Jewish Tribune – Chayei Sarah

**A Marriage Made in …**

Our parsha begins with the death of Soroh Imeinu and Avrohom Ovinu negotiating the purchase of Me’oras Hamachpeila from Efron.

Interestingly, this episode features in the very first daf of Gemoro Kiddushin. The Gemoro notes that one of the three ways to effect kiddushin is with money. Indeed, this method is used today, and we are all familiar with the Chosson giving his Kallah a ring as kesef kiddushin under the chupa.

The Gemoro asks its standard question: “Minoh lon” – Where do we know this from? What is the source that a man marries a woman by giving her money or something with monetary value?

The Gemoro answers that we learn a gezeira shovo from Avrohom’s purchase from Efron. Just as money was used to effect the transaction there, so too with marriage.

Why does the Torah choose this particular episode to teach the laws of kiddushin?

Rav Avrohom Gurwitz שליט"א suggests a wonderful answer.

Efron couldn’t believe his luck. He had originally offered to give the field away for free and now was receiving a vast sum for it. What a sale! Deal of the century!

Avrohom Ovinu on the other hand, knew of the eternal value of this real estate which was priceless. Odom and Chava were already buried there and it would eventually become the resting place of all our Ovos and Imohos. He felt that *he* had secured the deal of the century.

Both parties to this transaction therefore felt that they had made a brilliant deal and were the lucky ones.

That is exactly how each party in a marriage should feel. The Kallah should feel she has married the most wonderful man in the whole world and likewise the Chosson should feel his wife is the most amazing person on the planet. Both parties should feel like the luckiest person alive.

Perhaps this also explains a strange machlokes at the end of Masseches Gittin. Right at the very end of the Massechta, the Gemoro asks: what are the grounds for divorce?

Rabbi Akiva argues with Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel and says no significant grounds are needed. **אפילו מצא אחרת נאה הימנה** - even if he finds a wife nicer than his current wife, that is sufficient. That doesn’t sound like the same Rabbi Akiva who says וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ is the great rule of the Torah!

I once heard an explanation in line with what we said above. If a man thinks there is another woman out there who is better than his own wife – it’s bad news and time to consider ending the marriage.

This is also alluded to in sheva brochos where we say: **שַֹמֵּחַ תְּשַֹמַּח רֵעִים הָאֲהוּבִים, כְּשַֹמֵּחֲךָ יְצִירְךָ בְּגַן עֵדֶן מִקֶּדֶם**. We bench the couple that they rejoice like they did in Gan Eden. Why refer back to Gan Eden?

The answer is that in Gan Eden there was only Odom and Chava. No one else. Neither party thought that perhaps there was someone out there better or more suitable. Each one felt they had married their perfect partner, their soul-mate.

So our parsha is an unlikely source for this lesson and Avrohom Ovinu’s purchase of Me’oras Hamachpeila from Efron is indeed a most suitable source for the laws of kiddushin.

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