

# Ask A Breslover: Why don't you turn your wives into Chassidim?

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*Q: Rebbe Nachman once asked, "Why don't you turn your wives into Chassidim?" What does that mean to us?*

A: This is a tough one, I have heard several different approaches. Some are conservative and some are modern. As is the norm in Breslov Chassidus, Rebbe Nachman spoke in universal terms and his teachings apply differently to each individual.

I suppose that it depends on your upbringing, community and marriage relationship. For example I live in Lakewood, NJ where for the most part the women are *Moser Nefesh* to support their husbands financially for at least the first few years of marriage. In all honesty, this leaves the woman with very little time for serious study and external spiritual pursuit. Most families are large and between housekeeping, taking care of the children and work there is little time left for serious study. I would therefore say that one of Rebbe Nachman's most emphasized teachings was *temimus u'peshitus* – simplicity. A Breslov husband must learn to take the deep esoteric teachings of the Rebbe and live with them. He must be able to translate

their profoundness into daily life to the point where his spouse can appreciate and live by them even with her hectic schedule. For example the teachings of *Emunah* and *Simcha* are always applicable. The Rebbe has so much advice in regards to these that can be drawn on at every difficult moment. The lesson of *Azamra* – finding the good in oneself and others is just one example of that. Also, the importance and power of prayer can be shared and taught. The Rebbe spoke about practical acts as well such as singing Zemiros on Shabbos and doing odd things to cheer yourself up. There is so much practical advice that applies equally and it is the husbands job to live by the Rebbe's words and share them with his spouse in a way that will help improve the quality of life of their family.

Most of the above can almost be done by the husband without saying a "Breslov word" if one's spouse has hostile feelings towards Breslov. If you truly begin to live by these teachings, they will have an obvious effect on the marriage and it won't take long for your spouse to figure out where you are coming from. Rebbe Nachman taught us how to be truly happy and how to live a proper life. There is not a healthy person who doesn't desire these qualities. But it is up to the husband to communicate these values in a peaceful and pleasant manner. Positive emotional, psychological and behavioral changes will be noted. If a husband comes back from Uman, his wife will see the effect it has had on him or hasn't. A lot can be communicated even without words. Make sure that you truly feel "changed" by what you are learning and if your wife is willing, share those feelings with her. Most woman will feel much better about changes if their husband honestly shares his emotions with them.

In other communities and especially in later years woman do have much more of an opportunity to learn and study. I believe that most Breslovers would encourage husbands to teach their wives texts that apply to them. Many of the contemporary books

that have been written by Breslov scholars are most suitable for this. It is our hope and desire to continue working on this end in order to produce Breslov material geared especially for woman. In any event, one should consult with a Breslov elder/Rabbi as to what texts are most appropriate and if his wife so desires, why not share applicable teachings?

\*Please note the answer was written to someone whose wife was not interested in Breslov, NOT to a Breslov seeking women.