The Search for Eternal Love

Part 2

Dating vs. Marriage



**#1**

**Mishnah Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers) 5:19**

*Any love that depends on a specific thing, when that thing is gone, the love is gone; but love that does not depend on a specific thing will never cease ...*

**Questions:**

**(a) Why is the desire to feel love such a potent motivator for us? Why are we designed with such a powerful drive? Is it a purely a physical, instinctual drive given to us in order to populate the planet, or is it a deeper need?**

**(b) Do we associate love with any of the following feelings: a sense of expansion, belonging to something bigger than what I was before, an ecstasy of being connected to something beyond myself, or a feeling of greater oneness?**

**#2**

*Mitchell and Jackie are dating for two years. Jackie really wants to get married within a year or so, and Mitchell isn't quite ready for such a commitment. He doesn't think that marriage is that important.*

**Question: Would you suggest they break up or continue dating?**

**#3**

# **Jeremy Nicholson M.S.W., Ph.D., “3 Reasons Why We Don't Commit to Relationships,” www.psychologytoday.com**

*… A look at the modern dating landscape reveals that something in our attitudes toward commitment have changed. Younger men and women seem to be increasingly postponing or avoiding marriage and serious relationships ...*

**Questions:**

**(a) Why do so many people suddenly seem to be commitment-phobic?**

**(b) Why are more and more people afraid to commit to marriage and prefer to date indefinitely?**

**(c) Should something be done about it? If yes, what?**

**(d) Is there a real difference between dating and marriage?**

**(e) What is the purpose of dating?**

**(f) What is the purpose of marriage?**

**(g) Why do many people get divorced not long after they get married after happily dating for a long time?**

**#4**

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| **Marguerite Fields, “Want to Be My Boyfriend? Please Define,” www.nytimes.com, May 4, 2008 – Winner of the Sunday Styles national essay contest.**  *Recently my mother asked me to clarify what I meant when I said I was dating someone, versus when I was hooking up with someone, versus when I was seeing someone. And I had trouble answering her because the many options overlap and blur in my mind. But at one point, four years ago, I had a boyfriend. And I know he was my boyfriend because he said, “I want you to be my girlfriend,” and I said, “O.K.”*  *He and I dated for over a year, and when we broke up I thought my angsty heart was going to spit itself right up out of my sore throat. Afterward, I moved out of my mother’s house in Brooklyn and into an apartment in the East Village, and from there it becomes confusing.*  *So, a few days after the chat with my mom, when I found myself downtown drinking tea with my friend Steven, I asked him what he thought about dating. He has a long-term girlfriend, and I was curious how he viewed their relationship.*  *“The main thing,” he said, “is I don’t mind if she sleeps with other people. I mean, she’s not my property, right? I’m just glad I get to hang out with her. Spend time with her. Because that’s all we really have, you know? I don’t want her to be mine, and I don’t want to be anybody’s.”*  *I sucked my teeth and looked over at the next table, where two men sat opposite each other. One looked over his shoulder and gave me a closed-mouth grin.*  *Steven explained that it’s not a question of faithfulness but of expectation. He can’t be expected not to want to sleep with other people, so he can’t expect her to think differently. They are both young and living in New York, and as everyone in New York knows, there’s the possibility of meeting anyone, everywhere, all the time.* |

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| **Rabbi Akiva Tatz, The Thinking Jewish Teenager’s Guide to Life, pp. 72-4**  *Marriage should be a relationship between two people in which each one gives entirely to the other. Each one gives of himself, herself entirely, utterly and fearlessly. The result is that something is built which far surpasses what each individual is as an individual, a combination of two souls each fueled and fired by the other, far greater than each alone could have ever dreamed possible…And the remarkable result is that when you give yourself away entirely, you discover yourself most sharply.*  *The paradox of this deepest of relationships is that to the degree you are willing to give yourself away, exactly to that degree you find yourself. And when you have found yourself this clearly and sharply, you must be willing to put all that you have found, all that you have become, back into the relationship. You must give again and more deeply. And again you will discover a new depth in your own inner being. And again you will give it away. This is the beginning of the relationship we call love.*  *That is the Jewish idea of marriage: two people giving so intensely that they find themselves each entirely within the essence of the other and yet each discovering a unique identity more sharply and more independent.* |

**Questions:**

**(a) Of these two excerpts, which writer seems to have a more confident and powerful sense of identity?**

**(b) Based on what each says, why do you think this is true?**

**(c) Which assumption resonates with you more, which seems more valid? The first view: I am better off independent, ensuring my identity; or the second view: true independence and a greater sense of identity come when I am able to give myself over to someone who will cherish and safeguard my commitment?**

**#5**

**Question: What's your takeaway from today's discussion?**