

Do We Love Too Much?

By: Rabbi Yanki Tauber

short/ cir/cuit (elect.): an abnormal, usually unintentional, condition of relatively low resistance between two points of different potential in a circuit, usually resulting in a flow of excess current.

Random House Dictionary of the English Language

Do we love too much?

Apparently we do. Many marriages fail for a dearth of love; an equal number are suffocated by an overabundance of the same.

So desirous are we for connection, so hungry for communion with another human being, that we forget that for love to endure it must be complemented with an equal measure of restraint. So eager are we to give of ourselves to the one we love -- be it a spouse, a child, or a friend -- that we often give without consideration of the needs and desires of the recipient of our love.

When passion is mitigated with a degree of inhibition, when intimacy is tempered with a modicum of reserve, love flourishes. But when all limits are betrayed, love burns out.

A love relationship can thus be compared to an electrical circuit. In a circuit, the attraction between the positive and negative charges creates a current of energy joining the two; the current meets with a certain degree of resistance as it passes through the circuit, delimiting its intensity. The natural tendency of this attraction is to seek the shortest possible route, carrying the highest possible current, to join the attracted charges. But should this tendency be indulged -- should the "resistance" fall -- the circuit will "short": the current will escalate, ultimately causing the destruction of the circuit and the breakdown of the very connection which the current seeks to create.

The Book of Leviticus speaks of the tragic death of Aaron's two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu.

After many months of labor and anticipation, the Sanctuary had finally been set up in the Israelite camp and the Divine Presence came to rest within it. Amidst the joyous dedication ceremonies, "Nadav and Avihu each took his censer, and

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put fire in it, and put *ketoret* (incense) on it, and offered strange fire before G-d, which He commanded them not. And a fire went out from G-d, and consumed them, and they died before G-d" (Leviticus 10:1-2).

In his commentary on Torah, the great sage and mystic Rabbi Chaim ibn Atar explains that Nadav and Avihu died from an overdose of love.

Once a year, on Yom Kippur, the High Priest would enter the innermost chamber of the Sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, to offer *ketoret* to G-d. This occasion -- on which the most spiritual human being performed the most sacred service in the holiest place in the world on the holiest day of the year -- was the point of utmost intimacy with G-d attained by man. Nadav and Avihu were priests, but not High Priests (though they would have been, had they lived to succeed their father in that office); it was a very special occasion, marked by special offerings to G-d, but it was not Yom Kippur. But their thirst for intimacy with G-d could not be satisfied by anything less than the ultimate. They wanted to get closer yet, though "He commanded them not."

Human life is a love affair between the soul and her G-d. Our passion for life is a craving for the "spark of G-dliness" implicit within every one of G-d's creations; ultimately, everything we do is motivated by our soul's desire to draw closer to our Source. So powerful is this desire, that it can lead us to do things that are contrary to G-d's will -- things that violate the bounds of our love and destroy it.

For our marriage to live and thrive, we must feed our passion for life; but we must also know when to hold back. As in every truly loving relationship, we must learn to love in the manner that our beloved needs and desires to be loved.

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