

Tu B'av

One Plus One Equals One

Creation of Mankind

On the sixth day of Creation, G-d created Man in His Image. He created him as male and female together (*Bereshit* 1:27). Later on in that *parashah*, after having named all of the animals and still being unsuccessful in finding a partner for himself, G-d made man fall asleep and removed one of his ribs, from which He created woman (*Bereshit* 2:23).

The commentaries ask, if the *Torah* mentioned the creation of male and female already in the first chapter, why does it describe their creation again in the second chapter?

Two Stages in Creation

Our Sages (*Berachot* 61a, *Eruvin* 18a) tell us that there were two stages in man's creation. According to one opinion in the *Gemara*, man and woman were originally created as one being, having two fronts, one masculine and one feminine. As with all of G-d's other creations, they had the ability to reproduce. However, this was the only species created, with both genders combined in one being.

G-d then said (*Bereshit* 2:18): "It is not good for man to be alone. Let us make him a counterpart." Thereafter, G-d split man into two and made him an *ezer kenegdo*, "a helper opposing him."

Let us try to understand what happened: Did G-d change His mind? No, *chas ve'shalom*, G-d does not change His mind. Then, what was the reason for a first creation and then a second one? And, if the final creation, where man and woman became two separate, physical beings, was the correct one, why did G-d originally create man and woman as one physical being?

Furthermore, the *Torah* tells us that G-d formed man from earth, and in the second stage, woman was formed from man's rib. The *Midrash Rabba* (*Bereshit* 18:2) quotes *Rabi*

Yehoshua DeSichnin in the name of *Rabi Levi* as saying that G-d contemplated from which limb of *Adam* to create woman: Creating her from man's head may cause her to be haughty; from man's eye may cause her to be overly inquisitive; from man's ear may cause her to want to hear everything. Creating her from man's mouth may cause her to talk excessively; from his heart may cause her to be jealous. *Hashem* did not wish to create her from man's hand, as this may cause her to be constantly feeling around; nor from his foot, as she may wander about excessively. G-d created her from a modest and private place within man's body—his rib. When creating each one of her limbs, G-d told the woman, "Be modest."

Let us try to understand: When G-d separated man and woman and created woman as a separate entity to man, He created her from a part of man. Why could she not have been created from earth as well? What was the significance of her originating from man? Additionally, why was man created from the earth, which is soft, while woman was created from rib, which is hard?

In summary, what was G-d's intention in the series of events which constituted the creation of man and woman? Before we answer this, an introduction is imperative.

Different Roles

The *Chafetz Chaim* (*Parashat Re'eh*) was once asked why there is not one generally-accepted standard prayer book. Why are there Ashkenazic, Sefardic and Chassidic versions? And even within each congregation, for example, Sefardic, there are Turkish, Moroccan, Tehmani and other customs? The *Chafetz Chaim* answered that one may aswell ask the general of the Russian Army why his army consists of artillery gunners, foot soldiers, tank squadrons, and an air force? Let it consist of one type of fighter, and then his army would be much more organized, efficient, and easy to run. The answer is obvious. If the army would only consist of foot soldiers, an enemy plane could attack and destroy the whole army in one swipe. If they would just have planes, the enemy's foot soldiers would be able to stealthily enter their territory and conquer it. Therefore, every army

consists of different divisions, and everyone in the army has their given positions and roles.

Roles are not Interchangeable

Not only is it a blessing that there are different roles, as we shall explain, but also, it is imperative that no-one exchange roles. If the infantry suddenly decide to abandon their positions and join the artillery, this may cause fatal, irreversible damage to the whole army. When operating as part of a team or organization, one must faithfully fulfill one's appointed role to ensure the correct, smooth and efficient running of the team. Without it, any team or organization, such as an army, business, synagogue, hospital, or police force, etc., would be in utter chaos.

Roles in Marriage

The same applies to marriage, where both man and woman have uniquely defined roles, according to each one's different essence. If they were to try and exchange roles, this would create total chaos. If spouses do not adhere to their naturally-given role, the role which best utilizes their talents and occupation in this world, they will never feel satisfaction or accomplishment, or attain their maximum potential.

The Slavery in Egypt

Pharaoh, in his cruelty, planned to break the Jewish People. He knew that the best way to do this besides overworking them physically, would be by giving them occupations that would break them emotionally, by denying them the natural satisfaction that they could attain in areas where they best fulfilled their potential. Therefore, he gave instructions to exchange the roles of the men and women. The men would have to do women's jobs, and the women, men's (*Yalkut Shimoni Shemot remez 163*).

True Liberation

Hence, we can understand that there is no reason for competition or jealousy between those who have different roles. We all have a given role that cannot be exchanged. True

liberation is attained when one can fulfill the natural role that stems from his very essence. However, when one tries to be someone else or something that one is not, one will only end up suffering physical and emotional imprisonment. Conversely, when we understand and work with our natural capabilities and given roles, we will be fulfilling the Divine Will of Creation. We will enable ourselves to attain perfection and enjoyment in performing G-d's Will.

Ezer Kenegdo – Help or Hindrance

After G-d had created man as male and female in one body, it is written (*Bereshit* 2:18), “*Lo tov heyot ha’adam levado E’eseh lo ezer kenegdo,*” “It is not good for man to be alone, I will make an aid for him, opposing him.” G-d then separated woman to act as an *ezer*, a helper, *kenegdo*, opposing man. How can we understand two diametrically-opposed concepts being present within the same person? Is she an *ezer*, an aid, or is she *kenegdo*, an opponent? Our Sages explain (*Yevamot* 63a) that *zachah*, if he merits it, then she is an *ezer*, a helper. However, if *lo zachah*, he does not merit, then, she is *kenegdo*, an opponent. But if so, why were they written together in one phrase? To understand this, let us imagine the following scenario: A husband comes home from work, tired, exhausted and very angry. His wife asks him, “What is upsetting you?” He goes on to explain what happened: A business lead that he had been working on for the past six months had just been pinched by a competitor. Now, there are two possible ways that his wife could react. She may say, “I understand that it must be very aggravating for you, that he pinched the deal that you were banking on; but time will heal the pain. I am sure that success is around the corner, awaiting you from another source. It is not worth taking it to heart and letting the situation frustrate you further.”—She empathizes with him, yet opposes his anger. Alternatively, she may agree with his frustration and further encourage his wrath, by saying: “How dare he do such a disgraceful thing, pinching your business! I think that you should try and do the same to him. If that does not work, devise a plan to blacken his name in the business world.”

Examples of *Zachah/Lo Zachah*

In the first example, the husband merits that his wife “helps him” by taking the “opposing” approach. By not agreeing that he remain upset and presenting the other side of the coin, she is being a real helper. This is what our Sages meant when they said, *zachah*, if he merits it, then she is an *ezer* by disagreeing with him, *kenegdo* (see *Emek Davar Bereshit* 2:18). In the second example, she may be “helping” him by agreeing with him, encouraging and fueling his anger. However, essentially, she is working against him, because what she is doing is not being helpful, but highly detrimental to him. Her “help” in this situation, is really working “against” him. This illustrates what our Sages said, *lo zachah*, if he does not merit it, then she is *kenegdo*, against him, through her *ezer*, attempted help.

Defining Roles

Let us delve deeper into the essence and hence, the roles of husband and wife, so that we can answer the following questions: How a wife can be a true helper? Who is the breadwinner in the home? Who is the basis of the home? Who provides its energy, transforms it and nurtures it?

But first, let us develop another idea, and then apply it to our subject.

Adam or Ish?

The verse (*Bereshit* 2:23) states: "לזאת יקרא אשה, כי מאיש לקחה זאת," "For this reason a woman (*אשה*, *ishah*) is so called, for she was taken from man (*איש*, *ish*).” The *Torah* mentions that woman, *אשה* and man, *איש* share the same root. Yet, until this verse, the *Torah* never refers to man as *איש*, *ish*, only as “*Adam*.” Why is that so?

When man was originally created, comprising of two parts, one masculine and one feminine, within one physical body, both sides coexisted in perfect harmony. At that stage, he was referred to as *אדם*, *Adam*. However, when he was split into two separate entities, man and woman, each one facing the other, man was now referred to as *איש*, *Ish*, and woman as *אשה*, *Ishah*. What does this symbolize?

Essence of *Adam*

The word אָדָם, *Adam* stems from the word אֲדָמָה, *Adamah*—earth, which is building material. At the same time, it also bears the same root as “אֲדָמָה לְעֵלְיוֹן,” *edameh le’elyon*—I will try to emulate the most Supreme Being (*Yeshaya* 14:14). Thus, man can rise from being earthly, to emulating G-d. אָדָם also shares the same letters as the word מְאֹד, very much. This alludes to the fact that, with effort, he has the ability to transform and elevate himself greatly through his power of מְאֹד, which means “very much,” from being an earthly creature to a spiritually-elevated person.

Becoming Man and Woman

When man and woman were within one body, when they decided to move forward, it was in total harmony. There was no conflict; man and woman made a united decision, without any inclination to choose otherwise. In this scenario, man was comparable to the complete image of G-d, characterized by perfect harmony. However, this world is one where we must toil, and are granted free-will to enable us to earn reward by acting in the correct way. Thus, G-d, as it were, had to separate the two parts of man, to create differences that would now require resolving. There was no longer natural harmony. Man and woman were now separated and stood face to face. They could differ; they may disagree. Now their job was to endeavor resembling the original state of creation, where man and woman were living as one body (*basar echad*), in perfect harmony. Following their separation, the new state of “man” and “woman” required different names to describe each one’s essence, אִישׁ, *ish*—man, and אִשָּׁה, *ishah*—woman.

Ish—Ishah—Esh

What do these names mean? Our Sages (*Sotah* 17a) tell us that if man and woman merit, the Divine Presence resides amongst them, but if not, a fire consumes them. The word אִישׁ, *ish* consists of the letters אֵשׁ, *esh* (fire), together with a letter י, *Yud*. The word אִשָּׁה, *ishah* also consists of the letters אֵשׁ, *esh* (fire), but with a letter ה, *Heh* at the end. This means that after having been reinstated as separate beings, the essence of man and woman is אֵשׁ, fire, which has potential and is powerful. When the man provides the *Yud* and the woman the *Heh*, together they form the name of G-d. Then, the fire is spiritual

energy and potential, available to help each one attain spiritual goals and achievements, and allow the Divine Presence to reside within the marriage. In this context, the **שא**, *esh* is the person's **אישיות**—*ishiyut*, his personality and ability to achieve. However, if there is no element of G-d within their two personalities, then the **שא**, *esh* in both of them, lacking the *Yud* and the *Heh*, will be disastrous. It will be a physical fire that destroys potential. Since man and woman are so different and diametrically-opposed, even though they are two halves of a spiritual whole, if each only seeks to fulfill their own mundane wants and desires, then a physical fire is let loose, and the results are disastrous.

Hence, when the name of G-d resides amongst them, the fire within them is a spiritual potential that can merge together and help them achieve total harmony and perfection. It can restore their status of *Adam*, the name that depicts man's capability to emulate the Almighty. Thus, the name **אי**, *ish* denotes a man's role in this world, and **אה**, *ishah*, a woman's role. They must utilise their G-d given powers to achieve their essence.

Defining Their Essence

By contemplating the symbolism of the letters *Yud* and *Heh*, we can understand more about the essence of man and woman, and hence, their roles. The *Maharal (Netivot Olam chelek 2, Netiv Ha'nedivot 1)* explains the connotation of the letters *Yud* and *Heh*. The *Yud* is a small splash of ink, which is removed from physicality, due to the fact that it lacks dimensions. It denotes spirituality, which is beyond any physical definition. It therefore represents *Olam Haba*, the World to Come, man's goal and aim in all of his endeavours in this world. The *Heh* is comprised of a *Dalet* and a *Yud*. The *Dalet* has larger dimensions, two sides that connect with each other. Since it can be described, it connotes something physical and worldly with guidelines and limitations, characterizing *Olam Haze*, this world. However, the *Heh* also contains a *Yud*. As stated, the *Yud* represents spirituality, and it bears within it the potential to attain *Olam Haba*. Therefore, the *Heh*, which is comprised of a *Dalet* and a *Yud*, signifies that the *Dalet* can attain the *Yud*, which represents the Jew's ability in *Olam Haze* to attain *Olam Haba*.

Hence, we can now understand the roles of man and woman. The essence of a man's personality is *esh* with a *Yud*. The purpose of his fire is to gain him and his wife *Olam Haba* through his spiritual endeavours in this world, such as learning *Torah* and performing *mitzvot*. The woman's *esh*, on the other hand, is accompanied by a *Heh*, which consists of a *Dalet* and a *Yud*. This signifies that her role is to function within the physical parameters of this world, such as maintaining the home and the like, represented by the *Dalet*. However, this is in order for her and her husband to gain eternity, as represented by the *Yud*. The woman is the physical means for both her and her husband to reach their joint destination in *Olam Haba*, where their *neshamot* will no longer be contained in two separate, physical bodies; rather, they will be joined as one.

Foundations and Stories

When erecting a building, one first needs to lay solid foundations. Although when the building is erected, its foundations are concealed from the human eye, nevertheless, they are what hold up the entire building. Moreover, the amount of stories that will be able to be built will depend on the strength of the foundations. Even more crucial, is that the foundations define the dimension, angle and the shape of the building. A man represents the stories of a building, as his role is to create and build. The woman, on the other hand, acts as the foundations, which man is able to then build upon. She is hidden from the human eye, but yet, subtly defines, nurtures and gives dimension to his endeavours from behind the scenes. Correspondingly, she was taken from a hidden part of man that was made of bone. Bone is a strong material that gives man form, strength, and dimensions from within, while being concealed from the human eye. The verse (*Tehillim* 128:3) describes the woman as "*be'yarketei be'techa*," "in the inner chambers of your home," as she is the inner strength that holds up the whole house.

Jewish Status

Since the woman is the basis and foundation of the home, it is understandable that a person's *halachic* Jewish status depends upon his mother. (Even though the originator of the child's essence comes from the man, the physical sperm is non-dimensional, and not

able to do anything without the internal nurturing of the woman, who develops it until its birth.)

Inventor/Developer

As explained, the man is essentially the creator and inventor. His fire is directed upwards towards spiritual innovations, such as initiating *Torah* learning and teaching *Torah*. He initiates acts of kindness and mercy, plays an active role in the business world and is the initiator in bearing children. However, in order for man's endeavours to materialise and not be left as abstract, one-dimensional, or undefined spiritual aspirations, the woman is the one who enables them to be grounded, nurtured, guided and actualised. The woman has the ability to live in this world and be involved in more physical tasks, such as looking after her husband, running the home, organising and bringing up the children, while providing a basis for their spiritual advancement at the same time. The woman is exempt from all time-bound *mitzvot*, since she is preoccupied with the smooth running of the home.

Earning Money/ Baking Bread

The same holds true regarding other aspects of life as well. The man, through his business endeavors, 'creates' the money. The woman, however, with her given role as the one who nurtures and brings down into practicality, uses the money to go and buy flour and bake bread. This bread now gives her husband the strength to continue, and is therefore the underlying means for him to reach further spiritual goals and higher achievements.

Bearing Children

Similarly, as mentioned, the man has the power to initiate the creation of a child. The man creates *yesh me'ayin*, something from nothing. The woman, unable to create, is born with all the eggs she will ever need in her life. Already from birth, all her potential has been created. All that is left is for her to do is to bring it to fruition by aiding man. The woman can achieve *yesh me'yesh*, i.e. to nurture something that already exists.

Providing Light

Furthermore, she does not have her own source of light. Man is represented by the sun, the source of light, which has an unchanging pattern. The sun represents the intellect, which does not shift and vary like one's emotional state does. The woman, however, is represented by the moon, which has a changing cycle. Rather than having its own light, the moon receives and reflects the light of the sun. It sheds light during the dark times, and in this sense, upholds morale, acting as a base and strength at all times.

Chochmah—Binah—Da'at

On a similar note, we find that man represents *chochmah*, wisdom, and woman, *binah*, understanding and intuition. Together, the useful result of *da'at*, knowledge is attained. The man learns and gains wisdom, but often its application, guidelines and practicality require the understanding of the woman to apply it. When this is done, the true knowledge, *da'at* is attained.

Chessed—Din—Rachamim

Furthermore, the man represents the trait of *chessed*, kindness (which is represented by the letter *Yud*). However, often kindness is undefined, taken out of proportion or misused. The woman represents the trait of *din*, judgment (which is represented by the letter *Heh*). She has the capability to decipher whether it is really kindness to give in a particular situation. She can place limitations and guidelines, and define the “when,” “where” and “if” of the kindness. Together, the traits of *chessed* and *din* of a man and a woman create harmony, which is the trait of *rachamim*, mercy. *Rachamim* is the correct balance, determining how to use each of the traits correctly, in every given situation.

The *Yud* and the *Heh*

As explained, the woman, *ishah* has a *Heh*, which contains a *Dalet*, characterized by its physical dimensions. However, as mentioned above, the *Heh* also contains the letter *Yud*, which gives her the ability to simultaneously juggle physicality and spirituality. She is more

involved in the physical world by running the home, etc., but also remains focused spiritually. This is unlike man, *ish*, who has a *Yud*, and whose mission is only spiritual. Only through constant toiling in *Torah* and performing *mitzvot*, can man remain focused on his mission to attain spirituality. Hence, if man slackens in his spiritual endeavors, he is a lot more vulnerable.

Faith and Trust

We find that when *Moshe Rabbenu* was delayed coming down from *Har Sinai*, the Jewish men sinned by creating the Golden Calf, while the women were steadfast in their belief and did not donate their gold towards the cause. Also, when the spies returned from *Eretz Yisrael*, the women did not get involved in their sin. They had full trust in G-d that the Land of Israel was *kedoshah*, holy, and did not question His promise. They, therefore, did not die out in the wilderness like the generations of men (see *Rashi Bamidbar 26:64*). Furthermore, we find that after the Jewish People witnessed the downfall of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, the men, led by *Moshe Rabbenu*, sang praises to G-d. The women also sang praises, but they did so with the accompaniment of *tupim*, drums. *Rashi (Shemot 15:20)* asks, from where did the women in the desert obtain these drums? He explains that when the Jews left Egypt, although they were under the threat of being pursued and persecuted by the Egyptians, the righteous women had complete faith that G-d would perform miracles for them. They therefore took these instruments out of Egypt with them, to be ready for use when their salvation would come, and they would sing *Hashem's* praises.

The Merit of Women's Trust

Women cling to their steadfast belief and trust in G-d. In their merit we left Egypt, and in their merit we were saved with miracles, both in the story of *Purim* through *Esther's* intervention, and in the time of *Chanukah* through *Yehudit's* zealousness. They remained loyal to their physical task of upholding spirituality with their mundane actions, all the while remaining focused on their relationship with *Hashem*.

The Two Stages of Creation

Returning to our original question: Why did G-d originally create man as both masculine and feminine in one physical being, and later on split them into two? We explained that this world is one where free-will must prevail. That being the case, G-d, as it were, had to create a situation where attaining harmony would demand effort. Thus, two separate beings needed to be created. By nature, these beings would oppose each other, and forging them together would demand *avodah*. However, if G-d would have created man and woman initially as separate physical beings (like all species of animals), it would have been impossible for them to achieve complete unity (*basar echad*). If their unity would not have been actualized in their original creation, the achievement of perfect harmony afterwards would be humanly unattainable, due to their diversity. Hence, G-d created them as one being, with perfect harmony, not plagued by self-centeredness or ego gratification. This gives man and woman the ability to return to this perfect state, even after having been split up.

One's Portion in Torah

This is similar to the concept, taught by the *Vilna Gaon*, regarding each person's allotted portion of *Torah*. The *Gemara (Niddah 30b)* tells us that every fetus is taught the entire *Torah* whilst in its mother's womb. At birth, an angel strikes the baby's mouth to make it forget its *Torah* learning. We may ask: what is the importance of learning *Torah* with an angel, if we are anyway going to forget it? The *Chochmat Betzalel (ibid.)*, quoting the *Vilna Gaon*, explains that *Torah*, being Divine Wisdom, would be impossible for the human intellect to grasp, if not for man being exposed to it before birth. After having been taught it in the womb, it would now be possible for him to relearn the *Torah* and absorb it, thereby obtaining his portion in the *Torah*. For this reason, the *Gemara (Megillah 6b)* writes that if one claims that he has toiled to understand the *Torah* and "found it," one may believe him. It does not say that if one toils then one will achieve "learning" or "understanding," but rather, "finding it," as essentially, he is finding the acquisition that he once had.

Two Stages in Creation—Explained

Now that we have explained the necessity for two stages in creation, namely, the perfect scenario and the stage that requires effort, we must make it our goal to reach that original perfection. Thus, we can understand how in this context “one plus one equals one.” Man and woman’s new status of “one and one,” after their being split, can be restored through acts of unity and harmony to the original “one,” when they were actually physically one.

The Split

It is important to note that the split had to be done in such a way that the new situation would allow perfection (similar to their original status) to be attained. In any successful partnership, both parties cannot be given the same job. If they are given the same job, besides causing chaos the job would also not get done. Hence, G-d, in His infinite Divine Wisdom, created man as the spiritual achiever, while the woman would be a means to enable man to achieve. Man was created from earth, an inanimate object and raw material. Earth itself lacks life, but is full of potential. Woman, however, was created from living matter, i.e. man’s rib. Her job is to take the raw material that man creates and infuse it with life, by forming it and giving it dimension. Additionally, man was created from earth, which is a soft material, while woman was created from rib, a hard substance. The rib, being hard, acts as the foundation and basis for the future achievements. When the foundations are strong, they provide all the necessary strength to support all that will be built upon them. Furthermore, the positioning, angle and depth of the foundations determine how the stories of the building will be positioned as well. The stories of the building are therefore defined by the foundations. Also, man was created from something which is generally revealed, hinting to his position in the market place, which is out in the open. Woman, however, was created from a modest, private place, thereby depicting her quality of “*Kol kevudah bat melech penimah*” – “The true honour of a (Jewish) princess is in privacy” (*Tehillim* 45:14). She does not show herself off, but rather, works discreetly.

Man was created from an inanimate object, making him the initiator, whereas woman was created from a living entity, man, with her role as the developer. Additionally, since

she is part of man, she became his helping hand, enabling him to achieve perfection in this world. This way, because of the harmony within the partnership, when they reach *Olam Haba*, their complete soul will be able to bask in the aura of the Divine Presence. This is the glorious result of working towards bonding together in this world, to reach the perfection of *basar echad*.

Let us contemplate, understand and clarify each of our roles. Let us respect each other's given job, and attain perfect harmony together. By doing so, we will reinstate the perfection of the two halves, which was the state in which G-d originally created man and woman. In this way, the *neshamah* will be complete, and the Divine Presence will reside within our marriages.