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Rabbi Simon Jacobson Part 2

Speaker key

RSJ Rabbi Simon Jacobson
US Unidentified Speakers
MO Moderators

RSJ Everything is... [Laughter] Can we go off the record for the moment? Shall I begin? Do you want to introduce me? You may have forgotten who I am.

So, I can start where we left off. Does anybody have any questions based on what I said earlier, or have we covered that? I like more reaction because then I know where you're at. This is like a date when only one person is doing the speaking; that is not always so comfortable. It's like I'm exposing myself but I don't know who you are. So, it's like that guy who goes on a date with a girl and he speaks about himself for two hours and gives her his whole profile. Then he says to her okay, enough about me; what do you think about me. [Laughter] That's the second; once he hears what she thinks about him that means equal. Does anyone find that?

US Not lately. I'm smart enough [unclear].

RSJ What is your limit? A guy talks about himself for an hour and then you say: time to go home? Two hours, four hours, ten hours? I know people in marriages that the drill goes like this: she says, the wife says, she says when we dated he did all the speaking, I did all the listening; then in the first five years of the marriage I did all the speaking and he did all the listening; now we both do all the speaking and the neighbours do the listening. [Laughter]

So, we talk about why get married. Correct?

US Yes.

RSJ Why get married? So, the truth is maybe that should be the first one and this should have been the second. No, okay, that was how you get married, not why you get married.

I do want to continue where I left off, not only because I didn't say anything but it is also very much connected. This is on the record of off the record. The biggest challenge for me when talking about these things is number one, is everybody is different. You all have your own experience. One of you may have had a horrible relationship, abusive, may have grown up in a home that was a terrible marriage; another person may have grown up in a beautiful home and had beautiful relationships. So, my challenge is how do I speak to a group like yourselves and address one next to the other? When the truth is these two types of people need two very different conversations, to be honest.

I'll just share with you the internal mechanism; because it is part of the discussion here.

The second challenge is love and relationships is the hardest thing to talk about, because you don't want to give off platitudes and generic clichés. And it is personal and it is very customised, as I just said. But above all the hardest part is that it is very hard, if you really talk about your internal feelings about relationships, most people can't really talk about it so much; it's very uncomfortable. First of all, we're not aware of all the mechanisms at work, in place. Secondly it's a very vulnerable place to be, because you have to start addressing your securities and insecurities, past history, things that you may think are not that significant but may be very significant. It's almost like it's going into therapy when you're supposed to speak with someone one on one.

Now, I... therapy is great if it works. Coming from a Jewish perspective rabbis were meant to be soul doctors; they weren't just administrators telling you if your chicken was kosher. They were soul doctors, meaning that they were able to speak to you soul to soul. And that is usually done, not in a group; that is done one on one or something like that.

So, these are some... I'm just giving my disclaimers. I want you to know that I'm aware of this, and not just to come and preach ideas about marriage and relationships. I understand very well the complexity and it's very complicated.

But nevertheless my experience, and I've been around and I've spoken to different types of people, and I've studied the human condition, as I say, and of course I have my own history, my own personal life; so I try to combine the two and try to address the different scenarios and different experiences. If I knew all of you had healthy homes and a very healthy perspective on relationships I would give a different type of talk. I have to take into consideration that you probably... if you are a cross section of the population, some of you have some healthy, and some not healthy. So, I just want you to know that. I try to mix the two. But I hope you can take what is most relevant to you and discard what's not relevant. What is not relevant is not relevant. I just felt I should share that.

So, with that being said, the biggest question always is not what we're doing right but what we're doing, or why we should get married or not married; it is our assumptions. Now, not everybody is open to be challenged in their assumptions; let's be very straight. Some people do not want to be told that their assumptions are wrong; whether it is out of ego or pride, or because they think they've very smart, or they think they already went through childhood and they don't want to be told; or because they've been hurt by people who told them. I know someone, more than one, who told me after a while, a good few hours of conversations, and she said to me: honestly I don't... I'm not open to hear what you have to say, because I've been hurt by a rabbi who gave me advice, bad advice. And I was glad she finally said it

because it took hours for her to say that. I mean, once you say that it's already a breakthrough. Because people who have been hurt in different situations so they're not interested in someone's advice.

I'm not here to give advice, to be very honest; I'm just here to share ideas. But don't underestimate how much your assumptions may be wrong, number one; and how locked you may be in there. I don't care how open you think you are. I'm an open-minded guy, I think, and then I discover that some of the assumptions I had are absolutely wrong. Sometimes it takes years, and then I remember somebody told it to me; I couldn't hear it at the time. So, I'm speaking to myself just as I do to you. There is no one that's immune to that type of attitude. Especially if you're smart and you're somewhat successful; you think it works. But everybody has got their blind spots. There is no such thing. Maybe Mandip [?] because he's really worked out all his suspicions and all that.

US [Unclear comment]

RSJ So, that is very important to know. And there is nothing wrong to have wrong assumptions, as long as you can acknowledge it. Because remember, if you're going to get married and meet somebody, and you can't challenge your own assumptions, in marriage too you may not, which will undermine your relationships. Because your husband or your wife will say something and you say: one second, am I right or are they right. If you're always right that is not going to be exactly good for a relationship.

Having said that, let me discuss why we get married. That is a very good question, especially today. I'll begin with what I mentioned to you at the break. I remember Bob Dylan in an interview, an interview in Rolling Stone magazine. So, his name was originally Shabtai Zisel Zimmerman.

US Was it?

RSJ Shabtai Zisel Zimmerman, yes. I know him; and more importantly I know his son-in-law and his daughter and his grandchildren who are living in Santa Monica, Maria. We've been together a few times. Shabtai Zisel Ben Avraham; if you want to have the full Bob Dylan profile. Anyway, he knows how to read Hebrew well. Now that I've name dropped a bit I've got your attention.

So, he was interviewed right after they came out with the pill; just known as the pill. You know the story of [unclear]? Someone asked him about the pill, so he said take two and see me in the morning. Talking about the contraceptive pill. So, he was asked about it, and he answered something very interesting. He said: women shouldn't take this pill because it's another conspiracy of men to have sexual relationships without consequences. That was the way he put it; the progressive Bob Dylan. Moment of truth. Interesting perspective.

Now, I'm not talking about it now for medical reasons and stuff, obviously; I'm talking about... So, we live in a society where... I speak now as a sceptic; a really big sceptic inside me. Why get married altogether? Really big question. If you can get your sexual needs, and even a certain form of intimacy, have someone to go with to a party, you don't seem like a loser, you have someone on your side, beautiful and so on, man and a woman; why do you need more than that? What's the hassle to go through a whole ceremony, besides the expenses, and a commitment that's monogamous? I'm obviously married; you know what

I'm saying? But to do all that, what's the point of doing all this and have to deal with not just his or her beauty, you've also got to deal with all the problems? Everybody has got their issues. This way, you're in a relationship, issues you don't have to deal with, it's only committed to a certain extent; that is all you work with. You go home at night; you don't have to deal with someone 24/7. A great argument could be made.

I would like to hear it. Does anybody have an answer to that from your perspective? You can use a religious argument; but I'm talking about simply what would you tell a person that just says: what's wrong with that, I live like that, and you know what I can live ten years with somebody, or maybe a month, and if I don't like her or I don't like him I find someone else and another ten years, or another whatever it is, and just roll on? You can even have children, if you need that. You have a child, single parents or whatever. You can have all kinds of alternatives. What is wrong with that? Not whether you like it or not; I'm not talking about that. What is the fundamental argument against? What do you guys think? I would just like to hear what you guys think.

US I can't answer for the secular or male perspective; but just as a woman. I don't think you go can really intimate with someone if you feel that they're not really committed to you. That is what I think. How secular is that?

RSJ That's fine. Even psychologically one can argue like that too; it doesn't have to be...

US That's what I would say.

US I'm not saying –it sounds very [unclear] I'm not saying I agree with it – often a columnist looks at the issue of marriage and they see it more as an investment that you put in together, and that marriage is almost like signing a contract. If two people have sort of ad hoc arrangements to have children here or to do this there, the agreement is far less likely to last, and people are far less likely to put any effort in this investment. Until you get married you sort of sign a contract to say if you leave this arrangement it's very, very costly. So, you have a very ritualistic process to get into this union, so therefore when you leave it it is extremely costly to do so. So, people are far more... when you are in this marriage you are far more likely to invest time, effort and money into making it successful because you know that the other partner is not... is very unlikely to get up next morning and leave, because it is very costly to do so. So, people are far more likely to invest and be much more productive together.

US What do you put under the word marriage? There are people who get married but there is nothing behind this word: they are married and they divorce five months afterwards, so it doesn't matter. It is better to be with someone, you are not married, but you are committed.

RSJ So, you are asking my questions as well.

US No, I am talking about commitment. Okay, we are Jewish so we believe that there is a spiritual side behind all that, so it is important to our soul; we are connected to that. But like without that, like it depends what you do to this commitment; it depends how much you show you want to be attached to someone and to his words and to his silence as well; how much you are serious.

RSJ By the way what you said, for example, that some people respond, you know, you are being sentimental and personal and all that; you've got to get over it. Today we live in a progressive world and you expand your horizons, by not being so committed, you find love without... I'm not trying to argue that; I'm just saying...

US No, because [unclear]...

RSJ But remember, the argument is usually driven by selfish men who want to convince you of their... to take on their exploits.

US Their own view.

RSJ Right. And in truth, I'll be honest, men are more prone to... put it the other way around: women are much more conducive to what you just said. Who was it who said that men marry in order to have sex, and women have sex in order to get married? Who said it? Marilyn Monroe or one of these wise counsellors or whoever.

US Role model.

RSJ Role model, yes. The point I'm trying to say is that there is no question that women are definitely by nature, I don't want to say a cliché, but nurturing in the sense that they understand commitment, no question, more than men do. But today it is a world where women are being forced to play by men's rules. Even biologically, you know, the [unclear] puts it this way: love is a noun for a woman; for a man it's a verb. Think about it. A woman is love, and a man makes love, so to speak. So, it is much more, not a state of being, it's an experience. You see that: men are much more defined by experiences than they are by a state of being. This is pure cabalistic. When you see it in the Cabal it says a woman is makult [?], makult is much more a state of being than an act. It is a state of certain dignity. Think about that. But remember...

US Woman are makult and men are what?

RSJ Called in the Cabal is [Hebrew expression]; have you heard that expression? The dot. The ten spheres, it goes [speaks Hebrew]. So, if a woman is makult then man is the sphere before that.

US [Unclear] sphere before that?

RSJ It is considered one entity.

US She's [unclear].

RSJ Not, it's not because it's more. Size doesn't count, you understand. It's not about the quality. It's all the so called... it's like the sun and the moon type thing. So, you think the moon is just a recipient, but it's not; the moon is a whole state. You never see two people in love staring at the sun. The moon has its own romantic halo.

So, I heard what some of you said. I think I wouldn't disagree. Everyone had a good point there. There is nothing... we are on the same page, in many ways. But led me add to it. The

reason I asked a sceptic question is it's important to ask that question because then it forces you to really define what you want: why shouldn't...

So, what you've said is that it was more purely from a psychological human perspective. It doesn't seem... if you know someone is not really committed to you why would you, so to speak, open up, and emotionally feel... intimacy is based on trust, and trust is based on a commitment to know that person is there for you and is not just disappearing tomorrow. So, it is a simple type of [unclear].

Then what you both said, the spiritual side and your point, I'll just add to it as follows: it really comes down to, from a Torah point of view, the real answer is because God said so. Don't get me wrong; that's not a stupid answer; it's not like a religious answer. What do you mean God said so? It means who put life into place in the first place? Who created sexuality? This is a point I didn't make before. You see, in the secular evolutionary theory the real fundamental problem with it is not the theory itself, because it's not driven by any plan; it's driven by some... nature's need to perpetuate itself. Even that, as I said, who said that's the rule. So, it's driven by scientists trying to figure out from the bottom up what makes us tick.

The Torah's perspective is completely different. You can say it's a very strong one, but it says: God put this into place, and he's telling us what makes us tick, and he's telling us the best way that you will work, you will function. So, if you really put it that way, and I say it here – I wouldn't say this if you were all completely secular and never heard the word Torah before I wouldn't say this, I would have to make a case – but what it really comes down to is God created existence and he created sexuality and he created men and woman and he created life; how did he make this machine work, and what makes it work best. I think I mentioned... think of the Torah as an operator's manual: you bring home a gadget like this, it's listening to me as I speak, you bring home a new BlackBerry or a new iPad or some other thing, and then you have the operator's manual that tells you here is what you're supposed to do, these are the buttons to press, don't pour water into it; it tells you do this and it will work well, do that and it will... it won't work well. We see the Torah as God's operating manual. You are a human being, you don't know everything about yourself; you don't have a what makes tick and what makes you not tick. So, God says here is what you do, and this will make you work at your best, and if you don't do it it's going to damage you. It's not a punishment; it's a reward and punishment is about cause and effect: put your hand on the fire your hand is going to get burned, it's not a punishment; it's the nature of the universe. Abuse your sexuality and you're going to be hurt and hurt others; do it the right way and everything will be elevated.

So, really what it comes down to is...

US I have a question on this one. Like what you are telling that Jewish wedding gives subtification [?] [?].

RSJ That is what I'm leading to.

US So, is it the relationship by itself gives subtification, the high level of relationship between two people? Or is the [unclear] giving that subtification?

RSJ You're asking me? Yes.

US So, what is it?

RSJ I'm going to explain; I'm leading to that. So, here is how it works. You can go and work with your own devices and what you pick up – I don't mean you; I mean any person – you go with your own devices, what you picked up, hoping some healthy instincts, some not. And then you are really groping in the dark. The Torah what it does is it offers like this: it says here is the perspective on sexuality, it's complicated; but if you allow, if you listen and you see the way God wanted to structure it you will have the best... you'll be the best you can be, and you will have the best relationships, committed, sexually satisfying and on all levels compatible and so on.

The challenge is... okay, let's see what the Torah says. I'm here; how do I fit my life to this? That is a big question. So, what I would like to do here is to go over to what the Torah says, and use the second half of our discussion here: let's be here, how do you go from here, you know. Because even though the operator's manual is beautiful, you may not be up to it. They say, one second, I've been conditioned in ways that are completely different. But it is important, like when you teach someone art, even if you're not yet there, you want to show someone what the [unclear] are of the perfect template. So, then you can juxtapose your life and say: okay, I hear; now the question is how do I get there? So, is everyone following what I'm saying?

So, I'm going to just briefly describe what the Torah thinks of marriage, why marry, and what marriage should look like, and how that makes you work at your best. You'll see if you get this clearly, and especially if you pursue this and even work on it, then you can easily see where life stands in that concept. When I teach I always try to do that, try to create... it is critical to know that. I think that was one of the Outer Level [?], the founder of Cabal, said once that it is critical to know how small you are and how great you can become. Some people know how great they can become; they have an idea of their talents and so on, so they know where they stand. So, you know how great you can become but where are you: are you here, are you here, are you right near there or are you not. Then there are some people who know how small they are but they don't know how great they can become. So, you know where you are, but how far can you go? Like what I said at lunch yesterday: how much potential do you have?

The beauty of the Torah ultimately is it opens up new horizons of potential or your own life. Here we're talking about marriage and love; it's not just about love and marriage; it's about actualisation, it's about becoming the best you can be really. And that is what God said; that's what I referred to earlier. So, male and female, he separated them, and now he says now you are going to do a journey, you're born, you become an adult, find your soul mate, become the best you can be, join with someone else and change the world in whatever way you're going to do it. Change the world; some do it, some do not; more dramatic but...

So, what I would like to do is just describe this. And then we can go back and say okay, how far have we wandered away from our quintessential self. And that's... this is real; this is how one should learn Torah. You see Torah as a model. Now you say how am I going to get to it; where am I. And it gives you very strong clarity, and sometimes it is quite brutal because you see how far you are. But at the same time that is the beginning of growth: you want to know what excellence is before you determine where you are. It's not... it is all about growth, because awareness is half the cure.

So, here is the sense of the story. It is really in the bible you read the story of Adam and Eve, you read the story of Abraham and Sarah. Relationships in the Torah will give us somewhat of a model of what it is supposed to be like. So, the only disclaimer I make now is I'm not talking about the society of today, I'm not talking about the present situation; I'm talking about what it should be or what it could be, as opposed to what it is.

So, in that sense it goes like this: God puts this in place, and he says all of life plays itself out in a microcosm on your stage, in your personal life. So, 6 billion people, each person is like a small universe. And how you develop your life; and when you find your soul mate you are really so called fulfilling the purpose of your existence, of your small corner; which is a microcosm of the big picture.

And so in a sense the mere fact that we have to seek our soul mates... why didn't God just make it easy? Why didn't he just tell you: come out of your mother's womb with a little note that says your soul mate lives here and here, and that's their name? I mean, how much time would that save and energy? Wouldn't that be nice? Then you have to go and find that person and that's it. So, that's the big first question: why does God have to make it so difficult? It says [Hebrew] it's as difficult as pie in the sea; some say a lot more difficult. The answer is because that is part of the purpose of existence, is discovering the mission. God did not make it easy, because if he wanted to make it easy he wouldn't have created a life altogether. The same goes hand in hand: why didn't he tell you what your purpose is; why are there so many distractions; why can we live half our lives and not know what the hell is going on? And even more than that, people waste their time distracted by money, by this, by temptation, by desire, you know, the whole thing. Because the purpose of existence from a Torah point of view is to come into a foreign environment, foreign to spiritual. Souls above don't have any of these challenges: they don't eat, they don't sleep, they don't go to therapy, they have no neurosis, they have no challenges, they have no pain; everything is pure. What they don't have is challenge; what they don't have is growth; they don't have any... they don't make any radical shift. They don't accomplish anything, to be really honest; they're puppets playing out a script. Because there is no other option: there is no evil inclination, there is no temptation.

Mae West said: when I'm good I'm good, and when I'm bad I'm better. [Laughter] Another role model. Actually I am going to talk about the secular thing, but I couldn't resist that line.

So, what you have is you come down to earth, which is a challenge. Here you are not initially connected, and you have to find God and you have to find your purpose, and you have to not be distracted. That is the key challenge of every person in their life. Some people don't even know they should be on the search; they're so distracted they don't even know they're distracted. Some know they're distracted and they don't know how to find it. And some are finding it in bits and pieces. Again, each of you is in your particular place, and as long as you're on a journey it's good. The fact that you're sitting here is already a sign that you're not completely distracted, you know; you're looking for something in that regard. But it's a journey; it's a lifetime journey. And that journey is acutely manifested in your search for your soul mate. So, that search for your soul mate is not the side show; it is part of the purpose for your life, because who you are going to choose is very much who you are, it's very much about yourself understanding yourself, understanding what do I want to accomplish in this world. So, this is how the Torah puts the concept. That is why God split male and female. He did not make it easy. He split them and he said: now use your wisdom

and your ingenuity and your faculties and figure out who you are, figure out what your soul is like, and then you'll be able to identify your soul mate. And that is the story.

So, how does it work? The way it should work is that in a healthy home parents should be cultivating a sense of curiosity, cultivating the soul of a child and nurturing it – because remember, a young child is young – and giving the confidence; this is the key thing, you want to give the child the confidence that when the child is ready they will be able to go out into an alien world, where there are hostile forces, and have a sense of a perspective, and not be swept away by the winds of change and the winds of economic pressures and this pressure and peer pressure.

Again, I'm talking about the healthiest situation; I'm not talking about now where we stand. In a healthy environment a child is growing up with not just being fed physically and going to school, but a sense of self. When a child is ready, like a bird in a nest, that child will learn how to fly. Talk about the wings: you don't spread your wings until you have the confidence that you can fly. People who spread their wings too early and they're not too secure don't really fly well, or they don't fly far. When you have those deep roots you can bear great fruits, let's put it that way. Like a tree, it grows in two directions; the roots are the key to be able to grow upwards.

So, you find a lot of people who are flying and they are trying all kinds of ambitions, but you see that they don't have the grounding; they've never had that nurturing. And there is no real confidence; they are running more out of insecurity and fear than out of strength.

So, in a healthy situation a child grows up like this, has a sense of self and knows that his soul is important. It is not just about a career and money and impression and peer pressure and whatever, class, status; he knows that it's about bringing love into this world, finding someone that you can call your partner. And that is the priority. College, school never becomes more priority than discovering your soul. Finding your soul mate is never second to finding your career. I say this intentionally because I see that that's not what the standard is.

So, this is where the child grows up with a certain sense of purpose: I'm here, God sent me down to earth. Every morning you say [Hebrew]; I acknowledge you for returning my soul to me. That is the biggest most single... that is the mission statement of your life. So, everyone knows in the business mission statement drives your life, not activities. You don't get attracted... you don't get distracted by a new opportunity; does it fulfil our mission or does it not. And you will see in good businesses someone is keeping that scorecard and making sure everybody is aligned. And it is hard; it's not easy, because you have a company with many different people, many different agendas, many different ideas. So, imagine, even with when you're in a business it's not easy to do; in our personal lives it gets even more complicated. What's your mission? Most of us don't even ask that question until we're some way or another, 20s or 30s. Don't even... you know. But in a healthy environment that question is asked every day. Your soul came down; why did it come down to this earth? The [Hebrew] says the soul comes down, it lives 70, 80 years just to do a favour for another person. How many people know that or think like that? Why are we sitting here?

Most of us are here, you're curious; you're interested in learning and so on. Could be completely different reason: maybe God wants to come here to meet somebody. I'm not saying there isn't purpose in sitting here and learning together; but there is a bigger mystery to life journeys and why some of us live in certain cities and some of us meet certain people and

some of us have these opportunities. It's called [Hebrew] practice; there is a script we do not see; it's an invisible script. We see pieces of it. And part of what I said bital [?] is like accepting. I know a little about my life, most I don't know. And I have to... and that means you're not in control; it means that you understand that there is a deeper mystery and you're resilient enough and flexible enough to embrace it, and not be so rigid and say: no, that's not the way it's supposed to be; people come to pray, I don't belong here. You're here now, make the best of it. Maybe you do belong here. Who decided?

So, obviously we have to use our plans as much as possible, but the interesting thing, like in cinema they say, sometimes the greatest things happen when you don't allow your plans to get in the way: spontaneity. So, it's a combination of planning, spontaneity and... you understand that.

So, this is the context: a child who grows up like that has that confidence. Now they sense a sense of soul; they're going out seeking their other half, so to speak. Because you have a sense of self. The [unclear] Rabbi said this once, it's a great line for relationships in the concept of marriage, he says: if I am I because you and you, and you are you because I am I, I will not be and you will not be; but if I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, I will be and you will be. So, beyond the poetry what it simply means is that if you have not developed a sense of self, and of course you meet someone that also hasn't, and I am trying to react to who you are instead of me being me – obviously with humility and all that – you will never become an individual. So, a relationship is like this: you, the other, like that. That is the relationship. If this disappears in this and becomes like that, exactly. So, it is about two individuals who have developed a sense of self; not in an arrogant way where there is no room for someone else, because part of the purpose is recognising, and then joining in that way. So, what I'm describing obviously can be an ideal that is not realistic; but this is how the Torah describes.

And marriage, the institution called marriage is not about some kind of technical legal document; it's about the sanctification: how do you consummate and sanctify true souls coming together. That is what it is. That is why it's called cadution, sanctification, makadish [?], so that's sanctification. Like we say in every mitzvah we say [Hebrew]: you're sanctifying your life, you're sanctifying your actions. You're not just here to do whatever you like and indulge and just follow your whims; we're fulfilling a purpose in life.

So, the first assumption here is that you have a mission that is indispensable to you and you alone. That alone is a revelation to most people; they've never heard that before. Maybe they read it somewhere. But they don't think: I am here, God put me here, I must fulfil something. Then of course comes: what am I supposed to fulfil and how am I supposed to find out. And then comes the question: so who is my soul mate, who is my partner. We're both together finding this out. So, you see there are so many steps there most of us are never educated in.

Now, my goal here is obviously that we can all access it. You don't have to go back to [Hebrew], 20 years of school to get it; you could speed up the process. But it is critical to know what it looks like.

So, what does this marriage look like? Let's go one more step. What does a Jewish marriage... what is Torah's ideal model of a marriage? It's, number one, it's not about – like people have this common stereotype or myth – marriage is great but I have to give something up for it. Everyone will say that; almost everyone will say that. Woody Allen says it the

worst way; he says: marriage is the death of hope. [Laughter] Obviously I'm not coming to advocate that; that would not be what the Centre for Jewish Life should be sponsoring that message. [Laughter] If that leaks out that would not be good for us. So, he says that. So, Woody Allen's is an all screwed up situation. His relationships reflect that somewhat, so you definitely want to turn to him for guidance. He's good for humour, he's good for cynicism, smart.

But others will say: okay, marriage is a good institution, but since you now have to contend with another person it means immediately compromise. That seems like a correct argument. It seems like you give up something for something better or bigger. It's like you stay up all night if your child, God forbid, needs you; and you're tired all day. You give up something for something greater. It's true technically in some ways, but I'll share with you that it's not really true, because it's also based on an assumption what really makes us whole. It's based on the assumption that my needs is more important than anything. But if you really knew in your heart, if God came to you right now tonight and said: listen, I chose you personally, I sent you down here, I gave you a mission, here is what it is; and you knew it's true, do you think that that is not more important than all your needs? Your needs become less important; that is the thing. It's not I'm giving up. The whole idea of giving up means okay, I have something that is very important, but you know what, I'll give it up for something else; who says it's that important in the first place. If you are ready to challenge yourself like that you're getting into already a Torah way of thinking. That is real beautiful. [Hebrew] and gave a whole list of his needs. [Hebrew] asked if there was anything else he'd like to add, like a whole grocery list, and the [Hebrew] you can imagine he's a pretty high level guy, and [unclear] says: okay, you tell me everything you need; tell me, what do you need it for. And it changed the person's life obviously. He came back and... and his needs were not bad needs, I'm sure they were about health and about his family; it wasn't like some transgression.

US [Unclear comment]

RSJ Exactly. But the [Hebrew] said to him: you know, you're talking about your needs, what are you needed for; why were you sent to this earth. Now, the interesting paradox – and this is critical – when you come to that question and ask what are you needed for, and your mission is more important than the technical thing of your needs, you end up getting your needs in a much greater way than you would ever have gotten. It's not like you're giving up, because then you're getting your real needs fulfilled.

So, what a relationship really – again I speak quintessentially; I'm not suggesting I'm on that level or any – but the idea is the perfect thing: you are an individual, you are a complete individual, but it's like your mind comes and tells you there is something more than the mind. That doesn't make the mind less; it makes the mind more. People when they say the ultimate of knowledge is knowing that you don't know. That is the ultimate of knowledge. It's not just another... people think faith is the absence of reason. No. Faith is a step, and especially I relationships. Think of this: most major decisions in life are based on something that is beyond logic. Your logic can check out and research and so on, but then comes to the point: will I commit to this person and marry them. That commitment is supra rational. Because you can always say, your mind can always tell you: are you absolutely certain, 100% this person is for you, and that no matter what happens in life 20 years from now we're going to be partners. No one can answer anything with certainty. So, there is a combination of intuition, instinct, faith that allows you to make that so called leap. But it is an informed leap; it's not a two year old child that says I don't know and is ignorant. Here it is knowledge that

is taking you to a place, to a door which we call beyond knowledge. So, there doesn't compromise knowledge; that augments it, that enhances knowledge.

The same thing is in this context, the idea that you have a mission here and God sent you on a mission really opens the door that says: okay, I have now room for another person, and it's not only about me; I'm not giving up myself because my needs are not the beginning and all of why I was sent to this earth.

So, interestingly what happens then, as I said, and you embrace that then the needs come back to you, but they come back to you because you're not addicted to them; they come back to you as a result of your relationship instead of being the driving force of it. You follow what I'm saying?

And interestingly the parallel with marriage is the marriage with God. We say it all the time Shir ha-Shirim, the song of songs, a story about the romance, man and woman; it's a metaphor for our relationship with God. Because really, if you think about what I said earlier, when you find your soul mate you really find God, the complete God. You're marrying the part... your finding your part that connects you with God. So, although marriage with God sounds platonic or sounds more spiritual; but the concept, what does it really mean, a marriage with God? It means that it's not just about you; you have a partner here, there is a transcended element. So, when the Jews came into the Mount Sinai and said: we're marrying god, God marrying us; it's considering a marriage that meant that we're committing to something that is not just me and my narcissism. Simple as that. And that is the battle.

So, a healthy marriage, as I said, is a child grows up – summing up – in a healthy environment, it develops a sense of individuality, a sense of self, is confident, and that confidence leads them to a place of being comfortable and celebrating their vulnerability, knowing that they need another person in their life; not because they're missing something, but because they want to go beyond. It is not another need, okay I'm going to fulfil the need for intimacy, companion and stuff like that; it's like I'm going now to a dimension I've never gone on my own.

It would be no different than when you read a book, for example, or you meet a friend who stimulates you. It's not like you're giving up; this person is bringing you to a place you could never have been on your own. And that is how you embrace it. And it is sanctified through a marriage ceremony that has every detail of it is divine, it's a plan that goes back thousands of years, how Jews got married, it's the hupa, you have a couple I just found out they just got married last month. So, look at them, this is pure. We hope that in 30 years from now it will be as cute as it is right now.

US Amen.

US Amen.

RSJ You are our resident specimens. And a kosher guinea pig. So, then the question, as I said, is: where do you stand with regards to this. I think I gave a pretty overall summary. It's not thorough in every sense; but this can provoke you to read some books on the matter. I can give you some suggested reading stuff, and learn more. You want to learn what it's like and you want to learn where you stand. And trust me, as soon as you see what it's like you will immediately move closer to it. And then some things will need work, some things less work;

but a lot of it is awareness, to be honest. People have no clue sometimes as to plain awareness of how you define marriage, how you define purpose and stuff like that.

So, let's take questions, and then I'm going to give you a very heartfelt lesson as to how to find your soul mates.

US The question I had is obviously you've identified very clearly, talk about why get married, because obviously society does not dictate the way we live, allows for a relationship that has a lot of purpose or a lot of things that marriage has [?]. What would you say – let's not talk about [unclear] – what would you feel were the necessary steps needed for a fundamental change in attitude towards changing the way things are now?

RSJ Nipping it in the bud is always best. Pre-emptive, what they call preventative medicine, pre-empting the problems. Which would mean really it requires nothing less than a revolution in the whole education system.

US As simple as that!

RSJ I don't know how realistic it is, but you asked me the question. Now, it is like this...

US Realistically it should have an element of realistic-ness. We're not talking about an individual trying to change it, but a collective effort.

RSJ I understand, but I'm going to say one thing right here. I think under the circumstances, barring that revolution, so to speak, every person sitting right here, all of you and all of us, have a lot more power than you think you have. The key thing is not to be jaded or polluted by what's going on around us and to make your life work. Because any one of you will find your soul mate and build your life properly is changing the course of your life and history. And then you become an example for those that you invite into your home. And it becomes a shift. So, that to me is very realistic. That is why we're doing this.

You ask me in a global sense; it comes down to building families where your children will be exposed to some of what I just described, the Torah way of how to cultivate a soul's mission and how... Even if you didn't have it in your own life that doesn't mean you can't do it; maybe a little more difficult, but that is a responsibility, and it's a gift.

So, that would be my immediate response to people sitting right here. I'm not sure if you meant maybe something in between.

It comes down to awareness, awareness, awareness; that is the only real answer. Because people are not educated, were not educated about these matters. A lot of what I said I had to learn also, and I grew up in a relatively healthy home. No one spelled it out; it's not like my parents sat me down and said this is the way it is; you pick it up by osmosis, you pick it up by different ways. So, I think the Centre for Jewish Life is doing it. You are bringing Jewish people together, young people, like you did this weekend, and you are cultivating first of a certain Jewish pride and community. Not everybody necessarily in the room gets to where you want to go; but your goal is to in a sense get people to be a lot more serious and begin to ask questions and build up a healthy relationship. And, you know, you can't do it in a group of 300, but ultimately someone is going to come to advice; in a trusting environment they will

come for counselling and stuff like that. I think today has to be trying to reach as many individuals as you can and inspire them to do it right.

I don't know if I answered your question.

US Do you think that there is a difference between how a woman has to behave and how a man has to behave in order to reach his or her soul mate?

RSJ Yes. I didn't disclose that because it's really out of the scope of this, but that is another distortion. If you look at the feminine archetype in Judaism, and the masculine, we've wandered very far away from it. Men are not the way men should be, and women are not the way women should be. They said it's a world driven very much by aggression; you make it if you go out and get it. It is not necessary the concept of Judaism of [Hebrew] the concept that a woman, her dignity is within, the respect for feminine energy as an internal one; not everything is about what you express. This world does not respect subtlety; it doesn't respect that type of intimacy. So, there are real distinctions between women and men in that regard. It's part of what I'm discussing here is how you cultivate that type.

But women are more victims than men really. They're both victims really. It's a vicious cycle. But women, I think, have got hurt more; which is why you have the birth of feminism and the birth of... it is a healthy response to being subjugated and to being abused really, power wise and other things, and taken advantage of. So, there is a lot of distortion.

I don't know if any of you have my book Torah Meaning for Life; there is a whole chapter, women and men, just on this topic. If you read that it will give you a good perspective on what you're asking me; more than I can say here in a few minutes.

US No, but just like tips, you know, because I think we are living in a very hard generation. And once, as Jews, we have to choose really; it is a hard choice or to follow the trend.

RSJ Very hard. There is the peer pressure. Of course. It's a very hard question to answer. It comes down to finding a few influences in your life that you can trust, and not just being swept away by all the pressures around you. It's not so easy. There is a lot of pressure, peer pressure.

When you go on a date or something like that it is pressure all the time. They've got different standards. You don't want to feel like a pariah that you're so different to everyone else; at the same time you want to hold onto your standards. That's not a simple process. I don't have a quick answer for that one.

US I think it is a commitment to a higher truth.

RSJ Yes, but how do you manage that in a world that is fighting you all the time on that?

US The point is to find a soul mate. So, how are you going to...? Maybe there is not.

RSJ No, there is.

US There is not; you don't see it.

RSJ But you only need one person in your life, in that sense. And then you build your huge castle, so to speak; you build you... I don't mean isolated. I mean to say you build your foundation.

US If I could say something? I just agree with you, and I think the centre here, by doing all these sessions [?] it connects people. You're not going to meet your soul mate in a club or... I mean you could; but if you want to connect emotionally, and also you can see like if somebody is attractive or not; but going to something that is more spiritual or different events, like how to make sushi evening, then you know you are going to meet some Jews because we live in London, you meet a lot of people, you can see attractive people who are in your job, you're at work, you're at parties. But if you really want to meet someone that connects with you, that kind of event can connect people, and then maybe you can find something you have in common and you can tick the box that you want; I mean you want something that is...

RSJ It's absolutely... you have to remember you have to feel empowered; you are in control of your life. If you don't feel that way you'd better get somebody to help you get there. You are in control of your life and your decisions. That is the only thing that is going to stop you becoming just another statistic based on other people's demands. That's what it all comes down to: your own dignity, your own pride has to make you feel strong about it, find a few like-minded people and stick with them. You'd be surprised; people you think are your friends are maybe undermining everything you stand for. Because it's your comfort zone; it's not necessarily they give you the support for everything you believe in. And they subtly can undermine what you really stand for.

Maybe it is time for us to look at our roll indexes: look at who makes you feel more empowered and who weakens you.

So, let me conclude by saying I wish you all that in the next few months that you find your soul mates in the real way, and God should bless you all. I should have my dancing shoes ready and be ready to come dance with you at your wedding. And that you should have a very healthy and blessed life; many years together. And thank you to the Centre for Jewish Life for creating these platforms for environments of warmth and inspiration.

Good to meet you all. Please see me as a friend.

MO Over 1,000 people have heard you speak through the course of the evening.

RSJ That's nice.

MO Here, at the Centre, through the synagogue [unclear] obviously you are supremely confident, you are an inspiration. May you continue for many, many years until, please God, [unclear]. We will invite you back. As I said, it was very, very accessible [unclear] centre.

RSJ If you send me your email I will send you some reading material.

MO We can provide it for you. We want to wish you continued success in your endeavours to inspire, direct and empower people.

MO We also have been recording Rabbi Jacobson. This is more for your friends who haven't managed to come today, so we'll send it out. There will be a report, pictures, including the transcript of what was discussed today. I also want to announce today, and you can tell your friends who want to know it, we've just finalised a next weekend experience. This was the first and we got tremendous feedback. And we're doing another one in April.

US When in April?

MO Beginning of April.

MO April 8th; put it in your diaries.

MO See me for more details.