

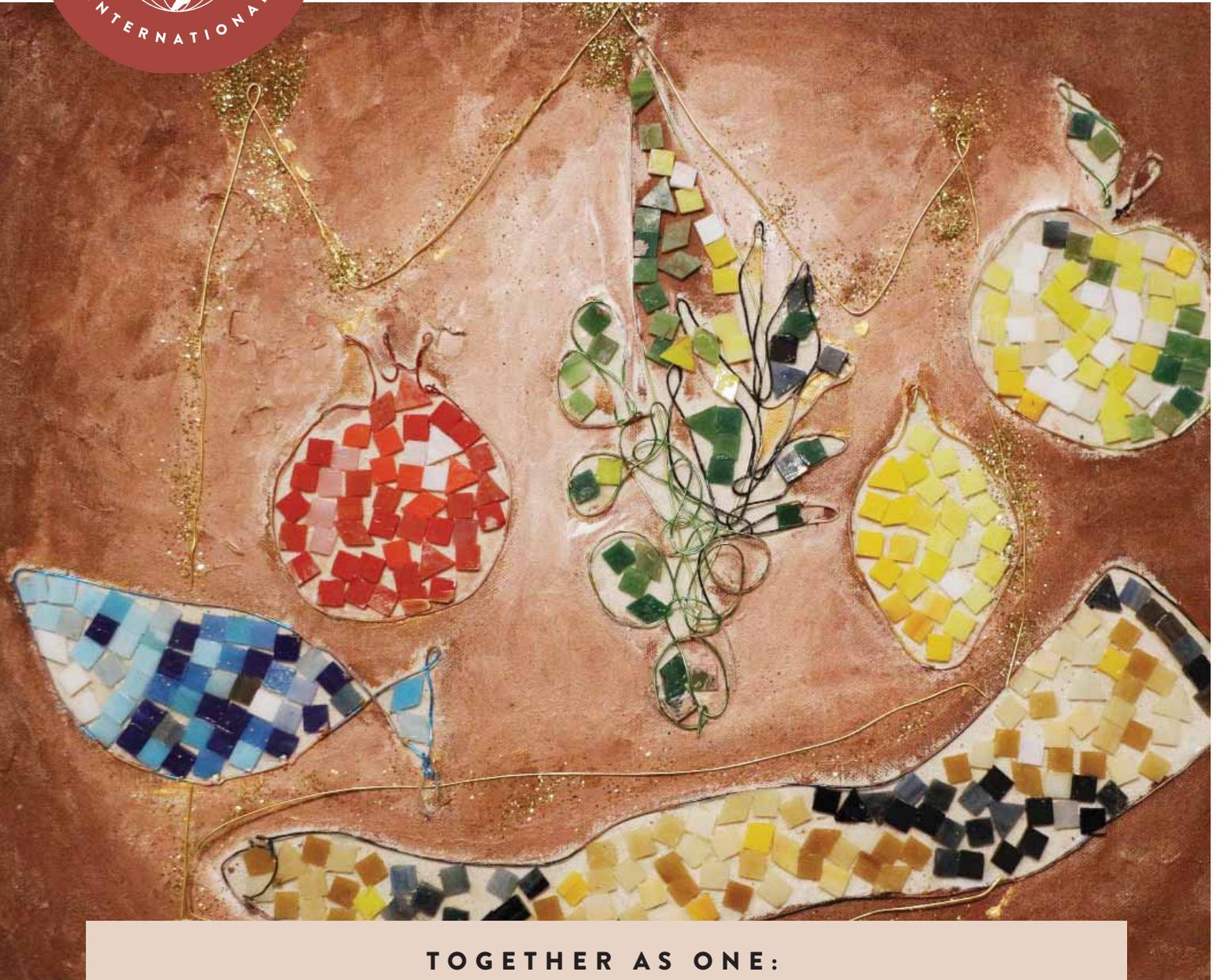


FALL 5780

ב"ה Volume 1, Issue 2

# EMBRACE

*Uniting and inspiring the worldwide community of Beth Rivkah Alumni*



**TOGETHER AS ONE:**  
**THE UNITY ISSUE**

*Despite the apparent differences in people, time, and places, we all unify as one person, with one intention, and resolve to live according to One Torah.*

COMING FULL CIRCLE

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COMMUNITY STRONG

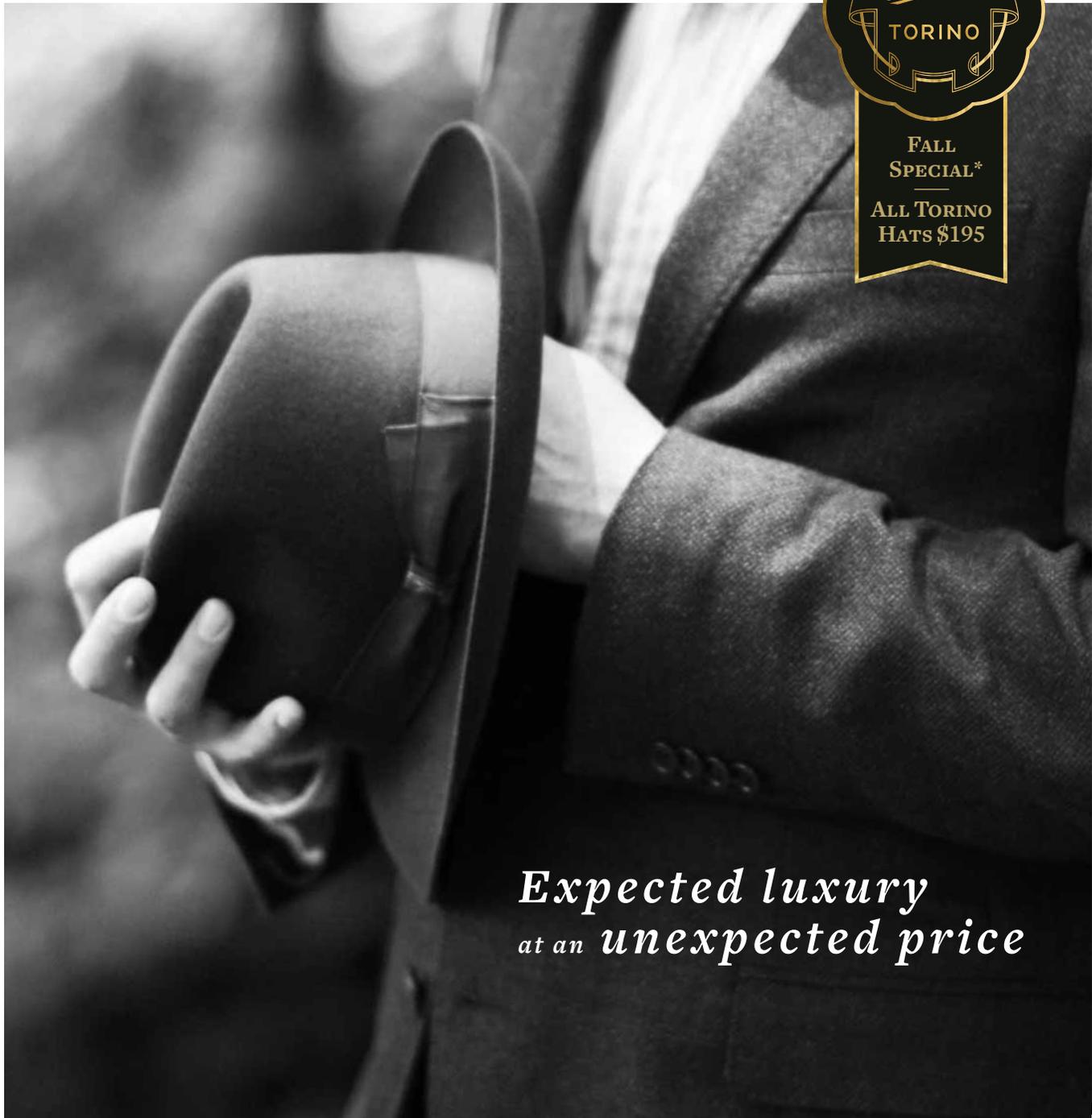
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*Hayom Yom: Tevet 22*

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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**HELP US PLANT A SEED**

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*Anytime we feel we are “better”  
than others, it is just Hashem  
reminding us that we still have  
work to do.*

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*Elul 5779*

It gives me great pleasure to greet you in this new Alumnae initiative coming together to share experiences, strengthen each other and build support for the holy moised of Beis Rivkah.

The Rebbe personally addressed the “mesaymois” every year, and during that sad time following Chof Beis Shvat, when we all joined the Rebbe in mourning the loss of our Rebbetzin, the Rebbe indicated that specifically through the establishment of an institution dedicated to the education of Jewish women and girls, something so near and dear to the heart of the Rebbetzin, would he find any consolation. The result was Campus Chomesh, which along with the other facilities, holds the soul of Beis Rivkah’s expanded student body.

Now, through initiatives like this publication, the mission of Beis Rivkah is strengthened even further through shared experiences and mutual support among those who merited to experience this special moised. The mosaic of experiences and thoughts shared will certainly make each and every alumna feel

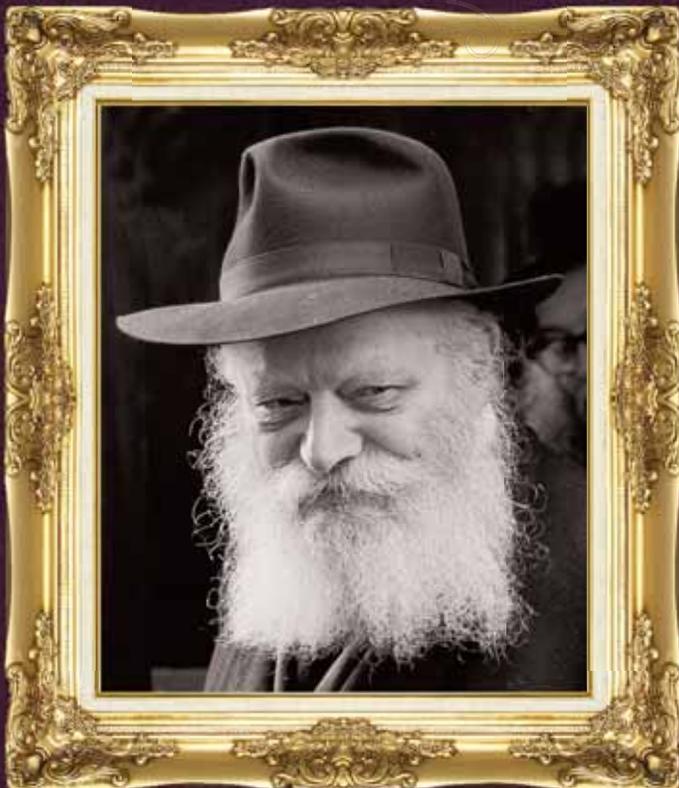


*The Rebbe hands Rabbi A. Shemtov his personal “participation” in the Groundbreaking of Campus Chomesh 470 Lefferts Ave.*

strengthened in their identity, and enabled to harness the singular power of a “Bais Rivkah girl” whatever their station in life, to help bring about the Rebbe’s ultimate mission, may it be now mamesh.

בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה.

On behalf of the of the Board and the Hanhalah,  
Rabbi Avrohom Shemtov  
*Chairman*



# THE POINT of IT ALL

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



After the first issue of Embrace was released, the responses weren't long in coming:  
"I read it cover to cover... so beautiful and inspirational."

"Was there a winter edition? If there was I'd love a copy of it." (Editor's note: There wasn't! But stay tuned for the upcoming winter edition!)

"Enjoyed the content and throwbacks, and learned in the process."

"Just want to thank you so much. It was so special to get the Embrace magazine all the way in Iceland!!"

"So impressed with how many people contributed."

"The story that really got me was Morah Hodakov's. Mirel Riva was my classmate. I can't believe that Morah Hodakov (Kramer) stayed in contact with her! This is unbelievable."

"Can't wait for the next one!"

Along with the feedback, many people had this question for us:

"Why? Why are you doing this? What's the point of this platform?"

Great question!

What IS the point?

Here it is: Our mission statement is to unite and inspire alumni around the world, joining forces together to bring Moshiach. Beth Rivkah alumni taking part in the future development of BR. Talents, experience, connections that can make an important impact.

Some of us left school 40 years ago, some last year.

But we all went to Bais Rivkah.

We are a family; a colorful mosaic of a family.

And so we want to unite, and to create a worldwide community of Bais Rivkah alumni.

With this goal in mind, it was heartening to receive this message from Mrs. Chaya Kramer:

*Just got an email from Merle Levy that, thanks to that article in Embrace, another one of my former students in*

*Our mission statement is to unite and inspire alumni around the world, joining forces together to bring Moshiach.*

that class (I had no idea of her whereabouts and lost contact with her years ago) sent an email to Merle! Her name was Gitel (Gloria) Oxenhorn. So now, after the article, they made contact and are in touch with each other! Embrace is doing some amazing things!

And then we stumbled upon the following:

In the month of Kislev 5695 (1934), the members of Igud Talmidei HaTmimim wanted to publish a journal to unite the Tmimim who had long since left the village of Lubavitch, married and settled far apart. The journal would consist of Chassidus, chiddushei Torah, stories of Chassidim, and news.

When they suggested this to the Friediker Rebbe, he replied: "Ahavas Yisroel is a foundation established by Hashem's commandment in the Torah. Loving friendship is a trusty, trodden path in Darkei HaChassidus; it is the basis of the farbrengens that are customarily held at joyous times; it arouses people to devote time every day for learning, and it enhances the

*Loving friendship is a trusty, trodden path in Darkei HaChassidus.*

love between friends."

The Friediker Rebbe noted that since the First World War and the Communist Revolution of 1917, the Tmimim had been scattered and they were all eager to find out about the wellbeing of their old friends.

He added: "True closeness among Anash is possible only through Torah and through memories of the days of old, days which shone with the friendship and good middos that unite hearts and that strengthen the love which transcends restrictions of place."

(אג"ק מהור"צ ח"ג ע' קנב)

That spelled it out clearly for us!

So, dear friends around the world, that's the mission of this magazine - to unite and inspire each other so that we can continue illuminating the world. And as it says, "The Ahavas Yisroel of Chassidim will bring Moshiach now!" ■

*Sara Blau*

Sara Blau



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# THE UNIFYING FACTOR

---

*An excerpt from the Rebbe's talk to graduates of Bais Rivkah, 22<sup>nd</sup> Day of Sivan, 5745 (1985):*

... **W**hen a multitude of Jews gathers together, it gives expression to the basic principle of Ahavas Yisrael — the love of a fellow Jew — and unity of the Jewish people. When the place of gathering is a synagogue or study hall, a place of prayer and Torah, and the purpose is to strengthen all matters of Yiddishkeit and holiness, then this unity is extended to encompass G-d, Torah and the Jewish people.

When many people gather, you have people from different homes, backgrounds, and groups, as the Gemara says: “For the mind of each is different from that of the other”. There are those whose life is devoted to Torah study, others who excel in observance of mitzvos, while others apply themselves mainly to worldly matters in the manner of “In all your ways acknowledge Him ...” and “... Let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven.”

When all these people gather “as one person with one heart (intention),” with the goal of fulfilling the mission of the Holy One, Blessed be He, in all matters of Torah and Yiddishkeit, then they are truly as one.

Such a gathering in and of itself affects the concept of: “In the multitude of people is the King’s glory.” The glory of G-d, King of the world, is magnified and glorified by this occurrence...

*When all these people gather “as one person with one heart (intention),” with the goal of fulfilling the mission of the Holy One, Blessed be He, in all matters of Torah and Yiddishkeit, then they are truly as one.*

...It is in this context that we interpret the verse in Iyov: “You should have a desire for the work of your hands,” to mean that the Holy One, Blessed be He, desires and longs for (as it were) the good actions of the people on earth.

This thought is further intensified by the fact that we meet in the third month, Sivan. The theme of Sivan is Matan Torah, the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people, which forged the eternal bond between the Jewish people and G-d, through the eternal Torah... When the Jews camped in the wilderness of Sinai, before Matan Torah, this unity was already effected: “as one person with one heart.”

Thus, there is a lesson to be taken from the month of Sivan, the lesson of unity; and when Sivan comes around it bestows the blessing of G-d upon us, to form that unity. This idea comes to reality in this meeting, in this place. That despite the apparent differences in people, time and places, we all unify as one person, with one intention, and resolve to live according to One Torah. ■

*Despite the  
apparent  
differences in  
people, time and  
places we all unify  
as one person,  
with one intention  
and resolve to live  
according to One  
Torah.*



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# Soul Sisters

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

She was a young woman, looking slightly uncomfortable in the Chabad House. She probably would have gone unnoticed amidst the many people who joined the Yom Kippur services a number of years ago, except that she stayed there all day. After Yom Kippur was over and everyone had broken their fasts, she struck up a conversation with the shlucha, introducing herself as a nurse. Originally from Brooklyn, she now had a job at the local hospital.

As they chatted pleasantly for a few minutes about this and that, the woman's eyes caught hold of a big framed picture of the Rebbe.

"I know who that is! That's the Lubavitcher Rebbe!" She announced with great excitement. Intrigued by this completely secular-looking woman, the shlucha replied, "Yes it is... but how did you know that?"

"Oh," she smiled, "I went to a school called Bais Rivkah, in Brownsville."

"WHAT?" The shlucha exclaimed, jumping out of her chair. "You're my soul sister! I went to Bais Rivkah too!" With great excitement, eager to hear more, she sat back down.

"My parents sent me to public school, but when my father decided to go to shul one day, things changed for me. There was a short, little Rabbi who asked



him, 'Do you have a daughter? Where does she go to school?'

"'Public school,' was the reply.

"'Oh! Let her come to the yeshiva!' The Rabbi responded.

"'But that costs money, and we don't have that,' my father protested.

"The Rabbi gave my father a friendly thump on the back and said, 'We'll take care of that, don't worry!'

"So my father came home and said, 'Guess what? You're going to Bais Rivkah!' And I did.

"I was a big troublemaker, but I had lots of fun in Bais Rivkah.

"I left before high school, which had just opened up then, and went to college, but my fond memories of Bais Rivkah always stayed with me.

"And of course, I saw the Rebbe many times- they used to arrange Shabbatons for all of the girls who lived in Brownsville, with opportunities to see the Rebbe!"

The woman related how both of her parents were Holocaust survivors and her mother had recently

passed away.

While she didn't keep Shabbos or Kosher, she knew that Yom Kippur was a very holy day. She wanted to be in shul to say Yizkor for her mother.

Originally, she had planned to attend one of the Conservative Temples in town, but when she got there, she realized that if she was going through all the trouble to say Yizkor she might as well do it right. So she looked for an Orthodox place and found the Chabad House.

"I'm so happy that this is where I ended up!" she declared emotionally.

The conversation between the shlucha and this woman did not end there.

Today, this woman is a grandmother, married to someone she met at that Chabad House. She keeps Shabbos, her sons are frum, and her daughter, named Chaya Mushka, is married to a Lubavitcher- all from the encounter of one Bais Rivkah girl with another. ■

  
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# A SEAMLESS UNITY



Mrs. Leah (Korf) Jacobson, Crown Heights  
*Graduating Seminary class of 5745 (1985)*

“One for all and all for one, down goes one down goes all!” I still remember the first time I heard that chant many years ago when I was in seminary, subbing in Bais Rivkah Elementary School on Church Ave. It was followed with a grand exit by all students behind their classmate who was condemned to the hallway.

Coming from a very small school in Florida, to say I was overwhelmed is an understatement, but I quickly learned to recognize it as Bais Rivkah spirit. It was unity, Bais Rivkah style, unparalleled anywhere in the world!

Unity is expressed in so many different ways: class, family, community, ethnicity, patriotism, religion, community of nations. And then there is a whole different form of unity, One that encompasses all others – G-d. He is everything, and everything is Him. He is unity, personified.

The world, to the naked eye, is the antithesis of this truth, and we were entrusted with an incredible task, to take this fragmented world and reveal Hashem’s unity.

How does one even begin to tackle this seemingly insurmountable mission?

A businessman was sitting in his home office one evening, desperately trying to put together the paperwork for a very important meeting the following morning. His wife had to leave the house and left their young child in his care, asking him to keep an eye on him while he worked. No sooner had she left when the child entered the room and said, “Daddy, I’m bored, what can I do?” The father smiled at him and took a magazine from his desk and ripped out a simple picture of a farm and tore it in a few pieces and told his son to piece it back together. Not ten minutes later, the child proudly handed his father the picture neatly taped back together and said, “Now what should I do?” A little frustrated at this point, the father took down an atlas, tore out a page with an intricate picture of the world, ripped it into many pieces and said, “Son, see you in a few hours. Put this back together.”

*It was unity, Bais Rivkah style, unparalleled anywhere in the world!*

It was only a short half-hour later when the father was handed the picture, perfectly put back together. Shocked, the father stared at his son and finally asked, "How did you manage to put the world back together so quickly?" The child took the paper from his father and turned it over, revealing a simple picture of a man. "Dad," he said, "all I needed to do was put the man back together and the world fell into place."

The lesson is clear: man must be in unity with his true self, for only when man is complete does the world around him fall into place.

A number of years back, after some challenging incidents in school, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe describing some of the issues that we were facing. In the letter, I mentioned that perhaps it was not so important because it's only the English department. The Rebbe responded to the contrary. The Rebbe said that in today's day and age, we must be especially vigilant that the students have teachers in the English department who are Yirei Shamayim, and that the lessons be infused with Torah values. We are not two different entities - we are one unit. We are not one thing in the morning and something else in the afternoon. We are not one person in school and something else when we go home. In everything we do, we must be true to who we are.

Who are we? What are we? What is our truth? We are N'shei Chabad, we are Bnos Chabad, we are Chasidim, Shluchim, we are the daughters of the King of kings, we are Bais Rivkah!

Our purpose is to bring that message of pride and understanding of who we are – as parents to our children and as teachers to our students.

In Hayom Yom the Rebbe tells us the answer the

Mitteler Rebbe gave to Reb Hillel Paritcher when he questioned whether to teach Chassidus to communities who have no conception of Chassidus. The Mitteler Rebbe asserted, "The soul hears words of Chassidus." The person might not totally understand, but the messages that our soul hears infiltrates our outer layers and allows us to be in tune with our soul – our truth! This begins an automatic chain reaction, allowing us to connect to one another, because when we strip away our facade, that which divides us, we can experience that which unites us – חסידים איין משפחה – we are one whole.

In all my years that I have been zoche to be a part of the Rebbe's school, Bais Rivkah, I have never lost the awesome joy I feel whenever Bais Rivkah pride is on full display. In Washington D.C. on our graduation trip when the girls proudly explained, to anyone who asked, that the number '79 on their graduation sweaters was the Hebrew calendar year, it was obvious that they are fully aware of how fortunate they are to be Bnos Yisroel! Each lesson infused with Torah and Chassidus, in the morning or in the afternoon, continues to build that inner pride, the pride that connects them to the essence of their soul, Hashem, Rebbe, family, and each other. Together, Bais Rivkah students and Bais Rivkah alumni all around the world shine away the darkness to reveal the purpose of its creation.

Who are we? What are we? What is our truth?

We are N'shei Chabad, we are Bnos Chabad, we are Chassidim, Shluchim, we are the daughters of the King of Kings; we are Bais Rivkah!

“אשרינו, מה טוב חלקנו!” ■





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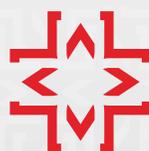
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# ALUMNI

*Who, What, Where.*



**Mrs. Rochel (Piekarski) Rubin**  
**Albany, New York**

*Graduating class of 5720 (1960)*

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

I'm a shlucha and founder of Maimonides Hebrew Day School. I was also a teacher in Bais Rivkah prior to moving to Albany. Teaching is who I am! I currently teach in the school my husband and I founded in 5740 (1980).

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

I'm a teacher by habit, I like structure and creating curricula. I'm excited about the subjects I teach and I enjoy imparting the teachings and excitement towards learning to the younger generation. I always knew my mission was Chinuch. I'm giving the source of life, Torah, to the children. Our school is very hands-on; we focus on having the children experience Torah in a fun and exciting way. For example, our Lag Ba'Omer parade. Even though no one was watching or cheering us on, we marched with our band, floats, and pride!



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

We didn't have an easy start to our shlichus. Being Chabad forty years ago meant that we constantly had to defend ourselves and prove our normality. We were met with lots of resistance and we weren't treated with respect. Regarding the school, it was almost yesh me'ayin! We started with very few families and lots of perseverance.

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

We meet many interesting people! When reminiscing over decades of work, I see how everything falls into place. We crossed paths with many Yidden and B"H were able to change their lives for the better and connect them to Hashem. Being that we live in the capital of NYS, we meet many assemblymen, state senators, governors. In the beginning, a lot of these high class, posh people would look down on us. They seemed intimidating and a little condescending. Now, B"H, they really respect and love Chabad.

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

I loved Bais Rivkah, and I appreciated it even more

when I was a teacher there, in the years 5728 (1968) through 5733 (1973). As students, we had so much excitement and enthusiasm for Chassidus. We ran to all the farbrengens and got lots of inspiration from Morah Chana Gorovitz and Mrs. Bassie Shemtov.

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

School is an amazing place; cherish the time you have there. Find yourselves good friends and learn from your teachers. School really shapes you- grades aren't as important as middos.



**Mrs. Nesha (Drizin) Grossman**  
**Los Angeles, California**

*Graduating class of 5736 (1976)*

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

I am a mother of 8 and grandmother of many B"H. When my older children were young, an opportunity to start a sheitel business arose. Although I didn't expect this to be my long term goal, I found the sheitel business convenient. It allowed me to work from home without leaving my kids in the care of others. The business turned into a shlichus; Los Angeles had a large frum community of non-sheitel wearers. I was benched to be able to introduce many women to the idea of wearing a sheitel for the first time by making it readily available to them. I also had the opportunity to facilitate sheitlach to many shluchos; introducing many of their congregants to the beauty of wearing a sheitel. For me, the sheitel business is not just about the money; it's about helping to make the mitzvah of covering one's hair a positive experience.

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

A struggle that I've endured, as have so many, is marrying off our kids. (Although of course, we follow the Rebbe's directives and do everything we can by contacting shadchanim, etc.) This situation motivated me to take some form of action. Together with a close friend, Esti

(Gourarie) Fogel, we started what was probably the first Shidduch WhatsApp group. It was created in April of 2016 and included Bais Rivkah Alumni from around the world. Eventually, it became a weekly Tehillim group which led to the founding of CBI (Challah Bake International), a yearly Challah Bake on the 15th of Av. Last year this event grew to include over 1500+ participants. Women sign up for CBI 10 days before the bake. They enter the names of their singles and then they get a link to join a WhatsApp group. Last year we had 15 groups!

Every 100 bakers daven for the singles associated with their group. Women worldwide unite and join in as we post words of inspiration and a final video/shiur given by a shlucha on the day of the event. All women participate by giving tzedakah, listening to a Dvar Torah and baking Challah.

The list of 3000+ names of singles from around the world is read at the Ohel by a group of women on the 15th of Av, the day of the bake.

Many Chabad Centers utilize this opportunity to make a public Challah Bake. You can check out some of the posts and pictures that were sent in after the bake on our website, [challahbakeinternational.com](http://challahbakeinternational.com).



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

Of course the Rebbe and Bais Rivkah. I am thrilled to see how my granddaughters, who attend Bais Rivkah, are enthused with the same kind of energy and spirit that was so important for me during my formative years.

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

The stories are endless, but I will share a specific one that comes to mind.

My oldest daughter went to a Bais Yakov-style school and her first grade English teacher was a frum woman who did not cover her hair. This really bothered me, as I felt that it would have a negative spiritual effect on the students. Hashem heard my concerns, and the teacher contacted me a few weeks into the school year,

telling me that her son was a chosson and he wanted her to wear a sheitel to the wedding. I sold her a beautiful sheitel, mentioning to her that maybe this was an opportunity for her to start wearing a wig every day. She was annoyed with my comment but said she might start covering her hair on Shabbos. I already knew from past experience that once a woman starts moving in the direction of partial wig-wearing, it becomes full-time wig-wearing very quickly. Within a few months, my daughter's English teacher was a full-time wig wearer!

I feel like I witness the Rebbe's brachos each time.

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

I wasn't a great student and spent much time dreaming in the classroom. But it wasn't so much about the information that I did or didn't learn; it was more about our mission, our passion, and our pride.

Shortly after I got married and moved to LA, I was interviewed by Barbara Meyhoff. She was an anthropologist and producer who won an academy award for the best documentary short film in the early '80s. She was working on another film about the religious Jews in Fairfax. While questioning me on camera about the subject of Taharas Hamishpacha, she asked me, "How can a modern woman like yourself adhere to all these old-fashioned laws?"

I responded, "I'm not a Modern Woman! I'm an Ultra-Orthodox Chassidic Woman!"

Bais Rivkah and the Rebbe gave me the confidence and chutzpah to be able to stand up for our way of life, even to a Hollywood producer!

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

Remember where you come from, and how you got to where you are today!



**Mrs. Chanie (Itkin) Geisinsky**  
Long Island, NY

*Graduating class of 5742 (1982)*

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

I'm on Shlichus. We run a day school, a Hebrew school, camps, Friendship Circle, and programs. I hope to instill pride for Yiddishkeit in the children.

The Rebbe made Shlichus feel like the coolest thing to do, like an elite group; by being on Shlichus you feel like you're part of a great army.

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

I see how much we have grown since we first came to Great Neck. Heads of the community told us that we shouldn't make a shul here. Now, so much is happening here. It's so inspiring to see how much we grew and how there's so much that we can continue to do.

When you're on Shlichus, you know that everything is from Hashem. If an event was successful or unsuccessful, it's because it was meant to be that way. Shluchim are executives of the Rebbe, the Rebbe's messengers. Being on Shlichus is always accomplishing.



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

On a Chabad level, we weren't wanted in Great Neck. There were huge Reform and Conservative synagogues and no one was interested in us at first. We had to fight to put up a Menorah. In building our Chabad House there was tremendous opposition in the community, and we had to fight court case after court case. Today, B"H, we have a beautiful building on the water and everyone knows Chabad.

On a personal level, I'm no social butterfly by nature. Being on Shlichus forced me to go against my nature and overcome my shyness.

### HOW DID BAIS RIVKAH SHAPE YOU?

It's an incredible place. Bais Rivkah gives you every

opportunity to be a leader. Bais Rivkah makes you feel that you are not alone, you are part of a team. It's like a magnet; once you are there, you are forever connected.

### WHAT WAS A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN YOUR SCHOOL YEARS?

I love production, it was always so beautiful.

I went to the Bais Yaakov Convention and it was right after the Rebbe came out with the song, "We want Moshiach now!" We had a few debates, but the principal spoke against us in front of everybody, saying how disrespectful it is to demand Moshiach. We wrote a duch and right after, the Rebbe said a tearful sicha asking why people are complaining- 'We daven for Moshiach every day for thousands of years, why are people now saying that it's a chutzpa to daven?!

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

When the Meraglim returned with their negative report they said, "We were like grasshoppers in our eyes." The question on these words are, why in *our* eyes? The answer is because they were embarrassed by themselves.

Bais Rivkah helps you be proud of who you are, and not be daunted by what others think. You have to remember what you learn and share it. At the end of the day, people realize that with Chabad you get true answers. We have Chassidus, the key that few others have.



**Mrs. Bassie (Shemtov) Shemtov**  
**Detroit, Michigan**  
*Graduating class of 5750 (1990)*

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

I'm a shlucha of the Rebbe and run Friendship Circle.

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

Since I was very young, there was nothing else besides going on Shlichus. When I see the thirst for

Yiddishkeit in children and the love the Rebbe has for every Jew, it really inspires me. The power of the Rebbe and the Pintele Yid, seeing people changing for the better, is the fuel that keeps me going.



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

Besides Shlichus, my real dream was to bring people closer to the Rebbe as my parents did. When Gimmel Tammuz happened there was a huge feeling of despair. I recently started bringing people to the Ohel, and really feel the Rebbe's presence. The number of people connecting to the Rebbe is unbelievable.

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

Because a big part of our Shlichus is Friendship Circle, we attract people who initially aren't interested in Chabad. From this situation comes the issue of how to incorporate Ruchnius when they are only interested in the Gashmius. Therefore, we inspire and teach through being role models and showing love for every Jew. Our goal is to infuse our community with Yiddishkeit while catering to their needs as well.

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

Bais Rivkah gave me the opportunity to live in the Rebbe's neighborhood. It provided the environment that allowed me to become who I am, and connect to people who are like me. I got chayus from being part of a community of Chassidim! Bais Rivkah has a very special atmosphere and really gave me the opportunity to grow.

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

How lucky you are to be in the school that the Rebbe started and encouraged! With this privilege, realize and accept the responsibility to teach and connect

others to the Rebbe, and to give the Rebbe and everyone around you nachas.



**Mrs. Esty (Kessler) Borenstien**  
**Crown Heights**

*Graduating class of 5764 (2004)*

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

My husband and I bought Prestige Embroidery nine years ago. We started it with one embroidery machine and one employee. Although I was involved in decision making and small jobs, I maintained a job as a special-ed teacher. B”H, Prestige Embroidery soon grew to a little empire. Five years ago, I left my teaching job to be home with one of my children who needed medical care. At this point, my husband started giving me bigger responsibilities at work that I was able to do around my baby’s schedule.

A year later, we moved our little shop to a location with a proper showroom and factory. We B”H now make everything Tashmishei Kodesh, from Tallis and Tefillin bags, Torah covers, Peroches to Bentchers and Challah and Matzah covers. Today, I run the complete front end of Prestige Embroidery, along with three other fellow Bais Rivkah alumni.

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

It is a great experience working with our community and being able to take part in everyone’s simchos, whether it is a Tallis bag for a chasunah or anniversary, Tefillin bags for a Bar Mitzvah boy, or a Torah mantle to celebrate someone’s life.

As a trained teacher one of the things I enjoy about my job is being able to give tours of our shop. The children who come are always curious to learn about leather and the process to make everything.

I also love doing leather workshops at Bas Mitzvahs. With our leftover leather, we create different art projects like picture frames, mirrors, Bentcher holders, Besamim holders, and dreidels.



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

I find that my hardest challenge today is balancing home and work; probably one of the biggest challenges of our generation.

I am still trying to find the magic code to balance both. I try to be home at least three times a week to get the bus and we B”H have no computer in my house, so I can’t work at home, making me fully available to the kids when I am there.

It is still challenging because we have smartphones and customers expect you to be available all the time for them, but I try the most that I can and daven that Hashem gives me the strength to be there fully for my children and do the best I can at work as well.

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

All our customers come for the sake of simchas, which is beautiful to be a part of. In addition, everything we make is holy or used for holy purposes. We actually had the privilege of repairing the mantle of the Rebbe’s Sefer Torah. The top of the Tankist mantle was completely separated from the material. We were asked to save as much of the original mantle embroidery intact, and we think we did a great job!

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

My first-grade teacher, Morah Chanie Brod, made such an impact on my life. She imparted the love of Torah and Mitzvos within me; she made it my core. Her teachings and inspiration got me to where I am today.

**WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE FOR ALUMNI AND CURRENT BAIS RIVKAH STUDENTS?**

Continue enjoying life, and work hard. Take advantage of the time you are given to create everlasting friendships.



**Mrs. Lea (Shemtov) Raskin**  
**Crown Heights**  
*Graduating class of 5772 (2012)*

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

I founded Tambourines Academy Sing and Dance Studio. Being that I grew up on Shlichus in Uruguay, there were no frum schools for me to attend. At the age of eleven, I left home to attend Bais Rivkah. In Uruguay, I had the opportunity to learn the art of performance, however, when I came to Crown Heights for school I didn't see the opportunity to continue my passion in a frum atmosphere. It became my dream to establish a space for girls to learn and express themselves in a professional atmosphere supported by chassidishe values. The first year we had 25 girls- now we B"H have more than double that amount!

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

The motivation for my work is seeing the potential of our girls. I really believe that every girl is a whole world waiting to express herself. I'm thrilled to provide this opportunity where each girl gets her individual attention and a chance to shine. Additionally, growing up in Crown Heights for a big part of my life compels and inspires me to give back to the community. I witness girls becoming confident, having fun, expressing their creativity, and strengthening their Yiddishkeit, which is all the more encouraging. I believe that Tambourines Academy adds a whole new dimension to the girls' lives, enabling them to internalize all that they learn in school and make it real to them.



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

Establishing something new is risky because you never know if it will work out and be a success. It's scary to make your dream into actuality, not knowing which way it'll go. However, I focused on my end goal with much hard work, determination, perseverance, and bitachon in Hashem.

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

It's super enriching and inspiring to see girls thrive and flourish. It's the highlight of their week and keeps them going. Many mothers related to me that their girls have gained so much confidence! Feedback like this never fails to uplift me. I believe that this is my Shlichus because I find that girls can easily get inspired in direct ways. Experiencing so much fun in such a Chassidishe way demonstrates to the girls that Yiddishkeit and a joyful life are not a contradiction! These days there are many distractions, yet personal attention and expression of self have a very deep effect which lasts forever.

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

When I think of Bais Rivkah, I think of all the extracurricular events which make Bais Rivkah special. For example, all of the Chassidishe Yomim Tovim programs. I learned so much even though we weren't sitting in a classroom. We were busy with a full-day program of exhibits, farbrengens, and inspiration. Now, when each Chassidishe Yom Tov comes around, I remember all that we did in Bais Rivkah and all the inspiration I gained. It will forever be ingrained in me. Being a part of Bais Rivkah provided such a powerful, exciting, energetic, positive, and united atmosphere which really affected me.

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

Take advantage of all the opportunities around you to get inspired, grow, learn, and enjoy with friends. If you have a dream or something you want to accomplish, feel empowered to do it! It's worth it. You miss 100% of the shots you don't take; it's all a matter of perseverance and bitachon. ■



# An Interview *with* Veteran Teacher Mrs. Schildkraut



Liba (Kramer) Rapoport, Cedarhurst, New York  
*Graduating class of 5757 (1997)*



*In Tishrei 5775, I was excited to find myself teaching second grade alongside my own second-grade teacher, Mrs. Schildkraut. This gave me many powerful, positive and memorable moments, specifically with Mrs. Schildkraut to guide me on this path.*

*Her fun songs made learning so exciting, the knowledge she imparted was unforgettable. She was our Google. And of course, the elaborate attention and the countdown from our age number before our birthdays made us feel so special, remaining in my memory until today. When I began teaching, I knew without a doubt that every student of mine would feel very special on her birthday too. I implemented similar rituals, singing and dancing and showering the birthday girl with love and attention.*

*Today, I teach first grade and continue many routines and ideas from Mrs. Schildkraut's class. B"H, my colleagues and I are lucky to have Mrs. Schildkraut in school, so we can continue learning from her how to guide our students with important values and knowledge.*

*May Hashem bentch her to continue having the strength to influence those around her.*

*Please enjoy the interview I was honored to conduct with Mrs. Schildkraut for Embrace Magazine.*

## **When did you start teaching?**

*I went to Bais Yaakov Seminary in Williamsburg at night for three years. When I was in the second year of seminary, Rebbetzin Kaplan called me and four other girls into her office and told us that there were Torah*

Umesorah and Lubavitch schools that just started, and female teachers were needed in five places. She would give us a year of seminary credits for teaching.

I was sent to Buffalo. That was my real first teaching job, and they still owe me money. In Buffalo, I met my husband and we lived in New Haven for twelve years. Five of my six children were born there.

I moved to New York in 5720 (1960), too late in the year to start teaching. I signed up as a substitute at Bais Yaakov of Crown Heights, on the corner of Park Place and Kingston Ave. At the end of the year, I was asked to teach there. I taught there for five years (5721-5726 (1961-1966)), and that's where I was Mrs. Slavin's third-grade teacher. After that, I taught for eighteen years (5726-5744 (1966-1984)), in Prospect Park Yeshiva, where I taught two of Mrs. Gelfand's daughters.

When my girls graduated in 5745 (1985), I began teaching in Bais Rivkah (my girls preferred that I not teach in Bais Rivkah while they were learning there). I taught on Crown Street, upstairs in the classrooms where the High School Department is now. Then I taught in the ladies shul in a classroom there.

### **How were students different then and now?**

Students were much more respectful (put this in!); parents were also more respectful.

### **Do any students stick out in your mind?**

No student sticks out, but, in every class there is always somebody memorable (laughs). The talkative ones, you know their names on the first day of school!

### **Did you ever go to the Rebbe and get any advice or bracha about teaching?**

Yes. I needed a babysitter for my youngest daughter. One Lubavitcher lady at the time was teaching, and her child regressed and had to be put in a home, as the babysitter didn't take good care of her.

I wrote to the Rebbe, "Should I go back to teaching? I am worried that my daughter should be properly taken care of at home when I am not home." The Rebbe answered, "You will always find the proper babysitter for her."

From then on, I never had to look for a babysitter. I was always approached with offers. Once, a couple came over and said, "We miss our grandchildren, can we take care of your daughter?" Another time, a Bobover lady said, "My husband doesn't want me to go out to work. Can I watch your daughter?" When I bought a house on Sterling Street, the upstairs neighbor was

home with her two-year-old and wanted to babysit. This was the Rebbe's bracha.

### **Did you ever teach family?**

Yes. I taught my granddaughters, and I now teach my great-granddaughters.

### **What were some challenges in teaching?**

Really and truly none. I never find anything hard; teaching has kept me very young.

### **Any advice for new teachers and experienced teachers?**

To love teaching and to teach manners, responsibility, proper behavior and to be a mentch.

Everyone says that I should be burned out by now, but I'm not. I love teaching. You really have to love teaching and imparting knowledge.

### **What did you learn from your students?**

To love them. To appreciate their potential. To see to it that they feel comfortable. At every PTA, the most important thing the mother wants to know is if their daughters are happy.

### **What teaching tools did you always have?**

I always have sharpened pencils, tissues, and soap on my desk.

My granddaughter's teacher from Toronto had these three things on her desk too. She said to her teacher, "These are just like my grandmother has on her desk." The teacher asked, "Who is your grandmother?" When she answered Mrs. Schildkraut from New York, she became so excited. "She was my teacher in Bais Yaakov!"



*Mrs. Schildkraut in action*

### **Which teaching tools are timeless, tools that aren't objects or physically in the classroom?**

Stories are a timeless tool. Every Sunday, I tell my

students stories from Treasury of Chassidic Tales. The stories are about Tzaddikim and are connected to the weekly Parsha.

### **Do you use humor in your classroom?**

Sure, I tell jokes and I teach songs.

### **Do you ever get bored of teaching the same things?**

Bored? No! Almost every year there is something different to impart.

I write a lesson plan every week because every class is different and you can not always cover the same amount in every class.



### **What inspires you to teach?**

Seeing the students' eyes open up and "get" something! I taught a math concept last week and I saw the students weren't getting it. So I taught it differently and was able to see the girls' eyes light up and say "oooh!" It's a really good feeling!

### **Did you make any technological changes?**

No. I just have one cell phone, the flip phone that you dial by pushing buttons. My granddaughter tried to teach me computer but it didn't work; I am technologically challenged.

### **What remains the same about Bais Rivkah?**

The faculty like to stay. I asked a non-Lubavitcher teacher why she wants to shlep here. She said that the atmosphere is pleasant and relaxed. The atmosphere with the faculty and co-teachers is just very good. I miss the camaraderie of the teacher's room - we used to have such a good time and talk. We simply outgrew the space in the building.

### **Are there any colleagues you remember fondly?**

Everyone. It's one big family. It's Heimish and family-oriented; we are all friendly with our colleagues and share our ideas.

### **How big was the school when you started teaching in Bais Rivkah?**

When I joined Bais Rivkah, I was the third second-grade teacher; it was Mrs. Elishevitz, Mrs. Avtzon and me.

### **What other memories do you have of Bais Rivkah in the 1980s?**

When we were on Crown Street, my classroom was in the high school lunchroom. One girl came from an unfortunate family. She never showered. During circle time, no one wanted to take her hand.

I couldn't say anything because she came all the time, until one day she didn't come. I asked the girls, "Why doesn't anyone want to hold this girl's hand?" They raised their hands and said that they felt uncomfortable. I told the girls that she was sad and that it was not her fault. The next week, two girls ran to hold her hand. I cried and I called their mothers.

### **Does size affect the school?**

In a large class, it's harder to give the same attention to everyone and to solve problems.

### **What message do you want to impart to the Bais Rivkah alumni all around the world?**

Keep the faith!

With that, I wished Mrs. Schildkraut well and gave her a bracha that she should keep up the strength to do her important work. ■



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# THE SCHOOL THAT NEVER SLEEPS

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Musia Kuravsky, Crown Heights  
*Grade 12*

I wasn't new to Bais Rivkah; I have been in this school since kindergarten. Bais Rivkah is pumping through my blood. Approaching the start of ninth grade, I was expecting classes to sit through, tests to study for, mundane, regular days that sometimes got exciting... right? Wrong. As soon as I entered Bais Rivkah High School, I realized that school now included trying to seize a slice of pizza with a thousand people on top of me, and then eating lunch with music blasting in my eardrums. I couldn't possibly picture myself performing in front of everyone for theme breakouts or cheering for my grade. To be frank, the first few weeks were quite the culture shock for me; my entire spool of normalcy unraveled at my feet.

On one of those beginning days, I stood in the hallway surrounded by two hundred girls, nearly knocking me over with binders and books, all racing towards the same staircase. I felt like a mouse at the edge of a staggeringly large mountain. That's when I realized that I had a choice. Either I could spend the rest of my years here shying away from the unforgiving crowds, or I could jump on the bandwagon and use this crowd as an audience.

*We don't graduate  
as students, we  
graduate as  
leaders!*

And so, I hopped right on board, taking the advice of "real it, 'till you feel it". I very hesitantly and self-consciously got up there and played keyboard for the "Mitteler Rebbe's Kapelye" on Tes Kislev! Then, I participated in painting for Shabbaton and after that, setting up for Health Day. It began to feel natural, like I was part of the force. And then... this school turned into my school.

Bais Rivkah High School has helped me discover and develop a passion for Yiddishkeit and an emotional connection to Hashem and the Rebbe. Through countless farbrengens, Chassidishe Yomim Tovim, shiurim in 770, trips to the Ohel, videos of the Rebbe each morning, Achos HaTmimim checklists,



Chassidus Before Davening, and daily programs in the shul, Chassidus and Geula aren't foreign or lofty concepts, rather they are reality. Kedusha is at my fingertips! All I need to do is show up and absorb.

With a strong sense of identity and love for my heritage, I am now armed to face any challenges that life throws my way. We don't graduate as students, we graduate as leaders! Having done HOO, taken part in production, gone on mitvzoim (Shine a Little Light!), and juggled schoolwork on top of all that, we all become shluchos in our own right, beacons of light to the world.

Not every day is fine and dandy. There are days when I feel discouraged and a sense of indifference. The responsibilities are too great, and why does it really matter if I put in effort? And then, I remember what Bais Rivkah is all about- stepping up to the plate with a full and joyous heart. Fitting myself, flaws and talents, into the picture. Doing what I need to do, and finding the Elokus, the spirit, and the brachos in it.

Bais Rivkah High School never sleeps. From morning to night, classes to programs to farbrengens, we're on a mission; planning, arranging, experiencing... really living. This is what Bais Rivkah has ingrained in my

heart. No day is just a day (or at least they don't let it be)! We are on a rocket, going full throttle ahead; destination- Geula. ■



A photograph of a young child with brown hair, wearing a maroon long-sleeved shirt and a plaid blanket, crawling on a white, fluffy rug. The child is smiling and looking towards the camera. In the top left corner, there is a logo for 'BON KNIT' in a dark blue box with a decorative top. Below the logo, the text 'Beautiful Knits for Beautiful Kids' is written in a cursive font.



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**7 Cheesecote Lane, Pomona**  
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3,650 Sq Ft ♦ 1.21 Acres  
Year Built: 2004  
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**42 Coe Farm Road, Montebello**  
5 Bedrooms ♦ 2.5 Baths  
3,658 Sq Ft ♦ 1.13 Acres  
Year Built: 2004  
**\$939,000** **FOR SALE**



**26 N Ridge Road, Pomona**  
5 Bedrooms ♦ 3 Baths  
3,213 Sq Ft ♦ 1.09 Acres  
Year Built: 1998  
**\$795,000** **FOR SALE**



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5 Bedrooms ♦ 3 Baths  
2,742 Sq Ft ♦ 0.72 Acres  
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5 Bedrooms ♦ 4 Baths  
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4 Bedrooms ♦ 4 Baths  
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4 Bedrooms ♦ 3 Baths  
3,138 Sq Ft ♦ 0.71 Acres  
Year Built: 1990  
**\$715,000** **FOR SALE**



**11 Fairway Oval, Spring Valley**  
4 Bedrooms ♦ 2.5 Baths  
2,040 Sq Ft ♦ 0.51 Acres  
Year Built: 1971  
**\$469,000** **FOR SALE**



**45 Halley Drive, Pomona**  
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# DROPPING THE JUDGMENT

## (4 MODELS)

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Rivky (Elishevitz) Wilansky, Moscow, Russia  
*Graduating class of 5765 (2005)*



### *Question:*

Recently, I started noticing that I make countless negative judgments about people throughout the day. When someone messes up or struggles with something that I don't struggle with, I subconsciously think that that would never happen to me and that she probably could have done things differently to prevent it.

Of course I do my best to keep any negative judgments to myself, but I noticed that it still reflects in the way I relate to them, and affects my ability to respect them or trust them in the same way. I would love to stop it but it's just so automatic that I'm not sure I can really help it. Is it even possible?

Signed,

*Don't Want to be Judgmental*

### *Dear Don't Want to be Judgmental,*

Thank you for bringing this up because judging is such a universal struggle on both sides! While we all hate being judged, we may still do it to others. The fact that you notice it and care to stop means that you're already halfway there.

At a recent farbrengen with my friend Ester Friedman, she said that she realized what *machshavos zaros* are for women - they're those negative thoughts and judgments that pop into our heads about others. And while we shouldn't feel bad for having those normal initial thoughts, (and we definitely shouldn't judge ourselves for judging others,) we don't either have to embrace those unwanted thoughts. Instead, we can choose to push those foreign thoughts away with both hands, because judging others is the exact opposite of uniting with them. When we judge, we are putting ourselves on an imaginary pedestal and seeing ourselves as separate and superior. But when we replace those judgments with positive thoughts, and decide to give everyone we encounter the benefit of the doubt, we are giving ourselves, our families,

our friends, our acquaintances, and our whole nation, the greatest gift possible.

To help us with this, let's visit four of our greatest role models whose examples and teachings will make it easier for us to *drop our judgments* and live together in peace, love, and unity, bringing Moshiach closer. With practice, it gets easier and easier to see the good in everyone around us.

## ROLE MODEL: MOSHE RABBEINU



The basic assumption we make when we judge is that we are better or that we know better, and that, "If I were in your shoes, I would do things differently." Moshe Rabbeinu did the exact opposite. The way that he was able to be the most humble of all men despite his obvious greatness was because **he put himself into others' shoes** and said, "Wow, if I was in their position, if I had their challenges, their life struggles, their great yetzer hara, I would probably do much less than them!" He looked at the last generation of Golus with such great humility, not because we are better than he was, but because considering our circumstances, we are doing incredibly well! And likewise, he assumed that if anyone else in the world was given his neshama, his powers, his talents, his revelations - they would use it out much better than he did.

Just because you think that you overcame a similar challenge, or that you had better results with something, you are not standing in her shoes so it's impossible to factor everything in. Her husband is not like your husband and her child is not like your child, etc. We can't possibly know if it's true. Only Hashem who knows absolutely everything can be a true judge.<sup>1</sup>

## ROLE MODEL: R' LEVI YITZCHAK OF BERDITCHEV



The next step is to learn from R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev's example and make a conscious decision to switch from walking around like a judge to walking around like an advocate. To switch from accusing to defending, and from criticizing to supporting. After all, who in the world wants to be in the presence of a judge?

There are many touching stories of R' Levi Yitzchak's rose-colored glasses. The way he walked around

as if blind to the negative, and naturally found the good in the least likely places. Instead of seeing a disrespectful Jew who changed his tires in the middle of saying Shema, he saw a beautiful Jew who said Shema even in middle of changing his tires. Instead of seeing a rebellious Jew who smoked a cigarette on Shabbos, he saw an honest Jew who refused to lie no matter how many excuses he suggested to him.

It takes effort to see the beauty and the good like R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev.

Most importantly, we have to be so careful about what we think and especially about what we say out loud, because the heavens take our perspective of "Beis Din Shel Mata" extremely seriously.

The fact that R' Levi Yitzchak was so careful to act as our lawyer and constantly speak up in our defense, was not just sweet and "rosy," but actually changed terrible decrees into positive outcomes for Yidden.

We each hold the same power for good!

## ROLE MODEL: THE BAAL SHEM TOV



Is it naive, even a little dangerous, to only see the positive? How is it possible to improve our surroundings if we won't see any problems there? How can we effectively fulfill our life mission of positively influencing the people around us, if we pretend that we don't see any issues that need change?

In a Sichon Parshas Noach<sup>2</sup>, the Rebbe quoted the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that "א מענטש איז א שפיגל" - A person is a mirror." If our goal is truly to help the situation, like Shem and Yafes' response to seeing their father, then we won't see any problems at all, and we will only see solutions. Instead of feeling bothered or angry, we'll feel even greater love and compassion. And most importantly, we'll feel compelled to do something to help make things better. We won't just see evil, but an urgent call to action.

On the other hand, if our natural response is like Cham's - to feel personally disturbed by what we saw or to start to gossip, mock, or criticize, then we can be sure that the reason Hashem made us see this negativity has nothing to do with the other person and **has everything to do with us**. And the moment we start working on improving ourselves, we won't be bothered by what we see in others.

It might take some honest soul-searching to find the same fault in ourselves, but it's there. Maybe we do

the same thing but on a smaller scale, or in a different relationship, or we don't actually do it (anymore), but we secretly wish that we could...

Or it can even be just a general reminder to work on ourselves, or to work on being less judgmental, because a sin is a sin is a sin. All sins are essentially the same rebellion against Hashem<sup>3</sup>. We are not perfect either, so as they say, **“Don't judge others just because they sin differently than you do.”**

Remembering the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that a person is a mirror is also the greatest motivator to judge favorably. The Baal Shem Tov taught<sup>4</sup> that a person is not judged until they pass judgment on another in a similar situation. We are only held accountable in the way that we hold others accountable. If we can excuse even the worst sins of another, understanding that they didn't really want to sin, but only did it because their great passions and temptations overcame them, or because they didn't realize the seriousness of the crime, then **Hashem will likewise forgive and erase all of our mistakes as well!**<sup>5</sup>

## ROLE MODEL: OUR REBBE



The Rebbe's view of every single Jew as a precious diamond not only causes him to judge us favorably in the most incredible way, understanding that deep down we all really mean well and that within every “lo lishma” lies “lishma,” but more importantly, the Rebbe's “diamond vision” sees and knows the full unlimited potential of each Neshama, and believes in us, and demands of us, to overcome all of our challenges from now on.

Not because he's judging us or putting conditions on his love or respect, but because **he sees that we really want to, and he sees that we really can.**

When the Rebbe told the young Jewish man who was planning to marry a non-Jewish woman, “I envy you,” he was both not judging him and inspiring him at the same time. On the one hand, he was telling him, “I am not in your shoes, I cannot imagine your irresistible temptation to marry her. I never had anything like your yetzer hara, and I am definitely not judging you for struggling with this! But in the same breath, the Rebbe was telling him, that if you were given such a great test, then you were also given an unbelievably high neshama and potential for greatness. You were given the power to overcome this! I believe in you so much to the point that I already envy you in advance. **I have complete**

## **faith and trust in you that you will pull through.**

There is no possible way that we can reveal the spark of Moshiach in another and bring out their best, unless we truly believe in them and view them in a positive light!

When we are fully confident that there is a beautiful priceless diamond beneath the external dirt that we see, when we firmly believe in the essential goodness and innocence of every single Jew, how could we *not* love and respect them unconditionally? And how could we *not* trust them to do the same for us?

So back to your question, YES, it *is* possible!

We *can* control our thoughts. We can learn to drop the judgment and see the best in others. And in the merit of us striving to have compassion on others and judge every Jew favorably, Hashem will surely have compassion on us, and judge all of *us* favorably, and bring Moshiach now! ■

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# UNITY *in* MARRIAGE

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Devorah (Geisinsky) Krasnianski, Five Towns, NY  
*Graduating class of 5748 (1988)*



**D**edication. Devotion. Commitment. Soul-Connection. Loyalty. Admiration. Mesiras Nefesh.

It was all of these that brought Rebbetzin Chana to Chili, Kazakhstan, a most forsaken place of appalling living conditions, which included extreme poverty, deprivation, and hunger. There was the heat of the burning sun, the discomfort of swampy mud, pesky mosquitoes and flies, and malaria.

All of this was voluntary. It was her husband, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneerson, who was the one sent to exile; she was free to remain living in their apartment in Dnepropetrovsk. She could have, but she didn't. Because she lived the doctrine that a married couple is one indivisible unit – larger than themselves, deeper than two separate individuals living a shared life. A true Achdus.

**There's a HE and a SHE in every marriage. Two separate entities creating a third entity beyond each of themselves – the WE – the unity, the marriage.**

The WE mindset is about framing the situation in light of the WE, not HE and SHE. This requires a fundamental commitment to each other with sensitivity and consideration. It takes time, effort, and experience.

What truly makes a couple a unit is not the renouncement of one's self or loss of one's identity to the marriage. Rather, it is a WE mindset and way of being, where each proactively contributes to that third and deeper entity, the WE. Each brings his whole self into the unity. It is not that either is giving in to the other. Instead, each is giving to strengthen and invigorate the marriage. The small actions, the larger decisions – all are for the 'Adai Ad' of the marriage.

HE and SHE. Each bolstering the WE.

The WE is always in the forefront, it is always the goal, the guide, the litmus test.

Such complete devotion to the marriage is possible – even for us mere mortals. How do two individuals who started as two separate lives move to such unity?

It doesn't just happen because we stood under the chuppah together. It is a journey. It is the fundamental commitment to truly seeing my spouse as the other half of my neshama. The commitment that if Hashem has brought us together, then my life mission is dependent on having you as my full partner. There is no 'me' without you. It is this deep commitment which brings lasting love. Not a shallow love which brings a shallow commitment. It is a constant and consistent building of that Binyan Adai Ad. And it demands an ongoing maintenance of that unity. With time and experience and strong commitment to each other, this becomes the norm for the couple.

Even when the WE and the marriage is the most important entity, the husband and wife will come to some situations with differences (every marriage has its disparities and conflicts from time to time).

There is HIS story and HER story. Each has its own perspective, relationship to the issue, and resolution to the problem - these may be based on gender, upbringing, personality, temperament, and experiences.

But there is also a third story – THEIR story – for the



WE. This is the one that harmonizes both of their perspectives, positions, and ideas. This story respects, accepts, and even embraces the

differences, and ends with a resolution that is best for the WE, for the marriage.

It is in this story where true togetherness and harmony blossom. It is where learning and understanding happen. It is where real collaboration and concern is fostered. It is where the 'two halves of one neshama' is sincerely lived. It is where each half of the couple knows, feels, and acts as one team, striving toward the same goal. It is a place of true unity – of WE – beyond each individual spouse.

Chassidus explains that unity has two general levels. The superficial level is one where two entities join together, yet remain separate on the inside. The higher level of unity is where there are no longer any separate entities. The two merge into one, in complete unity.

Being a WE is constant work, a journey of ups and downs, even after many years of experience.

We may each come to a situation thinking that a particular way is best for the WE. Each way has lots of validity; either one may indeed enrich the WE. But each of the couple is coming at it from their own angle, perhaps based on their gender, upbringing, preference, perspective, and values.

Rebbetzin Chana and Reb Levi Yitzchok lived in ultimate unity. A Torah unity - living together as one unit. Even in the horrible impoverished conditions in Kazakhstan, as terrible as it was, they were one united entity - one unit supporting each other and working through the daily challenge of survival. Unfortunately, food was so scarce that for the survival of both it would be safer if there was only one mouth to feed in exile. Oh, the anguish in making that choice. The conversations around that decision must have been excruciating. In the end, for the sake of Reb Levi Yitzchok, the Rebbetzin reluctantly went back to Dnepetrovsk for a short while.

*A married couple is one indivisible unit – larger than themselves, deeper than two separate individuals living a shared life.*

## How to work through what is best for the WE, for the marriage?

**Ask questions from genuine curiosity.** For this story to have a happy ending, each side has to approach the disagreement (a disagreement is not a fight, it can very well be a situation of two equally good options) with honesty, not defensiveness or blame. The objective is WE. This can only be achieved when both feel respected and heard. You need to sincerely seek answers to questions like, “What is going on for my spouse?” “What have I contributed to the issue?” “What do I see are the parameters and limitations here?” “How might my spouse be seeing this all?” “How is my spouse feeling about this?” “How am I?” “How might we come to a resolution that feels right to each of us?”

NOTE: the way the other person FEELS must be taken into consideration. The Rebbe writes that it is important to remember that a person’s perspectives may be emotionally based. It’s not just a question of rational explanations. Sometimes a person needs a combination of intellectual explanation together with emotional appeasement.

**It might be helpful to approach the situation with the eyes of an objective third party, or with an actual third person, such as your mashpia.** Start with open questions like, “What do you see is the situation here?” “What are the undeniable realities and limitations?” It may very

well be that you are seeing two different issues altogether. In order to create this third story, you must be working on the same issue. Even when you have the same end goal, it is very difficult to solve something that is not defined, or something you define differently than your spouse.

Present the differences and the way each of you see how it can work to enhance the WE. Perhaps a wise third party can see things more objectively, or has a new resolution that satisfies the needs of all.

**Talk it through until you agree what the real challenge is.** This may take several rounds of suggestions and modifications. “That’s not quite it. I see it as...” “Hmm, that’s close. I think it is more like...” “Yes, that explanation of the problem works for me.” Now you have a key part of the third story – the issue is defined.

**Next, work to understand what meaning your spouse has put to the issue** - again, gender, upbringing, perspective, and values all come to play here: “What about this is important to you?” “What does this mean to you?” “What is at stake for you here?” “What does this issue trigger for you?” “How do you see this impacting our WE?”

**Listen with concern and empathy.** It is in such conversations where you have the biggest opportunity to really learn about your spouse’s vulnerabilities, fears, worries, identity issues, and core feelings. Listen in a way that your spouse



feels heard. Be empathetic. Feel the emotions - excitement or pain - of the other. Acknowledge what you have learned about your spouse in the process. And of course, share your thoughts and feelings about the issue too.

At this point, you will have most of the third story, the crucial parts. The parts where real unity happens – listening and understanding and caring for your spouse while at the same time seeing it all from the lens of the WE.

It is this deep listening and caring that brings you to a place of understanding and feeling each other's point of view, a place where you can create a united common ground around the issue.

**Collaborate toward a resolution that enriches the WE.** In this frame of mind of unity and caring, you can now collaborate toward solutions. This is different from compromise where each feels that s/he is giving in or giving up on something important.

The marriage of each and every Jew is a part, as it were, of the general “marriage” between Hashem and His nation, the Jewish people-  
“מקדש את עמו ישראל.”

We thus understand why marriage is meant to be permanent:

Just as the marriage between Hashem and His nation that took place at Matan Torah is an eternal bond and cannot be severed – not even in times of exile – so too, the mirror image of man and wife is an eternal union, not meant to ever be severed.

*(Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXXIV, p14)*

**Consider all options. Come up with a few possible solutions.** Explore how the marriage would be impacted, how each of you would be affected (positively and negatively), and what might have to change in order for that scenario to work out. Explore how the relationship and partnership will be affected (schedules, etc.). Consider the fairness to each of you. You may end up blending some aspects of each of your ideas, or you may come up with a totally new idea. These discussions will ensure that each of you feels that you care about the WE and each other's success and happiness.

**Continue discussing until a resolution is mutually and happily accepted.** Taking the time to talk it out helps you feel like you did your best, and boosts your confidence in the decision.

**Make a decision, but be flexible.** The last chapter in this story are the decisions and the check-ins to make sure that there are no ill feelings or resentment on either side. Make it easy for each to live with the decision. As applicable, provide your support to make those options actually happen.

It takes time to develop and deepen this sense of WE. It takes conversation and listening, even more listening and sharing. It doesn't happen just because you are two halves of one neshama. It takes human effort, commitment, and will.

Rebbetzin Chana and Reb Levi Yitzchok had a marriage of unity, care, and devotion. They had the perfect mindset. Selfless commitment to each other. Respect and admiration. A marriage of royalty. ■

*Devora Krasnianski is the founder of Adai Ad (www.adaiad.org) whose programs provide the necessary tools and insights for a strong and successful marriage – starting with pre-shidduchim, continuing through the shidduch process and into marriage itself. She talks and presents on topics of dating and Shalom Bayis. She is also a shidduch dating coach.*

*In this frame of mind of unity and caring, you can now collaborate toward solutions.*



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# A SHIDDUCH



# MAKING



A seasoned shadchan shares her experience

---

Toby (Goldstein) Lieder, Melbourne, Australia  
*Graduating class of 5733 (1973)*

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In 1977, when we were newlyweds, my husband and I began our shidduch-making career. We had a notebook with one page titled “boys” and another page titled “girls.” Since we both knew many eligible singles, we entered their names into our notebook, matched them, and made over a dozen shidduchim that first year! We made even more Shidduchim in the following years. We kept it up even as we moved on shlichus to Sydney and then to Melbourne, Australia, 38 years and 14 kids ka”h later!

Whilst making shidduchim for people, I realized that many of the singles I was working with had no idea what qualities they wanted in their future partner. They didn’t know what’s important and what’s not. So I became a dating coach.

I created my own original session plan that I use to help the singles gain confidence and navigate through their shidduch search. We identify what their deal breakers are and what is compromisable. By the end of the coaching session, which usually takes an hour, they gain much clarity and understanding not only of themselves, but of their core values of what they need and want in their future spouse.

It’s an exhilarating feeling to know that Hashem chose me to be a shlucha to help bring neshamos together. It’s an incredible privilege and awesome feeling of accomplishment to think of all the future generations who will come from these shidduchim!

At times the job does get bittersweet. When many hours are spent trying to make a shidduch work and it doesn’t, it’s sweet because you know that the person is one step closer to finding the right one. It’s bitter because not only was a huge amount of time spent with no results, there is also no acknowledgement or pay for the ordeal.

*When one couple gets engaged after 20 didn’t, it’s like finding a diamond in the rough!*

What keeps me motivated is focusing on the ones that *did* work. When one couple gets engaged after 20 didn't, it's like finding a diamond in the rough! I must add that coaching young singles through the process of identifying what their major values are and what qualities they seek in their future spouse gives me a tremendous sense of satisfaction.

## ALL IN A SESSIONS WORK

During a coaching session we cover many areas:

We start with compiling a list of important values which will come to use in key times. I highly recommend the singles review their list before and after each date. This helps keep them on track with what they observe and discuss with their date, checking if they have these values. When married life gets challenging, there is this list of "gold," of the spouse's core values, the list of major qualities that they were attracted to to begin with! It makes the chesronos fall by the wayside and puts everything back into perspective.

Additionally, as a shadchan, the knowledge of this list of qualities is of great value to me. It helps me match up people with the same core values.

Another thing we discuss is the ability to distinguish between an "okay" red flag and a "stay away" red flag. At the conclusion of the session we identify what I call non-negotiables. It is a guide to help us filter and recognize what qualities speak to us most and what are the dealbreakers. So when what seems like a red flag appears, we always check in with our "gold" list of major qualities and see if they are present or up for negotiation. In other words, we are in quite a safe zone, by just knowing what our major non-negotiables are.

## NOT JUST BYSTANDERS

Parents play an extremely vital role in being proactive and helping their child get the right shidduch. The more you invest the more you gain. Here are small investments that can make a huge difference!

**1.** The more professional the profile and photo look, the better your chances are that it may get acknowledged and looked into seriously. When I receive profiles that are sloppy or extremely short, I feel in my gut that this person isn't that serious about shidduchim. A well-presented, thought out, professional looking profile will make a greater impact than a quick fix one.

**2.** Hire a qualified, dedicated shadchan with experience and patience, with a good intuition and a sincere honest reputation. If the shadchan is also a coach, that would even be more practical. It is

also advisable to be up front with the shadchan before starting a new shidduch and make a mutual agreement on the shadchanus fee. I was once very touched by a bochur who asked me for my PayPal information after I arranged a date

for him. He said he gives \$100 to every shadchan who sends him out on a date, whether or not it works out. I was very impressed and started doing that with my own kids. I now encourage other people to do the same. If money is too hard, a thank you card or a box of chocolates is nice, too.

**3.** Do one thing a day towards your child's shidduch! It could be a phone call to a shadchan, a word to a friend that you meet in a shop, or even a special perek of Tehillim. Just as the Rebbe Rashab said that we have to think about the chinuch of our children for half an hour every day, I feel that we should play an active role in our child's shidduch searching.

**4.** Listen with all your heart to what your child is really saying about what they want in a shidduch. I once heard wise words that really resonated with me: "At this point in our adult children's lives, we are to change gears and become their mentors, their coaches, and realize it is time to stop parenting." If they're old enough to get married, they're old enough to make their own decisions, with our gentle guidance. It is their life, their choice, and we need to learn to let go!

**5.** Every month or so, send out a WhatsApp profile to people you are close to. Include a photo with a short introduction that says "Please have my child in mind if you may know of any possible suitable candidates." I know of quite a few shidduchim that eventuated because the mother of a single would send this reminder out once a month! She said it was so worth the effort!

*It is just one word, once a week that can totally make the difference of a Shadchan noticing and acting upon it.*



*Toby Lieder's senior class photo*

**6.** As a shadchan, I highly recommend all my clients to be proactive and send me a one-word text once a week, that says either ‘available’ or ‘busy’. When their text pops up, I think for a few minutes who I may possibly have for them. It is just one word, once a week that can totally make the difference of a shadchan noticing and acting upon it.

**7.** Your child is looking up to you and reading your body language and emotional reactive responses in every way you react to anything positive or negative-regarding shidduchim in general, and specifically theirs. This is true especially when a shidduch doesn’t turn out the way we expected it to, or when we get declined and have to start the search all over again. Remember to be sympathetic, and acknowledge your child’s feelings and not brush them aside saying, “big deal, you didn’t lose anything anyway,” but rather feel with them, mirror their feelings, and recognize their pain. We as parents have the privilege to empower our children with embracing Hashem’s will, and role modeling for our children pure emunah, a real sense of bitachon, that whatever Hashem does is for the good so they can have the strength to keep going.

**8.** When getting ready for a date we can help our children look their finest. Our responsibility is to provide them with a special outfit, makeup, and/or hairdo so they can be dressed the best they can be.

## FOR THE SINGLES

There is also much a single should do in preparation for Shidduchim.

**1.** Tehillim and tzedakah are a great investment for your neshama. It is recommended to do something extra b’ruchnius in order for the two neshamos to quickly recognize each other. Before saying Shema every day, meditate and ask Hashem to help you find your zivug easily.

**2.** Think if perhaps in the past someone in shidduchim may have been offended. The Rebbe says to think hard and if there’s a slight chance that someone may have had their feelings hurt, one should apologize to clear this possible blockage.

**3.** The Gemara says that if one prays for another, Hashem will fulfill that which he himself needs first. I suggest to take this a step further and when possible, help another when they are preparing for their own wedding, or engagement, be it physically or emotionally.

**4.** Friends and family all have good intentions. But pay attention to the name being suggested to you without filters and advice from everyone who

has either dated that person, or says they know him/her well. Be melamed zchus and give everyone a fair chance if they qualify. Too many shidduchim are lost because of doubt raised by random friends that judge too freely. Let one person do the research seriously, and don’t go around asking everyone’s opinions. This can be detrimental to finding your right zivug.

**5.** Your dress code represents you. Look your best. Clean, organized, presentable outfits make a difference. Allow enough time before a date to relax and make an effort to look the best you possibly can. You never get a second chance to make a first impression!

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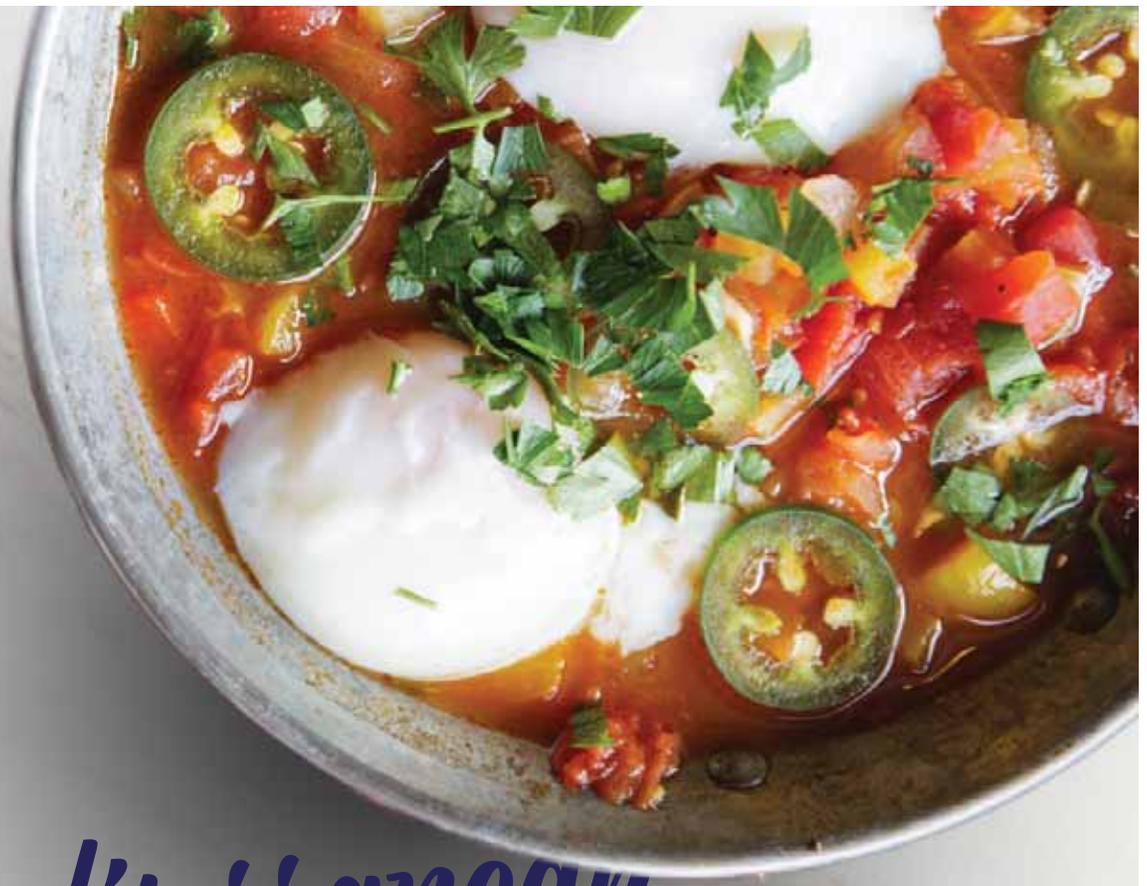
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# Reaching One and All



Yocheved (Hershkop) Freeman, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5755 (1995)*



**T**wenty faces are focused on me. My heart skips a beat as I pass my gaze over each one in turn. Twenty children. Twenty personalities. Twenty lives. There are auditory learners, there are the ones who need to see everything, and there are also the students who just crave excitement in their learning... and all must be taught. There are the apathetic and the eager, the pleasant and the cynical, the cooperative and the insolent... and all must be reached.

Is that even possible?

There are many different modalities that a teacher can use to help students succeed in the classroom. Methods commonly used are visual aids, organizational supports, and engaging students in experiential learning. However, beyond the typical classroom supports available, there are some powerful and important tools that any teacher (or parent at home) can utilize to really reach each child and learner.

**1.** See the child. Look beyond the surface and understand that every person, child or adult, is more than what meets the eye. Homelife, self-esteem, past experiences, and their own nature are just some of the things that will shape a child into who he or she is. See beyond the body that is warming up a seat in the classroom, and really think about how every child is a whole world.

**2.** Listen. Really listen. Engage each child in conversation and don't just hear their words. Listening means looking deeply into what the person is saying. Sometimes, when you listen, you don't even need to give advice or problem solve. At

times, simply reflecting what the student is saying makes the student feel validated. You may disagree and it would be okay to let them know that, especially when what the child is saying is not right, but be sure you let them know that you heard their point.

**3.** Don't judge. It's right and required to put a stop to negative behaviors, and one should not stand idly by when someone is doing something wrong, but you can suggest and even demand a correction of behavior without judging. It's not your job to judge. When you tell the child, "You are behaving badly," you're telling them that they are not good, that they ought

*See beyond the body that is warming up a seat in the classroom, and really think about how every child is a whole world.*

to be ashamed. The same message can be conveyed without embarrassing the child. For example, if a teen cuts class and is told, “You cut class. You always break the rules. You need to be punished. You are setting a bad example,” the effectiveness of such a statement is lessened because it targets the student as a person. Alternatively, you can be very clear that the behavior is unacceptable without using shame. It would look something like this: “Cutting class is unacceptable. When the rules are broken, there are consequences. Therefore, you are going to have to sit detention.” The consequence does not change; the student is not getting a pass for their negative behavior. However, the incident doesn’t take a toll on their self-esteem. Putting others down is never useful. Nothing good can come out of shame except for hurting the person being shamed. It does not teach good behavior, it does not cause remorse; it only creates conflict and negative feelings. Judgment isn’t necessary in order to correct the behavior.

**4.** Respect. Every human being deserves respect. Yes, children need to respect you. No, you should not tolerate disrespect. And children certainly

are less respectful now than ever before. Yet while such disrespect certainly needs correcting, it doesn't take away from the fact that all people deserve respect because we are all creations of Hashem, students too. Speak respectfully to students. Don't belittle them if they do something wrong. The best way to teach and convey a message is by being a proper role model and setting a good example.

When teachers (or parents) show they care, it gives the child a sense of safety and security. Seeing the child, listening to the child, removing judgment, and showing respect are all ways to help a child feel wanted and safe. This will enable them to learn, concentrate, and succeed in the classroom. Despite the disparity in the classroom and all the different needs that must be met, when a child feels secure, he or she will be able to thrive. ■

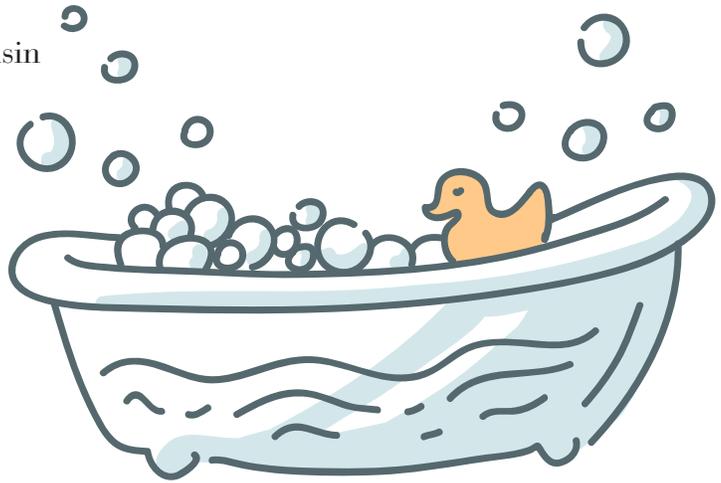


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# Ask <sup>the</sup> Right Questions

Hudi (Lipskier) Rapaport, Mequon, Wisconsin  
Graduating class 5752 (1992)



I was the very best parent before I had kids. Then Hashem had mercy on my arrogance and began to lead me in a better direction. As a wife and a mother, my adolescent opinions were overwritten by the reality of experience. Being a preschool teacher, I was given more opportunities that challenged my thinking and I began to study and observe children and parents in a new light. I found teachers, developmental psychologists, and theorists who showed me deeper ways to understand the language of children and how families thrive. Now, I gratefully share what I have learned and practiced with others who need a little helpful guidance, and I learn from them as well.

The key to success is in asking the right questions.

A client called me one day with a situation she sensed was important to both her marriage and her children. Sarah's husband Meir had surprised Sarah with two tickets to a getaway in honor of their anniversary. Meir had organized child care for their six children, nine to one and a half years old, and he had worked out all the logistics for his parents to run the house while they were away. The roadblock was that Sarah felt there was no way she could leave the children. She believed that their bedtimes, behaviors and schedules were all out of control. Sarah appreciated Meir's loving gesture. But she couldn't accept his initiative for intimacy because of her anxiety about their children.

*It doesn't take an earth-shattering revolution to change behavior; it's about the small messages we give our children that affect their self-worth. Children want to do well if they can.*

I strongly believe that the marriage is primary; it is the foundation that the family depends upon. Accepting this invitation from her husband did not have to mean abandoning the kids to anarchy.

I asked her guided questions until we came up with a realistic plan. “What do you need to arrange in order to feel comfortable leaving?” “What can you let go of?” With the trip as the goal and motivator, Sarah and I focused on practical parenting skills that would give Sarah the confidence to enjoy her time away with her husband and to honor his desire to celebrate their anniversary in a special way.

Specifically, we focused on bedtime routines: bath, reading, and lights out, adhering to sleep hygiene principles.

We reviewed the morning getting-to-school-on-time routines. Most importantly, Sarah accepted that Bubbe and Zaidy had their own style and Sarah didn’t need to micromanage their interactions with their grandchildren. Children are smart and resilient; they intuitively understand the language of love in all forms.

Parenting skills are not just about the kids. When couples work together on parenting, it strengthens the kids *and* the marriage. It’s all about giving each other and the kids the space to be themselves- relaxed, authentic, and motivated by positive intentions. Parenting and partnering go hand in hand.

Can this mindset work for the teacher-child-parent triad? I was challenged to think about this recently when a third grade teacher complained to me, “Adam is naughty from the minute he gets to school until the minute he goes home.”

I asked her to name one good thing he does so that she might compliment him for it. She thought a minute and said, “I seriously can not report one good thing about his behavior.”

I curiously asked her to tell me about Adam’s day. The teacher paused, then said, “He comes into school, hangs up his coat...”

“Really? He hangs up his coat? Let’s celebrate that. You have found something to compliment him on at the very beginning of your day together.”

The teacher called me the following day and described how after she got down to Adam’s eye level and told him she noticed how he always remembered to hang up his coat nicely, he was a completely different kid for the rest of the day. Not perfect, but different. The teacher’s voice was thick with emotion as she reflected

that her heart had opened to him when she gave him the compliment and she had a bit more patience for everyone the rest of the day. All it had taken was a bit of thought, asking the right questions, and this child’s school experience was now transformed.

It doesn’t take an earth-shattering revolution to change behavior; it’s really about the small messages we give our children that affect their self-worth and ability to self-regulate. To do this, we must be willing to meet the child where they are in that moment; listening and observing with the understanding that children want to do well if they can. Every behavior has a meaning and a message, though our expectations may make us temporarily blind and deaf. We need to actively look, ask, and problem-solve to encourage changes for the better.

This was driven home to me personally after my husband and I agreed to foster a child, Dovid, aged 7. He was a little bright light, sweet and affectionate, with a severe trauma in his recent history that made for some challenging times ahead for our family of four boys, my husband and myself.

Every Tuesday, after visits with his father, Dovid would come home to us a complete wreck. He was gripped by escalating anger and violence that shook and shocked our family.

I sat down with Dovid one day on the couch and asked him what would help him relax when he came home on Tuesdays. It took many tries, lots of patient suggestions, and waiting for responses until he told me that a bath would help him.

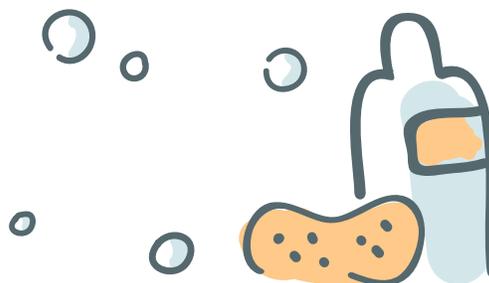
A bath.

On the first Tuesday he took a 3 hour bath. And he was a different child.

The next Tuesday, 2 hours.

By the end of his 7 month stay with us it was showers that soothed the rage and sadness on Tuesdays.

I believe every person has the key to their own truth within them. With close attention, asking the right questions, introspection and sometimes the patient help of another, this truth will reveal itself. ■



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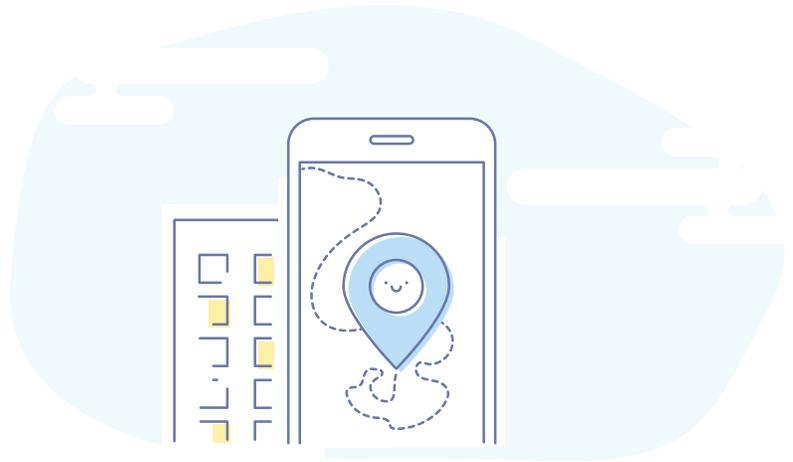
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# Chinuch With Direction *Where Are We Going?*

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



Imagine embarking on a road trip. You are running late and feeling under pressure. You turn on the GPS, only to realize that you have forgotten the address. No big deal, you reason. There are “Recent Addresses” saved. You choose one; after all, someone has followed these directions before!

Obviously, that would be ridiculous. The directions might be accurate—for a different destination. They will be of no help when you are heading somewhere else completely. Without the correct address, the instructions are irrelevant.

The Rebbe Rashab famously taught that just as laying tefillin is a daily obligation for every Jewish man, so is devoting half an hour a day to contemplating the chinuch of one’s children. What is there to think about?

We talk a lot about how to educate. There are books, articles, lectures, and classes. How to connect with our children. How to speak to them. How to nurture their creativity. How to cater to their needs. How to motivate them. How to make lessons interesting. How to respond to challenging behavior.

Yet perhaps we might pay more attention to the goal: What actually is chinuch? What are we trying to accomplish?

*Chinuch, however, is not the same thing as what the world calls “education”. In fact, they are mutually exclusive.*

Deceptively simple questions; transformative when we take the time to ask them. For only when we have an accurate destination can we find and follow the correct itinerary.

Society sees education as the means of ensuring one's success and happiness in life. For example, contemporary education aims to give a child the knowledge and skills necessary for him or her to ultimately land a good job and make a lot of money. It also prioritizes a child's independence and self-expression, and thus encourages him or her to explore, choose and self-direct as much as possible.

Chinuch, however, is not the same thing as what the world calls "education". In fact, they are mutually exclusive.

"The purpose and core of chinuch," the Rebbe teaches, "is to reveal in those we are educating the chelek Eloka, the spark of G-dliness within them, such that this awareness penetrates their entire being until all of their actions, speech and even thoughts are permeated with holiness."<sup>1</sup>

And in another sicha: "The true purpose of chinuch is not only for the child to learn. It is to accustom the child to kedusha, which connects his neshama with kedusha and with Hakadosh Baruch Hu."<sup>2</sup>

In other words, chinuch is not only about teaching them to keep the mitzvos, an added element within the general picture of helping them succeed in life. Rather, it is about having an altogether different definition of success. Chinuch means helping our children or students identify with their neshamos. Instead of seeing themselves as independent individuals here on earth in pursuit of their own happiness, the goal is that they see themselves as a part of Hashem, created to make this world a home for Him.

The two perspectives are polar opposites; in fact, they parallel the difference between kedusha and klipah. Kedusha is the recognition of Hashem's Oneness, whereas klipah is the denial of this truth and the perception of self as an independent entity.

The goal is that those we are mechanech should

*Essentially, then, chinuch is not so much about demanding from our children, but about demanding from ourselves.*

see Torah and mitzvos as their life, their true desire and the ultimate source of joy. Whenever doing the right thing is challenging, inconvenient, expensive or unpopular, we want them to have the clarity that true freedom is the ability to overcome their yetzer hara. The goal is that when faced with a life decision, they will first ask, "What does Hashem want from me?"; that they will look to Torah for guidance and think like Yidden.

What practical difference, we might wonder, does how we define chinuch actually make?

Firstly, to raise children to see themselves as a part of Hashem, we need to really believe it ourselves.

When we look at our child or student, do we see an independent spirit who must be convinced somehow to buy into Yiddishkeit? Do we, chas veshalom, feel bad about "burdening" them with mitzvos? Or do we see a neshama that wants to connect to Hashem if we will only give it the opportunity and direction?

And we need to communicate that clarity. As the Rebbe says<sup>3</sup>: "It is crucial to tell and explain to children that they have within them a neshama that is a chelek Eloka mi'maal mamash ("a part of Hashem above"), a neshama that stood at Har Sinai at the Giving of the Torah, and that for it, the fulfillment of Torah and mitzvos is a matter of life, for Torah is chayenu v'orech yomeinu ("our life and the length of our days"). [When this is explained to them,] they will naturally request and demand that their parents give them the most fundamental thing upon which their life depends."

Moreover, since a key component of chinuch is role modeling, before thinking about how to be mechanech our children, we might ask ourselves:



<sup>1</sup> Hisvaaduyos 5745 Vol. 4, p. 2301

<sup>2</sup> Likkutei Sichos, vol. 35, p. 12

<sup>3</sup> Hisvaaduyos 5748, vol. 3, p. 472

Who am I? Do I see myself as a neshama? What do I live for? What is truly important to me?

The more our children see that we value mitzvos over materialism; helping a Yid over comfort; Torah over secular studies; tznius over trends and doing the Rebbe's shlichus over money, the more they absorb the ultimate message of chinuch: A Yid is part of Hashem. G-dliness is our identity, and revealing it within the world is the reason we exist. לא נבראתי אלא "לשמע את קוני" – the only reason we were created is to serve Hashem.

In the Rebbe's words<sup>4</sup>: "It is obvious that the parents' conduct should not contradict what they teach their child, for otherwise, the child will ask, 'Why do my parents demand that Torah matters should be 'like new' (exciting) for me, while they suffice with the minimum to fulfill their obligations?' On the contrary, parents need to set a dugmah chayah..."

Essentially, then, chinuch is not so much about demanding from our children, but about demanding

<sup>4</sup> *Hisvaaduyos 5744, vol. 3, p. 1534*

from ourselves. The privilege and responsibility of raising children offers us an incredible opportunity, a mirror to our thoughts and feelings. Perhaps one key question we might ponder in the "half-hour a day" is "Ayeka? What are my priorities? Am I passionate about the Yiddishkeit I am transmitting to my children?" ■



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# The Unity Issue

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עַד שָׂאֵב מִימִיד:



# COMING FULL CIRCLE:

## *My Sister on her Women's Circle*

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Zeesy (Deutsch) Silberberg, West Bloomfield, MI  
*Graduating class of 5763 (2003)*

Chanel (Deutsch) Lipskier, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5761 (2001)*

As kids in Crown Heights, having our own bed was a ridiculous luxury. My sister Chanel and I would take turns flipping directions in our shared bed, because, of course, whoever's head was closest to the hallway could eavesdrop on our parents' conversation.

Shabbos would come and with it, a bunch of sleepover guests. We were relegated to the space underneath the dining room table. Like a pile of kittens, we cuddled there and felt like the luckiest kids in the world. Six little girls and two boys, and we basically shared everything from our beds to our uniforms, to Mrs. Rabinowitz song renditions, to in-house color war competitions. (When we did eventually move into a bigger house, we couldn't understand why our parents thought that was a good idea.)

We received the same strong, foundational message from school: You are shlichim. You are here to bring another Yid closer. Maybe it's giving up your comfortable bed, or entertaining interesting guests, or baking a few dozen challahs... but this is our responsibility and our privilege as Lubavitchers.

It was a powerful position. We were in the army.

Fast forward a few decades. All of my siblings are now living parallel lives in our respective communities across the United States. I am so lucky to have big and little sisters who celebrate the good times of my shlichus with me and coach me through the challenging ones as if they're right here in my living room.

To me, though, my sister in Crown Heights embodies the messages of our youth more than any of us.

*Being with other women and sharing similar struggles and successes is so empowering.*



Chanel (now Lipskier) lives with her husband and her five beautiful children, ka”h, around the corner from our childhood home. She runs an organization that was needed decades ago: the Crown Heights Women’s Circle. In between pickups and programs and our progeny, we sat down for a few minutes to explore her work. Grab a cup of coffee and come sit with us.

**Zeesy:** Hey big sis, why did you start the Women’s Circle?

**Chanel:** My husband founded The Beis Medrash (inspired by his father, a”h, who taught Baalei Teshuva in Morristown) in 2010. Around the same time, my friend Dvora Lakein said we should make a sisterhood to The Beis Medrash. So we did. The Women’s Circle was born in 2012.

My daily inspiration to keep our Circle rolling is the story of three women in Frankfurt, Germany in the 1800s.

During that time, Germany’s Jews were under the stronghold of Mendelsohn and the Reform movement. Frankfurt aand Main were so secular, you could barely recognize a Yid. Reb Shamshon Refael Hirsch took the bull by the horns and opened chadarim, one cheder each for girls and boys. When the first three girls were old enough to marry, he asked if they would promise to keep three mitzvos: Kashrus, Taharas Hamishpocha, and hair covering. They agreed. These women raised families who raised families of frum Yidden... and Yiddishkeit flourished again.



*The Deitsch siblings as children*

The Rebbe would tell this story at farbrengens to encourage women to wear a sheitel. The Rebbe was effectively saying that although it’s not the popular thing to do right now, YOU can make a difference by wearing one.

**Zeesy:** That is inspiring. What do you offer your women?



**Chanel:** Our cornerstone and most successful program is our weekly Caffeine for the Soul. We meet every Wednesday morning at 9:30 am at The Shul on Albany to learn Chassidus. Perhaps what makes us stand apart from other local shiurim is that babies are welcome. We set up toys on a large rug in the middle of a circle of chairs. The babies play while the mommies learn. It’s not a “Mommy and Me”; we are focused on mommies learning and conversing. But we do tolerate their disruptions graciously.



*Wednesday morning Caffeine For The Soul*

Seven Wednesdays of the year we are treated to Shaindy Jacobson and her Rosh Chodesh Society curriculum.

Another ongoing program is our Imos U’Banos-Mother-Daughter learning, modeled after Avos U’Banim. Girls come with their mother, sister, neighbor, or friend to Kahal Chassidim where they receive a binder and a choice of material that best suits them (in English, Yiddish, Hebrew, etc.). Mothers are encouraged to drop their cellphones into a box to really focus on the hour with their daughter (and be entered into a raffle for breakfast for two). This program runs from Tishrei until Pesach with an end-of-season barbecue.

We also offer special events throughout the year addressing relevant topics like postpartum depression, Shalom Bayis, the role of a woman as a wife and mother, bullying, etc. Every 18 months we host a magnificent Shabbaton at Vallevue Estate in Morristown. It’s a huge highlight for everyone with a long waiting list.

**Zeesy:** What are some of the struggles and joys in what you do?

**Chanel:** Mostly, my struggles are when I'm pregnant and not feeling well. Mrs. Esther Sternberg once told me, "Anyone can run the Women's Circle, only you can have your babies. Delegate!" And by now, the Women's Circle runs beautifully with or without me, thanks to dedicated volunteers like Naomi Shleifer, Shoshana Nocks, Chani Chein, Faigy Schwei and others.

My joys far outweigh any of the stress or challenges. I walk home every Wednesday morning on a high. It's my inspiration for the week, and it's not only the learning. Being with other women and sharing similar struggles and successes is so empowering. Naomi Shleifer put it well. She says, "My week consists of Shabbos and Wednesday and without both of them it's just not complete."

*The shiur was my lifeline and helped me pull through.*



*Shabbaton*

It's women like Naomi who encourage the Women's Circle to grow. She recently told me that she and her husband felt so lonely and isolated in CH and were ready to move away just before discovering our Circle. That was seven years ago. Now she's a pillar; I couldn't do it without her.

**Zeesy:** Can you give me an example of how the Women's Circle has made a lasting impact on someone's life?

**Chanel:** One woman who recently moved away sent me this letter:

"Shortly after the Wednesday shiur began, I suffered from a very dark depression (PPD). On the outside, I still appeared myself. But inside I was hurting. It was so foreign to me, naturally being a positive and outgoing person. I cried and cried every morning when my husband left for work and felt alone and

vulnerable. One big factor kept me going: The Wednesday morning shiur. I knew I'd be ok while I was in the company of my newfound friends. I literally relaxed as soon as I entered the doors, as I felt secure in everyone's company. You can imagine why I made sure to attend no matter the weather! The shiur was my lifeline and helped me pull through. B"H, the depression lifted, but the friendships that formed with the admirable ladies of the Circle are still strong!"

Another one of our members shared a powerful story at our recent Shabbaton. Picture the scene:

We are all sitting on the terrace as the sun dips behind the mountains.

Yehudis\* gets up to speak.

Several years ago, her doctor told her something was amiss during a complicated pregnancy. When her daughter was born, her husband sent a family WhatsApp, "Mazel tov, we had a baby girl. She doesn't have arms or legs."

Their baby passed away 8 months later. Yehudis continued to cook supper and put it on the table, and she'd bathe the kids and put them to bed, but her simchas hachayim was gone. "I was functioning on the outside, but I was dead inside," she told us. And then someone told her about the Women's Circle and encouraged her to attend that year's Shabbaton.

She said the Shabbaton awakened something inside of her, and she came home a changed person. She started to feel happy again, her home became a happy place again, her husband was happy again. She thanked the Women's Circle for giving her life back to her. When I encouraged her to share her story, she asked her husband if she should. "Of course you will do it," he told her. "We owe them everything."



**Zeesy:** I know you have some periods of time where you are fully involved in the Women's Circle, like before a big event or before the Shabbaton. How does that affect your kids? How do you juggle both?

**Chanel:** Zee! Do you think I have life all figured out?! I don't! I have hopes.



Chanel and Dvora

**Zeesy:** Okay...?

**Chanel:** I hope my children grow up to give to others, to be selfless, even when it's hard. Especially when it's hard. We want chassidishe nachas from our kids! Our society puts so much emphasis on children's desires. Self-esteem is given so much consideration. It's not their fault that they take us seriously and grow up to be demanding and self-centered.

I don't think it was this way 100 years ago. Wants and feelings were luxuries. (Imagine Bubbe Maryasha saying to her child, "Who wants to help me plant a vegetable garden so we won't starve while Tatty is in prison?" I just can't picture it.)

In order for my kids to grow up and not think that they are G-d's gift to humanity (they are, by the way, they just don't have to *know* it), it's important that they aren't **FIRST** *all* the time. I think it's good for them when I say, "I'm going

*In order for my kids to grow up and not think that they are G-d's gift to humanity, it's important that they aren't FIRST all the time.*



Naomi Schleifer with her daughter at a Wednesday morning CFTS



out to set up for an event." Or, "Mommy and Tatty are preparing for the shiur- no interruptions." Or, "Please deliver this supper to my friend."

While being an Akeres Habayis is my primary role, it doesn't need to be my *only* role. At the end of the day, taking care of my husband, my children, my haircutting business, and my house is still selfish-it's all me and mine. Giving back to our community, through the Women's Circle, is for others.

**Zeesy:** Did you ever struggle with the fact that you were staying in Crown Heights and not doing shlichus outside of our community?

**Chanel:** In seminary in Tzfas, Mrs. Sara Kaplan told us that a good marriage is one that shares a common goal. For example, shlichus, where both are focused on what the Rebbe wants of you. I was sold.

As it turns out, our shlichus is here in Crown Heights. I have my mother-in-law, my parents, grandparents, and even a few siblings in town. I'm so blessed. And Batsheva Borenstein (nee Bronstein), my BFF from school, lives directly across the street. As in, we can see each other from our kitchen tables. Zee, I'm not kidding. It's amazing.

Hashem had a plan and I see that now. I don't know how I would manage my pregnancies if I lived far away.

**Zeesy:** I love that, sister! So many of us live with our eye on someone else's lot and imagine, "If I lived over there, and had that incredible (insert: job, family, or community), I'd be flying." The good and the bad, it's our shlichus, no matter where we are. We're working on embracing it until the coming of Moshiach. ■

*\*Name has been changed.*





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# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## WHEN SIBLINGS GO FROM RIVALS TO ALLIES

Leah (Dubroff ) Abraham, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5761 (2001)*



It's Thursday evening. The supper is simple, the kids have minimal homework, and the cleaning lady has just left. I walk into the kitchen to get a head start on Shabbos and that, clearly, is my first mistake. The second mistake was assuming the kids understood how Mommy was going to be busy and that their role was to therefore play together nicely and quietly.

Sure enough, elbow deep in challah dough, the first shriek is heard, followed by an even louder retort. Within minutes it's escalated to, "I'm telling Mommy!"

I take a deep breath. My mind is telling me that instead of entertaining the "here we go again" and "why can't they just get along" thoughts, I should access those great ideas I've been researching since my second child was born - when we became a family with siblings. All that drama that has entered my kitchen has a name: sibling rivalry, and apparently, it is very common.

Experts explain that siblings fight because they are in a relationship in which they are forced (by blood) to share their homes, their possessions and most seriously, the love and attention of their parents. Consequently, the solution to those feelings of injustice is to validate their emotions,

*In a moment of rebellion against all of the parenting books I've read, I don't chide myself for not giving enough, and I don't tell my kids to work it out.*

accentuate their uniqueness and give each child lots of individual time. There are hundreds of variations to this theory and tens of books of subsequent advice. The overarching theme seems to be that if a child feels special, loved and cared for, they will have the capacity to focus and act upon their favorable feelings towards their siblings.

Armed with this knowledge, amidst the chaos of being asked to play juror and judge, I mentally check if I've been paying enough attention to this one or that one. Then I start psychoanalyzing my parenting and my priorities, mommy guilt rears its ugly head and I know that something is not working.

In a moment of rebellion against all of the parenting books I've read, I don't chide myself for not giving enough, and I don't tell my kids to work it out. I seek out the familiar and suddenly realize that I've seen this before. Why a child will get angry at breakfast because his sister "is staring at me" is baffling to my adult brain, but everyone gets into disagreements that seem illogical to others. This is not a sibling rivalry issue, it's a conflict resolution issue. Sibling rivalry is emotionally draining and feels endless, but reframing it as conflict resolution suddenly feels hopeful and purposeful. And from that point, it gets easier.

In the world of Tohu, each sefira shone in its fullest greatness. They got all the "love" and "attention" and each was totally unique and completely expressed. But that world eventually shattered. That's because what was needed was not a world in which each koach was fully expressed, but a world in which each shone and allowed for the others to shine as well. The sefiros of this world, the world of Tikun, work with each other, respect each other and need each other. This is the ultimate form of unity - that each of us is better because we have each other.

As humans (of all ages), our nature is to believe that we are right. Our opinions, our decisions, our choices - they are important to us and we have come to them because we think they are the best ones. Our personalities also play a significant role in our behavior and ideas, and the modern world has continuously lauded individualism, independence and self-expression. "You do you", "Follow your gut", "You

have to do what works for you" - the encouragement to focus on self is paramount. And I wonder if we have paid the price elsewhere for it.

Maybe I've been so focused on the individualism of each child, developing and expressing their uniqueness, that I have faltered in teaching them how to see and need others.

The foundation of conflict resolution is that each party explains their perspective and needs, and a resolution is jointly made. Even if one person conclusively is considered "right", much is being learned in the process, most significantly that each now has a greater understanding of the other. Hearing someone else out, asking questions for clarity, having an open mind for change, makes you a better person. We are at our

best because of all the bests in others that we welcome into our lives.

So, with a newfound confidence, I turn to each child and ask them what happened. The first thing they say is an automatic "he....." (I bet you all read that in the correct tone of voice too). I have them start again. Tell me, what was going on for you, what were you trying to do and what interfered? Everyone gets a chance. I help the youngest, I give a perspective for the baby, and I also share what it's like for me. This is not just about validating feelings, it's about hearing the same experience from another

person's eyes. I ask what they need, and we come up with solutions, ways how they can help each other and that make sense for all of them. Sometimes they don't have the patience to go through it all, (or maybe they're just well-practiced), and a solution is suggested right off the bat. Sometimes, once the intensity is diffused or the words are spoken aloud, no solution is actually needed. Sometimes we don't have any great ideas and we leave it for another time.

But for now, peace reigns and Challah is on tomorrow's shopping list.

I silently thank Hashem for my family, I recommit to reading more parenting books and giving more attention to my children, and I pray that as they grow to love themselves and each other more expressively, they can work these things out on their own.

At least on a lower decibel and on Thursday nights. ■

*That's because what was needed was not a world in which each koach was fully expressed, but a world in which each shone and allowed for the others to shine as well.*

# *LET'S DO IT FOR REAL*

Freidel (Patterson) Levin , Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5762 (2002)*



**U**nity is a responsibility, a choice.

Every time we decide to look at the positive, accepting a person for who they are, we are choosing to be part of a united front. We are nothing special when we're all the same. However, when we allow each other space to be, and celebrate our uniqueness, we can revel in the incredible whole that we make together.

This past year has been trying for me both personally and professionally - full of difficult changes, adjustments, and surprises. I have learned how comparison, jealousy, and gossip are dangerous harbingers of ill will; how if those feelings are allowed to stay, they can create real harm to us personally and as a whole. I have learned that judgment of others is a sign of my own insecurities, that it would be so much harder for me to be better if I am in that place.

We live in times where so much that has once been private is now public. We are connected in so many amazing ways, but we have lost our sensitivity and privacy along with it.

When someone is struggling, we may instinctively feel like asking, why/how/did you do this?" A much more productive reaction, however, would be: "how can I support you?" Sometimes, we watch another's life as if on-screen, gossiping and analyzing, forgetting that it is actually someone's life and not a scripted show.

Let's replace judgment with compassion!

I take responsibility for my thoughts, but there is no way to control how other people think. When I act true to who I am and what I am experiencing right now, I am trusting those around me to respect that. If they will understand, if I will be protected... that is not in my hands. I don't know how my actions will be returned to me.

*However, when  
we allow each  
other space to be,  
and celebrate our  
uniqueness, we  
can revel in the  
incredible whole  
that we make  
together.*

But if sharing is a risk, it's one I have to take. Because the only way to be connected is to share. To be a part of a true relationship, there needs to be trust and faith in each other. I put my faith in everyone around me by being myself.

By being true to myself, not letting myself be susceptible to judging, I am taking the old law of "be the same or be an outcast" and saying, "You know what? No. There is value to who I am right now and I am constantly evolving. Love me anyway, like I am learning to love you. Because when you show up to me with your story and your honesty, I plan to accept and respect you."

I have learned that it is in my best interest to smile at each face I encounter with absolute sincerity and love. Because when I look at you as an ever-evolving human who is trying your best I just want to cheer you on; I want you to succeed. And that makes me feel great. That's where I want to be.

Putting aside our generalizations, assumptions, and differences is what enables true unity. Loving each other *because* we are each unique and absolutely amazing is where we find our strength. If we are to stand together, let's do it with love. Let's do it being proud of our individual identities. Let's do it for real.

## A SLICE OF HUMBLE PIE

Sara Blau

*Graduating class of 5766 (2006)*

Two guys were sitting in a room, determined to become humble at all costs. They sat there for days and contemplated their lowliness, convincing themselves that they were total nobodies, truly pious and humble. Suddenly, a third guy entered the room and started pacing, mumbling to himself, "I'm a nothing. A nobody. Simple and humble."

The other two nudged each other and laughed. "This guy just showed up, and already he thinks he's a nobody!"

Humility isn't about thinking you are more humble than everyone else. But it is about being more humble

than literally every other person on the planet, as our sages instruct: "Be lowly of spirit before every man." How can you appreciate that others, even sinners, are greater than you? By being in awe of their struggles. And by asking yourself if you exert the same inner stamina as they do to combat your own challenges.

It's a definite, and sometimes necessary, ego puncture. If you find yourself feeling too smug in your service of G-d, you may just need to remind yourself that you're not really that great after all.

Maybe your friend lives or works in a place that is full of temptation? Maybe his or her nature is more passionate than yours, making him or her more susceptible to sin? Do you know the extent of your friend's private demons? Do you have any idea how much it takes to battle such strenuous inner turmoil?

When you think in those terms, you stop thinking you are holier than thou. You start questioning whether you invest enough energy to stop yourself from repeating a juicy piece of gossip or whether you are scrupulously honest in money matters as you should be. You wonder if you make it a regular practice to get out of your comfort zone enough to increase in Torah learning and prayer.

It occurs to you that if you're lucky enough to be well-versed in Torah, then you should be living life on a higher plane; instead of pointing fingers at others, you should hold up a mirror to your own actions and check your own standards. And you realize that you are no better than anyone else and if anything, may even be lacking in the effort department.

A humbling thought indeed.

*Sometimes, in order to be truly spiritual, you need to feed your ego a slice of introspective humble pie. ■*

*(Inspired by Perek Lamed of Tanya)*



# COMMUNITY

## Strong

---

Leah (Polter) Engel, Fair Lawn, New Jersey  
*Graduating class of 5772 (2012)*



**T**ishrei 5778 had just ended. Life was getting back into routine when we heard the devastating news. A friend's baby was diagnosed with leukemia. What did this mean? What to do? Tehillim rounds were being split and mitzvos and hachlatos were being pledged. But more needed to be done, we wanted a guarantee that all would end well.

The Rebbe continuously stresses how we have the koach to change/reverse a seemingly dark situation; it's all a matter of an influx of light. Yud Tes Kislev was right around the corner, the day that epitomizes and inspires this very concept. In truth, we were banking on the Alter Rebbe's bracha where he promises to fulfill the requests of those who take part in celebrating his Yom HaGeulah. This needed to be BIG and so we reached out and joined forces with N'shei Chabad of Crown Heights.

### *The Event:*



The achdus came pouring in. We fundraised to have a seudah for the entire community as the Alter Rebbe wanted. The Crown Heights community, as well as individual people, went above and beyond, providing more than what was expected of them to make this a reality. Whether it was the individual who made the graphics and videos, the lady who took on all the décor, an event coordinator who made this project her own, or the caterer who prepared more than what he was compensated for, the chessed and kindness was overflowing.

## The Theme:



Deciding what to focus on came with the simple logic: bring Moshiach, end ALL suffering. The trick; achdus and Ahavas Yisroel. But the execution was harder. This isn't a new concept. We know that Sinas

Chinam is what brought about the second churban and Ahavas Chinam will replace it. And we also know how real our intellect and even more real our emotions are. When something hurts, it hurts deep down. How practical is this whole "Ahavas Yisroel" mantra?

This was the target of the Yud Tes Kislev event. Demystifying the key to Ahavas Yisroel.

We were born to struggle, and as we know from Tanya, that itself gives Hashem immense pleasure. Practically, Ahavas Yisroel can be achieved with Geula Therapy. A therapy made up of one baby step at a time to fully strengthen our emunah in Hashem. To train our natural inclination and psyche to live on a higher realm.

It is the recognition that wherever I may be and all that I have in life is exactly set up by Hashem, in my best interest, to fulfill my mission here on earth. It is the belief that even though it doesn't seem good now, He knows what is best for me. And I trust Him wholeheartedly throughout the journey. Yes, one's emotions may rage in the moment, but perhaps just this once it can be pushed aside to experience a Geula moment.

A moment where although I may be struggling with shidduchim, parnassah, shlichus, children, or whatever one's individual example may be, I consciously make the effort to be genuinely happy for my peer that was blessed with this exact thing.

A moment where I recognize that she is not to blame for taking my job, but rather that is how Hashem desired it to be. The fact that she got it is because that is her unique shlichus and circumstances Hashem set her up for. And I am set up with my own.

A moment where I am happy with all that Hashem has provided for my imperfect life in this imperfect world.

A moment of forgiveness.

Like any therapy, this takes meditation and consistency. The Golus narrative is a strong one. But the potency of our combined Geula moments is that

much greater. It may just be your moment that will be the final one to bring Moshiach!

## Project C:



The inspiration was pulsing. The time was ripe. Project C had just been born. Women uniting and learning about Moshiach would be the perfect way to harness the Geula therapy.

The idea was to create a space where we can keep the achdus pumping and encourage one another to get our job of bringing Moshiach done. To unite our actual and virtual Crown Heights communities with block gatherings to learn about Moshiach in anticipation of it becoming a reality. The coordination and arrangements of the simultaneous hosting, learning, and teaching in Crown Heights and around the world were spearheaded by another devoted pair of girls who saw it to fruition.

## The Outcome:



Over 1,000(!) women attended the Yud Tes Kislev Farbrengen and an average of 500 women united at each Project C event. Wow! The goodness was perpetuating, the achdus was growing and the Mitzvos increasing.

## The Baby:



B"H with the help of Hashem and the Rebbe's brachos, our little fighter had a miraculous recovery.

Our story can end here.

But our job to bring Moshiach did not finish.

This year, I continued to be involved in the Yud Tes Kislev N'shei event as a personal thank you and in the zchus of a refuah sheleima for another baby. The theme was along the lines of living Geula moments. To open our eyes for the Geula.

## Epilogue:



A few months later, I gave birth to beautiful twin girls who were medically conjoined. They fought bravely for five months and on the first day of Sshavuos their precious neshamos returned to Hashem.

Ironically, our children literally embodied the idea that we are all connected. We are one. The reason we are in separate bodies is in order for each of us to fulfill our individual shlichus in this world. I find Ahavas Yisroel a constant avodah for myself and not always so easy. Many times when traumatic things happen, our knee jerk reaction is the desire for everyone to magically make amends, be angelic, and voila Moshiach will arrive. But I don't think that is the point of this mitzvah. Hashem knows we are human beings and doesn't judge us for it. And we shouldn't have to judge others either. Instead, let's recognize that we don't know their challenges, upbringing, character traits, or bad habits. And that if we were in their shoes, it is likely we wouldn't be any better. Hashem is the only one that knows who is really trying to work on this mitzvah in their heart.

The main thing is to do our best and put in the effort. Don't underestimate every positive thought process about another Jew. And if you B"H don't have negative feelings towards others, as Mrs. Sara Kaplan says, "Anytime we feel we are "better" than others, it is just Hashem reminding us that we still have work to do."

Every time we put effort into this Mitzvah, combating our instinctual reaction, we create a Geula moment! So.. What can you do for the girls and for Moshiach to come?

Perhaps you can cut out the attached card from the magazine and read it every day before davening. Read it for a zchus for Moshiach to come because that's what all of us need and want. And if you may, read it for the precious neshamos of Miriam Maryasha and Fraida Geulah.

Bezras Hashem very soon our two little daughters will thank each and every one of you and dance together with us all to the sound of the shofar blowing, may it happen now! Amen! ■

לע"נ מרים מריישא בת אברהם צבי הכהן  
ופריידא גאולה בת אברהם צבי הכהן



**Making Ahavas Yisroel a Reality in Your Life**

**1. Verbalize the truth:**  
 הרניי מקבלי עלי מצות עשה של ואהבת לרעך כמוך  
 the mitzvah, "love your fellow Jew as yourself." When you bring these words into the realm of speech, this message penetrates your being and has a greater effect.

**2. Regard others with an עין טובה, a good eye. This will protect you from jealousy which causes hate.**

- » Be happy for others. In order to truly be happy for others, you must be happy where you are and with what you have. If you struggle with this, you should strengthen your connection to Hashem and know that wherever you are and whatever you have is **exactly** what Hashem wants for you right now; it is exactly what you need to fulfill your unique shlichus in this world which only **you** and your neshama can accomplish.
- » Looking at others with a good eye also means refraining from judging. The yetzer hara, the self-centered part of the brain, tries to convince you that you're better than other people. When you look at others, remind yourself that you have no idea of the challenges Hashem has given them. It is very likely you would be no different if you were given the exact same circumstances.

**3. If someone has hurt you, daven for him.**

- » First, acknowledge that because you're hurt, you can't be objective. עשה לך רב, find someone to help determine if your pain is due to your lack of a good eye. But what if it really is the other person, someone who has clearly wronged me from the Torah perspective?
- » **The Alter Rebbe provides the necessary tools to overcome any and all negative feelings toward others:**  
 Know that any and all pain you have endured from someone else comes only from Hashem and is for your benefit! Strengthen your Emunah, your faith that everything Hashem does is for the good, and know that you will see the benefit eventually even if you don't see it now.

The Alter Rebbe points out that even in the case where the Torah legitimizes hating a Jew for his wrongdoing, you should "hate his bad and love his good." But these two emotions should not be equal; you should daven for this person's G-dly spark that is suffering because it has fallen so low.

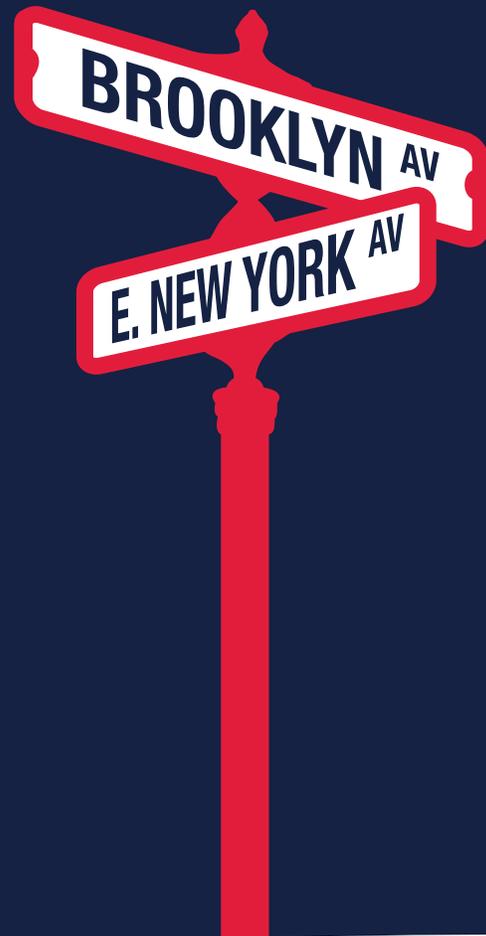
By davening for someone who has hurt you, you will accomplish three things:  
 1) Help another Jew 2) Arouse your love towards that person which will overpower the hate 3) Bring blessings to yourself and your family.

**Is having true Ahavas Yisroel difficult? YES! Does every effort have an effect? YES! Is it what will bring Moshiach and end this bitter exile once and for all? ABSOLUTELY!**

**Let's all take five minutes each day to review these principles and make it happen NOW!**

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# SO FAR YET SO NEAR

Miri (Carlebach) Lipskier, Melbourne, Australia  
*Graduating class of 5765 (2005)*



Rolling out of bed on Carroll and Brooklyn each morning meant leaving my home every day six minutes before the davening doors closed, and still having time to spare. My Crown Heights life and circles were a comfy twelve block circumference and I loved it! Family and friends all within a few streets of each other, and our reference point for ‘great distance’ was flying to California. 6 hours!

Geography class was never something that had me enraptured, and I wasn’t a globe trotter post high school either. I was ever so complacent doing the summer camps upstate and a few states away, while my friends cut their teeth on Russian and Slovakian. And here’s the Crown Heights girl who’s moved to

Australia, which definitely has its globe-trotting perks! My routes (especially Sefira time [Halachic discussion for another article]) have taken us to Dubai, Hawaii, Singapore, Germany, Vancouver, Bangkok, Qatar... and to California!

The kids we’ve been blessed with prattling in Australian accents, grilled cheese dubbed ‘brevilles’, and sweaters turned ‘jumpers’ are the surface scraping elements of wonder reflecting on the transformation of Crown Heights city girl to Down Under Shlucha. It’s a world that in my youth was worlds away, yet is now called home. It’s where I discovered that our world is a small world after all, and we are one.

Settling into town 10,356 Google-confirmed miles from

*Enter our  
Bais Rivkah  
family: where I  
connected, and  
reconnected,  
with the  
wonderful girls  
and women  
who grew up  
in the same  
community  
as I.*



my parents, family, and community was daunting. The cousins I have in Melbourne helped a tremendous amount; and of course, the fact that they speak English here. (Debatable sometimes, with terms like fair dinkum, choc o bloc, and just about every other dictionary word that Aussies have a habit of creating shorthand for [think brekkie. Avo. bikky...]) I am forever awed by my Bais Rivkah friends who call a country like France or Russia home, and have their kids speaking first languages that I wouldn't pass a Regent on!



Enter our Bais Rivkah family: where I connected, and reconnected, with the wonderful girls and women who grew up in the same community as I. The new downstairs neighbor in Australia who I had missed going to high school with by a year or two, but we could still reminisce and share memories and anecdotes of our teachers and life from our alma mater. The mechanchos and shluchos here who hailed from the same Crown Heights shtetl streets. The mothers and grandmothers who attribute their love for Yiddishkeit and Chassidus to the days they spent in the walls of Bais Rivkah. The passionate young graduates who come to spend a year on Shlichus here and share of the new and the old that are Bais Rivkah. It's not all that far away.

The strength that the earlier shluchos had to travel so far without the ease of Skype, WhatsApp, and Facetime is remarkable. The blessings of technology evolving as we approach Geula days is what keeps me



functioning! My kids have plastered many a kiss on the glass face of an iPhone, that is seen, if not felt, by their grandparents who are worlds away. They've brought their

grandparents to their classrooms in a lively 3D format, as they've read books to the class over the screen. WhatsApp groups of our Bais Rivkah grade hold beautiful bursts of inspiration and virtual farbrengens on Yomei Dipagra. Bais Rivkah childhood friends, now spread across multiple continents, share photos and reflections as our lives B"H progress.

*The distance to the buildings where I was educated is rarely felt, for those years served to instill the messages and real life lessons that reflect what education is.*

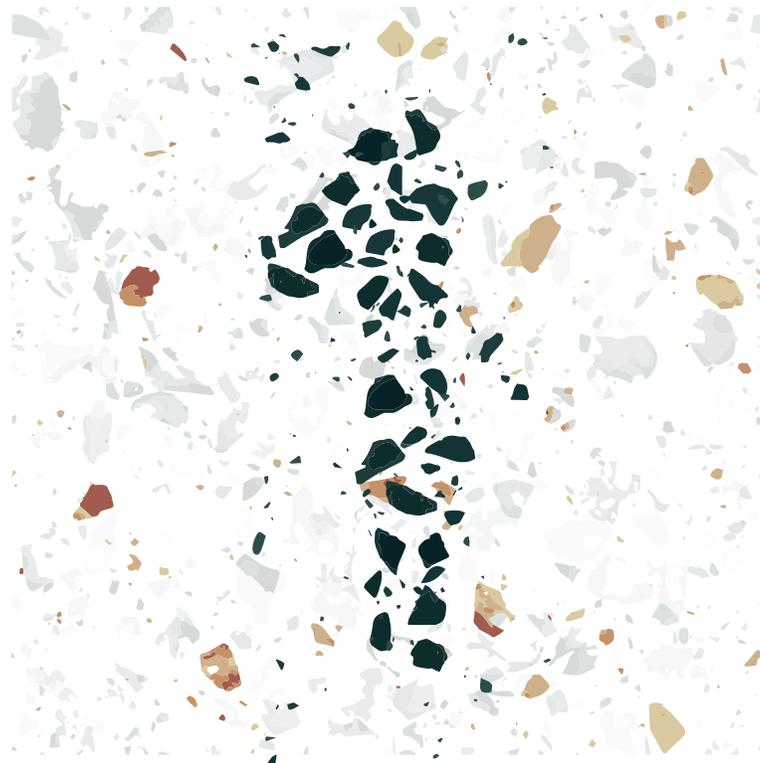


The distance to the buildings where I was educated is rarely felt, for those years served to instill the messages and real life lessons that reflect what education is. Celebrating Yomei Dipagra with our family and Shlichus community gleans inspiration from the programs, speakers, and farbrengens of my years in school. The teachers who were ever available in my youth still extend themselves with advice and wisdom that surpasses geographical distance. The years of education that inspired us to aspire to lead lives on shlichus are an inner charging source that remains the core values of the lives we lead.

The further you go, the closer you are. The Rebbe's appreciation for the geographical distance is our greatest motivation. So I'm definitely the lucky one to have traveled further than I ever thought possible, and been blessed to build a Bais Rivkah girl's home, in Australia. ■

# WHO KNOWS ONE

Moussie Berkowitz, Crown Heights  
Grade 12



## WHO KNOWS ONE?

We all have struggles. We stumble upon them daily. Our fears, insecurities and past mistakes often replay in our minds, holding us back from fulfilling what must get done. Why are they disturbing us? What are they there for?

We feverishly search outside for artificial remedies and temporary quick fixes. But are our challenges really supposed to be so threatening, so damaging, so limiting? Or can what seem like obstacles really be... stepping stones, opportunities to lift ourselves higher?

Learning Chassidus sheds light on our very real issues and challenges. When we recognize the unifying thread in the fabric of creation, the true Oneness in everything, our struggles will not be seen as blockages, but rather as vehicles of transport, propelling us closer to the Geula.

## WHAT IS UNITY?

Unity is translated as the state of being joined together as a whole; it's the feeling of oneness. Often, unity is instinctively associated with people being together, or a sense of wholeness. But there's a much deeper form of unity. A Unity which the purpose of the creation of this whole world is dependent on. A Unity that the togetherness of people stems from. A

Unity, that without it, all of us and the world would cease to exist. This Unity is the Oneness of Hashem, also known as Achdus Hashem. It's the idea that Hashem's essence, along with everything else in this world, starting from the most prestigious person to the most seemingly insignificant dust particle, are all truly one existence. But how can that be!?

*When we recognize the unifying thread in the fabric of creation, the true Oneness in everything, our struggles will not be seen as blockages.*

## INFINITE IN FINITE

It can be difficult to comprehend how an infinite Hashem can be One with his finite creations. This is graspable through understanding how Hashem creates. Hashem's unlimitedness enables Him to create a finite creation and simultaneously be completely infused in that creation. This ability does not contradict Hashem's infinity. The concept of Hashem's infinity is that He's

not bound to human perception of limitation. We can't understand how Hashem's existence works logistically, but we can understand that it's beyond our human comprehension. Hashem can do anything because He is the Creator of everything.

## OPPOSITES IN ONE

Hashem is comprised of many conflicting factors. He is able to be one with both revelation and concealment, Gashmiyus and Ruchniyus, Din and Rachamim, light and darkness, Mitzvos Asei and Mitzvos Lo Sasei, and many more seemingly contradictory existences, including good and bad.

Understanding Achdus Hashem means realizing how "ה' אחד ושמו אחד". The Baal Shem Tov explains this concept using the possuk of "הו' הוא האלוקים". Havaya is the midah of Rachamim, mercifulness. Elokim represents Hashem's midah of Din, judgment. These two names of Hashem are seemingly opposites; however, being that Hashem is One with everyone and everything, he is able to have opposing names. Hashem is the ultimate unifying factor in all opposites, because He created them all! Every moment, every speck of life is recreated by His Will, existing as an entity only because Hashem has a specific purpose for it to fulfill. Opposing forces are joined, woven together through their common factor: at their essence, they are all Hashem.

That's real Unity!

## WHY WE NEED IT

It is not only vital to understand Achdus Hashem in order to have proper Kabolos Ol and ultimately make a Dirah Betachtainim, but comprehending this concept is actually a Mitzvah. In the Rambam's Sefer Hamitzvos, the first Mitzvah discussed is Yedias Elokim, knowing who Hashem is. The second Mitzvah is Yedias Ha'Achdus, understanding Achdus Hashem and Hashem's relationship with this world. These mitzvos are relevant to us and possible for us to fulfill every second of our lives!

In his introduction to Likutei Amarim, the Mittlerer Rebbe writes that all of the maamarim that the Alter

Rebbe ever said were to help chassidim understand Achdus Hashem, and not just believe it. Our seichel is very powerful; through understanding an idea to the best of our ability, we can believe it and apply it even more.

In Perek Chof Beis

of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe explains that when we understand Achdus Hashem, we won't get involved in any of the klipos of this world. The klipos of this world, too, are part of Hashem. They, however, are expressed in a way of achorayim, from 'behind'. Hashem didn't necessarily want to create them, but he had to create them in order to give us free choice. That's why it's crucial that we understand Achdus Hashem: so that we can make correct choices.

*All of the maamarim that the Alter Rebbe ever said were to help chassidim understand Achdus Hashem.*

## WHEN EVERYTHING GOES WRONG

So what happens when I'm having a bad day? And not just a bad day- despite all those self-help tips and beautiful happiness techniques, right now, I'm feeling very, very upset. And angry.

Wait!!!

I believe in Hashem, right?

Being that we have emunah, we can agree that Hashem is all- encompassing. All-encompassing... that includes me! I am one with Hashem- there's no way He's working against me.

Nothing can bring us down when we recognize the Oneness of Hashem; how can we possibly feel let down if we know it's all a part of Hashem, who is all good? Understanding that everything happens with our best interests in mind trains us to be less tempered and inspires us to do more, at whatever cost. We're always told that everything that happens is for the best, but once we recognize Achdus Hashem as a reality in life, we gain the clarity, the ability to tell ourselves that even the most frustrating, painful situation is Hashgacha Pratis. And to really believe it!

So...disappointment? Frustration?

When we realize that the world and Hashem are a



singular unit, we can recognize Hashgacha Pratis in everyday, mundane, physical occurrences and disturbances. And with Hashem in control, with a Higher Power on the scene, the entire picture of life gets flipped around. The torrents of despair fall away in the face of trust that there is truth behind everything, faith that it's all for the best, and hope that the good will soon be revealed.

Our days are different when there is a unifying thread, a single entity binding every incident in our lives, the good and seemingly bad, together. Because in reality, it's all one. It's all Hashem!

But how do we train ourselves to think this way?

## MIND TRANSFORMER- BEFORE YOU CRASH

Life is great! Amazing things are happening! B"H!

When your day is coming along nicely, you're feeling good, having fun, or you're just doing your own thing-Hashem belongs there too! By incorporating your Creator, by having an Achdus Hashem mindset in your

regular, mundane thought processes and excursions, the concept grows on you. It helps you realize that everything is actually Hashem and revolves around Him!

A really practical way to live this is by speaking it: Boruch Hashem, Be'ezras Hashem, Im Yirtze Hashem, G-d willing... It really works. That train of thought dances with you through those happy days, adds an extra spark to those boring, mundane moments, and keeps you standing even when everything is falling apart.

So think about Achdus Hashem. Invite Hashem into your heart. Let Him guide you. It's a mind transformer. It's a life transformer!

May we be zoche to the day when we will all be able to perceive Hashem's Oneness, the unifying thread in the fabric of creation, with perfect clarity in every aspect of our lives, with the coming of Moshiach NOW! ■



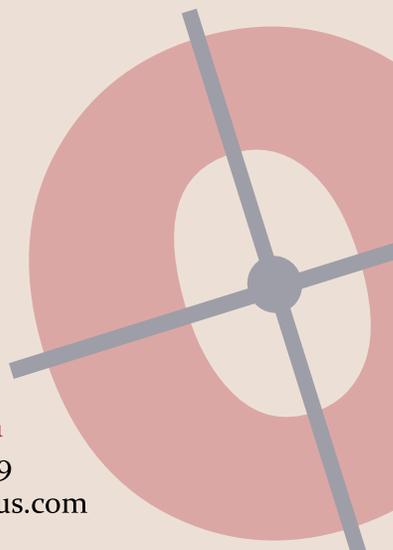
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# CONQUER *the* DIVIDE

---

Tonia Minkowitz, Crown Heights  
*Grade 12*



From my vantage point at the back corner of the Raleigh Hotel ballroom, I couldn't help but marvel at the school I am fortunate to attend. The electric energy in the room was one that could only be created by the unity of hundreds of girls. But this energy is not exclusive to our Shabbaton, it permeates our classrooms and hallways, and I am often baffled by this. How can so many teenage girls, all from different backgrounds, come together like we do in Bais Rivkah every day?

Of course, we aren't perfect, and I think many students sitting in the shul rolled their eyes when the Maamer Heichaltzu was introduced as Shabbaton's theme. With the slogan of "Conquer the Divide", we were expected to transcend the social norms of sitting with our friends, partaking in the activities that our social circles deemed acceptable, to sit with other grademates. My immediate reaction was that it was a cliché theme as we were all going to sit with our friends anyway, but then I learned the Rebbe Rashab's Heichaltzu.

*We were expected to transcend the social norms of sitting with our friends.*

## THE QUESTIONS

In Chumash Bamidbar, Moshe commanded the Yidden: "Arm from among you men for the army, that they can be against Midian, and carry out the revenge of Havaye against Midian."

This statement seems puzzling.

Why wasn't the war fought against the seven nations inhabiting Eretz Yisroel, if they seemingly caused more damage to Bnei Yisroel?



What was so significant about the war with Midian, and why did Moshe specifically have to be the one to fight the war?

And why are the words “Arm from among you men” used, in place of simpler language?

### WHAT’S IT REALLY ABOUT?

The name Havaya represents unity and synthesis. The klipa of Midian directly opposes this- Midian is the source of all discord and separation; it’s the root of baseless hatred. Midian is much worse than the seven nations, which represent the seven evil middos including anger, lust, and so on. Why?

A regular aveira causes a blemish in one letter of the name Havaya. However, Sinas Chinam causes a blemish in the name Havaya as a whole! This makes it much harder to correct the Klipa of Midian than the others, even though the other transgressions may seem much greater. Looking at the effect of these aveiros underscores this concept: The first Golus, which resulted from violating three severe aveiros, lasted only seventy years. The present Golus, however, as it is known, was caused by Sinas Chinam, baseless hatred. That’s why it has been the longest Golus yet (although the Rebbe said that is no longer a reason).

So what exactly is Sinas Chinam? Hating another Jew for no good reason- really?! Where does that come from?

### DEVIOS ROOTS

Baseless hatred stems from the feeling that another’s existence takes from your own, that another’s accomplishments minimize yours. It all starts from that intense feeling of self that creates an intolerance for anything that is other than that. From this root will come a million reasons, explanations, and vindication for the dislike, along with a sense of entitlement, need for validation, combined with feelings of inadequacy. It sounds like a recipe for disaster, but it’s the lives we all lead. So how do we get over our own inflated selves and make room for others?



### OVERPOWERING UNITY

That’s exactly why Moshe Rabbeinu had to be the one to fight the dividing forces of Midian as the reprisal for Havaya, unity. Moshe was the epitome of humility, of bittul, and appreciating others can only happen when the “I” is not overpowering.

Moshe himself had to “arm the men”, choose the soldiers, for by choosing the soldiers he gave them a nesinas koach, the ability to win this crucial war.

*Baseless hatred stems from the feeling that another’s existence takes from your own, that another’s accomplishments minimize yours.*

### A TIMELESS BATTLE

The battle against Midian, against baseless hatred, against divide is still being waged. We fight it every day, empowered by our Moshe, our Rebbe to emerge victorious, however hard it may be. Every army has rigorous training regiments to minimize or even eliminate the casualties, and we are no different. In Perek Lamed Beis of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe gives us a set of guidelines to follow. We need to look at our fellow Yidden not as their physical beings, but as a G-dly fire sent into this world, recreated every moment to fulfill a vital mission for the Creator of the world Himself. Fire, from the most impressive blazing flame to the smallest flickering wick, becomes one when joined; a oneness that is inseparable. Regardless of stature or character, at our essence, we are all the same. When we define ourselves by our true value, we are all one neshama.

When we realize how at our core, we are all the same, and our outsides just enhance the world and enable us to fulfill our specific missions, we can truly appreciate every Yid for who they are. That’s when we really conquered the divide!

### IN ACTION

Yet even so, as physical people it requires a lifelong avodah to be able to look over the flaws we see in someone else. At our Friday night roundtable discussions, I had the privilege of hearing from Morah Lipsker. She said that in order to be able to ignore something that bothers us about someone

else, we should imagine the circumstances that cause them to act like that. For example, I have a friend who loves to ask questions. She questions everything that our teachers say, and doesn't let up until she has an answer she's satisfied with. This can be annoying, especially when the bell is ringing and it's time for lunch (which is short even without late dismissal). I thought about what Morah Lipsker said and I tried to rationalize why she loves to ask questions. I will never know the real reason, but the thought process alone was enough to assuage my annoyance. I realized that I had the zechus of going to Bais Rivkah practically since birth, and that she only joined later on. She probably wasn't always surrounded by teachers who each have a unique perspective on Chassidus.

Realizing that, I was able to learn from her to ask all my questions while I am still in high school and have these amazing resources available to me.

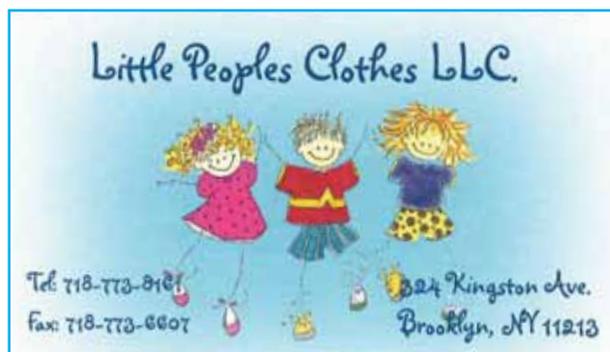


Left: Bais Rivkah High School Shabbaton 5779 logo.

Right: The logo made up of photos of all Bais Rivkah girls.

## UNITY – FOR REAL!

So even though I was one of the girls who initially rolled my eyes at the Shabbaton theme, and I definitely



have a long way to go in my Ahavas Yisroel, I realized what the magic ingredient that permeates the air of school is, the fundamental factor which allows for such an amazing environment

conducive for literal and spiritual growth. It's Chassidus, and the lengths that our school goes to infuse our every day with its deepest concepts and ideas. This ingredient is the toichen behind every small activity we do, every program we have, and every treat we get (yeah, those Laffy Taffys do actually have a meaning). This is why hundreds of girls are able to get along and join as one every day—we are all here with a shared thirst for Chassidus, even if we don't feel it, and our flames all burn as one. And when we all come together as one big fire, we can certainly overcome the separation rooted in Midian, that division that fosters animosity.

I love walking through the doors of Bais Rivkah every day; the doors that house the strongest army out there. It's there where I get the strength to stay a part of this army when, one day, I will no longer walk through those doors. I know that I have hundreds of sisters within those doors, and thousands spread throughout the globe, who will each continue to fight and do their part in bringing Moshiach, may it be right now! ■

*We need to look at our fellow Yidden not as their physical beings, but as a G-dly fire sent into this world.*



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# In Harmony *with* Your Spouse

Rivky (Losh) Levy, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class 5756 (1996)*



**W**hatever we pay attention to in our lives will grow. If you pay attention to the flowers in your garden, the flowers will grow. If you pay attention to your wardrobe, you will have a lot of clothes. If you pay attention to your relationships and put in a lot of effort, they will grow and blossom to be beautiful and everlasting.

Here are a few great ways to build positive energy in your marriage:

## 1. DON'T COMPARE

On a Tuesday afternoon, a couple sat over coffee in a coffee shop. A friend of theirs spotted them and marveled at how they were sitting and relaxing together in the middle of the day. “I should tell my husband about this couple, my husband never takes me anywhere,” she muttered under her breath. The truth was that the couple had fallen onto hard times financially and could not pay their mortgage bills. Their house had gone into foreclosure. They had gone together to work out a plan of how to keep their home. After a long and difficult meeting, they had stopped for coffee in the area and bumped into their friend.

You have no idea what's going on in other people's lives. Don't compare your life to others. In a handwritten note, the Rebbe gives advice to a woman about Shalom Bayis:

*"The situation that you are writing about—exists among many people (although, of course, everyone tries to hide and minimize it, and this causes one to mistakenly think that it's a very rare situation)—it exists either at a similar level, to a less serious degree, or to a more serious degree. In the vast majority of cases, the situation eventually quiets down."*

"Work on wanting what you have, instead of spending your strength trying to get what you want." You are given brachos from Hashem. Often, these brachos can be taken for granted. Try to be grateful for the things that you have. It says in Pirkei Avos, "אִיזוֹהוּ עֹשֵׂי הַשְּׂמֵחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ." Who is rich? One who is happy with what he has.

We can learn from Sara Imenu how to be grateful and not compare ourselves to others. It says that she lived 127 equally good years. How is this possible? She had a very difficult life-- she was kidnapped, couldn't have children until she was very old, and almost had her only son taken from her at Akeidas Yitzchak. From where did she get her strength? Sara Imenu's challah stayed fresh from week to week, never turning stale. Her challah represents

### 1. A Chassidisher Derher



the brachos in her life. She didn't look at other people's lives. When we look at other people's brachos, our challah becomes stale and we fail to see the brachos in our own lives.

When you appreciate the people in your life, you stop wanting them to be who they are not.

## 2. LET IT GO

A woman went to a busy doctor's office in Manhattan to get an x-ray. As she waited in line, she noticed many people in the packed waiting room getting up and asking, "How much longer?" "How many people are in front of me?" The secretary patiently answered each inquiry. Then, a man with special needs walked over to the counter. After looking at the appointment roster, the secretary realized that he had no appointment scheduled for that day. She kindly said, "Sorry sir, you're not on the list for today." Not understanding her, he kept on repeating that he wanted to be seen. She continued to calmly tell him that he was not on the list for that day. This went on for a while until he turned around and left. Impressed that the secretary didn't lose her cool, the woman on line complimented her on her composure. The secretary replied, "I used to get so annoyed at the people who came in. I have worked on myself to remain calm, cool, and collected and not allow myself to get frustrated. I let things slide and don't take it personally."

*Whatever we pay attention to in our lives will grow.*

Walk around as if you're wearing a raincoat on a rainy day. Just as the water runs off the plastic material, let things slide. There are often small frustrations in relationships - try not to let everything get to you. Those few minutes late, the forgotten errand, even the annoying comment - not everything is personal and not everything is a big deal. When you allow things to get to you, it's like wearing a sweater on a rainy day. Every drop of rain soaks the sweater and drags it down to become heavy.

When you don't sweat the trivial things, you leave room in your relationships to focus on the important things.

### 3. DO OVER

At a conference with over 100 people in the room, a speaker got up to begin speaking. After multiple attempts to silence the crowd, she yelled very loudly to get the crowd's attention. The room became silent immediately. "DO OVER," was the first thing she said, "I don't want to begin on a negative note. Let's begin again; please silence your cell phones and refrain from talking". If she could "do over", in front of a large crowd of people, how much more so can we if we don't like how we said something. We can say, "Do over" too, in the comfort of our own home, to our spouses and children. If you don't like something you said or did, you can always start again! Skip the guilt and make a move! For example, if you feel like you have been slacking with suppers, don't sit and feel bad about it, just begin making suppers that you are satisfied with. If you feel like your quick to get angry, start working on talking nicer.

### 4. CATCH 'EM DOING SOMETHING GOOD

"Thank you for checking in on me!"

"I noticed you picked up milk!"

"I appreciate you taking the boys to shul with you!"

"Thanks for picking up the baby last night when he was crying!"

Who doesn't want to be acknowledged? It creates warm feelings for everyone. Try to show appreciation at any opportunity possible. Write small thank you notes or send a text. Turn your home into a love bank. It doesn't take much! If you are doing something for your spouse, do it with a smile and with joy. If your husband is leaving on a trip, pack a small care package with some chocolate bars and a nice note. Show him you care. You can say things like, "I noticed we were out of your favorite snack, so I picked some up for you."

This can work for your children too: "I know you like pepper steaks, so I made that for supper tonight." Just keep on giving - you're creating positive vibes in your home. Rabbi Akiva became a great Tzadik in zchus of his wife Rochel who encouraged him to go back to Yeshiva. We learn from her that the woman is the neck of the body. In whichever direction we turn, the head will turn - that's the direction our families will go. Taking

a cue from Rochel, let's bring a positive, warm, Yiddishe atmosphere to our homes.

When we are grateful for all the little things that our friends and family do for us, and take the time to express it, our relationships prosper. ■

*When you don't sweat the trivial things, you leave room in your relationships to focus on the important things.*

*Rivky Levy is a certified life coach. She maintains a private practice and gives classes on coaching topics infused with emunah and bitachon. She is the founder of the Tanya WhatsApp group and connects hundreds of women with her Tehillim and davening WhatsApp groups.*



# PRIME AVENUE



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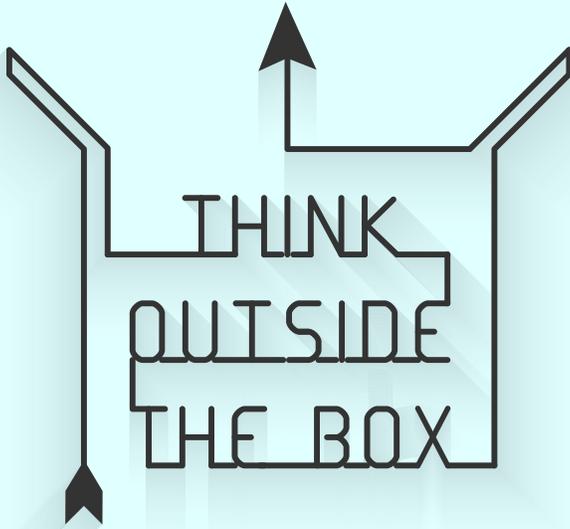
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Mushky (Avtzon) Yiftach , Los Angeles, California  
*Graduating class of 5767 (2007)*

I was never the type to hand in a blank assignment, but there was that one time. Our 9th grade English teacher, Miss Shor, assigned us to write a paper on 9/11. She said, “It should express your emotions and feelings, and it’s due next week.” That’s when I started to panic. Creativity is where I thrived; writing... well, not so much. When Miss Shor collected the papers I shuffled my blank one into the pile. “What is this?” she said as she caught a glimpse of my bare paper. “I clearly stated to write your emotions about the incident of 9/11.” I looked at her and said “No words. There are just simply no words.”

When she called me out of class I wasn’t quite sure what to expect from her. Would she give me a zero? A double assignment? What was I thinking? Why couldn’t I just write a paper like the rest of the grade?

My teacher looked at me. “I just want to tell you, Mushky,” she said, “A++, that was brilliant! And don’t let anyone ever stand in the way of your creativity.”

It was at that moment when I realized that a classroom can be a place for unconventional thinking and creativity. Having a teacher who was so open and accepting really fueled my creative side.

Many girls look forward to after school activities to unleash and express themselves after being

in rigid and overbearing “school”. But after being in Miss Shor’s class, I know school can be a place of individuality and expressiveness, and that is what I try to bring into my own classroom. I try to be the teacher who promotes and nurtures a creative mind and “out of the box thinking,” which will foster enormous benefit beyond the four walls of the classroom.

*“And don’t let anyone ever stand in the way of your creativity.”*

I take pride in knowing that my classroom is a creative space for children. But it’s not even only for my students; my classroom becomes my haven and creative space as well. Starting





from a blank canvas, I decorate my classroom in a way that lets me express my creativity, enhance my teaching and give my students the opportunity to shine. Before every school year, I try to think of

a new piece of décor that I can proudly welcome my students into their new classroom with.

This year, bright 3D sunflowers adorned the bulletin boards. I told my students that these flowers are large and vibrant, “But you girls are the true light and flowers in my garden.” With love, devotion, care, and creativity I know my students will blossom, each in their own way.

We start every morning with an interactive chant building community and enthusiasm.

Chumash is filled with shorashim songs and motions which the kids help compose. A curriculum I recently created is Parsha Pop-out. It enhances the Dvar Torah experience by having the girls create an open-ended paper pop-out that they can proudly present at their Shabbos table. I start by giving the kids a very basic idea and using their own talents, they each bring it to the next level.

It is very comforting for a child to sit in a classroom knowing that whatever she produces will be accepted and valued. Allowing creativity is what builds a student’s confidence, which will prove to be a valuable resource in her future when she needs to solve a problem on her own.

In our ever-changing world, we are constantly put in situations where we need to adapt and we need to tap into our inner resources. Motivating creativity teaches children that there is more than one way to problem solve, that they have it within, and are equipped to use their own thinking to adapt and thrive.

At a young age, one way to promote problem-solving and resourceful thinking is showing the versatility of everything in life. Not everything needs to be used for its intended purpose. And that’s why the phrase most associated with creativity is “Think out of the Box”. Think differently, unconventionally, or from a new perspective.

I find it comical how so many times throughout the year when trying to come up with an alternative way to teach a Yom Tov or concept in a way that will be so meaningful and more out of the box, my ideas came to fruition using a plain old... you guessed it... BOX!

I love pointing out to my students that when looking at a box, we can all see something different.

Here are just a few out of the box ideas that fit so perfectly in a box :

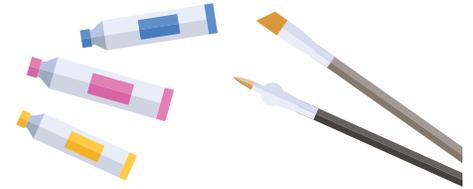
1. What better way to show the girls the concept of “Seder” than an organized file box? The cover of the box is a mini Seder table. As we learned about each of the Simanei Haseder the girls created a miniature version to place around her mini table, while inside the box were mini files with all the information and Divrei Torah filed away in such an organized fashion.
2. When teaching about the Mishkan, each group of girls used their plain cardboard boxes to create a life-sized keili in the Mishkan. They enjoyed creating it, setting it up and giving tours to the rest of the school.
3. For Shavuot, we came up with another opportunity to use a box. We created a gift box from scrapbook paper with the information on each side, and a Torah right in the center!

Using a box in so many different ways encourages my students to be open to possibilities and flexibility. It’s important to note that having a creative classroom is not only having a crafty classroom, it means encouraging a creative mindset; welcoming kids to open up and feel comfortable expressing their new ideas and feedback.

Promoting creativity and versatility is such a unifying concept in the classroom. There is no such thing as “not fitting in” because there is no mold to fit into.

*A box never has to be just a box, and a student definitely does not have to fit into it. ■*

*I know school can be a place of individuality and expressiveness, and that is what I try to bring into my own classroom.*



# TAKE CARE *of* YOURSELF—

*So You Can  
Care For Others*

---

Chanie (Berns) Teitelbaum, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5772 (2012)*



I am passionate about helping women feel good about themselves and how they look. I believe that when we as women take care of ourselves, we are then better able to care for all the people so dependent on us.

As a licensed fitness instructor, makeup artist and hair/wig stylist, I have seen and interacted with so many different beautiful types of people from all over, and I have a few top questions I always recommend people ask themselves either daily, weekly, or monthly to ensure they are in tune with and checking in on their personal needs.

## # | DID I TAKE SOME TIME TODAY TO BE # | KIND TO MY BODY?

Obviously, we all need a fair amount of shut-eye and healthy, nutritious food. In addition, we could use a recharge or some fuel for the day. For some it's a walk, others enjoy a hardcore workout class early in the morning/after a long day, or some women enjoy a simple meditative coffee moment to relax and unwind.

To this end, I teach several classes a week, both private and group classes at the Streetlite Company with all sorts of workouts and dance incorporative styles. The importance of allowing positive endorphins to fill your body, in a space where nothing else in the world matters, generates an everlasting daily affect on your performance, aside for being extremely healthy for your entire body. You only have one body, and no- it cannot wait any longer! Make a change; laziness is never an option!

## #2 DO I FEEL AND LOOK PRESENTABLE?

It is very easy to throw on a dress and shoes, and call it a regular Monday. But, you should ask yourself, do I like what I see? Did I take the time to wash my face or put on some moisturizer? When people ask me for skin or makeup recommendations, it usually ends off with, "Hey, can I book you for a one-on-one session?" If you feel lost trying to purchase makeup and skin care on your own, a one-on-one session is a great way to learn the least time consuming and most affordable options available.

When you're happy with the way you look, your confidence spills over into your day.

## #3 HAVE I NEGLECTED MY WIG FOR TOO LONG?

Taking the time to make sure the color, the fit, and the cut is right for you will also allow you

to feel better about what you see in the mirror. Sometimes the question comes up, how can I maintain my wig on my own? Sending your wig for professional care is expensive. Yes, the monthly wash and sets add up quickly, but it will only prolong the lifespan of your wig in the future. If you don't wash your wig properly or brush it delicately in between wears, the knotting caused by weather conditions and friction on your neck will only cause large chunks of hair to fall out of your wig when not brushing it properly. I like to recommend to my clients to purchase a conditioning spray with a wide tooth brush and gently brush the nape while holding the wig upside down to avoid ruining your set.

The list of self care tips can go on forever! However, the most important thing I would like to leave off with is: find what works for you and make it work for you! You are a priority as much as everything else in your busy life. Pause for a moment. Notice what keeps you going, and keep to it! Starting something new is hard, but once you dive in, the reward is far greater than the fear. ■



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# FROM SORROW TO SONG

## *Uniting Generations*



Nechama Dina (Wasserman) Laber, Albany, NY  
*Graduating class of 5752 (1992)*

For years, I missed my father's Shabbos melodies and Torah teachings at the Shabbos table. He passed away when I was 10, but I wanted to sing with him again! I missed his love, joy, and the inspiration that had flowed to all like an ever-gushing waterfall. As the years went by, I began to forget some of his Shabbos songs. Yet the memories were still buried deep like a seed waiting underground. I heard a song that stirred something inside me one Shabbos and, eventually, it led me to discover a new one.



*The Laber Family*

On the Friday night meal of the Kinus Hashluchos in 2016, I was at the home of Rabbi Levy Djan. The beautiful Sephardic rendition of "Sholom Aleichem" that he sang sounded familiar. "Where have I heard this before?" I wondered.

As though reading my thoughts, Rabbi

Dijan shared, "When I was a young boy, over 30 years ago, my family stayed at your parents' home in Crown Heights for Sukkos. Throughout my childhood in Paris, my father would sing this spirited tune that we learned at your father's Shabbos table."

Hearing the song and the story behind it left me heartbroken; I was overcome with longing for my father's light and songs.

## THE JGR SINGING CONTEST

During the summer session of the Jewish Girls Retreat in 2017, a program that I direct, I decided to join the original songwriting competition, "Sing Your Song," that we were holding. That summer session was hectic. B"H, my daughter Chaya had a baby, our first grandson, and we needed to prepare for a Shabbos bris, wrap up the end of camp, and juggle my roles of camp director and first-time Bubby. When I went to check in on my daughter in her camp apartment, I picked up my precious grandson. As I rocked and soothed my precious bundle, I jotted down words for my song for the JGR song contest, set to the "Sholom Aleichem" melody:

*Kuk nisht oif der vei  
Kuf oif dee Gezunt  
See the good, my love  
And trust the One above*

These were among my father's last words when he was ill, which he shared with Reb Mendel Shagalow: "Don't focus on the pain, focus on the health!".

I saw the tears trickle down my daughter's face. I felt my father's voice, speaking and singing through me, bringing healing to his daughters. Chaya told me later that this song gave her strength to focus on her new blessings, rather than the hardships of adjusting to motherhood.

I stood in front of the camp that night and shared this story. Presenting this song was my first public solo. All Shabbos, we sang and danced to this spirited tune, just like we did around my father's Shabbos table so many years ago. We did it with the joy that my father lived his life with, keeping his energy alive.

*For so many years Tatty, I missed you  
I never knew I could see you*

*Oh, Tatty, I longed for you  
With my heart and soul  
I yearned to be with you  
And hear you sing this song*

### **CHORUS:**

*Kuk nisht oif der vei  
Kuf oif dee Gezunt  
See the good, my love  
And trust the One above*



*Tatty, you never left me  
You were just concealed  
Until the day I realized  
To open up my eyes*

*I can truly feel you  
I can truly hear you  
I can truly love you  
I can learn from you*

*For you are really with me  
Each and every moment  
You are my guiding light  
In the darkest night*

*Today, we celebrate  
Tatty's shining legacy  
With our precious family  
In total harmony*

*With your first great-grandson  
Your light shines through and through  
From generation to generation  
He's your continuation*

### **CHORUS**

*Tatty, you never left us  
You were just concealed  
Until the day WE realized  
To open up OUR eyes*

*We can truly feel you  
We can truly hear you  
We can truly love you  
We can learn from you*

*We're singing your song  
And we know it won't be long  
When we'll sing our song together  
In the holy land*

### **CHORUS**

*Tatty, you never left us  
You were just concealed  
Until the day WE realized  
To open up OUR eyes!*

The Rebbe's father teaches that the only reason to cry after a tzaddik's passing is if there is no one to carry on the teachings. But as long as his children and students follow in his path, the tzaddik's life is perpetuated.



*Chaya told me later that this song gave her strength to focus on her new blessings, rather than the hardships of adjusting to motherhood.*

The mission of his descendants and students is to ensure that they "keep him alive" in the proper manner by learning his teachings and following his ways. When his students keep him alive, even he himself is alive. (Sichas Parshas Va'era 5742)

The next day, we celebrated the bris of my father's first great-grandson. Tears flowed as our first grandchild was named Azriel Yitzchok

by my wonderful brother, Azriel Yitzchok ben Azriel Yitzchok, who was born after my father's passing. It was a moment I will never forget. What a joy and comfort to know that my father's children and grandchildren are following in his path and carrying on his name and legacy! ■

*In Finding Song in Sorrow, Nechama Dina Wasserman Laber shares her transformative life journey, beginning with her father's untimely passing when she was only ten years old. In the 30 years that follow, she documents both her painful grief, as well as her ambitious dreams to further her father Rabbi Azriel Yitzchok Wasserman's legacy of teaching and outreach.*

*Nechama has been creating curricula and teaching for over 25 years in her role as a Shlucha, educator, and director of the Jewish Girls Retreat. Today, as the founder and director of Jewish Girls Unite, she educates future generations of Jewish leaders and empowers women and girls to shine their inner light. She uses the wisdom of Torah and her personal journey to guide others as a spiritual mentor and coach.*



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Submissions, memories and feedback:

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Have old pictures?

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coming soon...

**WINTER ISSUE**

The light of Chassidus



# A Taste of Bais Rivkah



**F**rom Crown Heights to Campus Shlichus in Nottingham, UK, Brocha Lent shares some of her favorite Rosh Hashana recipes (that she cooks all year round too!).

Between homeschooling her children, running events and classes for both community and students, and cooking for 80-120 (sometimes more) students weekly, Brocha doesn't have time for complicated recipes!

Her passion for cooking and baking while leading an incredibly hectic life has forced her to be more creative in the kitchen and find those shortcuts that help keep it all manageable. This is what people love most about the cooking demos she does across the country. Her recipes are quick, easy and delicious!

With the closest place to get kosher food over 100 miles away, Brocha is a pro at using mostly locally sourced ingredients that don't require a kosher shop, thus making her recipes (for the most part), healthy and fresh.



## ROSH HASHANA SIMANIM SALAD

### **For the salad:**

- 2 cups pea shoots
- 1 cup baby spinach
- 1 cup baby arugula  
*(You can use any green leaves you like)*
- ¼ cup carrots, julienned
- ¼ cup pomegranate seeds
- ¼ cup red apple, thinly sliced

1/8 cup leek, thinly sliced  
2 fresh figs

**For the dressing:**

1/3 cup olive oil  
1/4 cup honey  
1/4 cup red wine vinegar  
1/2 tsp chili flakes  
1 tsp yellow mustard  
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Arrange the salad ingredients on a serving tray or on two individual plates. In a bowl, whisk together the oil, honey, vinegar, chili flakes, mustard, salt, and pepper.
2. Pour the dressing over the salad just before serving. Alternatively, leave it in a small jug, next to the dish.



## APPLE & HONEY ROASTED CHICKEN

1 chicken cut into 1/8s  
Salt, pepper, paprika, garlic powder  
4 red apples, cored and cut into eight pieces\*  
1/2 cup apple juice  
1/2 cup honey  
1 tbsp Dijon mustard  
6 sprigs of thyme

1. Preheat your oven to 350.
2. In a baking pan, arrange the chicken pieces. Season well with salt, pepper, paprika and garlic powder.
3. Arrange the apples between the pieces of chicken.
4. In a mixing bowl, combine the apple juice, honey, and mustard. Whisk until well blended.

5. Pour over the chicken and dot the sprigs of thyme around the pan.
6. Cover tightly and bake for 2 hours.
7. Uncover and bake for another 30 minutes, to crisp the skin and give the chicken a nice color.

*\*choose a good quality red apple so it will hold its shape when cooking.*



## CREAMY PARSNIP & APPLE SOUP

4 medium onions, cut into chunks  
1/4 cup oil  
6.5 lbs parsnips, peeled and cut into chunks  
6 apples, peeled and cored  
16 cups water  
1/4 cup MSG-free chicken consommé  
*(Alternatively, use 16 cups chicken stock)*  
Salt and pepper to taste

1. In an 8 qt pot, sauté the onion in oil until translucent. Add the parsnips, apples, water and consume. Add salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer for 40-45 minutes.
2. Blend.
3. Taste for salt and pepper. ■



- BAIS RIVKAH -  
**Talent**



## CONQUER THE DIVIDE

Geula Katzman, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5774 (2014)*

Dear Neshama,

It's me.  
The One  
Who's One

And you?  
You're mine  
So you-  
You're one  
You, and you, and you  
You're all one.

Dear pure soul  
I've created you  
Instated you  
With a goal

To make the world whole  
To bring out  
My Unity  
In the trivial.

I split you  
So I can fit you  
Into the tiny little curls  
Of my big complex world

Into many different people  
My people  
Whom I love  
Whom I watch from above.

I hope that you seek  
And you find each other  
Your sister, your brother  
The one you were part of then

The one you know now  
The one you need to  
Connect to somehow.

Somehow to find  
That no one is left behind  
Because in my mind  
You're of the same kind  
Intertwined

Among you you'll find  
Stars, circles  
Ours are even  
Squares.  
I know. ~\\_(\`)/\\_/~

So those others  
They're really you  
They're just wearing  
Red or blue  
They're listening to  
Niggunim and blues  
They're about feeling  
Happy or blue  
They like eating  
Blackberries or blue.

But that all doesn't matter,  
Right?  
The point is for you  
To look past the blue.

Remember?  
I designed you.  
Your whole world  
And I defined  
The purpose  
Of mankind  
To come together and be one.

So what matters  
Is not the quirks  
Insecurities or perks  
Opinions or networks  
That make up the divide.

What matters  
Is that the world be complete  
Awareness of Me  
Concrete  
Defeat conceit  
Discord obsolete

When you open wide  
When you choose to become a  
Complete neshama  
So don't let me hide  
Conquer the divide.

## THE POWER IN OUR THOUGHTS

Naomi (Winner) Drizin, Manhattan, NY

*Graduating class of 5773 (2013)*

Frightening thoughts  
Are just that.

They are thoughts.

Why fill our heads  
With negativity,  
If we have a choice  
To fill with positivity?

To fill with hope,  
To fill with love,  
To fill with thanks,  
For the gifts from above.

Why fill our heads  
With anger,  
Or worries of loved ones  
In danger?

If we have a choice  
To fill with light and creativity,  
To fill with anticipation  
for festivity.

If what we think  
Is what we see,  
Why not put on a lens  
Of possibility?

The days we think good,  
We see the sunset.

We notice green lights,  
And our fears we forget.

We are confident.  
We get things done.  
No matter the circumstance,  
With courage we push on.

The days we think down,  
The sunset is not seen.  
We're too busy noticing that  
The light isn't green.

With anger and impatience,  
We feel trapped at the red.  
And while the sky is a rainbow,  
It's too hard to lift our head.

The days we think bright,  
We notice the good in others.  
We focus on the strengths  
Of our sisters and brothers.

On days we think jealous  
Or better than thou,  
We focus on their flaws  
And nothing else somehow.

Think only good,  
And good you will see.  
Choose to make your life,  
What you want it to be. ■



# Keepsakes

*Excerpt from a letter written by  
Morah Neiman to her former  
students in 5739 (1979).*

*Translated by Zelda Minsky, Crown Heights,  
Graduating class of 5779 (2019)*

## *Dearest Students,*

As I sit down to write a few lines, memories of days gone by flash before my eyes. Days that we spent surrounded by the school walls as you absorbed the words of your teachers. Time did its thing, and you dispersed. Some of you have merited to build Jewish homes, and some are preparing to do so. Many of you are definitely involved in teaching; all of you are involved in chinuch, directly or indirectly. Therefore, it's no wonder that I can't imagine which situation my letter will find you in. Nevertheless, one thing is definite: we have not separated. I am hopeful that whichever place or situation you may be in, there has remained between us a connection that cannot be severed. The strength that comes from the depths of Bais Rivkah is drawn into every corner of your house in every corner of the world because a spiritual bond has

no limits. Spirituality, as opposed to physicality, cannot be restrained or terminated by distances of space or time. Indeed, it's a great zechus, and an even greater achrayus that you carry, being graduates of this holy mossad...

...Dearest daughters, always remember that each action, word, and thought of yours is not exclusive to your personal lives! You bear the name of Bais Rivkah upon you! Hakaras Hatov demands of you to carry it on with purity and to add honor and beauty to the best of your ability, even to the point of mesiras nefesh. BH, this mossad is developing and blossoming- lots of energy is invested in it, with hard work on all levels. The eyes of your teachers are raised towards you, graduates!

...Yours with love,

*Morah Neiman*



Handwritten Hebrew text on lined paper, likely a letter or note.

Handwritten Hebrew text on lined paper, likely a letter or note.

Morah Neiman Letter



Class of '73



Spot a familiar face? Please let us know!  
Embrace@bethrivkah.edu  
Have more photos? Please send them to  
alumni@bethrivkah.edu

# EMBRACE MOMENTS



I honestly don't remember much of what you taught, but I vividly remember the stylish suits you wore, the subtle makeup, and your impeccable taste. I remember the poise in your body language in the way you held your hands, gesturing mildly but with emphasis and grace. You were classy, intelligent, and wise. I wanted to be you when I grew up. And then, during a candid class discussion about the future of BRHS uniforms, when a classmate ridiculed my desire for more fashionably cut clothing with a derisive comment regarding my body shape, you rebuked her and asserted my right to desire to look beautiful. It was exactly what I needed to hear when my weight, shape, and body image were so different from the ones all around me. It made me feel that I too could want what others wanted and feel what others felt, even though I struggled with a chronic illness beyond my control.

Now, my nails are rarely manicured; thanks to children, challah baking, and dirty dishes. I dye and cut my wigs on my own; the sun highlights it with time. Makeup is a matter of necessity; thanks to old age. But I stand with confidence, and when I talk, people say that I do so effortlessly, gracefully, and with poise. Thank you, Mrs. Jacobson, my eleventh grade mechaniches, for being a real-life role model.

*Anonymous*



**M**rs. Rhodes was great. Who knew physics could be interesting? I liked her a lot, she had a very positive energy, I remember. Good times.

*Tzippy R.*

**I** really loved learning accounting with Mrs. Rimler! She was so "normal." I loved the fact that we were learning something that would actually be helpful and practical one day. Well, in those days, I don't think QuickBooks existed, so it was really useful.

*Sheina L.*



**I** was a student from Fall 1966 to Winter 1969 when my father got a job in California (I was one of the writers of the article "Always Connected"). Your question sparked this once-dormant memory:

I never learned the name of this teacher. She was one of those in charge of students' behavior at lunch. If I saw a photo, I'd recognize her in an instant. She was middle-aged, very thin and short, and had the look of a disciplinarian. That's why I was surprised by her actions one day during my first weeks at Bais Rivkah.

My parents couldn't afford the lunch plan, so I "brown bagged" it with a cream cheese and raisin sandwich, a banana, and a thermos of cocoa in my metal lunchbox. I already polished off my lunch one day, and the teacher came over to me. She stood behind me and must have noticed that I didn't have anything on the plate in front of me. I wasn't even sure why I had a plate in front of me when we didn't pay for a lunch plan. She looked at me, and I was sure I was in trouble for something. I was terrified! What rule could I have broken so soon? I didn't even know anyone well enough to

get into mischief.

The teacher finally spoke: "Why didn't you eat lunch? Don't you like the food here?"

I stammered out a reply: "My parents didn't pay for the lunch plan. I bring lunch with me." I held up my lunchbox as proof that I wasn't on some kind of hunger strike.

The teacher insisted that I eat lunch, whether or not my parents paid for a lunch plan. She placed rye bread and smoked whitefish on my plate and ordered me to at least taste it. It happened that smoked whitefish was one of my favorite -- my uncle Maishe, z"l, used to visit us every Wednesday for lunch and brought smoked whitefish and lox with him. After this moment, I retired my lunchbox. I think it became an art supply box.

Thank you,

*Merle*

**I** was a student in the Bais Rivkah Mechina program, the program for Baalei Teshuvah women before Machon Chana was a full-time program. (I was there in the school year of 5740 ('79-'80.)) I was sitting in a little school office with Mrs. Yehudis Groner, who was the administrator of the program. Anyway, I was sitting and crying about just about everything. NYC was strange and weird to me; being in Crown Heights was equally strange and weird. I was learning amazing things but not feeling so amazing. As she tried to get me to calm down, giving me tissues and advice, I recall that she said, "Don't rub the skin under your eyes so hard. The skin there is delicate, and you should just dab it with the tissue." At the moment, I thought it was a bit odd, but upon further thought, here was a woman not only devoted to my Jewish education and development as a frum young woman, but she cared about me too . . . from my soul, all the way down to the delicate skin under my eyes!

You never know how much the little things you say can affect a person. . .

"A little bit of light dispels a lot of darkness." ■

*Malka Forshner*

# The Rebbe's Bracha



Goldie (Feld) Goldbloom  
Chicago, Illinois  
*Graduating class of 1985*

As a teenager, I was told by my doctors in Australia that I'd never be able to have children. This was devastating to hear, and fortunately did not come to be.

When I was in Bais Rivkah Seminary in Crown Heights, before I was engaged, a friend in Australia asked me to ask the Rebbe for a bracha that she should have kids. On behalf of my friend, I asked for the bracha, and the Rebbe pointed at me, and said, "You'll have a house full of boys and girls!"

When my firstborn child was six months old (in 1990), I took him for dollars one Sunday. The Rebbe asked me how he was,

and how I was feeling. He gave a dollar to my firstborn, and then handed me a dollar and said it was for me. But then, just before I left, he dropped another dollar and said, "Dos is far di neie kind." (This is for the new baby).

I was very confused. What new baby? He'd already given a dollar to my baby! Mrs. Sternberg moved me along, but seeing my confusion, she said I should go and get a test from the pharmacy.

And yes, I was expecting! The Rebbe knew before I did.

The baby's name is Devorah Leah, and today I have eight children, ka"h. ■



*Goldie with baby Devorah Leah Goldbloom*



*A house full of boys and girls*

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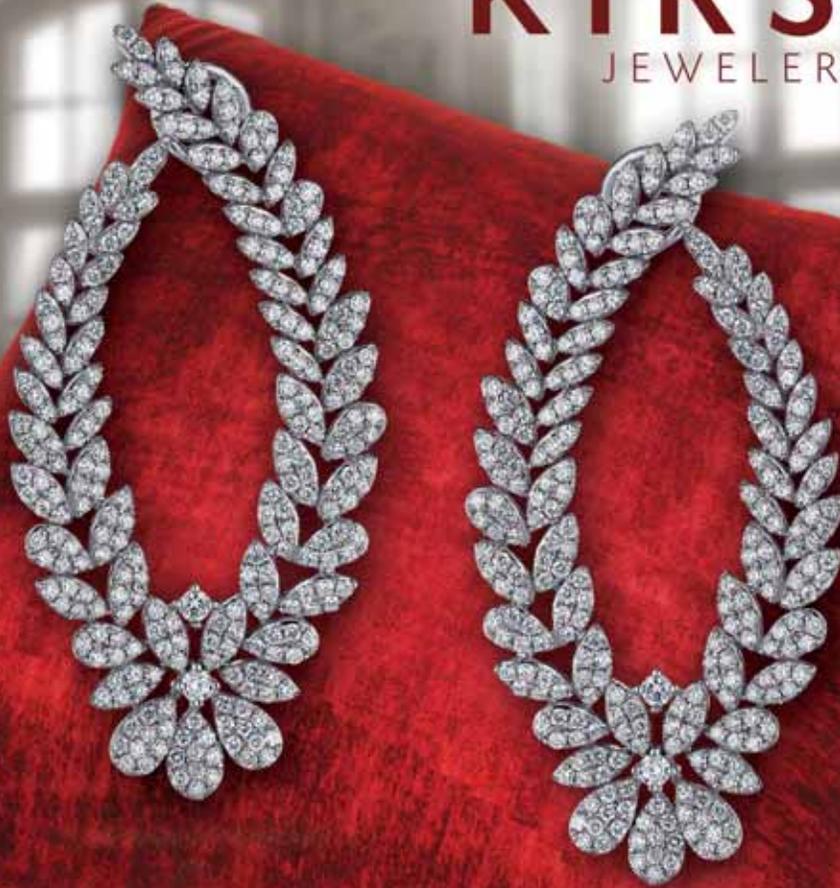
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