

It is Not Good for Man to be Alone

Thus he will leave his parents

R. Mois Navon

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The other day you called to tell me that you wanted to take me off your bank account (*leborid et haipui koach sheli mi besbboncha*). What chutzpa! I opened this account! I put in the initial money! Is this how you show you father gratitude?! Is this request even permissible? Or maybe it is actually *obligatory*? What really is the relationship of a newly married child to his or her parents?

We can get a profound answer from the first couple when they set out to start their new life together. In the following short but powerful text of the coming together of Adam and Eve, there is important advice for every new couple.

בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק ב פסוק יח - כה

(יח) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹזֵק אֱלֹהִים לֹא טוֹב הִיּוֹת הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ אַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ :

The first and most fundamental piece of socio-psychology here is that it is not good for man to be alone. We need each other, we need other people (see Levinas), but more than anything, we need an *ezer kenegdo*. We need someone to be our life partner, a person we can grow with, a person with can confide in, a person we can rely on.

Strangely, following this divine assessment of the human condition, the very next verses tell of God's creation of the animals:

(יט) וַיֵּצֵר יְקֹזֵק אֱלֹהִים מִן הָאָדָמָה כָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת כָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא אֶל הָאָדָם לְרִאוֹת מַה יִּקְרָא לוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא לוֹ הָאָדָם נָפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ : (כ) וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל הַבְּהֵמָה וּלְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְאָדָם לֹא מֵצָא עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ :

Did God really think man would find such a being within the animal kingdom? Of course not! God knows what man needs, but he also knows that man needs to appreciate the woman he will find, he needs to *realize* that it is not an animal that he needs – that is, his wife is not to simply serve his animal needs. So Adam, after having gone through the

arduous process of dating and seeing that it is not so simple to find an *ezer kenegdo*, is only then ready to meet Eve. So explains the Hizkuni:

חזקוני (בראשית ב, יח): "לא טוב היות האדם לבדו – מתחילה עלה במחשבה לעשות לו זוג, ולא מצא פתח לעשות עד לאחר קריאת השמות כדי שיתאווה לה ויחבבנה יותר."

And so Adam realizes that he needs a very special being – an *ezer kenegdo*. So now God is ready to perform the great miracle of creation – he is going to make a being perfectly suitable to man. The text describes the event as follows:

(כא) וַיִּפֹּל יְקֹזֶק אֱלֹהִים תְּרִדְמָה עַל הָאָדָם וַיִּשָּׂן וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצִּלְעָתוֹ וַיִּסְגֶּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה: (כב) וַיִּבְרָא יְקֹזֶק אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַצֵּלֶע אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִן הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיִּבְרָא אֶל הָאָדָם: (כג) וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֶאת הַפֶּעַם עִצָּם מֵעַצְמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לָקָחָה זֹאת:

Adam meets Eve and is overjoyed. He recognizes their true compatibility and calls her by a name which signifies that she is much like him – *isha* as he is *ish* (woman as he is man).

What then is the epilogue of this wonderful love story? The next verse states:

(כד) עַל כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד:

"*Al kein*" – "Because of this." Because man and wife are of one flesh, are perfectly suited to join in life partnership, they *must* now leave their parents.

"*Yaazov*" – "Leave." This is not descriptive but prescriptive. This not a recommendation but an order.

Each of us was brought into this world to take part in the wondrous endeavor we call creation. It is the endeavor to make ourselves better and make our world better. Our parents give us the tools to set us on our way. We begin our awareness of this great endeavor and our personal responsibility when we become of age (*bar/bat mitzvah*). But we remain under our parents' close guidance. This, the Torah here tells us, changes when we get married.

"*Yaazov*" – "Leave." The newlywed couple is now whole: a single, self-sufficient entity, ready and commanded to take part in creation as an independent unit (*yehida atzma'it*)

The two of you must now realize that your parents, your family and your friends are all here for you, but only in supporting roles (*betemicha velo behachtava*). No one can tell you

what to do, how to do, when to do. You can and should ask for advice, but you are in no way obligated, neither to ask the advice and certainly not listen to the advice of anyone but yourselves.

Is this disrespectful? Absolutely not. When the parent gives his married children advice, they can respond: We understand, but have decided differently. The parent must not be insulted but rather rejoice – Nitzhuni Banai, Nitzhuni Banai! Just as God rejoiced when the Sanhedrin took full *responsibility* for their decisions and did not rely, indeed, rejected, the voice from heaven, so too should parents rejoice when their kids have the wherewithal to make their own decisions.

You are beholden to each other and must remain beholden *only* to each other. The reason is simple. With each other's support you will withstand any adversity. Without each other's support, halila, you will be unable to do anything (no matter how much external support you have as individuals). You must never, ever, side with your parents, your friends, or anyone – you must be beholden only to each other. Again, you can and should listen to advice, you can and should bring voices you trust into your discussions and considerations – but these voices must always remain voices of advice.

And that brings us to the closing verse:

(כה) וַיְהִיו שְׁנֵיהֶם עֲרוּמִים הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא יָתִבְּשׁוּ:

They were naked but not ashamed. You are to consult only each other. You are to reveal to each other, and to each other alone – your fears, loves and desires, you are not to be ashamed but just the opposite, you are to create a single entity to actualize yourselves and fulfill your unique role in creation.

May you grow together, strengthen each other and open private bank accounts together.

Mazal Tov!