

Whom to Marry?

By: Rabbi Yanki Tauber

A wise man once said that the most difficult question to answer is a question that has a simple answer.

Because a simple answer is the most difficult kind of answer to accept. A simple answer seems an insult to our intelligence, a making light of our dilemma. But often the most profound question or the most pressing problem does have a simple solution.

Whom should you marry? Unless you are the head of state of a superpower at a time of global crisis, no other decision you will make in the course of your lifetime will affect you as deeply and as irrevocably, for the better and for the worse, as this one. And no other decision will be made in as high-pressure circumstances, and in as subjective a state of mind, as this one.

What does the Torah, which the Jew regards as G-d's "blueprint for creation" and his own guidebook for life, say about what to look for in the person whom you are considering to accept as your partner in life? Something terribly simple.

The first marriage of which we read in the Torah is the marriage of Adam and Eve. Theirs, of course, was the ultimate "made to order" marriage: G-d Himself created the bride and presented her to the groom. When Adam said to Eve, "You are the only woman in the world for me," she knew he was telling the truth. There's a message here about how to regard your spouse once you're married, but not much guidance in how to *select* a husband or wife.

The next marriage described in the Torah took place a couple of thousand years later--the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca. By now, there was more of a selection--a bride had to be *chosen* for Isaac. Abraham decided not to send his son to do the choosing himself, but his trusted servant Eliezer.

Eliezer loaded ten of his master's camels with goodies and gifts (a generous dowry never hurt a match) and traveled to Abraham's old hometown, Charan (good family connections never hurt, either). Then he prayed (that *always* helps). Then he put his plan into action.

He waited at the village well. It was evening, and the young women of the village came to draw water. His plan went like this: he would ask a maiden for some water from her pitcher. If she says, "Draw your own water, buddy," forget it. If she says, "Please, drink your fill," that's better, but still not what we're looking for. If she says, "Drink, my lord, and I will give thy camels drink also" (that's how people spoke in biblical times)--she's the one.

Reams of commentary have been written on the story of Rebecca at the well. Many profound insights have been gleaned from the Torah's 67-verse account of Eliezer's mission. But one gem of an answer shines through them all in its pristine simplicity: marry someone with a good heart.

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26 October | 22 Cheshvan

Haye Soroh

Shabbat Begins: 5:24 pm

Shabbat Ends: 6:26 pm