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The Concept of Soulmates in Torah & Kabbalah

*by Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok
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It has been ordained by the highest authority that men and women be attracted to one another. Unfortunately, most of us only recognize the lowest level of sexual attraction, that which is biological. Here, in western society there is something that has come to be known as "love at first sight." This experience is almost entirely biological, with no spiritual element to it whatsoever. Yet, it is this superficial level of love that most people are looking for. This hope for magic is mostly a waste of time. However, this does not mean that there does not exist that which today is referred to as "soulmates."

In the Talmud (Sotah 2B) a very peculiar statement is made: "Forty days prior to the formation of a child, a Heavenly Voice cries out saying "the daughter of so and so is destined for so and so." From this teaching, it appears that Judaism acknowledges that there is such a thing as soulmates.

This becomes ever more clear in the writings of the Zohar (Mishpatim) and in the writings of the Ari'zal (Sha'ar HaGilgulim). Yet, the topic of soulmates is a very complex one involving many things. A full review of this subject will have to wait for another, more expanded forum, yet I know I owe it to you my readers to cover this most important topic as best as I can here.

It must be understood that what today is called a soulmate, i.e., one special person for one special person, is not exactly what the Talmud is talking about, even though it appears that way on the surface. As is made clear in the Kabbalistic works mentioned above, Torah is never deterministic. While relationships are planned to go right, we sometimes steer things wrong, and this is usually through sexual sin.

Although Heaven might have ordained for us the perfect match, it is usually we that somehow botch things up through forbidden sexual intercourse. Our future potential for finding the right mate is then best summed up by the rest of what the Talmud in Sotah says, "Matches are as difficult for G-d as was the parting of the Red Sea" (at the Exodus). What this means is that once we mess things up (and I think that most of us qualify for this category) finding the right mate becomes an extraordinary hard job, with only Divine intervention making it happen.

However, G-d is good to us, although we may not be good to ourselves. In His great mercy, G-d provides for us a way out of our own self-made messes, but we have to follow His directions, or we will forever stay unhappy in the quagmire of singledom.

The secrets of reincarnation reveal to us that upon a soul's first visit to earth, being that it has no prior record of sins needing to be rectified, all things will come into one's life rather easily, including the meeting of and bonding to one's intended soul mate. However, all this changes the second time around. Once our souls come back to this earth to fix those things we messed up in the past, then not everything is going to run as smoothly as it was in our first incarnation. Now we have spiritual "baggage" and this slows us down. Yet, G-d is still good, although we are still bad.

There is a very great secret revealed in the Sha'ar HaGilgulim with regards to reincarnation that most do not know: there is a difference in cosmic law as to how men and women reincarnate. Usually, it is only men who have to reincarnate to continue to rectify their souls. Women, on the other hand, follow a different law. The rectifications for their souls are tended to above in Heaven. By the rule, women do not reincarnate for the sake of individual reincarnation. They do, however, reincarnate to help the soul of their mate with his incarnation. To put it bluntly, most female souls do not need to be here on earth for their own sakes; they have come for the men folk. You guys pay attention!

The holy Zohar (1, 55b; 3, 24a) teaches that no female soul or male soul is a complete human soul without the other. Male and female are two halves of the same whole. What affects the one, therefore, affects the other. This becomes most clear when it comes time for marriage.

If and when an individual, while growing up follows the sefirotic pattern for growth and maturity as outlined above, the chances are that due to proper sefirotic alignment he/she will draw to themselves their intended soulmates without too much difficulty. However, not everyone is so blessed to be raised in such a balanced spiritual way. Most of us have had to suffer the confusions of the bankrupt morals of western culture, which unfortunately has even penetrated deep into the heart of the Orthodox community.

Remember that sexuality is the doorway to spirituality. When we mess up sexually by being active at too early an age and in all the wrong ways, this takes a definite toll on our spiritual selves. When one is clear of sexual encounters, one's soul is pure and

simple. To a soulmate, it is spiritually clear and thus soulmates can spiritually see one another through distances of time and space. However, once sexual activity begins, regardless of the content, be it in a marriage or not, if the marriage is not to the soulmate the spiritual bond between soulmates becomes clouded and, as the Talmud teaches, "shidukhim" (matchmakers) then become minor miracles.

The above mentioned section of Talmud in Sotah contains within it very profound Kabbalistic secrets. As I have always said, it is the Talmud that is the deepest Kabbalistic text and not the Zohar. In order to understand the Kabbalistic significance of this section of Talmud I must first quote it to you in full and then turn to the great Kabbalist, Rabbi Yosef Haim (the Ben Ish Hai) and his Kabbalistic commentary to these words.

With regards to matches Sotah 2B states:

"Rabbi Shmuel Bar Yitzhak said that when Resh Lakish would lecture . . . he would say: "A wife is selected for a man according to his actions . . . Rabbah Bar Bar Hana said in the name of Rabi Yohanan: "Joining together couples is as difficult as the parting of the Red Sea" . . . Truly did not Rabbi Yehuda say in the name of Rav: "Forty days before the formation of a child a Heavenly voice proclaims: The daughter of so and so will marry so and so; the house of so and so will go to so and so; and the field of so and so will go to so and so [thus all is prearranged]. This is not difficult to explain. The latter deals with the first marriage, while the former deals with the second."

Rabbi Yosef Haim learns from this that when a soul is new to the world, it is said to be enjoying its "first marriage," and thus all things are prepared for him. Yet, when due to sin such a soul must return, this is called one's "second marriage." At this time, one's portion is dependent upon one's merits. If one is deserving then one receives one's full portion. If not, then one's portion is given to another. This is true with one's finances and it is true with one's soul mate.

More than this Rabbi Haim reveals something most profound. Being that a woman's soul does not need to reincarnate other than for the sake of her husband, this, therefore, means that her soul is on a higher spiritual level than that of her husband. Therefore, from the physical side a wife is dependent upon her husband for financial support. Yet, from the spiritual side a husband is dependent upon his wife for spiritual support. It is this state of conflicting dominance that causes the strife in most marriages today.

What then is a man (a couple) supposed to do? The answer to this is also given in the Talmud. "A wife is selected for a man according to his actions." If a couple wants for there to be peace in the home at the spiritual level, which then gives rise to peace everywhere else, then a man must rectify his actions and properly make himself to be worthy of a good marriage.

Notice that the Talmud places the emphasis for change on the man and not on the woman. This is because it is the man who is the active force of change and movement in accordance to the sefirotic pattern. What he changes spiritually will lead to physical changes. The secret of a good marriage, therefore, is a healthy dose of spirituality wherein which the man takes the lead in directing his family's spiritual values. In this way, the wife can spiritually regain the lost respect for a man who has fallen out of line with the supernal sefirotic pattern.

While this is the rule for the couple that is already married, for those who are still single, we are truly awaiting a miracle from G-d, one that can be compared to the parting of the Red Sea. Moreover, why was this miracle chosen as the example of the difficulty in getting the right people together? It is not because G-d had a hard time doing this miracle. G-d does not have any hard times. Rather this miracle manifested G-d's providence at our weakest hour, when the children of Israel had no other option or hope. The parting of the Sea showed us that just as G-d can separate that which naturally belongs together (i.e., water) so can G-d bring together those things that naturally belong together but have separated. However, it all depends upon us and our alignment with the sefirotic pattern.

G-d's light descends to earth through the medium of the sefirot. That light travels the path of the sefirot in a precise and unchanging manner. If we wish to receive the abundance and blessings of G-d that by nature travel the sefirotic road, then we too have to be on the road to benefit from what passes along it. In other words, when we are aligned with the sefirot, then we benefit from the descending light. When we are out of alignment, we are like an empty glass waiting to be filled, yet not standing under the faucet. The water is pouring out, yet the glass remains empty simply because the glass is not under the faucet. So it is with us.

Rabbi Haim also mentions an interesting point as to why the Talmud specifically states that the daughter of so and so is destined for so and so, emphasizing the female first. He states that the Talmud is subtly referring to the secret Kabbalistic order of creation. Quoting the Ari'zal, Rabbi Haim writes that just as the feminine aspect of G-d was manifest first in creation prior to the male, so is the mention here of the female prior the male.

For the one who wishes to find his/her soulmate, a tremendous amount of effort must be made, not to find the right person, but rather to make yourself to be the right person. This I need to explain.

When due to our sins we men are required to reincarnate, our female soulmates need reincarnate with us, in order to help us rectify our sins. Yet, once we are all back in the physical world for a second, third, fourth or more time, our amount of Divine direction is diminished due to our actions. Therefore, not only do we men suffer, but our female soulmates suffer as well. Not only can we men become corrupted due to the physical temptations that blemish our internal sefirotic pattern, our female counterparts can

become equally corrupted, and all due to us. When we men mess up things the rippling effect goes far and wide.

Although the Heavenly court does not hold a child responsible for his crimes until he reaches puberty (and doesn't punish for crimes until the age of 20), nonetheless, the blemishes from our previous lives follow us into this life and cloud our spiritual vision from seeing our spiritual reality. One of those spiritual realities clouded by our blemishes is the vision of our soulmates. This blemish now exists equally between men and women.

We all want to find the right person for us, yet we often fail to recognize who this is. Something within us tells us what to look for, but usually that something is very vague and not subject to rational and cognitive logical analysis. This is the blemish.

Simply by becoming more rational and logical is not going to solve much. There is much more to rectification than simple clear thinking. There must also be clear action. And the actions of which I speak are those of the Torah. It is by doing G-d's commandments that we clear up our spiritual blemishes and heal our weakened spiritual insight. When our spiritual eyes are healed and are seeing well, we will see who it is that G-d has waiting for us.

The possibility exists, however, that due to our sins, men, our beloved soulmates will find their ways into the arms and love of another man, who can remain their husbands throughout their lives. This indeed poses a problem for us (and them). Yet, G-d, in His mercy, has even thought of a way around this one. I now will reveal to you one of the greatest secrets with regards to soulmates, one that reveals G-d's ultimate wisdom and compassion for us His creation.

Sparks of Soulmates

What is one to do if one's soul mate is lost? One's soul mate can end up happily married to another person if we did not do the right thing at the right time. G-d forbid, but it does happen that our soulmates might meet with an unfortunate accident which takes their lives. Are we then supposed to live out the rest of our lives lonely and miserable? G-d is not so cruel to keep us from that which we so desperately need. We, on the other hand, are not so merciful to ourselves as G-d is to us. This point I will further elaborate on at another time. Yet, for right now, let me reveal to you how gracious G-d is to us.

Souls are a funny thing. They can come and go, from one body to another, without us even knowing that they were there. While reincarnation is the method of soul movement that most are familiar with, there is another type of soul movement that is known only among the Kabbalists. This type of soul movement is called "Ibbur" (not to be confused with the ibbur mentioned above with regards to the levels of spiritual growth). This Ibbur is what I define as a "piggy-back" incarnation. In other words, when we are born a soul is given to us. This is our soul. It stays with us from birth until death. Yet, this is not necessarily the only soul that we have. Sometimes for reasons ordained

in Heaven, G-d will allow a second (third or fourth) soul to enter into our bodies and to merge with our primary soul. These secondary souls then become a part of us, be it for a time or permanently.

This is how G-d works to fix soulmate situations that have gone awry. If, for whatever reason, the person destined to be our marriage partner fails to become so, G-d in His wisdom and mercy does a shuffling of souls. In other words, that aspect within the soul of another that makes that one our soulmate can be taken from the original person in whom it was placed, but is now otherwise occupied, and given to another who is not so occupied. In this way, our new partner, although originally not our destined soulmate actually becomes our destined soulmate. And the one who was destined to be our soulmate now becomes the actual soulmate of the partner with whom he/she is with. This act of spiritual soul shuffling requires that G-d move some mighty mountains all for the sake of our happiness.

You think it is easy for an aspect of soul to simply shift from one body to another, without the conscious personality of the person becoming aware that a part of them is very much being changed? G-d is truly amazing in that He performs these acts without us ever becoming consciously aware. All that we know is that we stop pining for a lost love and begin to recognize that the person whom we are with is actually the one we have been looking for all along. The person whom we are with might not have been our soulmate for the longest time, but if we merit it, G-d is gracious and miraculously turns the situation around and that person becomes our soulmate.

So you see, there is actually real hope for all of us. True love is just a mitzvah away. Truly did our Sages speak when they said matchmaking is as hard as the parting of the Red Sea. It truly is a real miracle for which each of us has to be forever grateful to our Creator and King.

Now that we know what can be done, we have to learn what must be done. Relationships between men and women need guidance both internally and externally. The sefirotic pattern provides for us the internal guidance, but, like everything else internal, sometimes the reception is cloudy and we still do not see the clear picture. To help us in these matters G-d has provided for us another great blueprint for human behavior. These are the stories of the men and women of the Bible. By observing their archetypal interactions we learn how it is that we ourselves are to behave.

The Torah teaches different lessons for women than it does for men. This should come as no surprise after all that we have learned. One thing that comes through loud and clear is the important roles women take in maintaining and directing the marital relationship. The entire Bible is full of stories expressing the merits of this or that woman and how they save their families. Not too many men are portrayed in the same light. The Torah thus provides very sound advice and insight into a woman's role in marriage. Torah places this emphasis on women to highlight the rectification of the collective feminine in the universe. As women properly act out their roles here on earth, so they assist in the realignment of the sefirotic patterns of the supernal "Faces."