

A tale of two sisters

By: Dr. Leah Adams

At this time of year, around Tish'a B'Av, there is a story commonly retold of two brothers who each anonymously donated grain to the other in anticipation of the other's needs. During this season when, as a nation, we are rebuked for Sinas Chinam, (loosely translated as baseless hatred), this story is meant to remind us of the importance of Vi'Ahavta Li'Reacha Kamocha. I have a different story, a story of two sisters. Read on and see what an impact this has.

Once upon a time there were two sisters. They were close in age, just 13 months apart. As small children they were so close that when they would see each other in the school playground during recess, they'd run up and hug each other. Over time they each developed their own interests and, as is common in adolescence, each went their own emotional way. Since they were a year apart in age, their seminary experiences occurred a year apart as well. Although they were away from each other during those two school years, they spent time together in the summer and talked by phone. Once the two finished seminary and returned home, the clothes swapping and jewelry borrowing continued as it had been when they were younger. They even shared some of the same friends.

It so happens that the younger sister met a nice young man while in Israel. Although they were young, and their relationship lacked the formalities of a set-up, it flourished into a mature relationship. Once this younger sister returned from Israel it was clear that she and this young man wanted to get married. Since the two were in different countries, a long delay was inevitable. The older sister became of age to enter "the Parsha" and their mother began inquiring about appropriate suitors. Concerned with her older sister's feelings, the younger of the two asked her sister if she would be hurt if the younger one got married first.

The older sister was genuinely happy for her sister. She explained; "You and I are different people with different personalities. We would be destined to marry different people. There is no reason for you to wait for me, my Beshert will

come too someday.” With that Bracha, the younger one made plans with her intended to get engaged at the end of June when he would be coming to the USA.

In the meantime, the mother kept up the pursuit for a shidduch for her older daughter. One day, in early May, a neighbor suggested a young man from the same town. The two checked each other out quickly and decided to go out. This was the older sister’s first date and the excitement was palpable. After each date, an immediate call to the Shadchan revealed that the couple wanted to see each other again. Within a few weeks, they were ready to get engaged! All of this came about even before the younger sister’s future Chasan arrived in the States.

In May it was the older sister who set aside her need for personal honor in and, in June, the younger sister had her turn. How, you ask? The younger sister’s engagement had been planned months in advance, the ring had been purchased and all that stood in the way was the distance separating the couple. Everyone in the family knew that the “Mazel Tov” would be in June, they had been anticipating the future Chasan’s arrival in the States and watched while the younger sister checked the days off on her calendar.

Even with all of this anticipation of her own impending rise to the status of Kallah, as soon as the older sister was ready to get engaged, the younger sister rejoiced. She never once suggested that the newer couple wait (only) two weeks so that her engagement, which had been planned first, could be announced first. She never once expressed that her joy was being diminished, or the limelight being taken from her, by her sister’s quick engagement. A L’chaim was held for the older sister and then a Vort. Within a week the young man from Eretz Yisroel arrived with a ring for the younger sister. Once again a L’Chaim was celebrated with the Vort for the second couple, (or is it really the first couple), planned for after the Three Weeks.

Rebbetzin Chaya Heyman, in the name of her husband, Rav Leib Heyman, Z”TZL gives over an interesting explanation about the relationship between Moshe and Aaron. It is said that Moshe was concerned about going down to Mitzrayim to free the Jews because he was worried about Aaron’s reaction to his

younger brother's rise to fame above him. After all, in Sefer B'reishis, every time a younger brother was seen rising above his older brother, major strife occurred. Think of Yishmael and Yitzchok, Eisav and Yaakov, and even Yosef and his older brothers. It is for this reason that the Pasuk states, "Halo Aaron achicha halevi . . hine hu yotzai likrasecha vira'acha visamach bilibo" Behold, Aaron your brother is approaching you to greet you, and he is happy for you (even) in his heart. This Midah, this reaction to his brother's rise to fame, actually became Aaron's claim to fame.

Just think what an amazing story this is. The older sister in the story above was able to set aside her honor as the older, (translated chronologically more suited) sister ***in her willingness to step aside to allow her sister to get engaged first!*** The younger sister was able to set aside her need for honor as the first intended Kallah ***in her willingness to step aside to allow her sister to get engaged first!*** In the older sister's case, the proximity of her engagement to her acquiescence certainly seems not coincidental. What a beautiful concept this is, Hashem seems to allow Simcha and personal happiness to become ours when we least demand it. This not only holds true with the way we feel about ourselves, but holds true in our relationship with other people as well. The more we play second place to the pursuit of honor, the more we place the needs of other's above our own, the more honored we become. You are probably wondering how I know this story, well . . . the characters are my daughters! Mazel tov, mazel tov!

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