



לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

When Someone Pushes Your Buttons

There is a beautiful idea that has accompanied me for years: the people around us are often mirrors. Not because they are exactly like us, and not because everything they do reflects something we do ourselves, but because the places where we react most intensely usually reveal something that already exists within us.

Think about how often we explain our reactions this way: "I can't stand stingy people because I'm such a generous person." "Rudeness drives me crazy because I always try to be polite." On the surface it sounds logical. But if that were really true, then the kinder, more generous, and more considerate a person became, the more irritated they would spend their life. Every flaw they encountered would infuriate them. Yet we all know people whose goodness seems to make them calmer, not angrier.

Very often, what hurts us is not the behavior itself, but the wound it touches.

Take someone who grew up in a home filled with criticism. One child may become highly critical of everyone around them,

while another may become the ultimate people-pleaser, constantly trying to avoid disapproval. Outwardly they look like complete opposites. Inwardly, however, they may share the very same wound: the fear that they are not worthy simply as they are.

That is why two people can witness the exact same behavior and respond so differently. One barely notices it, while the other feels deeply hurt. The difference is not necessarily in the behavior. It is in the place inside that was awakened.

This is especially relevant in dating, where it is so easy to dismiss someone with the words, "They're just not for me." Sometimes that is absolutely true. Not every uncomfortable feeling is a sign to continue a relationship. But sometimes, before we walk away, it is worth asking a different question. Instead of only asking, "What's wrong with them?" perhaps we can also ask, "Why did this affect me so deeply? What is it touching inside me?"

The same is true for those of us privileged to help others find their match. If we want to guide people with wisdom and compassion, we first have to know ourselves. It can also give us a completely different perspective when a suggestion we are convinced is "perfect" is turned down over something that seems so minor to us. We naturally think, "Why are they making such a big deal out of this?" But what if the issue isn't the trait itself? What if it is pressing against one of the deepest wounds they carry? We don't always know another person's inner world, and what looks insignificant from the outside can feel

enormous to someone whose heart has been shaped by different experiences. The more aware we are of our own wounds, the less likely we are to project them onto others or mistake them for objective truth.

Shlomo HaMelech teaches us, כמים הפנים כמים - "As water reflects a face back to a face, so one heart reflects another." Sometimes Hashem sends another person into our lives not only to challenge us, but to hand us a mirror.

During these Three Weeks, when we are called to repair the fractures that led to destruction and to increase Ahavat Chinam, perhaps one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves and those around us is the courage to look into that mirror. Not to blame ourselves, but to heal. Because the more we heal the places that ache within us, the more room we create for understanding, compassion, and ultimately, for deeper and healthier relationships. ■

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Founded in Israel in 2019 and led by Rav Rimon, **Shagririm Balev** - a social online matchmaking initiative - has taken the dating scene by storm. With over 10,000 candidates and 3,000 Ambassadors, in Israel and the US, Shagririm Balev is averaging a Wedding every 2 days!

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