Shalom Bayit and the Essential Difference

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Genesis 4: 1

Harmony between husband and wife is the fundamental basis of a Jewish home. In the Jewish family, men and women have different obligations and fulfill different roles. Because we are conscious that the Creator fashioned us as two different beings. With talents and traits that are necessary to synergize our marriage.

We look alike But we are different. Very different. So different that I'm not sure if you could classify men and women as belonging to the same species. I do not mean only in the physical realm, but more than anything else in the psychological and mental area. Nowadays, thanks to advances in medical and scientific technology, we know much better how the brain and the hormones work. And scientists have discovered that we are far more different than we supposed when John Gray taught us in 1992 that men came from Mars and women came from Venus. The dissimilarity between men and women is very deep and has a biological origin. This is masterfully explained, among others, by neurosurgeon Simon Baron-Cohen, a specialist in biological psychology,
in his revolutionary book: "The essential difference".

Recognizing these differences was never more necessary than in our days.

First, because the level of interaction and communication that is expected between men and women, especially in marriage, is much more intense and active than it was since the beginning of humanity. In the recent past, interaction between spouses

was limited and practical. Conversations about the running of the house, material needs and the education of children, etc. The emotional conversation – the exchange: "how you feel / how I feel", a dialogue that for the woman is natural and therapeutic – had no place between husband and wife. Women talked about their problems and emotions with other women: mother, sister and neighbor. Today, however, the expectation of interaction between husband and wife is different. A modern wife *intuitively* expects her husband to empathize with her emotions, her problems, her frustrations, her doubts and her fears. Most women ignore that for men an emotional dialogue does not come naturally. Men, in general, do not excel in the art of communicating emotions and feelings. For a man, participating in an emotional conversation requires learning and training. Because when a man faces a problem, he does not feel the need to share or talk about them with other people. Not even with his wife. Man has a different mental mechanism (opposite to that of a woman!) that helps him to process his fears and emotions.
Many men, on the other hand, think that wives talk too much, or that they talk in circles, or that they do not know how to express clearly what they want. They expect their wives to be Alexas or Siris. They do not know that women not only speak to communicate a problem but that they also use communication to vent their problems. Of these fundamental differences between men and women, little is known. Not many people have ever heard that the two brains are "different". I know that because I have given several classes on "Female Brain vs. male brain" and I do not usually find many people who know these topics.

Secondly, in our days a large part of modern society does not consider it politically correct to speak of psychological –much less of biological– differences – between men and women. The ultra-feminist view postulates that what distinguishes men from women are strictly social and cultural elements. According to this new liberal ideology "difference" is equal

to “inequality”. Therefore, they reason, we should educate the new generation in a neutral way, neither as men nor as women. And then, the differences will disappear.

Ignorance of the innate differences between the genders, the fact that so little is taught about it, and the deliberate denial of these differences, is largely responsible for the present crisis of the institution of marriage.

What to do?

The first time the Tora speaks of love is in reference to Adam and Eve. And in that context, the word the Tora uses to describe *love* is “yada'”, to know”: “Adam knew Eve, his wife” (Genesis 4: 1). It is very difficult – or impossible – to love another person without knowing her or about her. Without knowing how he or she thinks, how she reasons and especially how he transmits and communicates his emotions. Learning about our spouse and his or her gender, is learning to love our spouse.