

PARSHAT KI TEITZEI

5-11 Elul 5784
8-14 September 2024

Torah: Duet. 21:10-25:19
Hajtorah: Isaiah 54:1-10

What If You Mess Up?

Why does G-d tell you how to get divorced if He believes in marriage?

Not only does He believe in marriage, He believes that you should be married, and He wants you to be married to the person you are married to.

Why, then, does He allow you to get divorced? Not only allows it, but tells you how to do it?

As with all G-d's instructions in the Torah, getting divorced is a Mitzvah, a divine commandment. In fact, His instructions on divorce are very explicit. But why?

Because, having said what His instructions for marriage are, G-d doesn't abandon you when you get in trouble.

Because He is merciful and compassionate, kind and considerate, He gives you a second set of instructions, in case you can't follow the first set.

That's like a cookbook that tells you what to do if you ruin the recipe. Two of my children were once following the instructions on a package of cookie mix. One of them read the instructions aloud, while the other prepared the mix. The child who was reading said, "Now you're supposed to stir the dough fifty times." The other one exclaimed, "But I'm already up to a hundred! What do we do now?"

So, the first child said, "I don't know. I'll go back and see what it says to do." He checked the box, but the instructions didn't say anything about stirring the dough too many times. The two of them came to me and asked what they should do. "Should we throw it out? Should we

start all over? The instructions don't tell us what to do if we mess up."

G-d isn't like that. That's not how Torah - His set of instructions - is written. He tells you what to do if you ruin the recipe.

It's as though G-d says to you, "This is the person I have selected for you. This is the person I want you to be married to. You can't? It hurts too much? Then don't. Leave. But when you do, please shut the door behind you."

So, He not only tells us we may get divorced, He tells us how. "Here is the divine commandment for how to get in, and here is another divine commandment for how to get out."

G-d talks to us that way because He's married to us.

Like everything else that exists in this world, marriage is a reflection of what exists in the spiritual world. There is an absolute marriage that exists between G-d and us.

Marriage requires that something which you take seriously and strictly upon yourself, you are very lenient and accommodating about with your partner. G-d is married to us, and that He takes very seriously. He is committed to the relationship. Therefore, He is lenient and accommodating when we don't always live up to His expectations.

G-d says to us: "You messed up? Then try again. You blew it? Then here is what you have to do. You forgot? Then next time, try to remember. You forgot a second time? Try a third time." That's how we know that He's committed to the marriage.

Sometimes G-d does even better than that. He asks us what our

intentions were. For instance, He tells us not to mix meat and milk. What happens if we do? "Well," He says, "it depends on how much milk there was, and how much meat there was. And did you do it on purpose? Or was it an accident? If it was an accident, this is how you fix it. If it was on purpose, try not to let it happen again."

G-d expects you to be married, and to the person He has chosen for you. But He is compassionate and understanding when you tell Him that it's just too difficult. Maybe He intended for you to get married and then get out; maybe the laws for divorce are your "escape clause."

No. G-d intends for you to stay married. But if you can't, if it's too difficult for you, He understands, and He will help you out.

Does that mean your marriage was a mistake? You took a gamble, you lost, now admit it and get out? You made a mistake, so G-d is telling you how to fix it?

Wrong again. Your marriage wasn't a mistake. It was intended since the beginning of time. When G-d created your soul, six thousand years ago, He created your "intended" along with you.

Saying that you married the wrong person is like saying you gave birth to the wrong baby. Could you have somebody else's baby? A woman once said something like that to me. "You have how many children?" she asked, incredulously. I don't remember how many we had at that time, maybe ten or twelve. "Don't you know there are some people who can't have

Psalms Daily

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalm 117

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

Pirkei Avot (2:13)

Rabbi Shimon would say: Be meticulous with the reading of the Shema and with prayer. When you pray, do not make your prayers routine, but [an entreaty of] mercy and a supplication before the Almighty; And do not be wicked in your own eyes.

Aleph Institute

Hyman & Martha Rogal Center

5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412-421-0111

Fax:412-521-5948

www.AlephNE.org
info@AlephNE.org



ALEPH INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

children?" She was indignant. It was as if she were saying, "Give somebody else a break. Share a little. Don't have so many kids; let other people have a few." It doesn't happen like that. You don't give birth to someone else's children. The children that you have were meant to be yours.

As Albert Einstein said, "G-d doesn't play dice with the universe." If G-d doesn't play dice with atoms or molecules, then He doesn't play dice with hearts or minds or souls.

You are married to the person you are intended to be married to. G-d arranged it. He set it up; He predestined it from the beginning. In other words, His mind is made up that that's the way He wants it.

You don't want it? Fine. Since He is married to you, He says, "Whatever you want."

Will it spoil "some vast eternal plan," as Tevye asks in *Fiddler on the Roof*? The answer is yes. Yes, if you get divorced, you will spoil some vast eternal plan - G-d's plan. But will He let you? Will He help you? Yes, He will let you, and He will help you.

The reason that G-d allows divorce, and commands divorce, is because by doing so, He is teaching you how to be married. So, even though G-d has rules, even though He has laws, even though He has divine commandments, when you sin, He tells you: "You messed up? Try again. You made a mistake, and you admit it? Don't worry about it; you'll do better next time.

You did it ten times already? Ask for forgiveness, and I'll forgive you ten times."

That's exactly how you should be married—by treating your spouse the way G-d treats you. With that much mercy and compassion, that much kindness and consideration.

Your wife did it to you again? Forgive her again. She did it ten times? Forgive her ten times.

Be as committed to making this relationship last as G-d has been committed to making His relationship with you last. The moral is, by offering to help you get divorced, G-d is helping you stay married for all time. The way He has stayed married to you.

By Manis Friedman

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, September 8, 2024 - 5 Elul, 5784 First Chassidic Aliya (1777)

The first Chassidic Aliyah ("ascent" - immigration to the Holy Land), led by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk, and Rabbi Yisroel of Polotzk, reached the Holy Land on 5 Elul of the year 5537 from creation (1777 CE). They were all disciples of the 2nd leader of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi DovBer, the "Maggid of Mezeritch" and colleagues of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad.

Ezekiel Envisions Jerusalem's Downfall (428 BCE)

On the 5th of Elul, Ezekiel was sitting in his home in Babylonia, with the elders of the Jews seated before him. Suddenly, the hand of G-d fell upon him, and he experienced a vision in which he was transported to Jerusalem and shown all the abominations taking place there. He was then informed about Jerusalem's impending destruction, which indeed took place less than five years later.

Monday, 6 Elul, 5784 - September 9, 2024

Passing of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller, the "Tosfot Yom Tov" (1654)

Rabbi Yom Tov was a preeminent Torah scholar who served as rabbi in many distinguished Jewish communities in Austria and Poland. He is most famous for his Mishnah commentary, called *Tosfot Yom Tov*, which appears in most large editions of the Mishnah and is an indispensable tool for obtaining a thorough understanding of the text. He authored numerous other works as well, including a commentary on the halachic

work of R. Asher ben Yechiel (the Rosh), and Tzurat Habayit, clarifying the future layout of the third Holy Temple.

In his autobiographical work *Megilat Eivah*, R. Yom Tov describes how, when serving as rabbi of Prague, his enemies slandered him to the Austrian Emperor, resulting in his imprisonment and a death sentence. Thankfully, the verdict was later mitigated to a monetary fine and a prohibition against serving as rabbi in Prague.

Wednesday, 8 Elul, 5784 - September 11, 2024

Washington Responds to Newport Jews (1790)

The sexton of the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, wrote a heartwarming letter to President George Washington on behalf of the Jewish community, welcoming the President on his visit to Newport. In his letter, he expressed a vision of an American government that would permit all religions to live side by side in harmony, giving all its citizens the freedom to practice their religions.

On August 18, 1790, President Washington responded:

"The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its

protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

...May the Children of the Stocks of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid..."

Thursday, 9 Elul, 5784 - September 12, 2024

Nachmanides Renews Jerusalem community (1267)

Nachmanides (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) arrived in Jerusalem, after being forced to flee his native Spain, and renewed its Jewish community there. The synagogue he established is functional today, having been restored following the liberation of the Old City during the Six-Day War in 1967.

Birth of Dan (1566 BCE)

Dan, the son of Jacob and Bilhah, fifth of the Twelve Tribes, was born on 9 Elul in Haran. He lived to the age of 125.

Friday, 10 Elul, 5784 - September 13, 2024

Noah Dispatches Raven (2105 BCE)

On the 10th of Elul of the year 1656 from creation (2105 BCE), as the Great Flood neared its end, Noah opened the window of the Ark and dispatched a raven to determine if the flood waters had begun to recede.

Passing of R. Pinchas Schapiro of Koretz (1791)

R. Pinchas Schapiro of Koretz (1726–1791) was one of the greatest disciples of the Baal Shem Tov, and a colleague of R. Dovber, the Maggid of Mezeritch. His teachings were published posthumously in various books, such as *Likkutei Shoshanim* and *Midrash Pinchas*.