**Six Cultural Myths About Gender, and Six Real Spiritual Truths**

The following list is a remix of the writings of Rabbi Simon Jacobson in his groundbreaking best-seller, *Toward a Meaningful Life*. In *Toward a Meaningful Life*, Rabbi Jacobson addresses issues of strife and conflict between the sexes head-on. Through this article, we hope to debunk some toxic cultural myths and perceptions of gender and gender roles. We hope that this will lead you to greater understanding of yourself and your unique mission in life.

**Myth 1: Men and women are essentially the same.**

**Fact 1:** Besides the obvious physiological differences, there are also differences in the way men and women think, speak, and behave. Some of this is due to social conditioning, but some can also be traced to the inherent characteristics of each gender.

**Myth 2: Men are superior to women. And the opposite of men being superior to women is that women are superior to men.**

**Fact 2:** Did G-d create man and women as equals? Is one gender superior to the other? This is the equivalent of asking whether an engineer built two parts of a machine equally—the parts may be entirely different from one another, but without either one, the machine would either cease to function or would malfunction. We must recognize that man and woman were created by design as two equal beings, yet each with a distinct role to play toward one unified goal.

**Myth 3: Women are weak and men are brutish. It’s just nature. Boys will be boys!**

**Truth 3:** Society at times (ok, a lot of the time) mistakes subtlety and calls it weakness; in truth, it is more formidable than the most aggressive physical force. True human dignity does not holler; it speaks in a strong, steady voice; it resonates from within. The nature of a woman is subtle, not weak. And the nature of a man is aggressive, not brutish.

**Myth 4: In order for women to “make it” in this world, women have to be more like men. For example, a woman who is successful in business must be more masculine than a stay-at-home mom.**

**Truth 4:** If you want to “make it” in this world, you have to be yourself. The answer is not for men and women to try to be alike—nor, for that matter, for men to be like other men and women like other women. All men and women must be themselves, realizing that they’ve been given unique abilities with which to pursue their goals, and that their primary responsibility is to take full advantage of these abilities.

When we place more emphasis on the material than the spiritual, the masculine and feminine energies begin to diverge, and the male aggressive energy is inclined to dominate. When we value external power and control over hearth and family, when we value aggressive business tactics over wisdom, we are placing a higher premium on a man, or rather, on the parts of the man that find this form of expression natural and comfortable. We thus create an environment where masculine energy dominate and is valued most. Maybe offer the alternative – why can’t we value a strong family, children with manners and values, and security, relationship nurturing, human relations, (and some things that femine energy inculcates?)

**Myth 5: A “real man” does not express any feminine energy.**

**Truth 5:** Man and woman represent two forms of spiritual energy; they are the male and female elements of a single soul. Indeed, every aspect of the entire universe is distinguished by these two dimensions. For a human being to lead a total life, he or she must have both forms of energy: the power of expression and the power of deliberation; the power of strength and the power of subtlety; the power of giving and the power of receiving. And, ideally, these energies are merged seamlessly. While generally man and woman generally embody more of one of these energies than the other, that embodiment should ideally exist in its most spiritually pure form, undistorted by social and cultural pressures.

**Myth 6: Men are more spiritually-oriented, and women are more materially-oriented. Duh…that’s why women love to shop!**

**Truth 6:** All human beings, men and women, were created for the same spiritual purpose: to fuse body and soul in order to make themselves and their world a better and more refined place. In their spiritual service, there is absolutely no distinction between a man and a woman; the difference lies only in the manner in which their service manifests itself. Men and women have been given different tools with which to fulfill their common goal. Were each of us destined to fulfill exactly the same role in life, there would be no need for so many forms of expression.

Furthermore, it is the time now for the woman to rise to her true prominence. Women, because they are more sensitive to spiritual energy, must spearhead this new awareness. This would be the ultimate gender revolution—to topple the walls that separate spirit from matter, to lead the rebellion to a state in which there is a true harmony between the masculine and feminine energies.

***We know that gender and sexual politics are hot topics, and we welcome your disagreement. We’d love to hear what you have to say about these cultural myths. Do you think we’re right? Do we have it all wrong in your opinion? Let’s get some discussion started. It’s only through discussion that we’ll make progresss.***