

The "Kedushei Israel" Congregation of Kiryat Gat, Israel

Hapardes 43, Kiryat Gat, Israel. Website: <http://kedosheisrael.org>



TEN SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BRIDE AND GROOM

By Rabbi Sharon Shalom

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- 1. THE ATTRIBUTE OF LISTENING – THE LISTENER AS WELL AS THE RESPONDANT:** Listening to one's spouse is an antibiotic against the bacteria of loneliness, fear and lack of security, and to a certain degree prevents frustration and powerlessness that lead to fights and arguments. Therefore, husband and wife, it is up to you to adopt this medicine of listening. The meaning of listening is that, notwithstanding the love that exists between the two of you, you remain completely different from one another. Just as your faces are different, so are your ideas. Each of you is the image of G-d with self respect, ideas and desires, even if it seems unimportant and trivial. Let each one finish speaking. In the end, even if you do not agree, you can understand your spouse. You can understand each other's sensitivities and then express your ideas. We know the feelings of a person who knows that he is really being listened to and is given full attention. Suddenly he is relieved, smiles and feels alive. Only if we honestly listen can we succeed to knock down barriers. Be quiet and listen without busying yourself with the thought of how to respond afterwards. Sometimes one can do everything by him/herself – there is no lack of solutions and no lack of advice. What is missing is that somebody knows how I feel. **Therefore**, listening means to know what your spouse feels. The closeness of G-d is good for one; it is not good for man to be alone. So please, listen and listen more and remove worry and prevent argument.

- 2. HE WHO REJECTS IS REJECTING HIS OWN FAULTS** – When a person looks at himself in the mirror and suddenly finds dirt on his face, he will surely not go to his image in the mirror but will put his hand on his face and remove the dirt. Or take the man standing near the water and looking at his reflection in the water. If he plays, the reflection plays, and if he bends over, it bends over too. Such is the heart of one man to another. If he loves, the other loves him, and if he hates, the other hates him too. So too with our spouse. **Therefore** know that if you love your spouse you cause him/her to love you. That is to say- do not wait until there is love and then return love. Rather is it the giving of love that arouses love. More than the giving comes as a result of love, love comes as a result of giving.

The Baal Shem Tov said, "The man who is completely pure and never did anything to harm anyone, cannot see any wrong in anyone, and cannot hear anything bad that anyone may have done, because G-d did not invite him to see or hear any evil." **Therefore** when a person sees a man or a woman doing evil, or if he has been told by anyone that they did wrong, he knows for a fact that he has a small portion of the same thing himself, even if he is a tzadik [righteous person]. That is to say that when you see wrong in your spouse, be it anger, lack of respect, lack of seriousness, sorrow, or lack of enthusiasm, this is a sign that heaven is showing you that whatever you see is to be found in you. In other words you are the cause thereof. **Therefore**, before you try to correct and give advice to your spouse, check yourself.

3. **ACCEPT DIFFERENCE FOR EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT** – If you do not accept those that are different, that is, your spouse with his/her differences, that means that you do not accept yourself. The Midrash tells us "It is written, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One' – If you change the *daled* to *resh*, [*acher* – other instead of *echad* – one] you will destroy the world. "Do not bow down to any other [*acher*] G-d. If you change the *resh* to *daled* you will destroy the world." The difference between the *resh* and *daled* is a petty detail [the thorn of the letter *yod*], but it seems that on this petty detail rest mounds of meaning. The "*echad*" [one] as against the "*acher*" [the other, Satan]. So if you continue to behave or believe that you will succeed in changing your spouse or that he will have to answer to the standards that one desires for him, there will be great difficulty in building a harmonious, peaceful and pleasant life. You will simply be disappointed time and again. Therefore we must all recognize the weaknesses of our spouse and the limits of his/her ability, and realize that in any case it is possible for one to direct one's actions while leaving room for the personality of one's spouse. The secret is that it is not necessary to waste resources in changing our spouses, but rather to know him/her and to accept him and in any case his weaknesses will change into drivers for affection and empathy. Attempting to change means that you do not accept the creation of G-d. Furthermore it is very important that every one should fulfill himself in his own way. Each of you can develop in an individual way without concern for the connection between you. Therefore those who seek partnership will find the differences growing, while those who seek the differences will find partnership will follow.
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4. **PARTNER FOR THE MEANS, NOT FOR THE ENDS.** Groom, please pay attention to this secret. Your wife has a big secret. She wants you to be with her on the way. Not behind her and neither in front of her, but at her side all the way. So do not hold back on praises. Show interest in her and in her sensitivities. Your wife can meet every plan and assignment as long as you are at her side. **Therefore** your wife will want to include you and share the way with you - the results being less important. **Therefore** sentences such as "Why are you telling me. This is unnecessary." or "Do this or that" or "Do what you want" is dealing with the results and not with the way. You could lose her and she could distance herself from you. **Therefore** every detail is important.
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5. **WIFE: PRAISE YOUR HUSBAND** – There is a great secret that you should understand: Your husband is very interested in your well-being. All of his ambition is that it will be good and pleasant for you. **Therefore** never reserve his praises. Moreover never spare words about how good and how pleasant you feel, in the framework of your intimate relations. Expressions like these put adrenalin into his blood. Praise and reinforcement motivates your husband to do even better. So it is very important that in every sentence that you say to your husband begin with praise and ends with whatever else you want to say. **Therefore** woman! If you want to give your husband pleasure and satisfaction, show him that you are happy. A husband who hears only complaints from you will have problems with his intimate relations. Please, ladies, take nothing for granted.
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6. **THE NEIGHBOR'S GRASS IS GREENER** – Sometimes we take everything we have or everything that we are accustomed for granted. Therefore mankind tends to despise that which is routine. "May your fear of Me teach you the commandments of man," **Therefore** there is nothing that can be taken for granted in marriage. Everything that seems obvious is soon found to be misunderstood. Anything that does not require cultivation, effort and investment will erode and will have no meaning. **Therefore** two things are necessary: First, you must be thankful and value everything your spouse does for you, and take an interest in every thing he/she does, and value the things you do together, the shared pleasantries of everyday life. Together with this, always look for something new, to change the routine, to go on vacation or a trip, study together or anything else. It is important that you do things together and that you always seek new things. These events will refresh your connection and will allow you to understand that you have very green grass and it is real. The neighbor's grass only looks green from afar. This is a great delusion.
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7. **MISTAKES ARE ALLOWED BUT YOU MUST CORRECT THEM** – Prophecy does not accept the answer that a man who destroyed or who sinned must bear his punishment. **Therefore** only G-d understands the secret of repentance. The man who has sinned, says the Master of the Universe, shall repent and he will receive atonement. G-d understands that if man has made a mistake he can fix it. The correction is to not stay in the same place, but to change location, but in any case the punishment expiates. To what can this be compared? It is like a man upon whom an object is being thrown. When he sees the object coming at him, he moves from his place, thus saving his life. So if you made a mistake, or became angry, or perhaps expressed sarcasm towards one another, or if you forgot something important, know to immediately admit the mistake and request forgiveness, for forgiveness is required in order to come closer. This is how a spouse who is hurt can understand forgiveness. It must not be the kind of "sorry" that has overtones of "I will sin and repent" but rather a whole-hearted request for forgiveness. Show the sensitivity of remorse. Show your embarrassment. One way or the other demonstrate that you understood that you hurt your spouse. This way moves the injured spouse to sprout the seeds of love, the deep connection that blossoms from the depths of the heart. The "I'm sorry" is a way to reconnect by means of retreat and the secret reduction of ego. If we do not reduce our egos and it looks as if we want to correct mistakes, we are likely to cause our spouse to feel fear and lack of trust in his/her spouse. A spouse that does not feel secure is likely to come to revenge or grudge-bearing and intensification of the ego through a desire to keep one's place without giving in. **Therefore**, know that the world is round. When we distance ourselves from a point, we are also coming closer to it, from you I flee to you.
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8. **IF A PERSON IS WORRIED** he should either talk about these worries or act to ensure that these worries are decreased. Worries can be lessened via discussion. A marriage is a meeting between two different people. It is the nature of change that arguments arise and there are tensions and disagreements around various things. Sometimes the arguments lead to fear, fatigue and despair with one another. Sometimes, for unknown reasons, the couple deals with the arguments in a round about way, and sometimes there is even a situation whereby they ignore it, hoping that it will evaporate into the air. This is not right. Do not keep anything to yourself. Whatever you have to say to your spouse, say it! Try to say it in such a way that they will fall on attentive ears. The tone in which things are said is most important. Don't put it off. Speak about it. Try to have at least one meal together, or sit together for light conversation. During that conversation, concentrate on what you feel, without trying to correct your spouse or accuse him and demand changes. There is a great need to understand that nothing in this world is perfect, and that disappointments or arguments are in themselves the meeting place between two different people. Once, a man who had divorced his wife and remarried said to me, "If I had known that this is what awaited me with my second wife, then I would have preferred to stay with my first wife." So keep speaking to each other, for worry is reduced via conversation with others.

- 9. LOVE IS NOT LOST, BUT IT IS DIVIDED** - Life is very complex and is likely and sometimes to drown in taking care of the children, in making a living and there comes the feeling that love is no more. Some couples find this out later, when the children marry and leave home. Suddenly husband and wife face each other and do not recognize each other. Suddenly they are strangers. Therefore understand that love is not lost, but is divided or changed and you must always find it within the home. Therefore, invest in the direct connection between yourselves. Do not stay merely on the functional level of fulfilling assignments and meeting schedules. There is a need to grease the mechanism of the system. The grease is not the tasks or the children. It is the love. It is important not to say tomorrow, for tomorrow may be too late. So it is of great importance to find a way to establish direct contact, such as going out together without the children or additional dates that will help you find and renew love. This is an injection of energy into your relationship.
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- 10. THERE IS DEATH [MITA] AND THERE IS BED [MITA]** – It is important not to take your sexual relationship lightly. This is an inseparable part of your married life. Often it is more than a result of love and good relations; it is the cause of them. When intimate life flows well there will be a direct influence on the rest of the relationship between you at home. It is interesting that among the three commandments written in the Ketubah that are of Torah origin, one of them is "*onah*" – having sexual relations. This is not only for the purpose of bringing children into the world, but for pleasure and drawing closer in intimacy. Do not make light of this. This is not a side issue or an assignment. It is the goal! Together with this, if there is no prior preparation, then the act itself may become merely technical.
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**A PRAYER TO G-D, THAT HE MAY GRANT US BLESSING
AND SUCCESS IN ALL THAT WE DO.**

Lovingly,
Sharon Shalom