The Search for Eternal Love

Part 1

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**#1**

**Question: Do you believe in love at first sight?**

**Mark Twain**

*No man or woman really knows what perfect love is until they have been married a quarter of a century.*

**Mignon McLaughlin**

*A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person.*

**Question: What do you think about these statements?**

**#2**

**Daniel Jones, Editor, Modern Love, www.nytimes.com Jan. 31, 2014**

*I have sifted through roughly 50,000 stories that have crossed my desk. I have noticed people wrestling with…[one] question…above all others. From the young: “How do I find love?”*

**Question: Why is it so difficult for so many people to find love?**

# #3

# National Marriage and Divorce Rate Trends, www.1.usa.gov/1dMPvI2

*In the United States, there is one divorce approximately every 36 seconds. That's nearly 2,400 divorces per day, 16,800 divorces per week and 876,000 divorces a year.*

**Question: What could be a reason for this?**

**#4**

**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. What is an example of love that is dependent on a specific thing? The love of Amnon for Tamar. And what is an example of love that is not dependent on a specific thing? The love of David and Jonathan.*

**Questions:**

**(a) What are some examples of things that people depend on in relationships?**

**(b) What can be so bad when love is conditional?**

**(c) What, according to the Mishnah above, is the definition of everlasting love?**

**(d) Is it a realistic expectation to love unconditionally?**

**(e) Being that we live in a physical world full of things, how is it possible to have love that does not depend on something? What then do we love? If you say love depends on “nothing,” then how does it exist?**

**(f) If one is encouraged to love unconditionally, does it mean that external factors, like beauty, wisdom, character traits etc. should not play any role in a relationship? And anyone can be your “soulmate?”**

**(g) The Mishnah concludes that love that is not dependent on a specific thing “will never cease.” Does this mean love is eternal? Is this a source for everlasting love? Does love live on even after a person dies? Or is love at best “till death do we part”?**

**(h) Can you apply the rules of the Mishnah to all kinds of relationships – e.g. between man and G-d?**

**#5**

**Mishnah Pirkei Avos 5:16**

*… What is an example of love that is dependent on a specific thing? The love of Amnon for Tamar …*

Amnon and Tamar were half siblings, both children of King David from different mothers (although in Jewish law they were not related at all because Tamar had the status of a convert, who legally has no relatives). In order to satisfy his desire for Tamar, Amnon tricked her and ultimately violated her. Afterwards:

**Shmuel (Samuel) II 13:15**

*Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that his hatred for her was greater than his love for her had been.*

**Questions:**

**(a) How is it possible to go from being in love with someone to hating this person?**

**(b)** *Alice: “What should I do if I don’t love my boyfriend anymore? We have been together for six years.”*

**What advice will you give Alice?**

**Dan Savage, “How Should a Person Handle a Heartbreak?” www.nytimes.com, February 13, 2015**

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| Every relationship you're ever going to be in is going to fail – until one doesn't.  So, while it stinks to be single on Valentine’s Day, and while it stinks worse to have been dumped right before Valentine’s Day, try to look on the bright side: Your most recent failed relationship was obviously doomed – even if it wasn’t obvious to you – but now you’re free to enter into a new relationship. And that relationship, your next relationship, could be the one that doesn’t fail.  But what should you do in the meantime? While you’re still reeling from the pain of your recent breakup?  …Pour your heart out to a few patient, indulgent friends who are under orders to nod sympathetically no matter how unhinged you sound.  Wallow in your misery – lean into it, even – for two weeks.  Then knock it off.  Get out of your apartment. Go places, do things, see stuff. Go to the gym, take a walk in the park and go see movies, plays and concerts. Hang out with the same friends who are now under orders not to listen to you talk about your breakup – it’s their turn to talk about their lives, it’s your turn to listen.  And if you’re still reeling from the pain of the breakup? Pretend to be happy. Fake it. Because acting like you’ve got it together can actually help you get it together. |

**Question: Should we discover that until now we were pursuing the wrong type of love, do we allow ourselves new hope?**

**#6**

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

*… And what is an example of love that is not dependent on a specific thing? The love of David and Jonathan.*

**The Pirkei Avos Treasury, part 3, p. 353**

*No two people were in a position more conducive rivalry than David and Jonathan. Jonathan was the crown prince, the national successor to his father Saul (Shaul) as king of Israel … David was the rival, the interloper who had been anointed by Samuel (Shmuel) to take away the throne that should have been Jonathan’s. … David’s and Jonathan’s souls were bound together. Even though each knew that the other stood in the way of his succession to the throne, their love for each other was not affected (see I Shmuel 18)*

**Question: What is the recipe to achieve unconditional love?**

**#7**

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