

Compulsory Pre-marital 32 Step Course

on Marital Dispute Avoidance & Resolution

WE INFORM – YOU CHOOSE

PROFESSOR WA LIEBENBERG

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A special thank you to all the "truth" seekers who contributed to make this concise *Compulsory Pre-marital 32 Step Course on Marital Dispute Avoidance & Resolution* a reality. I have cited you in the footnotes and salute you for your exceptional research work, without your great insight this book would not be a reality. It is my prayer that the citations will lead the reader to your work. The book is written in such a way that it is easily understandable for Christians. It is my prayer that many Christians will receive the truth and be transformed.

by
Professor WA Liebenberg

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The 1998 Scriptures Bible has been used as basis unless
otherwise referenced

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Preface

YHWH "God" has called us to do two things. First, we are to never give up studying and seeking the correct interpretation of any given Bible passage. Second, such opportunities are golden moments for us to learn to show grace and love to others whose understanding of a given passage may differ from ours.

Throughout the HRTI's teachings, we use a slightly different vocabulary to that which some might be accustomed. We have chosen to use what many refer to as a Messianic vocabulary. The reasons being: firstly, using Hebraic-sounding words is another way to help you associate with the Hebraic Roots of your faith. Secondly, these words are not merely an outward show for us, they are truly an expression of who we are as Messianic Jews and Gentiles who have "taken hold" of our inheritance with Israel.

Instead of saying "Jesus", we call our Saviour "Y'shua" – the way His parents would have addressed Him in Hebrew. In addition, rather than referring to Y'shua as "Christ", we use the word "Messiah" – which is an Anglicized version of the Hebrew word, Moshiach.

"YaHoWaH" is the name of God in Hebrew, where it is written as four consonants (YHWH or YHVH, as the W and V are derived from the same Hebrew letter 'vaw'). These four letters are called the Tetragrammaton (Greek for "[a word] having four letters"). Jews ceased to use the name in the Greco-Roman period, replacing it with the common noun Elohim ("God") to demonstrate the universal sovereignty of Israel's God over all others. At the same time, the divine name was increasingly regarded as too sacred to be uttered and was replaced in spoken ritual by the word Adonai ("My Lord"). From about the 6th to the 10th century the Masoretes (Jewish scholars who were the first to add vowels to the text of the Hebrew Bible) used the vowel signs of the Hebrew words Adonai or Elohim as the vowels for YHWH; and later on the artificial name *Jehovah* was produced.

Christian scholars and translators after the Renaissance and Reformation periods replaced the sacred name YHWH with GOD and LORD (all in capital letters in the Bible); which was a strategic move of satan for not using the Name. The Sacred Name occurs 6,828 times in the Hebrew text of the Bible, proving YHWH wants us to use it.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, biblical scholars again began to use the form Yahweh and it is now the conventional usage in Biblical scholarship; but leading Hebrew Scholars suggest YHWH should be pronounced as Yah-oo-VaH (Y'shua is derived from YaH-shuvah which means YaH saves. Yah (יה) is an abbreviation of God's name, YHWH, as seen in Psalm 68:4. The Name is also found in the word hallelu-YaH, which means "you praise the LORD").

32 Point-plan to Deal with Marital Dispute Avoidance & Resolution

Introduction

It is part of the Hebraic Teaching Group's policy that every couple who wishes to become married must attend this three-month Pre-marital Course. No ordained Messianic Minister or Messianic Rabbi is allowed to marry any couple unless they have attended each and every class of this course under the authority of the Minister or Rabbi, as (s)he will do the counselling when problems arise (if there is no professional Torah Counsellor available).

You are Destroyed for the Lack of Torah Knowledge

*"My people have perished for **lack of knowledge**. Because you have **rejected knowledge** (of Torah), I reject you from being priest for Me (presently in your house and eventually in Messianic Kingdom). Since you have **forgotten the Torah** of your Elohim, I also forget your children (a curse on them)." (Hos 4:6)*

When couples come in for marriage counseling, it is constantly noticed that they do not only have issues to work out in their relationship with each other, they commonly also have issues to work out within themselves. It is often a delicate balance to somehow divide the sessions or scheduling so that there is time for the couple together and one or each alone. This is all in an ideal case where both parties acknowledge that they each have their personal issues to deal with... then, spending private time with each flows almost naturally. It becomes fairly complex when one says that (s)he is flawless and perfect while the other is responsible for all of the trouble and has all of the problems. It is necessary for the Counsellor to formulate a

- "big picture" plan,
- gradually identifying the problems between the couple, and
- seeing where these are manifestations of the personality, character and psychological history of each individual.¹

Then the Counsellor has to understand the "cause and effect" relationship between the "inner individual" of each spouse and: his/her individual behaviour, as well as the dynamics or clashes of the two personalities interacting with each other.

¹ This Therapy and Counselling work is based on the Torah guidelines by Rabbi Jeff Forsythe. He is a private Counsellor to individuals and groups, popular speaker, author and consultant who has been working since '77 to help people to achieve inner potential; satisfying relationships and a life of meaning, success and fulfilment. He is an Orthodox Jew based in Brooklyn, New York, USA. His work has been used as guidelines but rewritten and adopted for the Messianic Believer. A special thank you to him as he is a wealth of knowledge and a master in Torah Therapy and Counselling.

1. The Balance Between Working on Oneself and Working on His/Her Marriage

Often, the issues in marital arguments are not what they seem on the surface. The problem is often what these issues represent within the "inner individual" of one or both of the spouses. Since the surface manifestation is not the true issue, and the seeming issue will not be effectively addressed or resolved in and of itself, addressing the "inner individual" is crucial to fixing the marriage. To use the expressions, "If you don't have two complete halves, they can't add up to a complete whole."

A typical example, which is seen over and over, in some form or another, is the need to control. The person is in some way broken, insecure and defensive. The issue is not as important as is the *need to win, to be "safe," to be validated, to be clean or to be good*. In the past (in childhood or early in the marriage) the person was psychologically tyrannized or rejected, which made the individual feel very hurt, diminished, dirty, insecure, vulnerable or the like. The issue now gives the individual similar feelings, or the threat of them, which is unbearable. The person's stand in the issue is *really protection* from what the issue psychologically represents and is associated with, deep inside.

Sometimes the person was in some way abused or neglected such that the relating is designed (deep down) to keep life safe. The person might be reserved, workaholic, steamrolling, intrusive, unemotional, compulsive, critical, judgmental, attacking, etc. The mind designs from the start (or in reaction to stimuli) relating behaviour that controls, evades intimacy and/or takes away human identity from a relating partner, so that the second person is "pigeon holed" into a "compartment" that is perceived to be agreeing with and subservient to the way this first partner has "programmed" the world.

Naturally, when one comes to a spouse expecting and needing the other to fit into the way (s)he has "wired" the world, life does not flow smoothly. The other person was not born or designed to be cannon fodder for another person's neurotic "programming." So, when the two come together (and this is all the more complex when both have their "package"), they each react to the other's irrational and destructive demands, behaviour, needs, emotions, expectations and relating style. The difficulties can be quite hostile, tense and complicated.

When it comes to practical resolution in marriage counseling, without addressing both 1) the apparent practical issues between the two and 2) the underlying psychological foundation in each, the problems do not lastingly go away. A good percentage of Torah marriage counseling comes from people who went to other Counsellors who made no progress and the problems were never resolved. More often than not, these people tell me that this is the first Counsellor who made breakthroughs after being to three or four other

Counsellors. Torah experience makes it clear that what is missing on a wide scale is a comprehensive approach that requires dealing with the two as a couple; dealing with one, if not both, as individuals; and tying everything in to the law and wisdom of our Torah.

2. Two - If not More - Sides to the Story

One of the most critical issues in resolving shalom bayis² issues is having both sides of the story. The two sides often can be so different that it is wondered if they are talking about the same marriage and whether these two people ever really met each other before they met the Counsellor. It can be worse. If one or more of the parents are involved, they generally also have their own agendas and biases and make for even a bigger and more complex mess.

In Choshen Mishpat (the portion of the Code of Torah Law which deals with interpersonal claims, rights and judgements), the judge is required to be *impartial*, to obtain objective and factual information, to ask questions in ways that do not suggest answers or how to "second guess" the judge. A Marriage Counsellor is somewhat the judge who must find out what is real in marital dispute cases, what each is doing or causing, what each must change, etc.

When one party speaks, this has to be presumed to be *possibly* accurate and useful information. On the other hand; it may be subjective, incomplete or half-truth; it may be a plea for recognition or emotional support; it may be an attempt to manipulate or control; etc. When each speaks, they often contradict each other, interpret events or their meaning differently or correct each other's one-sided statements. Each tends to blame the other for all of the trouble, see everything that (s)he does or feels as justified and perfect, rigidly hold to his or her position and view, and force it onto the resolution process. This, of course, is sabotage. Occasionally a relative or close friend joins the process on some level, which can be helpful to the extent that the other party is objective, "agenda free," and sincerely concerned (about the couple, their children and peace).

To the extent that a husband, wife or relative has a personal agenda, that which is outside of that agenda is an object of scorn, fright and/or antagonism which could "invalidate" the counseling process in that person's own mind. The subjective person says that everyone else is wrong, can't understand, is futile to talk to. The goal is to be right, not resolved, so there are no substantive or lasting improvements.

One of the saddest aspects of this is that the *Torah requires honesty*, working at shlamus (personal completion and perfection) and on tikun

² Shelom bayit, shlom bayit, or (Yiddish) sholom bayis is the Jewish religious concept of domestic harmony and good relations between husband and wife. In a Jewish court of law, shalom bayit is the Hebrew term for marital reconciliation.

hamidos (growth in character and personality) at **all times**. Relationships is one of the areas in life in which

- 1) this obligation for ongoing growth is most put to the test,
- 2) Torah obligations are highest and
- 3) the stakes are highest.

The person with any agenda or "blindness" judges the counseling on the basis of how it serves his/her needs and designs. Each one can be locked in his position. In a good case, each works on seeing beyond his/her own limitations gradually. Realistically, it can be a slow process. If a person is deeply neurotic, brilliantly sneaky or manipulative; it takes time for the defenses, contradictions and perverse behaviour or thought patterns to come to the surface. Remember, what person A says about person B is information to look at, to compare person B with, etc., but not to take as final or complete fact. A professional and experienced Counsellor looks for data about the person, as much as possible *from the person*; not from potentially biased and imperfect hearsay.

Here's another sobering fact, which can be reported because Rabbis do matchmaking as well as Counseling according to Biblical times. Singles who circulate on "the singles scene" are often miserable with loneliness, repeated relationship disappointment and the "slim pickings." Rabbis even sometimes tell singles who describe themselves on the phone that they need not come in for the interview because they know of no one who would even be a "reasonable maybe" for them (it is believed there must be professionalism, competence and integrity in the matchmaking role). One woman at a singles seminar once said that she has a friend who keeps complaining about her husband. This woman said that her married friend should say Tehillim to thank YHWH for her husband. He's really not a bad guy and being single would be worse.

In order to achieve real resolution, each individual must recognize and accept responsibility for his or her reality, its impact on the marriage, its implications about his or her personal need to work to grow and change, and to make genuine contribution to remedying the situation. It is a test. The marriage, and the lives of spouses and children hang in the balance. Failure is tragic. Listening, understanding and yielding leads to a happier, healthier, calmer and more fulfilling life.

3. When your Car doesn't Work you Fix It, When your Marriage which doesn't Work, Why Don't you Fix It?

An important part in the subject of shalom bayis trouble is the refraining or refusal to substantively and accurately identify and resolve the problems. Some people outright refuse to do anything, many deny that there is (or that they have) a problem, some go into long and protracted psychotherapy

(which may have eventual use but which now avoids the immediate marital catastrophe), go to Therapists who tell the individual what *they want to hear* (rather than what they have to do according to Torah) or go to Therapists who let the person talk and talk without getting to concrete and practical resolution.

If a car breaks down, you fix it. If an injury victim bleeds profusely, he gets emergency surgery. If a person is drowning, he needs a lifeguard. If a marriage breaks down, you fix it. If a marriage is seriously injured and is bleeding profusely, it needs "surgery." If a marriage is drowning, it needs a "lifeguard." Often, a Marriage Counsellor must make a balance between *addressing the individual problems* within each partner, in conjunction with *addressing the destructive and intense conflicts* between the partners. The process also must provide appropriate balance between the issues of the present with the roots in the past, for resolution to be lasting and effective. Dealing only in the past gets "lost" and dealing in the present alone often misses the root of the trouble, which can spring back or take on new kinds of manifestations. Psychological rectification must, for the Torah-observant Believer, all be integrated with the requirements of the Torah, since, invariably, ***Torah violations are commonly intertwined in the marital behaviours and troubles*** (e.g. anger, verbal hurting or insulting, embarrassing, revenge, grudge, misguided non-halachic criticism or rebuke, loshon hora (prohibited slanderous speech) and other serious sins).

It is amazing how people with serious marital troubles continue along, without making the connection between the marriage not working and *their not getting it fixed*. They either do not take resolution seriously, or it doesn't occur to them to seek it except in the abstract, or their attempts to get help are off-target. They keep on repeating the same miserable patterns, emotionally crippling their children. Anger, tension, hostility, yelling, coldness and the like *can traumatize and "psychologically kill" a child starting right at birth*.

If a marriage is not functioning and peaceful, it is necessary (even if for no other reason than the children) to get capable help. This applies to rectification of both the psychological and *spiritual ills* that are present.

One of the key reasons that marriage troubles do not improve is the failure to do tshuva (repentance) on behaviours, emotions or faults. The halachos³ of tshuva teach of the unlimited potential to grow, to complete and to repair personality, behaviour, mistakes and character. And, with work, over time, a person can improve the way in which they relate, and the quality of their relationships. There are four steps to correct, restore and achieve proper and complete tshuva if ever one Torah-observant believer wrongs any other Torah-observant believer. One must:

³ Ways to walk or go.

- 1) **Admit.** Openly and truthfully acknowledge the wrongdoing. State that you realize you did what you should not have, or failed to do what you should have; and that this caused whatever harm or suffering or loss to the other person.
- 2) **Remorse.** Feel and express sincere regret for what you did and caused. The *highest level* of this is when this brings the perpetrator to feeling shame. The Maharal⁴ writes that shame demonstrates separation from the wrong which was done, and is therefore instead, commensurately, attachment to what is right.
- 3) **Commitment.** Commit to abandon the wrong, to *never* do it again in the future, and to replace it in the future with what is good and correct. Accept within yourself to refrain from the bad and, instead, to adhere to the good.
- 4) **Appease.** Restore the damage as a practical matter, doing what it takes - e.g. paying for damaged property, returning stolen property, publicly and apologetically retracting a public insult or slander, etc.; engendering trust, comfort and security in the victim; and taking full responsibility to enable the other person to feel safe and that the wrong has been fully remedied. Make good to right the wrong as necessary so as to appease and comfort the victim.

These steps achieve tshuva shlaima (complete return), accomplished when the wronged one has been paid, when the problem has been corrected and smoothed over so that the victim can afford to justifiably and securely forgive and forget.

4. The Heritage of Parental Neuroses and Dysfunctions in the Choice of a Mate and the Conduct of Marital Relationships

One of the repeated patterns that is seen as a Counsellor is people *choosing partners with whom marriage is a "tradition"* started by their background and parents. When that "heritage" is neurotic, destructive or dysfunctional, it is called "hurtage." Sometimes the "hurtage" is blatant, sometimes subtle. However, what matters is that the choice of partner and relating style or pattern stems from some psychological factor such as

- 1) a role model;
- 2) defending against a painful or negligent aspect of one or both parents;
- 3) internal unconscious association with some aspect of life which stemmed from that parent or that environment;
- 4) striving and longing after some intense emotional need;
- 5) self-image; etc. (or any combination, as may apply in individual cases).

⁴ Yehudah Loew of Prague, also known as the Maharal, was one of the outstanding Jewish minds of the sixteenth century. He wrote numerous books on Jewish law, philosophy, and morality, and developed an entirely new approach to the aggada of the Talmud.

When parents make demands, criticize, emotionally neglect or reject, emotionally or physically disappear, seek their needs from their children or psychologically "put their stuff" onto their children; the *children are deprived of their childhood, of the development of their intrinsic personality and their potential to have a full and authentic life as the individual they were created by YHWH to be*. This can include the child's direction in life, profession, capacity to function as a normal and independent adult, inner happiness, co-dependent and dysfunctional relationship choices and abilities, and spiritual or material achievements in the world. This can be tremendously costly in the context of the child's growing into being a mature adult, a spouse and parent.

Whether the child's emotional prod is to perpetuate or to escape their parents' psychological poison, their mate selection and marriage conduct is profoundly and destructively impacted. Often, they do not see what they are doing and seek to put blame on everyone else for what does not work. When two people's neurotic needs feed into each other, the combination of the "packages" together generally makes for extremely difficult, painful, complex conditions. Some people constantly rescue or protect another person, some deny or bury their feelings, some try to control and manipulate, some let themselves be used (generally out of desperation for love and approval) and then feel resentful, some constantly feel disappointed or unappreciated, some are unhappy or bored unless a relationship is unstable or exciting; some are perfectionistic, critical, judgmental, punitive, compulsive, abusive, workaholic, nervous, tough, or overly cautious; etc. Since most are seeking one-sided relationships in a blind drive to satisfy needs, their relationships generally start with a romantic stage in which the two are "winning" each other. Then the relationship grows comfortable and tends to degenerate to angry, intense, near-constant, unbearable and incomprehensible hostility ["it was so beautiful once!"].

Often when the person's psychological history in counseling is traced, there is tremendous wound, emptiness, defense, resentment, terror, insecurity, anger, anguish, emotional starvation, tension, restlessness and/or frustration.

When adults are caught in the complex web of having come from a negative and deficient childhood, we have to decide on how to approach each situation on its own merits. We always try to increase the person's understanding of the origins of his feelings, behaviours and patterns. After intellectual realization, it is imperative to progressively bring this to the point of *emotional assimilation*. **Only then** does lasting change take place, when the root of a problem is rooted deep beneath the surface. Behaviour modification **does not** work, and sometimes backfires, if a person's issues start beneath the surface and his behaviour is only changed on the surface. The neurosis just keeps manifesting in new ways. Since Behaviour Modification somewhat stems from study of animals, there is a halachic problem with Behaviour Modification for the Torah-observant believer. Tosfos [Chulin 42b] says that it is forbidden to study animal behaviour for the

purpose of learning human behaviour. Genesis chapter I says humans must rule animals, how can human behaviour be learned from animals? This therefore fits our principle very well. When there is no under-the-surface pathology⁵, a Torah variant of Behavior Modification was used by the original baalai mussar⁶ for midos⁷ and spiritual elevation, which it is permitted to use.

5. The Dangers of Secular Psychology for the Torah Believer

Psychology often contains *elements that violate the Torah*. Its attitudes, concepts, methods, and values are often unacceptable. For example, Behaviourism studies animals to learn about humans. This is prohibited⁸. A human has "mazel" [the good] and a "neshomo" [Godly soul], which no animal has. Learning from an animal to apply to a human being can be as false as impermissible; except to learn good traits, such as to not be lazy from the hard-working ant⁹, and one can use limited "behaviour modification" to improve midos (character traits) and self-discipline.

We have to be very careful and selective with secular psychology. Here are some examples:

- 1) Psychology maintains that uninhibited releasing of anger is "healthy." The Torah forbids and condemns it and the Igeress HaRamban calls it plainly a sin. In the mid '90s, a team of scientists found that anger leads to heart attack. That is not healthy! (This is not talking about "holy anger." There is holy anger and unholy anger. Holy anger is within the will of YHWH and will lead you closer to Him. This is seeing somebody violation Torah wilfully, blatantly and continuously: Eph 4:26: "*Be wroth, but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your rage.*")
- 2) For one complete week in New York, every day was cloudy and drizzly. Psychologists expected mass depression, due to lack of sun. A reporter interviewed people on Manhattan streets, asking if lack of sun had them depressed. Everyone said "no." One found the weather relaxing, others found ways to occupy themselves indoors. The psychologists did not have one person to bear their theory out.
- 3) A recent study found Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step programme was the best system for beating alcoholism. This system believes in a higher entity. Since it is not religious, A.A. does not refer to "God," but it does believe in a power above and beyond the human; which helps to strengthen will-power, resolve, discipline and long-run maintenance. Psychological approaches to freeing a person from alcohol addiction do

⁵ The term pathology itself may be used broadly to refer to the study of disease in general.

⁶ The ones who does introspection, self-improvement [and the study of Torah works dealing with this].

⁷ The positive and required aspects of a person in Judaism: in Jewish education they are aspects of what is called character shaping.

⁸ Tosfos, Chulin 42b.

⁹ Prov 6:6.

not have effective or long-lasting results; while A.A., with its spiritual belief and support, has proven most effective and successful.

- 4) Psychology recognizes no absolutes, even in serious questions of morality or man-woman intimacy.

Methods or concepts derived from animals or from secular origins often only skim the surface or are misdirected. If a surface behaviour modification technique is used in a situation in which the issue goes much deeper, the results, at best, will be irrelevant or brief and, at worst, destructive. A person with emotional trouble can be trained to change through Behaviourism but, since the root of his trouble has not been resolved or healed, and there is no morality, he or she will continue to behave in new neurotic ways.

As a simple example (based on many similar true cases), let us say that Ben was emotionally abused as a child so he grew up to be excessively shy. Since his ability to form relationships was crippled, he went to a behavioural therapist who trained Ben to be assertive and unashamed. Thinking he is fixed and fine, Ben became pushy, obnoxious, selfish and nasty. He would do or say as he wanted, without consideration of another person's feelings. There was no talking to him about his flaws. *Emotions effect who a person is attracted to*. Since the emotional root of his problem was unrepaired, he was *attracted to women who fitted his emotional needs*, with whom he had intense, unhappy, volatile and short-lived relationships. He confuses having no shame or inhibitions with being mature and healthy. Since psychology has no moral foundation and does not make judgments of good or bad about people, there is no basis in his misguided therapy for declaring his behaviour or personality to be deficient. His secular therapist is as pragmatic about business as he is about therapeutic methods, just considering what does or doesn't work, and whether or not Ben is satisfied with his results. Torah considerations such as character, human dignity, **God's will** or the impact of his behaviour on others are non-existent or minimized.

On the other hand, Analysis gets "lost" in the past and is impractical. To a significant extent, it fails often to address or improve functioning in "real life" in the present. There are many therapies, but none of them is complete as a theory or practical skill base. Torah Counselling has developed a very effective blend of:

- 1) sourcing the root of problems where they truly come from in the past
- 2) making practical life succeed "here and now" and
- 3) law and wisdom from Torah.

6. The Role of Self-Image in Abusing, Abandoning and Keeping a Spouse

When a Torah Counsellor does Counseling for singles or couples, the Counsellor repeatedly see that every time one partner in a marriage or dating relationship abusively treats or abandons the other, the perpetrator is broken psychologically on some profound level. If the person has no inner frame of reference for worth, respect or wholesome concept for self, there is no inner frame of reference for perceiving these about anyone else. People tend to *blindly deny fault in themselves and project faults onto others. "All who delegitimize [another person], and who refrain from seeing the favourable in the other delegitimize [in the other person] the trait which is actually his own blemish".*¹⁰ Abusive, cruel, punitive, unstable, irresponsible, rejecting and/or explosive traits come out after the relationship feels secure, and are "normal" in the person's mind, especially when by "a nobody" against "a nobody." These are increasingly probable at times of * differences or arguments, * life stresses or pressures, * conflicts between

- 1) internal emotional neediness or damage within the personality (or immaturity or selfish interest) versus
- 2) responsibility to the other person or to the relationship, * emotional and/or compulsive dependency (such as the relationship, or someone or something outside the relationship), * "subjectively justified" criticism, malcontent, complaint or fault-finding against the other person, * nasty and intense termination (and may include breaking up many times), * taking one's problems out on the other person, etc.

One who lacks self-respect, acts out by disrespecting or abusing you, and not being attracted to a person who exchanges respect. He sees himself as small and doesn't want the pain of seeing his beaten and wounded self-esteem. He sees others as small, which to his mind is "normal" or "reality." He is attracted to relating partners who feed into his emotional needs and offer him a sense of security (usually stemming from some significant unresolved childhood pain and psychological deficiencies): e.g. people whom he can "control" (so he doesn't feel his helplessness or fright), "rescue" (from their troubles and problems, to make himself feel important or valid), or psychologically browbeat (to take anger or frustration out on). In each case, he can convince himself that he has self-respect and his behaviour is justified because, by "coincidence," he always gets stuck with sub-standard relating partners, who are always totally the bad ones. Lacking self-respect, he presumes all people to be worthless, small and not entitled to respect or to nice feelings. You are there to service his needs and insecurities. Since, deep down, he "knows" he is "small," and doesn't want to face the pain of seeing it (it's miserable to be rejected, insignificant and too unimportant to be entitled to esteem, worth, inner happiness and security), he treats others as small and worthless, since this is the way his mind defines "normal," while

¹⁰ Kidushin 70a.

avoiding the pain of this "reality." This subterfuge spares him from direct confrontation with his beaten and wounded self-esteem. He will be attracted to people with personality weaknesses that feed into his particular needs, defenses and patterns. He will attract (depending on the case) people who need his "package" (abuse, confrontation, power-plays, love-at-any-price, removal from their feelings and/or someone to rescue).

This psychological mechanism (of attributing what is in my mind to others) can be for good, too. King Solomon says, "*See life with the wife that you love*".¹¹ The commentaries explain "see" to mean "*live happily [with the wife that you love]*." Why should King Solomon write "see (re'ai)" meaning "to happily live with?" A healthy person who sees himself as having value, qualities, what to offer; and as being good, respectable and lovable; will SEE the same in other people and will SEE LIFE AND PEOPLE HAPPILY! When Moshe, the most humble man who will ever live, had to quell the rebellion by Korach, Moshe showed that he knew his worth, standing up strongly for YHWH. Elsewhere in the Torah's account of Moshe, he is humble and compassionate. Moshe was never held back by excessive or unhealthy self-deprecating humility. Moshe was not prodded by arrogance, ego or unhealthy drive to conquer Korach. When a person sees himself as having good qualities and attributes, his view is *that there is room for everybody to live in the world; to be good, valuable and enjoyable; to have what to appreciate and be attracted to*. They are able to *get along with people, see people as worth getting along with* and want to get along in relationships. *All positives, in his mind, are normal*. He *SEES others as worth giving* what he has to offer, interacting happily with, exchanging with and (in midos and emotional terms:) enriching. Relating is mutually rewarding, dynamic, happy and healthy. Each keeps coming to the relationship with good to offer to each other.

7. Unfair or Nasty Tactics, Manipulating and Arguing: The Dilemma of Verbal Dirty Fighting in Marriage

One of the most excruciating, difficult aspects of a troubled relationship is *one-sided manipulation*. Here are many of the most common techniques (to grasp control; avoid the real issue and/or invalidate the victim as an unworthy or disqualified person) used in marriage relationships. A Counsellor always must deal on a case by case basis. For example, it has been seen victims justifiably blaming and demanding change from blindly abusive spouses. So please do not jump to play therapist, just know what marital issues you are dealing with.

ESCALATING: Quickly move from the main issue of the argument to attack to attack the other person's motives, character, flawed personality, and blame them for the failure of the relationship.

¹¹ Eccl 9:9.

TIMING: Choose the time when the partner is about to leave for work or about to fall asleep after a hard day at work and least likely to be able to respond.

CRUCIALIZING: Exaggerate the importance of the issue. "If you really loved me you would have...etc. or "This proves you never really loved me."

BROWN BAGGING: Think of every possible problem from the past and lay them on your partner all at the same time. Never stick to the original issue.

ASK WHY: Treat your partner like an irresponsible child. "Why didn't you clean up after dinner?," or "Why don't you love me like [whoever] loves [put name of good friend here]?" The object is to make the partner feel like an irresponsible child and incapable of an adult relationship.

CROSS COMPLAIN: If your partner raises a complaint, bring up one of your own.

OVER-GENERALIZE: Use "never" and "always." "You always ignore me when I ask for help," and "You never listen to me when I need sympathy."

BLAME: Make it clear that you are never at fault and are always the victim and will never make any changes. It is your partner who is at fault and if the relationship is to get any better, your partner will have to change.

SARCASM: "Well look here who's always so perfect. No room for any improvement here is there?" With just the right tone, your partner may not be able to respond.

MIND READING: Let your partner know you are the expert when it comes to knowing how they feel. "You don't really feel angry about that anymore," or "You didn't mean to say you wouldn't be home in time to eat dinner." This way, your partner isn't an equal and you won't have to deal with any issues, unless they read this list.

FORTUNE TELLING: "I can see you will just never change." This gives you the upper hand, shifts the discussion away from the issue, and demoralizes your partner.

PULL RANK: "When you make as much money as I do, then I'll listen to you." Keep your partner down since there is no need for an equal partner. Certainly it's a lot easier than discussing the real issues.

DON'T LISTEN: Don't let your partner know you place any value on their feelings, opinions or preferences in the issue under discussion. Ignore everything except the part you want to hear. Pretend to read or even fall

asleep. It's very powerful if you leave the house when your partner suggests an issue that is of special concern to them.

GIVE ADVICE: Always become the expert when your partner wants to discuss an issue. Tell the person just how to act, think and feel. Try to come up with a better answer and if questioned, point out that you were only trying to help and they brought the matter up in the first place.

USE LABELS: Use plenty of terms such as "neurotic" or "paranoid." This implies the other person is at fault. "Insensitive," or "slob" can be powerful also in the right context. Mainly, you will establish that your partner is inherently flawed as a person.

AVOID RESPONSIBILITY: You can bring any disagreement to a halt by simply saying, "Oh, I forgot," or "I guess I was tired." The object here is to avoid the whole discussion.

PLAY THE MARTYR: This can be very powerful if not overused. "You're right, honey, I guess there really is no hope for me." this generally leaves your partner without a response. If this strategy begins to lose its advantage, try pretending illness and blame it on your partner.

REJECT COMPROMISE: Never back down. Stick to your philosophy that only one of you can win and your partner doesn't qualify.

8. Heart, Personality and Externals: The Three Critical Levels of Relating and Attraction; and Of How to Select, Lose and Keep a Mate

The Torah teaches the dynamics of developing genuine love when the Torah commands us to love God. *"You will LOVE YHWH your Elohim with all your LAIV, with all your NEFESH, and with all your MI'ODE."* (Deut 6:5.) There are three levels created within a person for producing any love (whether for God or for a human):

- 1) laiv,
- 2) nefesh and
- 3) mi'ode.

The difference between love for YHWH and a person is not our purpose, so avail it to say that the differences are basically in the delivery and impact of love. The practice of love in a relationship between two human beings develops from mutual two-way loving, to bring consistent benefit for each recipient. By each bestowing ongoing good that pleases the other, each develops lasting and growing love. But, since we can be subjectively attracted (so we give or withhold love somewhat based on how we feel at different times) we must know the "system." Otherwise, true and mutual love may never come, or it may not remain.

- The laiv is **the heart**, the deepest essence level, your definition and center as a human being. Here are midos (character, qualities, personality traits), motives, attitudes, free-will decision-making, and capacities for subjectivity or objectivity. Here is the root of one's humanity, will and identity.
- Nefesh is "**personality**;" containing one's talents, skills, abilities, energies, unique cluster of emotions and sensitivities (and the way the individual expresses them), and expression of intellect (the mental function called "seichel"). The nefesh contains those powers that enable one to uniquely act in this physical world, providing the link between the outer world and the inner essence in the heart. The purest and most "golden" heart itself has no active manifestation and can be abstracted. Since the heart is the most internal element, it bestows its value by externalization and expression through your individual nefesh/personality to the outside world. One expresses and conveys what is in the heart with what one says and does and with how, e.g. with liveliness or dullness, humour or seriousness, and all traits across the entire spectrum of emotions, talents, self-expression and personality.
- Mi'ode is "**externals**." It consists of tangible objects, external to the person himself, such as one's wealth and possessions, as well as looks, and intangible externals such as your family ("yeechus") or your status in society, all of which have nothing to do with you as an intrinsic person.

The Torah is telling us, in our context, that development of true love **MUST** accord with these three components **AND** they must specifically come in this order: 1) laiv, 2) nefesh and 3) mi'ode. Their appeal and value to you must be in this specific order for genuine and lasting love to come in one human being for another. In relationships, **each level has to proceed to the next, and build in both chronological and priority order**. One of the most destructive mistakes is expecting love to come from any other order or combination of these three elements. If one's heart responds to nefesh (e.g. talent, personality or sense of humour) or mi'ode (e.g. looks, profession or wealth), such a person is not responding to the inner person - the heart of the other, and is probably not altogether in touch with his/her own heart. Attraction to mi'ode values is entirely in the imagination. For example, people who are attracted to money or social status have the *weakest basis for a lasting, happy or fulfilling marriage*. Nefesh is more subtle because personality is in the person, yet it is on the surface. A brilliant, personable or talented individual can be cruel, selfish, irresponsible, impatient, arrogant, rude, spoiled, shallow, brutish or explosive. A person with a developed and good heart is a mentsh (cognate with German: Mensch "human being" and means "a person of integrity and honour."); with midos (positive character traits), virtue, character, values and commitment. A person relates to as deep a level in the other as one relates to in oneself. If one doesn't know how to relate to one's own heart, *how can he know what it is to relate to another*

person's heart? How can you relate in terms that you know nothing about? How can one connect to a level in someone else that (s)he isn't in contact with or isn't aware of in him/herself? This can indicate need to work on oneself to develop more spiritual and emotional connection and sensitivity. To the extent that one doesn't have any of the essentials in the heart, or lacks contact with his heart and foundation in it; he can't perceive, value, be attracted to, relate to or pursue these. There is no internal frame of reference in his mind and being. Everyone can intellectualize about them, but they are not operative on a practical real-life "gut level," in the heart, where behavior truly stems from. He will be attracted and motivated based on inner reality - what it is and what it isn't, what the person really wants or rejects. People have psychological "antennae" that select people for relationships who are like their inner self and/or whose characteristics feed into the needs of one's inner self.

For example, Reuven and his wife Rachel adore each other. He is a poet and she is a cook. He composes a love poem, writing with a pen on paper. It pleases her to her heart. She prepares an exquisite meal which he enjoys. They have exchanged "laiv-love," which is expressed through (but not dependent on) nefesh (talent, personality) and utilizing mi'ode (time, money, paper, pen, food, pots). Their essence love bond is heart-to-heart (laiv), they express their heartfelt love through their individual personalities (nefesh) and, last, use externals (mi'ode) as means (never as ends) for provision of love. They both understand, value and prioritize the level of the heart; and have a true and successful love bond.

The more a person works on the laiv; particularly on midos, kindness and human virtues; the more he will know his laiv and grow more connected and attuned to it; and the more he: relates to and values laiv in another, sees the laiv (or absence of it) in others, governs and judges behaviour by the qualities of the laiv, and is genuinely attracted on the basis of laiv; then: the more he has the benefits of full lifelong goodheartedness as the foundation of his/her relationship. Relationships in general and a marriage in particular will grow, deepen, sweeten and endure in direct proportion to the extent to which it is an unconditional laiv-to-laiv relationship in which both partners recognize, give and appreciate heart. **NB. This is key to selecting, cherishing and keeping a mate.** We will apply this to building a fulfilling and quality marriage relationship in the next installment. Note that this series has 32 installments. The gematria (numerical value) of the Hebrew word "laiv" is 32 (lamed = 30, vais = 2). It is hoped that the reader will assimilate the material in this series into his/her heart, so that it will be applicable to practical every-day life. If the 32 installments of this series is willingly internalized into the heart (which is numerically equal to 32), with commitment to act on it, then this series will be helpful and beneficial to its readers.

9. Priorities and a Fulfilling and Quality Marriage Relationship

In business, there is a field called "Time Management," the purpose of which is maximizing productive and effective use of time. Let's apply it to quality marriage relationship. We'll start with some of its key definitions.

"Goals" define final results to be produced by effort/investment. They are clear, specific, concrete and preferably written. "Objectives" are component results; e.g. a couple's goal is a pleasant evening together, an objective is meeting at a restaurant at 6:00. (The goal is vision which you want to achieve and the objective is the mission, the vehicle how you will achieve the goal/vision.) This can be relative. A goal may be saving a rocky marriage, an objective would be managing that evening at the restaurant. "Priorities" are measures of value created or damage prevented by spending time or effort. These also may be relative and must be made with value judgment, data and common sense. To make this concrete, there must be a system for establishing priority levels e.g. A, B, C (high, medium or low). D is to specifically represent things you do not want to do (it is worthless or harmful) and A+ means sudden emergencies or opportunities that can override an A. The purpose is to identify the highest level of value-creating activity. "Scheduling" enables you to allocate time to make the most value-producing activities happen according to priority. You must allow for things that have to happen or be finished by certain times, and the unexpected, and a framework for organizing and discipline to achieve priority goals.

A marriage requires spending time in quality interchange between the deepest possible parts of each partner's being (laiv), where the real qualities, virtues and midos live. *Each must be connected to his/her own innermost being to be able to exchange it and connect it with another. One relates to as deep a place in another as one is connected to in him/her self. That level is the deepest level which one values and is attracted to.*

When blocked, not connected to one's innermost being (laiv), **one cannot be happy**, satisfied or fulfilled. An inner being needs an inner being. If you try to satisfy the inner needs with the outer personality (nefesh) or externals (mi'ode), *you will never feel you have enough and never feel fulfilled*. A bucket with a hole in it cannot fill, even when you keep pouring in. For a happy and fulfilled marriage, to have a mature and responsible relationship, you have to be full on your own in *the innermost level*. A quality and loving relationship comes from two people giving from their inner fullness to one another. *"Who is rich? The one happy with what he has."*¹² When happy with your inner life, and you have basic necessities, one's life is happy and satisfied independent of external things, gratifications or events. A relationship **does not** depend upon the levels of nefesh or mi'ode.

¹² Pirkei Avos, chapter four.

There are gender-based and individual considerations in quality relating. A wife may spend time decorating and cooking. Her husband should not see this as housework. She should be *loved, appreciated and recognized* for taking care of *his* home for *him*.¹³ He should buy her new colourful clothes for holidays.¹⁴ It is a wife's emotional need, especially if her peers have clothes. A woman is sensitive and emotional, a man is logical and analytical. This plays a crucial role in communicating, making decisions, responding to issues in life. Also, be aware of your partner's individual taste, feelings and wishes. Understand, identify and deliver such things to your partner.

Spend time regularly together. You both "own" and owe that time, and can expect it. Enjoy that time. Communicate in a soft, polite and positive tone; with concrete, clear details; especially about practical needs and differences; and get to know each other on deeper and deeper levels. Express feelings or needs in terms of how their accommodation helps the relationship, not in terms of your demand. Understand that you each may not be able to deliver everything, but care enough to do all you can with a good attitude and enable the other to trust that you keep working to do better. Apply goals and scheduling to building a fulfilling and quality lifelong marriage - your first priority.

10. Acknowledgement Therapy - How to Turn a Hopelessly Tormented Marriage Into a Truly Happy Marriage

When people with troubled man-woman relationships come for Practical Counseling (e.g. singles who can't find, form or retain a serious relationship; or couples whose marriage is an exercise in tension, battle, aggravation and pain), a significant recurrent pattern is noticed in many "tough cases." Although it may vary with individual cases, basically one or both members of the couple do not acknowledge the other, never mind substantively respond to, or give to, the other. This is particularly difficult for the relationship when (s)he can't hear the other, can't deal with the other as a real and distinct human being, is rigid, cruel, judgmental, immature, untrustworthy, superior, insulting; can't communicate, gives grandiose lip service and thinks (s)he is doing everything right and nothing wrong, thinks the other is doing nothing to contribute and everything to damage the relationship, forcefully works from his/her own assumptions and understanding (and imposes them on the partner; to the exclusion of the other's thoughts, needs, individuality and feelings) and is blind to the impact of his/her behaviour on the other person.

Some spouses talk "past" each other, not "with" each other. Some also can behave or communicate as if in his/her own world. Consider this true story. One morning, the husband said, "I want steak for dinner." Without a word, she bought and made chop meat because, on her own, she decided that they could not afford steak. When his wife served the supper, he was

¹³ Chazon Ish.

¹⁴ Hilchos Yom Tov.

infuriated because she disobeyed. She demanded he get a better paying and more realistic livelihood. He demanded divorce because she interfered in his domain, and abandoned her.

A painful, stressful, fight-ridden man-woman relationship is one of the most miserable and destructive things in life. The Abarbanel¹⁵ points out that the Torah mentions frogs ten times during the plague of frogs in Egypt. He says that this means that the plague of frogs was equal to all ten plagues. All that croaking noise and disruption was unbearable. Nagging, criticizing, fighting, tormenting in marriage - all that noise and disruption - is also unbearable like ten plagues! And it can break a victim's personality and self-image.

To succeed, a couple's efforts must be directed to recognizing the impact of each one's behaviour on the other, accepting responsibility for behaviour and personal growth instead of dispensing demands or blame, and development of ability to deal with the other as (s)he truly needs and is. That is vital to restoring their relationship. This requires drastically changing course, maturely acknowledging the other as a real person and substantively responding to the other, and building trust and communication. Sometimes, one or both must have therapy and examine his/her psychological history. It can sometimes take many counseling sessions till the real or deeper issues come to the surface. Rambam¹⁶ notes that the Bible does not praise Job for being intelligent, wise or brilliant. It praises him for having midos (good character traits) and being righteous. Midos and righteousness are fundamental. In YHWH's estimation, these are what count in a person. These (not intellect) are crucial to marital reconciliation, behavioural upgrade, having honest will to correct personal problems/faults, adaptability, constructive change and human growth. Torah Counsellors have seen many a brilliant, but sick or evil, mind: seriously anguish, control, manipulate, belittle, abuse or damage other people - even in close or familial relationships. The intellect is a dangerous weapon when used by a faulty character or disturbed personality. It is a valuable and beautiful asset when used by a sweet, mature, sensitive, giving, caring, responsible, good-hearted, loving, fine and respectful person. Often, change and improvement comes slowly and all concerned must have a realistic conception of the time-frames and the work which is involved in getting the marriage (and its members) realistically and lastingly repaired. But, this is only the beginning.

¹⁵ Abrabanel, was a Portuguese Jewish statesman, philosopher, Bible commentator, and financier. Abrabanel was born in Lisbon, Portugal, into one of the oldest and most distinguished Jewish Iberian families, the Abravanel family, who had escaped massacre in Castile in 1391. A student of the rabbi of Lisbon, Joseph Chaim, he became well versed in rabbinic literature and in the learning of his time, devoting his early years to the study of Jewish philosophy. Abrabanel is quoted as saying that he included Joseph ibn Shem-Tov as his mentor. At twenty years old, he wrote on the original form of the natural elements, on religious questions and prophecy. Together with his intellectual abilities, he showed a complete mastery of financial matters. This attracted the attention of King Afonso V of Portugal who employed him as treasurer.

¹⁶ Moreh Nevuchim 3:22.

11. Fundamental Issues in Making a Couple's Marriage Counseling Succeed

When a couple comes for marriage counseling, one or both are in profound pain. Sometimes, however, at least one party is not willing to work or change. I ask, "Do you like the results that come from what you are now doing?" The party answers, "No." Point out the contradiction between wanting to do the same things and desiring different results. If people can't change in order to do what brings the desired results, how can they complain that they don't like the results they get from what they do? They can either choose to change as necessary or choose to learn to love misery. Doing the same things gets the same results. To get different results, you have to do different things. If help is needed, it is best to get it *as soon as possible*; because bad situations, habits, tension, hostility, defenses and alienation tend to get worse and worse over time.

One of the very common problems is a lack of clear and objective goal-orientation. People in distress often think more in terms of relief than goals, so they can't be blamed when they lack thought-out goals. However, they often have one-sided and destructive goals, which have to be cleared out of the way before realistic and helpful goals can be formulated, never mind achieved! People often say, "I want X, make my spouse do Y and fix Z." It doesn't work that way. It can take time to help people to clarify issues, to see what is needed, to establish all the needed goals and to work towards operating in ways that are realistic and effective; especially if they are among those who are defensively resistant to change. The bottom line is objectively and systematically getting out of things that don't work and getting into things that do work. This can require retraining the person's thoughts, emotions and behaviours - and assuring internalization of the changes, so that they can be trusted to be spontaneous, operational and reasonably consistent in practical life. When it takes time to change all the details, we work on *changing the direction* meanwhile.

It is crucial for the couple to *feel* comfortable with the Counsellor. He/she may disagree with many things you say. He/she may not give-in to many positions you take. That is a sign he/she has "backbone" and is professional. You are comfortable because there is basic (not necessarily perfect) rapport; (s)he is Yoray Shomayim¹⁷; and you are confident (s)he is listening, attentive, responsive, trustworthy and concerned about the two of you and your marriage. You should sense his/her heart, as the Alshich¹⁸ writes, "*Words which come out of the heart enter into the heart.*"

¹⁷ The truth that is taught from the heaveilies.

¹⁸ Moshe Alshich, also spelled Alshech, (1508–1593, Safed), known as the Alshich Hakadosh (the Holy), was a prominent rabbi, preacher, and biblical commentator in the latter part of the 16th century.

Any responsible Counsellor will tell you that achievement of lasting change and improvement, especially in tough cases, requires time; together with hard, volitional, honest, steady, *good-faith* and patient work by both spouses. It can be a slow process. It is better to err on the side of slowness than to err on the side of sabotaging the therapeutic process. People tend to group or blur together multiple issues. Issues must be isolated to be defined, prioritized and sequenced, and then tackled (often one issue at a time), in order to be effectively and lastingly resolved. With professional help, and by developing the ability to acknowledge and respond to the reality of the other spouse, by seeking to please and respect each other and to prioritize peace, by both learning to communicate and give-in, by feeling concern for each other and working cooperatively together, a couple can make breakthroughs to a more functional and satisfying marriage relationship. Since the difficulties which block marriage counseling's success are often *inner psychological or disruptive emotional issues*, we will look at this more closely.

12. Psychological Obstacles to Succeeding in Marriage Counseling

Among the biggest problems is when one or both spouses is in *psychological denial* ("I have no neuroses, faults or blame") or *psychological projection* (you have all the neuroses, faults, problems and blame; including mine!). This is analogous to person A's house catching fire. He sees his home and all of his worldly possessions going up in smoke. He calls the fire department, but since he cannot admit to himself that he is having a life tragedy and his property is turning into ashes, he tells the firemen to go a few blocks away and put out a fire at B's house. The firemen cannot help A as long as they are directed to B. A has to accept the fact of major fire at his address and stop pointing his finger at B. Until then, the firemen are idle, unable to help, and A's house, life and possessions continue being destroyed. Until each person faces his own work on relationship resolution, introspection, personal responsibility, psychological issues and behavioural correction, even the best Counsellor is like the great fireman who was sent to the wrong neighbourhood because homeowner A couldn't face his pain and fear or break old psychological barriers and habits.

A most tragic problem in single or married people is fear of a committed, intimate relationship. The more you try to remedy problems or bring the person into a close relationship, the more the person will sabotage or flee.

Kathy needed and expected too much, and projected her faults and neuroses. She told me that she is deep, refined and works on her character frequently and seriously. She could not accept any shallow or boorish man. She was married for about two years. He brought her flowers and presents; was supportive, loving, patient and communicative; drove an hour to save her when she broke down in a rainstorm; was generous and sacrificing to care for her. He did not make much money and she left him abruptly. He pleaded with her and professed his love but she suddenly, selfishly and

callously was turned off and she dumped him like a disposable soda can because she couldn't have all that she wanted. She couldn't care less that she hurt and devastated him. After the break-up, she spoke to me several times. It turned out she only saw fault in him because she could not make a living and she projected her disdain for herself onto him. She was so insecure that she feared no one could love her so she was too frightened to maintain a love relationship. Kathy was inaccurate in saying that she was superior and needed someone "extra special." She needed *not to need so much*. The cure was *resolving her own life-impacting flaws & anxiety*.

Another major problem in marriage counselling is that one or both want instant gratification and victory. We live in a society which trains us to want, demand and expect "instant everything." I can go to the grocery and buy a frozen meal that I put in the toaster so I have a complete breakfast in two seconds. People think personal growth or marital resolution come out of some freezer and avail instant gratification. It does not work like that in the real world. It takes time. Rushing can be futile or, worse, sabotaging. We're dealing with personalities, emotions, conflicts, self-image, resentments, deep-rooted habits and behavioural patterns, defenses, mistrust and biases. Further, some people in counselling often have their own personal agenda (which does not always coincide with objective, fair, mature, genuine and lasting resolution of the issues involved). This can make them manipulative, resistant or unreasonably judgmental; which can damage the therapeutic process. They go into counselling essentially to "prove" the other spouse wrong, and to strive to get their own way. They may run and run and run to several counsellors or rabbis seeking to hear what they want to hear and to try to get what they want. The only thing they get accomplished is: they wear out lots and lots of shoes. Progress only comes with facing; and working hard, honestly and courageously on; the true and relevant issues, in and between the spouses. We will look at this further, from the standpoint of psychological health.

13. Psychological Blindness to One's Destructive Marital Behaviour

There are certain criteria by which psychology judges mental health. For example, signs of good psychological health include 1) adaptability, 2) living in the present, 3). the capacity to be affected by input from outside of one's own self and own mind (e.g. other people, rules or principles, realistic response to circumstances, etc.) and 4) the ability to grow.

Obviously, a person 1) who is rigid, 2) who lives in the past or future (e.g. present-day neurotic associations stemming from childhood dysfunction, or overpowering anxieties about what might happen in the future), 3) who is closed to or is unaffected by input from another person (needs, feelings, opinions, requests, etc.) or is callously indifferent about another person or who fails to deal with circumstances or principles as they really are, or 4) who

refuses to grow as a human being... does not show signs of good psychological health.

These being the case, when a couple comes in and one or both spouses show any of the above signs, I have "tools" or "data" that help to define what the situation is. All of these unhealthy signs indicate that there is serious work to be done in the counselling process. When a person has psychological difficulties which stem from abuse, emotional trauma, dysfunction, a neurotic parental role model, etc., the person's relating patterns are essentially 1) continuations of their "psychological training" and/or 2) defenses against the damage, fright or suffering they went through or against what they presently associate with it. This makes their relating very complicated because present behaviour is very trapped with nasty and complex origins in the past. Since such people tend to be somewhat blind to the meaning or impact of their behaviour, and are generally judgmental and defensive, it is difficult to get them clear or anchored in what the issues are, or what they have to do, to not do and/or to change. They always have an explanation. What is tragic, of course, is that the person, regardless of denial, is causing "human damage" by abuse or emotional harm to family members. Their refusal to recognize the reality outside of the "private reality in their mind" does not help those whom they are damaging. It is critical that they come to deal responsibly to repair their personality, behaviour and perceptions. If the person is "reachable" the Counsellor works to increase awareness of the hurtful, destabilizing and disruptive impact of behaviour on others, to accept his or her responsibility to shield spouse and children from harm and to gradually bestow good on other family members while working out the inner turmoil, conflict, pain, anxieties, tension, frustrations and confusion. If the person is not reachable, the road is more difficult and slow. The Counsellor must strategically work around the resistant individual by changing the other spouse; for example, build self-esteem, teach "emotional self-defense," increase the sense of value in the marriage (to maneuver the offender to having more fear of losing the marriage and more motivation to change) or make the offender's behaviour ineffective or backfire. Then, we can bring the partner into the counseling process. This, of course, does not apply if someone is "closed tight" or dangerous. It's always a case-by-case question.

Sometimes psychological or emotional problems stem from early in life. Sometimes the problems originate in the marriage or are brought to the surface in the marriage. To the extent that the marriage originates or triggers psychological or emotional difficulties, the marriage itself must provide repair (deeper or earlier problems have to be dealt with using different therapeutic processes). As Rambam writes, to fix a bad extreme you must *go to the other (good) extreme*. The couple must be emotionally supportive, nurturing, sensitive and understanding to create together an environment of emotional comfort, stability, responsiveness, fulfillment, cooperation and security. This is crucial to gradually building a wholesome, calm, trusting and satisfying relationship.

14. The Serious Impact of Marital Problems or Emotional Abuse on the Victim's Personality

A person's relationships are fundamental to his emotional condition. From the beginning of life, he needs emotional input and nurturance. Throughout life, this continues; although in the healthy adult, the focus is progressively less and less on taking or needing; progressively more and more on giving than needing. At the point ***when one is able to give more than take, one is ready to marry.***¹⁹ This does not mean that the grown adult does not need wholesome emotional input and safety from emotional injury. The earlier on that one starts receiving emotional harm, the more his psychological foundation is damaged. Also, the more profound and impactful the damage, the more an older person may get seriously harmed. The body can only tolerate so much pain or fright. After its capacity is filled, it will defensively "short circuit," burying the unmanageable emotions beneath conscious awareness. They surface in other ways, or in aspects of life which the system associates with the original stimulus. The close adult relationship between spouses has them psychologically vulnerable to and dependent upon one another. To the extent that they each rely on each other for emotional goodness and safety, the violation is that much more injurious and traumatizing. In a psychologically destructive relationship, the measure of harm by an abusive or sadistic spouse can be enormous.

When a person stubs his toe, he screams angrily. His feeling is actually pain. Similarly, a person emotionally hurt may come out as angry, when in actuality, the cause is pain. If this pain is too enormous and frightening to be processed on the surface, one manifestation can be depression. The person evades or pulls away from one or more aspects of life, may not care about life or may take certain things too seriously. Sometimes the symptoms are selective, in that they may only appear in areas of life psychologically associated with the original trauma. The emotions may be covered or guised in many other possible ways; depending on the cause, the person's sensitivity level and psychological history. There can be emotional and physical symptoms. Some include: fatigue, headaches, rapid heart rate or breathing, forgetfulness, confusion, poor or unsustained concentration, approval-seeking, sleeping too little or too much, nightmares about disaster or danger, compulsiveness, defensive overreactions, inability to express feelings, denial of or being uncomfortable about having feelings, focus on the past or future and not on the reality of the here and now, obsession with being clean or perfect, apathy, promiscuity, attention-getting, underachieving, keeping busy to evade or escape unwanted feelings or responsibilities; and anxiety about rejection, intimacy, normal risk or things which constitute no objective cause for fear. Such people often wind up being critical of themselves or others, malcontent, coercive, controlling, manipulative, contrary, hostile, unable to receive or trust love or respect, nervous, unstable,

¹⁹ Sefer Alay Shor.

insecure, self-injuring, impossible to please, cynical, sad, and untrusting of close relationships or of people's motives.

When a person is subjected to such profound psychological harm, their lives cannot be near fully functional. Torah Counsellors are confident that Heaven considers such injuring *to be a profound act of theft by the perpetrator*, who steals the victims ability to have a fulfilling, complete and wholesome life; especially when the victim *can't help but continue such damage into a next generation*.

In the Counseling work, it is frequently seen that people who, in their private "heart of hearts" are terrified of closeness, commitment, vulnerability or more pain and disappointment, whether from a current abusing spouse or from a past spouse who ruined their ability to be close. It's like psychological circling.

The closer people are, the more obligation they have to be loving, gentle, considerate, trustworthy, supportive, accepting, pleasing and good. If they are not, the consequences of trespass are greater, deeper and more lasting.

15. The Serious Impact of Marital Problems or Emotional Abuse on the Victim's Subsequent Ability to Have a Close Relationship

Behaviours that violate the relationship tear the heart, sometimes in ways that can emotionally harm or kill the emotional life of the victim, who can, for example, become depressed, numb, bitter, or hateful of marriage or the opposite gender. Sooner or later, abusive "blindness" will emotionally injure a spouse and *push him or her, angrily and resentfully, away from the perpetrator*. Once that starts coming out, the marriage tends to spiral "downhill," and, more often than not, degenerates to a point where 1) the couple cannot stay married, 2) one or both become(s) vicious and spiteful, 3) one or both get numbed or resentful and the rest of their life is spent "going through motions" or living in "separate worlds" (if they stay together), and/or 4) the couple separates and one or both may never again be able to have a lasting and stable marriage because of how miserably the failed marriage "burned" him and/or her. Without deep psychotherapy, the personality may have become too damaged, jaded, angry, pessimistic and/or frightened to allow another serious, committed, healthy and well-chosen relationship into his and/or her life. To keep "psychologically safe," the person may remain altogether isolated, seek after futile or unattainable relationships, run from relationship to relationship, find a "comfortable" or "friend" relationship that never escalates to commitment, choose partners who they can abuse (taking their problems out on subsequent partners, or "I hurt you before you hurt me"), choose partners who give them abuse (getting abused is "normal, in my experience"), get into long and unstable "approach-avoidance" relationships (which frequently bounce between being close and being hostile) that never escalate to commitment; or choose partners who don't

seem frightening, threatening and demanding (e.g. someone who "needs them," or who is relatively docile; so they end up dissatisfied because the partner is not a "true" match - just a "safe" one). Many heart-rending examples of divorced singles or re-marrieds have been seen whose ability to have a man-woman relationship has been wrecked or crippled by a previous failed or intensely dysfunctional marriage. They are pained, untrusting, frightened, defensive, angry, resentful, insecure, cynical and/or self-sabotaging.

Then, there is psychological impact on children too. Amy had been divorced twice. Both marriages were rocky and psychologically beat and hurt Amy deeply. Both former husbands were selfish and did not earn a living. The first husband was fiscally irresponsible and only made half-hearted effort to make a living. The second tried a business that did not have "mazel" (luck from heaven). Neither of her former husbands had means, so Amy received no kesuba (maintenance) money nor child support. She had to struggle with a family on her own, and became mistrusting of men and highly sensitized to financial difficulty. When her daughter Bea graduated high school, Amy sent Bea to a college which offered a scholarship. Amy told taught her daughter to expect to be abandoned by men, to expect no support from a husband, and to expect that even if she married, she should expect, at some time or other, to be divorced and Bea would have to fend for herself. Therefore, Amy "had to" send Bea to college to learn a profession, so that the "inevitable" wreckage that was sure to come would not leave Bea in the tough straits that Amy was in. Amy's psychological message impacted against Bea's mate-search, view of men, capacity to trust, emotional security, expectations from marriage and modes of relating to men. [Notes: 1) identities are disguised and 2) this does not criticize women having a livelihood, if it has its own merit; without value judgement, "agenda" or psychological harm - the point here is the psychological situation, cost and damage - Bea was trained that marriages are doomed and inevitably die; she was conditioned to approach men and marriage with a defensive and negative mind-set, which is unhealthy and will block long-run bonding with a man.]

16. The Most Common Things That Escalate Troubles and Destroy Marriages

A major problem is lack of communication. In practical marriage counseling, the different stories given by the two sides would appear to be descriptions of people who never met each other and who don't know each other. A person in any strife with another has his/her own agenda, interests, subjective bias, pain, defenses and perceptions. When you hear one side without the other, the story is probably nowhere near true, valid, reliable or complete. It takes hard and good-faith work by a Counsellor and both spouses to get to even perceive an issue in a way that the couple can constructively and meaningfully agree on and work with (never mind to work further on and resolve!).

A serious and destructive problem is meddling or intrusion by parents or anyone who takes sides or provokes one or both spouses. **NB. Always show peace, calm and unity in front of all people, especially children, or anyone prone to interfere.** Keep your quarrels and tension private, except for your marriage Counsellor and rov²⁰. The only exceptions might be in cases of violence, abuse or danger; or disclosing the problem to the rare person who can be trusted to genuinely, two-sidedly and effectively contribute.

Another major problem in troubled marriages is the often spoken about but too-rarely worked on subject of midos. Nothing substantive is achieved in any personal growth or interpersonal improvement without major, attentive, ongoing and practical concentration on the destroying of bad personality traits and the significant building of good personality traits. Each person must learn to *make cheshbon hanefesh* [introspective accounting] *at least twice a day* (morning and night), as well as *whenever (s)he does anything to hurt someone or does any sin*, and must have a *rabbinical guide to know what to do, when and how to do it; and to keep objective, constructive and diligent.* (See *How to Make Cheshbon Hanefesh*, also in Module 4.)

A related problem is when one partner says, "I won't change until (s)he changes." A Counsellor needs to tell the person that (s)he has to maintain his/her own standards, and not to incur fault because the other makes mistakes. Two wrongs still don't make a right. Each must accept responsibility for his/her behaviour, its impact on the other and on the relationship. If the other is wrong, or destroying the marriage, let it be his/her problem. For resolution, each partner must be prepared to change behaviour and grow as an individual person. You should be concerned with your journey on the Torah road to righteousness on not worry about your partner's faults.

A major cause of marital trouble comes from absence of sufficient kavod (respect, honour and consideration) for one another. Chazal²¹ in Yevamos obligate a husband to give his wife more kavod than he gives himself and in Kidushin obligate a wife to give more honour to a husband than she gives to herself. When the Rambam codifies this into law (hilchos Ishus) he places the first obligation onto the husband to honour his wife. We understand from this that if a man gives his wife kavod, she will naturally respond by giving back kavod to him, and they will have a happy and peaceful life together.

²⁰ A particularly notable rabbi; a halachic decision-maker.

²¹ Chazal or Hazal is an acronym for the Hebrew "Hakhameinu Zikhronam Liv'rakha" ("Our Sages, may their memory be blessed"), is a general term that refers to all Jewish sages of the Mishna, Tosefta and Talmud eras, essentially from the times of the final 300 years of the Second Temple of Jerusalem until the 6th century CE. 28

17. The Manipulation and Control Drive in Relating - A Person's Neurotic Need to Control People and Outcomes

One of the most recurrent themes found in relationship problems is an attempt by one or both parties to control. The need or drive to control is generally deeply neurotic and defensive in its roots. The person so deeply needs that people and outcomes serve the person's agenda that the person is blinded to most other people, other factors or higher principles. Everything and everyone exists to serve the person's needs. The person judges everything by his/her ability to provide the goal or need. The person is generally a very clever, shrewd and aggressive manipulator; bent on determining how events turn out; and enormously subjective in interactions of every or any kind. Things that can't meet the need, can't be used self-servingly or won't achieve the goal are criticized, disparaged, discounted or discarded; even if this entails being rude, cruel, abusive, perverse or irresponsible. Since the person is generally highly insecure, the person is an "angel" with strangers or with people whom the individual needs. The polite and charming behaviour is a surface veneer and a very phoney act. In one's private life, the person will only be nice when something is needed and being nice will help get what the person wants. Otherwise, the person is quite satisfied being anywhere between selfishly negligent and a callously abusive destructive one-sided tyrant.

This all makes relating to such a person very difficult, painful and gut-wrenching. Since the person specifically judges things by the extent to which they satisfy their agenda, they have significant difficulty admitting that they are wrong, have psychological and midos shortcomings; hurt, break or abuse others; should feel remorse or have to change. Such people tend to be rigid. There is always reason for what they do, say, feel, want; and they can generally be persevering, ruthless and callous in the pursuit of their aims. Such people tend to be very bright, sometimes psychologically insightful and they "have all the answers." The problem is: when relating to someone else, the person's neuroses have negative impact outside of his/her private reality. In Torah Counselling this is experienced repeatedly; the difficulty, viciousness and pain that these people ongoingly bring to spouse, children and others.

If you are married to such a person, it is very difficult to relate to such a person. Such people either will not come for counseling or come ready to tell the Counsellor, of course, what should be the outcome (and the fault is with the spouse and Counsellor!). To make such a person become reasonable is very difficult, since he/she tends to have strong emotions and interests; and be so smart, blind and rigid. It is necessary to change "frames of reference." By changing frames of reference and invalidating the offender's destructive axioms and behaviour, the usefulness of that behaviour is hopefully cancelled. The person sees that his/her pattern no longer works. This is a very individual question, especially if the other partner has some

dysfunctions that predispose him/her to abuse or shortchange. Sometimes the technique is radical, sometimes subtle; depending on the situation and personalities. There are times when the partner is "unreachable" and that marriage will either remain as it is or terminate. When the partner is "reachable" (although it is usually a very slow and gradual process), we try to send the message that the control, abuse, irresponsibility and manipulation won't work. Preferably we show that such behaviour either is ignored (the last thing the person wants) or backfires (the person is better off without the behaviour). Such people generally have a very poor, if not broken, self-image; which goes back many years; and change requires therapy. Because so much is psychologically invested, such people tend to resist change. If the person will not seek help, the "victim" has to work on coping, based on the individual circumstances. In future installments, we will be bringing many of the techniques which have been found helpful in cases where it has been able to reach difficult spouses.

18. The Analogy Between a Seriously Troubled Marriage and a Hemorrhaging Surgery Patient

A troubled marriage is analogous to a hemorrhaging (bleed profusely) patient, especially when one or both spouses behaves destructively or demands instant results. "We want peace, love, fulfillment of needs, joy, satisfaction and all of our problems resolved by tomorrow!" The Counsellor needs to tell them that a doctor first has to stop the hemorrhaging and assure that he has a living patient before he can do fine-tuning surgery. A patient is lying on a surgery table and bleeding rapidly. The life (blood) is leaking out. The patient may need an organ repaired or some nerves reconnected, but if the life flows out, there is no need to heal a dead person's ailment. The person just gets buried. A badly injured marriage is comparable. If we don't stop the hemorrhage, the marriage will just be dead and buried, *chass vichalila* ("heaven forbid"). Let's stop the war and torture. When the marriage hemorrhage has stopped and we have a live patient, we'll go for fine-tuning and then Paradise! In the next three installments techniques are given and address how to tie down the techniques in practical application. But first, the couple must *re-learn how to treat each other*. When doing practical counseling, in some of the worst cases a Torah Counsellor worked with, the Counsellor actually told the couple that their marriage is in hemorrhage and that they have to stop the behaviours that could "kill the patient." *That is key to "stopping the hemorrhage" in the marriage*. The same way that a hemorrhaging patient will die without emergency treatment, a "hemorrhaging marriage" will die without emergency treatment. Expecting "fine tuning" (e.g. a fixed relationship, seeking need-fulfillment and love, satisfying each other and building a peaceful and happy future, etc.) is futile till the hemorrhage stops.

Another vital thing. Beg all disputing couples, *to shield the children totally from all tension, animosity and fighting*. This can be psychologically crippling

to the children. They may feel guilty, develop severe emotional problems and/or become unable to have a stable marriage when they grow up. Don't teach the children to hate their father or mother. If the marriage, Heaven forbid, becomes unreconcilable, just calmly and repeatedly say, "Your father/mother and I are not able to get along. You are not at all at fault so don't feel bad. You are good and your father/mother and I both love you."

Among Torah Counsellor's jobs are lessening anxiety and tension; "validating" each person; and providing secure emotional support that assures "light at the end of the tunnel," that "the patient will survive," *if both partners work* in good faith, willingly, gently, diligently, patiently and with a good attitude. The Counsellor has to be adaptive for individual cases and personalities; and make judgment calls about varying techniques, pacing or sequencing; especially since different personalities, scenarios, dynamics and complications apply in each individual case. One of the things that we find most gratifying when we do private counseling is achieving breakthrough where there had before been no hope.

There are some techniques which have been developed that have been instrumental in making breakthroughs. The next three articles feature several samples.

19. Practical Therapeutic Techniques for Stopping Marital Hemorrhaging

This installment is the first of three which deal with techniques for addressing seriously troubled man-woman relationships. Warning: some people come for counseling and hope the process automatically fixes their problem; none of these techniques work unless *both parties* make true commitment to work, even though this is a slow step-by-step gradual process. If either will not be *willingly committed to work and to be trustworthy according to Torah guidelines*, there will indeed be no hope. In other words, there must be clear drive in both; in spite of the present hardship, tension, suffering, frustration, antipathy and/or discouragement; to produce a workable relationship; and to honestly be in the "process" of restoring and building it, with courage, self-sacrifice (especially of ego, defenses, stubbornness and pride), unselfish two-sidedness and determination. If both are committed, consistent and loyal, prospects for success can rise dramatically.

Application of all of the coming samples, and my other techniques, require softness, calm, respect, honesty, discretion, drive for resolution and peace, seeing the relationship as bigger than self, patience, acceptance of responsibility for one's own obligations to the relationship, letting go of judging or demanding, having a "giving orientation," having a good and unselfish attitude, consistency, perseverance, empathy, adaptability, trustworthiness, a good and positive attitude, recognition of and substantive responsiveness to the other, and a drive to grow. When these elements are

not present, we work on developing them. Sometimes psychotherapy is a necessary part of eliminating blockages and making breakthrough. Typically, the couple will adapt these techniques a bit to make them work in their individual situation and for their personalities.

If one partner's behaviour has a brow-beating aspect, the other will say something that points it out. Often, the offending partner is not aware that every word has the impact of a baseball bat over the other's head. If the victim says, "You're baseball-batting me," the offender has to realize that the behaviour is abusive, and stop. If other people are present, be creative: e.g. hint by humming the tune of "Take Me Out To The Ballgame," or refer to something that looks like a bat or a stick, so that the other "gets the message" and exercises character strength, behaviour change and self-control.

If a behaviour comes from a psychological pattern or conditioned habit, tell the victim to point out calmly, softly and non-confrontationally that the other is falling into the old pattern or habit, and that this pattern has been the cause of the trouble. The person might softly say something like, "Do we want to continue or to change the troubles [or results, consequences, quality of life] that we've been having?" If you change the cause, you can change the effect.

Another thing the Counsellor can do to undo a confrontational relationship is to give projects in which the couple practice being allies or teammates with common purposes, interests or goals. It may pertain to the children, livelihood, spiritual projects, hobbies, dealing with sources of relationship trouble (e.g. provoking events, learning to give emotional support, midos development or dealing with meddling and instigating relatives) or adding "quality time" together.

20. Techniques for Handling Serious Problems in Marital Communicating

If a couple has mutually exclusive understandings, feelings or assumptions, try to concretize it by getting them to analyze the points in arguments. "Your view is A and mine is B." Then show them how their expectations or concepts lead to different or conflicting conclusions. This works to build more common language and to prioritize peace over individual positions. Teach them to apply this at home when practical issues and tense misunderstandings arise. Let's say a bride wants to spend shabos²² with her parents. The husband does not want to. He's uncomfortable there. Instead of screaming at each other, he asks, "Are you aware of how your parents treat me and how that makes me feel?" She answers. He evaluates whether she understands and empathizes. She asks, "Do you know what it means to a

²² Plural for Shabbat.

girl to not see her parents for shabos for so long?" He answers. She evaluates whether he understands and empathizes. They compromise.

Sometimes one or both parties (due to insecurity, pent-up anger or other cause) cannot speak honestly or expressively with the spouse. To undo tendencies to manipulation, lying, evasion, half-truth, full or partial omission, etc. have them work on discussing issues in terms of the truth, single common understanding, objective merits of a point, benefit of doubt, not knowing the other person's entire thinking or side of the story, not having all the facts, how each might think differently due to different background or personality, etc., to gradually train their minds to think more closely, similarly, co-operatively and sympathetically. Differences become "exercises" in finding common meaning, instead of fights. Even if they don't always understand things the same way, the couple learns to see the other's thinking process better; with less emotion, attack, criticizing, disparagement or value judgment. They respond by discussing how to make a resolution, compromise or satisfactory alternative. If they cannot come to a mutual understanding, tell the couple to say calmly and good-naturedly, "Let's put the subject aside for now and bring it up at our next counseling session." Tell them to have patience, learn to give in more, give each other benefit of doubt and to have rachmanus (compassion, mercy) for the other's feelings and side of the story. This alternative approach lets them avoid a fight, keep a civil and human atmosphere, and trust that the issue will be satisfactorily resolved.

There are cases when the couple fights when one or both will say something and it provokes the other (it "pushes the other's buttons"). The speaker does not have the discretion, awareness, adaptability, creativity, self-control or diversity to inhibit the destructive speech and use a positive alternative. When one or both express their feeling, make a statement, respond, etc., the result will be a blow-up, fight, insult, alienation, or some other negative consequence. To stop the pattern, tell the party/parties to say nothing. What the party would say will only be destructive. Tell the party to write it down: what the other did, what you would have liked to say, what your feelings were - whatever would be relevant. The person can achieve some non-destructive release in the meantime. At the next session, the person comes in with the paper and we discuss what the person would have liked to have said, what the probable result would have been, what result the person would have liked, and how it would be necessary to change what the person would need to say to achieve the result that would be desirable and constructive. If both partners participate in this problem, tell them both to write down what happened, what they felt and wanted to say, and to bring their papers in to the next session. They see clearly how their perceptions, impulses, needs, internal "wiring," sides of the story, assumptions, emotions, agendas and behavior are different; and more importantly, what kind of work they need to do to stop the destructive pattern of clashing and antagonism, to softly resolve issues and to build communication and a workable compatible relationship.

21. Practical Therapeutic Techniques for More Abusive Marital Scenarios

If one or both parties speak in a harsh, demeaning, nasty, judgmental or abusive tone, make several rules. The party/parties must address the other with softness, respect and self-control. The issue must be discussed in what is called "natural private." This means: in privacy that comes about in a natural way. For example, if a quarrel-issue come up at the table in front of children or relatives, the party who wants to insult, criticize, demand or fight must keep silent. If the potentially trouble-making person would angrily growl, "I wanna speak to you in private!" everyone there knows there is a fight in the works. The atmosphere is tense and confrontational. For children, this can be terrifying and psychologically destructive. If other adults witness differences, they may take sides or meddle, which will be destructive. There is no gain by going into private this way. This, in contrast, is what is call "disruptive private," which misses the point. Instead, later, (s)he quietly asks to speak in private, in a "natural" inconspicuous manner. They have true and constructive privacy.

Some couples can handle tension better than others. Those who can keep themselves controlled and constructive can go into private right away to discuss and resolve difficulties. For them, it can be useful to excuse themselves from other people to discuss the matter as soon as trouble starts to surface. In general, the more immediately you resolve an interpersonal or psychological problem, the better. Ideally, the couple should see the need to talk privately as compelling, but they are to excuse themselves from others and go into private to talk *if the delay will not be destructive*. If the couple's stepping away will cause the people around them to talk loshon hora (bad, evil), this can be considered destructive, since the Torah prohibits causing any others to sin.

Another related rule is that the upset partner must address the issue in the form of a question (not a statement, demand, attack or value judgment). The question allows the other to respond comfortably as (s)he wishes. The party cannot steamroll or force his/her view, anger or bitterness. The other must be free to respond to the question with the comfortable expectation that his/her side will be given equal weight and fairness. Make clear that **paining with words is a serious sin**, so the offender has no permission to do it; **and even a correct position is automatically wrong if it is presented in the form of a sin**. If the offending party presents him/herself properly, the "victim" must acknowledge and respond fairly. If the offending party's approach is wrong, the "victim" must say that this was an improper approach and then ignore the offender until making proper approach. The last thing the offender generally wants is to be ignored and the main thing that (s)he wants is to be acknowledged. This trains the offender to take away the abuse and trains the victim to stop assuming (s)he must always run, close-up or hide. Communication and trust can gradually be built.

In a case where an abusive partner has no interest in counseling or work on better relating or on growth, the one partner who comes in can be trained to stop responding in ways that "feed into" or tolerate the difficult partner's abusive pattern, and to prod the other to move in helpful directions. This can include building self-esteem, learning how behaviour may psychologically "trigger" the other, behaving in new ways which invalidate the other partner's assumptions, learning how to make the partner's patterns fail or backfire, making the abused partner more valuable or attractive in the abuser's eyes (to increase motivation for the abuser to work on the marriage), etc. The hope is that the abusive partner can be maneuvered into starting counseling also. Since such techniques are geared to intense, irrational and emotional scenarios, they must be individually custom tailored to the individual situation and personalities.

22. The Marriage Restoration Contract: Defining Each Partner's Responsibilities to Marital Resolution

In the previous three articles, we addressed techniques for building acknowledgement of and substantive response to a partner in a troubled marriage, as a key step in healing the relationship. Let's develop this more.

In all the sample cases cited in the previous installments, we have striven to concisely describe techniques for "stopping the hemorrhage" in a painful, tense, miserable relationship. It is "life and death" to the process to accept responsibility to what each owes to the relationship and its resolution, development or health. The relationship must be viewed as bigger and better than the individual's feelings. Those feelings become the responsibility of the other. Each will be responsible for the other's needs and feelings (as much as humanly possible); so there is no more intense drive to grab, control, expect, fight, demand or abuse. Among the biggest sources of sabotage, confrontation, failure, antipathy and alienation are: putting fault and responsibility on the other, judging, criticizing, demanding, negating the other as a person, always having exquisite and impenetrable justifying explanations for one's own destructive speech and behavior. It is only when each party decides to accept responsibility, to give, to work on self; to regard the other with benefit of doubt, compassion, respect, forgiving and leniency; to be "other oriented;" that lasting changes and improvements come.

Establish obligations and duties for each that address the needs, fears, hurt, insecurity and coming to terms with the other. Each must train him/herself to exert self-control and not act from impulse, to have an attitude of responsibility for his/her behavior and obligations (to not have a focus on the other's shortcomings or behavior), to see impact of behavior on the other, to develop concern over that impact when negative or sadistic, and to adjust accordingly immediately. Provide emotional support, show how the behaviour may stem from the person's upbringing (and therefore is not necessarily valid just because it exists, which can help against having so much emotional

investment in destructive behaviour and against hurting or fighting with a relationship partner), help the person release internalized destructive emotions in non-destructive ways, have the couple focus on the long-term and on the impact on children (or, for a single: on never finding a stable marriage with such thinking and behavior), show how behavior would self-sabotage with a different spouse (to show cause and effect in their behavior, which would remain the same even with another spouse, to lessen fault-finding, value judgment, criticism and malcontent with the spouse), etc. The keys are forming an attitude of responsibility and giving, acknowledgement of the other's reality (which can be different from the concept in one's own mind of the other) and substantive and mature response to the "real other." When both approach each other, and the relationship's problems, this way, the couple will start the "turnaround." If they keep at it faithfully, they will be the proverbial snowball that keeps getting bigger and better. Give your partner what he or she needs and asks for. Be willing to give in and to extend yourself. Hold back from anger or from hurting, frightening or neglecting your spouse. No one has any license to hurt another or to fail in his or her responsibilities to the other. Marriage is obligation to provide what the other needs. **It's a contract.**

23. Keys to Marriage: Giving and Giving-In

Jewish law prohibits causing damage. It is argued in the law codes whether one who will have major loss may save himself by causing another minor loss, if he pays for it. If A has a jug with \$1,000 honey and B has a jug with \$3 wine, and the honey jug springs a slow leak, can A say to B, "Spill out your wine, I will pay you and salvage my honey." Ramo²³ says²⁴ that some rishonim require that the owner of the cheap wine spill it out for the owner of the valuable honey, while others rule that the honey's owner has absolutely no right to damage the wine owner, even for pay (e.g. if the wine has sentimental value). Shulchan Oruch HaRav²⁵ resolves the impasse beautifully by writing²⁶ that a spiritual person will be stringent on himself and lenient on the other - the one in jeopardy of losing the honey should seek not to harm the owner of the wine, and the wine owner should seek to save the honey for its owner. The Jew cares about, and wants to do good unselfishly for, another Jew. See how you can apply this in your marriage.

²³ Moses Isserles, also spelled Moshe Isserlis, (February 22, 1520 – May 11, 1572, was an eminent Ashkenazic rabbi, talmudist, and posek, renowned for his fundamental work of Halakha (Jewish law), entitled ha-Mapah (lit., "the tablecloth"), an inline commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (lit. "the set table"), upon which his "great reputation as a halakist and codifier rests chiefly." He is also well known for his Darkhei Moshe commentary on the Tur. Isserles is also referred to as the Rema, (or Remo, Ramu, Rama), the Hebrew acronym for Rabbi Moses Isserles.

²⁴ Choshen Mishpat 264:5.

²⁵ The Shulchan Aruch HaRav ("Code of Jewish Law by the Rabbi") is a codification of halakha by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, known during his lifetime as HaRav ("The Rabbi") and as the first Rebbe of Chabad.

²⁶ Hilchos Shi'aila Uschirus ViChasima, 6.

It is crucial to keep in mind both the qualitative and quantitative. I may have 47 peashooter reasons for my side and you may have one atom bomb reason for your side. You always need "seichel (sensible intellect)." Reason out, case by case, a fair, considerate, open-minded, good-faith, unselfish and halachic resolution. Also, you always need to objectively weigh the value of the issue *in the perceptions and feelings of the other person*. The resolution must promote elimination of hurt and establishment of long-run peace. *Maturity means contentment with less than all you want and happiness with all you have.*

Example of a successfully married chasidic couple. The wife comes into his business one day each week to do typing and correspondence. He drives the children each time they need to be taken somewhere or picked up. They both do things to extend themselves beyond their ideal range of activities to practice "alliance." They both do so in a spirit of contribution to the happy, healthy and peaceful operation of their home, marriage and family. They both are very friendly and pleasant people with good hearts who came from good homes. He did something very wise, which will only work when both partners are decent, nice and reasonably mature individuals. When he got engaged, he told his wife, "I'll make you a deal. Let's never fight. You are always going to be right." At the beginning of the marriage, he truly treated her like a queen who could do no wrong. After a while she started feeling bad and she complained to him, "I don't want to be always right! Will you please be right half of the time!" She decided on her own that a relationship means making the other happy, knowing how to give in and choosing someone who feels that way about you too. For about twenty two years, now, this couple has not ever fought. One always tells the other to have his or her way, and everything is done with calm and a smile. By the way, each of their children, without exception, has grown up (blee ayin hora) to be sweet, cheerful, friendly, polite, well-adjusted and pleasant. This is not a story, this is a real family. They are consistent, successful and have a lovely conduct. It's all true.

Whenever you are mad at someone, *do something good for the person right away*. Force yourself. Give a blessing, do a favour or kindness, make a peace overture. Do something right away and make strong, good natured moves to work to break the yaitzer hora, emotion or bad mida. ***Doing acts of love will break hate and it is a mitzva to do so.***²⁷ Don't stop yourself by saying, "The other person isn't doing as much. The other person isn't being big about it." You've got your job to do and he has his. ***Your job is to be Torah-loyal, peaceful, pleasant and a set-apart to YHWH.*** This is an area which requires considerable judgment, mutual good faith, a good attitude, sensitivity and reasonable adaptation to the individual personalities and situations involved. The "acid tests" are: * optimal practical, loving and healthy functioning of the family and * promotion of greatest, fullest ongoing peace in the marriage.

²⁷ Bava Metzia 32b.

24. Back to Basics - Where Many Marriages Go Wrong

We often "blow it" in life in matters that we know. If only we would constantly review, remind and apply what we know, we would keep our lives out of trouble and keep them in good shape. It repeatedly amazes us how people come to us for counseling and some of their major life or relationship difficulties come from *violation or omission of basics*. For example, ***the Torah openly prohibits causing pain with words, begrudging, vengeance, embarrassing, causing any form of tangible harm*** (e.g. bodily injury or damaging property or reputation) ***or intangible harm*** (e.g. waking from sleep, flattering, wasting a person's time).

If you ask any Jewish five year old to tell you about loving your fellow as yourself, he or she would get all animated and (in five year old frames of reference) tell you all about it (share your cookies, say "I'm sorry" and make-up, let David and Joel play with your toys). When a spouse emotionally abuses a spouse, it stuns them when you ask them about "*Love your fellow as yourself*" with his/her spouse. They can intellectualize about how Rabbi Akiva calls it ***the must fundamental principle of the Torah***²⁸ or how Hillel says that the entire Torah is commentary on ***not violating this***²⁹. But to apply "love your fellow" to not being sadistic to their spouse? To use modern language: something's missing in the "program." Emotional connected-ness to practical application seems to be hoping for too much. Especially when we consider that the Gemora³⁰ says we see someone before marriage to make sure one can fulfill "Love your fellow as yourself" with that person. When you went through a technical little procedure called your "wedding," you were called "rayim ahoovim [close friends who love each other]." ***Behaving with love applies to the one you married!*** Live and learn! It's your choice: do you want a five year old to fulfill YHWH's will at his level better than you have to at your level?

Another striking example is "derech erez kadmo li'Torah" [civil, thoughtful, polite behaviour precedes Torah,].³¹ Ask audiences or people who come in for counseling, ***"If derech erez comes before Torah, how can someone who acts without derech erez be a Torah person?"*** This gets the self-proclaimed believer thinking. The contradiction sinks in. If (s)he acts without the prerequisite for Torah, what does the pretense of being a Torah-observant person make the perpetrator? A phoney? A bum? A Torah person for sure not. The bubble will burst! ***If the person has been anguishing a spouse or fighting, how does that stack up against full-time derech erez as a prerequisite for being human and Torah-true?*** You see the truth will set you free!

²⁸ Yerushalmi Nedarim 9.

²⁹ Shabos 31a.

³⁰ Kidushin 41a.

³¹ Midrash Vayikra Raba.

The Vilna Gaon³² says³³ that ***the essence of life is working on midos every moment and that everyone who is not working on midos at any moment is wasting life***. People get so caught up in themselves, their self-importance, their inescapably important pursuits. Little do most realize that every moment that one is not smashing bad midos and elevating spiritually, *it is all a waste*. ***When one spends time and energy lording over or terrorizing or disappointing a spouse, one is in full time waste of life***. How can one who wastes life or destroys a spouse be too important? One needs a good foundation to be a good person and for each moment of life to be good. That's good midos.

Always judge favourably³⁴. Give benefit of doubt and see the positive. Rabbi Yitzchok Levi of Barditchev³⁵ ***always saw the positive in everyone***. If a Jew smoked on shabbos, knowing it was a serious violation of kindling a fire, he said that this Jew was honest. When someone comes late for minyan (ten men coming together to worship), see that he answers to YHWH, overcoming obstacles when delayed. If you see something in a negative light, say "I don't know all the facts." If you ever see anything in your spouse that you don't like, *always look for the positive*. If you always look: for something positive, for things to like, for a good aspect to appreciate, to not take him/her/each other for granted, to give to and not to take from; it will change your outlook, make *you a happier and more pleasant person*, and impact the quality and happiness of your marriage dramatically.

For any marriage to stand a chance, both spouses must be able to do the four steps of tshuva (repentance for sins and negative actions: 1) feel sincere remorse, 2) admit what you did, 3) make practical restitution and 4) appease - ask your Counsellor Rabbi for case by case guidance). Both must be experts at the arts of forgiving, overlooking, accepting, forgetting negatives and moving constructively forward.

³² Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman Kremer, known as the Vilna Gaon (Yiddish: וואָגאָנ רעגלייו רעד) or Elijah of Vilna, or by his Hebrew acronym Gra ("Gaon Rabbenu Eliyahu") or Elijah Ben Solomon, (Vilnius April 23, 1720 – Vilnius October 9, 1797), was a Talmudist, halakhist, and the foremost leader of mitnagdic (non-hasidic) Jewry of the past few centuries. He is commonly referred to in Hebrew as ha-Gaon he-Chasid mi-Vilna, "the saintly genius from Vilnius."

³³ Evven Shlaima 1.

³⁴ Pirkei Avos, chapter one.

³⁵ Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev (1740–1809), also known as the Berdichever, was a Hasidic leader. He was the rabbi of Ryczywół, Żelechów, Pinsk and Berdychiv, for which he is best known. He was one of the main disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch, and of his disciple Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg, whom he succeeded as rabbi of Ryczywół. Rabbi Levi was known as the "defense attorney" for the Jewish people, because it was believed that he could intercede on their behalf before God. Known for his compassion for every Jew, he was therefore one of the most beloved leaders of Eastern European Jewry. He authored the Hasidic classic Kedushas Levi, which is a commentary on many Jewish religious books and laws, and is arranged according to the weekly Torah portion. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov called him the Peér (glory) of Israel.

Then, there is the famous midrash³⁶, "**Gadol hashalom**," the greatest thing in human relations is peace, related to this are

- 1) the Chazal³⁷ which says, "**The only vessel which can contain blessing is peace**,"
- 2) the verse which says [Prov 3:17, The Torah's] "**ways are pleasant and all of its paths are peace**,"
- 3) To have peace in a marriage, **the man must honour his wife more than he honours himself**³⁸ and
- 4) the Shmoneh Esray's prayer for peace "**Sim Shalom**" that YHWH gave us the "**Torah of life and the love of kindness**."

We see that the real test for all interpersonal behaviour is its **being pleasant, respectful and peaceful; its being governed by the Torah**; and its mode of practice being ongoing kindness. You can have every material blessing, but without peace you have nothing, and peace has the value of all other blessings combined³⁹. **Unless there is peace, there is no blessing and no Torah** and, by lacking the greatest thing in interpersonal behaviour, the main point is missed. After all, there is another basic. The Talmud (Kesubos 61a) says that a marriage is for life [family and happiness], and not for pain. It's as if to say that the Torah considers spouses to be instruments for each other's happiness and well-being... and never otherwise. Regarding peace in the marriage context, Chazal⁴⁰ say, "Whoever makes peace in his home is as one who made peace between each Jew and every other Jew." The greatness of this speaks for itself.

25. Setting Priorities - Your Spouse and Children Are the Highest after YHWH

"Olam chesed yiboneh" [the world is built by active lovingkindness, Psalm 89:2-3. When one tears apart a spouse, is cruel or demanding, that also is the opposite of another basic: to be a paragon and factory of active lovingkindness. In Jewish law there is a principle of "kedima" [priorities]. In the laws of charity, yibum⁴¹ and inheritance, there are prescribed orders in which priorities are set down. Likewise, in regard to chesed there are priorities. Generally, in all of these areas, the closer one is related to you, the higher the priority. If you can't give kindness to everyone who might ask it of you, the closer the person is, the higher the priority. Till you satisfy the needs of your spouse and children, you do not go elsewhere to be a kind person (or else your goal is selfish honour and acclaim, not to be truly good and kind).

³⁶ Beraishis Raba.

³⁷ Mishna Uktzin, Bamidbar Raba.

³⁸ Yevomos 62a.

³⁹ Rashi, Leviticus 26:6.

⁴⁰ Avos DeRebi Noson 28.

⁴¹ If a married man dies childless the widow is to marry her dead husband's brother. This practice is known as Yibum.

Further, there are "kedimos" (priority levels) in many places in Jewish law. For instance, in the laws to whom you give tzadaka (charity/gifts/blessings) and chesed (lovingkindness) to, in the laws of inheritance and yibum, there are priority orders which say that person A comes first, person B comes second, person C comes third, etc. For instance, if I don't have enough time to do kindness for two or more people who need me, if I don't have enough money to give charity to everyone who asks it of me, the halacha (the way to do it) gives the priority order by person or category of person. In general, the closer a person is to you, the higher the priority. The closer a person is to you; the more you owe kind, sweet, respectful, compassionate, supportive, pleasing and generous behaviour to that person. There is no one closer than one's spouse and children. The obligation to be good is greatest to your immediate family. If one is good to the people on the street and neglectful or bad to one's family, **the person has no idea of Torah**. You marry to give to a person. The completion of the marriage ceremony is "nesuin." The inner meaning of "nesuin" is to accept active responsibility on behalf of the person you marry and the children who will come from that union. To not be actively responsible on behalf of the good of one's spouse and children is to have no idea of what being married means. Yet, some people act like saints in public and act like monsters and tyrants in private. Ongoingly do things that make your spouse know clearly and securely that he/she is the most important person in the world. Treat your spouse and children as your highest priority and never take them for granted. Sefer HaChinuch says that the laws of Shana Rishona (first year of marriage) are designed to fill your mind with consciousness of your spouse. Chazal⁴² say that love comes from active and constant bestowal of good on another. You love the one to whom you give (Michtav Mi'Eliyahu). The closer people are to you, the higher they are on the priority scale. The more that you give to them, the more you will love them. To be amazingly and ongoingly kind to a spouse and children is to literally "build the world." If after your family is provided for (physically, spiritually and emotionally) you still have time and ability, be kind to the world. For questions on sequencing and priorities, contact your Rabbi or the Hebraic Teaching Group (HTG) Beit Din.

Your spouse and children are the ones to whom you owe the most loving, polite and considerate, midos-dik, generously kind treatment in the whole world. You don't proceed to anyone else until your obligations to them have been satisfied. If you can't get along sweetly and peacefully with your nearest and dearest, what does your act with others really mean? Do you want to build or destroy the world?

26. Treating your Spouse or Child for the Sake of Ego vs. for the Sake of Heaven

Chapter two of Pirkei Avos tells us, "Do everything for the sake of Heaven." When one is filled with ego (whether for psychological or midos reasons) and

⁴² Derech Eretz Zuta 2.

is oriented towards self, this can be a daunting demand. When one has humility, this is not a daunting demand. True humility is achieved when one's actions are done because it is the will and wisdom of YHWH, as conveyed by those who keep the Torah heritage which comes from Sinai. One should always do Torah learning for the sake of Heaven but if one can't do so with pure intentions, let one start doing Torah with less-than-perfect intentions. Over time, by consistently doing, one's intentions will gradually improve until the point at which one comes to doing with pure intention for the sake of Heaven.

The extent to which you learn Torah and do good deeds for the sake of Heaven, you can gauge how humble, and therefore how spiritually alive, you are. If you think you are acting for the sake of Heaven, test by asking: ***does it ever lead you to a sin or is it ever at someone else's expense?*** Do you pray with such noisy devotion that the next person can't concentrate? Are you fund-raising for a noble cause and cheating to get the money? Are you driven to do a mitzva and, in doing it, you make your spouse or child suffer?

There is a Talmudic rule (Suka 26a) which says, "one who is engaged in a mitzva is exempt from another mitzva." When one is occupied with a mitzva, one must be able to concentrate on it and fulfill it completely and properly. If one is pulled from one thing to another, nothing would ever get done, never mind completely or properly. However, if I am doing a mitzva and another mitzva comes to me, I generally consider myself exempt from the second so that I may complete the first mitzva effectively and correctly. Let's say the Shabbat is coming and I know I can do no work... if your spouse or child needs you on Shabbat, they become your first mitzva. Knowing how to differentiate and to prioritize is central to acting for the sake of Heaven, and to acting according to *Heaven's will and priorities*. Hurting any Torah-covenant believer (feelings, property, health, anything) is a grave sin. Many people pretend for the public to be saints and think nothing of repeatedly and sinfully neglecting or anguishing their families.

Acting for the sake of Heaven never entails a sin in its wake. A sin for the sake of a mitzva remains a sin⁴³. If you truly act for the sake of Heaven, violating the will of Heaven never is a means for achieving your goal. Heaven wants you to spare yourself the violation and is not interested in any "service" with any violation. Such "service" is for an emotional or ego need, not for Heaven's will. This is opposing to Torah. Humility, spirituality or holiness service of YHWH is to be pure and to be on His terms. *The Torah's ways are sweet and peaceful* (Prov 3:17), even for one's spouse and children! Act so as to consistently bring good to the people in your life (with no bad "side effects"), especially to those who are closest. When done with YHWH's priorities, and the Torah's sweet and peaceful ways, then your behaviour becomes true service of Heaven.

⁴³ Suka 30a.

27. Anger and Jewish Marriage are Mutually Exclusive

Every moment when one is possessed by anger, the person has lost control of himself and his reason. The angry person loses his/her humanity and (s)he loses his/her attachment to the capacity to live in the spiritual domain that differentiates the human species from the animal. What is more scary is *"A person is recognized [for who he really is] by three things: **how he is when he is drunk, how he spends his money and how he is when angry.**"*⁴⁴ If a person remains mild and he still behaves like a human when angry, this truly is a "quality-person." If he behaves in an uncontrolled, cruel, furious, destructive manner when angry, he is unlikely to be a genuinely good person.

When angry, one has given up his/her attachment to the purpose for which one is alive on earth. While having the characteristics of the animal and angel, ***the human's purpose is choosing to live as a spiritual and growing entity at all times***; with reason, ***self-control and the instruction of the Torah governing all aspects of life***. Because one has relinquished his/her attachment to ongoing spiritual life and growth, (s)he has separated him/herself from the ultimate source of life, YHWH. The Talmud in Tractate Nedarim tells us (22a), *"The angry person is overtaken by every form of **gehenom** (hell);... (22b) the angry person considers G-d unimportant... he forgets wisdom and increases in stupidity."* The Talmud (Kidushin 41a) teaches that there is nothing left for the angry person but the anger itself (losing health, relationships, etc.).

Anger is serious. A psychologist who advocates "healthy anger" (except holy anger) is sending you and himself into war with YHWH and is setting you up for self-betrayal and isolation from people. Anger is an uncontrollable expression of, and preoccupation with, your own self-importance and indignation at having had your toe stepped on. By definition, it is totally constituted of arrogant self-indulgent components that are antithetical to what is human, never mind divine.

The Talmud (Shabos 105b) equates anger with the sin of idol worship. Idol worship is one of the three sins that is so evil that ***the Torah demands that an Israelite die rather than violate it*** (the other two are 1) murder and 2) prohibited relations [i.e. incest/adultery]). Why? When one serves or worships a deity, one attributes belief in the existence, reality, dominion, power and authority of that entity. When one loses one's temper, one becomes totally enslaved, overwhelmed and overpowered by the emotion of anger. This means that this raging emotion is the authority, the power and the dominion that the angry person serves. It has the reality and existence that authorizes it to domineer and control him/her. Then, the will and the dominion and the authority and the reality of the one true YHWH is negated within the angry person. The Torah says clearly and unequivocally (Deut

⁴⁴ Eruvin 65b.

4:35), "You have been shown in order to know that YHWH is Elohim, there is nothing else besides Him." The Torah is absolute. Nothing - with no exceptions - has real, meaningful or lasting existence, and authority, except YHWH. In the spiritual, closeness is measured by similarity. The closest hope that any physical being has to ultimate, meaningful and lasting existence is optimum closeness and similarity to YHWH: His spiritual essence, qualities and imperatives. For an Israelite this means **total and loyal observance of the entire Torah**, including subjugation of intense, selfish, immature or angry emotions.

28. Practical Techniques for Stifling and Controlling Anger in Yourself

In a case where a spouse is about to explode or get vicious, imagine that the Chafetz Chayim⁴⁵ (or your rabbi, or posaik⁴⁶, or any tzadik⁴⁷ for whom you have awe and respect, or your boss at work, or your next door neighbor who you always try to impress) is there in the room seeing every move you make. When Yosef HaTzadik was approached by his employer's wife, he ran away (Gen 39:12). He saved himself from sin by seeing the image of his holy father. By seeing Yaakov's image in his mind as if his father was there, Yosef came under control immediately, and effectively saved himself from sin. It is in the merit of this that he came to be called "Yosef HaTzadik."

One person had powerful, driving and intrusive yaitzer hora (evil inclination). He used the technique of agreeing with himself to commit the sin *after* a delay which would allow him to forget about it. He became very creative at "brainwashing" himself and he avoided sinning repeatedly. He told himself, "OK, I'll give in to myself *but* now it's almost time to doven. How can I pray to my Creator with my prayer stained with sin? Let me pray first, and then I'll [do the sin] after the minyan." "Today is: Shabbat, a day of extra Heavenly mercy; or Yom Tov, a day of holiness - how can I do this on such a special day?"

"OK, I'll do the sin BUT today has been such a good day for me. Why should I ruin it? I'll do it tomorrow."

⁴⁵ The "Sefer Chafetz Chaim" (or Chofetz Chaim or Hafetz Hayim) (trans. Desirer of Life) is the magnum opus of Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, who later became known simply as The Chofetz Chaim. The book deals with the Jewish ethics and laws of speech, and is considered the authoritative source on the subject.

⁴⁶ Posek is the term in Jewish law for "decider"—a legal scholar who decides the Halakha in cases of law where previous authorities are inconclusive or in those situations where no halakhic precedent exists. I.e. HTG's Beit Din.

⁴⁷ Tzadik/Zadik/Sadiq [tsa' dik] ("righteous one", pl. tzadikim) is a title given to personalities in Jewish tradition considered righteous, such as Biblical figures and later spiritual masters. The root of the word şadiq, is ş-d-q (צדק tzedek), which means "justice" or "righteousness", also the root of tzedakah ('charity', literally 'righteousness'). The feminine term for a righteous person is tzadeikas.

"OK, I'll do the sin BUT I'm tired now. I'll rest for a while and do it when I wake up."

"OK, I'll do the sin BUT I first have to [speak to (so and so), do (a chore), make a phone call]. I'll do it afterwards."

"OK, I'll do the sin BUT now I'm with [my wife, business associates, neighbours, children]. How could I be a such a desecrator of the Name YHWH? I'll do it later when I'm in a different place."

"OK, I'll do the sin BUT I didn't ask my rabbi yet if the halacha permits this [explosion, abuse, sin]. Before I do something, I always have to consult anyway. I'll wait until I ask my rabbi and hear what he says to do first."

"OK, I'll do the sin but I need exercise for my health. I'll go for a walk first and do the sin later."

He used this technique effectively and perseveringly and just about never did the sin.

Repeatedly read Psalm 131 (lo govah leebi). It has only three verses and has power to nullify a yaitzer hora. If you don't know Hebrew, learn this so that you can say it with understanding and concentration. In essence, King David reports how he never allowed his heart, eyes or deeds to succumb to bad things. Be careful to pronounce the "mapik heh" in the word "govaH" (a "mapik heh" is when heh [corresponding to "H"] 1) is the last letter in a word, 2) has a dot in it and 3) has a vowel - in such a case, the vowel is pronounced first and the "h" consonant sound is pronounced AFTER the vowel sound).

Read the "Shema" with extreme destiny and with awareness that this life is brief and fleeting, with correct pronunciation (e.g. the "mapik heh" in the word "yevulaH;" and making sure to separate every word and never slurring words together).

One man felt a powerful impulse to become angry and abusive at his wife. The Gemara teaches to ridicule a yaitzer hora⁴⁸. He pictured in his mind a big dumb gorilla, with his own face, holding a banana. Instead of blowing up, he giggled at the silly thought of his acting like a monkey, and the impulse was over.

When calm, consider your behaviour. Ask yourself, "Do I want to act like a [tyrant, beast, warrior, maniac, whatever]?" When an impulse comes to blow up, abuse, lose control, go into rage, be vicious or callous, remember how you answered, **"No, I don't want to act like a..."**. You don't want to see

⁴⁸ Sota 43a.

yourself in a negative way, nor to treat anyone in a negative way. You want to do what is right. You are "Tzelem Elokim (the Image of Elohim)" and so is every other Israelite. You want to see yourself, your behaviour and your spouse in a positive, consistently favourable way. You want to see yourself and your spouse as Godly.

29. YHWH Loves and Rewards Sacrificing to Love a Spouse and to Never Be Angry

Being married means ongoing responsibility to a spouse and children. Therefore, being marriageable means that you are able to unselfishly and steadily deliver what you are responsible for, even when life is stressful or painful. A good test in this is: when you are suffering or pressured, can you still be spontaneously concerned about another person? Even if you can't be your fully loving and giving self, you can say, with softness, control and consideration, "Right now I'm [upset, in pain, anxious, nervous, etc.] and I can't give you the [attention, courtesy, time, respect, answer, etc.] that you deserve. It is no fault of yours and I do not want to take my troubles out on you. I don't want to hurt or shortchange you. Give me some time to work myself out and I'll talk to you pleasantly and responsively later." When you're married, having problems is no excuse to withhold what you are responsible for...no excuse to ever stop being an "us."

The mitzva to "love your fellow Torah-observant Israelite as yourself" applies to your spouse⁴⁹. It may seem obvious, but there are plenty of people who are kind and loving to strangers but forget to be kind and loving with their family, where the obligation is greatest. To love one's fellow believer in covenant, a person must be very careful never to grow angry at others; for when a person is angry at others he not only feels no love for them, but he may even hate them and wish them harm⁵⁰. **The Torah forbids hate** (Lev 19:17) **and fighting** (Num 17:5 (you do not fight, YHWH will do the judgment)). Rambam⁵¹ writes that the mitzva to love one's fellow Israelite includes praising and honouring the person as much as you wish that others do so for you. How much more so should this apply to your treatment of the person one is married to! People make the mistake of saying "I will love and then I will give." Love comes only to those who say "I will give and then I will love." Happiness in marriage only comes when both spouses give on behalf of the good of the other (Michtav Mi'Eliyahu). When spouses love each other, YHWH loves them.

In the Torah portion Vayikra, the Torah describes the sacrifices that atone for an individual's sin. In most cases, the Torah says "When a person [odm] brings a sacrifice...". In one case, the Torah says, "When a soul [nefesh] brings a sacrifice...". Why the change this one time? Why in only one specific

⁴⁹ Kidushin 41a.

⁵⁰ Sefer Erech Apayim.

⁵¹ Hilchos Dayos 6:3.

case does the Torah see fit to refer to a nefesh? When the Torah changes to the word "nefesh," the Torah is discussing the flour offering. If a rich person sins, his offering is to be from a large animal [e.g. cattle] which is quite expensive. If a person is in the middle class, he brings two birds, a smaller expense. If a person is a pauper, he brings a handful of flour as his sacrifice, a relatively tiny expense. A rich person thinks nothing of spending money. For him, it flows like water. The middle class person can live with the smaller expense of his two birds. The impoverished person does not have money for bare necessities. Even though a handful of flour is very cheap for everybody else, any expense, even for a handful of flour, is a sacrifice. When the impoverished person brings his flour offering, he is sacrificing his very soul for YHWH. To show that this is the most precious sacrifice, to YHWH, to acknowledge that the pauper is sacrificing his own soul, the Torah says, "When a soul brings a sacrifice...[the pauper will bring it from flour]."

Similarly, any fulfillment of YHWH's will, which comes with our sacrifice, is dear to YHWH. YHWH very much wants spouses to love, respect and be peaceful and pleasing with each other. ***If anger, arguing, nagging, paining, fighting, abusing, or any other violation of YHWH's will and behaviour standards, is a powerful temptation for you, and you struggle down to your very soul, and sacrifice and extend yourself, for the sake of doing YHWH's will, you are dear and precious to YHWH.*** Eradicating fights and building love will enable you to proceed along the road to progressively achieving, more and more successfully, the will of YHWH, and of making yourself more dear, beloved and precious to Him.

30. Happiness Therapy for Your Marriage

Marital troubles come in many "flavours" to suit every individual "taste" including: * disrespect, * not keeping one's word, * being late, especially if repeatedly, * screaming, * criticizing, * condescending, * insulting, * embarrassing, especially in front of other people, * verbal attacking, especially in front of other people, * not attributing weight or importance to a partner's feelings or ideas (lack of empathy or care, "psychological blindness"), * withholding affection or supportiveness * not helping when the other is busy or pressured * being unreliable, inconsistent, untrustworthy or unstable, * failure to listen or to substantively respond, * failure to acknowledge and appreciate, * doing nice things for strangers which one does not do for a spouse and * failure to do things that your partner requests, even if with exquisite excuses for disappointing, hurting or rejecting your partner.

Marriage is the art of making your spouse into the most important person in the world - and making your partner know it. In Pirkei Avos, Rabbi Akiva tells us that it was a great act of love that YHWH made us in his image. It was a "chiba yesaira" (extra love) *that He let us know it*. Don't assume that your partner knows that you consider him or her valued, cherished or important.

Make it known constantly. This is the opposite of taking or winning. Marriage is giving and letting each other win. This requires all of the opposite of those things listed above. Keep your word. Communicate, listen, respond substantively and act according to the will and wishes of your partner. *Constantly and sincerely, give compliments, express appreciation, acknowledge what your partner wishes and feels with words, deeds and a pleasant attitude* (as long as there is no violation of Jewish law thereby).

Even a healthy marriage can have a "bump in the road." Here is an example of adding cheer to "turn the lemon into lemonade." A friend visited very good friend of his on Chol HaMoed⁵² of Passover. His wife, usually a cheerful and humour-filled person, was grumpy over the holiday's prohibition of most vegetables. Frustration was coming out. "What's a Pesach meal? A slab of chicken with potato kugel, potato pancake, fried potatoes, mashed potatoes and a side order of potato salad!"

The friend said to her, "I'll tell you what. We'll change the name of the season from zman chairusainu [the time of our liberation] to zman potatosainu [the time of our potatoes]." She chuckled. He told her husband quietly that if she gets grouchy about potatoes, remind her of "zman potatosainu." Every time he or one of the children mentioned it, she laughed harder and louder. By the end of Yom Tov, she was, herself, saying "zman potatosainu" with a hearty laugh.

The Vilna Gaon said that you can take every letter of the alef-beit and find it combined in the Torah with every other letter, with one exception: gimme! and tess, the letters of the Hebrew word "get." YHWH, in His Torah, never wrote together the letters of the word in His language for "divorce;" the one thing He wants His Torah totally *not associated* with. Think about that. The Torah mentions idolatry and every sin, but not divorce! Do you want a happy marriage? Rather than answering with cheap grandiose words, answer with actions, which speaks louder than words: shielding your partner from hurt of every kind; giving practical and true love, civil behaviour, respect, appreciation, humility, midos, kindness, sweetness, a smile, supportiveness, pleasantness, happiness and peace in your marriage and immediate family. The Gaon understood how much YHWH is saddened by divorce. From this: learn how happy He is when your marriage flourishes! If something would make your partner or marriage unhappy, try to do the opposite. As Rambam writes: to break a bad trait or behaviour, go to the opposite extreme. Who wants a miserable or unworkable extreme? What's better than a happy extreme? If you disappoint your partner, struggle to be reliable and punctual. If you verbally hurt your spouse; become supportive, comforting and encouraging. Instead of arguing, give in. Become more helpful, warm and considerate in practical daily life. Turn negatives to positives. Such a policy will make both of you happy!

⁵² Chol Hamoed refers to the "intermediate period" of the festivals of Passover and Sukkot.

31. Key to Peace: Spouses Honoring Each Other

Marital peace depends on reciprocal kavod. When Queen Esther came to King Achashverosh, he said that whatever she wanted, up to half his empire, would be given to her to satisfy her request (Esther 5:6 & 7:2). Consider that here we have a rough idolatrous king who offered his wife up to half of a 127-country empire just to make her happy. Torah-observant spouses aren't asked to give half of Achashverosh's Empire. But, when Torah-observant spouses relate to each other, shall they be outdone by the ancient Persians? How much more so should Torah-observant Israelites want to do favours, kindnesses and displays of kavod for the person they are married to? Shall they not provide what their partner requests? If Achashverosh can respect his Jewish spouse, can you not, to the person you live with day in and day out?

"What the person wants, that is his honor." (Yerushalmi Pay'a 1:1; Sefer Chasidim, section 152). Kavod (honour) is defined by the will of the other. In relating, it is imperative to respond to the other person in practical terms, based on the *other's will, needs and feelings*. There is **no room for projecting or imposing your perceptions or taste onto the other person**. This is utmost contempt and will deteriorate the relationship. Your definition of honour may actually hurt or offend the person. GIVE the person what (s)he wants; DO for the person what (s)he wants; PLEASE the person steadily, voluntarily, caringly and cheerfully. That is giving kavod, if (and these are important qualifications) there is no disparaging aspect (even if the person agrees to be disparaged) and if there is no violation of Torah.

"Let the honor of your companion be as dear to you as your own." (Pirkei Avos, chapter two.) Just as you are sensitive about your kavod, your feelings, the regard people have of you, so is everybody else also. Treat the other person's kavod as if it is precious, with the same sensitivity, consideration, value and importance that you would wish your kavod to be treated with.

"Who is honoured? The one who flees from honour." It is not enough to merely offer kavod in a manner of: "I'll give you some if you'll give me some." When you show any pursuit of kavod for yourself, that undoes the credibility of your seeming offer of kavod (which turns out to be false and self-serving). This is effective only when you've assimilated giving kavod to the point where you sincerely evade and flee from kavod. This demonstrates that your offer of kavod to the other is authentic and trustworthy. The human nature response is to feel kavod for he who offers it unconditionally and fully. Your obvious, exclusive, pure, sincere concern is for me and my welfare, my dignity, my feelings. To the extent that this is genuine; this evokes warmth, admiration, security, respect. The person who tries to make himself high, YHWH lowers; tries to make himself big, YHWH humbles; tries to push too much, YHWH pushes back. On the other hand, he who makes himself low,

YHWH raises high; makes himself humble, YHWH exalts; is yielding, YHWH brings to success (Eruvin 13b). He who offers kavod, refrains from taking it for himself, and flees from it for himself, receives kavod.

When Rabbi Aharon Kotler z'l, founder of the great Lakewood Yeshiva, would come to a toll, he would tell the driver to take the car to a human toll collector instead of a machine in order to practice kavod habrios (human dignity). Going to the toll machine would disparage the kavod of a human being. The practice of giving kavod is too important and inescapable. Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 students died (Yevamos 62b) in a 33 day period because they did not give kavod to each other. Their lot was death. The Torah is to be a "Toras Chayim (Torah of Life)." To be a kailee (container) for genuine Torah, one must have the trait of kavod and behave voluntarily with derech erez in practical life.

Kavod is attributing honour, weight, value, significance, respect and esteem to the person; it is willful adaptation of your behaviour to actively and consistently demonstrate these uncompromisingly and unconditionally in the most dignified, reverent, sincere, responsive and thorough fashion. In marriage it is not enough to give kavod as much as you receive it. Only when both give *more to the other* is it enough. The Torah wants us to treat each Torah-observant Israelite with kavod; and your spouse, all the more so; with extreme, excessive, sensitive, ongoing kavod.

32. The Greatest Thing is Peace

The ***greatest, most fundamental thing in human relations in general and the man-woman relationship in particular is peace***. Chazal tell us repeatedly, "gadol hashalom (great is peace)".

"GREAT IS PEACE and hated is fighting (Sifri Naso 42)."

"GREAT IS PEACE between husband and wife (Chulin 141a)."

"GREAT IS PEACE for which even G-d changed His words. Sara said, '[We can't have a child since] my husband is old.' Later G-d reported to Avraham [to preserve peace between husband and wife] that Sara said '[We can't have a child since] I am old' (Yevamos 65b)."

"GREAT IS PEACE; even if a person did numerous mitzvos and he hasn't made peace, he has nothing (Bais HaMidrash 3:129)."

"GREAT IS PEACE, that if the Jewish people have peace among them, G-d would not allow punitive Heavenly judgement against them (Beraishis Raba 38:6)."

"GREAT IS PEACE for all blessings and prayers culminate with peace. The [Shabos evening] blessings of 'Shma Yisroel' conclude with, 'blessed are You G-d Who spreads over us the tent of PEACE' [the weekday variant - not cited - says that G-d 'guards our coming and going for life and PEACE']. The Shmoneh Esray concludes with, 'blessed are You G-d Who blesses His people Israel with PEACE.' The blessing by the Kohanim concludes with, 'And may G-d give you PEACE'" (Vayikra Raba, Tzav). The only pipe through which blessing comes down from Heaven to earth is peace (Uktzin).

Psalms 34:14-15 says, "**Love peace and pursue it.**" Based on this verse, the midrash (Vayikra Raba) cites that peace is different from other mitzvos. Other mitzvos apply when they come to you. If you find a lost article, it is a mitzva to return it to its owner. If you don't find property, there's no mitzva. Peace is different. **Every Torah-observant believer is obligated to actively seek, promote, build and maintain peace.** You don't wait for it to come. You make it happen. You appease a person in a quarrel (whether his quarrel is with you or another). You exhibit courage and character. You get obstacles or inhibitions out of the way. You forgive. You travel to another place to bring about peace. You exert yourself actively and creatively...in your relationships and in those of any other Torah-observant believer.

"Humanity was created from one person because of peace, so no person could say to another, 'My ancestor is greater than your ancestor!' (Sanhedrin 37a)"

Whenever Moshe's brother Aaron heard that there was any argument between Israelites, he ran to make peace between them (Sanhedrin 6b). When Aaron died, the Torah (Num 20:29) says that the entire Israelite nation mourned for 30 days. Why such nationwide tribute and grief? Because when two people would quarrel, Aaron would go to one and say, "Your friend feels so badly to be in a quarrel with you. He is ashamed for wronging you. He told me he loves you so much but doesn't know the words with which to make up." He would stay with the person until all enmity was gone from the person's heart. Aaron would then go to the second friend and say the same. Each would say, "How can I remain in a fight with such a beloved friend?" and go to the other and meet and, without saying a word, each would hug the other and be best of friends (Avos DeRebi Noson, chapter 12). Aaron did this to make peace all of his life, therefore Israel loved him.

"When you make an altar of stones for Me, you will not build it of hewn stones, for if you lift up your sword on it, you have profaned it (Exod 20:22)." Rashi writes, *"'You have profaned it.' You learn that if you lift iron to it, you have profaned it; for the altar was created to lengthen the days of man and iron was created to shorten the days of man. It is not justice that one lift that which shortens [life] on that which lengthens [life, Mechilta]. Further, the altar brings PEACE between Israel and their Father Who is in Heaven. Therefore, there will not come upon [the altar] that which destroys and injures. And this*

yields a logical derivative. If stones; which do not see, and do not hear and do not speak; bring PEACE, as the Torah says [Deut 27:5], 'You will not lift iron on [the altar];' then the person who brings PEACE between man and wife, between a family and another family, between any Jew and another; how much moreso will no harm come upon him!"

"G-d's name is Peace." (Shabos 10b)

The Torah (Lev 26:6) tells of the bounty of the land of Israel (rain, crops, fruit, wealth) and YHWH says, *"And I will give the land peace."* Rashi writes, *"Perhaps you will say, 'I have what to eat and drink, but without peace, there is nothing.' So the verse adds, 'And I will give the land peace,' so that we know that PEACE IS EQUAL TO ALL other blessings combined together."*

The tractates of Brachos, Nazir, Yevamos and Krisos; as well as the shabos night and day prayer services; end with the following narrative...

Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Chanina: Sages multiply peace in the world, as it says (Isaiah 54:13), "And all of your sons (BaNaYiCH) are disciples of G-d and the peace of your sons (BaNaYiCH) will be abundant." Do not read "BaNaYiCH (your sons)," but rather "BoNaYich (your builders)." "Those who sincerely love Your Torah have abundant peace and they do not stumble in sin. Let there be peace in your walls and tranquility in your palaces. For the sake of my brothers and friends I will wish you peace. For the sake of our G-d's Holy Temple I will seek your good. G-d will give power to his people, G-d will bless His people with peace [Psalms 119:165, 122:7-9 & 29:11]."

Rabbi Avraham Asher Zimmerman, z'l, gave a beautiful derasha on this passage from the gemora:

Rabainu Yonah, in "Shaaray Tshuva," says that a person may ask what good it does if he would do tshuva, behave meritoriously. He thinks that his actions don't matter, don't make a difference. Rabainu Yonah points out that when Hashem revealed to Avraham that He intended to destroy S'dom, Avraham prayed on behalf of the city of S'dom. Perhaps there were ten righteous people. Even though there may have been tens or hundreds of thousands of people in the city, and even though they were almost all evil, perhaps there would be ten meritorious people who deserved not to suffer or be destroyed. The Torah, in telling us of this, is saying that a righteous person does make a difference. One's tshuva, one's merit, one's behavior does have impact on the world.

*The above gemara says that sages promote peace and are builders of the world. **Some people scoff at those who learn and obey Torah.** They say, "We make buildings, highways, inventions. We turn the*

wheels of industry and progress. We are the builders of the world, not the scholars who sit and learn." However, it is these builders who cause strife and destruction. The gemara emphasizes this by repeating this passage four times. Who are the one's who truly build the world? **Those who truly embody the Torah, the ones whose lives embody peace.**

Consider the above passage and the verses quoted in it again. See what it says. **The ones who sincerely love Torah and who are faithful disciples of YHWH will have abundant peace and not slip in sin, their homes will be peaceful and tranquil, they seek the peace and good of others, and, for being true to the cause of peace, YHWH will grant prosperity and blessing.**

Every effort at building the world *through Torah actions*, every spiritual accomplishment, every peaceful resolution or interpersonal interchange, is of incalculable merit - in YHWH's estimation. Keep peace at all times. Apply Rabbi Zimmerman's point to your marriage. To the Torah-observant believer, among the greatest acts are: **building a home that is a center for spiritual contribution and pillar of the community, and raising healthy and functional children.** If you're already in the middle of a dispute, if you're already emotional or tense, if your marriage has an adversarial pattern at all, then ask yourself, how can I end this like the Gemara: on a note of emphatic, enduring, Torah-rooted peace? Similarly, tractate Derech Eretz says to end each thing that you do on a good note.

Never forget that **your Torah-rooted effort will help to truly build the world** - and may even cause the merit for which YHWH keeps the world existing.

Torah Counselling Procedure

Marriage Officer (Messianic Minister or Rabbi) to go through the HTG Torah Counselling Procedure with the couple.

Prescribed DVDs

Couple to watch all the pre-marital prescribed DVDs at the Yeshiva, Synagogue or Shul in the presence of the Marriage Officer (Messianic Minister or Rabbi).

Something mind-boggling is happening right now before our eyes! What can only be seen as a sovereign work of the Ruach HaKodesh is breaking forth as Christians around the world are working to **return** to their **historical Hebrew foundation**. After being **stained** for more than eighteen centuries by Judaeophobia, anti-Judaism, and anti-Semitism, many Christians are being impacted by an unprecedented revolution of restoration. Scholars, clergy, and laity from virtually every nationality, ethnicity, and denomination are reconnecting their faith in Messiah Y'shua with its historical Hebraic Roots in the **Torah**. HalleluYAH

We inform – You choose⁵³

Never be guilty of: "**By your traditions you make the Word of God of non-effect**"⁵⁴

As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. Prov 25:25

Thank you that we may minister to you from the southern point of Africa – population ratio-wise the largest group of Messianic Judaism followers in the world.

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⁵³ The truth of the Torah makes you see the mistranslations in the New Covenant. It's amazing how you can look at the epistles of Rabbi Sha'ul one way and it looks like he's leading the body of Messiah away from Torah; when in reality, he's leading them **to** Torah. A paradox of vantage point. Let us remember, the intent of the law maker constitutes the law. We need to walk a mile or two in our Hebrew Messiah's shoes.

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That 'narrow way' is the path of Torah, which is the mission of the Believer...
to continuously direct you to the Crucifixion Stake.

*If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in
little matters of Torah.*

Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude.

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE

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OF YOUR TITHING