

Infusing Spirituality Into The Home

The Differing Needs of Men and Women

Every husband and wife need to find a point which unites them and work towards reaching it, so that they will feel their partnership. Previously, it was explained that a Jewish home needs to have *ruchniyus* (spirituality) infused in it. It was explained briefly and generally, and now we will explain this in more detail.

Everyone consists of a *guf* (body) and a *neshamah* (Divine soul); we are each a combination of the physical and the spiritual. In a marriage, the husband has a body and soul, and the wife has her body and soul.

All of these four aspects are coming together in marriage and will encounter one another. Just as we can encounter clashes within our own personality, such as the contradiction we face between our body and our soul, so is it possible for the husband's soul to clash with the needs of his wife's soul, and the same is true vice versa.

When a man's motivations on this world are mainly geared toward the physical, then the conversations he has with his wife are [mainly] physically-oriented. When all he talks about with her are physical needs and desires, such a home resembles a non-Jewish home. If all they do is chat, go on walks together, and speak about work and clothing and purchases with each other – then all they speak about with each other is worldly matters, and such a home will be centered around This World. It will not be a true Jewish home; it resembles exactly a non-Jewish home.

However, the other extreme is bad too: if a husband only seeks to build a spiritual relationship with his wife, this will not be enough to sustain their home. A true Jewish home is built on a solid connection between the spouses which involves **both** their body and soul. Husband and wife must be connected with each other both in the physical and well as in the spiritual.

In the previous chapter, we explained the nature of their **physical** connection [that they must not make the mistake of being totally body-oriented, and they must realize that they are souls too]. In this chapter, we will explain the nature of their **spiritual** connection that they must strive for. But we will first emphasize that a “Jewish” home is to live a spiritual kind of life, as opposed to a body-oriented life; each of them must strive to live a spiritual kind of life, as much as they can do.

A true Jewish home is when *ruchniyus* (spirituality) is revealed in it, every day. We will focus here on a certain point about the spiritual connection between husband and wife which is very fundamental.

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Man and woman differ in their physical needs, and that all of us know, more or less. But the spiritual differences between man and woman are even more complicating to understand, because *ruchniyus* (spirituality) is harder to understand. The first difference is that a man usually takes more the rational approach whereas women take the more emotional approach.

If both of them are living spiritually, there will also be differences. A man works mainly through his intellect, so he wants to “build” the home sensibly. A woman, though, takes the more emotional path, which means that she doesn’t seek to “build” it rationally. She wants a good home of course, but many times she does not know how to “build” it properly to go in the will of Hashem...

That is the rough outline. We will explain the difference now more in detail.

The Void of Spirituality In Today’s Homes

Let’s take a look at a Jewish home today in which there is an atmosphere of Torah in the home, which is supposed to represent the ideal “Torah home”. That’s what it’s called, but what has it become today? What do the husband and wife do?

The husband gets up in the morning, goes to daven, then he goes to *Kolel* and learns for at least 6-7 hours. All day, he is immersed in *ruchniyus*. The wife is doing whatever she’s doing, running the home. She is not immersed in *ruchniyus* during the day like her husband is. A husband is learning Torah all day is living in the *sugyos* (sections of Gemara) that he is learning, but a wife is involved all day with worldly matters, as she takes care of the children, dresses them, and does their laundry. It is all a *mitzvah* that she is doing, but she is still living in the material side of life.

So lives of husband and wife are being experienced very differently. All day he is involved with pursuits of *ruchniyus*, while she is involved all day in the physical responsibilities of life. Let us ask ourselves: Doesn’t this create a problem?

Of course, one can simply answer to this that each of them is doing their role: A man has a *mitzvah* to learn Torah, and a woman is not commanded to learn Torah; her task is to run the home and raise the children. If she merits it, she can stay at home with the children and not have to work, and if she doesn’t have that luxury, she goes to work. But in the end of the day, a wife lives in the material side of life.

The home might be called a “Torah home”, but it can have no Torah in it! The husband lives a life of Torah, and maybe he even says wonderful *Divrei Torah* at the Shabbos table, but what about the wife? She lives in a world in which there is almost no Torah in her life. Her husband’s *Divrei Torah* isn’t enough to satisfy her need for Torah.

A man merits to learn Torah in the *beis midrash*, so all *Kolel* men all have some *ruchniyus* in their life, more or less. The husband comes home after a long day of learning and now he meets up with his wife. How can they feel connected to each other, when they are each living such different kinds of lives?

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Even if the wife *davens* every day and says *Kerias Shema* every day (we don't discuss here if she is obligated or not in this), still, how much *ruchniyus* does she actually feel in her life? Usually, very little. The *ruchniyus* that she feels in her life is coming from the fact that she knows that she's helping her husband live a spiritual life, by taking care of the physical needs of the home and thus enabling him to learn with fewer things on his head; but although she accomplishes this, *she does not actually feel ruchniyus* revealed in her life from just this. She feels only the material side of life that she is involved with during the day.

What results from this? It does produce an ideal Torah home. It is a home with "*Kolel*" in it, and surely the *Kolel* has the Torah in it – but this doesn't help the home. The mere fact that the husband is in *Kolel* and that the wife is a *Kolel* wife, is not enough to infuse *ruchniyus* into the home. And as a result, the husband and wife cannot form a complete bond with each other. He is living a spiritual kind of life, learning most of the day, maybe saying *shiurim*, growing in his *ruchniyus*, while she is not. She finds herself in a very different world than the world that her husband lives in.

Idealistic Women

Until now we only addressed one kind of *frum* woman. But you may have recognized that there is another group of Jewish women who face a whole different problem than this: Girls who didn't learn in the mainstream seminaries, who gained the knowledge of their heritage through seminars that are geared towards *baalei teshuvah*. These girls have acquired an impressive amount of Jewish knowledge, *hashkafah* (ideals), and matters of deep thought.

What happens when these kinds of girls get married? It's hard to understand how this can be a problem, but it is: she is so infused with idealism that she will take upon herself tasks such as finishing the whole *sefer Tehillim*, every day. What about her three children who need to be taken care of? Even if she hears them wailing and crying (and it sounds like *teruah*, *tekiah*, and *shevarim* sounds of a shofar), she waits until they are screaming (when it sounds like a *tekiah gedolah*!) before she gets up from her *Tehillim*. This is because she thinks that it is her obligation to finish the whole *sefer Tehillim* every day!

She has become very spiritual, but her values are misguided, because she cannot pull herself away from spirituality to tend to the home. This is extreme behavior and it is problematic to a home.

We have seen here two different extremes taking place in our times, which are two different ends of the spectrum.

What The Husband Must Know

In a home where there are many children, the husband and wife are more involved with each other as they raise the children together. It is surely the will of Hashem to raise the children and take care of them, and they should help each other. But if this is all that makes them feel a connection to each other, they will not form a spiritual connection through this.

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Even if a wife makes sure to *daven* every day and she says *Kerias Shema* with her fullest concentration twice a day – and even if she says it again at night before going to sleep - it won't be enough for her to satisfy her spiritual void. It won't either be enough for her if she listens to her husband's *divrei Torah* every week by the Shabbos table. Even if she listens once a week to a Torah lecture from a prominent Rebbetzin, she will still not feel like it's enough. Maybe this will be enough for her to raise children in the way of Torah, but as far as her own personal life concerns, she feels totally empty from *ruchniyus*.

The husbands should know clearly that this cannot be enough for a Jewish woman to survive spiritually. Taking care of the kids, from morning until night, and being on the phone and talking to friends – is not giving her any *ruchniyus*. She won't be able to build her *ruchniyus* through *shiurim* on the *parasha* that she hears over the phone. It is a life dead from *ruchniyus*; it is not alive. And a husband cannot expect his wife to raise the children correctly if she is lacking *ruchniyus* in her life. It simply will not happen. In many situations, it is indeed very difficult for husband and wife to have a spiritual connection. It takes a lot of hard work. What, then, is the key to living a spiritual life together?

The Connecting Point Between Husband and Wife: Pondering Each Day Why We Live

A husband and wife will need to find a point that connects together in which they feel a sense of partnership, as it was mentioned earlier.

In a Torah home, where an *avreich* learns Torah most of the day, it's still very possible that an entire day goes by in which he doesn't ever think why he is living. He *davens* every day, learns every day, even does *chessed*, helps in the house, and does many other good things, but it's still possible that he never pauses for a moment to think, "What am I living for??"

The question of "**What am I living for?**" is something that each man and woman need to ask themselves. It is a question that must fill all of our souls, man and woman alike. It is the most fundamental question you can ever ask yourself. Whether one is old or young, he needs to wonder about it.

The issue, of course, is: how exactly we can live with purpose to our life. Each person will have a different answer to the question. One thing is for sure: every person needs to ask him/herself this question. But the question applies to all people.

The true answer to the question is: we are all here on this world for one purpose alone: **to recognize the Creator** in life.

How is it that a husband can think that his wife will feel spiritually satisfied when every day she gets up, davens a little, tidies up the house, does the laundry, bathes the children, cleans out the sink and does all the dishes (and the dishes are piled up the next day again)? It is because he hasn't stopped to think of why he and she are living. He doesn't think that life is about directing ourselves towards recognize the Creator more and more.

Instead, he lives superficially, and his mindset is that that life is simply about "things getting done": the children must be raised properly, they must be neatly dressed and clean, the house should be neat – and that there must be marital peace for this to happen, of course; and other

needs he has. Needs, needs, and more needs. And what is the biggest need of all? To have an “*aishes chayil*” (“woman of valor”) who will do all of this!

Whether one is a man or woman, the question of “What do I live for?” needs to be asked to oneself, every day. A person must ask himself or herself if he\she is actively striving to recognize the Creator. There is a way to get there for a man, and there is a way to get there for a woman. There is also a point between man and woman which can help them get there, and that is the point that can connect and unite them, through which they can build the home together.

The husband might think that because his life is all about Torah, his wife is the “*kli*” (the receptacle) that holds all of his Torah; so he thinks that she gets her needs in *ruchniyus* from that. But can this provide her with *ruchniyus* in her life...?

Life is not about what “needs to get done”. The husband must learn Torah and *daven*, the wife must raise the children and make them happy and cook all the meals, and that is all true, but is *that what life is all about, and nothing else??* Such a life only has “body” in it, with no “soul”.

These words sound very harsh to us when we hear them, but what should we do? It’s the truth, and it hurts.

When A Woman Searches To Fill The Void

Let’s try to understand what has been going on the last couple of years, through an inner perspective, and not through a mere superficial understanding.

In the last couple of years, the Jewish newspapers have been writing articles targeted for women readers, which are about deep thoughts concerning various matters of life. These articles are meant to make a person think about life. And the pen is free in the writer’s hand to write in the article whatever she feels like writing.

We must understand how this all started. It has come to the point in which women only remember their *ruchniyus* from being in seminary, and later in life they are in need of more *ruchniyus* because they weren’t getting it, so they sought to fill it. They wanted more and more. There are many women today who are searching for life with meaning. They really want to know of what an inner life is. They have good intentions. But they are being misled in the wrong direction.

Where is an inner and meaningful kind life found in? It is found in living with Hashem, through learning the Torah. That is possible for the husband, but what about the wife? When the wife remains in the home and her husband goes off to learn Torah in *Kolel*, she begins to feel that she is missing *ruchniyus* in her own life, and she wants to fill the void. How does she fill it? In today’s generation, many women are filling this void with all of the *garbage* reading material out there, gleaned by women writers who are getting all of their material from *non-Jewish sources*.

These are women writers who have studied in all kinds of strange places in the world. A new generation is being produced here, attempting to fill the spiritual void that many Jewish women feel. If the writers were trying to help the readers live a holier life, a life of bonding more with

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Hashem, that would be wonderful. Instead, all of the articles are pointing in all sorts of directions, to encourage woman to “search” more.

A man can fill his void mostly with Torah. But a woman does not have Torah, so what can she do for her soul? If she is already connected with Hashem, her soul feels alive and satisfied. If she doesn't, she feels a void, and she begins to search, for something else.

About 20 years ago, the women's articles were about keeping a tidy home and cooking. If it would have remained at that, it would have been fine. But now there are entire articles and papers devoted to fill the void that women are feeling. How it is being filled? With the knowledge of [secular] psychology. They are searching for life. But what they really need to do is to search for an inner life that is truly alive.

I hope you understand here what I am trying to tell you. The entire world of women has gone through an overhaul in the last 20 years! There are entire courses today given by “Rabbis” who are “converting” women to secular knowledge. These courses are not teaching *mussar sefarim*. They are not teaching ‘*Chovos HaLevovos*’, ‘*Shaarei Teshuvah*’ or ‘*Orchos Tzaddikim*’. As a result, the *b'nei Torah* are facing a new generation of wives who have become “scholars” of secular knowledge. This is the reality we face today. (Now they have courses too like this for men...)

Now there are *frum* “Chareidi” publications which are made special for women that are filled with non-Jewish ideas; the writers of these articles are avid readers of secular psychology and they wish to educate *frum* women with this kind of knowledge, and they do so without any sense of shame. This is the new “*hashkafah*” (outlook) that is sweeping through the world of women: to become “educated” with a plethora of secular knowledge towards how we should live life.

The Two Difficulties We Face In Building A Spiritual Home

In summary, to build a spiritual life in the home, the first problem we face with this, as we said, is because a woman is involved with the various responsibilities of life. And in more recent years, an even deeper problem has surfaced: the wife does have “*ruchniyus*” in her life – and she's getting it all from non-Jewish sources! She thinks that she is getting *ruchniyus* from this, but it is all pseudo-*ruchniyus*. It feels like she it is filling her void, but it is not actually filling the emptiness that she feels.

What results from this? The home cannot ever be spiritual in this way.

The Solution

What we have to do is to see the home through the lens of the Torah. In order to build a spiritual home, the husband and wife have to learn about life from the words of Chazal (our Sages). If not, and they are getting their viewpoints on life from secular sources, how can they ever hope to build a spiritual home??

To work on this practically is already the next step. Here we are just explaining the basis of what we need.

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(With regards to the workforce, where a woman often has to work with gentiles in the same office, this is also problematic. We are in exile, and it is a very deeply profound one, being that we so mixed with gentiles who influence us. The husband must see to it that his wife is working in a place that is not destructive to her values. They need to look for the best possible place for her to work in.)

Both husband and wife need to understand that they must stay away from all secular reading material, and that all of their viewpoints must come only from Torah and Chazal.

People argue that our Sages tell us that “*chochmah b’goyim, taamin*” - “Wisdom is found among the nations”. However, just because there is wisdom found among *goyim*, this does not require a Jew to read their ideas. A Jewish person reading any of the non-Jewish books is endangering himself to think like a non-Jew, and who knows what will become of him? He might become like a non-Jew in the way he thinks and views life, in the process of learning their wisdoms.

If a woman spends a lot of time reading non-Jewish ideas in the magazines and books, even if her husband learns Torah all day, she will be unable to gain from her husband’s Torah wisdom; it’s like they’re speaking different languages. He’ll tell her what he learned in *Mesillas Yesharim* that day, and she tells him back what she read in the paper that day. They will each be in two different worlds that they cannot relate to each other.

The only way for a Jewish woman to have real spirituality in her life is if she takes a few minutes every day to think: “What Do I Live For?” Although it is true that a woman needs to take care of the home and children, as well as cook, clean, and go to work to support the home (if necessary), these are things that “must get done”, but, she also needs to know how to live! It is not enough for her to feel truly alive if she just takes care of the home and the children and she works to bring in money. She must live also!

And what does a Jew live from? A Jew lives from his\her bond with the Creator and with doing His will. It’s not enough to do His will – you have to have a bond with the Creator.

It is not possible in every home to do this, but if they can do so, the husband and wife should ask themselves each day, “Who created me, and for what do I live for?” After that, they should strive to make their lives meet that. The fact that she is busy raising the children, running the home, and goes to work, does not exempt a woman from asking herself this question each day.

So in order to have a spiritual home, a woman’s need for knowledge of spirituality must be nursed **only** from the words of our holy Chazal (starting from *Chumash*, all the way down to the later *sefarim*). She must not be reading any non-Jewish books or ideas at all. If she does so, they are able to build a spiritual home. If a woman is reading any non-Jewish material, it is certain that their entire marriage will become shaky from the ideas she’s reading about, and they will not be able to enjoy a spiritual relationship with each other.

As we began to mention in these last two chapters, husband and wife are not just married together in the physical sense; they are not merely a union of two bodies. They are souls, two *neshamos* which are meant to become one, and therefore they must connect to their souls. They must form a connection of the soul together with each other.

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Husband and wife each have to work to reveal their souls, and in this way, they form a spiritual connection with each other, which is the way that a Jewish home is supposed to look like. Without the spiritual element in their connection, their home does not resemble a true Jewish home.

If it is clear to a woman that she needs to do this and to avoid all secular material, she will find that she can now be enabled to have a spiritual connection with her husband and enjoy the spirituality which her husband tries to impart to her.

Of course, this will not mean that the husband and wife will feel connected to each other in every last aspect of their marriage, but to a very prominent extent, they will feel more connected with each other, on a spiritual level – as long as they find the one point which they are both aiming for in life.

In Conclusion

The words here were brief about the topic. Hopefully, it has served to give you a little thinking of what a true Jewish home should look like,

A Jew lives from feeling connected to Hashem – not just from keeping the Torah and mitzvos. That is where we draw our *chiyus* (vitality) from in life: our bond with the Creator. To work on this concept, every day, think of the purpose of life that we should be living for. Think of the One who created you....