

Shalom Bayis Newsletter Issue 19

Do it for the kids, not really

By Rabbi Yehoshua Berman

“Divorce is out of the question; you’ve got kids!” That is an argument that is used by many shalom bayis mediators to convince a wife or a husband or both to stay together despite feeling strongly that they want to part ways. “Do it for the kids”.

BRIEF DISCLAIMER PAUSE: This article is not meant to imply that there is never a justification for divorce. My intention is simply to bring out a certain point that I feel may be helpful in some situations.

Others, though, argue strongly against this approach. They argue that a “do it for the kids” approach is just a manipulative tactic to keep two people who don’t care for each other together. Really, they (or at least one of them) do not have the feelings needed for the marriage to be healthy.

The “do it for the kids” people think that the damage that divorce may wreak on the children is so great that it must be prevented at all costs.



Now, of course, the “do it for the kids” proponents don’t expect that the couple will continue living together in animosity. They fully expect that the children will simply act as a motivating force for the couple to do the work that needs to be done in order to live together in peace and harmony.

The naysayers, though, argue that in many (most?) cases, all “do it for the kids” will accomplish is to bring bnei senuah into the world. If the couple is successfully guilted into staying together, despite their own feelings (or lack thereof), as a result of the “do it for the kids” argument; they will continue living together in disharmony. So say the naysayers.

I would like to suggest a possible middle-of-the-road approach: Do it for the kids, but not really.

Huh?

It’s like this. Let’s take, as an example, a case of a person who feels like he does not love his wife, or he cannot stand her, or whatever. For one reason or another, he feels like he just cannot continue to live with her. (This could just as easily be the other way around; I just happen to be using an example of a man).

Ok, but let’s ask him this: is there anything about your kids that bothers you? Is there anything about any of your kids that bothers you a lot?

If he has teenagers, the answer to that question is very likely to be a resounding yes.

Not let’s ask him this. Your child that there is something about her (or him) that bothers you a lot, do you think it could ever come to a point where you would disown your child because what bothers you has simply become too much for you to live with?

Assuming that this man’s mental health is in good shape, the likelihood that he would answer that latter question in the

affirmative is nil. A parent simply loves his child too much to let anything overpower that love.

Well, the fact that you love your child means you love your spouse, by definition. After all, your child is a composite of you and your spouse.

Chromosomes are the body's DNA packages; or, put otherwise, the stringy arrangements that contain the body's genetic coding¹. Most of the cells in the human body are diploid which means that they have 23 pairs of chromosomes, half of which come from the father and half of which come from the mother². There is something called uniparental disomy (UPD) – which is when a person receives two copies of a chromosome from one parent and no copies from the other parent – but this can sometimes lead to genetic disorders such as Prader-Willi syndrome (marked by uncontrolled eating and obesity) and Angelman Syndrome (marked by intellectual disability and impaired speech)³.

Whether you like it or not, for all practical intents and purposes, half of the genetic coding of your child is inherited from your spouse. In almost every cell of your child's body!

Of course, every human being is an individual and has his or her own particularly unique physiology, personality, and so on. That's what makes it so easy for our straw man to conveniently ignore his wife's "half" of his children. But the reality is, despite every single human being's unique individuality, there does exist in every child a huge amount of influence ("half", if you will) from each one of the child's parents. Inescapably, a whole lot of your spouse is "in" your

¹genome.gov/about-genomics/fact-sheets/Chromosomes-Fact-Sheet

²genome.gov/genetics-glossary/Diploid

³medlineplus.gov/genetics/understanding/inheritance/updimprinting/

child. Therefore, I would argue that when you love your child, it means, by definition, that you love your spouse. At least the part that was inherited by your child (which is a lot!). As unpalatable as it may be for our straw man, there is so much of his wife in his child.

Accordingly, I think we can resolve the above two opinions by telling him, “Do it for your children; but not really”. Cultivate a conscious awareness of the fact that every time you experience feelings of love and endearment for your child, you are by extension, and by definition, experiencing feelings of love and endearment for your wife.

Your child came from your spouse as much as she came from you. All the lovable and delicious qualities that you see in your child are “half” her/him. So do it for your children because they are an extension of your spouse as much as they are an extension of you.

If you love them, then you love your spouse. If you feel endearment for them, then you feel endearment for your spouse. All you need to do is reconnect with that love and endearment.



*If you enjoyed this newsletter, **please share it** with two other people who would likewise benefit from it. Thank you!*



*To receive the Shalom Bayis Newsletter **directly to your inbox**, click on the link below or email rbsa613@gmail.com.
<https://stats.sender.net/forms/egO2ke/view>*



*For questions or to **book a consultation**, email me at rbsa613@gmail.com*