

## EIZER KNEGDO

- *Hashem* implanted in women the unique ability to positively influence<sup>1 2</sup> their husband.
- A wife has the capacity to spiritually energize her husband even where others, including parents and *rabbeim*, have previously failed<sup>3</sup>.
- A wife who desires her husband's spiritual growth purely for her own acclaim will ultimately fail as an *eizer knegdo*<sup>4</sup>.
- A wife will succeed in raising the spiritual level of her husband only if she focuses on her husband's unique spiritual needs, rather than her idealized image of what a husband should be.
- It is counterproductive for a wife to give *mussar* or spiritual instruction to her husband<sup>5</sup>.
- Encouragement and positive reinforcement are the only methods with which a wife can aid in her husband's growth.
- A wife can build up her husband by truly understanding his talents<sup>6</sup> and character traits<sup>7</sup>.
- A wife should always celebrate her husband's accomplishments<sup>8</sup>.
- A wife must ensure that there is at least some area of endeavor where her husband feels totally in control<sup>9</sup>.

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1. The power of a wife to influence her husband for both good and bad is evident in the story regarding Korach's wife and On ben Peles' wife, see *Medrash Rabbah (Bamidbar 18:20)*.
2. See *Rashi* on the *passuk* *eizer knegdo (Bereishis 2:18)*. See also *Medrash Rabbah (Bereishis 17:7)* which states "*hakol min haeisha*". Rav Elya Lopian z"l told his daughter-in-law (the wife of his son Rav Leib z"l) "A woman holds the *neshama* of her husband in her palm".
3. See *Rashi (Bereishis 32:23)* who states that Yaakov was punished for not allowing the marriage of Dina to Eisav, since perhaps she would have influenced him positively, even though great people like Avraham and Yitzchok tried and failed.
4. A husband will always sense if his wife's spiritual encouragement is primarily for her own benefit or for his own benefit.
5. See *Avodah Zarah (18a)* where the wife of R' Chanina was punished for not giving *mussar* to her husband. This would seem to contradict what is stated above. However It may be that after many years of life together, when the bond of the marriage is rock solid, then it is appropriate and even necessary for a wife to rebuke her husband in spiritual matters.
6. See *Tanna D'Bai Eliyahu (Perek 9)* who states that the reason Devorah the prophetess merited having great descendants was because she encouraged her unlearned husband to dedicate his energies and talents to making superior wicks for the *Menorah* in the *Mishkan!*
7. To truly develop respect for a person, one must study and recognize each of their positive attributes. A wife who is able to pinpoint an area in which her husband is special and then focus just on that and constantly praise him for it at every opportunity will be a great *eizer knegdo*.
8. Such as offering to make a *siyum* when her husband finishes a *limud*.
9. This is one of the contemporary applications of the famous statement of the *Rambam* that a wife should treat her husband as if he was a king, see *Yad HaChazaka (Eishus 15:20)*.

- A wise person once said: “If you see a man that thinks he is smarter than his wife then you know he has a smart wife”.
- *Torah* learning is more vital to a man’s *neshama* than to a woman’s<sup>10</sup>. If a wife’s *shiurim* schedule is in conflict with her husband’s *Torah* learning, the husband’s learning takes precedence.
- There are many men that are on a high spiritual and moral level, but lack the ability to articulate *divrei Torah* at the *Shabbos* table from which women will enjoy and grow<sup>11</sup>. A wife must respect and understand that this inability does not diminish her husband’s overall spiritual stature.
- Women may not fully appreciate the tenacity and discipline needed for a man<sup>12</sup> to maintain a *Torah* learning schedule<sup>13</sup>.




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10. It goes without saying that women need to learn *Torah* (both *halacha* and *mussar*) for their own spiritual growth, however it plays a lesser role than for men.

11. In general men prefer and are accustomed to a different style *divrei Torah* than women.

12. Learning *Torah*, especially *Gemarah*, can be very rigorous and intense. The inherent difficulty and complexity of *Torah* study is obviously compounded when the learning takes place after a long exhausting day at work.

13. This is all the more true for those who are weak in their *Torah* learning skills.