

# "IF HE DOES NOT MERIT", THEN "OPPOSITE HIM"

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 520, Kavod and Oneg Shabbos. Good Shabbos!

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***Dedicated by Ephraim Sobol in loving memory of his father, Shlomo Mordechai ben Yaakov a"h***

## **"If He Does Not Merit", Then "Opposite Him"**

The Torah says, "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make for him a help-mate (eizer), opposite him (k'negdo)." [Bereishis 2:18] Rashi comments (based on Yevamos 63a) "If he merits, she will be his helpmate; if he does not merit, she will be oppose him."

The simple interpretation of this Gemara is that if a person merits finding the right wife, then he will have a spouse who will be his helper. If, however, he does not have that merit, he will have a wife with whom he is constantly arguing.

This simple interpretation is by no means the only interpretation of the Talmudic passage. I saw an interesting explanation in the Sefer Duda'ay Reuvain from Rabbi Reuvain Katz. Rabbi Katz writes that this pasuk [verse] is not referring to two different types of wives. The entire pasuk is referring to the classic "good" wife. The pasuk is explaining that a good wife must perform two roles for her husband, even though the two roles are sometimes opposite in nature to one another.

Certainly the Almighty created the institution of marriage because a person should have a help-mate throughout life. If a person is doing the right thing with his life, then the Almighty wishes that his wife should help him reach his goal. However, there is another aspect to why the Almighty created wives. Chazal comment on the pasuk "And He formed [vaYiven] the rib that he took from Adam into a woman and He brought her to Adam" [Bereishis 2:22] that a Binah Yeseirah [extra understanding] was given to women [Gemara Niddah]. Sometimes it is the function of the wife to use that Binah Yeseirah to tell her husband "You should excuse me my dear husband, but this is NOT the way to go!"

The classic example of this is the famous Gemara that states: "the wife of On ben Peles rescued him." [Sanhedrin 109b] Even though he had initially joined Korach's rebellion against Moshe, he

bailed out in the middle. Why did he bail out? It was because his wife pointed out to him the folly of his ways: "Don't be an idiot. It does not matter to you in the least whether Moshe is the leader or Korach is the leader. You won't be the leader in either case." Even though this was a put down, it nevertheless saved him from destruction.

In the scenario above, Mrs. On ben Peles was not playing the role of the dutiful wife who always reinforces her husband's decisions and complements him on the wisdom of the path he has chosen. She was not playing the role of the "help-mate"; she was playing the role of being "opposite." She saved him with her Binah Yeseirah, with her different way of looking at things. She saved him - physically and spiritually, in this world and in the next!

This, says the Duda'ay Reuvain, is the exact role of "Lo zacha - k'negdo" [if he does not merit, opposite him] to which the Gemara refers. "If he does not merit" -- meaning he is not acting in the meritorious way that the Almighty would want him to act -- then she should stand up "in opposition to him" and tell him that he is being a fool!"

### **Kayin Felt He Lost The First Competition In The History Of Mankind**

In the story of Kayin and Hevel, Hashem accepted the offering brought by Hevel the Shepherd, but rejected the offering brought by Kayin the farmer. The Torah says that Kayin was very bothered by this and his expression showed his discontentment. At this point, Hashem speaks to Kayin and asks: "Why are you annoyed, and why has your countenance fallen?" [Bereishis 4:6]

Should it not have been obvious why Kayin was annoyed and why his face showed disappointment? After all, his offering was rejected! No one likes to be rejected, especially not by the Almighty!

We can obtain insight into this question from the following true story:

Someone came into the Beis Din [Court] of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik. The person was a shochet who had slaughtered an animal and had a question as to whether the animal was kosher or not. The judge examined the animal and ruled 'Treife!' (not Kosher!) In those days, it was not like today where arrangements are made with non-Kosher meat producers to accept the animals that are not fit for the Kosher trade. In those days, hearing that an animal one just slaughtered was 'treife' was a real financial setback. But, the shochet took the news stoically. He walked out of the Court without uttering a peep.

Several months later, the same Jew had a 'Din Torah' [monetary dispute] with another person. The dispute was over a non-substantial amount of money. Certainly, the sum involved was far less than the loss he sustained when the Court ruled that his animal was 'treife'. The judge listened to the arguments of both parties and again he ruled against this same person. The shochet heard the ruling and he 'lost it'. He began cursing the judge. He began cursing Rav Chaim. He became abusive and stormed out of the Court.

Those observers who remembered that several months earlier this person had lost a much greater amount without reacting in the slightest, could not figure out why he was so upset on this occasion. Rav Chaim explained the difference to them: "It was not the amount of money that upset him, it was the fact that now he lost and someone else won." In the previous case, it was not him against the cow. It was a ritual 'shaylah' -- is the cow kosher or treife? There was no 'winner' vs. 'loser' in that 'shaylah'. However, in the second case, Rav Chaim said, there was a winner and a loser. The fact that the other fellow won is what bothered him. That is what he could not accept.

This, Rav Chaim went on, explains the nature of G-d's question to Kayin: "Kayin, your offering was rejected and Hevel's offering was accepted. But, G-d asked him, 'Why has your countenance fallen?' Are you angry that your offering was rejected? Or, are you angry because your offering was rejected while your brother's offering was accepted?"

"If you are upset because I have not accepted your offering, you indeed have something to be upset about. But if what is bothering you is that 'Hevel won' -- the first game in the history of mankind -- that is a very inappropriate reaction."

This is what Rav Chaim told the Beis Din. It was not the money. It was the fact that there was a winner and a loser and people cannot stand to lose.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Bereishis are provided below:

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