

Masculinity & Femininity: A Torah Perspective



Sponsored by George and Lisa Lintz in loving memory
of Lisa's mother, Sonia Loffman a'h

RABBI EFREM GOLDBERG



Masculinity and Femininity: A Torah Perspective

- I. Introduction
 - a. NY Times – Crisis of Men and Boys
 - b. Same applies to Girls and Women
 - c. Do masculinity and femininity exist? Should they? What are they?
- II. Two Genders
 - a. Hashem created male and female
 - i. Bereishis
 - ii. Bava Basra – two genders among all creation, not just humans
 - b. Hashem first created one androgynous figure and split in two
 - c. Maharal – difference between zachar and nekeiva
 - d. Metaphysical masculinity and femininity
 - i. Rav Soloveitchik
 - ii. Kiddushin 82 and Chassam Sofer, fortunate those whose sons are boys
- III. Backwards
 - a. Devarim – a generation of reversals
 - b. Rav Soloveitchik (1975) – immutable truths of Torah
- IV. Torah Femininity
 - a. Why can't women be witnesses or judges?
 - i. Tosafos
 - ii. Kosman - Preserving femininity
 - b. Insight – Nida 45
 - c. Love of the Land – Rashi and Kli Yakar
 - d. Givers and nourishers
 - e. Spirituality
 - f. Emunah
 - g. Push people to be better
- V. Conclusion – we need Torah femininity, Torah of the mother
 - a. Torah of the mother – Mishlei
 - b. Rav Soloveitchik |

The Crisis of Men and Boys

Sept. 29, 2022

If you've been paying attention to the social trends, you probably have some inkling that boys and men are struggling, in the U.S. and across the globe.

They are struggling in the classroom. American girls are 14 percentage points more likely to be "school ready" than boys at age 5, controlling for parental characteristics. By high school, two-thirds of the students in the top 10 percent of the class, ranked by G.P.A., are girls, while roughly two-thirds of the students at the lowest decile are boys. In 2020, at the 16 top American law schools, not a single one of the flagship law reviews had a man as editor in chief.

Men are struggling in the workplace. One in three American men with only a high school diploma — 10 million men — is now out of the labor force. The biggest drop in employment is among young men aged 25 to 34. Men who entered the work force in 1983 will earn about 10 percent less in real terms in their lifetimes than those who started a generation earlier. Over the same period, women's lifetime earnings have increased 33 percent. Pretty much all of the income gains that middle-class American families have enjoyed since 1970 are because of increases in women's earnings.

Men are also struggling physically. Men account for close to three out of every four "deaths of despair" — suicide and drug overdoses. For every 100 middle-aged women who died of Covid up to mid-September 2021, there were 184 middle-aged men who died.

Richard V. Reeves's new book, "Of Boys and Men," is a landmark, one of the most important books of the year, not only because it is a comprehensive look at the male crisis, but also because it searches for the roots of that crisis and offers solutions.

I learned a lot I didn't know. First, boys are much more hindered by challenging environments than girls. Girls in poor neighborhoods and unstable families may be able to climb their way out. Boys are less likely to do so. In Canada, boys born into the poorest households are twice as likely to remain poor as their female counterparts. In American schools, boys' academic performance is more influenced by family background than girls' performance. Boys raised by single parents have lower rates of college enrollment than girls raised by single parents.

Second, policies and programs designed to promote social mobility often work for women, but not men. Reeves, a scholar at the Brookings Institution, visited Kalamazoo, Mich., where, thanks to a donor, high school graduates get to go to many colleges in the state free. The program increased the number of women getting college degrees by 45 percent. The men's graduation rates remained flat. Reeves lists a whole series of programs, from early childhood education to college support efforts, that produced impressive gains for women, but did not boost men.

Reeves has a series of policy proposals to address the crisis, the most controversial of which is redshirting boys — have them begin their schooling a year later than girls, because on average the prefrontal cortex and the cerebellum, which are involved in self-regulation, mature much earlier in girls than in boys.

There are many reasons men are struggling — for example, the decline in manufacturing jobs that put a high value on physical strength, and the rise of service sector jobs. But I was struck by the theme of demoralization that wafts through the book. Reeves talked to men in Kalamazoo about why women were leaping ahead. The

men said that women are just more motivated, work harder, plan ahead better. Yet this is not a matter of individual responsibility. There is something in modern culture that is producing an aspiration gap.

Many men just seem less ambitious. College women are roughly twice as likely to enroll in study abroad programs as college men. In 2020, amid Covid, the decline in college enrollment for male students was seven times that of female students. As Reeves puts it: "It is not that men have fewer opportunities. It is that they are not taking them."

More men are leading haphazard and lonely lives. Roughly 15 percent of men say they have no close friends, up from 3 percent in 1990. One in five fathers doesn't live with his children. In 2014, more young men were living with their parents than with a wife or partner. Apparently even many who are married are not ideal mates. Wives are twice as likely to initiate divorces as husbands.

I come away with the impression that many men are like what Dean Acheson said about Britain after World War II. They have lost an empire but not yet found a role. Many men have an obsolete ideal: Being a man means being the main breadwinner for your family. Then they can't meet that ideal. Demoralization follows.

Ambition doesn't just happen; it has to be fired. The culture is still searching for a modern masculine ideal. It is not instilling in many boys the nurturing and emotional skills that are so desperately important today. A system that labels more than a fifth of all boys as developmentally disabled is not instilling in them a sense of confidence and competence.

Masculinity has gone haywire. Reverting to pseudo-macho cartoons like Donald Trump and Josh Hawley doesn't help.

2. Bereishis

וַיֹּאמֶר

אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְּרֵגֶת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם
וּבְבִהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ: וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים
אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

²⁶ And God said, "Let us make Man" in Our image, after Our likeness. They shall rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and over the animal, the whole earth, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." ²⁷ So God created Man in His image, in the image of God * He created him; male and female He created them.

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: – אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב
Every creature that the Holy One, Blessed is He, created in His world, זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה
He created them both male and female. – בָּרָאם
אף לִזְוִיתָן נָחֵשׁ – בְּרִית
Also the Leviathan, the straight snake, זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה
and the Leviathan, the curved snake, – עֲקֻלָּתוֹן
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה – [God] created male and female. – בָּרָאם
ואִלְמָלִי נִזְקְקִין זֶה לָזֶה –
If they would mate together and bear offspring – מַחְרִיבִין כָּל
מָה עָשָׂה – they would destroy the whole world.^[12]
What did the Holy One, Blessed is He, do, so
that they should not beget offspring? – הִזְכָּר
He castrated the male^[13] as soon as it was created, – וְהִרְגַּת הַנְּקֵבָה
and He killed the female – וּמִלְחָה לְצִדִּיקִים לְעֹתִיד לְבָא
and salted it to preserve it as food for the righteous in the time to
come, – שְׁנֵאמַר – as it says: "וְהִרְגַּת אֶת-הַתַּנִּין אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם", –
And He killed the serpent that was in the sea.^[14]

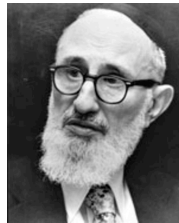
3. Bava Basra 78a

4. Bereishis Rabba 8:1

פרשה ח' ייאמר אלהים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו. ר' יוחנן פתח (פסלי קלי) אחד וקדם צדני וגו'. אד' יוחנן אמר וזה אדם אכל ב' עולמות. שני' אחד וקדם צדני. ואם לאו הוא בא ליתן דין וחשבון. שני' (סג) וחש על נפשו. אד' דמה בן אדער. בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון אנונינוס ברא. הידד וזר ונקבה בראם. אמר רשב"ל בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון ידיו פרוצות בראו. ונשר ועשא נבים נב לסא וגב לסא. אתיבון ליה ורביבין רקא אית מצלעותיו. אל כרין סכרוה. המרא (סח יז) וצלע המשכן והמחנות למסד משכנו וגו'. ובי תחומא בשם ר' בניה דר' סכיה בשם ר' אלעזר. אמר בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון גלם ברא.

(1) Rabbi Yochanan opened with 'You hedge me before and behind; You lay Your hand upon me' and Rabbi Yochanan said: 'if Adam had merits, he eats two worlds, as it's written 'You formed me before/achor and behind/kedem', and if not, he comes to receive judgment and accounting, as it's written 'You lay Your hand upon me'. **Said R. Yirmiyah ben Elazar: In the hour when the Holy One created the first human, He created him [as] an androgyne [androgynos], as it is said, "male and female He created them"**. Said Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman: In the hour when the Holy One created the first human, He created him double-faced [du-par'tsufin], and sawed him and made him backs, a back here and a back [t]here, as it is said, "Before/achor and behind/kedem You formed me". They objected to him: But it says, "He took one of his ribs [tsale'otav]"! He said to them: [It means, one of] his sides [sit'rohi], just as you would say, "And for the side [tsela] of the Tabernacle [mishkan]"', which they translate [in Aramaic] "for the side [setar] of the mishkan".

6. R' Yosef Ber Soloveitchik 1903-1993



בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם - *in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them*. What is the meaning of the juxtaposition of the reference to the image of God with the creation of man as two sexes? In interpreting the phrase, *male and female He created them*, Chazal explained that when God initially created Adam, He created him in a dual form (see Rash"i here). Male and female in this context are to be taken not only in a physiological sense but also in a spiritual/metaphysical one.

Every soul consists of a spiritual androgyny, a male and female persona. The combination of these elements is known in Rabbinic literature as *duchra venukva*, which can be found in every individual. *Duchra* refers to dynamic, active man while *nukva* refers to affected, passive man. Man both influences and is influenced; he is both giver and receiver. Only in the biological world is man exclusively male or female. In the spiritual world, every individual carries both traits, and only through the development of both the *duchra* and the *nukva* perspectives can individuals attain their full spiritual potential.

For example, when a teacher instructs his students, he is the giver, the "male," the *duchra*, while his students, who absorb his ideas, are the "female," the *nukva*. At one point in the lesson, however, a perceptive student may ask a particularly incisive question that leads the thoughts of the teacher in new directions. Indeed, Rabbi Chanina exclaimed, *I learn from my students more than from anyone else* (Taanis 7a). At this juncture, the *duchra-nukva* roles are reversed. The student has planted a seed that blooms into a beautiful flower within the mind of his teacher. The young student with eager eyes and an inquisitive expression becomes a *duchra*, while the teacher, with the grey beard and the august title of *Harav HaGaon*, is transformed into a *nukva*.

Who is the giver and who is the receiver? Who influences and who is influenced? As undeveloped as one's intellect may be, no one is exclusively a student. And as great as a person may be intellectually, no one is exclusively a teacher.

The blessing that God bestowed on man during Creation operates in both the spiritual-metaphysical realm as well as in the physical realm. Actualizing the potential of *duchra venukva* is the greatest and most exalted of blessings. A person must actualize his *nukva* blessing to absorb spiritual wealth and beauty. Concurrently, he must actualize his *duchra* blessing by using his spiritual energies to give to others. The student who lacks a teacher, although born with great potential, cannot realize his potential as *nukva*. Similarly, sometimes a great teacher can lack students to absorb his wisdom and he therefore cannot develop his potential as *duchra*. One spiritual personality is necessarily dependent on the other in order to develop an elevated level of self-actualization. *Derashot Harav 10:20*

5. Maharal

R' Yehudah Loew of Prague
1520-1609

אמנם מה שאמר כל מה שברא הקב"ה בעולמו זכר ונקבה בראו באור זה כי מפני שהתחתונים אינם במעלה ובחשיבות העליונים רצה הקב"ה ליכות את חשיבות האדם וכל התחתונים מה שחסר להם מצד אשר טובים השנים מן האחד, כי מה שחסר בזה גלה בזה כי יש בזכר מה שאין בנקבה ויש בנקבה מה שאין בזכר ולפיכך אמר הכתוב אעשה לו עזר כנגדו ודבר זה נמשך בכל התחתונים מצד כי טוב שנים מן אחד ונמצא כי לפי זה כי החבור הזכר עם הנקבה יש בו שלימות יותר בכלל שלהם, לא מצד שהנקבה היא עזרו לעשות צרכו מצד המלאכה בלבד או שיהיה להם תולדות אך כי האחד אינו שלם וכאשר הם שנים או הבריאה שלימה בלי חסרון ולא זה בלבד שהחשיבות והמעלה הוא כאשר יתחברו ביחד כמו חבור זכר ונקבה רק אף שכל אחד בפני עצמו גם כן הוא יותר חשוב כאשר נמצא זוג אליו כי כאשר נמצא האחד בלבד הוא חלק בלבד וכאשר נמצא זוג אליו והזוג הוא דבר שלם הרי כל אחד מהם חלק הכל ודבר זה יותר במעלה מאשר הוא חלק בלבד ואינו חלק הכל שכל חלק הוא חסר נמצא כי הזכר והנקבה בחבור שניהם הוא שלימות הבריאה וכל אחד בפני עצמו הוא חלק הכל. ועל זה אמר ואף לויתן זכר ונקבה בראם פי' אף הלויתן שאינו בריאה גשמית כמו שאר בריות זכר ונקבה ברא אותם כי מצד כי הלויתן הוא בעולם התחתון וכל אשר נברא בעולם התחתון נברא זכר ונקבה פי' שאין באחד כראוי והיה חסר ולכן ברא עוד בריאה שנית וע"י שניהם השלמת הבריאה וכל אחד חלק הכל.

8. Chassam Sofer
(Shavuos 18b)

1762-1839

ואורי יש לומר דלאו זכרים ממש קאמר אלא ידוע דהמשפיע לעולם נקרא זכר ואם היא נקבה בחולדה אם זכרה להשפיע לאחרים אם בממון או לזכות הרבים כו' נביאות או להנשא לת"ח ויתפרנס על ידה והוא יושב באהל של חורה ומרבין תורה בישראל על ידה היא זכר באמת. והמקבילים לאחרים לעולם נקראים נקבות ואם הם זכרים בחולדה נקבות הנה באמת וע"כ משארו שיהיה בניו זכרים משפיעים לאחרים וזהו ממש כמו שאמר ריב"ל בניו ראוי' להוראה. וטעם זה השכר אפשר משום דאמרו חז"ל אין אשה מתעברת אלא סמוך לוסתה וכבר כ' מזה בחשבות כנסת יחזקאל ותפש עליו מורי כ"י בתש"ו הכ"ל. וא"כ הרואים להרבות זרעם משמשים סמוך לוסתה ממש בעונה הסמוכה אבל החוללים בפני תאוהם ואינם חסידים על נפשם ועל זרעם הקב"ה נותן להם חלק עבודתם בניו זכרים פ"י משפיעים לאחרים אשר מולידים בניו רבים מבלי חבלי ידה ועל גידול והמה תלמידים אשר הם בניו באמת בונים עולמות :

9. Devarim 32:20

מבטם בגיו ובנתי:
 בי דור תהפכת ה'מה
 הם קנאתי בלא-אל
 אראה מה אחריתם
 בנים לא-אמן בם:

and He will say,
"I shall hide My face from them and see what their end will be —
for they are a generation of reversals,
children whose upbringing is not in them.

Surrendering to the Almighty

I HAVE TO discharge a duty. Believe me, I do it with sadness in my heart. You know me; I never criticize anybody; I've never attacked anybody. I have never set myself up as a judge or arbiter who approves or disapproves of statements made by people. But today, כולו כל הקיצין, I feel it is my duty to make the following statement.

★

Chazal have emphasized many times the importance of humility, that a proud person can never be a great scholar, because studying the Torah means meeting the Almighty. When a finite being meets the Infinite, the Maker of the world, this meeting must precipitate a mood of humility.

Humility results in surrender.

What do we surrender to the Almighty? First we surrender to

the Almighty the everyday logic, what I call the logic of the businessman, or the logic of the

Rabbi Dr. J. B. Soloveitchik, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University, is a grandson of Rav Cha'yim Soloveitchik of Brisk. This statement, from an address at a Rabbinical Council of America Convention, was made in response to "modern orthodox" proposals by Dr. Emanuel Rackman, rabbi of New York City's prestigious Fifth Avenue Synagogue, and assistant to the president of Yeshiva University. Rackman proposed that contemporary rabbis be granted the right to nullify *kidushin*, thus abrogating the need for *gittin* and circumventing the issue of *monzairuss* — all on the basis of a psychological and sociological reinterpretation of the *chazakos* used by Chazal.

7. Kiddushin 82a

mirable type of employment:

REBBI SAYS: — רבי אומר — It was taught in a Baraisa: — אין לך אומנות שעוברת מן העולם — אשרי מי שרואה את הוריו באומנות מעולה — BUT HAPPY IS HE WHO SEES HIS PARENTS IN A SUPERIOR type of TRADE, — and WOE TO HIM WHO SEES HIS PARENTS IN AN INFERIOR type of TRADE. — אשרי מי שרואה את הוריו באומנות פגומה — Similarly, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE WORLD to function WITHOUT PERFUME MERCHANTS AND WITHOUT TANNERS. — אשרי מי שרואה את הוריו באומנות פגומה — HAPPY IS HE WHOSE OCCUPATION IS that of A PERFUME MERCHANT, — AND WOE TO HIM WHOSE OCCUPATION IS that of A TANNER. — אי אפשר לעולם בלא בסקם ובלא בורסקי — Similarly, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE WORLD to exist WITHOUT MALES AND WITHOUT FEMALES. — אשרי מי שגניו זכרים — HAPPY IS HE WHOSE CHILDREN ARE MALES, — AND WOE TO HIM WHOSE CHILDREN ARE FEMALES.

Elaborates on R' Meir's statement in the Mishnah:

10. R' Yosef Ber Soloveitchik
1903-1993

utilitarian person, and we embrace the logic of Sinai. Secondly, we surrender the very utilitarian, very superficial, everyday will, and we embrace another will — the will of Sinai.

When Rambam explains *חבלי מלכות שמים* its elements: "love of G-d, fear of G-d, and the study of Torah which is the great principle that all else depends upon."

So *talmud-Torah* means *חבלי מלכות שמים*. And that is why one may not study Torah unless he says *birchass haTorah*. This is the reason for *Kaddish d'rahonon*. Because *talmud-Torah* constitutes an act of surrender, of accepting the harness of mitzvot.

It is interesting that Chazal always say *מלכות שמים* if you say not *חבלי מלכות שמים*. Why cause you accept it? because *חבלי מלכות שמים* is convenient, cooperating with man. That is why Chazal always inserted the word *על* — harness — meaning regardless of the fact that *חבלי מלכות שמים* is sometimes very uncomfortable, a heavy yoke.

★
What does *חבלי מלכות שמים* require of the person who studies Torah?

First, we must pursue the truth through singular halachic Torah-thinking and Torah-understanding: from within, in accord with the methodology given to Moshe and passed on from generation to generation. The truth can be discovered only through joining the

ranks of the *המסורה*. To say, "I have discovered something the *צוה* didn't know, the *Go'on* of Vilna didn't know, the *Go'on* of Vilna had no knowledge of; I have discovered an approach to the interpretation of Torah which is completely new," is ridiculous.

In order to join the ranks of the *המסורה*, one must not try to rationalize the *המסורה* without. One must not judge a secular

system in terms of a secular system of values. Such an attempt, be it historicism, be it psychologism, or be it utilitarianism, undermines the very foundations of *המסורה*, and leads eventually to the most tragic consequences of assimilationism and nihilism, no matter how good the intentions of the person who makes the suggestion.

Secondly, we must not yield to the passing charm of a modern political or ideological slogan because of an inferiority complex. I say not only not to compromise, but even not to yield emotionally, not to feel inferior. It should never occur [to one who has accepted *חבלי מלכות שמים*] that it is important to cooperate even a little bit with a modern trend or secular modern philosophy. In my opinion, *yahaduss* does not have to apologize — neither to the modern woman nor to the modern representatives of religious subjectivism. We should have pride in our *מסורה*.

Thirdly — it goes without saying — one must not try to gear

the halachic norm to the transient values of a neurotic society. (That's what our society is.)

Fourth, *חבלי מלכות שמים*, which is an identical act with *talmud-Torah*, requires of us to reverse and to love and to admire the words of the *המסורה*, be they *amora'im*, be they *rishonim*. They are the final authorities. ★

An irresponsible statement about Chazal borders — I do not like to use the word, but according to Rambam it is so — on the heretical. Rambam says (in *Hilchos T'shuva* 3:8),

וכן הכופר בפירושיהם ודעה שבעלי פה והמכחישים מנייה כגון דודקוביטש — Whoever denies the authenticity of Torah *she'al-pek* is a *chafetz*. Why did he add "מנייה" — whoever denies the authority of the scholars of the *תורה* —

Under the category of *בטריה* are classified not only those who deny *חבלי מלכות שמים* — there is no doubt about that — but even those who admit the truthfulness of *חבלי מלכות שמים* but are critical of Chazal as personalities. They find fault with *חבלי מלכות שמים* in their character, or that they had in their behavior, or that they had some prejudice. He is a *בטריה*, for he denies the perfection and truthfulness of Chazal. ★

Let me add something very important.

Not only the *halachos*, but also

the *chazokos* Chazal introduced are indestructible. You must not tamper, not only with the *halachos*, but even with the *chazokos*. For the *chazokos* Chazal spoke of rest, not upon transient psychological behavior patterns, but on permanent ontological principles rooted in the very depths of the metaphysical human personality, which is as changeless as the heavens above.

Let us take for instance the *chazoka* — that's what I was told about — of *מלכות שמים* ("Better to live together than alone — *Kidushin* 7a). This has absolutely nothing to do with the social and political status of the woman in antiquity. The *chazoka* is not based upon sociological factors. It is a *posuk* in *Braishit*: "ואיש חשוקת". And thy desire shall be to thy husband." It is a metaphysical curse rooted in the feminine personality. She suffers incomparably more than the male while in solitude. Solitude to a male is not as horrifying an experience as solitude to a woman. And this will never change *על הארץ*. It is not a psychological fact; it is an existential fact. It is not due to the inferior status of the woman, but is due to the basic distinction between the female personality and the male personality.

An old spinster's life is much more miserable and tragic than the life of an old bachelor. This was true in antiquity; it is still true; it will be true a thousand

years from now. To say that עב לומר ען דר מלכות ארבעל was simply misinterpreting the social status of woman at that time is simply misinterpreting the *chazaka*. No legislation can alleviate the pain of a single woman; no legislation can change this role. She was burdened with it by the Almighty after she committed the first sin.

If you should start modifying and reassessing the *chazokos* upon which a multitude of *halachos* rest, you will destroy *yahaduss!* Instead of philosophizing, let us take a match and set fire to the בית ישראל!

★ I also was told that it was recommended that the method of *אפקטורו רבנו* לקידוש מים be introduced. If this recommendation were accepted (I hope it will not be accepted) then there'll be no need for a *get*. We'll be able to cross out the *mishna* of *קורה את עצמה בנות*. Every *rabbi* will be able to suspend *kidushin*. If such a privilege exists, why should it be monopolized by the Chief Rabbinate in Iretz Yisroel? Why shouldn't the Rabbinical Assembly do it as well as the Chief Rabbinate?

Do you expect to survive as orthodox rabbis, do you expect to carry on the תורה under such circumstances? Chaos will replace the Torah.

I hope those gathered here will join me in objecting to such discussion and debates at a rab-

binical convention. I cannot imagine a Republican National Convention or a Democratic National Convention where a symposium would be held as to whether communism should replace democracy in the United States.

To speak about changing *halachos* of Chazal is at least as nonsensical as discussing communism at a Republican National Convention. It is discussing methods of self-destruction and suicide.

★ I know that modern life is very complex. I know your problems. Many of your problems are passed on to me. We are confronted with horrible problems: social, cultural, political, and economic; problems of the family, of the community, and problems of the society in general. We feel sometimes as if we were swimming against the tide. The crowd, the great majority, has deserted us. We are facing an awesome challenge. If you think, however, that the solution lies in a reformist philosophy or in an extraneous interpretation of the Hulocha, you are badly mistaken.

It is self-evident that many problems are insoluble. For instance, the problem of the two *monzarim* in Eretz Yisroel. You can't help it. We have the institution of *monzar*. No one can abandon it, neither the Chief Rabbi nor the Rosh HaGola. It cannot be abandoned. It is a *posuk* in Chumosh, לא יאבדו

רוֹשׁ already spoke about it: **את דמעת העשוקים** to dissident Jews, "That is our stand," they will dislike us; they'll say we are inflexible, we are cruel; but they will respect us. But if you try to cooperate with them — even if certain halachic schemes are introduced from within — you would not get their love, but you would certainly lose their respect. This is exactly what happened in Eretz Yisroel.

What can we do? This is
Torass Moshe. This is
מלכות שמים. We surrender.

★ The Torah summons the Jew to live heroically. We cannot allow an *איש איש*—no matter how tragic the case is—to remarry without a *get*. We cannot allow a *kohain* to marry a *giyoreess*. And sometimes the cases are very tragic. I know from my own experience.

I had a case of a gentile girl who became a *giyoress* *hutzduk*. She did not join our nation because she wanted to marry somebody. She met a Jewish boy, who came from an alienated background, had no knowledge of *yahaduss*. She brought him close to *yahaduss*, and they got engaged. He wanted to find out about his ancestry, so he visited the cemetery in which his grandfather was buried, and he saw a strange symbol [on the tombstone] — ten fingers [with thumbs]

and forefingers nearly forming a triangle]. So he began to ask—he thought it was a mystical symbol—and he discovered he was a *kohain*.

What can we do? This is the Halocha. A *kohain* may not marry a *giyoreess*. We surrender to the will of the Almighty.

But to say that the Halocha is not sensitive to problems, is not responsive to the needs of people, is an outright falsehood. The Halocha is responsive to the needs of both the community and the individual. But the Halocha has its own orbit, moves at a certain definitive speed, has its own pattern of responding to a challenge, its own criteria and principles.

I come from a rabbinical house. Believe me, Reb Cha'yim used to try his best to be a *maikil*. But there are limits to Reb Cha'yim's *kulos*. When you reach the boundary line, all you can say is, "I surrender to the will of the Almighty."

With sadness in my heart, I shared in the suffering of the poor woman—who was instrumental in bringing him back to the fold, and then she lost him. She walked away.

This is why Rambam said that *talmud-Torah* is identical with קבלת עול מלכות שמים.

★

To speak about Halocha as a fossil, דחמחא ליציל, is ridiculous. Those who study Halocha find it a living, dynamic discipline, which

continued on page 18

continued on page 18

11. *Tosafos*
Zevachim 103a

העמדה והערכה: אין לי אלא שילת
איש גרים נשים ועבדים כו'. משמע
מחד קרא היה ממעטין נשים ועבדים
ודין הוא דהא ילפינן מהדדי כג"ש דלה
לה מאשה והקשה הר"ר חיים דנפרק
החובל (ב"ק דף סח.) מנריך חרי קראי
גבי עדות חד למעוטי נשים וחד
למעוטי עבדים וי"ל דגבי מנות הוא
דילפינן מהדדי כג"ש דלה לה אכל
גבי עדות לא שייך למילף דאין חלי
כנאמנות שהרי משה ואהרן לא מעידין
לא משום דלא מהימני הנכח היכא
דגלי גלי:

→ SO WHY CAN'T SHE TESTIFY? ←

As a matter of fact, there is no definitive answer given in the primary sources to the question of why a woman can't testify. Some categories

of people cannot be witnesses, and the reasons aren't always intuitive even when we assume they are. We may speculate that relatives are not allowed to be witnesses because their loyalties might interfere with their desire for truth, but then we are left wondering why close friends are permitted to be witnesses.

Various possibilities have been suggested to explain women's disqualification, but they remain speculation. It has been suggested that being grilled and cross-examined might be in conflict with a woman's innate modesty — much as a king is disqualified as witness because it does not befit his honor to be cross-examined. Others wonder if the reason women are disqualified is similar to her exemption from time-bound mitzvot — the Torah did not allow her to testify because then she would be obligated to engage in this potentially time-consuming commitment, despite other familial obligations.⁶

While these considerations may be part of the equation, our androgynous ideal points to a more holistic explanation. Witnesses in court demand a very specific orientation. It is an orientation which is necessary in a Jewish court of law, but it is not necessarily the only orientation.

Testimony in court requires entering into a focused, true-or-false mode. When asked, "Did you see Joe kill Bob?" the appropriate answer in court is either "yes" or "no." But there is a perfectly legitimate answer that is neither a yes nor a no — it is an answer that takes into account much more than the black-and-white, justice-oriented end result.

"Yes, Joe did kill Bob, but let me explain why he did it. If you would have seen what Bob did to Joe first...or how much pressure Joe was under..." This second answer represents a more holistic, relationship-focused perspective of the circle/female force. Yet in a courtroom, it is not a valid response.

12. *Circle, Arrow, Spiral*
Miriam Kosman



A fascinating example of the clash between perfect justice and a more holistic perspective is found in the classic *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo. Inspector Javert, who demands that Jean Valjean be punished for the “crime” of stealing a loaf of bread for his starving family, represents the yes-or-no, “justice” mode. There is only one acceptable answer to the question “Did you or did you not steal?” Yet most people resonate with Jean Valjean, the supposed criminal, and sense that demanding this kind of fact-oriented justice is cruel and unjust.

This example is not relevant to Judaism because stealing to save a life is permitted — may even be required — and the horrific punishment that Victor Hugo wanted to impose is completely out of line with Jewish law, but it does illustrate the crash between these two forces and how crucial it is to have a balance between them.

→ A WORLD OF TRUTH ←

Is one perspective right and the other one wrong? The purpose of the court system is to determine a course of action based on the legal structure of Judaism. But living a rich, harmonious life, as we all know, has much less to do with who is right and who is wrong, and much more to do with how we relate to each other.

To look at a situation abstractly is to make a judgment about a situation or to take a course of action on the basis of such a judgment without considering the “human consequences” of that course of action, the specific and detailed effects which that course of action might have on other human beings. Or it is to make a judgment which is “distanced” in some way from the actual or potential experienced reality which would be the consequences of such a source of action. Concreteness requires that one experience, or vividly imagine, such consequences,^[s] either to oneself or to others, and judge on the basis of that awareness.⁹

Excusing a woman from participating in a process which on some level betrays her very essence may, at its deepest roots, be a validation of the female perspective. Yes, justice is important and truth must be ferreted out, but you, woman, who bring to the world the gift of the circle — the gift of interdependence and the gift of relationships — do not have to participate in the process. We respect your voice enough that we don’t insist on dragging you into the boxing ring.

In Jewish law, if one is able to testify, one must — there is no option of choosing whether you feel comfortable testifying or not. By disqualifying a woman from the whole process, there seems to be a message here: the bare facts may be relevant in a court of law, but they are not the whole truth — and those who have access to that “other voice” should not be required to distort it.

13. Nida 45

The Gemara explains the opinion of Rabbi:

What is Rav Chisda said: – מאי טעמא דרבי – For it is written: *Then Hashem, God, built the side, which he had taken from Adam, into a woman.*^[18] – ותבנה לו אשה – This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed is He, gave greater powers of understanding to a woman than to a man.^[19]

64. – but upon the women – אכל על הנשים – AND OF THESE, THERE WAS NO MAN, ETC.. – ובאלה לא היה איש וגומר. לפי שהן היו מחבבות – the decree of the Spies² was not decreed,³ – נתנה ראש ונשובה – The men said, – האנשים אימרים – for they held the land precious. – את הארץ – but the women said, – והנשים אומרות – “Let us appoint a leader and let us return to Egypt,”⁴ – “Give us a possession.”⁵ – לתנה לנו אחזה” – This is why the passage dealing with the daughters of Zelophehad is put next to a verse which says that those guilty of the sin of the Spies died here.⁶

14. Rashi

15. Kli Yakar

16. Breaches 10a

The third of the five “worlds”:

He nursed from his mother’s breasts, and gazed upon her breasts, and he spoke songs of praise regarding that time.^[29] – שגאמר – For it is stated:^[30] – ברכי נפשי את ה' ואל-תשכחי כל-גמוליו” – Bless, my soul – [bless] Hashem! And forget not all His nurturing. – מאי – What is meant by *all His nurturing*? – אבדו – R' Abahu said: This nurturing refers to the sustenance provided an infant from his mother’s breasts. – שגשה לה דדים – King David offers praise that [God] fashioned breasts for [a woman] opposite the place of insight, i.e. opposite the heart.^[31]

דבר אחר לכך פרט אנשים, לפי שאמרו רז”ל (ילקוט פנחס חשע כז) האנשים היו שונאים את הארץ ואמרו נתנה ראש ונשובה מצרימה (להלן יד ד) והנשים היו מחבבות הארץ ואמרו תנה לנו אחזה (שם כז ד) ועל כן אמר הקב”ה לפי דעתי שאני רואה בעתיד היה יותר טוב לשלוח נשים המחבבות את הארץ כי לא יספרו בגנותה, אבל לך לדעתך שאתה סבור שכשרים המה ואתה סבור שהארץ חביבה עליהם תשלח אנשים וזהו שלח לך לדעתך אנשים, אבל לדעתי היה יותר טוב לשלוח נשים כאמור:

17. Shemos Rabba 28:2

‘כה תאמר לבית יעקב’ אלו הנשים אמר לו אמר להם ראשי דברים שהם יכולות לשמע ותגיד לבני ישראל’ אלו האנשים אמר לו אמר להם דקדוקי דברים שהם יכולין לשמע. דבר אחר למה לנשים תחלה שהן מודרות במצות. דבר אחר כדי שיהיו מנהיגות את בניהן לתורה אמר רבי תחליפא דקיסרין אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא כשבראתי את העולם לא צויתי אלא לאדם הראשון ואחר כך נצטווית חוה ועברה וקלקלה את העולם עכשו אם אני קורא לנשים תחלה הן מבטלות את התורה לכך נאמר ‘כה תאמר לבית יעקב’ ורבי יוחנן אמר ‘כה תאמר לבית יעקב’ אלו סנהדרין שנאמר (ישעיה ב. ה) ‘בית יעקב לכו ונלכה באור ה’.

19. Berachos 17a

– גדולה הבטחה שהבטיח הקדוש ברוך הוא לנשים יותר מן האנשים – Greater is the promise that the Holy One, Blessed is He, made to the women than to the men, – as it is stated: „נשים שאנונות קמנה שמענה קולי, rise up and hear my voice; – you confident daughters, give ear to my speech.”^[53]

Answering his own question,^[54] Rav explains the special merit of women:

נשים במאי זכיין – Rav said to R' Chiya: – אמר ליה רב לרבי חייא – Through what deeds do women indeed merit eternal life? – באקרוני בנייהו לבי בנישתא – Through going to the trouble of bringing their children to the synagogue to learn Scripture,^[55] and through sending their husbands to the study hall^[56] to learn Mishnah and Gemara, ונטרין – and for waiting for their husbands until they come home from the study hall.^[57]

We have already remarked on V.42 that women are not obliged to live in the Succa. Succoth is a מצות עשה שהזמן גרמא a command which only applies to a certain fixed time, and such, as a rule, do not apply to women. Thus women are free from the duty of קידוש, ציצית, חגיגה, ראיה, פסח, סוכה, יו"ט. Exceptions to the rule are: שמחה. The exceptions are nearly as many as the rule. When we consider that Sabbath and Pesach are the two greatest institutions of the Torah recurring

from time to time, and that for both of them women are duty bound to observe not only the negative commands איסור הפך and איסור מלאכה but also the positive קידוש (זכור) of Sabbath, and מצה and פסח of Pesach, and that, equally so, although free from ראיה and חגיגה they nevertheless have the duty of participating in the three great national festival gatherings by שלימי מצות עשה שהזמן גרמא (see Kiddushin 34.b.) and also in the great national gathering of every seventh year, הקהל, their being freed from other מצות עשה שהזמן גרמא can most certainly not be on account of their being considered in any way of lesser worthiness or importance. But it seems to us to be rather much more likely that the Torah did not impose these מצות on women because it did not consider them necessary to be demanded from women. All are meant, by symbolic procedures, to bring certain facts, principles, ideas and resolutions, afresh to our minds from time to time to spur us on afresh and to fortify us to realise them to keep them. God's Torah takes it for granted that our women have greater fervour and more faithful enthusiasm for their God-serving calling, and that this calling runs less danger in their case than in that of men from the temptations which occur in the course of business and professional life. Accordingly it does not find it necessary to give women these repeated spurring reminders to remain true to their calling, and warnings against weaknesses in their business lives. Thus, at the very origin of the Jewish People, God's foresight did not find it necessary to ensure their bond with Him by giving women some permanent symbol in place of the Mila for men. So, also, at the Lawgiving on Sinai, God reckoned first of all (Ex. XIX.3.) on the faith and devotion of the women. So also, the Jewish Nation has established the fact—and all our generations have inherited it—that in all the sins into which our nation has sunk, it has been נשים צדקניות, the faithfulness of our women to their convictions and sense of duty which has preserved and nurtured the seed of revival and return. Women are free from the duty of ראיה and חגיגה because the open public national gathering of the nation as the representatives of the Torah which the gathering about the Sanctuary of the Torah means, primarily belongs to the metier of the men.

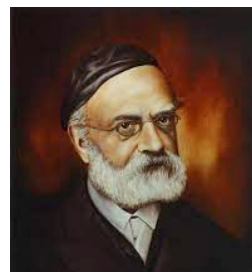
18. Maharal Nesiv Emunah

.. ויש לך לדעת כי האיש והאשה יש להם ביחד חבור ואצלם בפרט שייך אמונה כמו שאמרנו, ולכן אצל סוטה כתיב ומעלה בו מעל ותרגם אונקלוס תשקר וכו' וכל מעילה הוא לשון שקר. וכאשר היו מיחדים לעדות החולדה והבור על חבור זכר ונקבה כאלו היו מיחדים לזה האמונה של זכר ונקבה שיש להם אמונה ביחד, לכן היו נאבדים הבנים ע"י חולדה ובור שהוא הנאמנות של איש ואשה ותדע עוד כי הזכר והנקבה הוא כנגד אמת ואמונה, ויש לך להבין למה האשה עמדה באמונתה ביותר, וזה בודאי בשביל כי אמונת אשה לאיש יותר מן אמונת האיש לאשה כי אמונה לשון נקבה ואמת הוא לשון זכר, ואין כל כך נמצא האמת באשה כמו שנמצא האמונה ולכן עמדה האשה באמונתה ולא האיש, ותבין זה כי האיש מותר באחרת ואין האשה מותרת באחר:

20. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch

Vayikra 23:43

1808-1888



21. *Mishlei* 1:8

שִׁמְעֵ בְנִי מוֹסֵר אָבִיךָ וְאַל תִּטַּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ: כִּי לִנְיַת חָן הֵם לְרֹאשְׁךָ
וְעֲנָקִים לְגֵרְתְּךָ.

⁷ The fear of HASHEM is the beginning of knowledge; foolish ones scorn wisdom and discipline. * ⁸ Hear, my child, the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother. ⁹ For they are an adornment of grace for your head and a chain for your neck.

22. R' Yosef Ber Soloveitchik

1903-1993

"A Tribute to the Rebbitzin of Talne,"
Tradition 17 (spring 1978)



People are mistaken in thinking that there is only one Massorah and one Massorah community; the community of the fathers. It is not true. We have two massoros, two traditions, two communities, two shalshalos ha-kabbalah—the massorah community of the fathers and that of the mothers. "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob (the women) and tell the children of Israel (the men)" (Exodus 19:3); "Hear, my son, the instruction of thy father (mussar avikha) and forsake not the teaching of thy mother (toras imekha)" (Proverbs 1:8), counseled the old king. What is the difference between those two massoros, traditions? What is the distinction between mussar avikha and toras imekha? Let us explore what one learns from the father and what one learns from the mother.

One learns much from father: how to read a text—the Bible or the Talmud—how to comprehend, how to analyze, how to conceptualize, how to classify, how to infer, how to apply, etc. . . . One also learns from father what to do and what not to do, what is morally right and what is morally wrong. Father teaches the son the discipline of thought as well as the discipline of action. Father's tradition is an intellectual-moral one. That is why it is identified with mussar, which is the Biblical term for discipline.

What is toras imekha? What kind of a Torah does the mother pass on? I admit that I am not able to define precisely the massoretic role of the Jewish mother. Only by circumscription I hope to be able to explain it. Permit me to draw upon my own experiences. I used to have long conversations with my mother. In fact, it was a monologue rather than a dialogue. She talked and I "happened" to overhear. What did she talk about? I must use an halakhic term in order to answer this question: she talked me-inyana de-yoma. I used to watch her arranging the house in honor of a holiday. I used to see her recite prayers; I used to watch her recite the sidra every Friday night and I still remember the nostalgic tune. I learned from her very much.

Most of all I learned that Judaism expresses itself not only in formal compliance with the law but also in a living experience. She taught me that there is a flavor, a scent and warmth to mitzvos. I learned from her the most important thing in life—to feel the presence of the Almighty and the gentle pressure of His hand resting upon my frail shoulders. Without her teachings, which quite often were transmitted to me in silence, I would have grown up a soulless being, dry and insensitive.

The laws of Shabbat, for instance, were passed on to me by my father; they are a part of mussar avikha. The Shabbat as a living entity, as a queen, was revealed to me by my mother; it is a part of toras imekha. The fathers knew much about the Shabbat; the mothers lived the Shabbat, experienced her presence, and perceived her beauty and splendor.

The fathers taught generations how to observe the Shabbat; mothers taught generations how to greet the Shabbat and how to enjoy her twenty-four hour presence.