



A CHASSIDIC PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women's rights became a prominent issue in the 20th century. The revolution that the Rebbe spearheaded in this regard may come as a surprise to many.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



PARSHAT KI TETZE

Book of Devarim / Deuteronomy

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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There are two types of Divine service. Torah study - "theory", and "know G-d in all of your ways" - "practice," wherein even in the day-to-day tasks one is in service of the Creator. These two modes of service are required of both men and women. However, while with the former, men carry primary responsibility, in the latter it is the women who do so (Source 2). Which of the two is more important? Our world is one of practice (action) - mitzvot (Source 3). In building a Jewish home, and raising the next generation, women are better equipped and bear the brunt of the responsibility.

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Introduction:

In our generation, a woman's role is equal to and even surpasses that of a man. The Rebbe empowered women to succeed in fulfilling their unique mission in this world. Who shapes the ways of the household? Without a doubt, it is the woman of the house. The Jewish mother.

This is a lesson on the woman's role in Judaism and the true Jewish meaning of equality.

השיעור לפרשת כי תצא

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[לחץ כאן לשמיעת השיחה](#)



A. The Jewish Woman in the Rebbe's Teachings

Source 1 Deuteronomy 24:5

When a man takes a new wife, he shall not join the army in battle, nor shall he be subjected to anything associated with it. He shall remain free for his home for one year and delight his wife, whom he has taken.

כִּי־יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה חֲדָשָׁה לֹא יֵצֵא
בַּצֵּבָא וְלֹא־יַעֲבֹר עָלָיו לְכַל־דָּבָר,
נְקִי יְהִיָּה לְבֵיתוֹ שָׁנָה אַחַת וְשִׂמַּח
אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח.

This week's Torah portion discusses marriage between a husband and wife. In this lesson, we will discuss the unique role of the woman in the view of the Rebbe.

The Talmud tells us that King David “raised the yoke of repentance.” Meaning, that throughout the generations of the Jewish people, he stands out as the tzaddik who showed us all the power of repentance, and encouraged us all to follow a path of repentance.

In this light, it has been said throughout history about certain Jewish leaders that they “raised the yoke of Torah.” This appellation has mainly been given to devoted leaders with a broad reach, who did much for the cause of Jewish education, and taught Torah to many thousands.

Similarly, it can be said about the Rebbe, that he “raised the yoke of the Jewish woman”.

A Torah talk exclusively for women

In 1956 the Rebbe established the N'shei Chabad organization for women. This was long before many other Jewish women's organizations existed.

As one of its functions, N'shei Chabad would hold conventions several times a year. Something unique would transpire at these conventions: The main sanctuary of the 770 synagogue would be filled with women, and the Rebbe would address them with a special Torah talk for women. Men who wanted to listen in would have to make do with a loudspeaker system set up outside, broadcasting what was being said to the women inside.

Historically, no other Jewish leader is known to have addressed a Torah talk exclusively to women.

Spreading Judaism

In 1975, as part of the ten mitzvah campaigns launched by the Rebbe to bring Judaism to all Jews, the Rebbe initiated a Shabbat candles campaign for women, alongside the Tefillin campaign for men. Men and women were charged with equal responsibility to see to it that Judaism reaches their counterparts among the entire Jewish nation.

The “Shliach” and the “Shlucha”

When the rebbe instituted “Shlichut”, where he launched Jewish centers all over the globe, it was done in a revolutionary manner. Not just another synagogue led by a Rabbi with “the rabbi’s wife” - a “chef” whose job it is to prepare delicacies for the “kiddush”. Rather, the Rebbe sent out emissaries as couples - a Rabbi and a Rebbetzin - a shliach and a shlucha, who shared joint responsibility for establishing a Chabad House, including a synagogue, Torah lessons, children’s programs, etc. Husband and wife together, and each in their own way, were charged with bringing the message of Torah and Judaism to every Jewish man and woman in town.

When the Rebbe established the famous Shluchim Conference, where some five thousand shluchim from around the world are photographed as one, a shluchot convention was established alongside it as well to serve the shluchot in a similar fashion.

In-depth Torah study

With regards to Torah study, up until 1950, it was commonly accepted that a woman’s role is less in Torah study, and girls’ education focused on teaching them how to be good housewives. Here too the Rebbe led a broad “revolution,” and taught that women should also study Torah in depth. If they can succeed at other studies, become successful doctors and lawyers, why shouldn’t they be able to do the same with Torah? The Rebbe demanded of other community leaders that they institute a more in-depth Torah curriculum in their girl’s schools.

The Rebbe attributed great importance to Jewish women, for the great contribution they can make, in instilling and furthering Jewish values. But he also emphasized no less their unique talents, which they should use to fulfill their unique mission. The Rebbe did not value a woman wanting to be like a man and do what a man does in the name of supposed “equality.” On the contrary, a woman should utilize the unique talents that G-d has granted her in the most efficient manner.

B. Theory vs. Practice

>> The Rebbe

Two Roles

The general difference between the divine service of Torah study and the divine service of “know G-d in all your ways” parallels the difference between men and women.

כללות החילוק בין העבודה של לימוד התורה לעבודה של “בכל דרכיך דעהו” הוא גם החילוק שבין אנשים לנשים:

We are all familiar with the Divine service of Torah study. First and foremost, it is through studying Torah that one knows what to do, and what his or her mission in this world is. On a deeper level, by studying G-d’s Torah, people connect themselves to G-d Himself, and become more spiritual and uplifted people.

But what is the Divine service of “know G-d in all your ways”?

*If we pay attention to the details, we will notice that the verse is speaking here specifically of **your** ways, not necessarily G-d’s ways - areas directly pertaining to one’s service of G-d, such as Torah study, prayer and doing mitzvot. What this means is that even when one goes about his or her own mundane tasks, one must “know G-d”. Even while eating or working, one must do these things as well for G-d’s service.*

This is seemingly a quite novel idea, but it is this “novelty” that defines and distinguishes a Jew at all hours of the day, and throughout all the days of the week. A Jew is not only one who studies Torah and prays all day. A Jew is one who serves G-d also when eating, drinking, sleeping, and working to earn a livelihood.

This is ultimately the principal mission of every Jew, for which the G-dly soul descends into a mortal body: To find the G-dly in the mundane, and refine and raise up the material matters.

Judaism is not limited to the confines of the synagogue or study hall, or - in the dimension of time - to Shabbat, festivals, times of prayer, and Torah study. Judaism penetrates our weekdays and our worldly endeavors. Here too it is incumbent upon every Jew to “know G-d in all your ways.”

In this talk, the Rebbe makes the point that while Torah study is what’s emphasized most strongly for men, for women the emphasis is more on the service of “know G-d in all your ways”.

The obligation of Torah study is incumbent specifically on men, but the obligation of “know G-d in all your ways” relates to both men and women.

In fact, the latter obligation is even more relevant to women. The verse about the creation of the first woman says “I will make a helper for him.” The sages illustrate the woman’s role: “The man brings home wheat from the field, but does he eat wheat? The woman illuminates the man’s eyes and puts him on his feet.” This demonstrates that the work of “know G-d in all your ways,” engagement with the material world, is relevant primarily to women, even more so than to men.

החיוב של לימוד התורה הוא אצל אנשים דוקא, ואילו החיוב של “בכל דרכיך דעהו” הוא הן אצל אנשים והן אצל נשים.

ואדרבה, על פי מאמר רבותינו זכרונם לברכה¹ “כתיב² אעשה לו עזר, במה אישה עוזרתו לאדם . אדם מביא חטים חטים כוסס (בתמיה) . . נמצאת (האישה) מאירה עיניו ומעמידתו על רגליו”, מובן, שהחיוב של “בכל דרכיך דעהו” שקשור עם עניני העולם, שייך לעקרת-הבית יותר מאשר לבעל.

Source 2 Talmud, Tractate Yevamot 63b

Rabbi Yosei encountered Elijah the prophet and asked of him: The verse says “I shall make him a helpmate.” In what manner does a woman help a man? Elijah responded: A man brings home wheat from the field, but does he eat wheat? When he brings home flax, does he wear flax? It is his wife that grinds the wheat and processes the flax. Is it not his wife who illuminates his eyes and puts him on his feet?

מִצָּאוּ רַבִּי יוֹסֵי לְאֵלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא, אָמַר לוֹ: נֶאֱמַר “אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֶזֶר”, בְּמַה אִשָּׁה עוֹזֶרְתוֹ לְאָדָם?

אָמַר לוֹ פְּפֹשׁוּטוֹ: אָדָם מְבִיא חֲטִיָּן מִן הַשָּׂדֶה - הֲאִם חֲטִיָּן אוֹכֵל כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּן? וְאִם מְבִיא פִּשְׁתָּן מִן הַשָּׂדֶה, הֲאִם פִּשְׁתָּן עֶצְמוֹ לֹבֵשׁ? וְהֲרִי הָאִשָּׁה הִיא הַטּוֹחֶנֶת קֶדֶם אֶת הַחֻטָּה וּמַעֲבֶדֶת אֶת הַפִּשְׁתָּן, הֲאִם לֹא נִמְצָאת הָאִשָּׁה בְּכֶךְ מְאִירָה אֶת עֵינָיו וּמַעֲמִידָתוֹ עַל רַגְלָיו!?

Elijah the prophet explained to Rabbi Yosei how a woman is a helpmate to her husband - what exactly it is that a woman possesses and a man lacks. While the man may indeed be the one to bring home the wheat, this doesn’t suffice. Someone must turn the wheat into edible bread. The same can be said for the flax. All of this is done by the woman. In other words, women were given a unique sense of understanding, that makes them more in tune with the material world.

Based on this, the Rebbe explains how the service of “know G-d in all your ways”, speaks more to the woman than to the man.

(1) יבמות סג, א.
(2) בראשית ב, יח.

>> The Rebbe

Theory and practice

In other words, the role of the man is Torah, which means instruction. But its application—including educating the children especially when they are very young, as well as the conduct of the home in general, such as in the areas of kosher food, family purity, and all the foundational elements of the Jewish home—is implemented by the woman, the mainstay of the home.

כלומר: עניינו של הבעל הוא - תורה, מלשון הוראה³, להורות כיצד צריכה להיות ההנהגה; אבל לאחרי כן, כשצריכים לקיים זאת בפועל - בנוגע לחינוך הבנים והבנות ובעיקר בתחלת חינוכם, וכן בנוגע לכללות עמידת הבית, בנוגע לכשרות המאכלים, בנוגע לטהרת המשפחה, ובנוגע לכל הענינים העיקריים שבהם תלוי בית יהודי - הרי זה נעשה על ידי עקרת-הבית.

These aforementioned categories - Torah study and knowing G-d in all one's ways - can be defined as theory vs. practice. Torah study - theory, and actually leading a Jewish lifestyle - practice.

Torah assigns responsibility for the first part to the men. They are obligated to study Torah day and night, delve into it, become familiar with its intricacies, and ultimately come away with the practical conclusions of their studies. But here comes the second chapter: How indeed is one to actually apply his Torah studies in practice? How does one raise children by the light of Torah? How does one build a house with a Jewish atmosphere, with emotional support and moral values? This is the woman's role.

Obviously this isn't a black-and-white division. Women must also study Torah, and men must also be active in building a Jewish home.

The distinction is regarding principal responsibility. Men are responsible for theory, and women for putting it into practice.

3 ראה רד"ק תהלים יט, ח. גוי"א ר"פ בראשית (בשם הרד"ק). זח"ג נג, ב. ועוד.

>> The Rebbe

Which is more important?

As discussed earlier, action is of paramount importance. Proper action is greater than Torah study.

ועל פי המדובר לעיל במעלת המעשה, המעשה הוא העיקר, ועשייה לעילא - הרי ענין זה מגיע למעלה יותר מאשר לימוד התורה.

As we learned a few weeks ago, action is paramount. This means that the most critically important role is that of the women.

This is illustrated by the Talmud in Tractate Moed Katan. The Talmud states that even though “all your desirable things cannot be compared to Torah,” which means that “even all of the Torah’s commandments can’t be compared to a word of Torah study,” nevertheless, when there is a mitzvah which can’t be fulfilled by anyone else, Torah study is set aside in favor of the mitzvah. Not only is mitzvah observance not less than Torah study or equal to it - mitzvah observance even overrides Torah study.

וזהו גם מה שמצאנו בגמרא במסכת מועד קטן⁴, שאף שנאמר⁵ “כל חפצים לא ישוו בה”, ש”אפילו חפצי שמים לא ישוו בה” (“אפילו כל מצוותיה של תורה אינן שוות לדבר אחד מן התורה”⁶), מכל מקום, “במצווה שאי אפשר לעשותה על ידי אחרים”, נדחה לימוד התורה מפני קיום המצווה, והיינו, שלא זו בלבד שקיום המצווה אינו למטה במדריגה מלימוד התורה, ולא רק ששווה ללימוד התורה, אלא עוד זאת, שקיום המצווה דוחה את לימוד התורה.

(6) ירושלמי פאה פ”א ה”א (ג, ב).

(4) ט, ריש ע”ב (ובפרש”י).
(5) משלי ח, יא.

Source 3 Talmud, Moed Katan 9b

Rabbi Yonatan ben Asmai and Rabbi Yehuda the son of converts, studied the portion dealing with oaths in the study hall of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said to his son: These two people are wise and learned individuals, go to them so that they will bless you. He went and found them deep in discussion, raising apparent contradictions between verses. Among these apparent contradictions was the following:

In one place it is written in praise of the Torah: "She is more precious than rubies; and all of your desires are not to be compared to her" (Proverbs 3:15). One can infer from here that all human desires cannot be compared to the Torah, but the desires of Heaven, i.e., mitzvot, can indeed be compared to her. Elsewhere it is written: "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it" (Proverbs 8:11), which implies that even mitzvot cannot be compared to the Torah.

They resolved this contradiction by interpreting the second verse, to be referring to a mitzvah that can be done by others. In that case, even mitzvot cannot be compared to the Torah, and accordingly, one who is engaged in Torah study should not interrupt his studies in order to perform another mitzvah. The first verse, however, is referring to a mitzvah that cannot be done by others. In that case Torah study is not more important than the mitzvah, and one should interrupt his studies in order to perform the mitzvah.

ר' יונתן בן עסמי ור' יהודה בן גרים שנו פ'רשת נדרים בבית מדרשו של רבי שמעון בן יוחאי.

אמר לו רבי שמעון לבנו: בני האדם הללו - שני חכמים אלה, אנשים של צורה הם, כלומר, אנשים חכמים ונבונים, לך אליהם שיברכו אותך. הלך ומצא אותם שהם מקשים כתובים זה על זה:

נאמר במקום אחד בשבח התורה, "יקרה היא מפנינים וכל חפצין לא ישוו בה" (משלי ג, טו), ומכאן נדיק: אמנם חפצין שלך לא ישוו בה, אבל חפצי שמים - ישוו בה, משמע שמצות ("חפצי שמים") חשובות כמו התורה, ונאמר במקום אחר, "כי טובה חכמה מפנינים וכל חפצים לא ישוו בה" (משלי ח, יא), ומפסוק זה משמע שנאמר הדבר בהכללה שאפילו חפצי שמים לא ישוו בה!

ותרצו: כן במצוה שאפשר לעשותה על ידי אחרים, אז כל חפצים, ואפילו חפצי שמים, לא ישוו לתורה, ואדם הלומד תורה יעדיף את למוד התורה, והמצוה תעשה על ידי אחרים, כן, במצוה שאי אפשר לעשותה על ידי אחרים, אז התורה חשובה רק מחפציו, ולא מחפצי שמים.

Two sages are discussing the importance of Torah study. From one verse they infer that Torah is only more important than personal matters, but not more important than mitzvot. From a second verse they understand that Torah is even greater than mitzvot. How do they reconcile this apparent contradiction?

They explain: When a mitzvah can be done by others, Torah study is indeed more important and should not be interrupted. However, when dealing with a mitzvah that can only be performed by oneself, it outranks Torah study and warrants interrupting Torah.

>> The Rebbe

For example: Establishing one's private home on the foundation of Torah and mitzvot is a mitzvah that can't be fulfilled by anyone else. No one else can build your home for you - they won't know what to do, what needs to be fixed, how to fix it, and how to build it. The only person that can build your home is you, and, primarily, the woman who is the mainstay of the home. This is the concept of mitzvot that is even greater than Torah.

ולדוגמה: כאשר צריכים להעמיד את הבית הפרטי שיהיה מיוסד על יסודי התורה והמצווה, הרי זה מצווה שאי אפשר לעשותה על ידי אחרים: מישהו אחר לא יכול לעשות זאת ולסייע בזה, הוא לא יידע מה לעשות, מה צריך לתקן, איך יכולים לתקן, ואיך יכולים לבנות; ענין זה צריך לעשות הוא בעצמו, ובעיקר - היא (עקרת הבית) בעצמה, שזהו ענין המצוות שלמעלה גם מתורה.

Based on what we've discussed, it is true that Torah is of utmost importance. Yet, there still comes a time when even Torah study is to be interrupted - when a mitzvah can only be done by oneself. The most important mitzvah is to educate the next generation. Since men are not as good as women in this field, it is considered a mitzvah that cannot be done by men (to the same effect). It is for this reason that for women this mitzvah trumps Torah study.

C. Why Do Women Deserve More?

>> The Rebbe

Who is more important?

This is along the lines of what was explained [elsewhere], that the divine attribute of malchut, sovereignty, “is not a receptacle to the preceding seven attributes, but rather like a crown on their heads.” This will be reflected in the Messianic era when “the woman will dominate the man.” This is what the Arizal teaches that in the Messianic era “action will be greater.”

ועל דרך מה שנתבאר לעיל במאמר⁷
בענין ספירת המלכות, ש"לאו איהי
מאנא לגבי' כו' אלא עטרה על
רישי"⁸ [אינה כלי אליו וכו' אלא
עטרה על ראשו], וזהו גם שלעתיד
לבוא יהיה הענין של "נקבה תסובב
גבר"⁹, וזהו גם מה שכתוב בכתבי
האריז"ל¹⁰ שלעתיד לבוא יהיה
"מעשה גדול".

Source 4 Zohar, Part 2, 158:a

“A woman of valor is a crown to her husband”...
In the Messianic era, she is not a vessel for him,
nor does she serve him, but rather she is a crown
upon his head.

אִשָּׁת חַיִּל עֵטְרַת בְּעֵלָהּ... מִצַּד שֶׁל
הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, אֵינָה כְּלִי אֱלִיּוֹ, וְלֹא
מִשְׁמָשֶׁת לוֹ אֶלָּא עֵטְרָה עַל רֹאשׁוֹ.

In kabbalistic teachings, the woman is associated with the attribute of sovereignty. Here, in the Rebbe's talk, we were just taught that a woman's service is one of "action". The Torah tells us that the following three things will be greater in the Messianic era: The Zohar tells us that the attribute of sovereignty (i.e. a woman of valor) will be a crown upon her husband's head. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of how "A woman shall dominate a man". The Arizal explained that in the Messianic era "action" will be more valued.

It all comes together. The woman, resembling the attribute of sovereignty, and tasked with "action," will ultimately have her role more greatly and clearly valued and appreciated.

(9) ירמיה' לא, כא.
(10) ראה תו"מ סה"מ כסלו ע' קצה. וש"נ.

(7) פ"ג (לעיל ע' 251).
(8) זח"ב קנה, א (ברע"מ).

>> The Rebbe

Honoring Wives

All matters associated with the future redemption are realized through preparation during the time of exile. Here too we find the Talmud's general directive that a man must honor his wife "beyond his means."

וכיון שכל הענינים דלעתיד לבוא מתגלים על ידי ההכנה והעשייה בזה במשך זמן הגלות¹¹ - הנה גם בענין זה ישנה את ההוראה הכללית בגמרא מסכת חולין¹² שהאדם צריך לכבד את אשתו "יותר ממה שיש לו":

Source 5 Talmud, Tractate Chullin, 84b

Rav Avira said, What is the meaning of the verse: "Good is the man who is gracious and lends, who orders his affairs with justice" (Psalms 112:5)? It means to teach that a person should always eat and drink less than what is within his means, and he should dress and cover himself in accordance with his means, and he should honor his wife and children more than what is within his means (even to the extent of taking out a loan for it).

דַּרְשׁ רַב עֲוִירָא... מֵהוּ שְׁנֵאמַר
"טוֹב אִישׁ חוֹנֵן וּמְלֹנֵה יְכַלְכֵּל
דְּבָרָיו בְּמִשְׁפָּט" (תהלים)
קִיב, ה), לְעוֹלָם יֹאכַל אָדָם
וְיִשְׁתֶּה פְּחוֹת מִמֶּה שֵׁישׁ לוֹ
[שְׁלֵא יִפְנֹק אֶת עֲצָמוֹ לְמִרוֹת
שֵׁישׁ לוֹ יְכַלֵּת כְּלָכְלִית
גְּבוּהָה], יִלְבַּשׁ וְיִתְפַּסֶּה בְּמֶה
שֵׁישׁ לוֹ [לְפִי יְכַלְתוּ, כְּדִי
שְׁלֵא יִתְבַּזֶּה], וְיִכְבֵּד אֶשְׁתּוֹ
וּבְנָיו יוֹתֵר מִמֶּה שֵׁישׁ לוֹ
[שְׁיִלְוֶה מְאַחֲרִים לְשֵׁם כֶּן].

The Talmud gives us financial advice:

- A. Regarding food and drink - corporal pleasures - one should indulge in them less than one is financially capable of.
- B. With regards to clothing, which serves to make a person presentable, one should spend according to his ability.
- C. With regards to a wife (and children), the Talmud tells us that one must spend even more than his account balance allows, even if that means taking out a loan. Here there is no room for compromise.

>> The Rebbe

She deserves more

This requires explanation: Why is it necessary to honor one's wife so much, even "beyond his means"?

The fact that Torah requires this degree of honor is proof that she certainly deserves it. Otherwise, the Torah wouldn't obligate the husband to exert himself to such an extreme, beyond his means. Certainly she deserves this measure of honor, and since it is possible that her husband doesn't have the necessary means to provide it, he is required to obtain it, through a loan or through some other way, in order to "honor her beyond his means," as she deserves.

The reason for this great honor is that this is the ultimate truth of the matter, as will be revealed in the Messianic era, when "the woman will dominate the man."

This is reflected in our time as well, as explained above that the conduct of the home is largely determined by the woman, the mainstay of the home, who is the "helper opposite him." The husband doesn't have the necessary abilities for this, because this is how G-d wanted it to be. As a result, the wife received abilities beyond that which he possesses, and he, in turn, is required to honor her "beyond his means."

The Torah demands that a husband provide his wife with a standard of living beyond that which he allows for himself, because she deserves it. This is because according to Kabbalah, in the Messianic era it will be revealed that "the woman will dominate the man." We see this currently in our lives as

לכאורה אינו מובן: מדוע צריך לכבדה כל כך - "יותר ממה שיש לו"!?!

ועל כרחך צריך לומר, שכיון שהתורה דורשת שצריך לכבדה יותר ממה שיש לו, בוודאי מגיע לה כבוד זה, שאם לא כן, לא הייתה התורה מחייבת את הבעל להתייגע ולהשיג יותר ממה שיש לו, אלא בוודאי מגיע לה, ויתכן שכל מה שיש לו לא מספיק עדיין, ולכן צריך להשיג באיזהו מקומן, על ידי הלוואה וכיוצא בזה, יותר ממה שיש לו, כדי שיוכל ליתן לה כל מה שמגיע לה.

וטעם הדבר - לפי שכן הוא בפנימיות הענינים, כפי שיתגלה לעתיד לבוא כאשר "נקבה תסובב גבר".

ועל דרך זה גם עתה - כאמור לעיל שכללות הנהגת הבית תלויה בעיקר בידי עקרת-הבית, שהיא ה"עזר כנגדו", והיינו, שהבעל אין לו את הכוחות הדרושים לכך (מצד כמה סיבות; בגלל שכך רצה הבורא), כך, שהכוחות שניתנו לה הם "יותר ממה שיש לו", ולכן צריך לכבדה "יותר ממה שיש לו".

well, that the woman is the one who understands best the education of the children and the running of the home, and G-d gave the abilities for this specifically to her. The husband must therefore honor his wife "beyond his means."

This is also what occurred at the time of the giving of the Torah, when "G-d [gave] strength to His people." The first step was "so shall you say to the House of Jacob," which refers to the women, because observance of the Torah depends on them.

וזהו גם מה שהיה בדור של מתן תורה (שאז היה הענין של "ה' עוז לעמו יתן גו"), שהתחלה הייתה באופן של "כה תאמר לבית יעקב"¹³, "אלו הנשים"¹⁴, שבזה היה תלוי קיום התורה¹⁵.

Source 6 Midrash Rabbah, Exodus, ch. 28

"So you shall say to the house of Jacob (Exodus 19:3): These are the women...Why were the women first? Since they are keen with mitzvot. Another explanation: so that they should accustom their children to Torah.

כה תאמר לבית יעקב, אלו הנשים... למה לנשים תחלה? שהן מזדירות במצוות. דבר אחר, כדי שיהו מנהיגות את בניהן לתורה.

Back when the Jewish people received the Torah at Mt. Sinai, G-d recognized the power of women. He therefore sent Moses to speak with them first, and only after they accepted the Torah did he turn to the men. This is because the women have the unique ability to educate and nurture the next generation, to maintain a Jewish home, and pass the Torah on to the next generation.

>> The Rebbe

Men listen to women

This is especially true in the generation leading up to Mashiach—which is a reincarnation of the desert generation which received the Torah—a generation in which the men listen to their wives, as stated in the teachings of the Arizal.

וכן הוא ביחוד בדור של עקבתא דמשיחא - שהוא הגלגול של דור המדבר שקיבלו את התורה - שזהו דור שהאנשים נשמעים לנשותיהן (כדאיתא בכתבי האריז"ל¹⁶).

(15) ראה שמור"ר פכ"ח, ב.

(13) יתרו יט, ג.
(14) מכילתא ופרש"י עה"פ.

Source 7 Arizal's writings, Gate of Reincarnations, chapter 20

One should also know, that all the Torah scholars of this generation, are identical to the people of the generation of the Exodus, about whom it is written “I will show him wondrous deeds as in the days when You sallied forth from the land of Egypt.” As we’ve explained regarding the verse “Behold, you are about to lie with your forefathers and this nation will rise up etc.” And this is the reason why their wives rule them, because in their days the mixed multitude (erev rav), made the golden calf and they didn’t protest. The women, however, did not want to give their golden nose rings to that cause, and therefore they now rule their husbands.

גַּם דַּע, כִּי כָּל הַבְּעָלִי
תּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר בְּדוֹר הַזֶּה
עָתָה, הֵם בְּחִינַת אֲנָשֵׁי דוֹר
הַמִּדְבָּר, שְׁעָלֵיהֶם נֶאֱמַר
כִּימִי צִאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
אֲרָאנוּ נִפְלְאוֹת, וְכַמְבֹאֵר
אֲצִלְנוּ בַּפְּסוּק הַנֶּזֶק שֶׁכָּב עִם
אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְקָם וְגו'. וְזֶהוּ הַטַּעַם
שֶׁנְּשֻׁתֵיהֶם מוֹשְׁלוֹת עֲלֵיהֶם,
לְפִי שֶׁבִימֵיהֶם עָשׂוּ הָעֶרֶב
רַב אֶת הָעֵגֶל וְלֹא מָחוּ בָהֶם,
אֲבָל הַנְּשִׁים לֹא רָצוּ לָתֵת
נְזָמֵי הַזָּהָב לָעֵגֶל, וְלִכְךָ הֵם
מוֹשְׁלוֹת עָתָה עֲלֵיהֶם וְנִשְׂיָהֶם.

What are reincarnations? Man’s soul descends into this world with a purpose and mission. If that mission was not fully completed, or if something has gone awry, a soul will at times return to this world and get a second chance to fulfill its mission and fix what has gone wrong in the previous incarnation. A soul can go through this multiple times.

The Arizal taught that the last generations have been reincarnations of the generation of the Exodus. This is why their wives rule them. How so?

In the generation of the Exodus, when the Jewish people sinned with the golden calf, all men were involved - either directly, or indirectly, by failing to protest. Women, on the other hand, had no part in the sin. On the contrary, when the men asked for their wives’ jewelry, the women refused. Therefore, the men of our generation, being a reincarnation of that generation, are ruled by their wives...

>> The Rebbe

The women will bring Mashiach

At the time of the giving of the Torah, and then at the time of the construction of the Tabernacle and the journey to the Land of Israel led by Moses, the first redeemer, it was specifically the women who cherished the Land of Israel, contrary to the counsel of the spies. Women successfully demanded that they be given a portion in the Land of Israel, as the Talmud explains regarding the story of the daughters of Tzelafchad.

The same will happen with the women of our generation - they will demand from their husbands that they first accept the Torah to study, teach, and observe it, and that even while they are still in exile outside the Land of Israel they should establish a "tabernacle" for G-d, and give for it gold, silver, copper, and all the other materials mentioned in that Torah portion. This will achieve the result that we will soon walk upright to our land, with the coming of Mashiach.

כפי שהיה בשעת מתן תורה, והמשכו בבנין המשכן וההליכה לארץ ישראל על ידי משה רבינו, גואל ראשון¹⁷, שדוקא הנשים היו מחבבות את הארץ (היפך עצת המרגלים כו'), ודרשו והכריחו שיתנו להם נחלה בארץ, כמבואר בגמרא (במסכת בבא בתרא¹⁸) ובמדרש¹⁹ בקשר לסיפור של בנות צלפחד -

וכך יהיה גם אצל הנשים שבדור הזה²⁰ - שידרשו מבעליהן שלכל לראש יקבלו את התורה על מנת ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות, ונוסף לזה, שגם כאשר נמצאים עדיין במדבר, בחוץ-לארץ ובגלות, יקימו שם "משכן" לו יתברך, ויתנו עבורו זהב וכסף ונחושת, וכל שלושה עשרה או חמישה עשר²¹ הדברים שנימנו בפרשה, ועל ידי זה יפעלו בגילוי שבקרוב נוכל לילך קוממיות לארצנו, בביאת משיח צדקנו.

The Rebbe concludes with the hope that just as in the generation of the Exodus, when the women didn't sin with the golden calf or with the spies, but on the contrary - they loved and cherished the land, so too in our generation, the women will encourage their husbands to study Torah, and to go in the ways of "know G-d in all of your ways", to imbue the physical with the spiritual and make it more meaningful.

משיחת י"ט כסלו, ה'תשכ"ב

הנחת השומעים בלתי מוגה

תורת מנחם כרך ל"ב עמוד 305

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(20) ראה בארוכה שיחת יום שמחה"ת ס"מ ואילך (לעיל ע' 154 ואילך).
(21) ראה לקו"ש חכ"א ע' 153. וש"נ.

(17) ראה שמו"ר פ"ב, ד-ו. דב"ר ספ"ט. זח"א רנ"ג, א. שער הפסוקים פ' ויחי מט, י"ד. תר"א ר"פ משפטים.

(18) קטז, סע"ב ואילך.

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