



Home Improvement By Rabbi Yitzchak Dovid Golbart

The ***Jewish Reporter***, dedicated this issue to “Home Improvement.” I must admit that the Ribono Sh’Olam, Master of the Universe, did not gift me with the greatest potential and skill when it comes to using a hammer and saw, but I understand “Home Improvement” can be more profoundly a spiritual directive that is underscored in our Jewish Tradition.

In Judaism the most important spiritual environment we have available today is our home. What goes on in our home supersedes the importance of our synagogues and institutions as a place for spiritual fulfillment and joyfulness. The striving for Shalom Bayit, peace (or wholeness) in the home, is a central concern in Judaism. A good home environment is paramount in securing a successful spiritual and religious life for ourselves and our children.

Those with many different levels of Jewish observance will read this article. Some may just be entering their search for a more spiritual connection with Hashem, G-d, while others consider their life as a Jew to be an ever-present consciousness involving rituals and learning every day. However, I feel confident to say there is always room for improvement to make our homes a better place for celebrating our relationship with Hashem, our family members, and our friends.

When entering a proper Jewish home we find a Kosher Mezuzah on the door post. Affixing this symbol is fulfilling a Mitzvah (commandment) and is a reminder that we are guided and protected by a nurturing, loving G-d Who has prepared a formula for our wellbeing. This blueprint, known as Torah, is not an ancient document that is read only like a history book or gazed at like an old family album; it is Hashem’s program for our daily life. The Sh’ma that is written on the Klaf (parchment) of the Mezuzah (Deut. 6:4-9 and 11:13-21) teaches us that our home is the first place to teach our children the values imparted to us by Hashem. If we are blessed as being parents or grandparents, the best way to teach is by example.

Are we living a life commanded to us to “Love Hashem with our heart, our soul and our might?” Are we living a life of G'milut Chasadim, acts of loving kindness, and avoiding the lure of Lashon Harah, evil talk of gossip and slander?

Are we following the Aseret HaDibrot, the Ten Commandments, including remembering and keeping Shabbat Holy making our home a Mikdash Maat, a small sanctuary?

Our Tradition places the woman in high esteem. If not for the Ashet Chayil, “Woman of Valor,” standing as the foundation of a Jewish home as wife, mother, teacher and role model, a Jewish home can barely be maintained. What husband can insist on a Kosher home and a home filled with Jewish values without the tireless support and work of an Ashet Chayil?

In Mishneh Pirke Avot there are many recommendations for “Home Improvements.” We find: “Let your home be a meeting place for Sages, and sit amid the dust of their feet, and drink in their words with thirst; Let your home be wide open and let the needy be members of your household.” What better “Home Improvements” can there be than the ones that make our homes a Mikdash Maat?

If the parents are actively engaged in daily prayers and learning, will this not transmit to others in the home? If our children are grown, what fills the parents with more Nachas than seeing them continue our beautiful heritage?

Living our lives in this fashion leads to a wonderfully fulfilling life with a home that is holy. These values have more long lasting, life enriching elements than the mere mortar, bricks, and wood of our physical house. They are far more important than remodeling your kitchen or bathroom. Our formula for “Home Improvement” is affordable, joyful, rewarding and a Mitzvah.