

Sheva Berachot Dvar Torah

Nili and Micha

Just under 8 billion people live on the Earth today. Israel has a population of roughly 8 and a half million people, about 0.1% of the world population. Of the 15 million Jews living today, nearly 7 million Jews (about 45%) live in Israel.

When the Torah tells us in Breishit 2 “עַל-כֵּן יַעֲזֹב-אִישׁ אֶת-אָבִיו וְאֶת-אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד”, what are the chances that two people meant for each other will find each other? On paper, the probability is astonishingly small. Chazal tell us, though, that one of the reasons we place a cover over the Chuppah is to signify that we are under the שכינה, the Divine presence. Chazal remind us that there are three entities at the Chuppah, the Kallah, the Chatan and Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Pirkei Avot teaches us that הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים. What is יראת שמים? It is not fear or trepidation before the Divine, that would be pachad or chilah. Instead, יראת שמים is taking in the awesomeness of the Divine, realizing that everything that happens in this world is part of a grander, cosmic tapestry. God is part of the reason that people find each other but not just each other but that special, unique, completes-you-as-a-person individual. When each of you, Nili and Micha, look at each other, that is what you see.

We recognize the Divine over our heads at the Chuppah, we place mezuzot in the entranceways to our new home, we recite prayers of gratitude to HaShem for each blessing that we receive, be it food or water, special times, or special occasions. Why does our faith system inject God in everything we do? Why does our Jewish mindfulness reflect our Divine centeredness? Perhaps because each of us is here because of God – we are here together because, in some mysterious, cosmic way, God helped each of us find that special other person. We may not realize it at the time but that’s OK. God understands.

Doesn’t the text of the sixth Sheva Bracha itself amplify this Divine reality in our lives?. Who is HaShem other than the One who אשר ברא ששון ושמחה חתן וכלה גילה רינה דיצה חדוה אהבה ואחוה ושלום ending with v’reut? What is re-ut? Friendship. Who creates the possibility for Shalom and Reut? Hashem. Who creates openings for unbridled joy and rejoicing? Hashem.

Why does our text pair shalom and re-ut? Because true peace between two people can only be realized when there is true friendship. You guys, Nili and Micha, are true intertwined friends in the deepest sense of the word. This unbreakable bond of friendship, respect and dignity for each other, and romantic and realistic love generates the aura of peace that surrounds you both.

Another name for Hashem is Shalom since HaShem is fully Complete (shaleym). When a person feels completed by being in love and living with another person, their home is filled with peace. When a Jew feels the Hand of Hashem in her/his life, when she/he realize how blessed their lives are and experience the closeness of the Divine, they reach a place of Peace. Shalom v’reut.

The Talmud tells us in Berachot 16b that when Rabbi Elazar would finish his tefilah each day, he would recite “יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, שֶׁתִּשְׁכַּח בְּפוּרֵינוּ אֶהְבָּה וְאֶחָוָה וְשָׁלוֹם וְרֵיעוּת” May it Your Will, HaShem, our Lord, that love, sisterhood/brotherhood, peace and friendship will be within our lot.”

When the mishmar of kohanim would leave the Miqdash after their week of service and greet the incoming mishmar, the Gemara in Brachot (12b) recounts that the outgoing Kohanim would say to the

incoming Kohanim, " **אמר ר' חלבו: משמר היוצא המסיים את עבודתו בשבת זו אומר למשמר הנכנס** " **מי ששכן את שמו בבית הזה, הוא ישכין ביניכם אהבה ואחווה ושלוה וריעות** ", "He whose Name dwells in this House should cause Love, sisterhood/brotherhood, Shalom and Re-ut to dwell among you!"

As you, Nili and Micha, have entered a new phase of your life as a married couple, focused on your glorious future together and bonded by an unshakeable optimism and joy, let us who have come before you bless you as the Kohanim of Miqdash days did and say: May He whose Name dwells everywhere but even more tangibly in Israel and even more palpably in Yerushalayim, May God along with all of us bless you, Nili and Micha, that your life together be always filled with ahava, achva, shalom, v'reiut.

Mazel Tov.

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