

This dvar Torah is in honor of Jonathan ('09, '10, '11) and Ora ('11) Ziring, at whose chuppah I had the joy and privilege of reciting a berakhah Sunday night. The mesader kiddushin was Rav Doniel Schreiber, an old friend from the first year of Rav Rosensweig's shiur at YU, who spoke eloquently and inspirationally about the connection between the Shloshet Y'mei Hagbalah, the Three Days of Preparation for the Revelation at Sinai, and the way in which Jonathan and Ora's separate lives were preparations for their life together.

I started wondering later on, though, about why we permit weddings during this time period – after all, wasn't the basic instruction for the original days "Do not approach a woman", which the Rabbis understand as at least as important for the women as the men? So why don't we have the custom of separating spouses during that period, let alone allowing weddings?

The best answer, I think, emerges out of a wonderful statement by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, Shlita. Rav Lichtenstein states that in the conflict between religion and humanism as to whether knowledge of G-d or rather knowledge of humanity constitutes the ultimate goal of human understanding, we side unequivocally with the religious. But, he adds, we believe that the best way to study G-d is to study humanity, the tzelem Elokim.

Now there was a time at which this was not so. At Sinai, G-d was revealed so directly that anyone could "point and see". In the presence of that blinding sun, people had perhaps no need to study the lunar reflections of their fellow's faces in order to know critical truths.

But after the death of Mosheh Rabbeinu, the practical halakhah lost its direct hotline to G-d, as Sinai was a one-time, never-to-be-repeated event. Sometime near the beginning of the Second Temple, the nonlegal tradition lost its direct access as well with the end of prophecy.

And yet – Sinai must be repeated each day, by every Jew. "Let them be as if new each day in your eyes" mandates a constant recommitment. This notion – that an initial moment of "naaseh venishma", of making an absolute commitment based on very limited information, must be made practically meaningful and valuable by constant moments of recommitment generated and inspired by greater knowledge, is itself a powerful connection between marriage and Matan Torah, and of course the marriage of G-d and Israel is a standard if nonetheless astounding metaphor for Sinai.

But I think there is a deeper connection. In order to properly receive the Torah, we need to do so in the presence of Hashem. But since we cannot look toward open Revelation, the three days before Shavuot are a time for Jews to look at one another and find the tzelem Elokim in each other, to know humanity so well that yediat Hashem emerges naturally. And this is a core purpose of Jewish marriage.

It follows, of course, that to be properly understood, Torah must be approached with awe for the greatness of humanity in general, and with deep appreciation of each human being that it affects. May the love and knowledge that Jonathan and Ora share be, now and throughout their lives, the source of great and ever-increasing depth in Torah for themselves and all klal yisroel.

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