

# OF MEN AND WOMEN

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

Why is it forbidden for a woman who remarried after being divorced to remarry her ex-husband?

Why does the Torah mandate that a husband is exempt from all military service (see Rashi 23:5) during the first year of his marriage to a new wife, except if the new wife was his old wife that he divorced and then remarried?

The Torah in Bereishis (2:24) states, "Therefore a man shall leave his parents and cling to his wife" Why is the focus on the man? Why didn't the Torah state, "Therefore a woman shall leave her parents and cling to her husband?"

In the aftermath of Adam and Chava eating from the Tree Of The Knowledge of Good and Evil, G-d defined the basic natures of man and woman. Not surprisingly, the Torah's formulation defined major differences between the emotional and psychological makeup of men and women.

*(Ber.3: 16) "Chava, I will greatly increase your suffering in bearing; in pain shall you bear children. Yet your craving shall be for your husband"*

*(Ber: 3:17-19) "Adam, because you listened to the voice of the tree accursed is the ground because of you; through suffering eat of it. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread until you are ground from which you were taken"*

Chava's consequence was personal: physical pain and a need to depend on her husband. On the other hand, Adam's consequence was external to himself: The land would be cursed so that he would have to work much harder to produce much less, and he would be subject to frustration and failure. True, it might be at the expense of physical labor and potential pain; however, the source of that pain would be external to him. Theoretically, if Adam could hire someone else to labor for him he could avoid the direct personal consequence. Chava on the other hand did not have the option of hiring someone else to have her children. Either she would undergo the pain or she would not have children (epidural's did not exist in those days and Lamaze was an illusion that had not yet been invented).

The personal nature of Chava's pain and suffering was intended to focus her inwardly on the needs of her family. The dependency she would crave would be the protective embrace of her husband and home that would allow her to accomplish the building of her family. Chava would know from personal experience that family can only be accomplished through personal sacrifice and suffering.

Nine months of devotion was only the prelude to the intensity of birth and the lifetime of almost divine attentiveness and vigilance that child rearing demands. Regardless of Adam's accomplishments outside of the realm of home, their home would be a reflection of Chava's innate understanding that family is and will always be their greatest responsibility and accomplishment.

The external nature of Adam's consequences was intended to focus Adam on his responsibility for the greater environment and society where in which he and Chava would have to raise their family. He would confront long hours of frustrating and often unrewarding labor for the meager means of maintaining his home and family. He would dream of lush pastures and prolific orchards while confronting the realities of thorns and thistles. By contrast, he would return home every night to Chava and experience the true accomplishment of wife, children, and home, a reality that was far more fulfilling and much credit that it was Chava's.

Chava's sin was that she indulged herself by eating of the forbidden fruit. Chava's consequence / Tikun was to sacrifice herself for others (husband and children) in hope of realizing personal fulfillment that she would then have to selflessly share with her husband who seemingly had done far less than herself in raising the family.

On the other hand, Adam's sin was that he did not refuse Chava's overture. It was less his desire to eat the forbidden fruit than it was his weakness in not standing up for what was right. Adam should have refused Chava's offering of the forbidden fruit. He was not as "attracted" to it as the Torah's description of Chava's attraction. (See Ber. 3:6) Instead, he gave- in to his wife. His consequence / Tikun was that he would have to focus on the bigger picture, the picture outside the embrace of home and family. He would have to become the protector of family and societal values. He would be responsible for protecting the family by engaging the external world and making it safe and conducive for raising the family.

The bottom line is that Chava's Tikun was, "Ye your husband" and Adam's Tikun was, "bread" Chava was made to be dependent and Adam was forced to be independent of G-d. Chava was made to be dependant on Adam, and by extension, dependant on G-d. Adam was made to be independent of what otherwise would have been G-d's benevolent largess and support. G-d would have given Adam everything he needed had he only not eaten from the Forbidden Fruit. Instead, Adam had to work futilely to get less than what he would have received had he only listened to G-d's wishes. By extension, he would realize that his real accomplishments were in the realm of home where he did much less because Chava was present to take care of it. By further logical extension he would realize that doing G-d's law, and not the myriad of other things he assumed were important, was the only true work for which he would receive everything he ever wished for.

The reason the Torah states, "Therefore a man (rather than a woman) shall leave his parents and cling to his wife," is because a woman since the sin of Adam and Chava is to focus on her family, home, and husband. It does not suggest that a daughter will not or does not miss her mother and

father. Of course she will! In fact, she may miss them even more than her husband will miss his mother and father. Nevertheless, she will still desire to cling to her husband even at the expense of leaving the home of her parents. (That is why the laws of Kibud Av V'aim -honoring parents- are different for a husband and a wife.)

On the other hand, a man's tendency since the sin of Adam and Chava is to seek outwardly for his own misdirected sense of accomplishment. That is not to suggest that he shouldn't work hard to accomplish in the outside world. Just the opposite! He must excel in the outside world and impact his environment so that the world is a proper place in which to serve G-d and raise a family. However, his real accomplishment will be in the closed, protected embrace of his wife and children.

At first he will seek his fame and fortune outside of the home; however, the Torah states, "Therefore a man shall leave his parents and cling to his wife." No longer can man take his "home" for granted. The refrigerator is always open and the shower always hot. From that assured base, man ventures forth to acquire fame and fortune. Among those acquisitions will be a spouse and eventually a family. They will be unique among his possessions, but his feeling is that they are still possessions. He doesn't yet know that they are beyond possessions and acquisitions. He doesn't yet know that they are truly his only real and lasting accomplishment. (That is why students are called children. They too are counted as true and lasting accomplishments.)

A man must learn to cling to his wife and children. There is natural dependency, love, and need; but more often than not, the man does not realize or admit to the importance and profundity of those essential dynamics. Instead, he focuses on the accomplishments outside the home rather than the real accomplishments of the home. To help the man focus on the primacy of wife and home, the Torah mandates that during the "First Year" he must make his "new wife" his exclusive and primary focus. He cannot go to the army and he cannot be involved in anything that will distract him from recognizing the importance and primacy of, "therefore a man shall cling to his wife.

Because of the fundamental differences between men and women regarding dependency and home, the Torah allowed for men to have more than one wife but forbade a woman having more than one husband. A man does not define himself by his relationship with his home. He learns to respect and appreciate the home as his ultimate contribution and purpose, but nevertheless must continue to interact with the outside world. That interaction provides sufficient space and distance so that he can theoretically share himself with more than one family. On the other hand, a woman's tendency is toward dependency and commitment to home and self. It's beyond personal enjoyment and desire. It transcends pain and sacrifice. Her fulfillment is the exclusive focus of husband and children. Such a commitment cannot be shared or divided with more than one husband. (That is why the relationship between Am Yisroel and G-d is described as a relationship between a husband and wife.)

Once a woman has divorced and remarried, her new husband and family redefine herself. No longer

can she retain a responsibility and concern for her ex. However, if she should divorce her second husband or be widowed, she cannot go back to her first husband. The Torah calls it a Toaivah, an abomination is a philosophical and symbolic perversity in the reformulation of exclusivity that should exist in a loving relationship.

On the other hand, it is a Mitzvah for a man to remarry the woman he divorced before she marries someone else. In essence he is stating that he has grown beyond the limits of temporal, external, accomplishments and wants to commit himself to the real lasting accomplishments of wife, children and home. However, if he should remarry his divorced wife and the country is at war, he is not given the same military deferment that a 'new" wife would provide. The "new" wife demands the exclusive attention that focuses him on her and away from the outside world. On the other hand, if married, then divorced, then remarried, the husband already realized the importance and primacy of his wife and home and does not require the additional focus of the "First Year."

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