



What is the Connection Between the Splitting of the Sea and Matching Soulmates?

Being "In *Shidduchim*"

I personally never went out on a *shidduch* – an arranged date or a blind date. Actually, this is not exactly true. Before my first meeting with my husband of 38 years, there was a bit of arranging unbeknownst to me! My husband, who was then a single guy of 27, had arranged that I would be invited to the same Shabbat table as him. He had noticed me on my way to the Yeshiva lunch room, as he walked by when the men returned to the Yeshiva after finishing their lunch. Aware of the often-prolonged process of seeking a suitable marriage partner that many of my students and other singles endure, I'm grateful that I was spared this hardship by getting married young. The Talmud compares finding one's soulmate to the splitting of the sea:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף ב/א אמר ר' יוחנן וקשין לזווגן כקריעת ים סוף שפאמר (תהלים סח) אלהים מושיב יחידים ביתה מוציא אסירים בכושרות...

Rabbi Yochanan said, it is as difficult to match couples in marriage as was the splitting the Reed Sea, as it states, "G-d settles the solitary in a house; He takes the prisoners out into prosperity..." (*Tehillim* 68:7); (*Babylonian Talmud, Sotah* 2b).

People who have waited long to find their soulmate can testify that finally standing under the marriage canopy feels like being released from prison. I always understood the comparison between the splitting of the sea and matchmaking as an inverted comparison. In Hebrew, the word *מַיִם/mayim* – 'water' is only found in the plural, as you cannot separate only an unconnected drop from the great waters. Thus, as difficult as it is to split waters which are always united, so is it difficult to splice two separate beings to become one. Yet, there are many more eye-opening parallels between matchmaking and sea-splitting.

Split and Splice

It is hard to understand that matchmaking and the splitting of the sea are considered as *קשה/kashe'* – 'difficult' for Hashem. How can anything be difficult for the Almighty? The Chazon Ish explains that the word, *קשה/kashe'* doesn't necessarily mean 'difficult,' as nothing can be difficult for the Master of the Universe. Rather, *קשה/kashe'* denotes Hashem's intervention into the natural flow of cause and effect. When Hashem engages in overt suspension of nature, that is called *קשה/kashe'* – 'difficult.' Both *Shidduchim* and the splitting of the sea are evident intercessions into the randomness of nature (based on an article by [Eliezer Eisenberg](http://www.berotbatayin.org)). The continuation of the Talmudic passage quoted above describes the predestined nature of soulmates:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף ב/א ארבעים יום קודם יצירת הולד בת קול יוצאת ואומרת בת פלוני לפלוני... Forty days before the formation of the fetus, a *Bat Kol* (Heavenly Voice) goes out and proclaims, "The daughter of so-and-so for so-and-so..." (*Babylonian Talmud, Sotah* 2b).

Similarly, the splitting of the Reed Sea was predetermined as it states,

ספר שמות פרק יד פסוק כז וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת יָדוֹ עַל הַיָּם וַיָּשָׁב הַיָּם לִפְנוֹת בִּקְרֹא לְאִיתָנוּ... "So, Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and toward morning the sea returned to its strength..." (*Shemot* 14:27).

The word לְיָתֵנוּ // *l'eitano* – ‘to its strength’ can be unscrambled to לְיָתֵנָּה // *l'tenao* – ‘to its condition.’ Accordingly, the midrash explains that the Reed Sea was created on condition that it would split for the Israelites (*Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* 5:5). Thus, the splitting of the sea was preordained in the same way that soulmates are preordained from before birth. If these matters are predestined, then aren't they part of nature? If so, why are they called ‘difficult’ suspensions of nature? The ‘difficulty’ is that, although they are predestined, Hashem withholds them until we are worthy to let them happen through our steadfast emunah, heartfelt prayer and *hishtadlut* (effort). We need complete faith that just because we still haven't found our soulmate, and even if we have many strikes against us, we will indeed, ultimately find our soulmate, at the right time, that only Hashem knows.

Meeting with Matchmakers

Yet, emunah and prayer alone is not enough to find our soulmate.

ספר שמות פרק יד פסוק טו וַיֹּאמֶר ה'שָׁמָּה אֶל מֹשֶׁה מָה תִצְעַק אֵלַי דִּבֶּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיֵסְעוּ:

“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel and let them travel’” (*Shemot* 14:15).

The Israelites had to make the sea split through their own effort and *mesirat nefesh* (self-sacrifice) by starting to walk into the water. So, what is the equivalent effort needed in order to find one's soulmate? The answer is very individual and differs from person to person. It could mean working on ourselves by refining our character to [“become the ONE in order to find the ONE!”](#) as articulated by my friend, Bari Lyman. She further teaches, that there may be several blocks deriving from unconscious fear-filled ‘stories’ caused by a lack of emunah that peoples’ unconscious mind program them to think. Working on these blocks can be compared to releasing prisoners and freeing oneself from limiting ‘mind spins.’ I highly recommend working with a professional such as Bari. It states, “A prisoner cannot release himself from prison” (*Babylonian Talmud Berachot* 5b). Meeting with matchmakers and calling them monthly as a reminder is another vital, much needed effort. About ten years ago, I had two students who were both in their mid-thirties and eager to get married. One got a list of matchmakers and went to work making numerous phone calls and setting up meetings. The other relied on her emunah and prayer, believing that at the right time, Hashem would send her soulmate. Not surprisingly, the first student has been happily married for several years whereas, the other is still single. Another important aspect is the effort required to check references. Not everyone is as ‘lucky’ as I was – when, as a newly Torah-observant, inexperienced teenager, knowing nothing about the dating process in the Torah world – to find a wonderful man from an excellent family. I know several young women in their early twenties, already divorced from unstable men, with severe mental illness. I also know others who went out on uncomfortable meetings with men who had completely different lifestyles and goals from them. All this could have been avoided through the proper checking of references and talking with others who know the person (not necessarily on the list of references given out).

Parents' Involvement in Children's Shidduchim

How involved should parents be when our children are in the marriageable age? In the secular world, as well as some very modern orthodox circles, children are left to stumble in the dark, finding or not finding their marriage partners on their own. In some Yeshivish and Chassidic circles, the parents spend months in cross-examination of references, and in police detective work before allowing their child to meet the prospective match. The meeting is then only with the escort of the parents, who wait in the adjacent room. Between these two extremes, there are many nuances of middle ground, depending on the *minhag* (custom) of each community. Torah

observant, FFB children in their early twenties and especially if younger, need the guidance of their more experienced parents. How can we expect them to find out vital, often hidden information about a suggested date? Young people could rush into unfortunate marriages in their eagerness to join the ranks of their friends, who are already parents. Especially with the accelerating divorce-rate, it is the responsibility of caring parents to apply their greatest effort into supporting their children through the shidduch process. In addition, it is a special time of closeness with our children before they break away to start their own families. Still, everything must be in the right balance.

Soulmates – In Hashem's Hand

I don't believe in going overboard with the *hishtadlut* of triple checking, or being overprotective, for which Ya'acov was greatly punished. See *Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* 77:9. Although, "Sometimes something worth doing is worth overdoing," let us not forget that, ultimately, finding a person's preordained soulmate comes directly from the Hand of G-d.

ילקות שמעוני בראשית פרק כח רמז קיז

רבי יודן בשם רבי סימון פתח אלהים מושיב יחידים ביתה מטרונא שאלה לרבי יוסי לכמה ימים ברא הקב"ה את עולמו א"ל לששה דכתיב כי ששת ימים עשה ה' וגו' מאותה שעה ועד עכשיו מהו עוסק אמר לה יושב ומזווג זוגים איש לאשה ואשה לאיש וכו' (ומאריך במדרש רבות קחנו משם) יש שהוא הולך אצל זווג ויש שזווגו הולך אצלו...

Rabbi Yudan in the name of Rabbi Simon began, "G-d settles the solitary in a house..." (*Tehillim* 86:7). A matron asked Rabbi Yossi, "In how many days did Hashem create His world?" He answered her, "In six days, as it is written, 'In six days G-d made [heaven and earth...]' (*Shemot* 20:11). "Then from that time and until now, with what does He occupy Himself?" He answered her, "He sits and makes matches, a man for a woman and a woman for a man etc." Sometimes, he goes to his soulmate [as in the case of Ya'acov] and sometimes his soulmate comes to him [as in the case of Yitzchak... (*Yalkut Shimoni* 28:117)].

Rabbi Frand explains that when it comes to finding a mate – Providence will handle it.

The natural tendency, when working hard to accomplish a certain goal, is to forget that although Hashem wants us to make the effort, our final accomplishment is completely in Hashem's capable hand. Perhaps matching soulmates is not only קָשָׁה/*kashe'* – 'difficult' for Hashem. Rather the dichotomy between *hishtadlut* and *emunah*, which are both necessary in the shidduch process, is equally considered to be קָשָׁה/*kashe'* – 'difficult' for us. Just as it is 'difficult' for Hashem, to withhold our preordained soulmate, in order to allow us to become worthy to find him or her through our own efforts, so is it difficult for us to apply the greatest efforts into finding our soulmate, while simultaneously retaining steadfast *emunah*, that at the end of the day, it is no one but Hashem, that ultimately will send our true soulmate.