



Learning TO LET GO

The Torah's approach to marriage works—and it also jibes with human nature. Remarkably, there is a non-Jew who is extraordinarily good at expressing practical pointers for women to improve and maybe even save their marriages, pointers which conform with that Torah view. Laura Doyle is a relationship coach and bestselling author who has helped thousands of women achieve vibrant, successful marriages. Nechama Golding interviewed Laura Doyle for the *N'shei Chabad Newsletter*.

NCN: I know many, many religious Jewish women who are huge fans of your work. Have you had much contact with religious Jews?

LD: I've been honored to get to know several *frum* coaches in my coaching organization. I've learned a couple of words, such as "*shalom bayis*," which is exactly what I stand for. There is no equivalent phrase in English, so I just borrow it all the time.

NCN: Did you purposely give your books provocative titles (*The Surrendered Wife* and *First, Kill All the Marriage Counselors*, now renamed *The Empowered Wife*) that would intrigue some people but really outrage others?

LD: People always accuse me of being a genius marketer, like I chose that title just to cause controversy! I think that people interpret "surrendered" as "subservient wife" or "subjugated wife," and that's not it at all. The surrendered wife knows she can't control anyone besides herself, so she doesn't try. She doesn't tell her husband what to have for lunch or what to do at work. I think the word "surrendered" is a beautiful spiritual word that simply means acknowledging that you can't control anyone besides yourself. I love that concept and I combined it with the word wife and everybody lost their mind.

My first book was originally self-published; my husband and I put it together ourselves. I told him there might be maybe a thousand women who would be interested in this information. That's how big my vision was. He said, okay, cool, publish it. We printed 2,500 copies and they sold out almost immediately. Then Simon and Schuster bought it and it was published in 17 languages, in 20 countries, and it became a bestseller here and internationally.

You'll be happy to know that my new book is called *The Empowered Wife*, so I don't think it will upset anyone so much.

NCN: Tell us a little bit about the process that led you to formulate the concepts you write about.

LD: I was going through a very low point in my marriage and I wanted a divorce. I felt entirely helpless, thinking that my husband would never be capable of being a good husband, and that I would never be happy in this marriage. Either I'd have to suffer the rest of my life or get divorced. But when I discovered the intimacy skills and started practicing them, I realized that I was the cause of much of the trouble. And I had no idea. I was just doing what I saw my mom do. My parents are divorced, so I was following a failed recipe. It felt like such a miracle when I found the intimacy skills. The transformation in my husband was completely beyond my wildest imagination. He is still the man that I married, but for a while I was not seeing that side of him at all.

NCN: How did you come up with an insight that was so opposite to what you had experienced?

LD: Desperation is the mother of invention. I was on the brink of divorce, but also embarrassed of getting divorced—so I became open to ideas that I hadn't been open to hearing at first. I started asking women who'd been married for at least 15 years for their advice; 15 years seemed like an eternity at the time. I thought maybe they had some wisdom. I remember one woman said, "Oh, I try never to criticize my husband no matter how much he deserves it." I said, "Have you got anything else? Because I'm not going to do that."

I couldn't even hear what they were saying. It didn't make sense to me, but I think in my desperation and pain I became a little more open and willing to experiment with these suggestions. I tried everything. If it worked I kept it, and if it didn't I threw it out. Now women tell me they see results in about two weeks, but for me it was years of trial and error.

It took me time to get those habits down pat. I spent two to three years in experimentation mode. On my ninth anniversary I changed my name to my husband's name—I hadn't taken his name at first. It was symbolic of me not being willing to be joined.

All I had was my own experience, and it was so

shocking, so opposite of everything I thought I knew, that I thought it might be of value to other women. I learned that I couldn't control my husband and still expect to have the connection and intimacy that I craved so much. I was a controlling person, so after I learned the skills I just went around controlling my girlfriends and saying, "Apologize to your husband for being disrespectful!" Or I'd say, "Express your gratitude." For some reason they would go along with that, and we all saw just how much power we had. I had a little support group in my living room, there were five of us, and we all had the same goal, to make our marriages better, and we could really see the results. Someone would come in and say, "Wow, I can't believe this, but my husband won the sales contest at work and he took me on the most romantic trip of our lives! And he's not that kind of guy."

There was one woman who had always been fighting with her husband. "For months I wanted him to paint the family room and guess what, he finally did it! And I didn't even mention it!" We were all inspired by the results we were seeing.

NCN: The whole secular world claims that there are no differences between men and women. And you understand that there is a difference between men and women. How did you come to this awareness? Can you summarize the difference?

LD: On this point I went down kicking and screaming because I was a feminist! I truly believed there was no difference, and I thought that women would lose out in the workplace if we admitted there was any difference. I thought, oh, I'm the same as a man but smaller and with less body hair. Once I accepted the difference, I felt relieved because until then I felt like a square peg in a round hole.

It's kind of scary to try to be a man. I don't really know how to do it. Once I accepted that I don't need to, I started to feel much more like a round peg in a round hole and feel feminine. I feel so much more empowered because I know that

I have special gifts that the world needs, gifts that are unique to me in my relationship.

NCN: How would you define the difference between men and women, if you could summarize it?

LD: The essence of femininity is receptivity and desire. Men are more about the doing, achieving, accomplishing. And we are the feminine, we're experts on the emotional; we are so much more adept at knowing how we feel and expressing it. And that's a key ingredient for an intimate relationship. Nothing can get started without us being able to tap into our abilities that way.

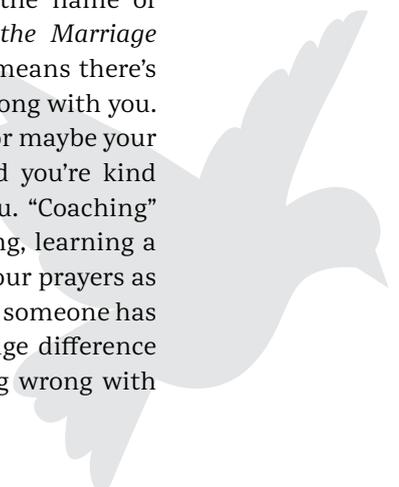
NCN: In Kabbalah, being a *mekabel* [recipient] is the feminine aspect. It's not a passive role, it's an act of opening yourself up, making yourself receptive.

LD: Wow, that's an amazing idea! I think a lot of people will say the feminine is passive and for me it really isn't. It's receptivity, desire, emotional brilliance, those are some of the defining characteristics of the feminine.

The longer I do this work, the more amazed I am at the elegant way the masculine and the feminine fit together. I realize how moving it is when everybody is operating from their strengths, and how ridiculous or destructive it is when people try to operate as the gender they're not.

NCN: Are you actually counseling people now, or do you train people to do it?

LD: I make a distinction between counseling and coaching. This touches on the name of my second book, *First, Kill All the Marriage Counselors*. For me, "counseling" means there's a pathology, there's something wrong with you. You might have a mental illness, or maybe your childhood was dysfunctional and you're kind of broken, and we have to fix you. "Coaching" to me is more about skills training, learning a particular process, like learning your prayers as a child. You don't know them until someone has taught them to you. There's a huge difference between saying there's something wrong with



you and we've got to try to heal it, or saying, hey, no one ever taught you these skills, so let's get you trained. What I do is coaching.

NCN: So was the title meant to be humorous? Is it a takeoff from Shakespeare, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers"?

LD: It's both. I wanted people to think about things differently than they have been thinking about them, and humor is a great way to accomplish that. Some people get the joke and some don't. Those who don't get it say, why are you so hostile? I'm hostile about marriage counseling because one of the key things that makes a marriage wonderful is respect. When you go to a marriage counselor with your husband, and you sit in front of that stranger and tell her everything that's wrong about your husband in front of him, it's one of the most disrespectful things you can possibly do. You just dug your hole a lot deeper than it was before you went to marriage counseling.

From my position as a coach, I have had so many women come and say, well, we went to marriage counseling and now we're separated, or we went

to marriage counseling and now we're divorced. I felt convinced that I had to bring attention to this problem. Part of the reason marriage counseling was damaging for me was that it obscured the truth that I had the key, I held the power to heal the relationship. And I wanted to be well trained to keep my relationship in good condition.

Whatever you focus on increases. For example, I decided in counseling that my husband has attention deficit disorder. So what did I get more of? Attention deficit disorder. Then I wanted him put on medication, and we did, and it was bad for his liver, but I didn't care because I thought that was going to make me happy. And all this time I had the key, I had the power in my marriage. But marriage counseling meant I was the wife waiting for the counselor to fix my husband so I could finally be happy. Of course, it never worked, and it doesn't work. There was a study at U.C.L.A. that showed that 75% of couples who had traditional behavioral marriage counseling were separated within one year. Seventy-five percent of the time it's a big ol' fail, and it took me a long time to recognize that.

NCN: Do you ever give up on a



∞ Is He Capable? ∞

Coach Sarah

“What if he really is not capable?” asks Chava anxiously.

Her question brings me back a couple of years to when I asked that same question of my coach.

Although the circumstances were different—she was nervous about whether her husband would be capable of providing for their family, and I was wondering

whether I could rely on my husband to be a good father—the issue was really the same.

I hadn't meant to take over the discipline and all child-related issues in our home. It just kind of happened like that.

My husband was busy. He was working, and I chose to mostly stay home. I grew up in a large family with lots of hands-on experience with little ones, and he had no

siblings. I seemed to have a natural feel for the kids' needs and overall health, and he didn't.

I didn't aim to dismiss his ideas about education, health, friends, or whatnot, but my ideas just seemed to make more sense.

This discrepancy just became more and more glaring as our children grew, and I perceived an increasing inadequacy in his parenting skills.

marriage, just say “forget it, you guys can never work things out”?

LD: I never say die. My mission, my charge, is to stand up for marriage. If a woman comes to me, that means she found some hope in herself to reach out to me. You don't reach out to me if you don't want to save your marriage. If you want to get a divorce, there's lots of places to go. People say, “Oh, yeah, you should leave him.” If you come to talk to me, that means you have hope and you want to save your marriage. Then it's my job to stand firm, to stand for your greatness and to help you see that possibility. I have a conviction that it is absolutely within our power as women to create what we want to have.

Marriage is a spiritual contract, so I see it as a doorway to a spiritual journey. It was for me. Learning to trust my husband was a metaphor for trusting G-d.

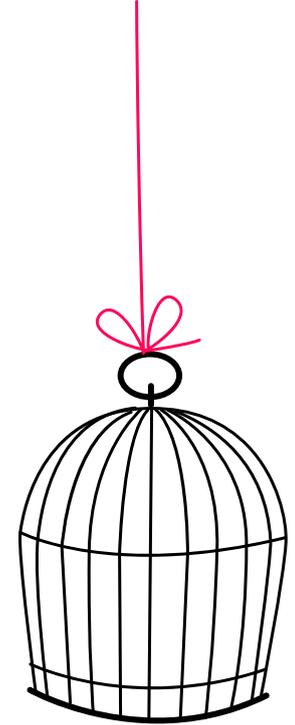
For example, I would wake up thinking that my husband is terrible with money. I can't trust him to pay bills, I have to pay the bills myself, I have to do everything myself or it won't be done right. And when I was able to let go and really

trust that my husband wasn't going to drop me, was not going to let me down, it was a way of becoming a woman of faith. Marriage gives you an opportunity to exercise your faith muscles, to trust in the unseen.

I had no evidence to think that he was going to be fantastic with paying the bills, but I made a decision to trust anyway. Isn't that what you do as a woman of faith, you decide to trust G-d? Strengthening your relationship with your husband [leads to] strengthening your relationship with G-d! It's a portal to spiritual growth.

NCN: Are you saying that the faith you need to build your marriage is similar to a religious faith?

LD: Right. I feel that women of faith have a leg up because of that training. I think part of the reason that I feel such a connection with the *frum* community is because the *frum* community puts a high value on marriage in a way that the rest of our society does not. That's kind of gone away. It's very easy to just get a divorce. And I know that there are problems even in the *frum* community, just as there are



When he would get angry at the kids I would come into the room to make sure things didn't get out of hand.

If I heard raised voices, or a child crying when under his care, I would walk over and ask him, “What happened?” And then I would set things right.

I suggested that we have a family discipline plan where I outlined what I thought would work best. My frustration just grew when he agreed, but then didn't follow through.

Our kids were suffering. One

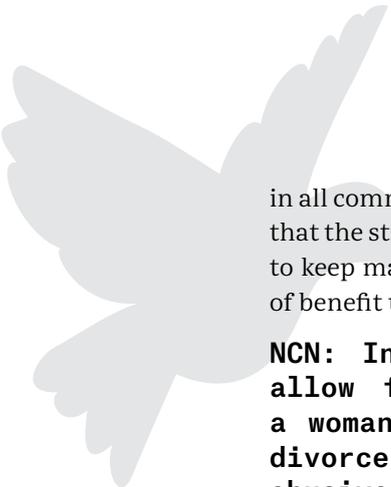
teenage daughter was kicked out of school for poor behavior. Another daughter was struggling academically. We enrolled her in an expensive program that she wanted to be in, but I couldn't motivate her enough to really benefit. I was exhausted and overwhelmed.

When my coach suggested I examine my respect and control around raising our family, I balked. How could I rely on him and just trust that he'd figure it out? How could I just throw my children to the wind? If anything, family and

professionals were telling me to step in more. It seemed like the height of irresponsibility to say, “I can't,” and let my husband figure things out on his own. And what if he is messing up? I shouldn't protect my children?

But I also could not continue alone and, I had to admit, it was taking its toll on my health and sanity. And I wasn't doing too good of a job myself anyway.

So, leaning on the shoulders of my *mashpia* and the women who'd walked this path before me, I chose to have faith that my husband was



in all communities, but there is an advantage in that the structure and the expectation are there to keep marriages together. I think there's a lot of benefit to that expectation.

NCN: In your books you seem to allow for the possibility that a woman may have good reason to divorce a man who is physically abusive. Do you believe that other forms of (non-physically-violent) abuse exist? Do you think that a woman can cure an emotionally or verbally abusive man (who may be not only angry but also manipulative, someone who makes his wife think she is the crazy one) by living the way your books describe?

LD: Safety comes first. I always want everyone to be safe. If someone is physically injuring somebody else, obviously that's not safe.

As to the other kinds of abuse... it's interesting to me that only women use the term "verbal abuse." Men don't ever say they've been verbally abused. If I look at my own marriage, I have said

things that qualify as verbal abuse, no question. So what is the definition of verbal abuse? Is it something we say to overdramatize that when two people live together they sometimes hurt each other?

I once wrote a blog post about how verbal abuse is no excuse for divorce. And a lot of people responded with comments like, "You are such an idiot, I can't believe you are so ignorant about this." And they demanded that I take down the post. I see this again and again. Here a woman is verbally abusing me in this blog comment, and she feels that she's not! She has no accountability or awareness of her own verbal abuse.

In my experience, I've never seen a woman clean up her side of the street and not have enormous influence and impact on the outcome of her relationship. She has more power than she may think. Let's look at that. It's so easy to point fingers and say somebody else is to blame here, not me. The more that I focus on and take responsibility for and apologize for hurtful things I've said—it's so empowering. It feels like sawdust in your mouth the first time, but once you get the outcome—of greater harmony and intimacy in the home—it doesn't feel so hard at all.

capable and would come through.

It was hard.

Ha, that was an

understatement.

It was TERRIFYING!

Like walking off a cliff.

At first I would literally have to leave the house, take a walk, grab the keys and go shopping, anything, just to get myself out of the way in order to keep my commitment to be respectful.

Forcing myself to walk away from the room where my husband

was dealing with a child... I kept affirming to myself, this is his relationship with his children, he will figure it out.

When the kids came to me with questions or complaints, I referred them back to their father. Ask Tatty; he will help you.

When the school called and I just couldn't face those teachers anymore, I told my husband how overwhelmed I was. He stepped up and said, "I'll deal with it." I had to swallow my fears—would he botch the meeting? Would it reflect badly on me? Would they wonder where the mother is? Instead, I said,

"Thank you."

Family meals offered another practice ground. A kid or two or three would be fighting or misbehaving. Instead of jumping in to fix the situation or shooting meaningful glances at my husband to wake up and take care of it, I sat back and did nothing. And when it got to be too much for me, I quietly pulled myself up and went to my room for a breather, or better yet, walked around the block and talked myself through it.

What are you afraid of? I asked myself. I'm afraid our children won't grow up to be *mentschen*.

NCN: What can and ought a wife do if her husband is uncomfortable in a leadership role and really wants her to make the decisions? What if he enjoys and wants to be dependent on his wife? What can she do then?

LD: In my case I needed to open my eyes a little bit wider to see my husband's leadership. Perhaps I had established early on with my husband that I was in charge, and the way for him to keep the peace was to just go along with that. It doesn't mean he enjoyed it or that I enjoyed it, it was just a habit we had. I think this is a common confusion: Is it that he likes it this way or is it just something you've both gotten used to?

I married a man who's very easygoing. I'm pretty driven, I'm pretty ambitious. He's very laid back, and that was a very attractive thing to me, because sometimes I'm a little too uptight. When we talk about leadership, it can take a lot of different forms. So, for instance, maybe I'm going around the house cleaning, and I'm resentful and I'm sick, and he's lying on the couch relaxing. And I'm saying, look at that! I'm

getting mad about it, and getting that ugly face on. Instead I could look at that as leadership. You know, my husband is saying, "Hey, there's a time to relax and right now is the time to relax." And instead of going beyond my energy limits trying to clean the house right then, I might just go and sit with him on the couch. My point is that we expect leadership to look a certain way, and it takes a lot for a woman to get past her own bias of what her husband's leadership should look like.

Maybe your husband is not going to lead the way you think. For me, I really had to have a different timeline. In my house, my husband does all the dishes. Before surrendering, I could never get him to do it. And then post-surrendering, I never do dishes anymore. But I bet you there are dishes in my sink right now. Probably, I haven't looked, but he doesn't always do it immediately after the meal like I think they should be done. That's one example. If I don't want to be responsible for everything, or lead everything, then we need to be patient. Maybe not be so attached to our concept of good housekeeping. Like, oh my gosh, if someone comes over they're going to see dirty dishes!

Is this realistic? Yes, it could be! It's kind of unfolding in front of my eyes!

Can you control this? Well, yes, I can jump in again and say, forget it! Experiment failed, I'm taking over—this time fully.

I kept on talking with myself. What did I want to create in my home?

Oh. My. G-d. Respect. I want a respectful, peaceful home. Respect is the cornerstone of *mentschlichkeit*.

The light went on—the best way for me to bring peace and respect into our home is to start. And I

would start by respecting their father.

I walked around a few more times, until I could pass my house and all was quiet. I went inside, thanked my husband for restoring peace, and continued the meal.

It was an uphill battle.

But I won.

And my family won.

The break came when my husband said to me, "I hate what you're doing."

Shocked, I asked why.

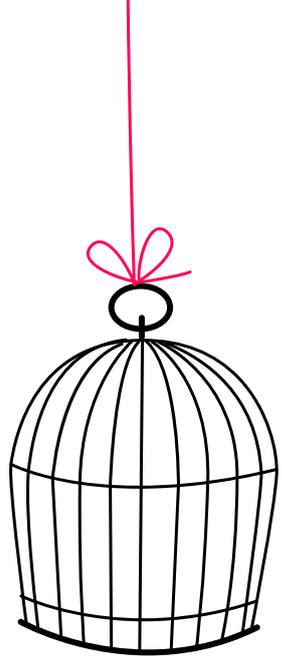
He replied, "Because I'm faced with all my own shortcomings."

He used to be able to avoid taking

responsibility, because I was always there to step in. Or he could blame his mistakes with our children on me, because I was openly doubting him. Now that I was staying calm and respectful, he felt the full burden of responsibility for his role as a father.

Once I stopped breathing down his neck, he was free to grow and build our family.

My husband became my rock. When we are together as a family, I am free to relax and let him handle things. Family meals are more peaceful and a time for bonding. Our daughter is doing beautifully



Well, they're also going to see that I'm relaxed and happy and my husband adores me and he does dishes! In my life, having the house look perfect is a lower priority than the other benefits I get from surrendering. The question I have is, are you jumping in and doing everything, or is there space for him? Is there any room for him to do things on his timing?

If I am tending to my garden and I'm full of peace, then I have a different perspective of my husband too. And maybe I'm creating a little more emotional safety and space for him to be that leader that I want. I don't think it's giving up at all, it's just staying out of blame and criticism, which are the opposite of spiritual maturity.

NCN: To what kind of woman are your books geared, and is there any type of woman that your books are not addressing?

LD: I started out saying *First, Kill All the Marriage Counselors* is a book for women who find themselves being controlling. What I find hilarious is when a woman will say, "Well, I'm not the one who's controlling; he's controlling. No one is controlling him." Here she is trying to control her husband, to make him less

controlling. It's all kind of circular and gives you a headache if you think about it too long.

I feel like the intimacy skills are spiritual principles that we're all bound by, just like we're all subject to gravity, whether you know it or not. I find them magical and enlightening and beautiful, and I'm passionate for every woman to have them.

NCN: It sounds like you starting out addressing women who were controlling, and then you found that your approach could be helpful for all women.

LD: Yes, and I think it's not always easy to see yourself as controlling. Some women are very controlling and don't even know it. They think they're being helpful. It's difficult to identify yourself.

NCN: Do you have any message for *frum* singles? We have a lot of singles who are doing everything they can, who would like to be married.

LD: I've heard from women who read the book [*The Surrendered Single*] and then they meet

in school, and my husband is on top of the children that need academic help. Of course I'm involved, but I'm not the end-all and be-all. It is a relief.

Mistakes are owned and cleaned up. I love the way he handles tricky situations and conversations with our children and is way more effective than I ever was.

He chose to work independently on his parenting and will often give me guidance that is emotionally brilliant.

He will go out of his way to do things for and with the kids that I

would have otherwise dismissed.

I feel truly lucky and supported. "Chava," I say. "You never know what your man is capable of until you respect him."

Her journey is just beginning, but with the courage she is already displaying, I have high hopes for her. She is choosing to stand back and stop helping him with tips and suggestions. She is choosing to respect his choice of career and trust he will figure it out. She is choosing to focus on her faith and gratitude when her husband brings up his failures at work. She

is making sure to nourish herself spiritually, and has picked up her painting and her dance classes.

Who knows what wonderful things are in store for her?

After trying every conventional method, Sarah discovered the Laura Doyle skills. Spurred by this women-only approach that delivered stunning results, she became an LD-certified coach herself. Sarah may be reached at extraordinarymarriage@gmail.com.

somebody, usually within about six weeks. Sometimes they meet someone the same day they close the book. For the *frum* community, I'd say that what helps is your openness to anyone. If a person calls, or you hear about a name, you could have reservations about it. "Oh, he might not be whatever enough, I don't know if it's going to work." You could get into some negativity, but when you stay open to the possibility, good things can happen.

G-d wants us to be loved. All we have to do is to be open to that, and not refuse it. The feminine is to be receptive. This is how we were made to be.

NCN: I'd love to hear more about how women can apply your philosophy when there are children in the picture. Many issues that can come up in a marriage are kid-related. For example, how can a wife remain respectful when she feels her husband is really doing wrong by their child? Another example: When a wife does need help from her husband—in the immediate moment—how can she state that as a desire without expectations, rather than "issue orders," when she really needs help right now?

LD: Just to be clear, I don't have any children—so I'm the perfect mother. I do have *frum* coaches that I have trained. Most have large families. What I see with them is that the pull of motherhood, the vulnerability of your children, is very compelling. Part of motherhood is feeling that you are doing the most important job in the world, and I think that makes it hard to walk away sometimes.

We women need to remember to take care of ourselves. There's an expression, "If you take care of the mamas, the babies will be fine." One of my *frum* coaches told me a story of her brother coming over; he wanted a ride to the airport. He also said, "I'm kind of hungry; do you have any food?" She has six kids, and she started opening the refrigerator to find him something to eat, and she felt depleted. She

said to herself, everyone just better stay out of my way, otherwise something's going to happen to them. So she closed the refrigerator and just said, "I'm going to go take a nap." And she went herself, in the middle of everything, with all the kids and her brother there. And everybody was fine, everything was fine, and when she woke up she liked everyone again. She had the sense that the courageous act of marching herself in to take a nap served not just her but her entire family. Instead of losing it and breaking down and being impatient with her brother and her kids, she was able to remove herself and things didn't fall apart.

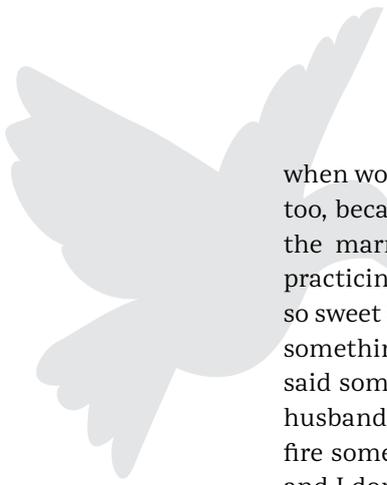
I think that's a big fear that women have: that the house, the kids, won't function if she is not there all the time. Her faith is to believe that everything will be fine if she does what she needs to do for herself. Sometimes it's an act of faith to take a nap.

NCN: You're saying that there might be times that we could be taking care of ourselves, if we trust a little more that things will be okay, that our husbands might not do the job we would do but that's okay. What about pointing out to your husband things he should do with the children? Let's say you're going out and the kids need baths.

LD: If you have information for your husband, I think that's always fine. So if you're just telling him "he's not buckled in" or "she's close to the street" and he didn't know that, there's nothing wrong with saying it. You're just communicating something that he needs to know, there's nothing wrong with that.

In general, it is not considered controlling just to express your desires to your husband. I feel so connected when I say, "I would love a cup of tea," and he says, "Oh, well, I'll make you one." Or I'll ask, "Would you get those things out of the cabinet for me?" and he'll do it. A request like that doesn't hurt the intimacy between spouses.

Sometimes I get a little paralyzed thinking about how exactly to phrase things, and I appreciate



when women tell me this is happening to them too, because it shows they're really prioritizing the marriage. I love that. Now that I've been practicing intimacy skills for many years, it's so sweet around here. I still mess up, I'll still say something controlling or rude. For example, I said something kind of disrespectful about my husband's business. He said he was going to fire somebody, and I think he was just talking, and I don't know that he was really going to do that, but I was like, "Really? You're going to fire him without even talking to him first?" I was just jumping in and telling him what to do, and he didn't like it. I didn't want to apologize right away, so I didn't. Actually, it took me a little while to apologize. But the atmosphere didn't suffer, because in general we have it good, so a little mess-up every now and then doesn't kill it. That's your new habit, that's a new groove in the road that you go down, instead of the groove of tension and bickering and hurt that used to be.

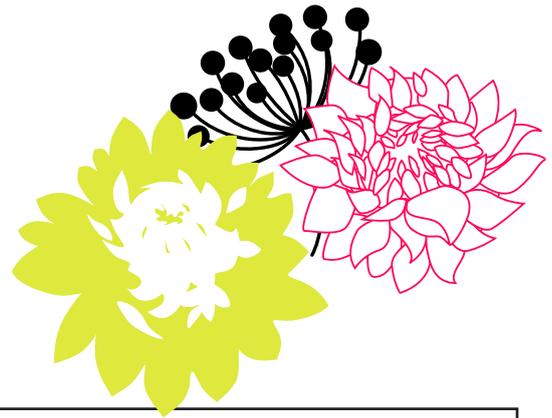
NCN: It's an inspiring vision.

LD: Thank you. I hope it is. My wish is for all women to see this as a possibility for themselves. Sometimes it's hard to get to that vision when you're in a lot of pain and your marriage is

suffering. You think it's fine for other people, but it's never going to work here. And those are the women I love to see inspired, and think maybe there is a possibility for their marriage too. I was once completely miserable. If I can have the marriage I have now, why can't you?

This has been one of the most in-depth interviews I've ever done in my life, and I've done thousands of interviews. I'm really moved, I'm touched. Nechama, you're evidently very passionate about this too. We're kindred spirits. I've told you more than I tell most people and you got that out of me, so I appreciate that.

NCN: Thank you! ❁



POST SCRIPT It was a thrill for me to interview Laura Doyle. I first read her books years ago but I had some questions. To be able to ask the author herself for clarification was a privilege.

Laura was fun to talk to, and I could see exactly why she is a popular public figure. Our conversation was inspiring and I hope some of that carries over here in print.

I found myself explaining to Laura some of what I'd learned in Chassidus about the Jewish idea of marriage as a *mashpia-mekabel* relationship. Her idea of femininity seems to be closely associated with what we describe as being a *makabel*. I couldn't help but be reminded of what I've learned about *bitachon* as well—trusting that Hashem will bestow good, and acting accordingly.

I still don't agree with everything Laura Doyle says (for example, I do think there is such a thing as verbal or emotional abuse, and even in the absence of physical abuse there might be times when a woman can do little to improve her marriage). And she recommends that women should openly discuss their husbands and marriages with other women, and this is not consistent with our values. But all in all, I found her perspective compelling. I hope you find something useful here as well.

-Nechama Golding



Laura Doyle



Nechama Golding

RABBI MANIS FRIEDMAN ON LAURA DOYLE: “LET’S HOPE THE WORLD CONTINUES TO FIND ITS SANITY”

It is actually encouraging to see that the secular world is picking up on Torah concepts. This is a sign of Moshiach coming, when “the world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem.” It is particularly gratifying when the secular world also recognizes an *eidele* (refined) concept, not just a scientific one.

The Torah says that Chava was cursed, *v’el ishech tshukosech*, meaning, she will yearn for her husband. The *medrash* comments, “Look at how Hashem’s ‘curses’ always turn into blessings!”

Why is it not a curse, but a blessing? Because when a man understands that a woman yearns for a husband, he will run around looking for a wife, because who wouldn’t want to be yearned for?

So instead of women seeking out men, it is the reverse: *darko shel ish lachzor achar ha’ishah*.

Another way to put it is that since he lost a rib, he is always searching for his missing part.

So we see that the *mashpia-mekabel* dynamic actually begins with the *mekabel*, because a *mashpia* is a response to a hunger. For a husband to really fill the role of a *mashpia* (which can be partially defined as provider-protector-giver), he can’t just give what he has. He has to give what is needed. Before the wedding, he says a *ma’amar* clearly stating that the *mashpia* must give strength to the *mekabel* in the form of security; he has to show her she can trust him.

Laura Doyle doesn’t mention that being receptive or surrendered (*mekabel*) is really synonymous with being a nurturer. One of the reasons men are not as good at nurturing is because men have an agenda. They need

to accomplish and they need to amount to something; they need to prove themselves, and that’s a full-time job. It doesn’t leave a man very available for others.

A receptive woman, a *mekabel*, is a natural nurturer because she’s completely there for her family and others; she is a good listener and much more than that. *Beiso zu ishto*: a man has a home only if he has a wife.

What does it take to nurture?

It’s actually a passive effect. Sometimes you don’t even do anything to nurture. When a husband or a child comes home, he walks into the house, takes off his coat, sighs in relief, and sits down feeling nurtured. It’s not because a woman handed him a cup of hot chocolate. Just being there is nurturing because he feels accepted.

Laura Doyle is proving that surrendering is not being weaker. I’m saying it’s more than that. Being *mekabel* is being a nurturer. A *mashpia*, a husband, is a provider, but the wife is the nurturer.

I am not comfortable with Laura Doyle’s teaching women to have faith in their husbands based on their faith in Hashem. It’s unnecessary and going overboard.

Let’s hope the world continues to find its sanity and that the way of Torah should become the way of the world.



The concepts touched on above will be developed by Rabbi Manis Friedman in a future issue of the N’shei Chabad Newsletter.