

Beshallach

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The Gemora makes a rather ominous statement that making a *zivug* is as difficult as splitting the sea (*Sotah* 2a). Hearing this, most minds immediately jump to the conclusion that it means that just as it is very hard to split the sea, so is it very hard to make a match between people.

The Gemora questions this because elsewhere we are taught that a pairing of man and woman is actually announced in Heaven forty days before birth. The Gemora concludes therefore that the original statement only applies to subsequent marriages, should they prove necessary. Finding one's "first" soulmate pre-dates birth, but subsequent "soulmates" are difficult to find.

The Arizal explains that "second marriage" doesn't mean of a different person in the same lifetime. It means the same soulmate in a different lifetime (*Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 20). A person in the world for the first time has spiritual innocence which the angels can work with. But a person reincarnating to fix up past mistakes discourages angels from helping out with the *shidduch*.

The bigger question that doesn't seem to get asked is, "Hard for *whom*?" Certainly not for God. He just has to *think* about something and it is already history. The sea split the moment God decided it should, just like that.

Therefore, maybe what the Gemora really means is, "Just as it isn't difficult for God to split the sea, likewise is it easy for him to make the right *shidduch* for a person." And the Gemora's question and answer? Back up, not argument, perhaps just saying why do we need the one statement if we already have the other?

Okay, so when then do so many people have a struggle finding their soulmate, and do so many people have to struggle to keep them? Furthermore, what is the comparison? The problem with splitting the sea is taking two parts that already have *shalom bayis* and separating them from each other. A *zivug* is about finding two separate and very different entities and achieving *shalom bayis*.

But that's the point, isn't it? It is "hard" for God to split the sea but not because it is hard to cause the sea to split. It is hard because God loves unity and undoing it is contrary to His nature, so-to-speak. So, how much so therefore would God be prepared to help two strangers become one when their *yetzer hara's* fight to keep them apart.

This is alluded to, the Gemora says, by the words "*ish*—man" and "*ishah*—woman." They have an *Aleph* and *Shin* in common, which spells "*aish*—fire." What they do not have in common is the *Yud* of *ish* and the *Heh* of *ishah*, the first two letters of God's holiest Name. The message: While God is in a marriage, there will be *shalom bayis*. When He is not, then the marriage will be consumed by *aish* (*Sotah* 17a), which often means anger.

And therein lies the "difficulty" for God in making a *zivug*. Few

marriages start off perfect, and even fewer end that way. And yet, God is even prepared to have His non-erasable Name dissolve in water to make *mei sotah* (*Sotah* Water, not Soda Water) to promote *shalom bayis*, peace in the house. Similarly, He'll even hang around a struggling couple as long as possible to help them put out their "fire" and achieve *shalom bayis*.

And then there is the other side of the story, the people who struggle to find their *zivugim*, sometimes for years. That's hard for God too, Who prefers to see everyone happily married. But our idea of perfection is clearly different from God's at times, since He does everything perfectly while we rarely do.

Perhaps that is part of the Gemora's message as well. Maybe it is telling all of us that, no matter what your *zivug* situation is, God knows it all...does it all...worries about it all. That may not give you the "*shalom bayis*" you hoped for in the meantime, but on the cosmic scale, we're all in the same boat, trying to achieve personal perfection and a personal relationship with God, as He is with us, regardless of current marital status. We just have to work with what we have, and do the best we can, and the results will take care of themselves.

And may everyone looking for their soul mate find them one way or another, sooner or later, and be blessed with *shalom bayis* inside and outside.

New Seminar starting this week: Da'as: The Only Frontier. For details go to: <https://www.shaarnunproductions.org/seminars.html> (based on the new book of the same name available through Amazon and Thirtysix.org).

Only good news.

Good Shabbos,

Pinchas Winston