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**The Marital Recipe**

**By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**



“*And he wrote her a bill of divorce*” (24:1)

Nothing is sadder than family break-up. Divorce is the scourge of our modern world. In all sectors of the community, divorce is on the rise. In some areas, more people now get divorced than stay married. Prenuptial agreements are par for the course. More and more couples enter marriage with fewer and fewer expectations.

The Torah acknowledges that not all marriages will be successful. If necessary, it gives us the mitzvah of divorce with a document called a get. The concept of "till death us do part” is not really a Jewish idea. However, divorce, while being a mitzvah, is no source for joy.

Judaism teaches that when a couple gets divorced, the mizbeach (holy altar) weeps. How are we to understand this idea that the altar weeps? Nothing in Judaism is merely poetic. And why specifically should it be the altar that weeps? Why not the Tablets of the Covenant? Why not the husband’s tefillin? Why not the wife’s Shabbat candelabra?

Probably the greatest source of marital disharmony is misunderstanding the purpose of marriage. The secular paradigm, enshrined in every fairy tale, from the Brothers Grimm to the Brothers Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, is that the princess finds the prince of her dreams. She finds total fulfillment in Prince Charming, and he finds everything he wants in her: Beauty, poise, intelligence, money, someone who puts the top on the toothpaste. Everything!

**Marriage is a Machine for Giving**

But marriage is not about finding someone to fulfill you. It’s about finding someone you can fulfill. Marriage is a machine for giving. Marriage is about living the principle that you are not the center of the world. In the Book of Genesis, the Torah says, It is not good for man to live alone. When you live alone, you only have one person to give to — yours truly. The world revolves around you. You are the center of the universe.

The mizbeach is the place where man gives to Hashem. Man gives of his best and offers it to his Creator. The word korban (woefully inadequately translated as sacrifice) derives from the root “closeness.” When you give, you become close. When you take, you distance yourself.

**By Itself Salt is Nothing**

The Torah tells us that no korban could be offered on the mizbeach without salt. Salt is the archetypal giver. Salt has only one purpose: to give taste to something else. By itself, it is nothing. When a person sees himself as salt, when he sees the whole purpose of his existence is to give, he has added the vital ingredient to his marriage. He has added the spice of life.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Tetzei 5783 email of OHRNET – The Orh Somayach Torah Magazine.*

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**The "Reproof"**

According to Chasidut, all of the Torah's curses in this section are directed against the "sitra achara" ("the other side," i.e., the forces of evil), as it states, "And the L-rd your G-d will place all these curses upon your enemies and on those who hate you." This will be fully realized in the Messianic era, when G-d will "remove the spirit of uncleanliness from the earth." *(Ohr HaTorah)*

**The Uniqueness of the Jew’s Responsibility to Emulate G-d**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



According to Maimonides' enumeration of the Torah's 613 mitzvot, general commandments such as "You shall be holy" or "You shall keep My laws" are not, as a rule, considered mitzvot in their own right. Rather, these injunctions are classified as broad directives encompassing all of Judaism.

It is therefore surprising, at first glance, that the commandment in this week's Torah portion, Ki Tavo, "You shall walk in His ways," is classified as a positive mitzva, requiring a Jew "to emulate the Holy One, Blessed Be He." Maimonides writes, "Just as G-d is gracious, so shall you be gracious. Just as G-d is merciful, so shall you be merciful. Just as G-d is pious, so shall you be pious." Indeed, the commandment implies that a Jew is required to emulate G-d to the best of his ability, at all times and in all circumstances.

But why is this commandment different from all other general statements in the Torah, to the point that it is characterized as a separate mitzva? What does the verse "You shall walk in His ways" entail that other similar commandments do not?

To explain:

Maimonides classifies "You shall walk in His ways" as a distinct commandment, as it contains a unique aspect not found in any other general directive in the Torah. This innovation is alluded to in the specific use of the word "walk," which implies an ongoing and perpetual sense of motion.

One of the differences between the soul of a Jew and an angel is that angels are stationary beings, fixed in their spiritual positions, whereas the Jewish soul constantly ascends from one spiritual level to the next. The Jew is constantly in motion, reaching higher and higher spiritual heights by virtue of his actions.

It sometimes happens that a Jew may observe mitzvot, yet he remains on the same spiritual rung as before. His performance of the mitzva did not cause him to progress or ascend any further. The commandment "You shall walk in His ways" comes to teach us that a Jew must never be stagnant, and that his performance of the mitzvot must always lead to an improvement of his overall spiritual condition.

How are we to accomplish this? By observing the Torah's mitzvot solely because they are "His ways" - because of our desire to emulate the Creator. For when we do, our spiritual ascent to higher and higher levels of G-dliness is assured.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Teitzei 5760/2000 edition of L’Chaim. (Adapted from Volume 4 of Likutei Sichot.)*

**Torah Thoughts that**

**Count for Our Parsha**

*I have put away the hallowed things from my house...I have not transgressed any of Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them* (Deut. 26:13)

Every year (aside from the Sabbatical year) a Jew is obligated to set aside a tithe of the land's produce; every three years, he must remove them from his possession and give them to the Levites. A special "confessional" is then recited, which includes the above words. But why the apparent redundancy? If a person claims to have "not transgressed any of Your commandments," isn't it obvious that he hasn't forgotten them? The answer is that a person can fulfill a commandment yet "forget" it at the same time - if his mind and thoughts are on something else, other than the mitzva. *(Sefat Emet)*

*Blessed you shall be in the city* (Deut. 28:3)

According to the Midrash, "the city" means "in the merit of the mitzvot you do among society," implying the obligation to ensure that one's surroundings are also imbued with Torah and mitzvot. *(Divrei Shaarei Chaim)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Teitzei 5760/2000 edition of L’Chaim.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on How Can**

**a Man Know When it’s Time to**

**Leave Kollel and Go to Work**

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**QUESTION:** How can a kollel man know when it’s time for him to leave the kollel to work?

**ANSWER:** Never. As long as he is being supported, then he should continue to learn. Whether the kollel supports him or his or her parents support him, there’s no reason to leave. It’s never too late to go out into the world. And when he goes out with more learning and more ripeness of experience, more seichel, he will be more successful.

However, one criterion he must follow, and that is if they don’t have parnassah. When his wife says, “I don’t want you to learn anymore; I want you to work,” that’s it.

A man can only do it if his wife gives him permission. Otherwise, the condition of the kesubah takes over. “Ana eflach – I will work”. And even though they made a condition beforehand, once she says that, he must go out and make a parnassah.

By the way, I want to tell you, when there’s a shidduch and the boy says, “I want to learn forever,” so have somebody talk to the boy. Ask him, “Do you really mean forever, mammish, no matter what?” And if he says yes, then good-bye.

If your wife is willing to work to support you, then let her go work as long as she’s willing. But as soon as she says she’s not willing, then the contract is changed now, and you fall back on the kesubah contract of Ana eflach– I will work and support you.

*Excerpted from a Parshas Ki Tzeitzei 5783 email of Toras Avigdor based on Rabbi Avigdor Miller’s Tape #E-94 (January 1997) from his classic Thursday night lectures.*

**Why Give in Multiples**

**of 18 (Chai)?**

**By Rabbi** [**Yehuda Shurpin**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/15169/jewish/Shurpin-Yehuda.htm)



***Art by***[***Sefira Lightstone***](https://www.chabad.org/3159160)

**Unpacking the Gematria of 18**

Many Jews typically give charity (and gifts) in multiples of 18 (e.g. 18, 36, 54, 72 etc.). On a simple level, this is because the numeric value of the Hebrew word חי (*chai*), which means “life,” is 18. We are thus symbolically blessing both the recipient and the giver with good, long lives.

Who Started It?

It isn’t clear when or where this custom originated, but one classic example dates back to the 1700s when, on multiple occasions, the Baal Shem Tov instructed people to donate in multiples of 18, using the term *chai*.1

The Price of a Sheep

An earlier source for donating 18 coins is found in the Code of Jewish Law2 (and quoted in Tanya3): one who transgresses a sin which would have required an animal offering during the Holy Temple era, should donate 18 *peshitim*(coins) to charity.

In this case, there is no significance to the number 18 beyond the fact that 18 *peshitim*was how much a run-of-the-mill sheep would have cost back then.4 Nonetheless, some look to it as precedent for giving in multiples of 18, since nothing in our lives is truly happenstance.5

The Significance of 18

The Talmud6 and Midrash7 list many things that are specifically in the amount of 18 or *chai*:

Our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are mentioned together in the Torah 18 times.

There are 18 passages in which G‑d communicates with Moses and Aaron as equals.

[G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm)’s name appears 18 times in the Shema.

There are 18 “commands” in the [Torah](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1426382/jewish/Torah.htm) regarding the building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

G‑d’s name appears 18 times in Psalm 29.

There are 18 vertebrae in a person’s spine.

In fact, these are the reason the Sages instituted that the daily Amidah should consist of 18 blessings.

Rabbi Yehuda Lowe, the Maharal of Prague, further explains that this number is associated with the Divine attribute of mercy.8 The additional (19th) blessing, in which we ask G‑d to judge our enemies, is not included in the 18, which are all about mercy, blessing and life.9

Additional Significance

The mystics point out that 18 is also the numeric value of *chessed*(kindness), *osher*(wealth) and *kofer*(atonement), when one uses the system of *mispar katan*, in which all zeroes are removed.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Osher | עושר | Wealth | 7+6+3+2=18 |
| Kofer | כופר | Atonement | 2+6+8+2=18 |
| Chesed | חסד | Kindness | 8+6+4=18 |

This reflects the three primary motivations for giving charity: to merit Divine kindness, achieve atonement for a misdeed, or as the [Talmud](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2537389/jewish/Talmud.htm)10 tells us, to merit an abundance of livelihood.

Just Give!

At times, the Rebbe would advise giving in various other increments, depending on the circumstances. Overall, the main thing is to give as much as you can, providing as much assistance to others as you are able. For charity, no matter the amount, has the ability to save us from danger, and in its merit we will usher in the Ultimate Redemption, may it happen imminently.

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef1a6041360) For example, Keter Shem Tov, Hosofot 388:
If you find yourself in danger and needs a miracle, donate 18 large coins for candles to be lit in honor of the soul of Rabbi Meir Baal Haness and loudly proclaim three times:
“I donate these 18 large coins for candles in honor of R. Meir Ba’al Haness. G‑d of Meir, answer me (see Talmud Avoda Zarah 18b)!”

Then say:

“May it be Your will, Hashem, our G‑d and the G‑d of our fathers, that just as You heard the prayers of Your servant Meir and wrought miracles and great wonders on his behalf, so may You do for me and for all those who are in need of miracles, be they hidden or open. Amen, may it be Your will.”

[2.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef2a6041360) Rama, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 334:26.

[3.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef3a6041360) Iggeret Hateshuva ch. 3.

[4.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef4a6041360) See Magen Avraham and Mishna Berurah *ad loc*.

[5.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef5a6041360) See Shut, Divrei Yoel 30.

[6.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef6a6041360) See for example, Talmud Berachot 28b, Jerusalem Talmud Berachot 2:4, 4:3.

[7.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef7a6041360) Midrash Vayikra Rabbah 1:8, Bamidbar Rabbah 2:1.

[8.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef8a6041360) Maharal, Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Avoda, 9.

[9.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef9a6041360) Maharal, Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Avodah 17.

[10.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/6041360/jewish/Why-Give-in-Multiples-of-18-Chai.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef10a6041360) See Talmud Shabbat 119a.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Seitzei 5783 website of Chabad.org Magazine.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Ki Tavo 5783**



The explicit descriptions of the disasters, personal and national, that make up a large portion of this week’s parsha raise certain issues. Why do Moshe and the Torah paint such a harsh and unforgiving picture of the Jewish future before the people? And if we expect people to glory in their Jewishness, is this the way to sell the product, so to speak? We all support the concept of truth in advertising but isn’t this over and above the necessary requirement?

The fact that the description of much of Jewish history and its calamitous events related in this parsha is completely accurate, prophecy fulfilled to the nth degree, only compounds the difficulties mentioned above. But in truth, there is clear reason for these descriptions of the difficulties inherent in being Jewish to be made apparent.

We read in this book of Devarim that G-d poses the stark choices before the Jewish people – life or death, uniqueness or conformity, holiness or mendacity. Life is made up of choices and most of them are difficult. Sugar coating the consequences of life’s choices hardly makes for wisdom. Worse still, it erodes any true belief or sense of commitment in the choice that actually is made.

Without the necessary commitment, the choice itself over time becomes meaningless. The Torah tells us that being a Jew requires courage, commitment, a great sense of vision and eternity, and deep self-worth. So, the Torah must spell out the down side, so to speak, of the choice in being Jewish, The folk saying always was: “It is difficult to be a Jew.” But, in the long run it is even more difficult and painful, eventually, for a Jew not to be a Jew in practice, thought and commitment.

According to Jewish tradition and Halacha, a potential convert to Judaism is warned by the rabbinic court of the dangers of becoming Jewish. He or she is told that Jews are a small minority, persecuted by many and reviled by others. But the potential convert also sees the vision and grandeur of Judaism, the inheritance of our father Avraham and our mother Sarah and of the sheltering wings of the God of Israel that guarantee our survival. The potential convert is then asked to choose whether he or she is willing to truly commit to the project.

Without that commitment the entire conversion process is a sham and spiritually meaningless. And the commitment is not really valid if the downside, so to speak, of being Jewish is not explained and detailed. Judaism is not for fair weather friends or soldiers on parade. The new phrase in the sporting world is that the players have to “grind it out.” Well, that is what being Jewish means – to grind it out, daily, for an entire lifetime. The positive can only outweigh the negative if the negative is known. Those who look for an easy faith, a religion that demands nothing, who commit to empty phrases but are never willing to pay the price of practice and discipline, will not pass the test of time and survival that being Jewish has always required.

Shabat shalom

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

**Vacation Challenges**

**By the Kalever Rebbe**

There is a special purpose in doing all the mitzvot wherever you spend vacation. Many vacation destinations serve a purpose in avodat Hashem by raising sparks of holiness found there.

“The place the L-rd, your G-d, will choose in which to establish His Name, there you shall bring all that I am commanding you.” (Devarim 12:11)

**The Generation of the Flood**

One summer, while R’ Dovid from Dinov, zt”l, was visiting Badan, which was a vacation destination known for its therapeutic hot springs, he was saddened to see that the Jews vacationing there were acting completely differently than they did at home. While on vacation, they abandoned their meticulous observance of Torah and mitzvot and, instead, were indulging in behaviors that were frivolous and depraved.

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R’ Dovid was greatly pained when he saw this, and he said:

“Chazal taught us (Sanhedrin 108a) that the hot waters of the flood still flow into the warm waters of Tiberius. Why do we need this as a reminder of the flood that took place during Noach’s generation?

“Now, after seeing what is taking place here, I have the answer: Hashem was concerned that the future generations would question Hashem asking, ‘Why was the generation of the flood punished so severely?’ Therefore, Hashem left places in the world with hot springs, so that you can see there how that generation behaved. Then, you will see that Hashem was just in that punishment.”

Today, this happens in many places. Vacationers become relaxed and lazy in their Torah and mitzvot. They claim that they do not have the comforts and resources that they have at home. Strictly kosher food with a quality certification is difficult to find. There may not be a minyan there, and they don’t have everything that they might need to learn and daven. It is also difficult to be different from everyone else around you. Therefore, these people allow themselves to become less observant while on vacation.

**The Cry of the Tallit**

There is a story told of the Great Maggid from Kelm, R’ Moshe Yitzchak Darshan, zt”l:

One summer, the maggid vacationed in Roblin. Tens of thousands of Russians visited this town every summer, especially people from Riga, which was nearby. When the maggid went to shul on Shabbat, he noticed that most of the men from Riga were davening without their tallit because they did not bring it with them.

At the end of davening, the maggid ascended the bimah and said:
  “Gentleman, let me share a story with you. I was once traveling in Riga and visited a particular man in his home. However, when I got there, the family members told me that he had traveled to Roblin. Suddenly, I heard a voice weeping from the other room. When I went into the room, no one was there except for a tallit that was laying there crying. ‘Tallit, why are you crying,’ I asked. The tallit answered, “How could I not cry? My owner is traveling, and he took with him his money and some valuables and left me behind!”

So, I comforted the tallit and said, ‘Don’t cry. The day will inevitably come when your owner goes far away and leaves behind everything but you.”

**The Dead Leave Everything in**

**this World Except for His Tallit**

The words of the Maggid, which were spoken from the heart, entered the heart of all the listeners, and they immediately understood the lesson. When a person passes away, he leaves everything behind in this world, except for his tallit that he used for the mitzvah, which someone is customarily buried with, symbolizing that the only things we can take from this world to the World to Come are the merits of our mitzvot.

This should inspire someone to realize that if they make such an effort to enjoy the temporary pleasures of a vacation, they must try even more so to perform every mitzvah, even when it isn’t easy. For, enjoyment in this world is temporary, while the pleasure in the World to Come earned through observing the mitzvot is eternal and everlasting.

**Collecting Sparks**

However, the very idea of a vacation is not inherently wrong. On the contrary. There are many vacation destinations that serve a purpose in avodat Hashem.

The Seforim HaKedoshim explain that there are sparks of kedusha (holiness) spread throughout all the corners of the world. The purpose of galut, exile, is for the yidden to collect and elevate these sparks. Wherever a yid finds himself, if he is involved in holy matters – or even physical activities that are done for the sake of Heaven – then he draws the holy Shechina into that place, and those hidden sparks of holiness can be elevated and returned to their source.

**Therefore, when a Jews is anywhere, especially a place where there are not a lot of other Jews there, he must realize that he is there with the purpose of elevating the sparks of kedusha that are concealed in that place.**

R’ Moishe of Sambor, zt”l, once asked his older brother, my holy ancestor R’ Tzvi Hersh from Ziditchov, zt”l, why when he travels from town to town working all day with the non-Jews he can daven Minchah in the afternoon and feel a tremendous presence of kedusha in his davening, while when he works in the large cities he doesn’t have that same experience.

R’ Tzvi Hersh explained, that the sparks of kedusha that are trapped in these tiny non-Jewish villages, don’t have anyone living there who can elevate them. When a Jew visits there, however, and is involved in something holy with pure thoughts, these sparks immediately connect to him and draw down a tremendous light.

**Fulfill Your Purpose!**

This concept can be taken one step further:

The Seforim HaKedoshim explain that each yid comes to this world with a unique, individual purpose of evaluating certain sparks of kedusha that are bound to him, based on his soul’s source in the heavens and a very specific Divine calculation. Hashem then orchestrates the events of one’s life to ensure that each yid will find himself in every place he needs to be to elevate those specific sparks of kedusha that he was sent into the is world to rectify. As the pasuk says (Tehillim 37:23), From the L-rd a mighty man’s steps are established, for He delights in his way. Hashem “establishes” our steps; He sends us to places to ensure that we can fulfill our purpose of elevating those sparks of holiness that are unique to ourselves.

**This is our pasuk’s lesson:**

“The place the L-rd, your G-d, will choose” – where places Hashem chooses for you to be, the purpose is “to establish His Name there” by drawing down the Shechina and its glory into that place. However, to accomplish that, a yid must “bring all that I am commanding you“. He must bring into that place all the mitzvot, and observe them with the same vigor and meticulousness that he would at home.

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The Rabbi Moshe Taub, the Kalever Rebbe is the seventh Rebbe of the Kaalov Chasidic dynasty, begun by his ancestor who was born to his previously childless parents after receiving a blessing from the Baal Shem Tov zy”a, and later learned under the Maggid of Mezeritch zt”l. The Rebbe has been involved in outreach for more than 30 years, and writes weekly emails on understanding current issues through the Torah.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Seitzeri website of Brslev.com*

**The Master Composer of Piyuttim for All Occasions**



R’ Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai composed over 200 piyuttim and pizmonim. Some of these piyuttim were published in siddurim and machzorim, and were widely recited and sung by Sephardim in shul and at se’udos mitzvah. He wrote piyuttim for almost every occasion – for weekdays, Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, kiddush levanah, all yomim tovim, bar mitzvah, on the final geulah, on Eretz Yisroel, on mussar thoughts, on parts of the Tanach and Gemara.

In 1875, a published order of piyuttim for hakafos on Simchas Torah gained fame in Livorno, Italy. The author’s name did not appear, however, at the beginning there were pesukim printed with the beginning and ending letters spelling out the names of R’ Yosef Chaim, his father and grandfather. Until today, Iraqi Jews sing R’ Yosef Chaim’s piyuttim on Simchas Torah.

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