

BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 117, Inducing Labor: A Viable Option? Good Shabbos!

Rav Yosef Salant: Fill the World, but Stay Out of the Hidden Domain

The pasuk [verse] teaches, *"And G-d Blessed them and said to them 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the world, and conquer it'"* [Bereishis 1:28]. This is the Mitzvah to have children, to populate the world. I saw an interpretation, perhaps homiletic, of the word *'Kivshua'* - *'and conquer it'* - from Rav Yosef Salant in his Be'er Yosef. Rav Yosef Salant points out that we find the root of this word, *"KiVSHua,"* in a different context.

The Talmud says [Berochos 10a] that King Chizkiyah did not want to have more children. He grew very ill, and the prophet came and told him *"You will die in this world, and will not live in the world to come"* [Isaiah 38:1].

Isaiah chastised Chizkiyahu and asked why he did not want to have more children. The King responded that it was not because he felt that children are a burden; rather he saw prophetically that his descendants would be genuinely wicked. He wished to have no part in bringing such descendants into the world. That is why he stopped having children.

The Talmud says that the prophet told King Chizkiyah, *"What business of yours is it to go into the Hidden matters (KaVSHi) of G-d? You must do what you are told. Stop making calculations based on the world of that which is hidden (KiVuSHim)."*

The truth of the matter is that there is an historical precedent to this philosophy of not having children. It did not start with Chizkiyahu. Our Sages tell us that Amram the Levite left his wife, because he didn't want to bring children into the world to be thrown into the Nile by Pharaoh. His daughter Miriam had to tell him that this was not the proper practice and that he should return to his wife - who then gave birth to Moshe, who led the Jewish people out of Egypt.

Amram again thought, *"Why bring children into the world?"* However, such issues are the *"Kavshi d'Rachmana"* (the Hidden Domain of G-d) which we have no right to enter. This, says the Be'er Yosef,

is the meaning of the words in our Parsha -- *"Be fruitful and multiply, fill the world, v'KiVSHuha."* Don't try to enter the secret world. You do what **you** have to do!

The Medrash says in the name of Rav Berachya, that this issue also bothered G-d when He created Man. G-d knew that He was creating righteous people but that He was also creating people from whom wicked people would descend. G-d said, "I will hide my face from them." It is as if G-d is saying, "I will create man and I won't look (at the future) -- whatever will be, will be."

Just as G-d created human beings and gave them the gift of free choice, knowing that it would not always turn out that people would be righteous, so too mankind has to emulate this practice as well. In the domain of being fruitful and multiplying, we can not always make calculations -- "Is this the right time?" "Is this the right place?" We have to do what we are told to do.

We see people today, in our generation, who were born in Shanghai while their parents were running away from Hitler [May his name be blotted out]. They were trapped in China. They did not know where their next meal would come from. Their past was destroyed, their future uncertain. But a Jew goes on and brings the next generation into the world.

Don't go into the world of the Hidden (Kivshu-ha); a person must do that which is incumbent upon him or her. The job of a Jew is to keep the commandments without calculations. G-d says, "Do it!" That makes it right.

Netziv: The 'Unlucky One' (Lo Zacha) Is the One With The Docile Wife

The pasuk says, *"It is not good for man to be alone, I will make for him a help-mate, opposite him"* [Bereishis 2:18].

We are all familiar with the Rash"i on this pasuk. Rash"i asks, "Which is it? Is the woman supposed to be a 'help-mate' or is she supposed to be one who stands 'opposite' - in opposition - to her husband?" Rash"i answers, "If a person has the merit to marry the right woman, she will be a help-mate, if not she becomes his adversary."

The Netziv, at the Sheva Brochos of his own granddaughter (who married Rav Chaim Soloveitchik), gave his own insight (virtually the inverse of Rashi's interpretation) into this same dilemma.

The pasuk in Mishlei states, *"For the way of all man, is correct in his eyes..."* [Proverbs 21:2]. Every person thinks the way he does things is correct. A person cannot see his own faults and weaknesses. We are our own biggest friends, but on the other hand we are blind when it comes to judging whether we do right or wrong.

And yet, we cannot always trust an outsider. We don't always know if that person has our best interests at heart. How does one get around this dilemma? Who loves me enough that I can be

confident that this person will have my best interests at heart, but on the other hand is, at the same time a different person, who can maintain an objective opinion? The Netziv said that to alleviate this problem, G-d created separate genders - G-d created women distinct from men, and He created the institution of marriage.

It is the woman -- one's wife, who loves her husband as he loves himself, and yet has the advantage of objectivity. She has the advantage that she can stand back and tell her husband "What you are doing is not right." That is the wonderful quality of marriage.

This is the interpretation of "a help-mate, opposite him." The way she becomes the help-mate that G-d had in mind, the way she fulfills her destiny as a help-mate is by being the "K'negdo," by being "opposite" every once in a while, and telling her husband "No Way!" Otherwise, how is a person to know if what he does is right or wrong? If every man thinks that he is correct in his own eyes [Mishlei ibid.], who will ever tell him when he is in fact wrong?

Therefore, the Netziv said, the woman who stands opposite her husband, at times, telling him that he is wrong, becomes his biggest help-mate. Unfortunately, if a person marries a woman who is a 'Yes- Woman,' a docile and servile wife who never takes it upon herself to show her husband where he is wrong, that is a situation of "Lo Zacha" -- he was not lucky.

This is what the Netziv told his granddaughter, when she married Rav Chaim Soloveitchik.

Personalities & Sources:

Rav Yosef Salant -- prominent Rav in Yerushalayim during early 20th century; author of Be'er Yosef.

Netziv -- (1817-1893) Acronym for Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin. Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva in Volozhin; author of Haamek Davar commentary on Chumash.

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik -- (1853-1918); Rosh Yeshiva in Volozhin, subsequently Rabbi of Brisk. (Known as 'Reb Chaim Brisker').

Glossary:

Kavash -- conquer or subdue (alternatively, that which is hidden)

Sheva Brochos -- (Meal consisting of the) Seven (Marriage) Blessings

(Lo) Zacha -- (Did not have) merit

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.

Technical Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#); Baltimore, Maryland.

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#117). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: Inducing Labor: A Viable Option? The other halachic portions for Parshas Bereishis from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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