

Potential, Promise, Hope and Goodness

Moments of potential, promise, hope and goodness. That's what we're here to celebrate today. Two people finding one another and deciding to share a life together is something truly worthy of celebrating. Josh grew up at the Jericho Jewish Center, and his parents have been members here since 1997. Amanda his long-time girlfriend, then fiancée and now soon-to-be wife, has been at JJC for numerous High Holiday services and other events. How great that we as a congregation can celebrate this milestone.

You might be thinking, “How on earth does an *aufbruch* or marriage connect to Parshat Tazria/Metzora? This parasha is one for which rabbis are often paralyzed at what to say to relate to their congregation. As I see it, we need go no further than the first half of the second verse of the parsha ... וילדה... “Speak to the Children of Israel saying, ‘a woman who conceives and gives birth.’”¹ No we're not here to say we can't wait until you have children but rather there's a comparison to the birth of a child and a couple coming together. As a

¹ Leviticus 12:2

relatively recent parent, I can vouch for the fact that when a parent looks at his/her child, s/he sees all the potential for growth, development and goodness. Your parents are *kvelling* at you right now having found your *besheret* and sanctifying this moment in front of G-d and Israel.

It reminds me of the famous song “Sunrise Sunset” from *Fiddler on the Roof*:

(Tevye)

Is this the little girl I carried?

Is this the little boy at play?

(Golde)

I don't remember growing older

When did they?

(Tevye)

When did she get to be a beauty?

When did he grow to be so tall?

(Golde)

Wasn't it yesterday

When they were small?

(Men)

Sunrise, sunset

Sunrise, sunset

Swiftly flow the days

(Women)

Seedlings turn overnight to sunflowers

Blossoming even as we gaze

Each person blossoms into who s/he is meant to be, undergoing scrapes and bruises along the way and yet developing spiritually over time. Rabbi Ben-Zion Bokser wrote, “Each person is both part of the

human race and a unique being with a particular spiritual and potential capacity. Thus, the doctrine of human equality asserts that each individual is distinct.”² When a couple is formed, each member continues to develop, not only as an individual but also as a partner with his/her spouse. This adds a level of complexity to the mix, for how can two individuals with their own wants and desires coalesce into a unit? It requires communication, compromise and growing together in order to accomplish this.

Josh and Amanda-today we are celebrating your choosing to build a life together and all the potential, promise, hope and goodness that comes along with that. You mentioned to me that you work as a couple because you’re both busy, dedicated to your careers as a cardiologist and criminal attorney, respectively. You have learned how to develop your own identities and now have an opportunity to strengthen your identity as a couple. It is wonderful to celebrate with you with your congregational family at the Jericho Jewish Center. Mazal Tov on

² Ben-Zion Bokser, *The Talmud: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 30.

reaching this joyous day! To crystallize the joy of this celebration, I ask that you turn with me to Page 838 where we read responsively.