

Anash Chinuch

FINDING FULFILLMENT AS EM HABANIM AND AKERES HABAYIS

THE ADVANTAGE OF A WOMAN'S CHINUCH

Women are called the "*akeres habayis*" because they are the "*ikar habayis*", (the most important part of the home). It is seen clearly that the main *chinuch* of the η (not only small children, but the smallest infants) is not through the father, a *melamed*, a *rosh yeshivah*, or the *rav* of the city – but the mother. Specifically, the *chinuch* of the smallest children is almost entirely in the hands of the woman. (*Hisvaaduyos* 5748, vol. 4, p. 341)

WOMAN'S FOCUS AND PASSION DIRECT THE HOME

The woman is called the *akeres habayis* because she is the "*ikar*" (most important part) of the home. The *ratzon* and conduct of her husband and children are dependent on her *ratzon* [what excites her, what her focus is]. From this we learn two things: First, the great responsibility *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* placed upon the woman; and second, since

Hakadosh Baruch Hu placed this kind of responsibility on the Jewish woman, he certainly gave her the abilities to be able to fulfill her *shlichus*. (*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 4, p. 10)

JEWISH IDENTITY IS DETERMINED BY THE MOTHER

Jewish identity is determined by the mother. If the mother is Jewish, the child is Jewish. It doesn't matter who the father is, where he stands [spiritually], or what state he is in.

From this we can understand the great merit and responsibility placed upon the mother in regard to *chinuch*. To bring up a child to be a *Yid* is dependent on the mother. (*Sichos Kodesh* 5729, vol. 2, p. 112)

MOTHER PERMEATES THE HOME WITH G-DLINESS

The husband's role is to give the general instruction, by making the point that for the home, the *chinuch* of the children, and of conduct of each household member needs to be according to the *Shulchan Aruch*.

The wife's role is to then establish this in all the particulars of the home: the children's *chinuch* and the conduct of the household members so that within every small detail of daily life, the family members should experience the matter of "*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*" which the husband said in the morning. She is the one who permeates day-to-day life with this idea and brings it into expression in the conduct of the home in all of its particulars.

Avraham Avinu gave the general instruction: "He commands his sons and his household after him, that they should keep the way of Hashem to perform righteousness and justice", but the particulars of *chinuch* – such as how to educate Yitzchak, and which friends to protect him from – all were attended to by Sarah. Due to her role, Avraham was told, "Whatever Sarah tells you, hearken to her voice". (*Hisvaaduyos*, vol. 31, p. 138)

MAKING HER HOME INTO A MISHKAN

It is clearly and openly recognizable that the home is run by an *akeres habayis*, whose inner heart is a *Mishkan* and *Mikdash* for Hashem, and her conduct in practice is according to the instructions of the Torah. This matter is expressed in the conduct of the entire household: the husband, the sons, and the daughters. Their conduct in thought, speech, and action is permeated with creating a *Mishkan* and a *Mikdash* for Hashem *Yisborach*. Even the objects and vessels in the home, the vessels for eating and so forth, are permeated with *kedushah* and G-dliness, as befits a home that is made into a *Mishkan* and *Mikdash* for Hashem *Yisborach*. Of such a home the *pasuk* says, "I will dwell within them." (*Hisvaaduyos* 5747, vol. 3, p. 344)

BRINGING GEULAH

It would be fitting to meditate on [the fact that] that the birth, salvation, and *chinuch* of the redeemer of Yisrael came from the devotion of two Jewish women: a mother and daughter –

CHINUCH MASHPIA

Mrs. Beila Goldstein, wife of Rabbi Levi Goldstein, mother and experienced educator is available Sunday and Wednesday evenings from 7:00-9:00PM.
Phone Number: 718-953-1313

THANK YOU

Mrs. Chana Aidel Erlenwein, Mrs. Chavi Goldberg and Mrs. Beila Goldstein for tips in this month's issue

Moshe's mother Yocheved and his sister Miriam. This was at a time when the decrees of *Par'oh's* enslavement reached the height of difficulty, to the point where even the strongest in the generation became dispirited. Yet these two women, mother and daughter, were not discouraged. "The Jewish wet-nurses" continued their work with true *mesirus nefesh* to give life to the children. In the depths of *galus* they established the generation of *geulah*. With their dedication and courage they saved not only the women, but the men as well, until they merited that through them came the redeemer of *Yisrael* to take *Yisrael* from slavery to freedom.

So, too, it is in the last generations of this bitter exile, and in our generation in particular. The same role, responsibility, and merit that belonged to the women of the first *galus* belongs to the women of this last *galus*, as my father-in-law, the Rebbe, frequently emphasized in writing and in his oral discourses. (*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 22, p. 424)

THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE HOME

Since each and every [woman] is an *akeres habayis*, the entire atmosphere of the home is dependent on her. (*Hisvaaduyos* 5748, vol. 3, p. 366)

INTERFERENCES TO HER ROLE AS A MOTHER

It is known that among the main obligations of a woman and mother – and this is also her merit – is the conduct of her home in accordance with the instructions of our Torah and its *mitzvos*, the *chinuch* of sons and daughters, and so forth. From this it is understood that every matter that interferes with this, even if it only causes a

weakening [in her ability to carry out her role in the fullest] should be totally negated and avoided, since this prevents her from fulfilling the duty which has been placed on her by the Giver of the Torah and Creator of the world. (*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 14, p. 436)

A TRAGIC MIS-EVALUATION OF HER ROLE AND WORTH

Some mistakenly think that a woman should feel inferior to a man; therefore, she should strive to fight a war: Just as a man is eligible to a certain position, and just as a man can accomplish certain tasks, she should also be able to work in that position and she should also be able to perform those tasks. She should be able to leave the home very early and come home, completely exhausted, very late, for she must demonstrate and prove how she isn't inferior to him..

...We see what happened when some women were forced due to reasons of livelihood to become busy with jobs, business, and livelihood, and therefore had to leave the home. Society came to think that a woman's perfection is to be found in imitating a man...

To think that she will reach perfection by forgetting about all of this and demonstrating that she can be a successful professional, as it's called, or a successful breadwinner, and so on—this is in fact a descent and a fall for her. Not only has she lost her self-respect and incorrectly assessed her talents, but, G-d forbid, [this has a detrimental effect upon] the survival of Jewish families.

The woman should occupy herself with her main work, and her main work and her main task is educating [her children], which is the idea of the

[role of the woman as] "mainstay of the home." She shouldn't degrade herself to [what for her would be] trivialities by imitating another. Nor should she declare that since we live in an environment in which [the woman's staying home] might be interpreted differently, she should abandon her own children so that others will be able to say that she was elevated... (*Sichos Kodesh* 5734, vol. 1, pp. 24-29)

A MOTHER'S PRIMARY PRIORITY

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 30th of Nisan [April 27], which reached me with considerable delay. In it you write about [a woman in your community] who would like to open a shop and, presumably, would want to manage it personally.

Although it is generally difficult to give advice in such a situation from a distance, and not knowing the person – I do not think, generally speaking, that it would be advisable for her to undertake such a responsibility, in view of the fact that she has [...] children of school age and has also to take care of household responsibilities in her important role as *akeres habayis*. Even if, as you write, she can get adequate help in the house and there would be no problem with childcare, it cannot be a substitute for the personal attention and care that the children need in their upbringing and *chinuch*. These considerations surely have top priority, and all other considerations can only be secondary.

To be sure, if one has time to spare, it should be utilized in the best possible way, but one should not confuse the order of priorities.

(Letter of the Rebbe 9 Sivan, 5739)- reprinted with permission from chabad.org

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- Recognize that you are not just changing diapers and doing dishes. Hashem has entrusted you with the most important task: raising the next generation. You are setting the foundation for your children to have a passion for Hashem and *Yiddishkeit*. Each small investment you make on a daily basis adding to the *kedusha* of your home and the *chinuch* of your children will affect generations to come.
- It is very difficult to live from the inspiration of years ago in seminary. Inspiration is something that needs to be renewed and refueled on a regular basis. It is very difficult to remain inspired without regular Torah learning. In Parshas *Vayeishev* we learn from "The pit was empty. There was no water in it," that there were snakes and scorpions in the pit that Yosef was thrown into. Torah is compared to water and here we learn that where there is a void of Torah, there will be snakes and scorpions. We need to be constantly filling our minds and the minds of our children with Torah, in order that there should be no opportunity for "snakes and scorpions" to enter.
- Very busy? Learning something very short, even two minutes a day, can go a long way. Whenever possible, make it part of your routine in a way that involves the children. Learning geared at children can be very inspiring, because it is simplified and often captures the essence. Read *chassidische* stories to them, short *sichos* for children, listen to a *shiur* while in the car driving, while cooking, doing dishes, wherever you can squeeze it in. If you have the time for it, make a *chavrusa* or go to a *shiur*... pushing yourself to do this will give *chayus* to your entire week. These things are good for your children to be involved in, good for your children to see you doing and add meaning and intellectual stimulation to your day.

- Make a point of learning teachings of the Rebbe on the woman's role on a regular basis. To see what you do, through the eyes of the Rebbe, will provide such a *chizuk* and give you the strength to live up to the formidable task Hashem has endowed the Jewish woman with. (*El Nshei U'bnos Yisrael* (Hebrew) and Letters by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to *N'shei u'bnos Chabad* (found on Hebrewbooks.com) are good sources for such learning).
- Play *niggunim* often at home and dance around with your children. Sing to them as often as possible throughout the day. Even if you need to push yourself to do this, you will be filling your home with simcha and uplifting yourself as well. Many studies show that acting more upbeat actually makes a person feel happier.
- Try to bring more revealed *ruchniyus* into your day. Talk to Hashem while doing your work. Learn Tanya by heart with your children and sing it with small children while cooking. Talk to your children about Torah as much as possible, it is of course wonderful for your children, but it will do so much for you as well, refocusing you and making you feel more connected.
- By investing yourself creatively in the *chinuch* of your children, trying to find ways to make every moment of the day connect back to *kedusha* (e.g., two apple slices because Paroh had two dreams in this week's *parsha*), to instill good *middos*, to live with the *parsha* of the week, etc. (Let's work this week on being *sameach be'chelko*, because the brothers were jealous of Yosef in this week's *parsha*). You may find less of a need to go elsewhere to feel accomplished.
- Many responsibilities may seem mundane to you and not connected to *avodas Hashem*, but this is what Hashem wants you to be doing. You are the *Kohen* of your home; your home is a *Mikdash Me'at*. Your *gashmiyus* is your family's *ruchniyus*. When they have their physical needs met, a clean, orderly home and nutritious meals, they have the strength to go out and make the world a *Dirah Betachtonim*.
- It is so important that a woman eats well, gets enough sleep and takes care of herself. If you are running on empty, you can't give to your home. Giving to yourself is giving to your family as well.
- For a woman to feel *besimcha* she needs to be productive: Have a set schedule, know what needs to be accomplished, set small and attainable tasks and try to elevate each moment as much as possible. Wasting time on the internet and the like may feel fulfilling at the moment, but it's a trick of the *yetzer hara*.
- Seek help. If you have challenges with organization, ask a woman who is very organized for tricks to make your home run more smoothly.
- It can be helpful to remember that children are not little forever, the time passes so very quickly. You are not putting aside your aspirations forever. Once your children are in school for most of the day, do something that you have always wanted to do. There will be a time for it. It's a maturity to put one's needs aside to care for a family.

WHAT DOES A STAY AT HOME MOM DO ALL DAY?

Education in the truest sense begins at the moment of birth, and especially when the child begins to show signs of understanding, at age one or one and a half. The child is developing rapidly during this period, and we must fill its waking hours with games and pastimes that have genuinely educational content. Unfortunately, most mothers have not learned how to use their child's playtime to the best educational advantage since, understandably, they are anxious to avoid too much disruption of their household routine.

Similarly, even when the child begins daycare or playgroup, on their return home the mother should fill the hours before bedtime with some sort of positive activity. However, the problem is that she knows not what nor how—and the problem becomes more insistent during vacation time, *Shabbos* and festivals.

An idea worth trying is to form a committee of kindergarten workers who themselves are mothers—women of experience in early childhood education and the home—whose mission will be to mull over the problem and put forward a variety of proposals. These would then be circulated in a special publication dedicated to this topic. (The Educator's Handbook, Rabbi Hodakov, p.196-197)

Many times a woman could be heard, while doing housework, cooking, baking, or cleaning the home, telling small children *chassidishe* stories. This left a strong impression on the children. (*Sefer HaMaamarim*, Admor HaRaayatz 5711, p. 59)

From the time a baby is born the father and mother need to have in mind raising the child to Torah and *avodas Hashem*. When the father [or mother!] comes to learn, he should learn beside the child in order that his ears should cleave to the words of Torah. (*Shevach Habris*, p. 36-37)

Many stay at home mothers would like to do more to surround their child with kedusha and just need some help coming up with ideas. We wanted to share the schedule below kept by an Anash mother. It won't work for everyone. Each family should find what works for their lifestyle, personality and the temperament of the child.

MODEH ANI I say *Modeh Ani* for her when I go into her room in the morning.

NEGAL VASSER I wash my daughter's *nagel vasser* in crib. Once we are ready I wash her *negel vasser* at sink with *brocha*.

MORNING BRACHOS She stands on the chair and holds her own *siddur*.

HAYOM YOM Read *Hayom Yom*

LIVING SIDRAH CDS Eat breakfast while listening to Rabbi Levi Goldstein's the Living *Sidrah* cds on that week's *parsha* [note: This is what works for us. Parents should

feed a hungry child before doing all of the above.]

BRACHOS We say *brachos* on the food with a pause in Hashem's name [Check with your own rabbi or *mashpia* for what to do with a child that does not yet speak]

KINDERLACH DAVENING We sing:

- *Hireni mekabel*

- The "*tzdakkah, tzdakkah, tzdakkah* that is what we give" song and mommy and daughter give *tzdakkah*
- Holding plush Torah we sing "Torah *tziva lanu Moshe...*" and Torah songs, "(little Torah let me hold you tight",

"Hashem gave us a present do you know what it was?"

- We open to *Shema* in the *siddur* and say *Shema*.

- Sing song from *Chassidishe Chalomos* Rebbe's *niggunim* cd: "First there was Reb Israel the *Heilecher* Baal Shem tov song..." - flipping through Rebbe board book

- We sing *Ach tzaddikim*

- I sing the "*Aleph Beis*" song to her while pointing to the letters and *nekudos* in the *siddur*. Now she knows how to open to the *Aleph Beis* page in the *Chitas* on her own and brings it to me.

- *Sheyivaneh Beis Hamikdash* dancing while holding up *Beis Hamikdash* model or pointing to picture of *Beis Hamikdash*. Sometimes we hold hands and hold her dolls to form a circle and dance now!

PSUKIM Sing the Rebbe *Psukim* to *niggunim*. Sometimes I use a big bubble wand to make bubbles for her to catch while singing these to her.

PLAY TANYA WITH RACHEL JACK'S CD I sit on a low stool by my daughter's bookcase. She also has a little stool she sits on. She usually sits next to me and pulls out a *sefer*.

WHAT DOES A STAY AT HOME MOM DO ALL DAY? CONTINUED

and pulls out a *sefer*. [For more ideas of how to do this with a baby see the Anash Chinuch Newsletter #1]

DVAR TORAH Walk and give my daughter a *dvar Torah*. This is usually about something I've just learned or a review of something very important I want her to know (e.g. How much Hashem loves her, why we want *Geulah*, what the world will be like, a summary of the *parsha*, *chassidus* on the *parsha* etc.). I speak from the heart. I've been doing this since she was born. Most of it probably goes way over her head, but it is good for her to know that we fill our time with Torah, when we walk we speak words of Torah and that we are purifying the air.

LIKKUTEI SICHOS CHAVRUSA OVER SKYPE It is good for children to see that their mommy learns. my daughter usually sits with us by the computer loving the attention, and then goes off to play when she is bored.

REBBE SPEAKS TO CHILDREN We read short section from the *sefer The Rebbe Speaks to Children* in preparation for next *chag*.

HOUSEWORK I try to involve my daughter and let her "help" me as much as possible. For example, when putting away laundry she takes the clothes out of the hamper and hands them to me to put them away. When I sweep the floor she runs to get her broom and "helps" me sweep. When I cook she sits with me in the kitchen, and I let her hold things, mix, drop vegetables into a bowl etc. We can already see how this is instilling good *middos* in her from her constant desire to help others!

PLAY TIME We try to play *Chassidishe Chalomos* in background as we play. I try to bring in as much *kedusha* and education to our play as I can think of.

DAILY HALACHA I learn a *halacha* a day from the *kitzur Shulchan Aruch* and read it out loud to her. It's good for her to see that we try to squeeze as much learning into our day as possible.

DAVENING When I *daven* I hand my daughter a *sidder* so she can

"*daven*" too. When mommy gives *tzdakkah*, she wants to as well! Sometimes she even stands by the wall and flips through her *siddur*!

STORY TIME We love the set *Stories the Rebbe Told Us*. At some point in the day we usually read from picture books. We only buy her books that we feel have something to teach her and that are of *kedusha* content. Why fill her mind with *shtus* when there are so many great books available?

TEHILLIM We sing a few *prakim* of *Tehillim* that we are trying to learn *be'al peh*.

DANCE We play *Nichoach* and dance around together... my daughter loves this!

MORAH MUSIC I selected some of the more *ruchnius* songs and a few songs that will help her learn to follow instructions.

CRAFTS I try to find Jewish craft ideas online. We don't do it every day, but once in a while and especially before *chagim*, we try to make cards for family members etc. It is good for children to have outlets

for self expression. Sometimes we try to draw something connected to what we are learning in *parsha* or *chagim* etc.

BEDTIME ROUTINE kiss *mezuzah*, say *shema*, *kush* pictures of the Rebbeim we have up on her wall before going to bed, *tzdakkah*, then I sing her a *niggun*.

SOME TIPS: If entertaining your *kinderlach* all day is overwhelming to you, consider making arrangements with another mother with similar aged kids. You watch them a few hours, and then she watches them a few hours.

The Rebbe asked that children have their own *sfarim*, so we use our daughter's own *sfarim* whenever possible. She doesn't know how to read yet but she can recognize certain pages because we leave the bookmarks on those pages and we use them as part of our daily seder. For babies you can also put a *Chitas* in the baby's crib and have the baby kiss it once a day.

FIRST AND FOREMOST A MOTHER Letter of the Rebbe

You write about your present frame of mind and lack of fulfillment in having to devote all your time to domestic responsibilities, taking care of the children, etc.

It is a matter of common sense, as well as of considerable emphasis in our Torah, that a woman finds her fulfillment precisely as the *akeres habayis*, and that this is the area where she can truly accomplish great and wonderful things, if only she desires it. It is written that "G-d created man upright, but he seeks many calculations." Thus, in the present abnormal times, it has become a prevalent, though nonetheless erroneous view that the wife must seek employment and that this must be outside the home. To be sure, if there were some employment that could be done at home to supplement the *parnassa*, that would be well and good, as is mentioned in the well-known chapter of *Eishes Chayil*. However, some women insist upon outside employment, so that this has become the established practice and has become "second nature," to such an extent that it has resulted in a complete reversal of values, making the essential secondary and the secondary essential, as if a woman can be regarded as a real person only if she goes against her nature and against the natural order of the world.

The above would be true even if the woman had only one or two children to take care of. How much more so when there are, thank G-d, more than a minimal number of children? This is especially true when they are of an age when they are entirely dependent upon the attention and loving care of the mother. And when one lives in a place where the ability to keep a Jewish home is in itself a challenge – not as it used to be in earlier days and under different circumstances – and when one has, in addition, the great responsibility and privilege to strengthen *Yiddishkeit* with the light and warmth of *chassidus*, all this certainly requires the mobilization of all of the woman's capacities, ingenuity, concentration and peace of mind, and there is no satisfaction greater than that which comes from being able to accomplish all of the above. It would seem rather doubtful that, after all this, there would be an excess of energy and interest to divert to outside employment and the like.

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