



REBBE RESPONSA

The Rebbe's English Letters

Religious Differences in Marriage

How to foster peace and inspire spiritual growth
when one spouse is more religious than the other

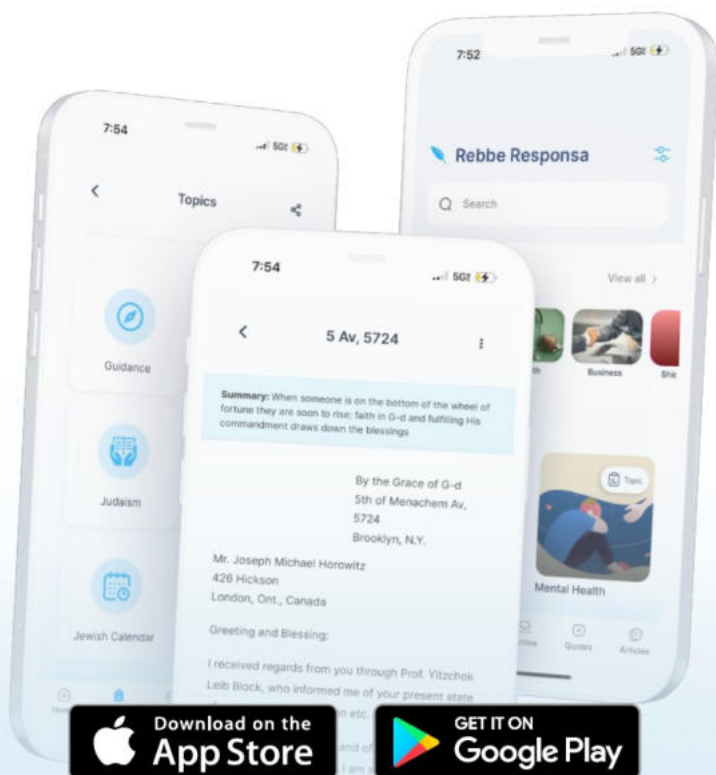
Issue 133
Vayeitzei, 5786



Rebbe Responsa

The Rebbe's English letters

Timeless guidance on
every topic and issue - at
your fingertips



ב"ה

A Word from the Publishers

We are pleased to present *Issue 133 of Rebbe Responsa*, a compilation of letters originally authored by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in English, culled from the *Rebbe Responsa* app.

The letters in this week's issue explore a sensitive reality that some couples face: differing levels of religious commitment between husband and wife. Each correspondent sought the Rebbe's counsel on how to navigate the strain this created in their lives—some writing as the more observant partner, while others represented the less observant. The Rebbe's guidance emphasizes the importance of staying true to Torah observance while also fostering harmony at home, and offering wisdom on encouraging a spouse's spiritual growth without creating conflict.

At the end of the booklet, we have included a newly released letter of the Rebbe highlighting the uniqueness of the month of Kislev, published here for the first time.

* * *

The Rebbe's English letters represent a little-known facet of the Rebbe's Torah, containing profound wisdom and practical guidance expressed in clear, accessible language. We encourage you to download the Rebbe Responsa app, which offers the only comprehensive collection of the Rebbe's English letters available to date. With over 5,000 letters organized by both topic and date, the app makes finding the Rebbe's guidance and worldview simple and accessible.

May the inspiration in these letters guide us all toward a year of revealed good, personal and communal growth, and the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days.

The Rebbe Responsa Team

Table of Contents

Winning Hearts, Not Arguments..... 4

How to inspire a reluctant spouse toward establishing a Jewish home when direct influence creates a perceived attempt to assert power

Who Needs to Give In? 6

When a spouse is only religious for their partner; understanding the difference between religious conviction and personal preference in determining who should compromise for marital harmony

Growing at Different Paces 8

The strengths and struggles of adopting Jewish observance later in life; when one spouse advances faster spiritually, creating friction with a lagging partner; the question of compromise

The Source of True Peace 11

Can one sacrifice Torah for family peace? True harmony flows from observance, not from its compromise; the proper way to achieve this

The Wrong Solution 13

Separation due to religious incompatibility is not the right solution

Newly Released:

Kislev: A Bright Month 14

Blessing for a growing measure of happiness and brightness in the auspicious month of Kislev

To receive Rebbe Responsa at your local shul or in your inbox, reach out to us at Editor@RebbeResponsa.com

1

Winning Hearts, Not Arguments

*How to inspire a reluctant spouse toward establishing a Jewish home
when direct influence creates a perceived attempt to assert power*

By the Grace of G-d
28th of Tishrei, 5722
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter of September 7th reached me with some delay. In it you write about your attitude, as well as that of your wife's towards the Jewish way of life.

Judging by your personal views, as expressed in your letter, I do not think I need elaborate on the fact that establishing a Jewish home in accordance with the Jewish way of life and religious observance in the daily life, is essential to true happiness and harmony, not only spiritually but also materially, since for the Jew, the material and spiritual must go hand in hand together.

Living as we do in a world troubled by uncertainty and confusion, how happy are we that G-d, in His infinite kindness, has shown us the true way of life, a life of harmony, peace and security.

As for the problem of establishing this in your home because of the present lack of cooperation on the part of your wife, the reason for your wife's reluctance may be a natural reaction to a pressure exerted by the husband, which she may misinterpret as an effort to be boss, lord and master of the household. Therefore, if this same influence would come from friends, rather than from you, she may be more responsive. It would be especially well that she should come under the influence of young American-born women who have true Yiddish homes and follow the Jewish way of life. Fortunately, there are a number of such young housewives whose cooperation could be enlisted.

In the light of your description of your present environment, it would be a good idea to consider the possibility of moving to a

community or a neighborhood which is orthodox. ...[where] your parents live, may offer a solution.

With prayerful wishes for the success of your efforts and determination to live up to the way of our Torah, which is called Toras Chaim, the Law of Life, and Mitzvoth whereby Jews live, and hoping to hear good news from you,

With blessing,

M. Schneerson

Needless to say, you may write to me again without hesitation.

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.
HYacinth 3-9250

הנהגת מנהל מנהל
ליובאוויטש
770 אסטון פארק
ברוקלין 13 נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
28th of Tishrei, 5722
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter of September 7th reached me with some delay. In it you write about your attitude, as well as that of your wife's towards the Jewish way of life.

Judging by your personal views, as expressed in your letter, I do not think I need elaborate on the fact that establishing a Jewish home in accordance with the Jewish way of life and religious observance in the daily life, is essential to true happiness and harmony, not only spiritually but also materially, since for the Jew, the material and spiritual must go hand in hand together.

Living as we do in a world troubled by uncertainty and confusion, how happy are we that G-d, in His infinite kindness, has shown us the true way of life, a life of harmony, peace and security.

As for the problem of establishing this in your home because of the present lack of cooperation on the part of your wife, the reason for your wife's reluctance may be a natural reaction to a pressure exerted by the husband, which she may misinterpret as an effort to be boss, lord and master of the household. Therefore, if this same influence would come from friends, rather than from you, she may be more responsive. It would be especially well that she should come under the influence of young American-born women who have true Yiddish homes and follow the Jewish way of life. Fortunately, there are a number of such young housewives whose cooperation could be enlisted.

In the light of your description of your present environment, it would be a good idea to consider the possibility of moving to a community or a neighborhood which is orthodox. your parents live, may offer a solution.

With prayerful wishes for the success of your efforts and determination to live up to the way of our Torah, which is called Toras Chaim, the Law of Life, and Mitzvoth whereby Jews live, and hoping to hear good news from you,

With blessing,

M. Schneerson

Needless to say, you may write to me again without hesitation.

2

Who Needs to Give In?

When a spouse is only religious for their partner; understanding the difference between religious conviction and personal preference in determining who should compromise for marital harmony

By the Grace of G-d
12th of Sivan, 5720
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter of May 31st, in which you write about the relationship between you and your husband, and that the difficulty in your marriage was religion, namely, that your husband is Orthodox and that you became Orthodox for his sake; however, you do not understand religion as he does.

I need hardly enlarge upon the importance of harmony in married life and about the preservation of the home, which is called “an everlasting edifice” in the prayers of the marriage ceremony. This is not just a beautiful phrase, for the concept of a Jewish marriage is that the two young people build a permanent home on the everlasting foundations of the Torah and Mitzvoth, in a way that their children would likewise maintain and perpetuate our sacred traditions and the sanctity of the Jewish home. And as in the case of any physical structure, the most vital part of it is the foundation, no effort or expense is spared to ensure the durability of the foundation upon which the whole structure rests, so much so that every precaution is taken to safeguard the foundation even against the far-fetched, or even unexpected hazards – how much more effort and care should be taken in ensuring the strength and durability of the foundations of the home, upon which the very happiness of the parents and children, to the end of posterity, depends.

As for religious observance, it is clear that even when one does not know the significance of any particular observance, yet observes it on the basis of faith or authority, the most one can lose

is some inconvenience. Whereas the person who has strong convictions on the subject, if he were to make concessions, it would entail tremendous inner conflict. By way of illustration, which I am sure is not a matter of contention in your case. Suppose an Orthodox person has a friend who is not particular about the dietary laws. If both go into a Kosher restaurant and have a Kosher meal, neither would be the worse for it, which would not be the case if the non-Orthodox person would insist on their going into a non-Kosher restaurant. While I am sure that such an extreme case is not applicable to you and your husband, the purpose of the illustration is to bring out the point that it would be easier for you to make concessions than for your husband, and the most that it can entail for you is some relatively minor inconvenience, which is surely warranted in order to preserve the permanence and happiness of the home.

I would like to add also another basic consideration. The history of the Jewish people as a nation goes back more than 3500 years. It is a history based on the Jewish adherence to the Torah and Mitzvot, the Jewish way of life. During this long course of history there arose from time to time certain dissenting groups which tried to break away from the Jewish tradition, but in the space of a very short time, at most several generations, such dissenting groups completely disappeared from Jewish life. One who can reflect on this without prejudice, must come to the inevitable conclusion that the Orthodox way of life is the only true and permanent Jewish way of life. Therefore, even if both of you were remote from such a way of life, every effort should have been made to change to the true Jewish way of life, in order to ensure true and lasting happiness, materially and spiritually; certainly when you have been fortunate in marrying an Orthodox husband.

If you will let me know your Hebrew name and also your husband's Hebrew name, together with your mothers' Hebrew names, I will remember you in prayer that the Almighty help you re-establish peace and harmony in your home, on the foundations of our sacred Torah, which is called *Torath Chaim*, the Law of Life, being both the guide in life as well as the source of a true and happy life.

With blessing,

3

Growing at Different Paces

The strengths and struggles of adopting Jewish observance later in life; when one spouse advances faster spiritually, creating friction with a lagging partner; the question of compromise

By the Grace of G-d
10th of Sivan, 5725
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. ...
Baltimore 7, Md.

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter in which you mention your background and also about the change in your way of life, after having been raised in an environment which was not one hundred percent orthodox; however, in due course you experienced a change and became more observant of the Jewish way of life, which has created certain frictions between you and your husband.

Judging by the content of your letter, it is surely unnecessary for me to emphasize at length that it is natural for a human being to grow and advance steadily, not only physically but also and above all, spiritually. Such advancement is possible only through the acquisition of additional knowledge, particularly of course the knowledge which has to do with the world outlook and has a bearing not only upon the physical aspect of life. Consequently, as a person grows and develops and discovers new vistas in this realm, there is no reason to fear or regret. On the contrary, one should be grateful to Divine Providence, which has opened one's eyes to see the true light, regardless of any difficulty which this may entail.

Published: *The Letter and the Spirit*, vol. 6, p. 35-37 (partially published in *The Letter and the Spirit*, vol. 1, p. 412).

Note: Letters printed in *The Letter and the Spirit* are from the archives of Rabbi Nissan Mindel, the Rebbe's personal secretary who was entrusted with transcribing the Rebbe's orally dictated responses. The archive consists of secretarial copies that may not include the Rebbe's final edits and corrections, as well as first drafts and unsent letters.

Needless to say, one who has not been brought up in this way from childhood, finds many difficulties in the resolution to change one's life, including various frictions, etc., which is not the case with a person who has been brought up in the proper environment from the start. On the other hand it is clear that human nature is such that when a person attains something through his own efforts and after a great deal of thinking, etc., such attainment is so much sweeter than anything which a person attains without effort or toil. This is true even in material things; and much more so in spiritual things.

I would like to make a further point. The yetzer hora, whose purpose is to distract a person and prevent his attaining perfection, will obviously not come with the argument: "To be sure, you have found the truth, but why take the trouble to follow it?" Such an argument would of course be rejected. So the yetzer hora attempts to distract and confuse a person in other ways. However, if one is on guard, one has a different evaluation of the difficulties which impede one's advance along the path of goodness and holiness.

I can well understand that your husband, who has not gone together with you along this path, or at any rate, has lagged behind you, may sometimes be somewhat dissatisfied that the other partner in life has greater progress, while he had not yet found the strength to follow suit. On the other hand, in such a case it is clear who has to make the concession in order to avoid friction. For the non-religious person it is easier to make a concession, inasmuch as it does not involve any transgression or sin or even any strong conviction or matter of conscience; at most it might involve certain inconveniences. On the other hand, for the religious person, a concession means a breach of strong religious feelings and convictions that go to the very core of the soul.

From the above it follows that the other partner, if he will only see that there is no attempt by the other party to be domineering, but that the other party is only motivated by strong feelings and convictions of having found the truth, and consequently wants to see a near and dear person share in this new-found truth — realizing this will eventually change his attitude, especially if you follow the ways of Torah, which are ways of pleasantness and peace.

Inasmuch as all true things are reflected in the Torah, the above thoughts are particularly timely, now that we have celebrated the Festival of Shovuos, the Season of Our Receiving the Torah. For, as

the Torah indicates – when G-d was about to give the Torah to the Jewish people, He told Moshe Rabbenu to address himself first to the women and only after they agree, he should approach the men.¹ Indeed, the women accepted the Torah with extraordinary enthusiasm and then all the Jewish people accepted the Torah willingly and eagerly, and G-d addressed Himself personally to each and every Jew and Jewess: “I am G-d thy G-d”² – in the singular person, to emphasize the personal relationship between each and every Jew and G-d.³

May G-d grant that all the difficulties and frictions should soon be no more, that you and your husband should go hand in hand together along the path of truth, the way of the Torah and the mitzvoth, with joy and gladness of heart and together bring up your children to a life of Torah, Chuppah and good deeds, in good health and ample sustenance.

With blessing,

P.S. I was pleased to be informed that you attended the Convention of the Chabad women. I trust the inspiration will be with you throughout the year.

¹ *Shemos* 19:23 and *Rashi* ad loc.

² *Ibid.*, 20:2. See also *Rashi* ad loc.

³ See *Yalkut Shimoni* on the above-mentioned verse (sec. 286).

4

The Source of True Peace

Can one sacrifice Torah for family peace? True harmony flows from observance, not from its compromise; the proper way to achieve this

By the Grace of G-d
19th of Cheshvan, 5735
Brooklyn, NY

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter reached me with some delay. In it you write about your problem in regard to the relationship with your wife, after being married for 14 years and having been blessed with children. You also indicate that the problem is connected with the observance of the Jewish way of life.

In the latter aspect lies also the answer to your questions. It is the Jewish way of life, in accordance with the Torah, that having been married for a number of years, and having been blessed with children who are to be brought up to a life of Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds, it is imperative to do everything possible to preserve the peace and harmony of the family to the fullest measure.

At the same time, it is also clear that inasmuch as the Torah is the Jew's very life, there can be no sacrificing of it even in the hope of preserving the family, for, on the contrary, a peaceful and harmonious Jewish family life is possible only if it is based on the observance of the Torah and Mitzvot, as is also written⁴ in reference to the Torah that "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace."

Needless to say, while it is necessary to insist upon the Jewish way of life, this should be explained to the wife in a pleasant way, taking into account her feelings, and not give the impression that there is any desire to "boss" her around and to show who is the master of the house; but that this is really for the benefit of both the parents and the children and, what is no less important, also for the

benefit of the whole Jewish people, since the family unit is the very basis of our Jewish people as a whole.

It is a matter of common experience, due to human nature, that when two persons are personally involved in a disagreement, it is hard for them to discuss their differences dispassionately, and one or the other or both, might get involved in a heated debate, when things are said which would otherwise not have been said. Therefore, it is customary in such a situation that the matter is brought before an orthodox Rabbi, who has both the experience, as well as is bound to treat such matters in confidence. Thus, the matter can be discussed fully in the presence of the Rabbi, and straightened out in accordance with his guidance.

I would like to add one important point, that a Jew who accepts the Jewish way of life in his daily life, even though it was not spontaneous, but came about through the influence or even persuasion by another – sooner or later this Jew will come to realize the truth, namely that it was for his real benefit, and whatever his original reaction might have been, whether he was reluctant or resentful, in the end he will certainly be most grateful for that kind of influence which has set him on the path of truth and real happiness.

You do not mention anything about the Jewish education of your children, but I trust that in light of the above, and in accordance with the traditional blessing, you are bringing them up to a life of Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds.

Hoping to hear good news from you in all the above,

With blessing,

P.S. You mention in your letter that you would like to speak to me personally. But this is not at all necessary inasmuch as my reply to you would be the same as outlined above. Moreover, it would not even be very practical to see me, necessarily briefly, for this is a case where both parties have to have an opportunity to unburden themselves fully in the presence of a third objective person, preferably an orthodox Rabbi as indicated above, which may require more than one session.

I would suggest that you should have your Tefillin as well as the Mezuzoth of your home, checked to make sure they are Kosher, and

to be meticulous in observing the Mitzvo of putting on the Tefillin every weekday morning.

5

The Wrong Solution

Separation due to religious incompatibility is not the right solution

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Shevat, 5714
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. ...
West Olive, Michigan

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge your letter in which you describe the various phases of your religious experiences and convictions, which finally led you to discover the truth of the Old Testament and to a leaning to “Old Testament Hebrewism,” as you call it. In your search for the truth you began to study Hebrew, in order to be able to study the Old Testament in the original...

...I take the liberty of one further remark, in reference to your writings about the incompatibility which has arisen between you and your wife on religious grounds, which has led to your separation. You do not mention all the circumstances, however, despite your statement that you had no “brera,”[–choice] separation of husband and wife is not a desirable solution, and should only be resorted to after all other attempts have proven futile.

With the prayerful wish that the Creator of the Universe guide you in the right path, the path of Truth, that you may be able to fulfill your function in this life on earth, and thus enjoy spiritual contentment, so necessary also for physical wellbeing.

Sincerely yours,

Published: *The Letter and the Spirit*, vol. 2, p. 45 (see note to letter three).

This letter was apparently written to a non-Jew. For the full letter, see the Rebbe Responsa app.

Kislev: A Bright Month

– Newly Released –

*Blessing for a growing measure of happiness and brightness in the
auspicious month of Kislev*

By the Grace of G-d
15th of Kislev, 5730
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mrs. ...
Minneapolis, Minn. 55416

Blessing and Greeting:

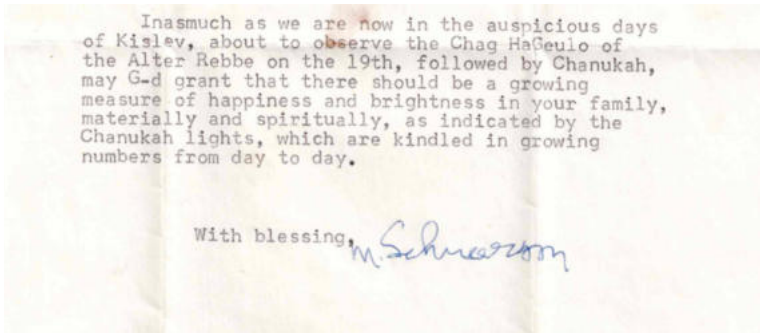
I duly received your letter and snapshot of your daughter, bless her. Due to an oversight, this has not been acknowledged previously, which you will surely forgive.

No doubt you received my reply to your telephone messages.

Inasmuch as we are now in the auspicious days of Kislev, about to observe the Chag HaGeulo of the Alter Rebbe on the 19th, followed by Chanukah, may G-d grant that there should be a growing measure of happiness and brightness in your family, materially and spiritually, as indicated by the Chanukah lights, which are kindled in growing numbers from day to day.

With blessing,

M. Schneerson



*Dedicated in honor of
the birthdays of*

Yaakov Zecharya *ben* ***Yisachar Dovid***
and ***Devorah Shoshana*** *Bas* ***Moshe Elazar***
Klausner

May Hashem bless you with arichus yomim
v'shanim tovos, along with health, simchah,
nachas, and hatzlacha in all your endeavors,
until we rejoice together with
Moshiach Tzidkeinu

By your children and grandchildren,

*Miriam, Nafi, Chanie, Chaim, Rivky,
Yosef Chaim, Mendy, Fraidy,
Schloimi, Scholi, Gitty,
Racheli, and Levi*