

# INTUITION AND INFLUENCE

THE WOMAN'S OBLIGATION  
TO SPREAD YIDDISHKEIT

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## STEPPING UP AND STEPPING OUT<sup>1</sup>

A young girl living in ancient Shechem, no older than ten, had grand ideas for the city and its people.

Dinah had only recently arrived in the area with her father and eleven brothers. Yaakov, her father, had no plans to settle there long-term. Young Dinah, confident in her ability to be a positive influence, went out to observe the local girls. She wasn't looking for playmates—she went out with a purpose: to inspire them to join the righteous ways of her family, descendants of Avraham, who had rejected the idol worship so common at the time and served only Hashem.

Her intentions were pure, and ultimately she would succeed, at least to a degree. The entire male population of Shechem would undergo *milah*—a form of *giyur*—as a result of what she set in motion, and the female population became integrated into Yaakov's family. Dinah's goal of influencing Shechem was a success.

[True, the story also led to tragic

consequences, alongside her positive influence on Shechem and its people. But that was beyond Dinah's control. The Rebbe explains that, according to Rashi's interpretation, her violation at the hands of Shechem was not her fault, but rather a punishment for her father's actions.]<sup>2</sup>

Why didn't she stay home, modest and quiet? She had inherited this outwardness from her righteous mother, Leah, who was also known for going out.<sup>3</sup> Leah didn't shy away from acting when she sensed an opportunity to bring something holy into the world. Dinah also had this power. In fact, a previously missed opportunity to use that power is what led to this story's tragic outcome.

Not long before this episode, Dinah's father hid her in a box to prevent her wicked uncle Esav from seeing her. He feared the danger of Esav setting his sights on her, but Yaakov was punished for this. Had Esav been allowed to meet Dinah, her righteousness would have almost certainly influenced him. She had the strength to reverse the dynamic: rather than being corrupted, she might

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have been the one to transform Esav for the better, and it was a risk worth taking. But her father erred on the side of caution, and the opportunity was lost.<sup>4</sup>

This time, Dinah followed in her mother Leah's footsteps, who represented the *avoda* of the *baal teshuvah*, going outward to transform the world around her. Dinah did not remain shielded from view. She stepped out to do good.

Dinah's willingness to step outside and engage is a message to her great-grandnieces, the Jewish women of today. True, the Torah tells us "*kol kevuda bas melech penima*," serving inside the home as *akeres habayis* is a woman's primary mission. However, those who are gifted with exceptional qualities and can influence others, to be "outgoing" like Dinah, also have an essential role to play on the outside. In a *tzniusdike* way, women should

help their fellow sisters who have lost their connection to Yiddishkeit return to the path of Avraham.



Women are uniquely positioned to do *hafatzas hamaayanos*. Debates and arguments are a man's way of operating. Wise and caring words, delivered in the soft and peaceful manner of women, are a more effective and longer-lasting method of influencing others.

As the Rebbe writes,<sup>5</sup> "the woman is bestowed with a greater and more expressive measure of feeling and heartfelnness, and she is therefore especially suited to arouse and stimulate the inborn Jewish feelings of *Ahavas Hashem*, *Ahavas Hatorah* and *Ahavas Yisroel*."

Women have the power, and they should certainly use it for the good.

## A SIDE JOB ON THE OUTSIDE<sup>6</sup>

When dark clouds appeared over a medieval town, the residents raced to prepare for the approaching storm. Strong winds can be brutally unforgiving to anything in their path, especially homes or belongings left unsecured.

High above the town towers the windmill, a familiar symbol of medieval ingenuity. The windmill not only does not fear the storm, it embraces it. While strong winds can topple the fruit of one's labor and leave destruction behind, the windmill does the opposite. It harnesses those very winds and transforms them for energy. What could have been harmful becomes productive. The gale becomes a source of light and power, thanks to a structure standing tall, spinning its sails to fuel the town below.

This image of transformation reflects the Jewish people's journey through *galus*. We too face powerful winds, forces that threaten to shake us. But like the windmill, we don't just endure. We take the struggle itself and elevate it, turning challenge into *kedusha*, and lifting the world with us.

An even more elevated version of this idea is the *ananei shemaya*, the heavenly clouds we long for to carry us to Eretz Yisroel. These clouds are also driven by the wind.

With the right effort, we can take the winds of confusion, pressure, and darkness that surround us and rise above. We can transform those very forces into vehicles that carry us and the entire world toward Moshiach.

Now, being the windmill in the hurricane of *galus* is a tall order. When the storm rages and the world shakes, it's much easier to stay inside the warmth and light of the Jewish home. To this, the *navi* Yirmeyahu speaks up with his prophetic words: "*yesh sachar lip'ulasech*—your work shall be rewarded."

Yirmeyahu prophesied about the *churban* and the long, bitter *galus* that followed. His very name comes from the word *mar*—bitter. And yet he, specifically he, is the one who promises us that our mission in *galus* will succeed. That our efforts will bear fruit and we will be rewarded.

His prophecy and very name teach us that our job in *galus* is to embrace the storm, even while begging Hashem for it to end. That we have the power to transform the bitterness of exile into light, and use the challenges to propel us forward.

All we need to do is step outside, out of our safe homes and into the street, where the winds howl and the storm rages. It's there, facing the challenges, that we discover the strength to transform the darkness.

How?

When the home we leave behind is a fortress of *kedusha*. A home where Jews not only *live* but are *enlivened*, nurtured, and cradled. A true Yiddishe home, built on the strong foundations laid by the *akeres habayis*.

The *navi* tells the Jewish woman that there is a reward for her actions. Is this promise necessary? Wouldn't Hashem surely help us anyway? The reason for this guarantee is because of the "secondary" nature of the work. A Jewish woman's primary focus is inward. Raising her children, supporting her husband's Torah learning—these are the cement in the foundation, building and strengthening the walls of her home. The outside world? That's the "extracurricular" job. The side mission. And yet even there, Yirmeyahu promises success in the name of Hashem.

A Jewish woman's ultimate sphere of influence is the entire world. Have you heard of another Jewish woman, your dear sister, who didn't have the opportunity to grow up in a Yiddishe environment? Who doesn't have a shelter in the storm of *galus*, and is left exposed to the winds outside? It's the Jewish woman's role to step out of her warm home and bring her inside.

It may feel like a volunteer mission, something beyond your core home-based responsibility. But ultimately, Hashem has promised us success and placed this task in our hands. "*Your work shall be rewarded*," He tells us, and His rewards are known to reach every level: spiritual, physical, and everything in between.

So the call to the Jewish woman is clear: step up, take responsibility, and step outside to educate and uplift the entire world. Be there for your sisters in need, and bring them into your sturdy, *akeres habayis*-built fortress.

And the ultimate reward? The *navi's* promise in the following *passuk*: "*v'shavu banim ligvulam*—the children will return home." ❶

1. Adapted from Likkutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 150ff.

2. While some interpret Dinah's actions as going against the spirit of *kol kevuda bas melech penima*, here too the Rebbe explains that according to Rashi, her intentions were entirely meritorious. See footnote 18 of the *sicha*.

3. See Vayeitzei 30:16.

4. From the fact that Yaakov was punished for hiding Dinah, we see that it wasn't only a possibility that Dinah would bring Esav to *teshuvah*, rather it is clear that that would have been the outcome. See *seif* 2 of the *Sicha*.

5. Free translation of the Rebbe's letter to the N'shei Chabad Convention, Lag B'Omer 5721. The original Yiddish letter is printed in *Igros Kodesh* vol. 20, pp. 265–266.

6. Adapted from *Sicha* to N'shei Chabad, Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5746. *Hisvaaduyos* 5746 vol. 3, p. 445ff.

### ADDITIONAL INSIGHT:

- » A prophecy about the days of Moshiach tells us that "...old women shall yet sit in the streets of Yerushalayim."<sup>8</sup> The reward for women being involved on the "outside streets" spreading Yiddishkeit, in a *tznius-dike* way, of course, will be the fulfillment of this *nevuah*.<sup>9</sup>
- » With *taharas hamishpacha* ensuring a child is born into a holy environment and *kashrus* supporting the child's growth and development in a sacred way, the success of all other *mitvzoim* is strengthened. Thus, the women's *mitvzoim* uphold and reinforce all the others. Even *mitvza tefillin*, while not directly one of the women's *mitvzoim*, can be supported by Jewish women by ensuring that tefillin are kosher and worn correctly.<sup>10</sup>
- » In the tefillin that Hashem wears, which declares the praise of the Jewish people—"Umi ke'amcha Yisrael, goy echad ba'aretz"—there is no distinction between men and women. Women can also participate in *mitvza tefillin*, such as by donating funds toward the purchase of new pairs. By doing so, they have a part not just in the heavenly tefillin, but in those worn here below.<sup>11</sup>

7. Yirmeyahu 31:16. [This *passuk* was the theme of the N'shei Chabad convention the Rebbe was addressing.]

8. Zecharya 8:4.

9. *Toras Menachem* vol. 42, p. 173.

10. *Ibid.*, vol. 81, pp. 244–246.

11. *Ibid.*, vol. 51, pp. 86–87.

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