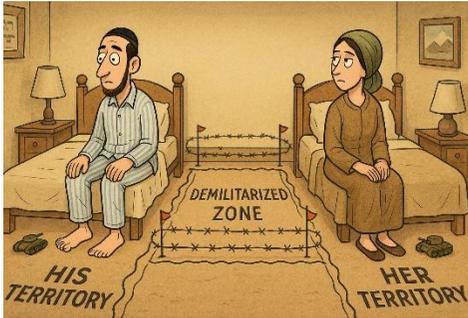


Shalom Bayis Newsletter Issue 24

“The One” or “All-In-One”?

By Rabbi Yehoshua Berman



“I need him to support me on this.”

“I need her to support me on this.”

It’s the crux of many a marital clash, isn’t it?

Everyone needs moral support. Especially when things are tough and you’re expending an enormous amount of effort to ride the wave instead of being drowned by it.

You’re fighting with all your might to make it happen. To succeed. To persevere. To thrive.

All you need is a kind word.

Instead, you get lack of understanding. A hint of disapproval. Maybe even more than a hint...

It stings. No, it burns!

“Of all the people in the world, aren’t *you* supposed to be by my side?! Aren’t *you* supposed to be the one who roots for me through thick and thin?! Where are you? Where have you gone...?”

When you're giving it your all, when you're all-in and it's for the team but you feel like your co-captain is just not with you... few things can feel more painful.

Often, what is missing is healthy, open communication to facilitate navigating each other's emotional needs (perhaps with some input of a professional as well).

What if you've tried that, though, and the misfire seems to not want to go away? Is something off? Maybe. That can happen too. Perhaps you could use a different approach (or a different therapist).

But there is another angle that is worth considering as well: sometimes it might be more a matter of misaligned expectations.

You know, heavy traffic is an incredible drag. There are few things that fray the nerves as much as heavy traffic. But...

It's a part of life.

If you get in your car at 7:30am and expect to be able to get from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak by 8:30am on the dot, the only thing you'll be barreling towards real quick is uber-frustration.

A lot of us have this sense that our spouse needs to be an "everything". A friend, confidant, adviser, listener, empathizer, co-worker, co-strategizer, a system of "checks and balances" (read: parent or teacher), a devoted helper (read: employee or child), and, of course, a romantic partner.

As human beings, we have lots of different interests and needs, and our lives include lots of different types of relationships. We've got parents, siblings, spouses, children, friends, neighbors, co-workers, employers, and the list goes on.

Each social relationship has its own unique role to play in our lives.

And in their lives.

While a desire for your spouse to be the foundational, primary source of emotional support and partnership in your life can be perfectly understandable, to expect that a spouse will be an all-in-one might just be unrealistic.

Before you come to the conclusion that s/he is just not with you, please think carefully. Are there any aspects on which you do get some expressions of support?

Support doesn't necessarily have to take the form of "I really appreciate what you are doing". Support is validation.

It's an expression of value and meaning.

"I hope they realize how valuable your work is" can be as profound an expression of support as any.

Even something like, "You know, with what you're doing, they should give you a raise" is just another way of saying, "In my eyes, what you're doing is really important."

Please. Think carefully before you come to the conclusion that s/he is just not there for you.

It's not that such a thing cannot happen.

But it's worthwhile considering that maybe what's really going on is that you expect cross-all-frequencies support, or a certain specific form of expression of support... and maybe that's just something that your spouse cannot consistently or naturally provide.

Maybe your husband truly appreciates all the time and effort you put into your teaching job, but his neural network is not adapted to taking in fine details of weekly parsha projects.

Maybe your wife really does appreciate the fact that you are working so hard to support the family, but her heart is just not hard-wired to hear about the all the trappings of the more ambitious side of money hunting.

When those needs aren't met — not out of apathy, but simply because your spouse doesn't have that particular skill in their toolkit or their temperament is hardwired too differently — it doesn't mean you're doomed.

It might just mean that you may need to diversify your human relationships portfolio a bit more and find someone else that can be with you on that particular wavelength.

After all, there is a reason why Hashem put us in a world in which we have lots of different relationships.

Your spouse is without a doubt “the one”, but they don't have to be the all-in-one.

If this message resonated with you, please don't keep it to yourself. You know at least one person—maybe a sister, a cousin, a friend—who needs to read this today. Forward it to them now. You'll be giving them a gift.



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