

בית רבקה  
ALUMNAE



WINTER 5780

ב"ה 3, Issue 1 Volume 1

# EMBRACE

Uniting and inspiring the worldwide community of Beth Rivkah Alumnae



## THE LIGHT OF CHASSIDUS

*“Chassidus is a universal language that speaks to the soul of every Jewish woman.”  
A modern mother-daughter interview with Mrs. Shaindy Jacobson and Rashi Marcus.*

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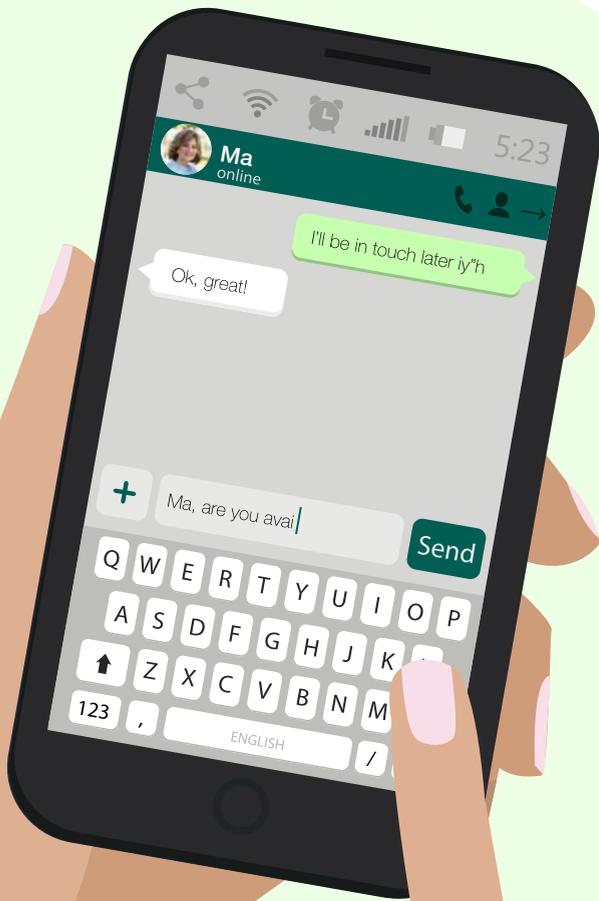
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MARK J. NUSSBAUM  
& ASSOCIATES<sup>PLLC</sup>  
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SERVING THE  
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COMMUNITY FOR  
OVER 10 YEARS  
WITH A SMILE

# SHINING A LIGHT on RACHEL

Sara (Kravitsky) Blau, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5766 (2006)*



“I never lost an ounce of sleep over my child” . . . said no Yiddishe mother ever. It’s in our blood. We’ll do anything for our children, even at the expense of our own comfort, convenience, and, of course, sleep. Rachel Imeinu transmitted that trait to us. It would have been an honor for Rachel to be buried in Mearas Hamachpela together with the Avos and Imahos. Yet she gave up that privilege and agreed to be buried on the side of the road because she saw with her prophetic vision that one day, when the Yidden would be passing her kever on the way to Golus, they would want to daven by her kever.

Of course Rachel was a martyr.

Except she wasn’t, and it was eye-opening for me to realize that.

She didn’t suffer from martyr syndrome (“Do you know what I do for you? Do you think I enjoy standing on my feet for hours cooking food for you?”). The Rebbe explains that Rachel was truly happy to be buried on the side of the road, on the way to the city of Efrat, so she could be of assistance to her precious children.

This idea totally changed things for me. It’s not that she didn’t sacrifice; it’s that she didn’t do it begrudgingly. She didn’t do it feeling pity for herself. In fact, she likely didn’t feel herself at all.

*She didn't do it feeling pity for herself. In fact, she likely didn't feel herself at all.*

*continued on page 11*

# A RIVERSIDE

ABSTRACT • 1031 • TACS



IN HONOR OF

*Mendy Gansburg*

A PERSON WHO IS REALLY DEVOTED  
TO THIS GREAT CAUSE.

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Nurse Practitioner  
has joined the team.



**Dr. Avraham Gottesman**

*The Pediatrician trusted by parents and loved by children.*

# *From The* **REBBE**

---

## *Chassidus as a vital ingredient*

BY THE GRACE OF G-D  
12<sup>TH</sup> OF TAMMUZ, 5720 [JULY 7, 1960]  
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

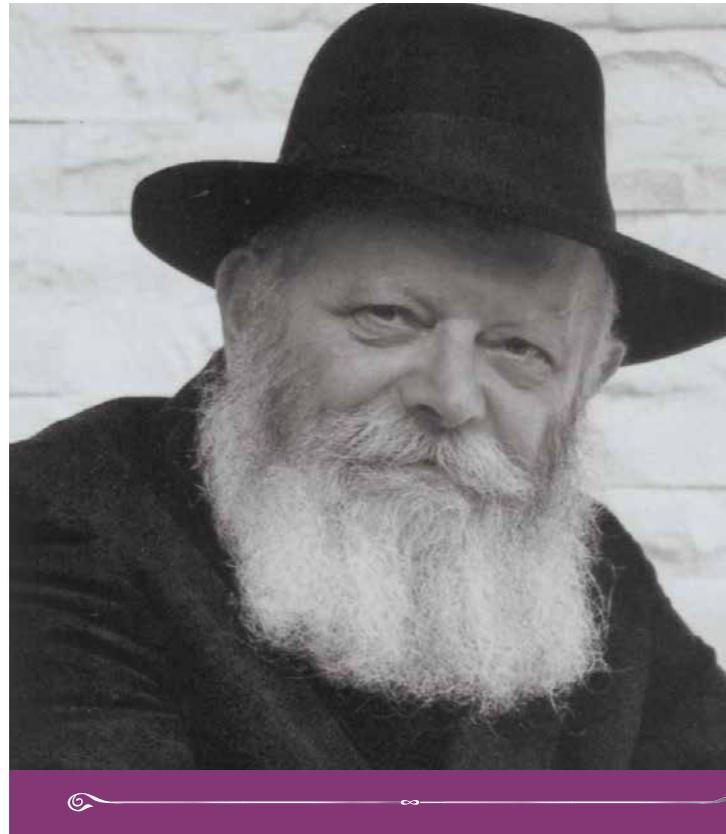
MR. H. A. GOODMAN, LONDON

### GREETING AND BLESSING:

**T**his is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 8th of Sivan, in which you touch upon the influence of Chabad and various other loyalties and obligations, etc.

There is, of course, the general principle that the larger sum already includes the smaller one, or, as our Sages expressed it, "In the sum of 200, 100 is included." I refer to the teachings and way of life of Chassidus [chassidism]. For Chassidus did not come to minimize in any way, G-d forbid, but to add to and strengthen all matters of Torah and Mitzvoth by instilling a spirit of vivacity and enthusiasm into all aspects of Jewish life. The Baal Shem Tov, whose 200th anniversary of the completion of his life's work we have just observed on the 1st day of Shovuoth, placed the emphasis on serving G-d with joy and on the awareness of G-d's Providence which extends to everyone and in every detail, in particular – two basic principles which go hand in hand together. For, when one reflects on G-d's benevolent providence and His constant watchfulness and care, etc., there is no room for anxiety, and the Jew can indeed serve G-d with joy and gladness of heart.

Although you will suspect me of being favorably inclined to the Chassidic point of view, and I will not deny it, and in any case it would be futile to deny it, nevertheless the fact is that Chassidus, far from creating a conflict in the matter of allegiance to the



Torah and Mitzvoth, is the ingredient which gives the necessary flavor and zest to all matters of Torah and Mitzvoth, and can only strengthen and vitalize all positive forces in Jewish life.

I say this in all sincerity and with the fullest conviction, and I hope that you will accept these words in the spirit that they are given, especially as I am writing this letter on the auspicious Day of Liberation of my father-in-law of saintly memory, whose life and work fully reflect the above. You are surely familiar with the conditions of Jewish life in Soviet Russia in those days when, under the pressure of extreme religious persecution, many spiritual Jewish leaders fled from that country, and my father-in-law remained to carry the banner of the Torah and Mitzvoth almost single handed. His work was not confined to the Chassidic community, as you know, but to all sections of Jewry, including, what you call "the other camp," supporting, materially and spiritually, rabbis, yeshivoth and religious institutions also of the other camp, and with the same selflessness and peril to his personal safety, as he worked for the Chassidic community. This he did from the profound conviction that there are no two camps in the Jewish people; that the Jewish people is

one people, united by one Torah, under one G-d. This is a tradition that goes back to the founder of Chabad and the founder of Chassidus in general who emphasized that the Chassidic movement is not the property of one Chassidic group, but the heritage of all our people, and that there will come a day when this will be realized in the fullest measure.

It is remarkable that when one reads the letters and bans by the early opponents to the Baal Shem Tov and his teachings, and if one does so without prejudice and with an open mind, it should make *everyone* a Chosid. In fact, the greater the attachment to, and veneration of, the Gaon of Wilno, the chief opponent of Chassidim in those days, the greater and more loyal a Chosid one should become. The reason is plain, for those letters also state the reasons for opposing the Chassidim, namely, the fear that they may weaken the foundations of the Torah, and Mitzvoth. How wrong those apprehensions were is obvious. Stop any Jew in the street, even one of the most stalwart adherents to "the other camp," and ask him, "What is a Chosid and what is his way of life?" he will unhesitatingly reply something like this: "A Chosid is a bearded Jew with long sidelocks, dressed in an old-fashioned

*The Chassidic movement is not the property of one Chassidic group, but the heritage of all our people, and that there will come a day when this will be realized in the fullest measure.*

way, who puts on two pairs of *Tefillin*, prays much longer, boycotts the movies, careful to eat only Shemura on Pesach [Passover], etc., etc." Further commentary is unnecessary.

I trust this will suffice on the subject matter, since this is the first time we have directly touched upon this question.

With best wishes of the Day, the Day of Liberation of my father-in-law of saintly memory, may his merits stand us all in good stead, and

With blessing,  
M. Schneerson ■

*continued from page 7*

The Rachel I appreciate when I learn Chassidus is a completely different Rachel.

Before, I knew the facts. Now, I appreciated her approach. Because learning Chassidus is like turning on a light in a dark room—you can suddenly see what was already there.

During these cold winter months (unless you are from the alumnae living Down Under!), we hope you can warm up with this magazine, which features articles highlighting the light of Chassidus. From the Rebbe's letter to personal perspectives, from Rosh Chodesh Society to Batsheva Learning Center, may the magazine shine a light and help you appreciate what is already there. ■



Sara Blau

#### EDITORS' NOTE:

*We would like to note a few errors in the previous issue:*

- *BR Alumna Nesha Grossman's maiden name is Marozow, not Drizin.*
- *In "Ask the Right Questions" by Hudi Rapoport, Hudi's bio was omitted: Hudi Rapoport is a certified life coach. She gives classes on parenting according to chassidus as well as one on one coaching. She can be reached by phone at 414-839-8468 or via email at Hudirap@gmail.com.*
- *We neglected to give credit to Rivky Levy in the side bar to Unity In Marriage.*

# Unlikely Regards

---

Mushka (Brook) Zaklos, Battery Park, New York  
*Graduating class of 5766 (2006)*

As told to Chaya Mushka Baumgarten, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5779 (2019)*



It was a regular Monday morning, about six or seven months after my mother-in-law had passed away. My husband was about to leave the house when he mentioned the challenges of the year of Aveilus.

Later that morning, a woman stopped him on the street and asked him where she could find Chabad. Living on Shlichus in a very secular neighborhood, this was quite unexpected. "You stopped the perfect person," my husband responded with a smile. "My wife and I run the Chabad house here!"

They had just recently moved to town from Long Island, the woman explained, and as they spoke, she revealed that she used to go to Bais Rivkah. Her parents were traditional Jews and were looking for an affordable quality Jewish education.

"It was a long time ago," she shared, "But I loved Bais Rivkah and I have the best memories from my time there!"



"Who was in your class?" My husband asked, intrigued.

"Let me see..." She thought for a moment and began to list a few names. At the second name she mentioned, my husband exclaimed; "That's my mother!!!"

Needless to say, my husband took down her contact information and followed up with her.

Today, Chaya (Helene) Creel, is a regular attendee and her adult children are involved as well!

She got in touch with her former classmates, was added to their class WhatsApp group, and now maintains a close, warm connection with her Bais Rivkah sisters.

Bais Rivkah cared for her and gave her so much, and she always speaks of how grateful she is for it.

This encounter was incredible Hashgacha Pratis; it was a great reminder to me that Bais Rivkah really is one extended family.

I'm proud to say that today, BH, our daughters attend Bais Rivkah. ■

BH

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# FROM THE DESK *of* MORAH C. GOROVITZ

A special Yasher Koach to the editors of EMBRACE:

**For the opportunity** to embrace my principals, teachers, classmates, colleagues and students of the Bais Rivkah Family.

**For the opportunity** to reflect and do some introspection regarding the impact of Bais Rivkah Chinuch and share a few basic thoughts that I tend to take for granted.

**For the opportunity** to thank Hashem For all the good and ask for the ultimate good.

To thank the Rebbe;

May we merit to fulfill his ratzon in all.

To thank all the people who invested in Bais Rivkah –

Past and present, those with us and those no longer with us.

May Bais Rivkah do them proud.

**For the opportunity** to wish each one and each other the realization of tefillos and bakashos in a manner of REVEALED GOOD (only) NOW!

Let's focus on the goal.

*"Our goal is to engrave in the hearts of our students and awareness that they are true "Bnos Yisroel" - The appreciation of the holiness, greatness and purity associated with this role, and the responsibility it entails..."*

*"Our purpose is that every Jewish girl should be fully cognizant of her responsibilities as a member of Am Yisroel, and as a future builder of a Jewish home."*

*From a talk given by the Rebbe at the inauguration ceremony of Bais Rivkah (25 Iyar 5706), printed in Reshimos to Parshas Yisro 5756)*

Place yourself into the Bais Rivkah Journey Chart

Location	Student	Teachers/ Faculty	Parents of Students	Other
Bais Rivkah Schools in DP camps				
Bais Rivkah France				
Bais Rivkah Morocco				
Bais Rivkah Kfar Chabad				
Bais Rivkah Montreal				
Bais Rivkah Brooklyn				
Riverdale Avenue				
400 Stone Avenue	✓	✓		
823 Eastern Pkwy				
Bedford and Snyder		✓		
Bedford and Church			✓	
Crown Heights Yeshiva				
310 Crown Street (BRHS)		✓	✓	
Campus Chomesh (Lefferts)			✓	



**“Our mission is timeless, idealistic and practical.** The Jewish woman is the mainstay of her home and her community. Our graduates are trained and educated to take responsibility for transmitting Jewish knowledge and values. In view of the school’s mission, the values do not change. Living in the era of information explosion and access to hi-tech tools, compels the higher education community to assist the student in analyzing and filtering the information, and then train them in critical thinking. DHL considers it critical that the knowledge gained at Jewish institutions of higher learning lead to an ethical and moral lifestyle. The studies must impact and be reflected in one’s daily life. Education should be aimed not only at the intellect but also at the heart and soul of our students.”

*-Quote from Institutional Self Appraisal Report 2015*

Listed below are events, experiences, and issues that students may have encountered while at Bais Rivkah.

Can you put names of teachers/ classmates/ programs/ studies/ discussions that gave clarity to any of these items?

Did you get guidance during these experiences?

Was there a focus on character building and spiritual growth?

Did you forge friendships? Pick up where you let off – connect!

Just an exercise to “refresh”. Did you forge friendships over these? Reconnect! Call a friend and do it together:

The Jewish American Dream  
(my son the doctor – the lawyer) \_\_\_\_\_

Holocaust survivors \_\_\_\_\_

WWII refugees \_\_\_\_\_

Religious freedom and opportunities  
in the U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

Peace Corps \_\_\_\_\_

“Broadmindedness” \_\_\_\_\_

Six Day War \_\_\_\_\_

Assimilation \_\_\_\_\_

Children being more observant than  
their parents \_\_\_\_\_

Secularization \_\_\_\_\_

The Baal Teshuva  
Movement \_\_\_\_\_

America – growing center of  
Yiddishkeit (yeshivos/ day schools/  
organizations) \_\_\_\_\_

Jews in Soviet Russia \_\_\_\_\_

Hippies \_\_\_\_\_

Women’s Liberation  
Movement \_\_\_\_\_

Jewish women’s education,  
leadership \_\_\_\_\_

Womens’ ongoing  
Torah study \_\_\_\_\_

Importance of family \_\_\_\_\_

The “Me” generation \_\_\_\_\_

Millennials \_\_\_\_\_

Hi-tech world \_\_\_\_\_

Information explosion \_\_\_\_\_

Moshiach and Geulah \_\_\_\_\_

Fashions, trends \_\_\_\_\_

Peer pressure –  
positive/ negative \_\_\_\_\_

Relationships and  
connections \_\_\_\_\_

Generation gap \_\_\_\_\_

Authority, Kabbalos Ol,  
discipline \_\_\_\_\_

Chassidus/ Rebbe/  
Hiskashrus \_\_\_\_\_

Responsibility to one’s self,  
family, neighbor, community,  
Klal Yisroel \_\_\_\_\_

Ufaratzta \_\_\_\_\_

Shlichus \_\_\_\_\_

Mivtzoim \_\_\_\_\_

Bein Adam l’Makom (Yiras Hashem,  
Ahavas Hashem) \_\_\_\_\_

Health – physical, emotional,  
mental \_\_\_\_\_

Developing individual  
talents \_\_\_\_\_

Using one’s talents and abilities  
for Chinuch \_\_\_\_\_

Simcha \_\_\_\_\_

Mashpia \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

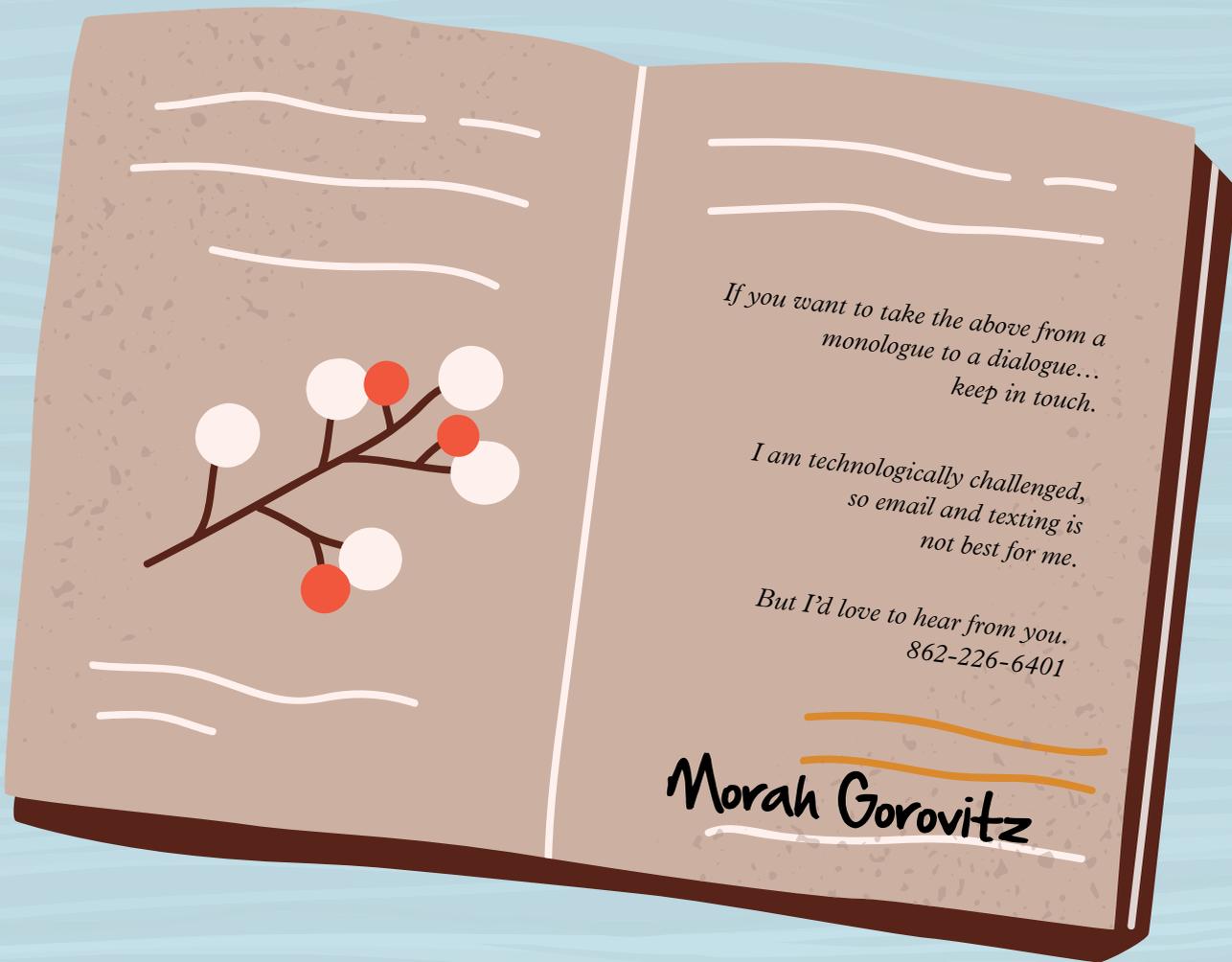
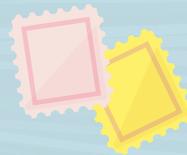
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Whether we like it, acknowledge it, or not, our Bais Rivkah chinuch experience is a Hashgacha Pratis event. The Rebbe Rashab chose the neshamos that would learn in Tomchei Temimim. WE WERE CHOSEN.

Urgent! It is up to each of us to surge forward and do all we can to bring and welcome the Geulah.  
May it be NOW.





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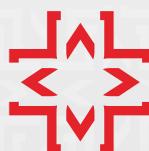
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# YOUR HEALTH YOUR SCHEDULE



# ALUMNAE

## *Who, What, Where.*

Sara (Benzimol) Benzecry, Crown Heights  
*Graduating Class of 5773 (2013)*



**Chaya (Wilschanski) Roitblatt**  
**Crown Heights**  
*Graduating Class of 5761 (2001)*

### **WHAT DO YOU DO NOW, AND WHAT COMPELLED YOU TO GET THERE?**

I coordinate the Shifra and Puah breakfast meals in Crown Heights together with Miriam Goldshmidt.

How I got involved is an interesting story. I had two children, and after five years of struggling with secondary infertility, I was expecting my third child. Six weeks before my due date, my second daughter woke up with her eyes swollen shut. I made an appointment at the pediatrician for my daughter and headed off to work. About two hours later I felt my water break, so I headed straight to the hospital. I asked my brother to take my daughter to the pediatrician, where she was rushed to the same hospital where I was being monitored. For twelve hours I was alternating between the emergency room where my daughter was and the labor and delivery floor to be checked. After twelve hours of observation, we were told that my daughter wouldn't need emergency surgery BH, but would need to be hospitalized and placed in quarantine. At that point I

was able to focus on my own labor and BH, we had a healthy baby boy!

As you can imagine, it was a very hectic time. I was taking care of the newborn at home, recovering from birth, and going to visit my five-year-old in the hospital until she came home the day before the bris.

One morning I returned from the hospital and found a brown paper bag with a delicious, filling breakfast at my door. I didn't know who it was from or how they knew to find me, all I saw was a tag with the words "Shifra and Puah." It was exactly what I needed; it was like I was getting a hug from the community during that busy and emotional time. There were people out there who understood what I was going through and took the time to show their support. I was so moved by the gesture that I put aside the enclosed card with the contact information and said to myself, "When I am able to, I will get involved in this incredible organization." It took a while, but after 11 months I reached out to see how I could help.

For the first year, I was a volunteer. I would cook bi-weekly for Shifrah and Puah. At that point, I was expecting my fourth child. My water broke at 26 weeks and I was put on bed rest in the hospital for nine weeks, until the birth of our healthy baby girl. Those few months were very hard for my family, and I saw first hand how much support was needed for new mothers. When Shifra and Puah expanded through Junior N'shei Chabad of Crown Heights they reached out to me and asked me to take charge. With the help of Miriam Goldschmidt and a group of incredible volunteers, we BH have been successful in running it for close to two and a half years.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

We make breakfast for 8-12 new mothers each day; each woman receives a three- to four-course meal for up to 10 days. A typical breakfast has a protein, carb, mezonos, yogurt or fruit cup, and a vegetable. Our cooks are amazing and really go all out for the mothers, and the breakfast ends up becoming a breakfast/lunch combo. We provide big brown bags, soup cups, salad clamshells, and a yogurt cup so that each breakfast is beautifully packaged and rejuvenating for the new mother.

We have an incredible team of volunteers that make it possible! They are always ready to jump in and help out with whatever is needed. There are three types of volunteers each day: a cook, driver, and companion. Before a cook becomes a volunteer we make sure that her home and lifestyle are in line with Torah standards and that all the food is on the highest standard of kashrus. The cook makes meals for all of the mothers who are receiving breakfast that day. Most cooks purchase the ingredients on their own. The driver picks up the breakfasts from the cook's home by 9:15 am and plans the route for delivery. The companion rides with the driver to make things more efficient. She drops the meal off with wishes of *mazal tov* and smiles for the new mother.

Cooking takes a lot of work, so the cooks usually volunteer bi-weekly, though we have some amazing volunteers who cook every week! The driver and companion deliver breakfast together every week. Sometimes we have friends who want to volunteer together; if not, the driver and companion become friends very quickly.

## WHAT'S YOUR SOURCE OF MOTIVATION AND INSPIRATION IN YOUR LIFE?

Being in a situation where I needed to reach out to my extended family and the community made me tune in to this big need in our community. Having someone come to the door with a homemade, delicious meal makes such a big difference in the whirlwind of the first few days at home. Sometimes (especially in the cold winter) the Shifra and Puah volunteer is the only adult the mom speaks to all day and that interaction is priceless. Until my experiences with the births of my third and fourth children, I felt that I was capable and managing. Then, at a time when I was in need, I didn't have to ask, and Shifra and Puah was there. I feel that being involved in bringing that feeling to post-birth mothers is a part of my *tafkid*.

## WHAT WAS A DETERRENT IN YOUR PATH, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

Life. It gets in the way of volunteering. When we're busy, the first thing dropped is our volunteer position. Things come up, and when a volunteer can't keep her commitment, Miriam or I have to step in. We need more volunteers desperately. When I started volunteering for Shifra and Puah, I promised myself that it wouldn't take away from my time with my children. There have been days that I woke up at 5 am to cook until 7 so that I could be with my kids. Even though I feel like giving it up sometimes, I can't. The cause touches me, and giving to it is a big part of my life. I see the incredible brachos that Shifra and Puah has brought to my life. Since getting involved, my family has grown by three more



children *kein ayin hara*. I see how the brachos just become greater and cannot imagine life without it.

### CAN YOU SHARE ANYTHING INTERESTING ABOUT YOUR SPECIFIC SHLICHUS?

I find it incredible that the Rebbe was instrumental in starting Shifra and Puah. The Rebbe saw the need in the community and took the time to institute this special moisad. This is such a practical and real way to help new mothers focus on the joy of having a precious new child and not get lost in the challenges of the first weeks at home. If the Rebbe took the time to create this program, I can definitely try to help someone in need. All it takes is saying, “Hi, what can I do to help?”

### HOW DID BAIS RIVKAH SHAPE YOU, AND WHAT WAS A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN YOUR SCHOOL YEARS?

I joined Bais Rivkah in 11th grade, and I was pretty shy. The girls were so willing to help me become a

part of the group. It helped me come out of my shy personality (some years later) and do my best to help others. I remember being personally greeted by the assistant principals with a smile. My life’s work is about touching another person. The small details make the biggest difference and a smile goes a long way. Bais Rivkah helped me gain that perspective.

### WHAT IS YOUR DREAM FOR SHIFRA AND PUAH?

To have an industrial kitchen where six-seven volunteers can cook at once. It is so much nicer to cook around other women. We’d be able to provide meals for many more mothers and meet the demands of the community. We’d be equipped to deal with specific food requests like allergies and sensitivities. We would be able to prepare some of the food in advance and have it frozen to be able to service more mothers. I’d like to see every woman after birth getting meals.

## BACKSTORY:

In 5737, the Rebbe instructed the leaders of the Kfar Chabad Community to create an organization to help the new mothers in any way possible. It was called Shifra and Puah, reminding us of Yocheved and Miriam’s commitment and support for the new Jewish mothers and babies.

In 5771 (2011) N’shei Chabad for Hebrew Speaking women established a branch of Shifra and Puah in Crown Heights. The need for the breakfast meals kept growing and they soon were making 20+ meals daily. They reached out to Junior N’shei Chabad of Crown Heights and asked them to create an American branch to help support and expand the existing program.

Between both branches, there are 20-23 new mothers receiving a delicious breakfast daily. The Junior N’shei branch takes care of 8-12 of those meals.



If you want to request meals for a new mother, call Chani Farkash. She will add the mother to the list and will make sure that there is no duplication. Then, based on where the new mother lives, she will receive meals from the Hebrew Speaking or American Division and feel the virtual hug from the community.

Besides sending breakfast, Shifra and Puah can also send cleaning help and high school girls to help out with older siblings. They can get Shabbos meals at cost prices and help send a new mother to a kimpeturin home so she can have a few days to relax and recover.

### INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Shifra and Puah can help pay towards the raw materials. Even if you can’t make a steady commitment, volunteering once in a while is a big help! Reach out to Chaya Roitblatt at 718-704-9754.

Until then, I want everyone to know that these meals are for everyone and every new mother should feel comfortable to tap into this special program.

### WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE FOR ALUMNAE AND CURRENT BAIS RIVKAH STUDENTS?

Firstly, it's amazing to see how Bais Rivkah has grown since my days there. I see how they are constantly trying to improve and give our girls the best. Kudos to the people making it happen.

Secondly, get involved. Notice the people around you. Everyone has their pekel, and we have no idea what is going on in the life that they are leading. Reach out. We are all busy, yet all it takes is to reach out and say that you are there to help.

It will enhance your life and theirs.



**Baila (Chanin) Stern**  
**Fort Sam Houston, S. Antonio, TX**  
*Graduating Class of 5757 (1997)*

### ONE OF MY PERSONAL STORIES WITH THE REBBE AS A CHILD:

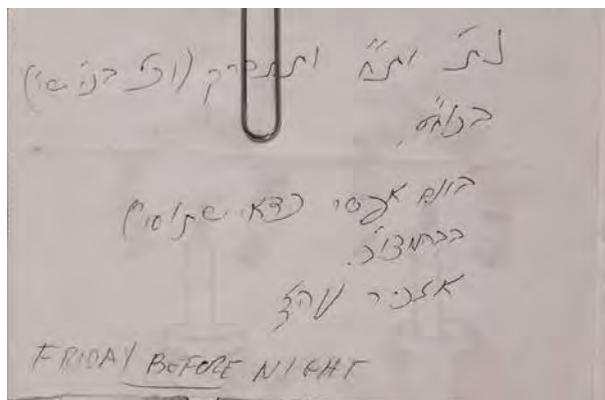
When I was nine years old, my mother brought home a book for my two-year-old sister, called, "Brown Bear, What Do You See?" It bothered me that the book had non-kosher animals in it, so I wrote a similar book, with kosher animals, for my sister. After perfecting the book with some help from my dedicated family members, the book was published when I was ten years old, in 4th grade.

After the book was printed, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe together with a copy of my newly published book, "What Do You Say?" One page read, "Candles, candles, why are you so bright? Because Jewish girls light me Friday night."

When I received the Rebbe's response along with the book, there was a page marked with a paperclip that

held a correction. The Rebbe added one word: "Candles, candles, why are you so bright? Because Jewish girls light me Friday **before** night."

The message was very powerful, and I carry it with me, in the education we give our children, and in the Shlichus life we live. The Rebbe's message with the one word, "before," taught me and my family a lifelong lesson on the importance of words and how others read and understand what we write. Until today, when speaking about Shabbos, we emphasize Friday *before* night.



### WHAT DO YOU DO NOW, AND WHAT COMPELLED YOU TO GET THERE?

My husband is a Rabbi/chaplain in the United States Army. In his position, he supports all troops and provides for the Jewish troops.

When we applied to the Army, the regulations required soldiers to shave their beards. However, my husband would not consider this, and it came to a point where we had to stand up for our beliefs and Yiddishkeit in court.

After almost three years of legal battle, the Army offered to settle out of court, and my husband was allowed to keep his beard while joining the army, making him the first Chabad Rabbi with a beard in the Active Army (Chaplain Yaakov Goldstein was serving in the Army Reserves before the ban on beards was enacted).

My husband has been serving for the past nine years, with my full support and with the Rebbe's brachos constantly coming our way wherever we are. As with all Active Duty officers, the Army moves us every few years, giving us the wonderful opportunity to have been stationed at a few different bases already. In some of our posts, there are over 100 troops that join services; sometimes there are very few. We have



challah bakes, Shabbos and Yom tov services – not to mention the food we prepare for it all!

One interesting challenge came up during Tishrei 5779 when my husband received orders to lead services at four different Army posts for each of the Yomim Tovim. The bases are far from kosher food and we were staying in hotel rooms with no kitchen. With just one and a half weeks’ notice, we had to make food for the whole month of Tishrei for the family and for all the services and packed very compactly to have room for the five big coolers in the car.

### WHAT’S YOUR SOURCE OF MOTIVATION AND INSPIRATION IN YOUR LIFE?

The Rebbe. Without the Rebbe’s constant brachos and guidance, we wouldn’t be doing what we are doing here in the military. I grew up in Crown Heights, and until I was fifteen we lived Rebbe all the time! Dollars, farbrengens, Mincha, beepers, the sirens, squashing in 770! Those years living with the Rebbe constantly in my life, learning in Bais Rivkah, and

socializing with my peers, helped prepare me for my life on Shlichus. We feel the Rebbe guiding us in our Shlichus. We see it constantly, and it comes in many forms- a text from a random person, a shared video, or a letter from the Igros Kodesh.

The first time my husband was going to be deployed (the first of six deployments to date) coincided with Pesach. I planned to fly with my children to New York to spend Pesach with my family in Crown Heights.

I wrote to the Rebbe and asked for a bracha that my husband should go and come back safely, and for my planned trip with my children to New York. I opened the Igros Kodesh and saw two letters. The first letter was an incredible letter giving brachos for hatzlacha for my husband.

The second letter spoke to (me) someone on shlichus, “I sent you on Shlichus, and you are trying to run to your parents’ house when a challenge arises?” We didn’t buy the tickets to New York and had an incredible Pesach Seder in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Two of my husband’s brothers helped us host

75 soldiers, while my husband in the Afghanistan war zone had 65 soldiers at his Seder.

### WHAT WAS A DETERRENT IN YOUR PATH, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

Many of the people that we come in contact with are completely ignorant about Yiddishkeit .For a soldier in the Army ,it can be very challenging to keep the Mitzvos if their commander has never heard of Shabbos ,Kashrus ,and Yomim Tovim .That's why we are doing what we do ;we are here for the Jewish troops .One of the ways we do this is with our challah bakes .We give them a mini taste of Shabbos food- gefilte fish ,chicken soup ,potato kugel ,challah ,dips, etc all in small dishes .They eat while the dough is rising and we have a Stump the Rabbi session where they can ask all of the questions they have .This helps clarify many misconceptions about Torah and Yiddishkeit ,and when another Jewish soldier comes their way they will be able to help them out .When the dough is ready ,my daughters and I teach them how to braid the dough into six-braided challah.

### CAN YOU SHARE ANYTHING INTERESTING ABOUT YOUR SPECIFIC SHLICHUS?

Because we are constantly moving, it would be difficult for our children to keep switching schools, so we homeschool our children.

A typical day starts with davening and breakfast. Then I learn Limmudei Kodesh one-on-one with each child while the other children learn Limmudei Chol on their own. We are usually finished learning by 2 in the afternoon. Then, of course, we're busy with Shabbos, Yom Tov, and helping the Jews in our

area. We meet many people and we are here to support them through anything they may need. In many of our experiences we come to find that we aren't only helping the Jews that we meet, but we are growing and learning ourselves.

There is one story that comes to mind, that took me way out of my comfort zone, and taught me a valuable lesson. My husband was called to attend to the widow of a soldier who was on her deathbed. In her hospital room surrounded by all of her children, my husband was told that she had just informed them that she was Jewish, and had survived the Holocaust. It was their father, an American soldier, who rescued her and they later married. She gave her daughter a locket with a Magen Dovid which was the only thing she had when she survived the war. My husband said vidui and She-ma with her and left instructions to the family and nurses on what to do when the neshama departs.

As my husband was leaving, he started a conversation with one of her sons outside the room. Her son mentioned that finding out that he was a Jew as his mother was dying was a lot to process. My husband asked him if they had any plans for after her passing, and her son responded that everything was organized and they planned to cremate her. My husband, who usually speaks diplomatically, blurted out, "So you're going to finish what Hitler didn't?"

A few hours later, my husband got the call that she had passed away and they asked for him to coordinate the details to bury their mother according to Halacha.

We set into action, trying to arrange for the Chevra Kadisha to come. We were on the phone for hours with Shluchim in a four-hour radius, and we still hadn't found anyone to do the Tahara. My husband



came home and asked me to conduct the Tahara. I asked another military spouse, a Jewish woman to help me out so the Holocaust survivor can have a kosher Tahara. She Baruch Hashem had a Kevuras Yisroel.

We never know what it will take to change a person's life. I never thought that I would be a part of a Chevra Kadisha, but when the time came, I stood up to the challenge and was given the strength to help this woman eternally. A day after the funeral her daughter came wearing the locket her mother had given her for the Friday night service and was obviously proud of the Jewish roots she had just found out she had.

When I go on errands I usually wear a shirt that says "US Army." It's my way of attracting Jewish people to say hi or ask a question. One day I was food shopping, and a couple came over to me and asked me where they could find kosher food. I showed them all the kosher products in the supermarket and they were so excited to see that there was kosher food accessible so close to the base. I invited them to come over to our house for the Friday night Seudah. It turned out to be the first time putting on Tefillin and lighting Shabbos candles since their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. The wife mentioned that she had just lost a pregnancy because of a blood disorder. Without even thinking I started telling her about Mikvah, while my husband's face said, "Really, is that the first Mitzvah that you're going to tell them about?" After they left, I told my husband that the words had just come out of my mouth, and I hoped they would accept what I had told her. Nine months later after going to the mikvah, they had a baby boy and BH they are expecting their second child very soon.

## HOW DID BAIS RIVKAH SHAPE YOU, AND WHAT WAS A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN YOUR SCHOOL YEARS?

Bais Rivkah was the source of my education and helped prepare me for my life on Shlichus. My favorite time of the year was production. It highlights talents and strengthens the kochos and self-esteem of girls that don't necessarily feel good about learning and tests. The students get to know girls from other grades and create everlasting friendships.

## WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE FOR ALUMNAE AND CURRENT BAIS RIVKAH STUDENTS?

Don't focus on what you can't do, rather focus on what you can. I never thought I would move out of Crown Heights, let alone be on Shlichus, moving every few years.

When I got married I was teaching and doing hair and sheitels on the side. When we moved out on Shlichus, I didn't think I would be able to homeschool my children. My husband said, "If you can teach 30 students in a classroom, you can definitely teach our three children!"

Bais Rivkah definitely prepared me for this amazing opportunity to live on shlichus. You are able to do much more than you can ever imagine. Don't let what you think you aren't capable of get in the way of what you can actually accomplish. ♣

*To learn more about military life and our unique shlichus lifestyle, feel free to contact me at [bailastern@gmail.com](mailto:bailastern@gmail.com)*



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EXPRESSIONS

# Chinuch: IS THAT MY CHILD?

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Mrs. Chanie (Avtzon) Wolf, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5763 (2003)*



*A mother is walking down the street with her two young sons.*

*A passerby asks her how old the boys are.*

*“The doctor is three,” the mother answers, “and the lawyer is two.”*

As parents, we sacrifice all that we have and then some – time, money, physical and emotional energy – for the sake of our children. Day and night for many years – and to a certain extent, forever – we love them, care for them, and do all we can to help them grow into successful adults.

Furthermore, as Yidden and Chassidim, we invest ourselves in their *ruchnius’dike* well-being, extending ourselves in incredible ways to provide them with a Yiddishe, chassidishe chinuch. We spend beyond our means for them to learn Torah and be inspired in their Yiddishkeit and we devote constant energy to teaching and training them to keep the mitzvos.

But with all that love and giving, we are only human, and there is always that selfish side that wants to have successful children for its own reasons. At its core, the *nefesh habehamis* – the ego – feels inadequate, essentially aware of its ephemeral existence. It thus struggles with self-esteem and yearns for success and the acceptance of others to validate its worth. When we become parents, we expect that for all we do for them, our children will fill those needs. We see our children as extensions of ourselves whose life choices reflect on our parenting. It’s the “my son, the doctor” syndrome – how does my child enhance my self-image?

Unfortunately, this very natural but ultimately selfish agenda can often get in the way of chinuch and it can be so sneaky that it’s hard to catch.

In his famous *Maamar Klalei Hachinuch V’hahadracha*, the Frierdiker Rebbe teaches that the

first prerequisite to chinuch is honest self-examination. One who aims to educate a child must be very self-aware and take personal growth seriously. Specifically, the Rebbe teaches, self-love is the greatest impediment to one's ability to influence another and it clouds our interactions with the children we love so very much.

## WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT ME?

We may see success in chinuch as the key to personal and social validation. We might be horrified when a child displays bad middos. What will everyone think? Is that my child? How embarrassing! We feel like failures when a child doesn't want to daven, and are frightened of what will come next.

We are frustrated when we feel that we are giving so much without the return we expected. We may be angry when a child misbehaves. We have too many things to do, we're exhausted, and the stress is overwhelming. Why is she making my life even more difficult? After all I do for him, can't he just act like a mentch? Don't I deserve nachas?

These painful feelings, left unchecked, can cause us to respond inappropriately. Instead of thoughtful chinuch, we are likely to offer only emotional reactions. We may come across as harsh, controlling, or angry, and the guidance we meant to offer will not be well-received. In our fear and frustration, we may even make unreasonable demands on the child, which will likely backfire. Seeing our children's imperfections as a reflection of ourselves, we may try to deny them, avoiding the responsibilities of chinuch by blaming others (such as their teachers) or excusing them in some other way.

## JUST BE NORMAL!

On the opposite end, our desire for social acceptance and success may lead us to limit our children in their Yiddishkeit: I want my child to be "normal," successful, and popular. I can't handle the image of my child as a "nerd," being different or holier than everyone else. Yes, of course I want her to be frum, but not too frum!

The Rebbe describes this conflict as it commonly plays out in chinuch of daughters: "Some mothers give their daughters a hard time. If the daughter walks down the street wearing a long dress, people will say she looks like a Rebbetzin, and that would make the mother much older. People might even

think the mother is already seventy – and no one wants that to be said about her, even when she is in fact eighty..."<sup>1</sup>

A child may come home from school inspired to fulfill a particular mitzvah in a more ideal way, only to be met by cynicism. "This is good enough," his parents respond abruptly, projecting their discomfort with higher standards on their pure youngster.

## WHOSE CHILD?

Rabbi Shmuel Lew relates a timeless lesson the Rebbe taught him regarding maintaining the proper perspective in chinuch. In yechidus, Rabbi Lew shared with the Rebbe that, although he maintained a close and loving relationship with his children, he would sometimes, as any typical parent, lose his temper with them. This loss of control bothered him, especially as it would lead him at times to hit his children. He asked the Rebbe for advice, to which the Rebbe replied:

"One of the things to contemplate is that as much as they're your children, even more so they are Hashem's children. בנימ אתם לה' אלקיכם. You wouldn't strike someone else's children. To hit the Aibishter's child? Your hand should tremble! Sometimes it is necessary to discipline, but never out of anger."<sup>2</sup>

This fundamental lesson is essentially the light of Chassidus in parenting.

"Every child is a child of Hakadosh Baruch Hu," the Rebbe teaches. "The physical father and mother are only the shluchim of Hashem who were given the merit to give birth to the child, raise, and educate him."<sup>3</sup>

In this vein, the Rebbe offers a deeper interpretation of the concept that "There are three partners in the creation of man: Hakadosh Baruch Hu, his father, and his mother"<sup>4</sup>. It is a partnership not only in conception, but also in the upbringing of the child:

"The partnership is divided so that providing for the spiritual needs of the child (the chinuch) is the job of the parents, meaning that Hashem entrusted them with the most precious deposit possible [a Yiddishe child], who is 'truly a part of Hashem above,' in the hope that they would fulfill their role to ensure that the child's neshama will shine in him openly... In contrast, the material needs of the child... are the responsibility of the Holy One..."<sup>5</sup>

*This child does not belong to me. I don't own her. She is not here to make me feel good about myself. She is Hashem's child, deposited with me for safekeeping and nurturing. And I was given precise instructions in caring for this child of royalty.*

We learn at the very beginning of Tanya that before a child is born, it is made to swear “Be a tzaddik and not a rasha.” But who is making this vow? The neshama that is still enjoying the radiance of the shechina and has no awareness of the challenges it stands to face?

The Friediker Rebbe explained: “The above dictum alludes to the fact that this vow is actually elicited (also) from the parents of each and every child, obligating them to assure that their child will be ‘righteous’ and not ‘wicked.’”<sup>6</sup>

## MAKING IT REAL

Perhaps we can apply this Hashem-centered perspective to the two scenarios above:

### ***On taking our children's chinuch personally:***

We teach our children to keep mitzvos not because we want them to, but because *Hashem* wants them to. We train them to have good middos because the One Above expects it of them; not so that we can feel good about what wonderful children we have. We encourage them to learn Torah because that is what their neshama needs; not because we yearn to take pride in our top student. Their triumphs and challenges are between them and the Aibishter; they are not a reflection of me. My responsibility is to do all I can to support them in their journey – truly loving them, teaching, guiding, and motivating each child to fulfill the shlichus bestowed upon him or her by Hashem.

***On limiting our children's growth in Yiddishkeit due to social pressure:*** These are not our children. Just as a babysitter is expected to adhere to the values and educational and health standards set by the child's parents, we ought to constantly ask ourselves: What are the standards befitting a child of the Aibishter? When it is tempting to simply follow the crowd and do what “everyone” is doing, it would be helpful to take a deep breath and remind ourselves:

*This is not about me. I promised Hashem that I would take care of His child and do my utmost to help him live as a tzaddik. I took responsibility for this neshama, and committed to its chinuch. Might my concern about what others will think be holding my child back from reaching his spiritual potential?*

## THE ULTIMATE TRUST

This is perhaps the most challenging, yet most exalted, calling of parenting: releasing our egos. We must give and give and then give some more and expect nothing in return. Because it is not about us at all.

What would chinuch look like if we could maintain the clarity that we have been given the holy task of raising Hashem's children? That what matters is not what we want or feel we deserve from our progeny, but what their Creator expects of them?

What if, in those moments when we must discipline a child, we could keep our egos in check - מוח שליט על הלב - by thinking of the incredible faith Hashem has placed in us by entrusting us with a neshama?

How high could our children soar if we could overcome self-love, tuning out the voices around us and suspending fears of judgment or failure?

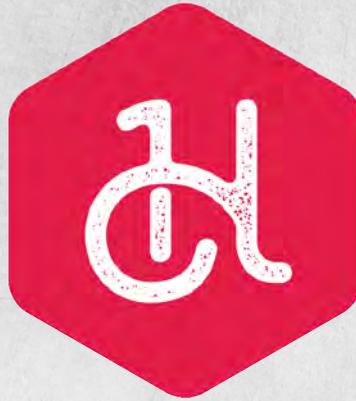
We will only know if we try.

Hashem knows we can. And He trusts that we will. ■

1. *Simchas Torah*, 5730; *Sichos Kodesh* 5730, vol. 1, p. 122
2. [chabad.org/therebbe/livingtorah/player\\_cdo/aid/1023081/jewish/Spare-the-Rod.htm](http://chabad.org/therebbe/livingtorah/player_cdo/aid/1023081/jewish/Spare-the-Rod.htm)
3. *Hisvaaduyos* 5747, vol. 2, p. 650
4. *Niddah* 31a
5. *Hisvaaduyos* 5743, vol. 3, pp. 1482-1483
6. *Sicha*, Kislev 19 5721, *The Rebbe's Holy Care*, Issue 3



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Matel (Keller) Hecht, Monsey, NY  
*Graduating class of 5752 (1992)*

## THE UNION of TWO SOULS

Marriage. Two individuals unite and become one. Excitement and bliss reign in the air, as life settles into a routine. The key component to sustaining a Jewish marriage, and certainly retaining that excitement and bliss, is the knowledge that “This marriage is not dependent on me, it is not dependent on you, or our feelings.” There is something above the two of us, that transcends us. Aibeshter. Ratzon Hashem. Specifically regarding marriage, Dinei Taharas Hamishpacha. At the foundation of a Jewish Marriage, keeping the eternal bond strong, is the Mesorah from Moshe Rabbeinu, to keep Dinei Taharas Hamishpacha. The laws directing us on how to keep a Jewish home. Building the next generation. Taharas Hamishpacha is a Chok, with rules that are not made to be understood. The power of this mitzvah is when we are careful about each detail, as clarified in Shulchan Aruch. By doing so, as the Rebbe often stressed in letters to individuals, we ensure that the foundation, the pipes, and the structure of the marriage are of the best quality. It is a marriage built out of submission to the Aibeshter, making it unlimited and eternal.

## IMPORTANCE of TAHARAS HAMISHPACHA

The Frierdiker Rebbe expressed the importance of Taharas Hamishpacha in Hayom Yom, Yud Nissan with the following words: “...With regard to the campaign for Taharas Hamishpacha; it is an endeavor that literally saves lives.” It is the foundation for the continuation of the Jewish nation. The Rebbe wrote many letters to various individuals expounding on this theme. Some of them can be found at [www.torah4blind.org/lwm-5765/415.htm](http://www.torah4blind.org/lwm-5765/415.htm). He explains that the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health of the child is affected positively when the Taharas Hamishpacha laws are followed accordingly.

The idea that Taharas Hamishpacha is the foundation of the Jewish home was also

emphasized in the sicha that the Frierdiker Rebbe spoke to the women in Riga, shortly after his Geulah on Yud-Beis-Yud Gimmel Tammuz. Though most of the sicha detailed instructions regarding chinuch, towards the end of the sicha, he emphasized that chinuch begins with the foundation of the home, the maintenance of the Dinei Taharas Hamishpacha. Following in that paradigm, the Rebbe instituted Taharas Hamishpacha as one of the 10 Mivtzaim.

*It is a marriage built out of submission to the Aibeshter, making it unlimited and eternal.*

## WORKING ON the BOND

As illustrated in Shir Hashirim, the bond between husband and wife is very similar to the bond between the Aibeshter and Bnei Yisroel.

Our intimate connection with Hashem began when Hashem led Moshe to the burning bush, giving him instructions to take us out of Mitzrayim. The Geula of Mitzrayim was for the purpose of Matan Torah; the goal was to create an intimate eternal union and bond between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel. Our first palpable experience with intimacy as a nation was our commitment at Matan Torah, where we felt the love and connection with the Aibeshter.

Similarly, the love and connection that husband and wife share with one another is their commitment to each other. This commitment is established under the chuppah, the night of their wedding, and each month again when they

have the opportunity to reignite their connection after two weeks of separation. This reignition is strengthened by the adherence to the laws governing harchakos, the particulars of keeping the calendar, and all the details leading to mikvah night. By doing these mitzvos, husband and wife are fulfilling Ratzon Hashem and truly enhancing their connection.

### IMPACTING *the* WORLD

Bilam attempted to harm Bnei Yisroel through cursing them using his power of Nevuah. He couldn't succeed. When he saw our adherence to the sensitivity of Mitzvahs Taharas Hamishpacha and Tznius, he had to admit, "מה טובו אהליך יעקב."

The Torah is teaching us a powerful lesson. The union between each Jewish couple is unique. Keeping this unique union private, enables the third dimension of marriage, the Shechinah to dwell among them. An entity that transcends the mundane of marriage. Making it the Aibeshter's marriage, not the couple's own.

Taharas Hamishpacha is holy because it's a tzivui of the Aibeshter. It retains its utmost purity when we do our part to keep it private. When we integrate with the society around us, sharing what should remain private with the public domain, we end up becoming confused, we lose the special touch, the purity, the essence of the unique bond that transcends the mundane of marriage.

In *Maamer Haichaltzu*, the Rashab points out that Midyan (Bilam's hometown) represents the idea of divisiveness, ego, and discord; this is what Bilam was all about: interfering in things that weren't his business. This is why the last directive that Hashem instructed Moshe Rabeinu - a leader whose essence was the exact opposite of Bilam and represented Bitul and the unity of Am Yisroel with Hashem and with one another - was to fight the war of revenge against Bilam. His last task was to eradicate the divisiveness and ego that interfered with the Kedusha of Am Yisroel, to reinstate the unity between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel, between husband and wife.

Adhering to the halachos of Taharas Hamishpacha, including the first night of marriage, is the foundation of our nation. As each couple keeps the bond of marriage private and pure, the parallel bond between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel is strengthened. And as quoted By the Frieddiker Rebbe earlier in this article, "Keeping this mitzvah the way it's meant to be kept literally saves lives." What we do in the privacy of our bedroom affects our children and the following generations; it impacts Bnei Yisrael's relationship with Hashem.

### MAKING *it* REAL

In Basi Legani, Ois Beis, the Frieddiker Rebbe reminds us of the Alter Rebbe's Maamer on the Possuk, "אדם כי יקריב"

לה. "מכם קרבן לה." Our sole purpose in this world is to create a Dira Bitachtonim. We give up our personal pleasures - for the sake of pleasure - in exchange for being close to Hashem. When we offer our service to Him, (by following His commands and thereby connecting to Him) it comes from deep within us. We transform an indulgence into a holy endeavor when we figure out how to utilize the pleasurable act in a manner of refinement and elevation.

*"Keeping this mitzvah the way it's meant to be kept literally saves lives."*

### PERSONALIZING IT

The beauty in these laws is that they are tailor-made. When a couple finds themselves with bumps, with personal concerns that seem to complicate following the written law, the couple can turn to their personal Rav for clarification. The details that one submits to the Rav, will help the Rav, endowed with Siyata D'shmaya from the Aibeshter, determine an answer tailor-made for the specific question asked. Just as the original laws are Ratzon Hashem, so too is this specific psak. It's important to emphasize, that a specific response to a specific individual is just that. A tailor-made psak for the detailed story presented, and should not be extrapolated for a similar circumstance. Each case is judged individually. Stories abound how the same circumstances, with just a slight variation, produce completely different halachic responses.

This beautiful mitzvah begins at the time of wedding preparations, with an assessment of priorities. When a Kallah learns about the crucial importance of the halachos of Taharas Hamishpacha, she is setting herself up for success in building her home in Kedusha and Tahara.

There are over 35 recently-trained women with an abundance of knowledge who are here to share what they know (Mikvah.org/instructors). These teachers continue to support their Kallahs even after their wedding day. Each is certified and endorsed by well-known Rabbanim. Treasure your diamond. Keep it pure. The Rebbe promised us multiple times: Adhering to this mitzvah will bring countless Brachos; including the ultimate Bracha of גאולה שלימה when we will be reunited with our Rebbeim.

■ והקיצו ורננו שוכני עפר, והוא בראשם, עטרת נשיאנו בקרוב ממש.

*Matel Hecht is a Kallah teacher certified by Mikvah.org and has been teaching Sichos and Maamarim to adults for over 20 years.*

ד"סג

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# OVER A CUP *of* COFFEE

*From one mother  
to another*



Chani (Zalmanov) Okonov, Brooklyn, NY  
*Graduating class of 5758 (1998)*

“Do you really have eight children?” The questioner is usually asking this one while looking me up and down.

“How are you feeling? Is this your first or second pregnancy?” She smiles and waits for an answer while I wonder how to explain that this is my eighth, Baruch Hashem.

Then there’s the classic, “You’re the only person I know who has so many kids and is normal.”

Community members are usually shocked, then impressed, then wowed when they find out how many children are in our family. Then they put me on the “superhuman” pedestal, imagining that I have it all figured out. For good measure, they often add something like this at the end: “Well, of course, religious people grow up in big families so you must be used to this.”

Disclaimer: I’m an only child.

Growing up, I dreamed of having siblings - and definitely a large family of my own one day. My cousins were a family of ten, and their house was always more fun and exciting than mine. I imagined that being the mother of a large brood was like being counselor of the best bunk in camp, and I couldn’t wait!

Our family began to grow not long after we married, BH. Of course, my reality was far from the “Camp Mommy” I dreamed about. I was overwhelmed and disappointed with myself. Although I’d always been great with kids, I didn’t have much experience with toddlers. I had never changed a newborn diaper. And I certainly had never been responsible for a brood of

little kids twenty four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year.

The constant noise was just so loud! Where had my special kid-charmer talent gone? I went from being the favorite cousin, counselor, and teacher to a struggling mommy.

I read lots of parenting books and articles. Some were helpful, many were not. They often contradicted each other. I needed guidance I could trust, so I thought about what I could learn from the women in my life whom I admired the most: my mother, mother-in-law, grandmothers, and aunts. I focused on reading Jewish parenting books that specifically taught Yiddishkeit's perspective on motherhood. Slowly, I found my own intuition - which is actually what I needed most. Although I am still far from the superhuman my community may imagine me to be, I don't feel as lost as I did back then.

Once, when I was feeling particularly overwhelmed, I asked my mother-in-law, who had raised seven children, how in the world she did it. At the time, I had been thinking, "I can barely manage with two kids! How will I ever manage a big family?" She encouraged me, saying that there are resources inside of myself that I didn't realize I had. She reminded me that children don't come all at once and that I would learn to gradually stretch my inner abilities. With time, she said, I would see that I could juggle more. Even though I couldn't fathom it at the time, she was right.



Looking back, there are moments that I am proud of and others that I wish I could redo, but BH I have grown, discovered new abilities - and become a stronger person in the process.

We know how much the Rebbe encouraged us to have as many children as we can. Yet in the moments when there's no cleaning help, the kids are hyper, and the baby is waking up from a nap, it can be really hard. If I could sit over a cup of coffee with the younger version of myself, and encourage her through the tough moments, I would share some of the things that I've learned along my motherhood journey. Please join me on the couch and let's talk.



**Believe in yourself more.** This lovely cliché slogan for a poster or t-shirt is actually true. Remind yourself: Hashem chose you to be the mother of your children because you are the best person to raise them. With all of your imperfections, there is still no one better qualified in the world.

**Partner with your partner.** You don't need to fit the mold of the perfect mother who has it all together on her own. Raising a large family requires a team. It's okay - and healthy - to lean on your husband. You are in this together! Tell him what you need and let him try to help in his way. Your children and husband can build a closer relationship if you let him be a father.

**It's okay to accept help, and even to ask for it.** For years, I felt bad about the cost of cleaning help until I noticed that in Aishes Chayil it says, "ותתן סרך לביתה וחק לנערתיה." The Aishes Chayil has maids, in plural! The ideal woman doesn't do it alone. Yes, there are things that only you can give your children, but as your family grows and time shrinks, there are also things you can delegate. We all have things that we can use outside help with (especially the things that take a toll on our mental

health) and we should never feel guilty asking for and accepting it.

**Aim for progress and not perfection,** take it step by step. Being a mother means applying every concept you ever learned in connection to Teshuvah, Bitul, Emunah, middos, and Ahavas Yisroel. It's a life-long journey of avoda and personal growth, so don't be so hard on yourself when you don't live up to your ideal self.

**Remember who you are.** Somewhere along the way, we get caught up with changing diapers, managing the house, keeping track of each child's needs - not to mention being there for our husbands, jobs, and shlichus. You need to remember to nurture your inner self, and I'm not talking about self-care like going to get a manicure or taking a "me day." If art, music, reading, photography, nature, or fitness were things that inspired and energized you before you had your children, try to find small ways to reconnect to those hobbies and passions.

**Fill yourself up spiritually.** Do things that uplift you b'ruchnius, even if it's just two or three minutes of learning. Surround yourself with spiritually-focused people who talk positively about others, motherhood, and the community you live in. Surround yourself with people who are focused on spiritual growth, not only on the physical and mundane tasks of life.

**Have fun!** Laughing with the kids, making silly faces, and putting on music to dance to are all forms of shtus d'kedushah. There is nothing like a happy home. And in those moments, the kids' energy is directed towards joy rather than destruction, the mess fades away, and you start to feel so much better! Sometimes we need to remember to simply enjoy our children. You might just discover that they are, after all, the "best bunk in camp," and are each amazing, funny and cute in their own way.

**Think long-term.** The first few years can be especially tough but there is wisdom in the mindset of "גם זה יעבור." This stage will pass. Yes, each new stage brings new challenges, but in other ways, it gets easier. The children will be more independent and will be able to help each other. Before you know it, they

*Slowly, I found my own intuition - which is actually what I needed most.*

will grow up and leave home. These years with your whole family under one roof are precious and temporary, so enjoy them!

**Focus on your own role and what you, as a mother, can do.** When a child is going through a rough year at school or dealing with a crisis that is outside of your control, focus on what is in your power, and give it your all, as this alone can have a great impact. There is something extremely powerful and healing about a mother's unconditional love and dedication.

**Daven.** Tefillah is the strongest tool a parent has. Hashem hears our pain, our worries, our frustrations, and our agmas nefesh. Find moments, such as licht bentchen, to pour out your heart to Hashem. I will never forget those moments, as a child, when I watched my mother and grandmother daven. Looking back, I believe without a doubt that the brachos I have are gifts that Hashem gave me through their tears and tefillos.

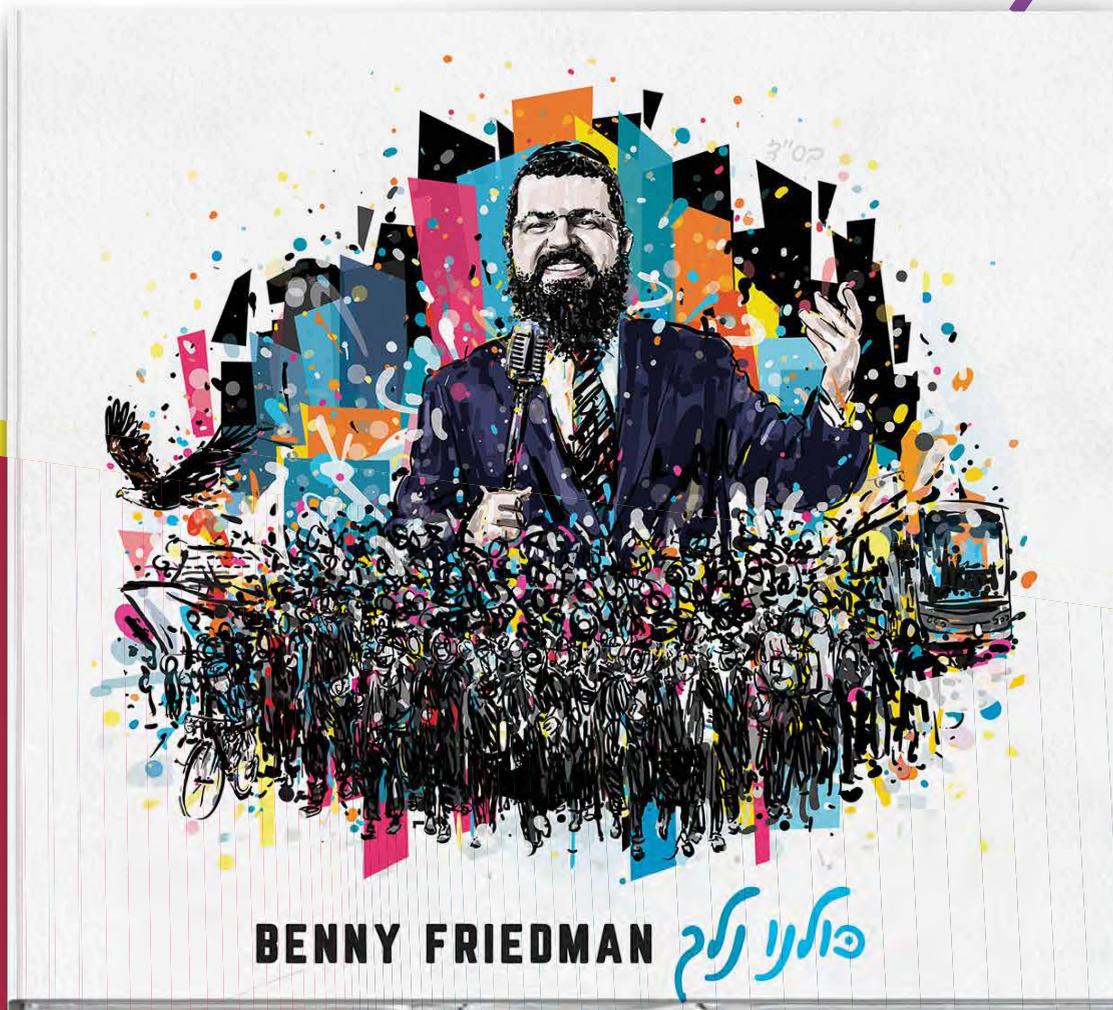


To my dear fellow Bais Rivkah alumnae, before you go back to the routines and responsibilities that are calling, I want to give a bracha that Hashem grant us all the wisdom to know how to raise our precious children in the light of Torah and Chassidus; the physical and mental strength to take care of them with *memuchas hadaas* and *memuchas hanefesh*; the inner simcha to raise them with joy; and an overabundance of yiddishe and chassidishe nachas. ■

*Chani is a shlucha in South Brooklyn, New York, at F.R.E.E. of Brighton Beach. Along with her husband, she co-founded Mazel Day School, which primarily serves children from Russian-speaking Jewish families. Today the school has over 310 students enrolled, BH.*

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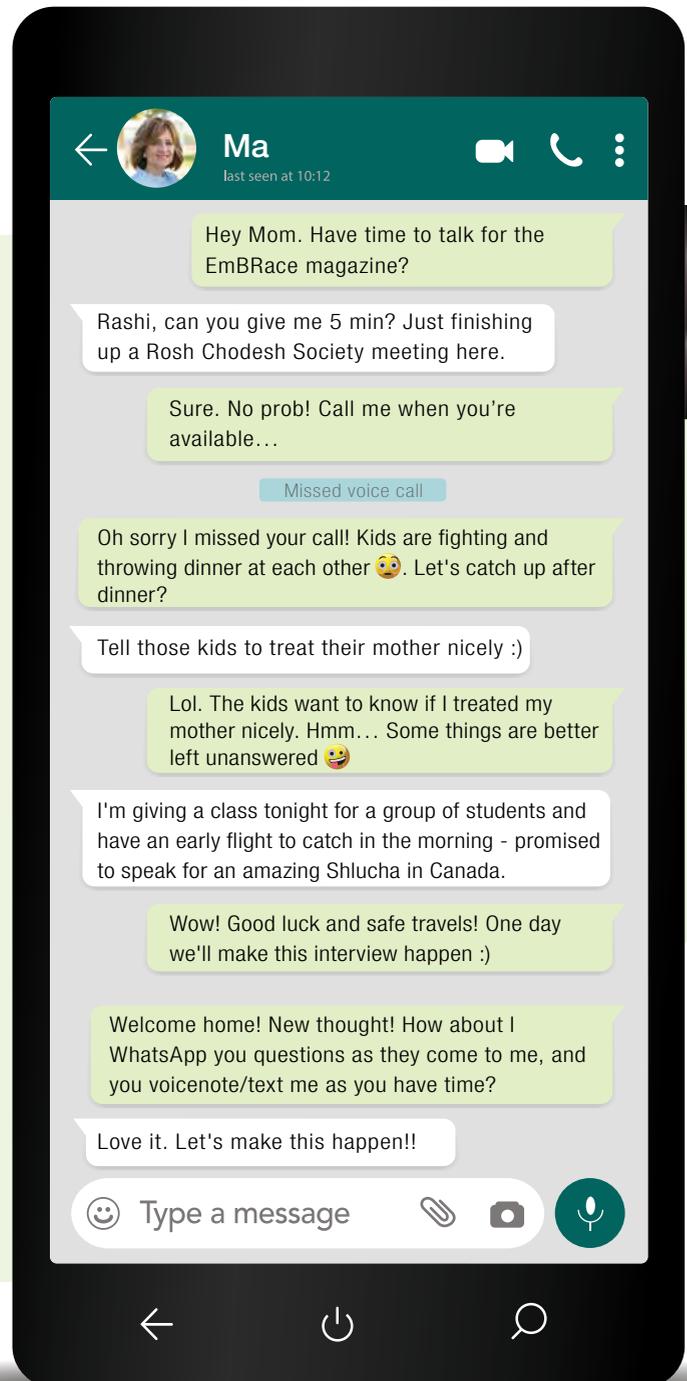
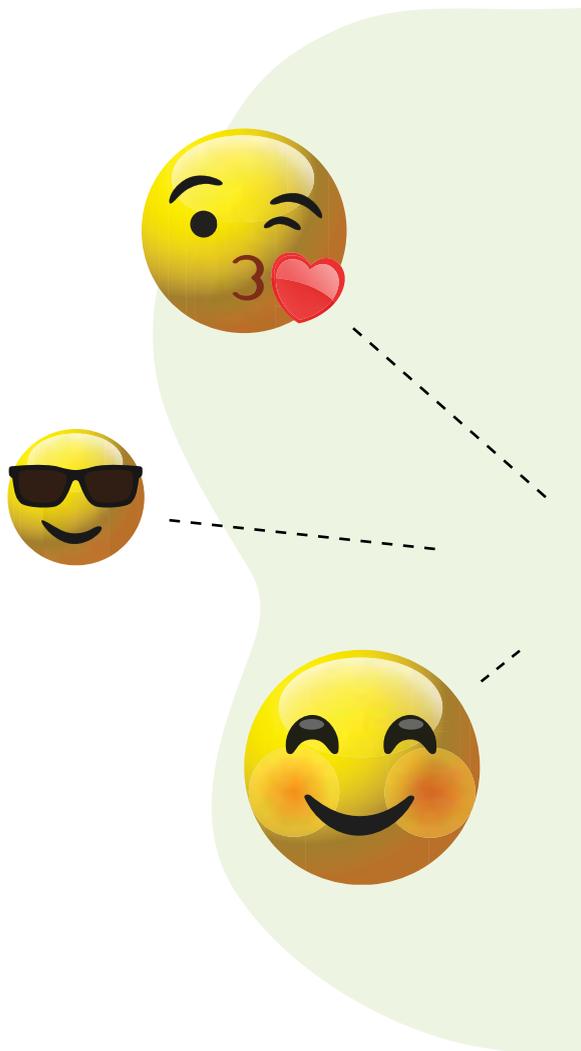


Music  
that is  
Charasho!

# WhatsApp?

## A Contemporary Mother-Daughter Interview

Rashi (Jacobson) Marcus,  
Redondo Beach, California  
*Graduating class of 5763 (2003)*



**RASHI:** Throughout your day you wear so many different hats (and you wear them quite well!!): director, wife, mother, lecturer, friend, grandmother, confidante, mentor - just to list a few. How do you manage to juggle it all, while giving each "job" your full attention?

**MA:** Trust me, I have a long way to go (like many of us mortals)! There are two core principles that I believe play a very important role in this discussion. One is a story I heard from a much revered Chassid a number of years ago that I have since tried to keep in the forefront of my mind every day. He recounted that our beloved Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka was once asked, "What was the best time in your life?", to which she responded, "Right now! This very moment is the best time of my life!" This lesson is an incredible roadmap for the mundane, nitty-gritty grind of daily life. It's clear (at least to me) that what the Rebbetzin was saying is this: Focus! Live in the moment! This moment will never come again so use it to its fullest potential. We all wear numerous hats, but if we can learn to focus on each specific one as we don it, often repeatedly and in quick succession, we will create the space and wherewithal to deal with each "job" as it comes our way.

The second insight is gleaned from the mitzvah of Mezuzah. We place a mezuzah on (almost) every doorpost of the various rooms in our homes. While each room has its designated purpose and our behaviors in these rooms are very varied in many ways, the mezuzah is there to remind us that even if we're cooking in one, sleeping in another, and eating in a third, all are bound together in the knowledge that Hashem lives in each and every one of them. If we consider each of our "jobs" as an integral part of our G-d-given mission and know the Aibershter is not only expecting us to "perform" to the best of our abilities but is also present within each interaction, this gives us the power and inspiration to act accordingly.

Having said that, let me tell you, it is a job! It's not an easy one. But one that affords us great gratification.

**RASHI:** As a graduate of Bais Rivkah, how do you think your years there influenced and affected the person you are today?

**MA:** It is with tremendous pride that I can say, unequivocally, that my years (from pre-1-A all the way through Seminary - lucky me!) in Bais Rivkah are

“Right now! This very moment is the best time of my life!”

what have influenced and affected my life in every way. Again, by no means have I completed my education and training - I'm definitely a work in progress on this journey called life - but I can say with full confidence, that the solid foundation that I and my fellow Bais Rivkah attendees have been gifted has, and will continue, to influence not only ourselves but our progeny as well. If there is anything at all that can be deemed successful in my life, it is due to the education I was blessed to receive. The Frieddiker Rebbe had a mandate when he established Bais Rivkah and it continues to imbue its students forever.

**RASHI:** Tell me more about your job as the Director of the Rosh Chodesh Society. What is the Rosh Chodesh Society? Where do you find your inspiration? What is your vision and goal for the future?

**MA:** The Rosh Chodesh Society, a program of JLI (The Rohr Jewish Learning Institute), was initiated and dedicated by Merkos on the first yahrzeit of Rebbetzin Rivka Holtzberg, *Hashem Yikom Dama*, to bring Torah and inspiration to women in her memory and honor.

In a nutshell, the Rosh Chodesh Society is a global initiative that aims to transform the lives of Jewish



women, their families, and their greater communities through the bonds of shared Jewish experience. Through the international network of the Rebbe's Shluchos, amazing scholars, leaders and educators, we provide cutting edge adult education in tandem with monthly cultural and social programs. Our ultimate vision is to empower, inform and inspire women to spark a worldwide spiritual revolution that will ensure a brighter future for the Jewish people.

My personal goal is to give every Jewish woman the gift of her birthright - she should know where she comes from, what she stands for, and she should be able to empower the next generation to be leaders. I think it's especially important to mention that as the Rebbe spoke on numerous occasions, we are now living in the era that is right before Moshiach and it is a time where women will be at the forefront - this is actually one of the harbingers of the coming of Moshiach.

As for where I find my inspiration, that is the easiest question! I find my inspiration from the Shluchos that I am so, so lucky to work with. I cannot say this enough: I feel like the most blessed, lucky person - I am sitting here in my office in Crown Heights, in the comfort of Brooklyn, and every single day I am privileged to connect with Shluchos who are living all over the world, who are facing unbelievable challenges of every kind b'gashmius and b'ruchnius and they just keep plugging away! They are the most inspiring people in the world! Nothing is too hard for them, they do what they have to do and the world is most definitely a changed and better place because of them. My job, what I do every day from morning to night, is simple: I think of ways that I can perhaps make their lives easier when it comes to sharing Torah learning with Jewish women in their communities.



And so every year we create a new curriculum, that generally includes 7 lessons which are offshoots of one greater idea. These are professionally created courses that allow the Shluchos to have ready-made, all-inclusive materials to help their women study Torah. The idea behind it is to make it easy for the Shluchos to prepare and share so they don't have to spend the time they don't have putting it together

Yes, it consists of an enormous amount of never-ending very serious work, both physical and emotional, but the secret is that we have a partner in this noble task.

themselves. Each state-of-the-art curriculum includes fantastic content, a teacher's manual as well as a student handbook, beautiful videos, visually pleasing PowerPoints, top-of-the-line marketing materials, and incredible support tools for the instructor.

One of the things that gives me the most pleasure is that the Rosh Chodesh Society has grown into a real sisterhood of women giving feedback, sharing stories, offering inspiring thoughts and ideas, posting pictures, showcasing their creativity and being an amazing support group for each other.

Every Shlucha and each of the participants receives a special gift as part of "belonging" to the society. Women approach me at the Kinus Hashluchos banquet proudly wearing the RCS bracelet, so thrilled to be part of a community of thousands of Jewish women around the world. (See photo of bracelet in sidebar.)

I feel extremely blessed that I have been given this special gift of being able to work with the Shluchos. My real vision and goal for the future, hopefully in the very near future, is that every single Shlucha in the entire world will be able to use our program. Just imagine the power of hundreds of thousands of women around the world studying the same thing at the same time -- all thanks to the Rebbe's incredible Shluchos.

**RASHI:** Let's turn the focus to your role as a mother/grandmother for a minute. You managed to raise two fantastic, talented, educated, smart, funny, just all-around awesome *and* humble children 🥰. Now, BH they are raising their own families. Any tips for this generation of parents? Any secrets to raising happy, healthy, well adjusted, frum children?

**MA:** Humble indeed! First and foremost: I wish I had all the answers - I certainly do not. The one thing I am certain about is that the role of parenting

is the most incredible experience one can be gifted, and at the same time, the most humbling. Being granted this gift from Hashem is a constant reminder that each and every child is a present that is His as much as ours. And that is something to think about, live with, and be cognizant of at all times because as soon as we base our parenting "abilities and decisions" on this indisputable premise, we are transported to an entirely different mindset of what parenting really entails. Yes, it consists of an enormous amount of never-ending very serious work, both physical and emotional, but the secret is that we have a partner in this noble task. And this partner is Hashem. We cannot allow ourselves to forget this for even one nano-second, because in fact, this entire business of raising children is not about us. It is about our beautiful children and the One who entrusted us with these precious lives. Throughout the years, when I would sometimes look to my father (Zeidy Gansbourg) for guidance in this area, he would share whichever advice was pertinent at the time and always conclude so eloquently, "Just don't get in the way."

If I may, I'd like to add something which I believe can be helpful on a practical level. You know your child better than anyone else in the world, that's why s/he was given to you. Remember, it should *never*

be about what others will think; what will so-and-so say: how will it look if I...? These diversions can be devastating for our children. We've been entrusted with a unique, one-of-a-kind invaluable gem; no two are alike, and the only thing that matters is what is best for him/her (not your neighbors, friends, or sometimes even your close relatives, and their opinions). If you and the people you respect who understand your child feel strongly about something, go for it. Your child will thank you.

And now, once all the words have been spoken, daven. And daven again. Keep davening and do not stop. Hashem is our partner and He hears us.

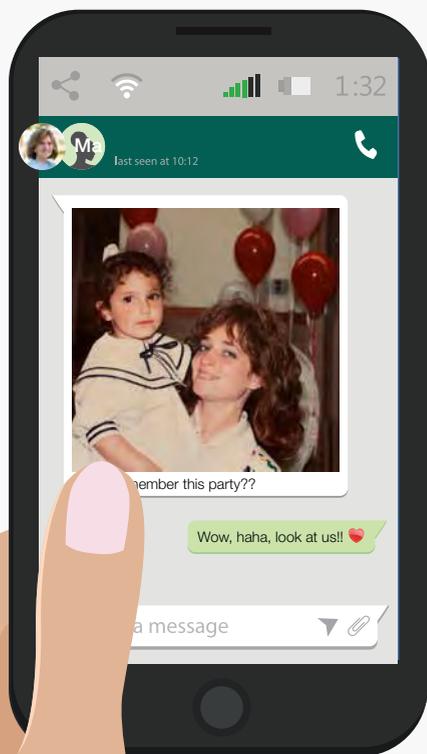
P.S. Always remember: There is one thing even greater than being a parent. Being a grandparent. An immeasurable zechus.

The knowledge that I have been handpicked to carry out my tiny part of this mission is what propels me to begin and end each day with purpose, drive, and excitement.

**RASHI:** In today's lingo, one would say that you are "so normal" and "frum and with it." You're put-together, well dressed, confident, balanced, frum but don't take yourself too seriously, can find enjoyment in life, etc. Any advice on how to find this perfect balance? How to live a productive and meaningful life and at the same time take care of yourself and enjoy the life Hashem has given you?

**MA:** Ha! What I would have given to hear you say this when you were a teenager!

Thank you for your outrageously kind vote of confidence - honestly, I'm so floored, I have tears in my eyes - and as a mother, I cannot verbalize how I feel when you share these words. However, as a simple person, the truth needs to be told and that is that I am very, very far from this laudable personality you paint. I am miles and miles away from achieving this status. But would I like to? Certainly! Because I think that is our/my *Avodah* in this world, to find





the (I'd love to say "perfect" but I'll be thrilled with half-decent) balance to live with my *Nefesh Elohis* and *Nefesh Habehamis* and survive the turmoil in a healthy manner.

Rashi, it's apparent that Bais Rivkah taught you well! Because you actually include (half) of the answer in your question, "...don't take yourself too seriously": To me, this is half of the very important key to living a productive, meaningful, happy, healthy life. The other half is even more important, and that is, "*you take your mission, the reason for your being, seriously*".

Imagine traveling through magnificent gardens and orchards to get to your destination of a life-

time. You're focused on the destination and all that it promises, yet along the way you encounter stunning surroundings. Yes! Stop and admire Hashem's handiwork. Look at His majestic trees, lush grasslands; taste His perfect, succulent, juicy fruit; smell His beautiful flowers, and enjoy each and every encounter in the knowledge that He put it there for you to enjoy, marvel, know, and thank Him that He has wrought it all. For all of this has been created for you, to help you reach your goals in a way that will inspire and ignite within you the excitement to accomplish what you must with joy, love, and gladness of heart.

Chassidus is the universal language that ties everything all together.

## MORE ABOUT RCS:

We have a number of teams that work on each course. There is the curriculum development team, which consists of researchers, writers, editors, as well as a group of shluchos who serve as a sounding board for all of our ideas. They share input in many areas to help us develop something relatable, interesting, meaningful and inspiring. We often run various course components by a group of lay people/potential students, so as to ensure the most effective academic programming. The multimedia team is charged with creating the amazing Powerpoint, video, and other novel interactive presentations. We reach out to experts in the educational gaming field, workshop leadership, and whatever else we think may enhance a course's ability to be learned b'ofen haniskabel.

Our courses are built with tools to preempt inevitable and difficult conversations. For example, for our Soul Mates course, which discusses Jewish relationships, we prepared Shluchos to address intermarriage and we posed as many questions as we could to experienced

Rabbonim so we could equip the Shluchos to answer them.

We work on having a balance that preserves our framework and structure while, at the same time, always leaving an open mind to ensure that we are progressive in what really matters: raising the bar of our presentations. It takes close to a year to completely build a course from beginning to end.

All our courses are text based, often incorpo-



So, smile, laugh, sing, dance, enjoy the brachos in life and **know** that they are stepping stones to an even greater bracha: the bracha of infusing all of our actions with a purpose-driven mission. After all, why are we here? To transform the mundane into kedusha. To make a *dirah Lo Yisborach b'tachtonim*.

**RASHI:** Following up on the above, on a more serious note. Life hasn't always been a bed of roses. Everyone goes through ups and downs with difficult moments and unfortunate tragedies. How do you pick yourself up after being dealt a difficult hand? How do you find the joy and celebration in life during darker times?

**MA:** There is a lot to be said on this topic - too much to fit even into this very long, dark, suffering golus.

There is no easy methodical answer - indeed, if we begin attempting to dissect and analyze the



realities we sometimes face in life, there will be no answer at all. Instead, I'd prefer to share what I think is an apt lesson which I learned, both from reading it in a letter of the Rebbe to a particular doctor, I believe, and hearing it from Rabbi Lau. In each case, following a terrible tragedy, the in-

rating readings from numerous different parts of the Torah. What really brings each lesson to life is the Chassidus interwoven throughout. Women from secular communities to Modern Orthodox communities, to our very own Crown Heights community, are profoundly touched by the depth and light of Chassidus. There is simply nothing like it!

Our biggest challenge is to engage so many different women from across the board, and from around every corner of the world. Women of different ages and stages participate; newcomers, veterans, and everyone in between. Boruch Hashem! Our Shluchos are instructors par excellence, range in age from 20's to 80's, ka"h. Some communities are very secular and some are more observant. Our courses are designed to reach as many people as possible. Chassidus is the universal language that ties everything all together.

We have a pilot RCS program in French right now and one of our dreams is to have our course translated into a number of languages. "לכשיפוצו מעיינותיך חוצה..." I envision the day that the powerful, life changing concepts in Chassidus will be accessible to everyone wherever they may be.

Since we are one circle, one family, women feel comfortable joining RCS groups wherever they are. We have some snowbirds who begin the courses in Canada and complete them in Florida. We have women traveling through the US, Europe, Australia, Asia, and catch a class during their travels so as not to miss out on something they so enjoy. Not a day goes by that I don't receive an inquiry from a woman asking where the closest RCS class may be taking place near her home.

Please allow me to invite you to stop in for a visit at [RoshChodeshSociety.com](http://RoshChodeshSociety.com). We'll be thrilled to have a cup of coffee and a friendly chat.

*Rosh Chodesh Society is the women's division of JLI, the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute, under the leadership of its Executive Director, Rabbi Efraim Mintz. ■*



dividuals asked the Rebbe, "What will be?!" to which the Rebbe responded, "A Jew does not ask 'what will be?', a Jew asks, 'What can/should I do?!'"

I think this sums up how we were raised. As you're very well aware, especially being named for my mother, may you live and be well *l'orech yomim v'shanim tovot*, my very young, vibrant, beautiful, active mother returned her neshama to its Creator 50 years ago (how can that even be possible?) on the 2nd day of Sukkos, at the age of 37, *r"l*. I was a 7-year-old second-grader, the youngest of 5 children. We grew up with the knowledge that we cannot control what the Aibershter does and does not give us, **but we can control what we do with what we are dealt**. In the ensuing years Hashem has given us incredible, numerous brachos; we have so, so much to be grateful for, so, so much to celebrate.

At the same time, as you know, we've also been dealt "other cards". Yes, we laugh and we cry. We rejoice and we weep. We stand tall and we fall. But the victory lies in wiping away the tears, picking ourselves up, straightening ourselves out, and forging ahead. For living life to its fullest - *really* living - is a choice. A personal choice each of us must make. Choose well. Choose life. I promise you will never be sorry.

**RASHI:** What is the most fulfilling part of your life? What gives you the motivation to get up each day and make a difference in this world?

**MA:** Of course raising my family, having the great merit of seeing my children raising their families, celebrating *simchas*, and being blessed to witness the nachas we all hope, pray, and wish for is definitely at the top of my list. One might say, this may be cate-



I love the bracelet and always wear it. It's my aunt Bronia's hand, Sadie's hand and my hand. Tals took it when we were in Toronto this year, May 2017.

It was a very special moment for all of us. Bronia, my mom's sister, is a 92 year old Holocaust survivor.

gorized as my personal fulfillment.

Being involved with the Rebbe's Shluchos and deriving the tremendous joy and *nachas* they generate, learning from every single interaction how to be a better, kinder, more genuine person, this too is listed at the top, as does visiting Shluchos around the world - many who are Bais Rivkah alumnae! - and many of which have been students of my own! Seeing their success in transforming entire cities, states, and countries... Wow!

One might say this is categorized as my communal fulfillment.

But I'd like to note that all of the above are one and the same. I am forever thankful to Hashem that my personal, communal, and professional (or whatever else the world may name this) calling is the same. The Baal Shem Tov taught us that we may possibly come down into this world just to do a favor for another Jew. He taught as well, that Moshiach will come *lich'sheyafutzu maayanosecha chutza*.

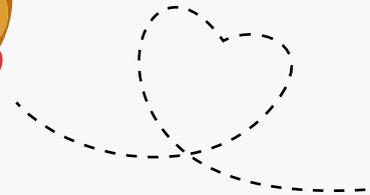
The Rebbe has charged us to carry out this mission. The knowledge that I have been handpicked

to carry out my tiny part of this mission is what propels me to begin and end each day with purpose, drive, and excitement. Is it always easy? No! Most definitely not. But I know it is always right. And that is the ultimate fulfillment.

**RASHI:** As a Bais Rivkah Alumna and a teacher there for so many years, what parting message would you like to share with all your fellow classmates, schoolmates, students, and future students?

**MA:** Rashi, I share this not in parting, but rather in greeting! As your wonderful husband Bentzy so aptly sings, “*Chassidim don't say goodbye.*”

Every one of us who had the fantastic zechus of entering through Bais Rivkah's doors, walking its hallways, sitting in its classrooms - on either side of the desk - eating in its lunchrooms, attending assemblies, playing Machanayim (indoors, outdoors and sometimes in between:), decorating its walls, attending Shabbatons, starring in productions, wearing its uniforms, and most importantly absorbing its unparalleled teachings and spirit, have been, are, and will continue to be blessed for eternity. ***Ashreinu! Ashreinu! Ashreinu!*** ♣





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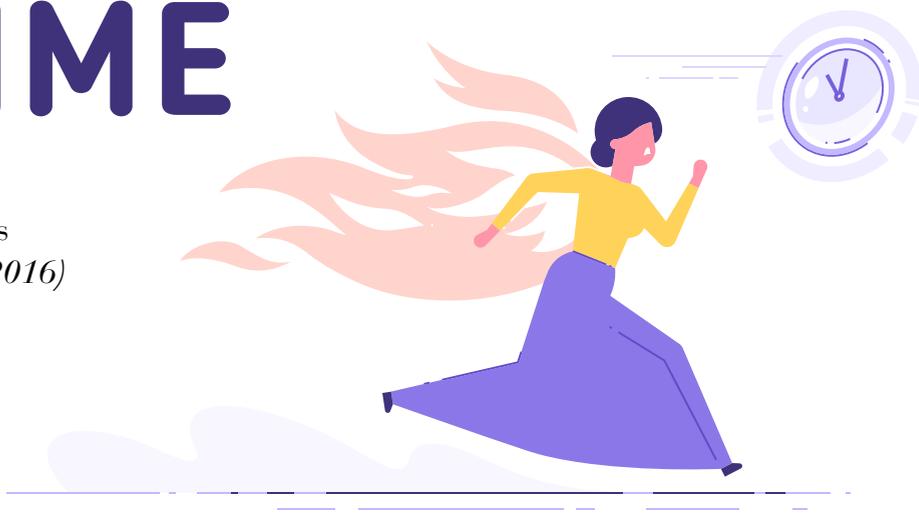
*Four alumnae share  
how Chassidus fuels  
their lives:*

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# IN THE NICK OF TIME

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Rivkah Katz, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5776 (2016)*



**B**reathe. Five minutes left.

It's Hoshana Rabbah day and our meal is called for twelve o'clock. I'm starting to realize that my schedule was well thought out on paper but a flop in reality. Solution: beat the clock. I push pan after pan in and out of the oven as the minutes fly. This recipe requires perfection, one minute too long in the oven and the cake dries out.

I skip the stairs in twos for some semblance of a quick mirror check. I can see the clock behind me tick reproachfully in the mirror - and I remember the cake. I had a range of one minute to take it out. And that minute passed. By the time I charge down the stairs and whip on the cooking mitt, the cake has passed the point of no return, but it can do.

I only tell myself that because the damage is done. I'm not feeling too great about it. Sore topic.

The cat-and-mouse chase between the clock and me continues. The hands move past twelve and then quickly continues rushing past 12:45 while the last licks are in the oven. I make it to the meal looking presentable yet inwardly disheveled. On every clock I pass, I sense a grimace from the clock face and an accusatory wag from the rhythmic movement of the ticking hands. Time is my forever vice. But I made it. You'd think I am calling for victory, though my scattered thoughts are in need of collecting, I enter mid-meal, and have an overbaked cake to show for it.

I feel like those stretchy, bendable, sticky stick figures whose versatility allows them to be pulled and twisted in every direction. Jack of all trades, master of none. It's not the failure to master all of these that bothers me. In the fleeting moments already now gone, I realize that I maladaptively thought time was my vice. That's why the slightly dried cake is nagging at my nerves. Because cake is cake and everyone likes it. What irks me is how I ticked off the tasks on my list. Missions accomplished by a harried, frazzled, driven, but only partially present individual. Back when I started my day, the endless train of thought was already chugging. I couldn't keep up. My friend's time and the opportunity she usually brought became a distorted foe looming with doom.

Thankfully, though, life is denser than a piece of cake. Time matters as well, but effort makes the mark.

My problem wasn't the burnt cake nor the inability to be a jack of all trades. We all have our fair

share of juggling to do, and we will probably all be the master of none. And that's okay. Revel in what you do achieve. Carpe Diem, seize the moment, be present.

Everyone can be a Beinoni, which makes the bar seem low. If anyone can do it, so can I. But, the Beinoni is a sophisticated individual hurled into a world of human complexities and contending lures. The survival tactic? Not giving in. The inbetweener is met with a plethora of duchesses and devils, a constant duel to reign. One opponent ceases for a moment and reality hits. This mediocre man, who apparently has exceptional expectations of mediocre, never has nor ever will sin.

So maybe that can't be me. I step the rules at times and my record isn't clean.

Yet timing is the Beinoni's virtue. Past and future are notional. The moment is of essence. When a person overcomes a hurdle, at that given moment, it's as if he has never had and never will sin. A Beinoni's status is fixated on the current act. An individual

win renders the winner. It's the magic of the moment that turns metals into gold.

It's the fleeting seconds of presentness that hold time from wisping by. We have the gift of collaborating with these moments, and the Beinoni chooses to invest in the given time.

20/20 vision will always be hindsight and dreams will constantly be planted. The moment, however, only exists if we are present. A cake can flunk. But real avodah doesn't. It's what is, not what was and what will be, that makes a Chassid.

We don't run the show, but we do play a part. And when we are engrossed in what's really happening, nothing else matters - because avodah isn't a piece of cake. ■

*It's what is, not what was and what will be, that makes a Chassid.*



FREEDA

# Unraveled

---

Sara Hecht, Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh, Eretz Yisroel  
*Graduating class of 5761 (2001)*



"Why do you think that happens, that unraveling in life? That struggle to find the parts of us that are scattered in the wind—and then tie them together in ways that we can gift to the world? Do you think it is for the best?" she asks me.

I find the answer in a song I have written—a song, like all deep melodies, that has come from a world beyond my understanding. Today it brings comfort where I might have otherwise been lost for words—comfort for her, comfort for me.

The unraveling, the apparent disarray, the unrest in our world, is all the very essence of life. Hashem could have weaved our lives to look picture-perfect, but instead He chooses to unravel the strings and leave them for us to tie up.

I believe it is because He wants a real relationship with us. Although He is whole, complete and perfect, He says, "I want something else: I want a connection with you. I want you to find Me and choose Me on your own."

So, instead of handing us life on a silver platter and making His existence blindingly apparent, He hides. And He clips our wings so we can grow our own, enabling us to become partners with Him. Then life becomes a rich and meaningful relationship between man and Creator.

Yes, the unraveling is for the best. Hashem wants us to appreciate our lives in the deepest and sweetest of ways—something we can experience only by taking our own steps in this cosmic dance.

But this answer isn't mine. It's the answer I was taught is given when a soul in turmoil asks, "Why?"

*And He clips our wings so we can grow our own, enabling us to become partners with Him.*

# UNRAVELED

(from the debut album *Pieces*)

Composition and Lyrics by Sara Hecht

Clipped my wings, so I could grow my own  
 You sent me away, to find a new path home  
 You turned out the lights, so I would look inside  
 And I thought, how do I dance when the music's died  
 Oh, dance you will  
 But those steps won't be mine  
 I can't promise it easy  
 But I promise you'll shine  
 And when you feel me deep inside  
 Then you'll know I no longer hide  
 Unraveled the strings  
 I will tie them back up  
 You rain me down with your blessings  
 Don't ever stop  
 Unthreaded your dream  
 Because you knew I could weave  
 Now together we'll both make it different  
 Now together we'll both make it ours

You pushed me gently through an unknown door  
 You said, walk where nobody's walked before  
 You turned out the lights, so I would look inside  
 And I thought, how do I dance when the music's died  
 Oh, dance you will, but those steps won't be mine  
 I can't promise it easy, but I promise you'll shine  
 When you feel me deep inside  
 Then you'll know I no longer hide  
 Unraveled the strings  
 I will tie them back up  
 You rain me down with your blessings  
 Don't ever stop  
 Unthreaded your dream  
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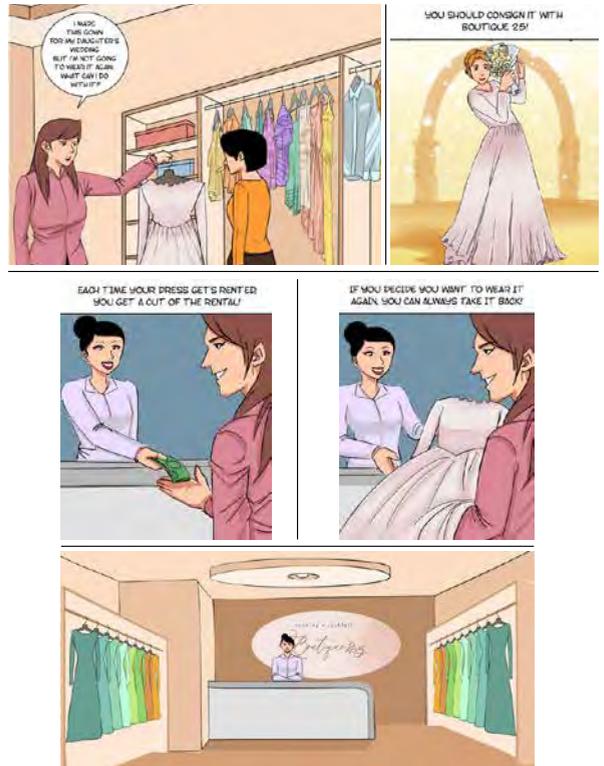
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*Hayom Yom: Tevet 22*

My father proclaimed at a farbrengen: Just as wearing tefillin every day is a Mitzva commanded by the Torah to every individual regardless of his standing in Torah, whether deeply learned or simple, so too is it **an absolute duty for every person to spend a half hour every day thinking about the Torah-education of children**, and to do everything in his power – and beyond his power – to inspire children to follow the path along which they are being guided.

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# The Human Struggle

Blumie (Morozow) Piekarski, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5772 (2012)*



I will always remember the night I learned Tanya for the very first time. By night, I mean an intense up-until-six AM night; and by learned, I mean the kind of learning that doesn't leave you, the kind that gives you butterflies in your stomach and keeps you short of breath, the kind that makes you want to create a song, a poem, a painting, something to help you hold on to what you've absorbed.

I'd spent Shabbos at a friend (a shlucha) and found a teacher's manual for JLI's Soul Maps (a course on Tanya authored by Rabbi Shais Taub) on her shelf. Picking it up was the single best thing I did that year. It was riveting; I could not stop reading until I devoured the very last page. My mind was a whirlwind of ideas competing for space as I tried to wrap my head around all that I was reading. I was on a high; I was hooked. And my understanding of life's purpose took an irrevocable shift.

Overnight, the intricate details of human struggle became crystal clear. I have "insides" and "outsides," Rabbi Taub explained, and the goal is to ensure my outsides are up to par. Intellect and emotions—those are beyond my obligations. All that is required of me is to ensure that my conscious thoughts, speech, and actions are in line with what Hashem wants. And for that, the single tool I need is impulse control—a capacity that as a human I already possess. No sweat if I don't feel spiritual doing it; no tears that I still have selfish desires. This moment, this deed is all that counts.

What makes this task difficult is the conflicting teams within. Why do I have to force myself to do what I already concluded I want to do? Because I was created with a dual-soul structure: there are two distinct I's. For as long as I am alive, I will struggle to express my higher self over my ego. And in every challenging moment, I can cue in my impulse control and choose right over wrong time and again.

Easy, right? Wrong. Take the rubber band: if I pull just one end, it will stretch... and stretch... and then it will snap. I will undoubtedly snap under the pressure of containing my urges. That is unless I pull the other end of the rubber band closer as well—and develop internal mechanisms to inspire me and bridge the gap between my insides and outsides.

*Shame eradicated  
by the confidence  
that to struggle is  
to be.*

The short-long way to crowning my Nefesh Elohis king of my body is to become aware of the disunity a single selfish act spawns in the cosmos. And I'd extend the logic: I'd willingly die to refrain from idolatry; hence, I'd undoubtedly do the right thing over any sinful act, which is essentially a declaration of belief in a power other than Hashem. This is the quick-fix approach.

The long-short way is to develop an awe and love of Hashem that will transform my insides. To this end, the Tanya expounds on meditations to quench my thirst for inspiration. I'll be in awe of nature's vastness, in love with He who keeps me alive, trembling before a powerful king, my emotions reflecting the overwhelming love my Creator has bestowed upon me. Armed with a lifetime supply of contemplations, and the knowledge that intellect breeds emotions, I need but to designate time for reflection, and I will be uplifted.

And when life hands me lemons—it takes recalling Who knows what's best to appreciate the worth of the banknotes over the dollhouse I would have chosen. Guilt is to be replaced with designated repen-

tance time, and shame eradicated by the confidence that to struggle is to be. Slowly, one deed at a time, I'll draw down the infinite light, until the light is all there is, fulfilling the ultimate purpose of Creation.

It will be many years until I master the complexity of the Tanya, but for now, every time I open its pages I learn something new. And if I tell you that learning a chapter of Tanya on Shabbos mornings was how I pulled through the “three [kids] under three” stage, you'll have to try it yourself to believe me. ■



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# REWRITING your NARRATIVE



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Chava (Sneiderman) Witkes, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5771 (2011)*

**L**ife, stop reminding me how unfair you are. Seriously though, my best friend got married last week and that leaves me as the last of our group still single. I'm so done. Done with going to other peoples' Shabbos meals and sitting in the corner. Done with watching everyone else move on with their lives while I'm stuck way behind.

*The kids I went to school with, they're launching businesses, making serious money... but when it comes time to pay rent, I still have to call my father for help. Everyone else is good at something—what's wrong with me?*

*I try not to be alone too often because when I am, I can't help but wonder why Hashem is out to get me.*

In the story you've written about your life, your character is the victim. Everyone else is happy but you'll never be because you're the worst and Hashem doesn't love you.

That narrative will never allow you to be happy. How can you fulfill your potential if you feel like a loser?

What if you rewrote the script? What if you aren't married yet because you are on a journey to figure yourself out? What if you have a wealth of hidden talent that you just need to uncover? And what if, Hashem hasn't forgotten you at all—what if He is watching you at every moment and cheering you on?

Life doesn't just happen to us. And there is no such thing as bad luck. Hashem is up there giving everyone what they need.

*Our world  
view is limited  
by our finite  
perception.*

When a child walks into the doctor’s office for a vaccine, she might feel that the people who are supposed to care about her cause the most suffering. Later, when that girl gets ice cream, she feels like she has the best parents in the world. However, what’s better for a child —immunization from deadly illnesses or frozen milk and sugar?

The bottom line is that we don’t know always know what’s better for us. Our world view is limited by our finite perception. But would you believe it if the Alter Rebbe said it? Pain has a purpose. And sometimes that purpose makes the pain a good thing. Something to be grateful for.

What if you could, once and for all, stop judging whether life is fair or not, whether everyone else has it better than you? What if you trusted that every single life event is for your benefit—the good and the hard.

So the next time you’re sitting at that Shabbos table, maybe look around the room with a different voice playing in your head. One that says, “I’m

fortunate to have such a good crew, and Hashem, thanks for everything, but can you please hurry up the struggling part?” ■



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# RECLAIMING OUR INHERITANCE

כה תאמר לבית יעקב

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Hadassah (Silberstein) Shemtov

In conjunction with

Zeldy (Nemanov) Friedman, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5771 (2011)*



I recall that excitement I felt as an 18-year-old girl boarding my first flight to Eretz Yisrael, headed for a year in seminary. This was my chance to gain a deep understanding of Chassidus and to experience real, in-depth learning. Seminary was indeed an eye-opening experience that exposed me to an enticing world of ideas that had been previously unknown to me. At the same time, I noticed an implicit understanding among us students that we would remain passive recipients of our teachers' knowledge, rather than active participants in the learning process.

As I reflected on the experience, I gradually realized that I did not feel disenfranchised or even ignored. Instead, I felt frustrated by the resistance within our communal psyche to embrace the change that women of the modern age desperately need; to reverse a self-perception among ourselves that we are interlopers to the world of serious Torah learning.

The need to change this self-perception became increasingly apparent as I continued to encounter the struggles, doubts, and questions of today's teenage and adult women. I noticed an underlying sense of estrangement from the source of our tradition — the holy texts. For many of my friends, the lack of expectation for rigorous scholarship and academic mastery within their Torah learning led them to seek intellectual satisfaction elsewhere. For others I knew, the dearth of knowledgeable female educators and leaders to look up to, led them to believe that as Jewish women, they could not have intellectual ambitions when it came to Torah. Finally, even those who had immersed themselves in the world of

*That night, we decided that if we were the ones to see the void, then clearly, it was our mission to fill it.*

Torah learning felt so anomalous that they began to doubt themselves and their own capabilities.



It was a cold Friday night as I walked down Lefferts Avenue from my small basement apartment to my friend's house down the block. I had gotten to know Zeldy (Nemanov) Friedman through our mutual Mayanot friends, and I was excited to engage in the passionate discussions that were a trademark of the Nemanov family. Tonight was no different. Zeldy and I bemoaned the fact that since we had left Mayanot, there were hardly any serious learning opportunities available to us. Why couldn't there be classes in Chassidus, Halacha, and Gemara, where we could build our skills, expand our knowledge, and continue the journey of independent study?

And then, after a heated discussion, something changed. We hit that critical turning point when we realized that instead of complaining about the problem, we could be a part of the solution. That night, we decided that if we were the ones to see the void, then clearly, it was our mission to fill it.

"I always loved learning, but since there was so much I did not have access to, I felt that it was really just for men," Zeldy said. "When I experienced text-based learning, I finally felt like the Torah was mine. Sud-

denly there were no limits to how much I could learn and know. It was exhilarating, and I knew that I needed to share that with as many women as possible."

*The girls who joined look like they had been struck by lightning.*

After Shabbos, we scheduled our first board meeting and began making phone calls to educators and community leaders to ask for advice and support. Rabbi Shlomo Yaffe was one of the first people I called. I could barely finish introducing myself, before Rabbi Yaffe launched into an hour-long monologue, passionately arguing the exact case I had planned to present to him. He spoke about the Rebbe's futuristic vision for women's Torah learning and how far we are from reaching that goal. He spoke about the many women recorded in Chabad history<sup>1</sup> who were scholars in Kabbalah, Chassidus, Halacha and Gemara, and the need to bring the centuries-old Chassidic tradition of educating our daughters to the women of our generation. He concluded the conversation with remarking, "Thank you for calling. I am very excited to be part of the last generation of men teaching women." Those words rang in my ears, filling my heart with idealism and hope, as I imagined the metamorphosis that was possible.

1. See *Sefer Hazichronos*

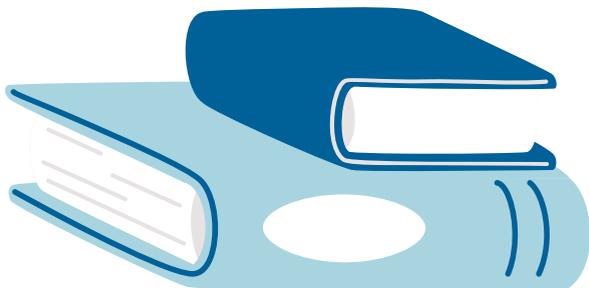




Thus began the thrilling journey of building a community that would empower women to both own their Yiddishkeit and gain confidence in their familiarity with the world of Torah learning. As we introduced people to our vision, we aimed to shift a self-perception that has been ingrained in a community for generations. We dreamed that eventually, the sight of a frum woman learning, discussing and teaching Torah with the same expertise as any physicist can within the world of science, would be as typical as the sight of a 10-year-old yeshiva boy reciting a mishnah.



That first year, growth was slow, and at times we wondered whether our efforts were worth it. Was a transformation even possible? Then Chaya Zeitlin, a Bais Rivkah alumna, came to us with a new idea. A high school chidon. “The highlight of my elementary school years was joining the Sefer Hamitzvos Chidon. I want to give high school girls the thrill and drive that a chidon generates.” After hosting our very first com-



petition in Bais Rivkah’s auditorium and watching the twenty contestants on stage demonstrate their mastery of an entire sefer of Maamarim, I knew we were onto something big. “The girls who joined look like they had been struck by lightning,” Chaya, now our chidon coordinator, said. “It’s as if the chidon ignited a fire inside them.” The chidon grew from twenty finalists from five schools to fifty-five finalists from twelve schools in just three years. As I spoke to the many students and parents involved, I was moved by their stories. One girl told us, “Chidon not only changed the way I view Rambam, it changed the way I view learning in general. Chidon empowered me and showed me that I can sit down after school, take a sefer off the shelf and learn it.”

After the success of the high school chidon, we felt empowered to start our next project - developing curricula for text-based courses that would give women the ability to master a topic in Chassidus, Halacha or Gemara from inside the original text. After our second Chassidus course, one student told us, “At the first class, I looked at the words of the maamar and felt overwhelmed and scared. I told them I wanted my money back. But I stuck it out and eventually I became so comfortable, that I was able to translate the text myself and even give it over to the rest of the class. I came out feeling empowered. This course allowed me to do something I never thought I could do.”

*Learning is the only way to remain passionate about the things that really matter.*

Next, we plan to finally bring our long-awaited dream into reality and open a part-time women’s learning program. Zeldy Friedman, now a curriculum writer and teacher for our courses, shares, “I cannot wait for the day that a busy and thriving women’s Beis Midrash is operating in our community. Learning is the only way to remain passionate about the things that really matter. Although we had many inspiring teachers in high school and seminary, five years down the line, much of it is forgotten. What I’ll never lose is the ability to pull a sefer off the shelf and find the inspiration I need to stay connected.”



A few months ago, I walked into the room where 30+ women gather every week for Sushi and Study, our

weekly chavrusa program. I stood back for a moment, taking in the scene. Women of all backgrounds sat in pairs, pouring over the text of the sicha in traditional chavrusa style, reading, discussing, and debating the ideas. It was a real, live, women's Beis Midrash, a communal space for women to bond over authentic Torah learning. The vibrant sound of learning sounded like music, and my heart sang along with it. And then I noticed something remarkable. I didn't recognize a single face in the room. Most of these women did not even know my name. In that moment I realized, Batsheva Learning Center was more than a personal dream. It was a movement, larger than any of us who had sat in that first board meeting five years ago.

As Batsheva grows and excitement for our vision spreads, I feel humbled to be a part of something this powerful. I believe its power comes from the fact that this movement didn't really start with us, but from the image that the Rebbe painted decades ago on the many occasions throughout his leadership that he discussed the issue of women's Torah learning. During a yechidus with the Belzer Rebbe, and in a famous sicha in 5750 (1990)<sup>2</sup>, the Rebbe dismissed the notion that encouraging women to immerse themselves in advanced study of Halacha, Gemara and Chassidus would in any way detract from a frum, chassidishe lifestyle. For the modern Jewish woman, this study would only enrich her Yiddishkeit with more life and meaning. The Rebbe spoke about the fact that women today have so much opportunity for sophistication and intellectual stimulation in the secular world. If we are not able to match that in the world of Torah, we've done an injustice to our women and girls.

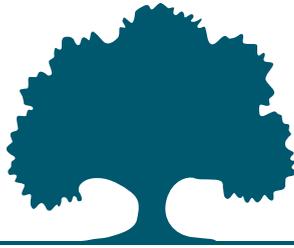
2. *Sefer Hasichos 5750, Parshas Emor*



More than that, the Rebbe did not just see advanced-Torah learning as an antidote to an unfortunate reality of our time, but part of a much larger vision. There was a time when Yidden did not need knowledge to fuel their frumkeit. In a different world, the simplicity of the masses was enough to maintain the purity of their emunah. However, we live in an age when, as Yeshayahu says, “knowledge fills the earth as the ocean covers the seabed.” While Yeshayahu referred to the knowledge of Hashem, the pervasiveness of all human knowledge is a prelude to that era. In our time, exposure to all areas of Torah does not corrupt a Yid's emunah but empowers it. In the recent past, this realization gave rise to the standardized yeshiva education system for boys, as well as the birth of girls' chinuch institutions. Now, as history develops towards the Final Era, it becomes increasingly necessary to expose men and women alike to the vast ocean of Torah knowledge, imbuing them with a sense of ownership of their Yiddishkeit.

To find out more about Batsheva Learning Center, visit our website at: [batshevalearningcenter.com](http://batshevalearningcenter.com) ■





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# A Transparent Future

Esty (Wineberg) Perman, Overland Park, KS  
*Graduating class of 5771 (2011)*



**W**e were eating breakfast one morning when my four-year-old daughter asked me, “Mama, does translucent mean some of the light can go through, all of the light can go through, or NONE of the light can go through?” She wasn’t actually asking. She was just checking to see if I knew the right answer. I must have passed, because we went on to define transparent and opaque too, the three buzzwords of her class’s Creation unit on light and shadows.

Opaque—none of the light shines through. Translucent—some of the light shines through. Transparent—all of the light shines through.

We’re used to living a life full of light and spirituality, but before the Baal Shem Tov, Yiddishkeit was relatively opaque to the average Yid. It was a series of laws, black and white. A religion of rules: today we eat bread, tomorrow we eat matzah, in between we clean. It was a beautiful way of life, a wonderful way to live, but lacking so much warmth.

The Baal Shem Tov, and later the Alter Rebbe, introduced kabbalistic concepts that brought the joy back to Yiddishkeit. They taught us that everything happens for a reason, that Hashem is intimately involved in our lives, always. They taught us that Hashem wants us to know Him, not just follow His rules. That Hashem is knowable. By us.

*They taught us  
that Hashem wants  
us to know Him,  
not just follow His  
rules.*

They were two incredible luminaries who changed the landscape of Yiddishkeit. Two holy Rabbis who turned the light on, and then focused the beam.

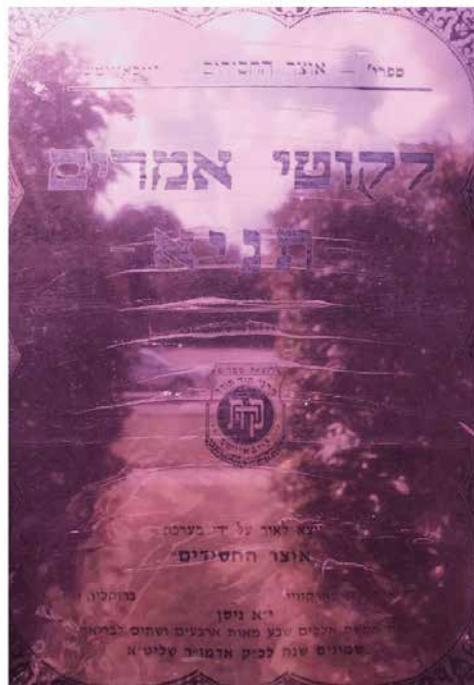
They taught us that physicality is just a cover for millions of sparks of Elokus and light. That we can reveal those sparks when we do a mitzvah, say a bracha, are kind to a friend.

They taught us that every Yid has a neshama that is a part of Hashem, equal to Moshe Rabbeinu's in its innate holiness. They taught us how to make the light shine through the world around us; they made Yiddishkeit translucent.

Like the sunshine that makes a blade of grass grow, it is impossible to separate Yiddishkeit as we know it from the Chassidus they taught us. Elokus, kedusha, light is everywhere, and it's well within our reach.

And when Moshiach comes, the world will become so transparent that we'll be able to point at a tree and say, "This is my Hashem and I will praise him," because Hashem is all that we will see. ■

*Esty writes regularly about Yiddishkeit, secondary infertility, and life lessons.*



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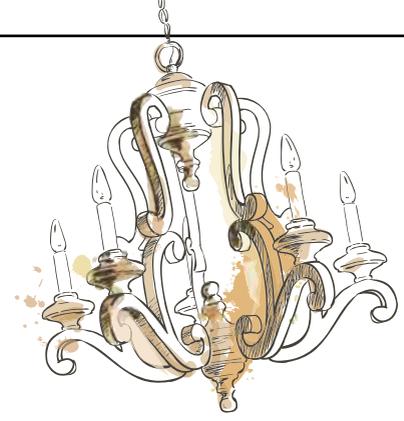


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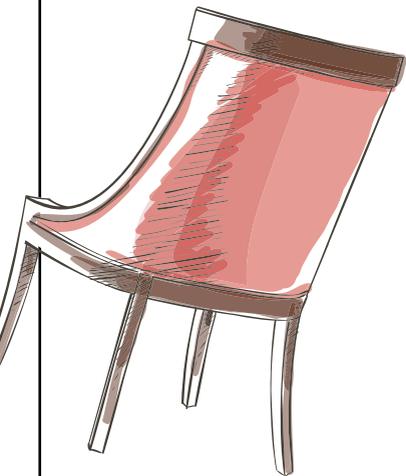
# THE Designer's Take



A DESIGNER'S LIST OF FREQUENTLY  
ASKED QUESTIONS - AND THE ANSWERS.

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Brochie Spritzer (Tiefenbrun), Interior Designer, Crown Heights  
*Graduate of 5769 (2009)*



**Q:** IF THERE IS ONE PIECE OF DESIGN ADVICE YOU  
CAN GIVE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

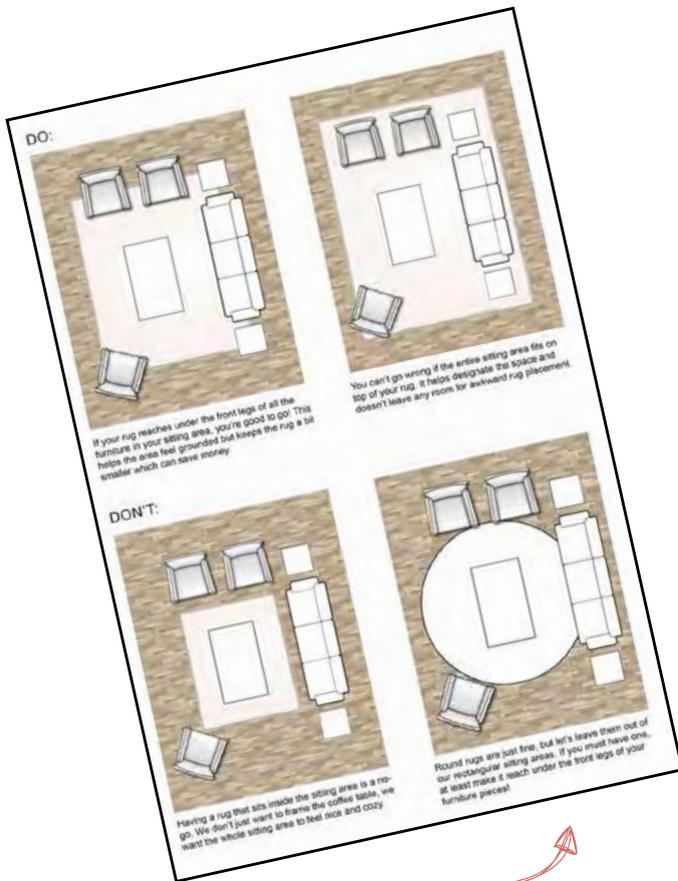
**A:** Know your design style.  
Familiarize yourself with design styles such as *contemporary*, *Scandinavian*, *rustic farmhouse*, *traditional*, *transitional*, and get to know which one resonates with you. The good news is that it's very forgiving to mix styles. As designers, we just want to ensure that the outcome of your home complements the homeowner, as opposed to the designer.

**Q:** HOW DO I CREATE A PROPER LIVING ROOM  
SPACE?

**A:** Start with the rug. A rug will ground your space. Going with a smaller size to save money is tempting, but it will create an unbalanced look. At minimum, the legs of your sofa and the legs of accent chairs should be on the rug.

Play around with layouts. Sometimes the best layouts are the simplest ones, such as two sofas facing each other with a coffee table in middle and end tables on the side.

Create balance using symmetry and objects at varying levels of height.



*A great visual on how to ensure proper rug placement: (Pinterest)*

**Q:** WHEN REDOING A KITCHEN, WHERE CAN I SAVE MONEY IN ORDER TO FIT INTO A BUDGET?

**A:** When on a budget, stock cabinets are a great option. If you already have cabinets, you can reface or repaint them. Spend a little extra on the door handles/pulls. This acts as jewelry for your cabinetry and will upgrade the look.

Budget permitting, there are semi-custom as well as fully-custom cabinetry. In addition, countertops and

backsplash play an important role in the final look of the kitchen, and should be thought out carefully.

**Q:** WHAT MATERIAL COUNTERTOP DO YOU RECOMMEND?

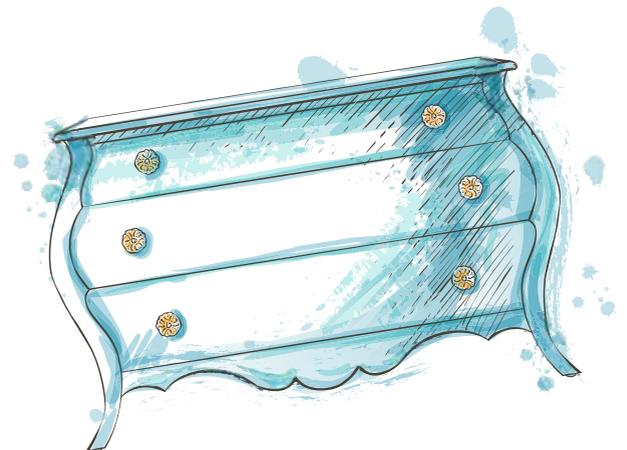
**A:** In order to answer that, a little background information is needed.

Countertop materials basically fall into two categories: manmade and natural.

Quartz is a manmade, very durable material that many times is a consumer's first choice. One thing that people love about it is that it won't stain. It may get annoying gray marks from aluminum pans, but that's nothing a little barkeeper can't take out. It is possible to chip, with no real way of restoring the stone, so some say not to place boiling hot pots directly onto the stone.

Marble and quartzite are natural stones. They can chip, but can be restored through buffing. Natural stones stain and etch from anything acidic. To prevent that, it can be protected with a sealant. In my opinion, with all of its etches, a natural stone has a certain beauty over something man-made. The palace of Versailles will always be beautiful, no matter how many stains and scratches the marble has from the throngs of visitors it contains each day.

Granite is a more durable stone that kind of lost its way in the world of design because of its speckled look. Leathered granite, a processed granite, has gained popularity in the last few years. Its texture lends a rustic look and can be an understated statement in your home.





*A brown leathered granite is used as the countertop and backsplash in this image. (Vogue Living)*

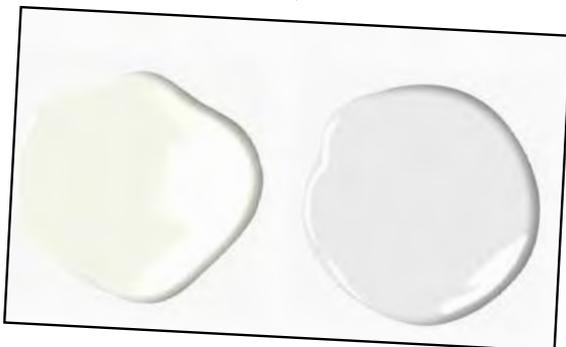
*Tip: In order to install an undercounter outlet strip, it must be done before the backsplash is put in.*

**Q:** SHOULD I PAINT MY WALLS WITH A FLAT FINISH?

**A:** I've come across people who painted their home with a flat finish because they were told that it's the nicest, only for it to be ruined mere months later. The truth is that it's your painter's favorite finish because flat will not pick up on the imperfections of the wall if your painter did a half-job sanding it. I like to keep flat paint strictly for ceilings, and use an eggshell finish for walls.

**Q:** WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WHITE PAINT COLOR?

**A:** I like Simply White and Decorators White by Benjamin Moore.



**Q:** SHOULD I PAINT THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF A DOOR DIFFERENT COLORS IF THE ROOMS AND/OR HALLWAYS ARE DIFFERENT COLORS?

**A:** When it comes to interior doors, consider it one unit. Do not paint the inside one color and outside another. It almost never works.

This is a rare exception to the rule, in which the door to the powder room will always be closed.



**Q:** WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE WHEN IT COMES TO DECIDING ON THE FINISHES AND DECOR OF THE HOME?

**A:** Finishing materials play an important role in the design process; it's what completes your home. Deciding on the color and material of your sofa, rug, curtains, table and chairs is what creates the final outcome of your design. Take your time with this, and if you're a fan of color don't be afraid to play around with it!

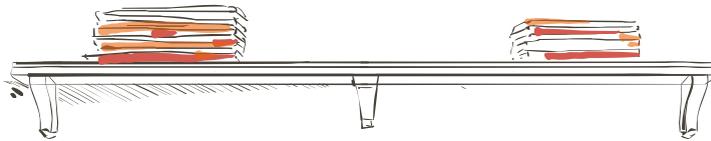
Designing a space should be fun, yet it can be daunting at times, too. That's where a designer comes into the picture. We help you through the entire process and eliminate mistakes that have a way of creeping up. Our goal is to create a seamless design that is both aesthetic and functional, and most of all, a space that personifies you.

**Q:** WHAT IS A DESIGN IMAGE THAT YOU CAN DRAW INSPIRATION FROM?

**A:** This is one of my all-time favorite spaces, designed by Bennet Leifer. He uses a mix of organic materials and combines purples and blues. The rich mahogany wood lends a sophisticated vibewith a cozy feel through the inviting color scheme.



To reach Brochie Spritzer, contact [brochieinteriors@gmail.com](mailto:brochieinteriors@gmail.com) 🍷



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# MY JOURNEY *with* ADHD

Sometimes, *how* is more important than *what*.



Rivky (Zajac) Gurevitz, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5766 (2006)*



Childhood can be tough. Grownups are bigger and smarter, other kids are cuter and more popular. Skills that come easily to some students can be frustratingly elusive to others. The cruel jibes of classmates hit sensitive nerves. When I was in elementary school, my teachers often stressed the concept of *moach shalit al halev*, the mind needs to control the emotions. They seemed particularly insistent that I learn this lesson while I was in the midst of hitting another girl who had been harassing me. You could say I lacked social skills. As I got older, they began constantly reminding me that “A Chassid iz a mesudar - A Chassid is organized.” Although I understood the actual words they were saying, the execution of both concepts completely eluded me. How? How was the mind to take control? How is a person supposed to become organized? For a person with ADHD these two concepts, control, and organization can be very daunting.

When I was five, my mother took me to be evaluated, but no official diagnosis was reached. My mother didn’t even think it was a possibility that I would have ADHD because she had a common misunderstanding of how this disorder presents. She saw my

ability to hyperfocus on tasks that interested me and saw this as proof that I did not possibly have ADHD. After all, children with ADHD did not sit still for extended periods of time, did they? We have, however, come to learn that people with ADHD lack the ability to regulate their attention span to desired tasks. Therefore, mundane tasks may be difficult to focus on and at the same time, others may be completely absorbing. My hyperfocus was classic ADHD.

As I grew older and more self-aware, I knew that I was different than the girls around me and I just did not know how to fit in. I started to revel in being different. I didn’t care what others thought about me. Despite my newfound defiance and self-reliance, I had the status of an outsider. Deep down, I just wanted to be included.

There were teachers who saw beyond the geekiness,

*Once I embraced it, life became much easier. I began to learn about how my brain works.*

the lack of organization and the social awkwardness, and went out of their way to work with me. Not only did they give of their time; they showed me true empathy. Their kindness did not necessarily teach me how to be organized, but ultimately, it had an impact. Over time, I became less impulsive, and I began to gain a certain sense of control over my emotions. Looking back, this was all haphazard. There wasn't a path to follow; it was all trial and error. The process was a continuous struggle; I definitely disappointed a lot of teachers and principals. Eventually, I managed to find my own groove and own my personality.

Getting married was wonderful and a happy event, but difficulties began to arise. My troubles with being focused and organized became very apparent. My husband struggled to relate to my disorganized housekeeping and some of my behaviors that he viewed as negligent. He mentioned these challenges to a psychologist. The psychologist felt it would be helpful for us to meet, and he asked my husband to set up an appointment for me. He spoke with me at length, and at a certain point, he said that he believed that I had ADHD and that he had a colleague, a neuropsychologist, who could help me. My reaction when we had that discussion was far from positive. I had been conditioned that ADHD was an excuse for the lazy, and I was NOT a lazy person. I didn't appreciate what I felt was an armchair diagnosis.

I was really angry.

However, as time went by, I began to read more. I read any book about ADHD that I could get my hands on, and I started to recognize myself in the picture they were painting. The more I read, the more I saw that I was unique and that what I was enduring was not what the rest of the world was experiencing.

I recalled a time when I was an eleventh grader. Mishpacha magazine had published an article titled "Mrs. ADD". As I read the article, I saw myself entirely in the profile. When I ran excitedly to share what I had found with some older friends who were in Bais Rivkah seminary, their flippant response threw me off. They chided me not to diagnose myself from a magazine article. As this memory came floating back, all I could think was, "Well, I was right."

Over the years I have seen a neuropsychologist, psychologist, social worker, and psychiatrist. No one has any doubt that I have ADHD. Once I embraced it, life became much easier. I began to learn about

*I know what my imperfections are, and I must seek out the tools and strategies to work on them.*

how my brain works.

My brain's frontal lobe is different than those who do not have ADHD (whom we would generally classify as neurotypical). Tasks that fall under executive function can be challenging. This means that even though I know how important it is to be mesudar, I often feel frustrated because I do not know how to organize myself. This means that I will need to learn how to plan, how to put things in their place, and how to regulate my reactions when I feel certain emotions, otherwise moach shalit al halev becomes very difficult. It means that I know what my job in this world is: I must work on my imperfections to serve Hashem as He asked me to. I know what my imperfections are, and I must seek out the tools and strategies to work on them.

There is a beautiful silver lining that I have found on this journey. We all know that inside of us is an actual part of Hashem. Each of us carries a portion of Infinity. While oftentimes practical people might say an idea could never work, I feel that glowing spark inside of me saying that anything is possible. My ADHD helps me connect to that part of my neshama that sees all the possibilities, and they are endless.

## READING & RESOURCES

There are a number of programs that have become popular in teaching how to regulate one's emotions, and also how to learn appropriate social skills. Some examples are Zones of Regulation and Social Thinking.

Parents and teachers can read books such as Leah Rubabshi's *My Sometimes Feelings* with their child and then discuss it together afterward. I also find that the books that start with the titles "*I Can...*" by Sara Blau are excellent resources.

If I can leave you with one message, it is that a child or adult who has ADHD is NOT broken. We have our own positive attributes and abilities to serve Hashem and make this world a dirah bitachtonim. We just may do it differently, and in ways that may be unconventional or out of the box - and that's okay. While I would have been happier to have had a diagnosis when I was a lot younger, I do not cry over

the past. This is the journey Hashem chose for me. Rather, I am learning how to do things differently with my new tools and the support of my therapist and family.

It's hard, but that's how we know we're doing the right thing. הזרעים בדמעה ברינה יקצורו - Those who sow seeds with tears will harvest in happiness. 🌱

## WHAT ADHD IS

ADHD is an acronym for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

There was a time that ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder) were divided into two different categories, but now they are classified together under one umbrella term.

There are three types of ADHD and Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) explains them in the following way:

### ADHD Predominantly inattentive presentation

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
- Has difficulty sustaining attention
- Does not appear to listen
- Struggles to follow through with instructions
- Has difficulty with organization
- Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring sustained mental effort
- Loses things
- Is easily distracted
- Is forgetful in daily activities

### ADHD predominantly hyperactive-impulsive presentation

- Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair
- Has difficulty remaining seated
- Runs about or climbs excessively in children; extreme restlessness in adults
- Difficulty engaging in activities quietly
- Acts as if driven by a motor; adults will often feel inside as if they are driven by a motor
- Talks excessively
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Difficulty waiting or taking turns
- Interrupts or intrudes upon others

### ADHD combined presentation

The individual meets the criteria for both inattention and hyperactive-impulsive ADHD presentations.

CHADD also points out that ADHD can be co-occurring with other disorders, and one would not ne-



gate the other. In addition, there are levels to ADHD and therefore those making the diagnosis today must state the level of ADHD an adult or child has when being diagnosed. The three levels are mild, moderate, and severe. A person with mild ADHD will have a few symptoms and they will be just enough for a diagnosis based on performance in school, social, and work settings. A moderate ADHD diagnosis will be given when symptoms or functional impairment present themselves between moderate to severe. A severe diagnosis according to CHADD is when: "Many symptoms are present beyond the number needed to make a diagnosis; several symptoms are particularly severe; or symptoms result in marked impairment in social, school or work settings." Most cases of ADHD have their roots in heredity. Today, when a child goes for evaluation, one thing that will be looked into is family history.

In addition, there is strong neurochemistry involved. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, dopamine, and norepinephrine are the two neurotransmitters that play a role in ADHD. There is often not enough being transmitted. In addition, they note that the frontal lobe of the brain is often smaller in children with ADHD, and they develop later. The frontal lobe is what teaches us about problem-solving.

## WHAT ADHD IS NOT

ADHD is not an excuse for a child to neglect control of his or her emotions or to quit trying to be organized. What I *am* trying to point out is that sometimes a child will really be having difficulty controlling his or her emotions, or struggling with organization. We then have an opportunity and an obligation to teach them these important skills and tools.

As a preschool teacher, I see just how much I need to teach my children *how* to control and regulate their emotions. All children, whether neurotypical or not, need to learn how to regulate their emotions.

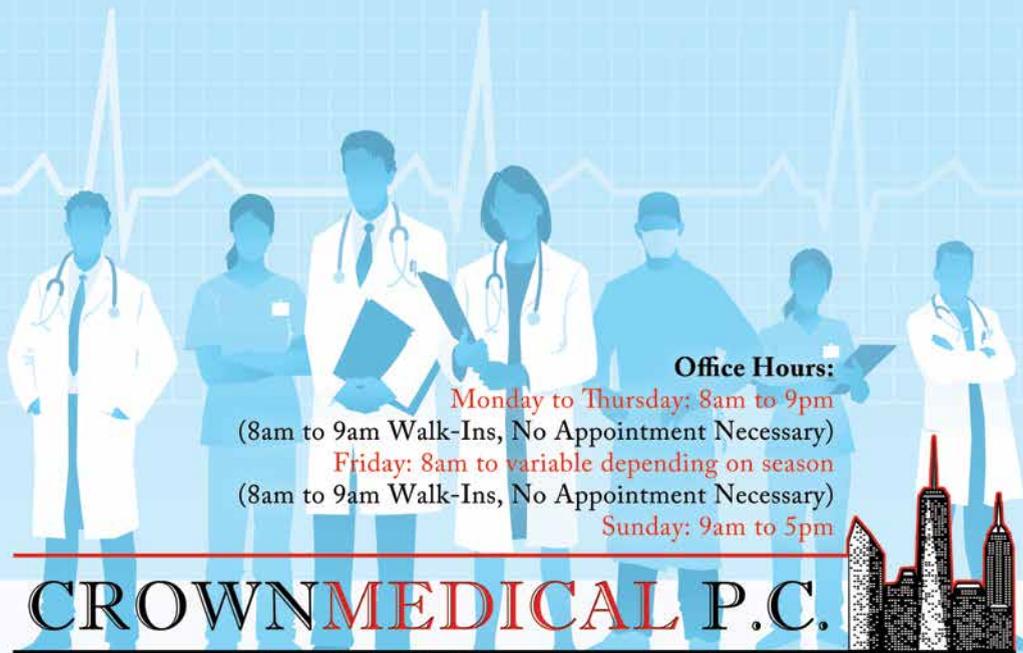
## HOW, NOT WHAT

**Model Behaviors:** When a child has ADHD the learning curve needed is greater. What might be obvious to the parent or teacher is not going to be obvious to the child or student. Telling a child to be more organized without modeling the HOW of these things is not going to be useful, because the child is going to feel bewildered. You need to physically demonstrate, act out, use puppets to role-play situations and appropriate responses.

**Consequences:** This also does not mean that a child or student who has ADHD should get away with behavior that is inappropriate. Far from it; research has shown that children with ADHD learn best when there are consequences. However, empathy and compassion are vital. If you lose patience with your child or student, they will feel it, and it's extremely

counterproductive. If most neurotypical people would be tuning out speeches, how much more so the child who has ADHD. Keep the language simple and short. The consequence should be immediate, so the child can make the connection.

**Create Routine:** In addition, modeling organization is important. There are many ways to do that. Visual charts play a big role. Make a chart for EVERYTHING. A chart for what to do when a child wakes up in the morning, a chart for going to sleep, and a chart for anything that you want a child to do without prompting. Designate a space for everything. The goal is to create a habit or routine. Creating a GOOD routine or habit means that you have trained the brain what to expect and how to behave.



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# From STRUGGLE to STRENGTH



*A mother's touching letter to her child*

Esti (Reizes) Lowenbein, Pomona, NY  
*Graduating class of 5772 (2012)*

*Dearest Mordechai,*

Today, as you turn four years of age, I'd like to share sentiments with you that until now I was only able to convey with many hugs and kisses. At times, I hold you and tears stream down my face. You should know that these are not tears of sadness; these are tears of joy and happiness. You are my little miracle, and you taught me so much. The reason I'm sharing this with everyone now is so that they too can learn from you.

On כ"ב סיון, June 8, 2015, we were delighted to welcome you to our beautiful family. I couldn't wait to look at you and spend hours bonding with you. After a difficult labor, you arrived weighing six pounds and eight ounces. Instead of hearing the sound of a crying baby though, I heard hysteria in the room as the doctors struggled to gain access to your airway. You couldn't catch your breath, a tube was placed down your throat, and you were whisked away to the NICU. You were placed in an incubator with many tubes, wires, and monitors. I couldn't bear to see you like that.

The doctors told me that your voice boxes weren't moving. They called it vocal cord paralysis (VCP).

Little did Tatty and I know that this would be the start of a twenty-week-long hospital journey with you. A

difficult and painful journey, yet a powerful and life-changing one as well.

*I stood up for you, Mordy:*



Let me tell you a bit about myself, Mordy. I, too, was born with vocal cord paralysis. Just like you, I struggled to breathe at birth. Because of this, I always had a low voice that inhibited me from fully expressing myself as I wished. I pursued a degree in speech therapy



to help myself and others. Learning and practicing speech therapy turned out super beneficial and *hash-gacha protis*.

I grew up trusting Hashem and trusting doctors. I also worked very hard to do all in my power to prevent problems from occurring. But nothing could have prepared us for this roller coaster.

Mordy, watching your tiny body tied up to all those machines literally broke my heart. I did not want to leave you even for a second. At one point, I went home to your brothers and sisters, only to return to the hospital to see you sweating profusely. I realized the incubator you were in had gotten to dangerously high temperatures, and I shuddered to think what would have happened to you had I gotten there any later.

At that moment, I promised you that I would do my utmost to be at your side. This proved to be challenging since your five other siblings were home, and I couldn't be at two places at once.

Knowing the anatomy and physiology of the situation, as well as having experienced it myself, I felt that I had a better understanding of it than the doctors. The doctors said that because of the stridor breathing and because you would turn blue when crying, inserting a trach tube was the way to go. I felt like waiting until the problem would resolve on its own as it did by me, was the better solution, especially since I also knew the risks involved in having a trach. I couldn't bear to put you under the knife until I was one hundred percent certain that this was the right choice. The doctors began to make me feel guilty, telling me that by not going ahead with the surgery, I was the reason you were suffering.

Sadly, while in the hospital, you developed the Rhinovirus and were put in isolation. You couldn't hear the nurses, and they couldn't hear you. They would only enter the room to feed you or if the machine was beeping. When you cried, your oxygen levels would go down, and the nurse would then need to don special garb and put on a mask before entering. Your oxygen levels would drop too low, and this seemed too dangerous to me. I went to the chief of staff and pleaded that it was unsafe for you to be in that position. I stood up for you, Mordy. That was something I never saw myself doing before. But I would do anything for you. And yes, they took you out of isolation due to my persistence.

I wished I could just run home with you. It was so



difficult knowing that you were under someone else's control. A baby needs to be with its mother! I couldn't even see your face, because it was completely taped up to hold the CPAP and feeding tube in place. Even so, you were still a gorgeous baby. I cried with you every time the nurses ripped the tape off your face to replace it with another. But in between, I'd snap a picture of you to show our family.

I had your back every step of the way and helped you progress. When all was beginning to look better, you started crying out of pain. This went on for over a

*Just like I have millions of cells in my body that I'm not aware of, yet they still work in perfect harmony exactly as Hashem designed them to be, so too, I do not and cannot control this situation.*



week. The doctors told that it was because you need the trach. I knew that couldn't have been the reason. But after much pressure and with a heavy heart, I consented to the surgery.

The day before the surgery, you were wearing a navy outfit with the cutest hat. We played, sang and davened together. I took lots of pictures of you with your favorite toy.

I felt like this is what Hashem wanted from us; it was no longer in our control.

As you went in for the surgery, the world davened along. Mid-surgery, as Tatty and I went to get fresh air in the hospital yard, the phone rang. It was the doctor, and with a pounding heart, I answered the call. He let me know that two hernias were found, and they needed my permission to operate on them before inserting the trach and feeding tube. I consented and smiled for I knew that I had been right. It wasn't just the VCP that was bothering you; it was something else.

Mordy, I must tell you, every time I had to leave you to go home to your brothers and sisters was the hardest thing for me to do. It was almost just as hard as the long, lonely train rides, where the feeling of helplessness was so much more amplified. When I was not home or in the hospital, I felt all alone. I spent those long rides praying for your recovery. During one of them, it hit me: Just like I have millions of cells in my body that I'm not aware or in control of, yet they still work in perfect harmony exactly as Hashem designed them to be, so too, I do not and cannot control this situation. At that moment, a deep peace came over me as I discovered a newfound faith in the Creator of the world.

After you recovered from the surgeries, you were sent to Blythedale Rehab Center in Westchester for Tatty and me to learn how to tend to your trach tube

*Mordy, you taught me to focus on the NOW.*



and g-tube. Changing the trach ties daily was difficult and tube changes were torturous. Thank you for teaching me to put my own self aside and go beyond my comfort zone.

After one hundred and twenty days, you were cleared to go home! You were outdoors for the first time ever! Bubby and Zeidy rode alongside to welcome you home. For the first time ever, I had all six of my children under one roof! It was so exciting, yet overwhelming.

Your siblings were beyond thrilled to finally have their little brother home. The house was converted into a mini-hospital with oxygen tanks, machinery and plenty of medical supplies. Although you were home, we made many trips to the hospital and natural healers, and each time it was in a car loaded with machines.

At five and a half months you had your bris with Dr. Rosen, Hatzalah members, and close family present. We were thrilled to announce to the world that you had joined the tribe. We named you Chaim Mordechai Halevi after your special great-great-grandfather and his father. We added the name Chaim, meaning life...

At eight and a half months you were given a Passe Muir Valve (PMV) to wear on your trach tube, which redirected the air back through your throat and allowed you to vocalize once again!

The joy in hearing your voice was overwhelming. You had the cutest laugh and could imitate sounds adorably. Even your cry brought tears of happiness to my eyes! We were elated to share this great, long-awaited moment with everyone, and I learned to take a moment to reflect and appreciate all that we were given, the simple and normal things. Your cry made time stand still.

I started realizing that we often obsess about the past and worry about the future while squandering the present. Mordy, you taught me to focus on the NOW. I learned to stay in the moment, to be present.

I fought so hard for every step of progress. After undergoing a sleep study and a laryngoscopy/ bronchoscopy, you were finally decannulated at eleven months of age, despite the initial projection of the doctors that you would need a trach tube until you were nine years old!!

Throughout this time, there were many people who took their time and helped out in many ways. These people gave of themselves in the highest form, unconditionally- without strings attached and not expecting anything in return. They taught me how to

*The greatest strength grows from struggle, just like breathing difficulties strengthen the lungs.*



give to others with more sympathy and understanding, making the quality of my giving so much better.

I remember what the Rebbe told my mother when my sister was presented with this stridor breathing: that it is a merit for long life, אריכות ימים. Only later did I understand. The greatest strength grows from struggle, just like breathing difficulties strengthen the lungs. No one asks for pain; no one wants it. But the lessons we can learn from it are invaluable.

Yes, I still wake up from nightmares recalling your difficult beginning, and the trauma continues to plague me till today. But when I can be strong and apply the lessons learned, I can achieve greatness. That's when I realize how these struggles are such a gift.

There were many more details, problems, and challenges along the way; difficulties which became opportunities to grow and learn from. The lessons I

learned were put into practice when your sister Meira was also born with vocal cord paralysis.

So Mordechai, when I hug you tight and you see tears streaming down my face, I want you to know that they are tears of joy and strength.

Love with all my heart,

Mommy 🍂



ב"ה



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# A PILLAR *of* BAIS RIVKAH

Tzirl (Simon) Goldman, Crown Heights.  
*Graduating Class of 5739 (1979)*



“**G**ood afternoon, Miss Simon.” With an acknowledging nod of his head, Rabbi Shimon Goldman, member of the Bais Rivkah Vaad, stood at the counter of the Bais Rivkah lunchroom, at 2270 Church Avenue, greeting students and observing the meal being served. As a shy grade seven student, I responded with a quick hello and took my seat at my class’ table.

Taking time from his work day, running his butchery business on Coney Island Avenue, Rabbi Goldman stood to make sure the girls of Bais Rivkah were well cared for. As the cooks lovingly dolloped the day’s prepared delicacies, Rabbi Goldman took note of how the kitchen was run. It was part of his “job” as a board member, together with Rabbi Mordechai Rivkin A”H and YBLC”T Rabbi Gavriel Rubashkin, that the girls of Bais Rivkah were nutritiously fed, in addition to managing all affairs of the school.

Fast forward, just short of a decade later, and I’m facing Rabbi Goldman again, but this time in his



*Bais Rivkah 310 Crown Street location*

*Since I was working as a secretary at Bais Rivkah High School, the ice-breaker topic was... Bais Rivkah.)*

living room as I'm coming to meet the parents of the young man I'm dating. (Since I was working as a secretary at Bais Rivkah High School, the ice-breaker topic was... Bais Rivkah.) "So how are things at school?" Rabbi Goldman asks. Amidst one of life's most important events for a parent and child, Rabbi Goldman had Bais Rivkah on his mind.

Soon after that encounter, Rabbi Goldman became my father-in-law. I closely observed just how dedicated he actually was not only to Bais Rivkah, but to his community as well. Aside from being on the Vaad of Bais Rivkah, he served as Gabbai of the Gemilas Chessed Shomrei Shabbos, a member of Agudas Chasidei Chabad, as well as on the board of other institutions in the neighborhood.

How did a man, the sole survivor of his family, rise to become a pillar in his community? How did a lone Bachur who escaped the hands of the Nazis, Yemach Shemom, by running away from Poland with the Yeshiva, and eventually landed in Japan through the gracious support of Chiune Sugihara, become a leader of the Rebbe's Moisad?

One would think that after living the life of a teenager on the run, my Shver would have been happy to live a life of tranquility, and enjoy the normal routine of family life. Why have to contend with meetings, boards, fundraisers and spend hours upon hours of time supervising the management of a school?

Above all else, he was a Chossid who lived his life by the Rebbe's directives. It was a call from the Rebbe, through Rabbi Hodakov, that got my fa-

ther in law involved in Bais Rivkah.

Upon the establishment of Bais Rivkah, Rabbi Yitzchok Goldin, a Neveler (someone from the town of Nevel- Russia), was in charge. Rabbi Gavriel Rubashkin arrived from Russia in 1954, and as a Neveler himself, upon enrolling his daughters in Bais Rivka, offered to help with running the school.

This was how Bais Rivkah was functioning until Rabbi Goldin suffered a heart attack in the late 1960s. Bais Rivkah had to be taken care of! In שנת תשכ"ז (January 1967), Rabbi Hodakov called Rabbi Rubashkin and suggested to him to participate in the establishment of a Vaad that will oversee the operations of Bais Rivkah. It goes without saying that a call from Rabbi Hodakov meant a call from the Rebbe. In response, Rabbi Rubashkin went to work and formed a group of local communi-



*The Vaad working on obtaining the 310 Crown Street building*

ty members and businessmen. While the original Vaad consisted of ten people, the three who remained were my father in law, Rabbi Rivkin and Rabbi Rubashkin.

Meetings were held two evenings a week, after a full day's work, every Sunday, and Wednesday or Thursday, the location alternating between the members' homes. It was hard, but they were all young, energetic and committed to the Moisad. Although it was very strenuous and time consuming, they were the nucleus of the school. A Duch of the Vaad's activities was given to the Rebbe every three months.

Financial responsibility was top priority. A deficit of \$110,000 became the immediate responsibility of the Vaad.

The school's budget then was \$50,000, a lot of money at that time. In order to keep things running, the Vaad always borrowed money. Rabbi Hodakov would take personal checks of the Vaad members, guaranteeing their checks on loans. Rabbi Hodakov approved all their checks. The Vaad never failed.

*Aside from rebuilding his own life and family, the community family and organizations he was involved with was Hitler's revenge.*

Besides running the day to day affairs of the school, the Vaad worked tirelessly to acquire proper homes for Bais Rivkah. As the Brownsville neighborhood changed (well, it's changing again with Yidden moving back into that area), it was no longer safe for Bais Rivkah students there. The buildings on Snyder Avenue and Church Avenue were purchased through the efforts of the Vaad. When that was no longer a safe haven, the Vaad again put in hours upon hours to secure the purchase of 310 Crown Street.

Crown Heights Yeshiva, at 310 Crown Street, was a day school whose population was dwindling. The demographics of Crown Heights were changing, as many people were leaving the neigh-

borhood and moving to other parts of Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island. Crown Heights Yeshiva was moving to Canarsie, and the Vaad became an interested buyer of the property at 310 Crown Street.

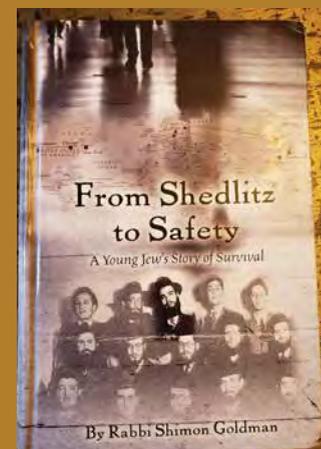
Although Crown Heights Yeshiva was considering selling to Medgar Evers College for a higher price, there was a member of the Crown Heights Yeshiva board who was instrumental in the decision to sell to Bais Rivkah. There were many, many meetings and discussions to get the greater board of Crown Heights Yeshiva to sell to Bais Rivkah. This was a long and hard fight for the Vaad which they B"H succeeded in.

I am still in awe of my shver's involvement. It required so much of his time - time away from his family, from his personal life. I am sure as well, that as a devoted Chosid of the Rebbe, he felt a calling to respond to the Rebbe's desire that Bais Rivkah was well run and taken care of. As a survivor, I wonder, if he felt that it was his mission to keep Yiddishkeit and the learning of Torah alive. I never asked him, but I saw how devoted he was to all the moisdos he was involved in.

Aside from rebuilding his own life and family, the community family and organizations he was involved with was Hitler's revenge. My Shver's birthday was ה' טבת, the day of דין נצח in the history of Chabad. His part in keeping Torah alive must have been his personal נצח דין.

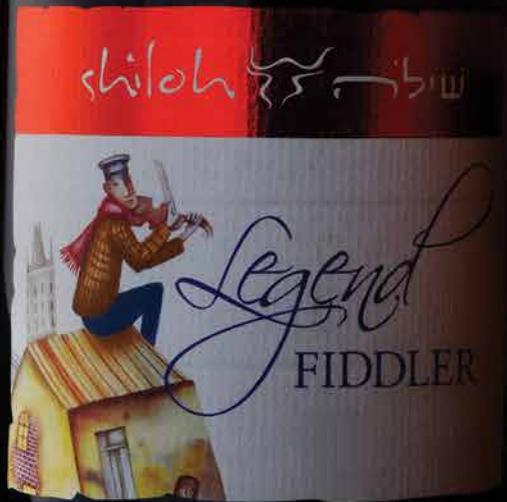
וכל מי שעוסקים בצרכי ציבור הקב"ה ישלם שכרם...  
יהי זכרו ברוך ■

In 2004, he penned *From Shedlitz to Safety: A Young Jew's Story of Survival*, in which he chronicled his memories of prewar Poland, the trevails of his escape and the new life he created in America.



make any meal

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# A Taste of Bais Rivkah



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Nechama Dina  
(Baitz) Safar  
Los Angeles, California

Graduating class of  
5763 (2003)

There's nothing like a good home-cooked meal to bring people together, but you don't have to be a chef to make it happen. Here's the thing—I don't actually like big, fancy cooking. Spending a long time in the kitchen waiting for a dish to finally be ready to eat is not something I find enjoyable. But preparing a quick, tasty meal and then savoring that meal with loved ones? Now that's something I love.

The Simply Kosher Cookbook is filled with all of my favorite kosher recipes for easy weeknight meals, and also for entertaining. Each dish is deliciously simple with minimal ingredients and prep time, but of course maximum flavor. Whether you want to impress your future mother-in-law with a good potato kugel, cook an easy rush-hour dinner that your children will eat, or score points hosting a dinner party for friends, there is a recipe in it just waiting to be cooked, eaten and enjoyed with loved ones.



## SALMON WITH LEMON CAPER SAUCE

*Pareve • Grain free • Nut free • Sugar free*

*Serves 4 to 5*

*Prep time: 10 minutes | Cook time: 20 minutes*

I really enjoy the taste and presentation of the lemon caper sauce layered over the fish in this dish, and I often serve it when entertaining.

Guests usually end up asking for more of the delicious sauce, so I make sure to provide a serving dish of it on the table for easy access.

2 pounds salmon fillets  
 1 tablespoon olive oil  
 Juice of 1 lemon, divided  
 1½ teaspoons salt, divided  
 ¼ teaspoon plus  
 ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
 2 tablespoons Earth Balance  
 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour  
 1 cup water (or vegetable stock or white wine)  
 2 tablespoons capers

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Line a baking dish with parchment paper. Place the salmon in the baking dish and drizzle with the olive oil and half the lemon juice. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt and ¼ teaspoon of pepper.
3. Bake for about 18 minutes, until the salmon flakes easily with a fork.
4. While the salmon bakes, prepare the sauce: In a small saucepan, melt the Earth Balance, then add the flour and whisk to form a paste. Add the water and stir. Season with the remaining teaspoon of salt and pepper and the remaining lemon juice. Whisk together until the sauce thickens, then stir in the capers.
5. Serve the salmon topped with the sauce.

*Per serving: Calories: 441; Total fat: 30g; Total carbs: 2g;  
 Fiber: 0g; Sugar: 0g; Protein: 41g; Sodium: 1011mg*



## CAJUN SAUSAGE RICE BOWL

*Meat • gluten free • nut free • sugar-free*

*Serves 4 to 6*

*Prep time: 10 minutes | Cook time: 45 minutes*

There is nothing I enjoy more than ending the day with a deliciously easy and hearty meal. Carbs were created to make you feel all warm and cozy inside, and rice is at the top of the comfort food list for me. Cooked together with vibrant spices and savory slices of sausage and pepper, this one-pot dish is full of flavor in every creamy bite.

1 tablespoon olive oil 1 onion, diced  
 1 large red bell pepper, chopped  
 12 ounces sausage, cut into rounds  
 2 teaspoons Cajun seasoning  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 1½ cups uncooked brown rice  
 1 (32-ounce) carton (or 4 cups) reduced-sodium chicken stock

1. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat the oil and sauté the onion and pepper until tender.
2. Add the sausage rounds to the pan and cook until the edges are slightly crispy, about 5 minutes, stirring every so often so they don't stick to the pan. Add the Cajun seasoning and salt.
3. Add the rice and chicken stock and combine well. Cover and simmer on medium-low heat until the liquid is absorbed, 30 to 45 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.

**Variation tip:** If you like, add some chopped fresh cilantro or parsley for color and extra flavor. You can also swap out sausage for salami, hot dogs, or boneless, skinless chicken.

*Per serving: Calories: 519; Total fat: 21g; Total carbs: 60g;  
 Fiber: 3g; Sugar: 3g; Protein: 22g; Sodium: 1566mg*





## TOFU MUSHROOM STIR-FRY

*Pareve • Grain free • Nut free • Vegetarian*  
*Serves 4 to 5*

*Prep time: 10 minutes | Cook time: 15 minutes*

This easy stir-fry is ready in minutes and will make you want to lick your plate clean. The sauce is a great recipe that comes together quickly and tastes delicious with just about any type of stir-fry. You can swap mushrooms for green beans, asparagus, broccoli, peppers, or another favorite vegetable. To make it a meat recipe, you can also use chicken or steak slices in place of the tofu.

- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- ¼ cup water
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or avocado oil
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 1 (12-ounce) package extra-firm tofu, drained, pressed, and cubed

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce and honey.
2. In another small bowl, whisk together the cornstarch and water.
3. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and cook until they are soft and browned. Add the cubed tofu and let it heat up, then pour in the soy sauce–honey mixture.
4. Move the mushrooms and tofu to the sides of the skillet, creating an open space in the center of the skillet. Pour the cornstarch mixture into the open space and swirl the skillet over medium heat until the sauce thickens.

5. Once the sauce has thickened, combine everything together in the skillet and serve.

*Per Serving: Calories: 200; Total fat: 9g; Total carbs: 24g; Fiber: 1g; Sugar: 19g; Protein: 11g; Sodium: 910mg-*



## SPINACH AND BEEF STUFFED SHELLS

*Meat • Nut free*  
*Serves 4 to 5*

*Prep time: 15 minutes | Cook time: 35 minutes*

If I have to hide vegetables in my kids' food so that they will eat them, I'll do it. I am not above being a sneaky mom in the kitchen. My boys love anything with pasta and these shells are stuffed with ground beef, another win in their eyes. They love this dinner so much they don't even seem to notice the spinach. You can stuff these shells with a mixture of ground beef and any vegetable you want to get your kid to eat. Steamed cauliflower mashed into pieces tastes delicious too.

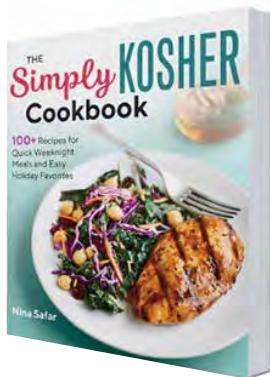
- 1 (12-ounce) package jumbo pasta shells
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 cup frozen spinach, thawed
- 1 (24-ounce) jar marinara sauce

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Cook the pasta shells in a large pot of boiling water for 12 minutes. Drain and set aside.
3. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook the ground beef, using a spatula to break it into pieces. Add the spinach to the pan and stir to combine.

4. Add three-quarters of the marinara sauce to the beef mixture and stir to combine. Cook for an additional 5 minutes.
5. Stuff the pasta shells with the beef-spinach mixture.
6. In a large baking dish, arrange the stuffed shells and top with the remaining marinara sauce.
7. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes.

**Variation tip:** Ground chicken, ground turkey, or meatless veggie crumbles can be used in place of the beef. You can also swap out the spinach for sautéed onions and mushrooms.

*Per serving: Calories: 518; Total fat: 10g; Total carbs: 71g; Fiber: 6g; Sugar: 10g; Protein: 35g; Sodium: 982mg* ■



*Nina Safar is a food blogger and founder of [kosherinthekitch.com](http://kosherinthekitch.com) and author of *The Simply Kosher Cookbook*. She was raised in a large Brooklyn family (with nine sisters and two brothers ka"h) full of love for food and tradition, and now channels that passion into cooking and sharing food that blends tradition and culture. She admits to having zero patience for difficult recipes, which is why she creates easy and convenient dishes that don't compromise on flavor. She now whips up recipes (with her two sons standing by for snacks) at her home in Los Angeles.*

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# - BAIS RIVKAH - Talent



## A LAYERED SILENCE

Anonymous  
*Graduating class  
of 5776 (2016)*

Chanukah  
Once was the candle  
Of Mitzvos  
The light  
  
Of the Torah  
Upliftment from even  
the lowest  
Of places; triumph  
Of the good  
Over blackness of evil.  
  
Once, I explored all the books  
Of Chassidus  
Uplifted my soul to see  
Broader, from higher.  
  
Once,  
This menorah was more  
Than its oil;  
  
Its flames spoke  
Of stories; they lifted me  
Higher.  
  
Today,  
I sit close to  
This same lit menorah  
  
My eyes travel past the  
closed books

Of Chassidus  
To gaze at its light  
That I know  
Should tell stories.

My ears strain  
To listen; I move  
To sit closer  
  
But I don't hear stories  
This year, they  
Don't speak them; they  
Flicker, evade me.

I think they are  
Saying,  
"Go learn some Chassidus..."



## FOOTSTEPS

Sara (Herson) Brafman,  
Morristown, NJ  
*Graduating Seminary class  
of 5744 (1984)*

Parched earth,  
Desert sand,  
Footprints,  
Millions of them.  
  
They walk, together,  
Through the vastness of  
the desert,  
Weary from years of slavery,  
Now,  
Free at last.

Here, in the barrenness  
of Sinai,  
A fledgling nation prepares  
to receive the Torah.  
In awe,  
At the foot of the mountain,  
They stand.

Smoke,  
Thunder,  
Lightning,  
The blast of a shofar.

Then, silence.  
No living thing stirs.  
Millions bear witness  
To Heaven's descent  
upon earth.

The Torah, blueprint  
of creation,  
Wisdom of the  
Creator  
Himself,  
Is now theirs.

Revelation, in the midst of  
nothingness.

Parched earth,  
Desert sand,  
Torah, a "Living Wellspring  
of Water,"  
Each precious word studied,  
Reviewed, again and again.

Passed from father to son,  
Generation to generation.

The Jews journey on,  
Footprints,  
Millions of them.

Traversing rough terrain  
While tightly clutching their  
Torah scrolls.

Home in the Promised Land,  
In days of peace and  
prosperity,  
And through the suffering  
of bitter exiles,

The People of the Book never  
stop learning.

Through the ages,  
Forced over and over again  
To flee,  
Torah scrolls clasped tightly.

Millions of footsteps,  
Traversing virtually every  
corner of the globe.

They lived by it.

They died for it.

A people's endless journey  
through time  
Follow the footsteps of  
generations past  
To the land of the Czars.

The iron fist of oppression fell  
heavily upon the Jews,  
Dealing them a mighty blow.

The bloody pogroms of  
ת"ח ות"ט,  
Entire villages decimated,  
Extreme poverty,

Hopes and dreams of  
salvation, shattered  
By the deceit of Shabsai Tzvi.  
Battered and bruised,  
They struggled to hold strong.

And then, in the midst  
of thick darkness,  
Parched earth,  
A virtual desert,  
Revelation.

Toras HaChassidus is revealed  
by the holy Baal Shem Tov.  
Given at Sinai but hidden,  
until now, from the masses.

From village to village,  
Wellsprings of "Living  
Waters" flow,  
Quenching the thirst of the  
parched and weary.

A land soaked with  
blood and tears,  
Now an oasis in the desert.

The Mezritcher Maggid,  
the Chevraya Kaddisha,  
the Alter Rebbe,  
Angels of flesh and blood  
walking this earth.

Teaching, uplifting, guiding  
their people.

Mezhibuzh, Mezritch, Liadi,  
Anipoli, Zhytomyr;  
Beacons of radiant light.

The Jews journey on.  
Millions of footsteps following  
in theirs.

And then,  
Am Yisroel suffers the  
greatest genocide  
Known to mankind,  
Six million.



A number too enormous  
to fathom.

Through fire and water,  
they went,  
The words of Shema Yisroel  
and Ani Ma'amin  
On their lips.

Through miracles and the  
staunchest of faith,  
Klal Yisroel survived.

The evildoers have long  
perished,  
But we are here, proud and  
strong, Baruch Hashem.

Today, walking in the places  
That saw so much anguish  
And beheld such awesome  
holiness,  
We can see the paradox  
Of our very existence.

Whether in the desert  
of Sinai,  
The ravaged villages  
of Ukraine,  
Or the very spot on earth  
In which we find ourselves,  
It is in the deepest darkness,  
In the greatest challenges,  
That Hashem ultimately  
reveals  
His brightest light.

And it is in those dark places,  
Whether outside ourselves  
Or deep within our souls,  
That the light which  
WE create,  
Is most powerful,  
Most meaningful,  
Most bright.

Three thousand years  
have passed  
Since we stood at Har Sinai.  
The journey's been long,  
But ahead of us,  
Just a few steps more,  
The Rebbe's words,  
"הגיע זמן גאולתכם,"  
Echo powerfully in our ears.  
We are almost home.

The wellsprings of Moshiach  
Have spread far and wide  
The Golus is dark,  
But where barren deserts once  
stood,  
"Living Waters" flow freely.

Let's listen closely,  
For very soon we will hear  
The shofar blast.

We will hear the footsteps  
And we will see  
The light  
Of Moshiach!



The ravenous hunger  
devoured, overpowered.  
Leaving a coward.  
Self-control scoured.

It was the famished feel,  
the hole in me.

The desire to satiate.  
A heartfelt plea.

Goodbye to the diet.  
My heart can't keep quiet.  
I can't numb my ears to its  
impetuous tears.

It's crying for more than the  
portion allotted.  
It starved for authenticity cuz  
what it's got rotted.

It thirsts for G-d, for the  
truth, it wants more.  
What's its meaning, it's  
screaming, what's it here for?

And that, how can I ignore?  
So I lost my streak and ate  
some more.  
And instead of full,  
I'm feeling quite poor.

## THE SOUL'S PLEA

Rivkah Katz,  
Crown Heights  
*Graduating class  
of 5776 (2016)*

Today I lost my streak.  
Succumbed to willpower.  
Now feeling weak.



## NOT A MINUTE LONGER

Mina Esther (Kosofsky) Gordon, Melbourne, Australia  
*Graduating class of 5736 (1976)*

The situation is quite desperate—  
How much longer will he be?  
We say we want Moshiach  
And that we're waiting anxiously.

Yet there's a little voice inside me  
That says although it's true,  
Shouldn't I be seeking  
What still I need to do?

Of course, we want Moshiach,  
We have waited so many years,  
But how does one express this?  
How should one show he cares?

In Shir HaShirim the woman hears  
A knocking on her door.  
She says she's washed her feet,  
How can she let them touch the floor?

By the time she goes to answer  
Her Beloved has long gone.  
Now she has to search for Him  
All night until the dawn.

I think I hear Moshiach's knock  
After taking off my shoes.  
I am busy with my phone  
Texting the latest news.

Do I say, "Wait a minute,  
I'm not quite ready yet,  
There are things I have to finish,  
And then I'll be all set?"

"We want Moshiach now,"  
Want indicates a lack.  
We must realize what's missing  
Long for the Shechina to come back

We should be running towards Geulah,  
We can't afford to miss the bus!  
We are waiting for Moshiach  
But perhaps he waits for us.

From גולה to גאולה  
It only takes one letter  
Put an Alef in your life  
And the world will be much better.

All the ills of this Galus  
Are painful on the surface  
But when the truth will be revealed,  
We'll understand their very purpose.

The highest lights from Above  
Will rush with undiverted flow  
And fit into the vessels  
Newly expanded down below.

It's up to us to make this happen  
I don't know exactly how,  
But let's start by realizing  
How much we Want Moshiach Now.



# Keepsakes

Spot a familiar face? Please let us know!

[Embrace@bethrivkah.edu](mailto:Embrace@bethrivkah.edu)

Have more photos? Please send them to

[alumni@bethrivkah.edu](mailto:alumni@bethrivkah.edu)





Tune to  
 lyrics Team Disc Yay!

March Song

Marching forth with noble pride  
 growing stronger with each stride  
 Proclaiming victory - our cry!

Vanquishing our every foe  
 Thus fulfilling our goal  
 Awakening the spirit in every soul.

Chorus  
 2 { The Rebbe leads his flock  
 paving our way  
 to bring us now  
 peace in our day!  
 Hey!

Give it all you got!

give it all you got!  
 "Winning" Team "Disc" Yay!  
 Cheer yay! yay!  
 (Tune of All the Nations)

Sing loud!  
 Every single generation  
 Finds themselves in a big mess,  
 But to save the situation  
 With a <sup>plan</sup> we are blessed.

Cooperate!  
 Oh he strengthens our spirit  
 and helps us to believe  
 so we'll never never, not forever  
 Forget what we received!

Chorus  
 Oh-h generalization is our trademark  
 It's what keeps us on the top  
 As for you the plain your gonna  
 (clap clap)

Flop and Plop (slowly).  
 (sing steadily) Oh tossies, wiggle waggle, squirm & squawk  
 Watch out for defeat -

Come on wks - charge on strong!  
 Team Disc Victory  
 Team Disc Victory  
 Team Disc Victory!  
 Hey!

Color War songs from the 1980s

# EMBRACE MOMENTS



I love getting the Embrace. It gives me a few hours every once in a while to go back in time to a place and time that I cherish. A time where I was growing without realizing it... Back then, I didn't always see where I was heading or how it was helping me, but now I do.

I want to thank every teacher and faculty member who helped me grow into who I am today. Whether it was something you taught me, a good word, a smile, or maybe just seeing you as a person, a *dugma chaya* of what a Yid and Chossid is... it was all important and part of who I am today.

Thank you on behalf of my children, my seminary students, my Chabad house community. They might not know it, but their life is enriched, thanks to you. You inspired me in a way of *tofeiach al menas lhatfiach*.

I also want to give a special shout out to Morah Metzger (now Mrs. Tova Meizlish) who not only gave me a love for our Rebbeim and Chassidus but showed love for teaching and for each student even years after teaching us continues to inspire me. Big thanks for thinking of my shidduch - I am forever grateful!!!

*Chanie Brand (Blau)*



I have such fond memories of Earth science with Mrs. Shurpin. I had to take it twice because I failed the Regent. She never made a big deal; she just smiled on the first day when I returned and said, “Nice to see you again.” I got an eighty on the regent that year; she was so proud of me!

*Rivky L.*

Morah Korf, I was your student in the mid-90s in ninth and tenth grade. You taught us Halacha, always with a smile, warmth, and lots of laughter and humor. You’re the teacher that sticks out in my mind from high school. Your care, your love, your passion for what you taught us and your warmth to each of us was palpable in every class, in every lesson. In a large high school of one hundred plus students per grade, I often felt unnoticed for the gifts I had and what I brought to the class; not around you. I felt seen, cherished and appreciated while in your class. You took what could’ve been a boring subject, teaching us all the laws of Shabbos and you made it fun, with lots of smiles, jokes, and laughter. I remember looking forward to your classes with a feeling of ease and comfort, knowing that for the forty-five minutes of your lesson I’ll get a little break from what can feel like constant academic intensity in high school. Your classes were light and fun and you taught your subject well. Thank you, Morah Korf, for making an overwhelmed girl in a large high school feel cherished and loved every time you were around. I appreciate your smile, your warmth and care for each of us, and will always remember you fondly as one of my favorite teachers in high school, who went the extra mile beyond the subject taught and brought her love and care for each student to every class. This, my friends and fellow teachers, is the most precious gift that you can give to a high school girl, more than anything you teach. Thank you, Morah Korf.

*Anonymous*

In elementary school, I adored my sixth grade English teacher, Miss Reiter (later Mrs. Karasik). I remember her for being kind, soft, fair, patient, “clear,” fun, interesting, yet she meant business.

I approached her a few years back and told her that she was one of my favorite teachers and told her why; surprisingly, she didn’t recall the things I shared with her. (Well, it was way back in 5732, 1971-2).

Some of the things that I enjoyed about her class were:

1. During the math period, she would prepare “extra credit” sheets laid on her desk for the girls who finished their classwork early. Without any fanfare or special attention, we would take the sheet/s—or stencils, as we called them back then—and complete them quietly at our desks. This gave the “quicker” students a challenge without making the rest of the students feel inferior. She addressed the different levels of the class’s math capabilities.
2. Miss Reiter once brought a guest to the class, a “genuine” Russian woman, who taught us, “Listen, my friends . . . One is Hashem . . .” in Russian. She also showed each of us how to write our names in Russian. I remember all of this because it was a special, memorable day!
3. At the end of each long and tiring day in sixth grade, our thoughtful teacher would read to us a few chapters from a book. Yes, we were eleven to eleven-and-a-half-year-olds, but we loved the calming atmosphere, hearing Miss Reiter’s gentle voice reading *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, for one, to relax us and to end our day in a pleasant, peaceful way.

Mrs. Karasik—thank you for giving these wonderful memories to me and, I’m sure, to my fellow Bais Rivkah classmates, the 5732 sixth grade class, in the red brick building on Church Avenue. ■

*Rivka Kugel*



# If the Rebbe Commands



Shterna (Baumgarten) Rodal,  
Crown Heights  
*Graduating Class of 5730 (1970)*

BH, I had the Zechus to have my first *yechidus* with The Rebbe in 1955/תשט"ז. I was four years old. My mother A"H had just given birth, so my father A"H had taken my brother who was five and myself, and of course, we were told all the protocol: Don't talk, don't walk around, don't touch or ask for anything.

This was mentioned many times in preparation to visit the *Nosi Hador*, the leader of the generation. The Rebbe spoke first with my father while we stood silently as instructed. Suddenly, The Rebbe turned to my brother and asked him , "דו ווייסט ווי צו זאגן שמע ישראל" - Do you know how to recite Shema Yisroel?"

My brother nodded his head. So the Rebbe said, "Nu, zog - so say!" My brother shook his head no; we had our orders. My father had told us not to speak. The Rebbe took out a silver dollar and showed it to my brother. The Rebbe said, "אויב דו וועסט זאגן שמע ישראל" - If you will recite Shema I will give you a silver dollar." My brother shook his head no. I could feel my father tensing but of course, he didn't move a muscle or say a word. I couldn't understand why my father was so tense. After all, we were following all his instructions.

The Rebbe then turned to me and asked me the same thing and also offered me the silver dollar. I really wanted that silver dollar. I was

about to recite the Shema, when my brother hissed, "Tatti said not to speak!" I saw the Rebbe smile, but, I shook my head no, and I did not earn the silver dollar. When we exited the room, I turned to my father and said, "Ta why are you upset? We listened to everything you said!" That's when my father said the words that to this day guide me, motivate me and give me the inspiration and strength to know what to do. My father said, "אבער אז דער רבי הייסט טוט מען" - but if the Rebbe commands, you obey."

This made a tremendous impression on me. There is a mitzvah of *kibud av v'aim*, honoring one's parents; yet here my father was telling

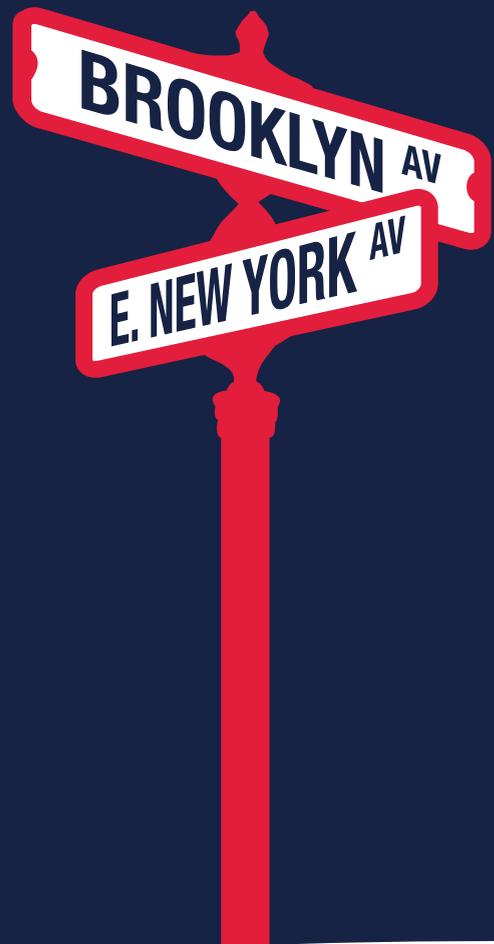
me "The Rebbe's holy word supersedes everything else. We all learned a lesson from this *yechidus*. My parents learned that with children you have to be very literal: don't speak, but if the Rebbe speaks to you or asks you to do something, you obey. No questions asked, no *calculations*, no 'do I feel comfortable?' or, 'can I do it properly?'; אז דער רבי הייסט, טוט מען."

The main lesson was witnessing my parents' love, reverence, and awe for the Rebbe. And so from a young age, we learned that הנשיא הכל הוא הכל: the Nasi is everything. ■

*The Rebbe's  
holy word  
supersedes  
everything  
else.*

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