



FALL 5781

ב"ה Volume 2, Issue 1

EMBRACE

Uniting and inspiring the worldwide community of Bais Rivkah Alumnae



IN HIS HANDS

"Like clay in the hands of the potter... so are we in Your hands."

**I LIKE TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING.
I STRUGGLE WHEN THINGS DO NOT
TURN OUT AS I HAD PLANNED**

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**MY ADDICTION MADE ME
RECOGNIZE THAT MY SOUL WAS
CRAVING MORE SPIRITUALITY**

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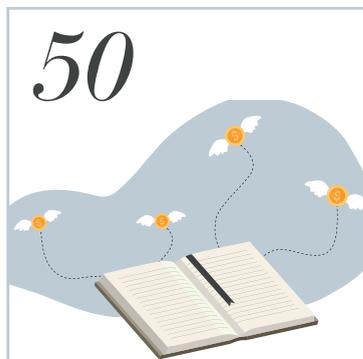
**AS MUCH AS BAIS RIVKAH NEEDS A
HOME, SO TOO, DOES THE JEWISH
HOME NEED BAIS RIVKAH**

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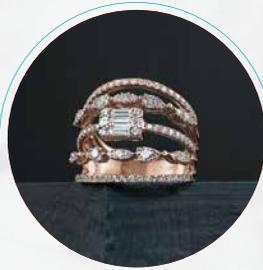


THE MAKING OF A HEALTHY MOM

Caring for my health in my child bearing years is a critical part of my avodah. –Chana Devorah Feldman



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IN HIS HANDS

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



I always said that Shabbos was my hardest day of the week. Theoretically, I appreciated the family time and it was such a beautiful concept; yet, I struggled. As a creative person, the inability to create sometimes felt unbearable.

And then came zoom school. Due to corona, devices seemed to overtake our lives. The kids spent hours and hours on little screens, and then some more while I had to get work done. Technology was king, choking us all.

And then I found myself looking forward to Shabbos. To 24 hours with no distractions. To reading books and making messes with mentchies and magnatiles, instead of being glued to the dreaded screen.

I also appreciated a break from the news. I learned that the world could go on without me following its every move. Shabbos was a reprieve from the onslaught of difficult, conflicting, and disconcerting news.

I could let go of the illusion that I had the final say with how anything turns out. Instead of just feeling a loss of control, as I had in the past when I felt like I could not reach people on Shabbos, I felt like everything was under control, just not by me. I learned to

appreciate the spirituality of Shabbos, to let go and trust a bit more. To recognize that just like Hashem created the world in six days and then rested, Hashem continues to create every aspect of creation, and I could relax a little. I started feeling like Shabbos was becoming a day like it was supposed to be, a day of connection to Hashem, “Shabbos Hayom La’Hashem.”

It took the extreme exposure to technology to appreciate the break from it. I learned to appreciate the time when my brain could actually think without distractions. And as you will read in the theme articles, this awareness and acknowledgment of Hashem running the world brings about so many miracles.

I don't mean to imply that suddenly Shabbos is a breeze and there are absolutely no challenges. But I do find myself really looking forward to Shabbos, knowing that the world is safely in His hands. ■

Sara Blau

Sara Blau



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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.



BethRivkah.edu/DollarADay

HELP US PLANT A SEED

From the REBBE

נשיא דורינו

Greetings and Blessings!

Your letter duly arrived, but numerous pre-occupations did not allow me to reply until now. As a matter of fact you don't need my reply, because you received a reply from my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], when you were here.

Nevertheless, I would like to reiterate something that I have already said a few times:

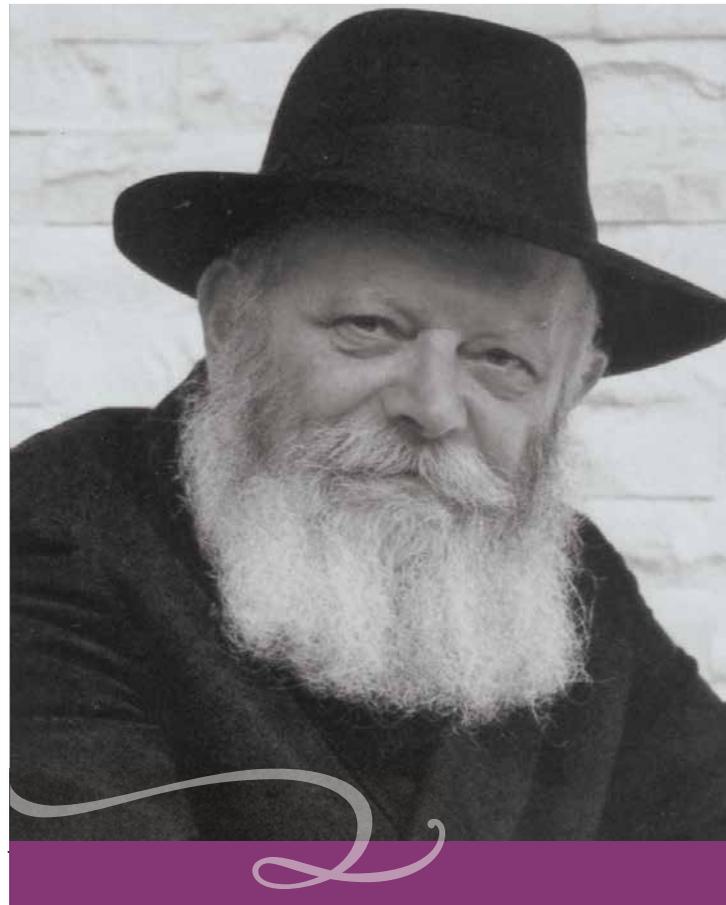
One ought to know, once and for all, that faith is not something that is meant to remain only in one's thoughts; it must permeate the whole of one's life.

You are, without any doubt, a believer. So, the very first point of belief is that G-d directs the world. And if He is capable of directing one-and-a-half billion people, then your own affairs will certainly see the fulfillment of the verse, "I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and deliver you."

Now, think this over. G-d promises, "I will sustain and deliver you." So think: Can a gentile from this or that land disturb G-d from fulfilling His promise (G-d forbid)? Having thought that, now consider: Is G-d really in need of your worry as to how He is going to run your affairs and solve your problems? Or will He succeed in finding good solutions even without your worrying?

After all is said and done, you must remember that the Rebbe — that is, my revered father-in-law, of saintly memory — gave you his blessing, and the blessing of a tzaddik is certainly fulfilled. So the blessing you received will also be fulfilled.

However, until you see the fulfillment of the



Either (a) you will walk around worried in case (G-d forbid) the blessing won't be fulfilled. And then, when the blessing is fulfilled, you will have a fresh worry: *_Why did you have to waste so much vital energy in vain?_*

Or (b) you will be staunch in your trust and faith in G-d — that He will lead you along the right path and will fulfill all the blessings that you have been given. And then, when you see them being fulfilled in actual fact, you will be able to tell yourself: *"_Just look how well I handled this deal! I didn't worry about things that were no cause for concern_ ."*

This is one of the meanings of my father-in-law's blessings to you, and *_not only as a blessing but also as a directive_* . Be happy, because — with G-d's help — the problems that you imagine to be so serious will be solved.

You have nothing to worry about. You can be

happy, and you can fulfill the directive of the verse,. Tehillim 100:2. "Serve G-d with joy."

I wish you a kosher and joyful Pesach and a healthy and joyful always, and look forward to hearing good news from you in the near future.

Source: Igros Kodesh, Vol. 4, p. 255 translated by Sichos In English (Printed in the book "In Good Hands")

This letter is one of many which are posted through whatsapp groups (dubbed Chazak) to spread the Rebbe's view and correspondence with others regarding the topic of Emunah and Bitachon.

This group features daily doses of guidance and chizuk from letters and sichos of the Rebbe in regards to Emunah, Bitachon, Simcha and tools to overcome challenges in life. Established close to 6 years ago, in dedication to the passing of אורי ניסן ע"ה בן יבדל לחיים טובים ארוכים מנחם מענדל, the group has grown exponentially to 1,000 participants! ■

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Message from *the* Chairman *of* the Board

As we, at Bais Rivkah, prepare ourselves for a new exciting year, after a painful break, it is my privilege and honor to share with you some thoughts and feelings.

This coming year will, א"ה, be the **eightieth** year since Bais Rivkah opened its doors for its first 30 students.

Bais Rivkah, headed by the Rebbe ז"ל since its founding, having been named as its “Nosi” — President— by the Friediker Rebbe ז"ל, at its very inception, has always maintained a special place of honor in the Rebbe’s mind, heart and vision.

Bais Rivkah was founded in order to provide young women and girls with a Torah education not merely as a defense against the spiritual threats from the world around us but as a preparation and training for identifying and taking advantage of its unique challenges and opportunities for strengthening Jewish life.

We are privileged to belong to Dor Hashvii — כל השביעי חביבין — as the Rebbe proclaimed in no uncertain terms on Yud Shvat, 5711. Dor Hashvii, the seventh generation since the Alter Rebbe, also means the “Generation of the Seventh”. Dor Hashvii does not only describe *which* generation we are in, but *whose*. **We are the Rebbe’s generation.** We are the neshomos that came down to this world to help carry out the historic mission and vision with which the Rebbe was charged.

The Rebbe made very clear to us what we are able to, and therefore must; for what we must we are therefore able to, accomplish: the האמתית והשלימה גאולה.

The Rebbe taught us time and again, especially when personally addressing the Bais Rivkah



Rabbi Avraham Shemtov, Chairman of Beis Rivkah, with noted philanthropist Ronald O. Perelman, receiving a brocha from the Rebbe ז"ל

graduates each year, that the success of this historic mission depends on each and every one of you, the *neshei ubenos yisrael*. No longer would it be enough for you to merely play a supportive role for your husbands; *Dor Hashvii, Malchus and Geulah* needs the special power and zechus of women to play a more active role in order for *Geulah* to become a reality.

Indeed, so many of you, Bais Rivkah Alumnae, have gone on to spearhead and support —together with your husbands and families— the Rebbe’s revolution in Jewish life on many levels in communities all over the world.

As we enter the eightieth year, when we celebrate “גבורה”, strength, I take the opportunity to wish you and your families, —ישראל בתוך כלל— ומתוקה וכתובה וחתימה טובה, לשנה טובה. May each of you and all of us go מחיל אל חיל in carrying out the specific tasks and responsibilities that we were each blessed to be charged with within the common goal to help make the long awaited גאולה a reality.

Rabbi Avraham Shemtov ■



I just wanted to say that I read the *Embrace* over Shabbos and it's really well done! Full of toichen and good articles to read. Thank you!! כל הכבוד

I would like to express my appreciation for the *Embrace* Magazine! I have a confession to make: this Shabbos after davening, I picked up my Tehillim to say all the Prokim for those who need a Refuah Shleima. The *Embrace* was in the magazine rack and I thought I would just glance at it for a minute. Well, it was a very, very long minute, I couldn't put it down! It was so emotionally engaging, intellectually stimulating, as well as inspiring and meaningful. Most importantly, each writer was an individual who I knew and cared about. In my mind's eye, I began to rewind images and it seemed just like yesterday that these "girls" were sitting on the shul benches. It didn't matter that some graduated in the 70's and are grandmothers, but to me they stayed forever young. When I finished reading it, from cover to cover, I picked up my Tehillim again, and as I read the words of Dovid Hamelech, the inspiring messages of my students stayed with me!

– Mrs. Tiechtel

Hello, thank you for sending me the alumnae magazine. The articles are great - very inspiring. And especially the slogan: Once a Bais Rivkah girl, always a Bais Rivkah girl.

Except for one tiny little detail.

Some of us are still single. Not just some; in Crown Heights alone there are many Bais Rivkah singles.

Yes, some of us with classmates who are almost grandmothers, are still single. And reading your magazine makes me feel a deep sense of sadness. If my 'womanly' worth is my home, I have no worth. At least, that is what it seems like.

And there is another painful point. I'm always a 'girl', the single girl, while my cousins who are ten years my junior are 'ladies'.

As for feminism and women's rights: I have worked and still work on shlichus. A bochur who is years younger than me and with years less experience gets paid - always! - more than I do. The 'Rebbi' (I'm talking about someone who's either not





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married, or married with a wife who's also working) gets paid, consistently, about a third more than I do. There seems to be inequality and a lack of respect for women, especially single women.

I hope my letter can raise awareness and generate meaningful discussion on these issues.

– Pained

Dear Pained:

Thank you for writing and for bringing up an important topic of discussion. While so many feel embraced by the Bais Rivkah spirit, there are always those who feel disenfranchised, on the outside looking in, among the student body. This can be because of financial hardship, illness, learning difficulty, or family background. After graduation, other factors create this sense of being disenfranchised: an untimely loss, being unmarried, divorced, or childless at a time when it seems everyone else has moved on with their life, etc. As a family, we need to make an effort to convey not only "we are the best because..." which often leaves out people who are struggling, reframing it instead as "there is room for everyone here, because Bais Rivkah is a family."

Just as we cherish children, but recognize that Hashem chooses a different path for some families who are not blessed with biological children of their own; we must value marriage but recognize that some women have been chosen by Hashem at a particular time in their lives for the challenges and opportunities to share their gifts with the world, albeit as a single. The Chovos Halevovos in Sha'ar Habitachon describes both the challenges of being single as well as those that come with marriage and family, yet explains that each of these circumstances also offers opportunities to serve Hashem better.

Single women deserve to be defined by more than their single status, they are defined as Benos Yisro'el with an important mission to play and distinguished by virtue of their Yiras Shamayim, their womanly wisdom, their good deeds, their chassidishe gefil.

During the summer, we read the story of the Benos Tzafchad, who as single women, close to or in their forties, spoke to Moshe with wisdom and sincerity, and because of their love for Eretz Yisroel, their pure hearts, and their sharp minds, were zocheh to have a parsha in Torah revealed through them. Sara Schenirer was unmarried for much of her adult life, yet used the time to found the Bais Ya'akov movement and to change an entire generations' thinking about the vital importance of women's education.

Regarding payment-norms, and the world, things have changed. There was a time when no one, male or female, Rabbi or Rebbetzin, married or unmarried, would ask for pay for taking part in Shlichus. I still remember the shock of the first time I was asked to pay an honorarium for a speaker (that went beyond travel expenses). The flip side of this, of course is that it was very hard to get good, professional quality, speakers. There were very few people who were able to devote themselves full-time to their shichus, because of the incredible financial stress. Many stayed on shlichus for only a few years before re-entering the "paid economy."

Today, the nature of shlichus has adapted to have more formalized and more clearly articulated responsibilities. This shift was perhaps inevitable, and while people may romanticize the good old days, it is more useful to accept the realities of the present, and the benefits of a developing professionalism, which has resulted in an explosion of growth in the number of shlichim and the stability of their shlichus. Within this professional framework--yes, women deserve equal pay for equal work--or we will ultimately lose their contribution as they are forced to work in the wider economy (as is the case in much of the Litvishe world, where the wives of men in Kollel work are forced to seek jobs in secular bastions of corporate America). All of us have the challenge, and the opportunity, to raise consciousness, like the Benos Tzafchad, with yiras shamayim, wisdom and sincerity... because we realize that ultimately, the shlichus world will benefit from providing women with a salary commensurate with their contributions. This will enable gifted women to continue to work within the world of shlichus--with all the spiritual benefits that provides for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Thank you again for raising the vital issues in your letter. It is a reminder that we are all the daughters of Bais Rivkah, and all should feel its embrace.

*– Chana (Steinmetz) Silberstein
Ithaca, New York,
Graduating class of 5739 (1979)
Director of Education
Roitman Chabad Center at
Cornell University*

The Childless Woman's Role in Judaism

By the Grace of G-d
13th of Iyar, 5737 [May 1, 1977]
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

Your letter (post-dated April 18) reached me with some delay.

First, many thanks for your good wishes in connection with my birthday. I can best reciprocate in the words of our Sages, "One who blesses others is himself, or herself, blessed by G-d, the Source of all blessings." Accordingly, may G-d bestow His generous blessings on you in all needs.

Now with regard to your question about the woman's role from the viewpoint of our religion, or, as you refer to it, 'orthodox' Judaism,

I must first point out that the division of Judaism into 'orthodox, conservative, reform,' etc. is a purely artificial one, for all Jews have one and the same Torah, given by the One and Same G-d, though there are more observant Jews and less observant Jews. To tag on a 'label' does not, of course, change the reality.

As for the attitude of Judaism to the woman, it has also been frequently pointed out that those who think that the Torah places the woman in an inferior role to that of the man labor under a misconception, for it has no basis in truth. Man and woman are like the head and the heart in the physical body: both are equally vital, though each has entirely different functions, and only the normal functioning of both together ensure a healthy body. The same is true of the role of the man and woman in Jewish life, and, indeed, in any healthy human society.

It follows that the heart need not feel inferior to the brain, although in certain aspects it depends on the brain, just as the brain need not feel inferior to the heart because in certain respects it depends on the latter. Similarly in Jewish life there are duties and functions which G-d has allotted to the woman and those allotted to the man.

Where a person, for some reason, is unable to perform a certain Mitzva or some of his or her functions, there is a ruling in the Torah, *Toras Emes* (so called because all its teachings are true), "the Merciful



ful One excuses a person who is incapable of performing his, or her, duty." Indeed, G-d who knows what is in the heart of everyone, and knowing that were the person able, he or she would have performed it, considers the thought in place of the deed.

Incidentally, it is noteworthy that of the various Divine names, it is the name רַחוּם ('Merciful One') that is used in the above ruling. This pointedly emphasizes that all G-d's precepts derive from His attribute of mercy and loving-kindness, which, like all Divine attributes, is infinite. It follows that where a person is precluded from performing a Mitzva by circumstances **beyond** his or her control is completely excused and exonerated.

Needless to say, one need not apologize for asking questions. On the contrary, since Jews are described in the Torah as a 'wise and understanding people,' it is desirable that questions which come within the realm of human understanding should also be understood and not left to faith alone, wherever this is possible. There is only one prerequisite, which goes back to the time when the Torah and Mitzvos were given at Sinai, namely that the Torah must be accepted on the basis of Naaseh ('we will do') first, and then v'nishma ('we will understand') - meaning, that the performance of Mitzvos must not be made conditional on the understanding of their deeper significance, etc., nor must the vitality and enthusiasm of the performance be any the less.

This basic principle and attitude is also a matter of common sense. If the Torah is accepted as Divine - otherwise there is no point at all in any questions and discussions, since if it is man-made one would be free to do as one pleases - that is, given by a Supreme Being, Whose Essence is beyond human grasp, it would be a contradiction in terms to demand to know the meaning and significance of each Divine Mitzva before performing it, for it would reduce the Supreme being to the level of the limited human intelligence, which, moreover, is subject to development, since human understanding increases from day to day with newly acquired knowledge and experience; yet he insists on understanding it today, on his present level.

One might even add that there is a sound pragmatic, or 'business' consideration involved, as, by way of a simple illustration, when one is offered an opportunity to invest a dollar with a view to earning

a thousand dollars, though there may be a remote possibility of losing the \$1. A normal individual would certainly not hesitate to make his decision. Similarly, when a Jew, on the basis of na'aseh before v'nishma, invests in a relatively small effort by restricting himself in matters of Kashrus and Shabbos observance, etc., and the Yetzer Hara attempts to distract him by saying, even if you live 120 years maybe you will never fully grasp the significance of what you are doing — the most the person will have lost would be having denied himself certain foods or some convenience on Shabbos. On the other hand, if a person will wait with the performance of Mitzvos until he will realize their significance, and in the meantime will act like any gentile, he will deprive himself of the eternal good which was his within easy reach, and when the time will come and he will discover the truth, he will realize that he has lived in transgression of the Divine Torah, with all the consequences there from.

Much more could be said on the subject matter, but I trust the above will suffice. May G-d, whose benevolent Providence extends to each and everyone individually, lead you in the path of Truth.

With blessing,

M. Schneerson

P. S. Since you refer to women's lib, which has become so popular in recent years, it baffles me that the thrust of the movement is centered on the woman's becoming similar to man — and this is what is termed 'independence' and 'feminist' pride, etc.!

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TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Letters, comments, questions and suggestions are welcome!

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PART TWO

Chaya Rivkah (Hodakov) Kramer, Crown Heights
Graduating Class of 5725 (1965)



In Spring of 5779, in our first issue of *Embrace*, we shared a story uniting three Bais Rivkah Alumnae. When Sarah (Lerner) Cunin received an email from Chaya (Hodakov) Kramer to put mezuzos on Merle (Meisel) Levy's home, she was united with another Bais Rivkah girl. Merle transferred from public school to Bais Rivkah in Fall of 5726. Although she moved and left Bais Rivkah mid-year, Merle and her dedicated teacher Chaya Kramer remained in touch. A Yovel and a bit later, Chaya Kramer reached out to Sara Cunin as the local shlucha in Merle's region in Nevada. Sarah shares that this experience left her with a surge of empowerment: "While it is Bais Rivkah that unites us, it is the Rebbe's vision that binds us."

"While it is Bais Rivkah that unites us, it is the Rebbe's vision that binds us."

The story does not end there. This summer, Mrs. Chaya Kramer received an email from Merle Levy's husband, Donne. It was requested that the correspondence be shared with our *Embrace* readership:

Chaya Kramer to embrace:

Hi *Embrace*, So sorry to send you this email, but - sadly - I have some news that I think you should know.

Merle Levy has not been well and recently was hospitalized. I kept in touch with her husband. This morning I got the following email from him (copying it here):

Donne Levy (Merle's husband) to Chaya Kramer

Merle came home from the hospital this evening under hospice care. Sorry to inform you that she died early this morning. One of the last things she did on Earth was read the card you sent. Funeral will

be in Sacramento. You'll be kept informed.
–Donne

Chaya Kramer to BR Embrace:

I am in touch with the shlucha Sarah Cunin. Just yesterday Sarah told me she came to the hospital to visit Merle, but could not get in. They only let in one guest to visit and the husband had the visit right, of course, so Sarah remained outside. While still parked, she called Merle on the phone. Der Aibershter suddenly put into Sarah's mind to say Shema with Merle, and they said Shema together!!! Yesterday!

I'm sure you remember the article (the three part article) which included Merle's piece. It was in the very first Embrace magazine.

Be'ezras Hashem we should have only happy news to share and enjoy many simchos!

Chaya Kramer to BR Embrace:

Today I notified Gloria/Gittel Oren (Oxenhorn) about the sad news of the passing of Merle a"h Levy and this is her reply. I forward it to you, and reading it you will understand why I want to show it to you.

Gloria Oren to Chaya Kramer:

Thanks for letting me know. So sad. I knew Merle since we were abt 8 months old. Her mother used to shop in my dad's store on Stone Ave. and would bring her along. They would spread a blanket out in one of the dis-

*Dedicated teachers and students
who are there for one another.
Once a Bais Rivkah girl, always
a Bais Rivkah Girl.*

play cribs and put both of us on it. We'd smile at each other and baby converse while her mom shopped. We then went on to two different public schools. In third grade I came to Bais Rivkah and Merle followed I believe in 5th grade. A year later I think, the school moved to Bedford and Church Aves. in Flatbush. I believe the picture I sent you was the Stone Ave building, but I could be wrong.

I will send the family a sympathy card. I have the address.

Again, thanks for sharing even if it meant being the bearer of sad news.
– Gloria

This is the ongoing story of Bais Rivkah—dedicated teachers and students who are there for one another. “Once a Bais Rivkah girl, always a Bais Rivkah Girl”.

Please do a mitzvah in honor of the neshama of our Bais Rivkah sister, Merle Levy

Mirel Rivkah bas Hirshel and Bayla A”H. ■



L to R: Sheva Cunin, Pinny Cunin, Sarah Cunin, Merle Levy, Rabbi Mendel Cunin, Donne Levy



ALUMNAE

Who, What, Where

Kesem Mia (Nir) Hetsrony, Houston, TX
*Bais Rivkah Seminary Graduating
Class of 5777 (2007)*



Kesem Mia (Nir) Hetsrony
Houston, TX
*Bais Rivkah Seminary Graduating
Class of 5777 (2007)*

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

Like so many women today, I wear many hats!

First and foremost, I am a wife and mother.

I am also privileged to be a shlucha, an educator, and an author.

Since a young age, I have been blessed to have a love and passion for chinuch. As a teen, I loved how empowering shlichus was. I had the opportunity to lead a girls' weekly Shabbos program, teach in Hebrew School, and have meaningful summer experiences while globe-trotting to different CGI day camps. As a Bais Yaakov student, these opportunities were not available to most of my classmates, and I truly felt *ashreinu mah tov chelkeinu*. Lubavitch has a "we need all hands on deck" approach, and as a teen, it was the most incredible feeling to know that my capabilities were wanted, needed, and could finally be expressed.

I am still enamored and empowered by shlichus today.

Whether through running CGI Houston, public speaking, arranging women programs, or through the power of my pen, I still endeavor to use all of my kochos in learning, spreading, and teaching Torah and Chassidus.

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE DIFFERENT THINGS YOU WRITE?

Sure! Although my writing takes on all kinds of forms, my greatest zechus and literary accomplishment is the work I do to bring the Rebbe's teachings to children!

For over 5 years, I have been writing the Children's Narration of the Rebbe's Sichos for JEM's Living Torah videos. While watching the Rebbe speak, children hear a relevant, engaging, and inspiring storyline. I write the script, and together with Chony Milecki and his talented cast, we bring the Rebbe's message to life!

I also have the incredible opportunity of writing the "Parshafier" column in the *Hachayol Magazine* for Tzivos Hashem. I work with a talented team of researchers and editors, overseen by Mrs. Pessi Stolik. We take the teachings from *Der Rebbe Redt Tzu Kinder*, and present them in a story form that is applicable and relatable to today's children.

If you have a chance, try reading a "Parshafier" side by side with the *Der Rebbe Redt Tzu Kinder* it is sourced in! You'll see that for the most part, the Rebbe's message is clearly laid out all through the storyline.

I work very hard to make sure that the Rebbe's message is always in its original form, without diluting or whitewashing anything. Stories can - and should be - fun and adventurous, but they should always retain the highest form of toichen. Children have a unique

sense and desire for truth. Nothing is more emesdik than the Rebbe's words directly given over to our children, and I love having a role in making that happen!

IN ORDER TO WRITE SO MUCH ABOUT THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS, DO YOU HAVE TO LEARN A LOT?

Yes!

As a woman, I am in the unique position of having a job that requires me to learn parts of many different sichos. It has been the greatest gift. Spending so much time on the Rebbe's words, and figuring out how to give them over in a practical way, has literally changed the way I think. I am constantly experiencing paradigm shifts as yet another sicha blows me out of the water, inspiring me to reach higher, do more, and love all.

WITH ALL THE DIFFERENT THINGS YOU'VE WRITTEN, HOW DO YOU CONTINUE TO COME UP WITH INNOVATIVE AND RELEVANT STORYLINES?

First and foremost, it is all directly from the Aibishter.

You cannot force yourself to be creative. When struggling with writer's block, I daven and say, "Hashem, the Rebbe's teachings need to be given over. You have to make it happen!" Of course, He always does!

I look at my role as being a conduit. I have no kochos on my own merit. I only have the capabilities Hashem decides to give me. And as long as I have them, I am determined to use them. Of course though, using those kochos involves hard work and brainstorming.

And I have the best way of doing so: I Farbreng!

When I learn a new sicha, I review it a few times. I then try giving it over to my family or discussing it in conversation with friends, and if time allows, in a speech or class. All of the Rebbe's sichos are relevant and practical; it's just a matter of applying it to our personal lives.

The more I farbreng on the topic, the more the ideas flow.

Just as Dovid Hamelech teaches us in Tehillim, "*He'emanti ki adaber* - I believe for I have spoken." When we talk about a topic, teach it, give it over, and share, we are solidifying our own emunah! When you believe in something, it literally comes to life in all you do.

WHAT OTHER THINGS DO YOU WRITE?

I recently started freelancing, which has taken my writing in all kinds of interesting directions. Shluchim have had me write letters to government officials, donation requests, and help with getting out of sticky situations. I have been asked to write poems for simchas, helped businesses with their websites and advertising, assisted young adults with their shidduch resumes, and lots more. I get a thrill out of seeing the affect the written word has, and this is especially true when it comes to persuasive writing. I also have a couple of manuscripts for children's books which IYH I hope to publish someday!

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR SHLICHUS?

We are currently on shlichus in Houston, Texas. 'We' as in my family, for shlichus is truly a family experience. We run CGI Houston, a day camp of over 160



children ka'h. My husband and I teach in the day school, and we also run programs like Tzivos Hashem and Avos Ubanim.

I love the intense thrill of programming, and actually enjoy the unique ebb and flow that it brings. I currently organize the Nshei Chabad Houston events, and I am super excited that a Junior Nshei Houston has now taken off!

One of my greatest passions is teaching and public speaking. As a shlucha and educator, I Baruch Hashem am very busy in these areas!

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED DETERRENTS IN YOUR PATH? HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THEM?

Hm... A few thoughts come to mind.

”הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו” - When your goal is to do good and bring kedusha into the world, then despite any challenges, you will always succeed. Obviously if the passuk lets us know that help will be given, we can infer that help will be needed! So yes, I've had challenges - we're in galus after all - but these challenges are insignificant when I realize that the Aibishter Himself helps me overcome them.

I think it's really important to acknowledge that people do not accomplish great things without their fair share of intense and often overwhelming challenges. Knowing that people not only overcame adversary, but reached great heights despite (and often because of their challenges), is truly inspirational.

That being said, Hashem has blessed me with an incredible optimism and love of life and living. Therefore, I am able to clearly see and appreciate the brachos that fill my life. I simply do not enjoy discussing hardships. With the right perspective, and tremendous siyata diShmaya, you can turn any deterrent into a springboard to be better and accomplish more. I can't say I always succeed at this, but I definitely try.

In challenging times, I turn to the Rebbe, who instructs us to have a support system of mashpiim and yedidim. My family, dear friends, and mashpia continuously lift me up and encourage me through their love, guidance, and good advice!

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

Coming from Bais Yaakov schooling, Bais Rivkah Seminary was the first Chabad school that I attend-

ed. It completely changed how I looked at the Aibishter, Torah, Bnei Yisroel, and myself.

Bais Rivkah Seminary afforded me the opportunity to *'Lebben mit der Rebbe'*. Every class and lesson vibrantly breathed the Rebbe's presence. Whatever I learned that year is ingrained within me. Even today, I still mention ideas, stories, and lessons I gained in Bais Rivkah. Learning in Crown Heights meant learning with the creme de le creme of Lubavitch; Morah Gorovitz, Morah Kahn, Mrs. Dena Gorkin, Mrs. Borevitz, Rabbi Vigler, Rabbi Geisinsky, and so many more incredibly inspiring educators!

As the epicenter of Chabad Chassidim, we were gifted with the best speakers from across the globe. It was such a privilege to live in the Rebbe's shchuna, daven in 770 daily, and farbreng with true Chassidim.

Personally, the greatest gift I was given in seminary is my mashpia. Mrs. Esther Sternberg taught us about the importance of a mashpia, and I was enamored by her pure devotion to the Rebbe and the Rebbe's inyonim. For the past 13 years, her guidance and direction has literally changed the course of my life.

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

The world needs you!

Being a student in the Rebbe's moisad is a gift, a privilege, and a great responsibility. You were given the tools to both look at the world in the way the Rebbe envisioned, and improve it when it's not up to those ideals. Even in your everyday interactions, you are illuminating the world through living a life based on Chabad Chassidus.

Because of my Bais Yaakov schooling, I have the unique experience of knowing that a Torah life devoid of Chassidus can feel so empty and shallow. If you ever question what makes a Bais Rivkah girl special, I encourage you to teach someone Chassidus. The contrast inspires me, and as mentioned above, *"He'emanti ki adaber"*. Speak your emunah into being! ■



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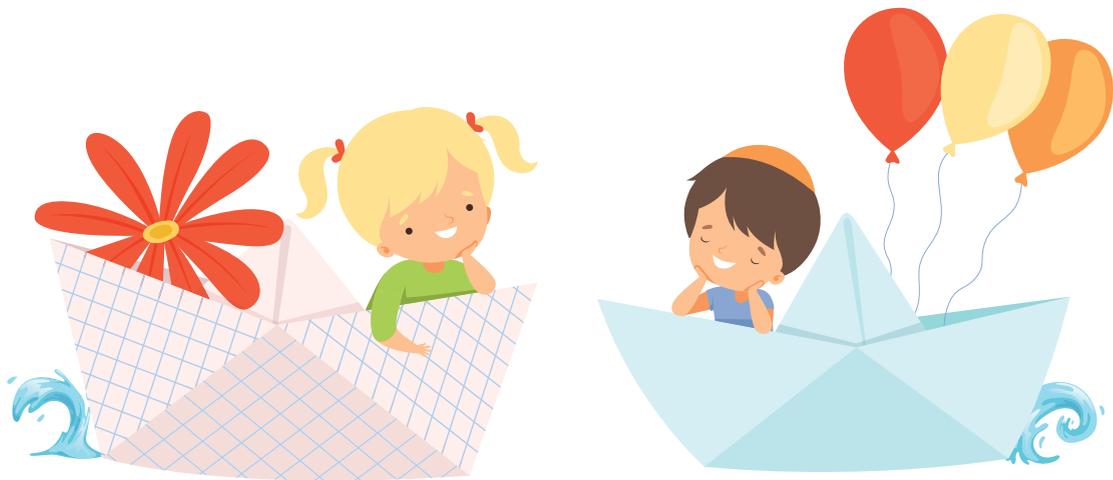
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THE CAPTAIN of THEIR SHIP

Setting Limits Confidently

Estee (Goldberg) Lieblich, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5759 (1999)



HEAD TO HEART PARENTING

“Positive parenting” is trending on social media these days, and it’s wonderful in many ways. Parents are trying harder to acknowledge their children’s feelings, model emotional awareness, and accept that large expressions of emotions are not a form of misbehavior. But for many parents it can be very difficult to set limits and boundaries, and it may feel like a negative experience that they try to avoid.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are parents who are very comfortable with setting appropriate limits. Yet, they feel that acknowledging their children’s emotions is too new age-y or unnecessary, especially in instances that require firmness.

Kindness (Chessed), setting limits (Gevurah), and seeing things from our children’s perspective (Tiferes) are all important components in raising Yiddishe children with good midos and strong Torah values. How can we integrate them seamlessly in our everyday interactions with them?



Children crave a sense of safety and security, and they look to us to set limits and boundaries with confidence. It lets them know that they are in safe hands. When we are shaky and unsure of our role as parents or feel that children do better with only love and kindness, our children express their discomfort by acting out and having meltdowns more frequently.

All environments have their own cultures, rules and regulations, and the more we know about what is expected of us, the more successful and confident we feel in those environments. Whether it be at work, stores, the airport, or at the bank, there are unspoken rules of conduct that are meant to be followed. As adults, we know this. But for children, they learn

*She understands her child,
and therefore her child feels
understood by her.*

to make sense of the world from the limits we set and the boundaries we create. That, coupled with our love and understanding, is their foundation for feeling safe and secure in their world.

We see this clearly with toddlers. *They push the limits again and again, not to “test us” but to learn from us.* What does mommy allow? Where does tatty draw the line? Is it okay to do this or not? Appropriate to go there or not? They are learning, and pushing the limits is part of the process of learning. They are looking to us to calmly and confidently set limits and enforce the boundaries for them. Again and again.

It's important that we are not afraid to set limits and say no. Of course, we should do so calmly and gently, respectful of the child's age and developmental stage. Knowing that they can't put their shoes on the bed, that scissors must be used safely, that they can't sit in Tatty's seat, that they need to sit at the table when eating, that they can't pick up the baby without

permission, that they can't touch your phones, that they can't squeeze out all the toothpaste or shampoo in the shower just for fun, and that meal time and bedtime routines are enforced, etc., are all examples of boundaries and limits that children need to learn about and follow in order to be menschlich, respectful, and overall successful in their home environment.

(Always rule out the possibility that your child is tired, hungry or overstimulated. If she is, meet her basic needs first before setting limits. Those situations make it much more difficult for her to cooperate, and she is likely to keep pushing the limits until her needs are met.)

With very young children it can be very frustrating when we repeat ourselves again and again, and our child doesn't follow through. *But that's the child's way of letting us know that she needs our help.* You can say, “I'm going to help you get ready for bed,” while taking her hand and leading her to her room. “I see you are having a hard time with the baby. I can't allow you to hit him,” while you gently take her hands and stop her from hitting. “I'm going to help you get your teeth brushed,” while picking her up and bringing her to the bathroom sink. This is all done confidently and kindly.

A confident parent accepts the fact that their child may not like the limit they have set and reacts with empathy to the child's resistance and cries. She doesn't take it



Walking on eggshells around our children conveys that we are afraid of their reactions, resistance and tears.

personally or feel like a failure. Instead she understands her child, and therefore her child feels understood by her. “You are so sad that I won’t allow you to have another cookie.” “You are upset that we are leaving the party now.” “You’re crying. You’re angry that you need to stay in bed.” “You wish you didn’t have to clean up your toys.” “You’re upset that I said you can’t go outside.” Arguing or trying to prove why our limit or boundary is necessary definitely doesn’t convey confidence on our part.

When a child hits their sibling, we need to quickly block the behavior. “I can’t allow you to hit your sister. I see how angry you’re feeling because she took your toy.”

The child who has limits set without her feelings being acknowledged doesn’t learn to express her emotions in a healthy way. She isn’t given the language to match her actions (for example hitting her sister) with her inner experience (being angry with her) and may often resort to using her hands.

To build emotional intelligence in our children we need to first foster emotional awareness, and we do this by acknowledging our children’s feelings, essentially reflecting their feelings back to them. The child who doesn’t experience this on a regular basis, doesn’t learn to say “I’m so sad that I can’t play with my friend” or “I’m upset that I need to go to sleep now” or “I’m so angry! My brother broke my tower of blocks.” This makes it harder for children to express their emotions verbally, and therefore they often express themselves using actions instead of words. The more we model the language of emotions by validat-

ing our children’s feelings, the more our children learn to regulate their emotions in a healthy way.

Walking on eggshells around our children conveys that we are afraid of their reactions, resistance and tears. But constantly giving in to children’s demands, or often trying to avoid confrontation, can cause parents to feel resentful of their children. Setting limits and saying no early on helps us prevent resentment from building up and erupting in anger and frustration.

When a child consistently pushes against the limits and boundaries we create, it’s his way of reminding



us that he is feeling out of sorts with us and that he needs our limits and our love. Tolerating and validating their feelings, while reinforcing the boundaries, actually helps to decrease the limit-pushing behavior. They so badly want to trust our ability to deal with them and help them, and they need to know that we won’t start to lose our cool or fall apart when they do.

Our kindness, specifically in difficult instances, helps our children view us as being on their team, and makes them more receptive to the chinuch we are trying to impart. Don’t underestimate their ability to work through these difficult feelings with your love and support. You are giving them the tools to succeed in life, and the safety and security that they crave from the captain of their ship. ■



Estee (Goldberg) Lieblich, a Bais Rivkah alumna, lives in Crown Heights with her husband and 4 children.

Estee is an early childhood consultant, a parent educator, and a certified temperament specialist. Her Head to Heart workshops focus on Mindful Parenting for Heartfelt Relationships.

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COMMITMENT

THE FOUNDATION *of* LOVE

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



It is late at night. I have finally settled into a deep sleep when I hear that familiar ring in my ear – it's my baby crying again. I am tired. Very tired. As much as I love my child, I am not feeling particularly excited or inspired about our opportunity to bond at this particular moment. I am not quite feeling the love; in fact, I don't feel anything. I simply jump. Reflexively. My baby needs me. I am his mother. I am here.

A short while later, having finally succeeded in soothing my child, I am overcome by the desire to give him a tight hug. And a kiss. And another one. I love you, zeeskeit. You are mine. Thank you, Hashem.

★

As Yidden, the most essential values we seek to instill within our children are Yiras Sho-mayim and Kabolos Ol. But what are they, why are they so important, and how do we actually get there?

THE FOUNDATION

Love is a critical element in any relationship. It is the lifeblood, the fire, and the energy that fuels a dynamic, growing connection. In parenting, marriage, and in any other important relationship, investing effort into cultivating a warm loving bond is crucial.

But this love must rest on a firm foundation, and that foundation is commitment. More than anything, a child needs the security of knowing his or her needs will be met, even when Mommy is tired, moody, or busy. With every act of care and every response to a cry, a parent transmits the most important message: "I am here for you no matter what. You can rely on me." And from that commitment love develops. For we love those to whom we give.

When a couple stands under the chuppah, they make an everlasting commitment to each other. The chosson tells his kallah: “*Harei at mekudeshes li.*” You are mine. In the kesubah, he promises to support her in every way, physically and emotionally. To be there for her forever.

And implicit in the couple’s commitment to each other is that when the passion wanes and disagreements inevitably threaten their harmony, they will do all they can to rebuild their love. They will invest all the time they need to connect, discuss, and understand. They will reach out for guidance if necessary. They will make shalom bayis a priority. Thus, while love does not guarantee commitment, commitment ultimately ensures love.

All this is true as well in our relationship with Hashem, who is described as both the father and husband of Am Yisroel. Cultivating a loving bond with Hashem and a passion for Yiddishkeit is extremely important. It is what brings our avodah to life, filling it with meaning and joy. The emphasis in Chasidus on love – the threesome of Ahavas Hashem, Ahavas Yisroel and Ahavas HaTorah – cannot be overstated.

Yet, the foundation remains our commitment to serve Hashem no matter what. As the Alter Rebbe teaches us in Chapter 41 of Tanya, in the segment that the Rebbe recommends a chossid meditate upon every morning before davening:

“One must, however, constantly bear in mind what is the beginning of [divine] service, as well as its core and root... One must first arouse the innate fear which lies hidden in the heart of every Yid not to rebel against the Supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He... And he for his part accepts His Kingship upon himself, that He be King over him, to serve Him and do His Will...”

When we stood at Har Sinai, we – every neshama that would one day be born – declared: “*naaseh v’nishmah*” – we will do, and then we will hear. We will be there, Hashem, even when we don’t feel like it. Even when we are tired or uninspired. Even when the mitzvah is challenging, inconvenient, or unpopular. Even when we are in pain and the good is concealed. We are yours.

And every Rosh Hashana, we crown Hashem as our King once again. We renew our commitment to serving Him, fortifying the foundation upon which we hope to build a beautiful structure of love, passion and joy in the year ahead.

While love does not guarantee commitment, commitment ultimately ensures love.

For when we accepted Hashem’s marriage proposal, we promised to work on our relationship too. “*V’ahavta es Hashem Elokecha*” – loving Hashem is a mitzvah. And while love does not guarantee commitment, commitment ensures love.

It is this commitment that we call Kabolas Ol, born of a deep sense of awe of Hashem’s greatness and recognition of His Sovereignty over us. And it is this awe and this commitment we wish for our children.

The question is how we help them get there, especially as these are values that are quite foreign to modern society.

A NEW MOVEMENT

In the year 5741 (1981) the Rebbe launched an innovative children’s movement called Tzivos Hashem – the Army of Hashem. In a letter responding to concerns about its militaristic tone, the Rebbe discussed the reasons for the establishment of Tzivos Hashem:



“...American children have been brought up on the spirit of independence and freedom, and on the glorification of personal prowess and smartness. It has cultivated a sense of cockiness and self-assurance...Since, as mentioned, the root of the problem is the lack of *Kabolas Ol*, **I thought long and hard about finding a way of inducing an American child to get used to the idea of subordination to a higher authority**, despite all the influence to the contrary—in the school, in the street, and even at home, where parents—not wishing to be bothered by their children—have all too often abdicated their authority...”



To help Jewish children develop a healthy sense of discipline, the Rebbe explained, they would voluntarily enroll in *Tzivos Hashem*, a system of rules which they would be encouraged to follow. They would be trained to keep the mitzvos and inspired to see themselves as soldiers of the Commander-in-Chief, Hashem, fighting the war to bring *Moshiach*.

Perhaps we can see in the Rebbe’s concept of *Tzivos Hashem* four key principles of chinuch to *Kabolas Ol* and *Yiras Shomayim*:

BOUNDARIES AND DISCIPLINE AT HOME

Children raised with boundaries and discipline are naturally much more receptive to the concept of *Kabolas Ol*. The ideas that one is obligated to

They would be trained to keep the mitzvos and inspired to see themselves as soldiers of the Commander-in-Chief, Hashem, fighting the war to bring Moshiach.

do a mitzvah or that Halacha is not negotiable are an extension of an upbringing where parents set clear expectations for behavior. Respect for her parents’ authority helps a child respect Hashem’s authority.

Of course, as with anything in chinuch, a positive approach is crucial. Authoritative parenting is healthy; authoritarian is not. Discipline should never mean anger, negativity, blame or shame *chas vesholom*. Rather, boundaries set in a calm, matter-of-fact manner, reinforced in a positive way - especially with praise - accustom a child to respecting authority.

A RELATIONSHIP WITH HASHEM

If *Yiras Shomayim* means awe of Hashem’s omnipresence and omnipotence, then acquiring it necessitates awareness of this reality. We need to talk to our children clearly and often about the “Commander in Chief” of *Tzivos Hashem*. They should be conscious that they are not simply doing “the things we do”; they are fulfilling the mitzvos of Hashem. And Hashem cares deeply about every thought, word and action of theirs.

The *neshamos* of children are innately attuned to *kedusha*, and developing a personal relationship with Hashem is more natural for them than for adults. But it is our responsibility as their parents (or teachers) to help them access that connection. We can help them by mentioning Hashem often in conversation, especially in a personal context:

“Hashem, please help us find Mendel’s toy!”

“Hashem is so proud of you for letting your sister go first.”

“*Gam zu letova*. We don’t know why that had to happen, but surely Hashem has a good reason!”

TURN IT INTO A POWER STRUGGLE

No, not with you! The last thing we want is for our

child's need to assert her independence to manifest as a power struggle with us over boundaries. Worse yet would be a power struggle with us over keeping mitzvos! If we've been pulled into such an argument, we lose - and Yiddishkeit loses.

Rather, the model of Tzivos Hashem empowers a child to see herself as being on Hashem's team, the side of Torah and mitzvos. And the enemy is not her parents; it is the yetzer hara. Every challenge is an opportunity to be victorious over that foreign voice of selfishness that resides within. For she - she is a soldier of Hashem. She wants to do the mitzvah. She wants to bring Moshiach. It's just that nasty yetzer hara again - and he has to be pretty foolish to get into a power struggle with such a mighty soldier!

Helping our children tune in to the voices inside them and teaching them to identify with the voice of their neshama is a priceless gift. This is effective at any age, but the younger we begin, the better.

The most helpful thing we can do is be their cheerleaders - with extra points for humor:

“What a gibor! You just beat that yetzer hara so hard he is crying!”

“Oh, I see that yetzer hara is trying to get Chaya to not listen to Mommy. But he is so silly, he doesn't know that Chaya is a big, strong Captain in Tzivos Hashem and she is going to win!”

They will be prepared to make a true commitment to serving Hashem - and do it with love.

And we need to trust that they will, in fact, win. They want to do what's right. They just need support.

I remember when I once encouraged my son to spend a few quiet moments speaking to his yetzer tov and yetzer hara and deciding what to do. He must have been around six years old. He came back after a short while and reported: “my yetzer tov is sleeping.”

“Okay,” I responded, “maybe you can try to wake him up!”

It didn't take long before he was back with a smile. “My yetzer tov said I should...”

MISSION TRAINING

As Chazal teach us, “*hamaaseh hu haikar*” - it is the action that matters most. Ultimately, the most important thing is accustoming our children to actually doing the mitzvos on a regular basis. Rather than waiting until they are older and appreciate the meaning and the beauty of Yiddishkeit, we need to make the deed the priority.

The earlier a child gets used to washing negel vasser upon awakening, saying brochos before eating, and wearing tznus'dik clothing, the more ingrained these mitzvos become in his or her life. The Tzivos Hashem model of missions to accomplish and a system of accountability for completing them helps children bond with the mitzvos and develop a life-long commitment to keeping them.

And if, simultaneously, we are speaking about Hashem and empowering their yetzer tov, then by the time they graduate from Tzivos Hashem and become bar or bas mitzvah, they will be prepared to make a true commitment to serving Hashem - and do it with love.

★

The baby is finally peacefully asleep in his crib. Please, Hashem, may he grow up to be a ChaYoL - a true soldier - a chossid, yerei Shomayim, and lamdan. May he jump eagerly out of bed each morning because You, his King, are calling. And may he always experience the love and joy of doing a mitzvah, aware that the King he serves is, in fact, his father too. ■



True Joy

Chana (Bernstein) Carlebach, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Graduating class of 5746 (1986)



In 5740¹ the Rebbe spoke at a farbrengen where he shared the following,
“The world is in a dire situation, and much as we can try to explain what is going on [around us] it wouldn’t be fully expressed, as we can only see a fraction of what is actually happening. Physically, we can clearly see - and everyone agrees - that this is an unprecedented situation. Certainly, however, everything will surely end up being for the best.” The Rebbe then gives us a clear directive, “In the interim, [until we see the positive outcome], we are expected to be joyful, as the Torah of Truth demands of us. *True Joy*. Not merely forcing our cheeks into a smile; not saying to ourselves, ‘I’m supposed to be joyful, so I will resolve to do so.’”

Although the Rebbe’s words were said in 5740, the message is perfectly relevant in these turbulent and uncertain times forty years later. The Rebbe has provided us with the encour-

agement and strength to deal with this unprecedented time in the world. Joy- true, authentic joy- the Rebbe says, is the key to dealing with all of life's challenges, whatever they may be, and especially in areas that are vital to the continuity of our People.

A few months ago, at the beginning of the pandemic, our washing machine, needed to be repaired. Although allowing outsiders into our home was prohibited due to the outbreak of Covid-19, Baruch Hashem the plumber was able to come fix the machine as he was considered an essential service worker. I spent a few minutes talking to him and something that he said really resonated with me. He shared that in this time people are able to focus on what really is most important- the family. He looked at me and said, "The Jewish people have always known what is most important. Now the rest of the world is learning that lesson."

In the family unit, the woman fills the most important role. She is the *akeres habayis*, the foundation of the home. The Rebbe has taught us that all Jewish homes are both a microcosm and an extension of Hashem's home, which is all of Creation. Women, as the foundation of the family, are therefore truly the bedrock of the world. The woman's base is her meticulous practice of *taharas hamishpacha*. All blessings for her family come through her careful observance of this specific mitzvah. Through *taharas hamishpacha*, we bring Hashem into our home, our family, and into the world.

Taharas hamishpacha includes the cycle of going to the mikvah and the intimate relations that follow. The purpose of intimate relations is for husband and wife to become one, as the Torah tells us: a "man should leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh."² The ideal state of marriage is when the husband and wife are one; even the separation that is mandated by the Torah during the time of *niddah* is expressly for the eventual union and intimacy that will follow. As a result of this oneness with our spouse, we become one with Hashem and one with ourselves.

Our actions here in this world are mirrored above. Through our marital unity, we cause the unity of Hashem and His *Shechinah*; Hashem's oneness is then revealed in this world. Now we understand why it is through *taharas hamishpacha* that we will usher in Mashiach. Mashiach's arrival is described as the ultimate expression of Hashem's oneness in this

True Joy: Not merely forcing our cheeks into a smile; not saying to ourselves, "I'm supposed to be joyful, so I will resolve to do so."

world, the day that "Hashem will be one and His name will be one."³

The Arizal tells us that the generation that will greet Mashiach is endowed with the *neshamos* of the women in *Mitzrayim*. The Rebbe emphatically taught us that we are that generation. When evil Pharaoh decreed that the men needed to sleep in the fields, hoping to crush the Jewish people's spirit and prevent the birth of Jewish babies, these courageous women went out into the fields to meet their exhausted husbands. Despite the hardships that they faced daily, the women made themselves attractive, joyful, and playful, lifting their husbands' morale. In addition, Pharaoh planted guards by the entrance of the mikvahs to prevent women from immersing, and thus prohibit later intimacy with their husbands. The Jewish women were undeterred, and determinedly found other places to immerse themselves. These women are our heroes and role models; their resolve, trust in Hashem, and absolute belief that everything would come to a good conclusion is the lesson for us to implement in our homes. By emulating those strong and determined women, and persevering in our observance of *taharas hamishpacha*, the Rebbe says we will hasten the coming of Moshiach.⁴

Recently, women have been faced with a similar dilemma to the righteous women of *Mitzrayim*. Many women have risen above tremendous challenges in order to get to the mikvah. Whether it was traveling long distances, immersing late at night, dodging po-



lice blockades, or giving of their time to drive other women during lockdown, they were determined to do what had to be done, with a can do attitude brimming with joy.

During COVID-19, the closing of some mikvahs brought *taharas hamishpacha* into the spotlight. As people took advantage of the many virtual classes offered, education on the topic of *taharas hamishpacha* surged in popularity. Hundreds of classes took place on Zoom, inspiring many women to start anew and observe this mitzvah. The Rebbe wrote in *Hayom Yom*, that the campaign for *taharas hamishpacha* is an endeavor which literally saves lives.⁵

This obligation and opportunity to spread the word about *taharas hamishpacha* applies equally to *n'shei and b'nos chabad*⁶. The Rebbe also said⁷ that by committing to keeping this mitzvah and dedicating themselves in an exact manner when they will get married, this will hasten the bracha for finding their shidduch.

Over the course of the past few months I kept thinking that the Rebbe has prepared us for these turbulent times. The Rebbe emphasized the importance of true simcha, the joy that comes from trust that Hashem's plan is good. This attitude has to permeate all aspects of our life, and especially areas that might seem challenging, such as Taharas Hamishpacha. He pointed out how smart Jewish women have always been, and empowered us with the ability to find solutions to the challenges facing us.

They would be trained to keep the mitzvos and inspired to see themselves as soldiers of the Commander-in-Chief, Hashem, fighting the war to bring Moshiach.

The Rambam says that we need to visualize that all the collective merits and mistakes of the Jewish people are on a balanced scale, and that one positive action can bring salvation to the entire world. Let's choose this mitzvah that unites Hashem and His *Shechina*, the mitzvah of simcha⁸. By emulating the women of *Mitzrayim* we are bringing joy to our family, community and the world. ■

1. *Jem Presents: Global Crisis- What does the Rebbe say? 13:57 and on*
2. *Bereishis 2:24*
3. *Zechariah 14:9*
4. *Likutei Sichos, Volume 13, Page 297*
5. *Hayom Yom 10 Nissan*
6. *Hayom Yom 21 Shvat*
7. *Igros Kodesh, Volume 13, page 326, letter 6812, dated 12 Nissan 5719*
8. *Pesachim 72b*

Chanie Carlebach is the Director of BMC Teachers College. She has been honoured by Canadian Jewish Congress for excellence in education. An international speaker who is passionate about all women-related topics, especially Taharas Hamishpacha, Chanie has been teaching Taharas Hamishpacha for 33 years; she has trained close to 100 Taharas Hamishpacha teachers. Hundreds of students, shluchoh and teachers all around the world have been the beneficiaries of Chanie's knowledge. She is also a life coach specializing in intimate relations and motivating women in all areas of life.

Chanie is most grateful to Hashem for her husband and 13 children, ka"v.

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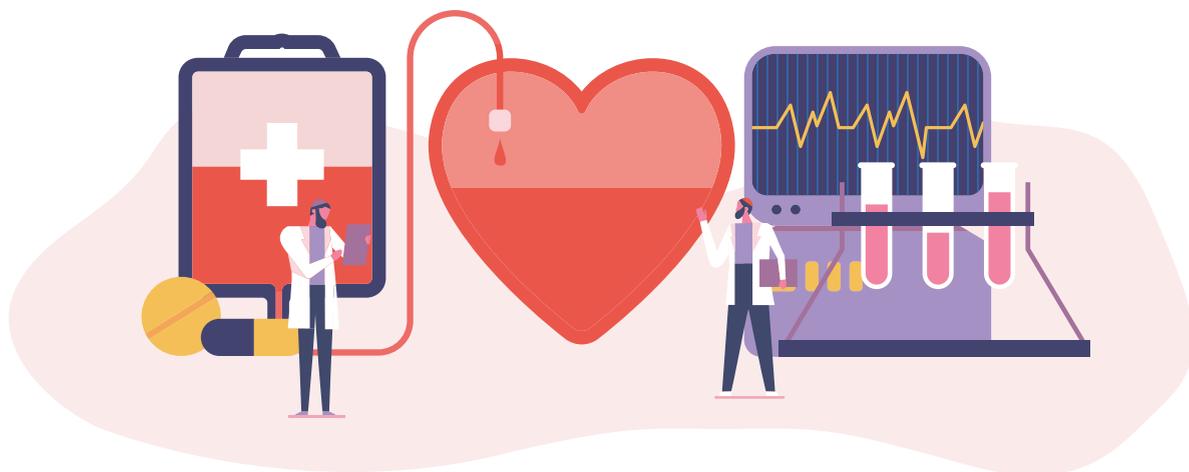
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SPOTLIGHT *on* *our* HEROES

Feiga Khutoretsky, Crown Heights
Grade 12



Throughout the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, our community has witnessed terrible tragedies, לא עלינו. We have rallied together with tefillah, and many individuals and organizations have put in enormous effort into supporting our community. There is one, however, that particularly stands out. Amidst the uncertainty, the Gedaliah Society has emerged to provide us with information and invaluable services.

ITS HISTORY AND NAMESAKE

The Gedaliah Society, a network of Chabad medical professionals, was established six years ago, in 5774, by Dr. Shlomo Minkowitz, in memory of his father-in-law, Mr. Gedaliah Shaffer A”H, the father of many Bais Rivkah graduates.

In the words of his daughter, Mrs. Chana (Shaffer) Minkowitz, a graduate of Bais Rivkah, “If there’s one theme to put around his life, it would be his commitment to Yiddishkeit and his family, and the pursuit of truth and knowledge.” He grew up in Boston, in a traditional family. Similar to the song, “My Zeidy,” he was heavily influenced by his religious grandfather, and went on to become a Lubavitcher chosid. In addition to being a scholar, well-versed in Nigleh and Chassidus as well as other studies, Mr. Shaffer was well-known for his Tzedakah. His daughter recounts that on Sundays, she would

come home to a line of people, out the door and down the steps. People knew that at seven o'clock on Sundays, they would be warmly welcomed in the Shaffer household, not simply for a check, but for a personal meeting with someone who cared for them deeply. Cups of seltzer and words of encouragement and support were shared freely. "For a person who was so jealous of his time, making sure every moment was accounted for, he completely devoted himself to this."

Mr. Shaffer's life of giving has found fitting tribute through the Gedalia Society, especially in recent times, when the Gedalia Society has played such a vital role in the community.

STEPPING INTO THE PUBLIC EYE

This past year, the organization began to look outward. The global COVID-19 pandemic was when the Gedalia Society, including its members that are Bais Rivkah graduates, began to really work full-time on public needs. Recognizing the lack of guidelines set down by government organizations, the board of the Gedalia Society, in conjunction with Rabbonim as well as Dr. Eli Rosen, worked on setting up relevant guidelines for the community. The board is made up of Dr. Shlomo Minkowitz, Dr. Zev Nelken, Mrs. Esty Slavin, Ms. Irit Lang, and Ms. Miriam Andrusier. In an effort to gather accurate information related to coronavirus specific to our community, the Gedalia Society ran two surveys. Both surveys received about 4,000-4,500 responses.

Ms. Irit Lang, a transplant coordinator for Renewal, was instrumental in setting up a COVID-19 helpline for the community. The helpline was a blessing to those who could not leave the house due to social distancing or isolation. Anyone that could not leave the house could call in for help. "There was a shortage of Tylenol and thermometers, just basic things that people needed," says Irit. Items such as these were in short supply during that time, and it was often not easy to obtain them. Many people were also reaching out for emotional support. For that reason, a hotline for coronavirus related questions was set up. Mrs. Esty (Kaminker) Slavin, a PA in women's health, relates that an older couple called the hotline to ask if they could go to the hospital to visit a friend that they were concerned about. After some calls, the hotline volunteer who took their call was able to reassure them that their friend was being taken care of, and she could tell them confidently not to go. Another woman who called the helpline was worried

Having a solid foundation of who I am has helped me stay steadfast in my Yiddishkeit throughout my life.

about her parents who had no phone in the house. She was concerned that if they needed something, they had no way to reach out. The helpline sent someone out to check on them, and make sure that they had phone access. Many of the calls dealt with COVID-19 education; people were unsure of who could and could not go out, and how to stay safe. The hotline was able to offer much guidance. These were two separate lines that shared a phone number; the helpline was run by Ms. Irit Lang, and the hotline was organized by Ms. Miriam Andrusier. Overall, the hotline fielded 5,136 calls, and the helpline ran 550 errands for community members.

During the thick of the pandemic, the Gedalia Society ran a plasma drive and was involved with another, larger drive. These were blood drives targeted at assessing whether people had antibodies in their blood and if so, using their plasma to treat people who were actively sick with COVID-19. The first drive that they arranged was private, open only to medical professionals, Hatzolah members, and the Chevra Kadisha. After that was a success, they were involved in organizing a second blood drive. This one was open to the public. It drew over 200 people who came to be tested. On the



It's your responsibility that if you have a skill, you must use it to help others, and you must strive to make a difference.

advice of Dr. Rosen, who serves as a consultant to the Gedaliah Society, many people over the age of 65 required testing before they left their homes after quarantine. The Gedaliah Society was very involved in paying home visits to many older people to test them for antibodies and coronavirus. The organization also sent many nurses and other medical professionals to individuals who were sick at home. These were for things that normally could be done by a full- or part-time nurse, but due to COVID-19, nurses were hard to come by. Tasks like having vitals measured, an IV set up, or getting blood drawn from home all became much more difficult. Gedaliah Society members alleviated much of that burden.

The Gedaliah Society was formed to support Lubavitchers in the medical field. Yet Ms. Irit Lang says that her most rewarding aspect is being able to bring so much to those in the community. This sentiment was echoed by many involved in the organization. Mrs. Esty Slavin shares, “I feel very rewarded when I help people in the community. I feel like the Aibishter is giving me the ability to use my skills to help people.”

BAIS RIVKAH'S IMPACT ON GEDALIAH SOCIETY MEMBERS

Ms. Lang, a graduate of Bais Rivkah Seminary, says that “For me, Bais Rivkah Seminary set the groundwork for a lot of my Yiddishkeit and my beliefs. Having

a solid foundation of who I am has helped me stay steadfast in my Yiddishkeit throughout my life.” This powerful statement is heard time and again when speaking to Bais Rivkah graduates. Wherever their future takes them, the groundwork was set by Bais Rivkah, and they have renewed strength to stay firm in their beliefs.

Mrs. Slavin, a graduate of the Bais Rivkah class of 5760, narrows in on another crucial lesson that is taught in Bais Rivkah: the power of one. “In many other places, you're taught to be one of the group; the group is very much emphasized. But the Rebbe empowers and creates leaders. A person can never say, ‘Oh, I'm just one small person.’” The lesson from her years in Bais Rivkah made her realize that “it's your responsibility that if you have a skill, you must use it to help others, and you must strive to make a difference.”

When Mrs. Bronya Shaffer, noted lecturer and wife of Mr. Gedaliah Shaffer, was asked about the idea of an article addressing the contributions of Gedaliah Society, she replied, “I think that's a wonderful idea; indeed, the members of The Gedaliah Society are to be lauded for their unstinting and loyal service to this community for several dreadful weeks. It's fitting that a Bais Rivkah magazine should honor them.” In light of the Gedaliah Society members' devotion, they certainly deserve our community's appreciation. B'ezras Hashem, we shall no longer have to suffer through such difficult times, as Hashem will bring us the final Redemption, with the coming of Moshiach NOW. ■

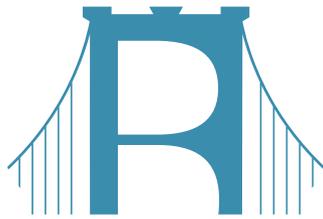


Ms. Irit Lang



Mrs. Esty Slavin





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*Indeed, as the clay in the hand of the potter, who,
when he wishes expands it and when he wishes
contracts it; so are we in Your hand*

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Not a Moment Too Soon

Chaya (Hershkop) Stern, Philadelphia, PA
Graduating class of 5766 (2006)



I am a person who likes to be in control. I like to know what's happening and when. I struggle when things do not turn out as I had planned.

Soon after I found out that I was pregnant with my first child, I decided that there would be no hospital gowns, food restrictions, restraints or limited timelines for me. So I chose to give birth in a birthing center. I felt passionate about the idea that women should have choices in how they want to give birth and that their choices should be supported. I wanted a natural birth and I wanted to be in a space where I would have a voice and not need to fight to have my choices respected. I had my first two daughters at the Brooklyn Birth Center, and Baruch Hashem they were straightforward textbook births. My babies were born a few days before my due dates after quick and easy labors.

When I was expecting my third child, I went to see the birth center near our home in Philadelphia. I remember telling the midwife my birth history, and she indicated that it was likely this pregnancy and birth would be similar to my previous ones. I was looking forward to an uncomplicated pregnancy, easy labor and quick delivery. I was also fully expecting my baby to be born a few days early, just like its sisters. However, Hashem had other plans and my anticipated smooth path turned a little bumpy.

During My third trimester, the baby had a missed heartbeat. The birth center sent me for an echocardiography. I forced myself to remain calm, say some Tehillim and remind myself that Hashem wants me to have a healthy baby! At the ultrasound, the doctor gave me conflicting information, saying a skipped heartbeat is very normal and common, but it could also indicate the necessity for an automatic c-section. The plan was to monitor the heart rate and make sure it didn't get too fast. I focused on this plan because the thought of a c-section gave me nightmares. Baruch Hashem, over the next few weeks the problem resolved itself and I breathed a sigh of relief. Around this time, I also began expe-

Say some Tehillim and remind myself that Hashem wants me to have a healthy baby!

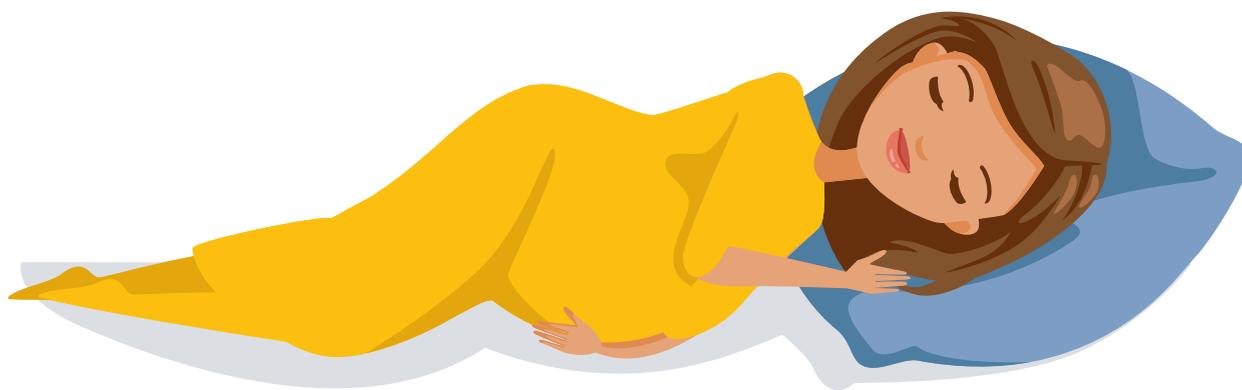
riencing severe pain which made it difficult to walk. I stopped working with my Early Intervention babies early, and found a chiropractor experienced in pregnancy-induced pain. She mentioned that her colleague also specializes in pregnancy pain reduction, but I stored her information for later because I was certain my baby would be born shortly and the pain would go away.

But the baby was not following my timeline. As my due date approached, I went to sleep every night imagining that I was in labor. I would awaken multiple times, certain that labor was starting. When my due date passed, I felt desperate for my baby to be born. Things were not working out as I had ex-

pected. This was not what I had planned for! I was learning the truth about birth - that it is not in my control at all. I could prepare a very comprehensive birth plan, but Hashem is the Creator of the Master Birth Plan. He created the world and His plan accounts for how, when, where, with whom and in what way each neshama will come into this world. It is Hashem Himself who holds the Key to Childbirth.

At four days overdue, though, I had still not fully accepted that this baby would come when Hashem decided it was ready, and that there was nothing I could do about it. I spent hours researching natural methods to induce labor and could not concentrate on anything other than willing my baby to be born. I was doing special exercises nightly, marching up and down the stairs, and drinking endless cups of raspberry leaf tea. I even ate dates (I had not eaten those since Tu Bishvat in Bais Rivkah Elementary!).

When early labor finally began, I breathed a huge sigh of relief, expecting the same smooth process I had experienced in the past. But to my dismay, labor did not progress, and there was cause for concern. As much as the Birth Center supports natural births and mothers' choices, their protocols indicated that I might soon have to be transferred to the hospital. I was feeling despondent and anxious. I went in to have the baby's heartbeat monitored and I had my first pleasant surprise of the day. Francesca was the midwife on duty. I had previously met Francesca at a different birth center location for a routine appointment. I had felt really comfortable with her and appreciated her open-minded approach to women's healthcare. The amazing Hashgacha Pratis was that Francesca only works at this



I could prepare a very comprehensive birth plan, but Hashem is the Creator of the Master Birth Plan.

birth center 10 days a month, for births only, and she had just started her 10 days. I was slowly starting to accept that Hashem knows what is best for me. Francesca viewed the transfer deadline loosely and was willing to extend the time as long as I showed some signs of active labor. My next incidence of clear Hashgacha Pratis was that I still had the card my chiropractor had given me and I was able to reach her colleague, Marlene, who agreed to meet me at the birth center for a session. Marlene was so certain she would be able to help that she told me to pack everything I would need for the delivery because I would next be going home with my baby! Marlene is trained in acupuncture, acupresure, and massage and is a general wonder woman who specializes in fertility, pregnancy and birth. After working on me for two hours, Marlene, stumped at the lack of major progress, finally asked me, “What are you holding onto? Do you think there is anything stopping you from letting go?” She sensed that my body was physically ready but something else was holding me back. Of course, there was. I was holding on to my illusion of control.

After the session, my midwife offered me additional suggestions to help advance labor. Francesca was



unflappably calm and reassuring throughout. She was not Jewish, but she was clearly spiritually connected. She constantly reminded me that G-d is in control and that each baby is born at exactly the right time. “No one can witness a birth and not believe in G-d,” she said gently. “G-d brought the world into being and He will bring your baby into the world”. Sometimes we need to hear things from others to fully accept what we already know. When I stopped worrying and consciously accepted to trust in Hashem’s plan, things began to move quickly.

Seemingly, Hashem’s plan for this baby was the “long short” road, since before I knew it, I was in an advanced stage of labor. And barely an hour and a half later, my baby was born!

My journey doesn't end there. My baby was born with a very weak cry and appeared to be struggling to breathe. My midwife encouraged skin-to-skin

I was slowly starting to accept that Hashem knows what is best for me.

contact to help regulate his breathing, but he was turning blue and more midwives were called in to help. My husband was worried and anxious, but I was able to draw on my new resolve to “think good” and have emunah and bitachon. Hashem had brought me this far, and I chose to focus on His Hashgacha, trusting that everything would be ok. I picked up a Tehllim and really let myself feel the words keeping me calm as I watched the midwives suction the baby, put him under warming lights and eventually give him oxygen. Five minutes later, Baruch Hashem, my screaming, pink, warmed up baby was back in my arms.

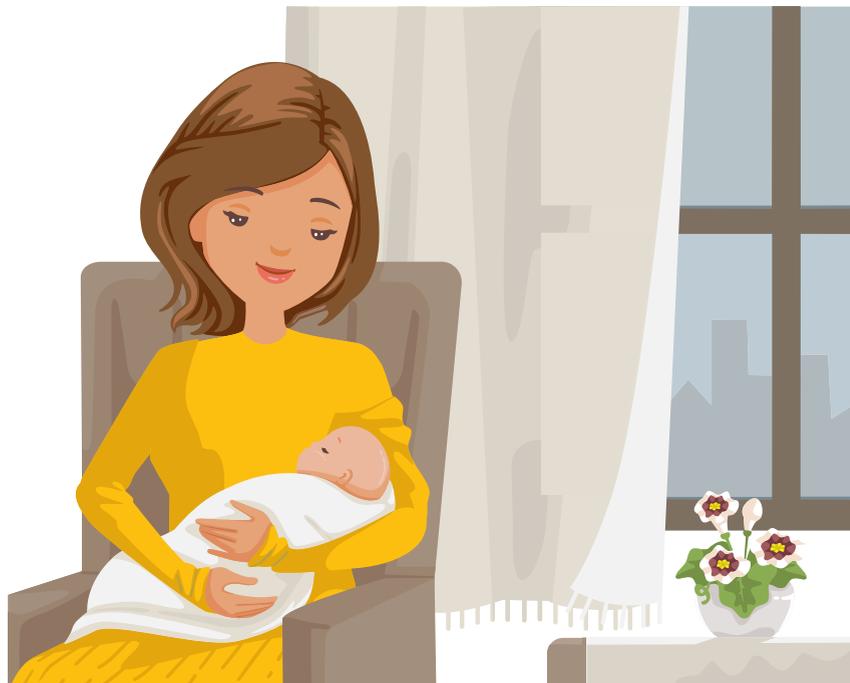
What I learned from this experience is that we can make plans but Hashem is the Master Planner. He is orchestrating every minute detail in each of our lives, in the way that only He knows is best. As my due date approached, all my energy was invested in holding onto my plan. I needed to feel in charge and was not ready to let go and put myself “in His hands”. Once I surrendered my plans, my expectations, my need to be in control - my baby was born. When my baby needed extra help, I was already in a better place. I had learned to shift my

When I stopped worrying and consciously accepted to trust in Hashem's plan, things began to move quickly:

focus, trust in Hashem and make space for all the good Hashem had planned for me. ▀

Chaya Stern is an Early Intervention OT and feeding therapist in Philadelphia. Chaya also offers feeding therapy consultations using a parent coaching model. Chaya is passionate about healthy moms, healthy births and healthy children.

Chaya can be reached at eatersandfeeders101@gmail.com



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CAME TO BELIEVE

By Anonymous
(Proud Bais Rivkah alumna)



I struggled with weight my whole life. Not like five or ten pounds here and there, but more like eighty to one hundred pounds. And aside from the weight, I felt like food was my worst enemy. But it was also my best friend. It was my ultimate soother, but also made me feel like the ultimate loser. I had this love-hate relationship with food, and the battle left me feeling depressed and down about myself.

For years I tried so many different diets and programs. Nothing worked. I had no control and my brain was hijacked by food. I could diet successfully for a short while, but then I was right back at it with a cycle of binging and regretting it. I worked with very kind and understanding nutritionists, but for me, that wasn't enough. There was something deeper going on, and I did not have the tools to know what that was. I felt like I was hopelessly addicted to food, and there was no way out.

I would tell myself I wouldn't overeat, and then I would, and spend hours afterwards on the couch or in bed, drained from my energy. I was depressed about it, but everything else in life seemed to be going well, so why was I making such a big deal about food? I felt like I was in a fog.

I heard about 12-Step Programs for weight, but I was afraid of them. Were they in line with Torah? With chassidus? I kept away.

At some point, I stumbled across Rabbi Shais Taub's book "God of our Understanding." I was mind blown. In his clear, sincere manner, he was able to explain what was really happening.

He explained that addiction was really a spiritual illness. That while there are physical and chemical components, the true cause of addiction is an intense thirst for a connection to a Higher Power. No amount of food (or any drug of choice) will ever satisfy the craving because that is not what the soul is really craving. "Nafshi Sarog Eilecha"- "my soul yearns for you."

I couldn't believe it. I was a frum girl my whole life, yet I still related to what he was saying. I didn't feel that real deep connection to Hashem when davening or doing Mitzvos. Hitting rock bottom in my addiction allowed me to recognize that my soul was desperately craving more spirituality in my life, an aspect that I had neglected since seminary.

I learned to recognize that I was treating food as my "G-d". Instead of turning to Him when I was struggling, food was my only solace. When I am faced with challenges I do need extra support, but food cannot provide that. A strong sense of belief and Bitachon in Hashem can.

I learned to start recognizing that I had emotions beneath the surface and that I was just shoving it down with food, rather than facing them head on. I needed to work on myself, with the support of others, and identify what was causing the negative emotions and how I can perhaps change my thinking to impact my feelings.

Rabbi Taub showed me how each of the 12 Steps are perfectly in line with chassidus. I started to see how controlling I had been of my life and the people around me, and how that really did nothing other than frustrate me. I became aware that I had been looking at the world from a very self-centered perspective rather than from a G-dly or purposeful perspective.

The medical phenomenon fascinated me. How doctors acknowledged that a vital spiritual experience can cause a psychic change in someone to the point that an obsession or desire for an addictive substance could be lifted. How they supported a spiritual solution to a multifaceted problem.

I started to daven like my life depended on it. This

Hitting rock bottom in my addiction allowed me to recognize that my soul was desperately craving more spirituality in my life, an aspect that I had neglected since seminary.

process allowed me to have a real relationship with Hashem, and abstaining from all addictive substances like sugar and flour allowed me to discover a relationship with Hashem like I could never accomplish when I was "in the food". It allowed me to be able to appreciate all the Mamorim and Sichos that talk about the radical transformation in the nefesh habihamis that occurs from spiritual effort- a real spiritual experience. I realized that I had to let go of resentments towards others, for if I stored it all inside of me I would end up eating over them.

The process of the 12 Steps allowed me to admit I couldn't do it on my own, but that Hashem could do anything if I get out of the way and let Him. I came to believe that Hashem would lift my addiction to food, and He has come through for me in ways that I could not have ever imagined.

I have also begun to devour the words of our holy Rebbeim. I see now how they have such a deep understanding of the human psyche, which for a Yid is our neshama, and how they knew exactly what was needed for us to be emotionally and mentally balanced Yidden.

Does this sound mega spiritual? It probably does.



Doctors acknowledged that a vital spiritual experience can cause a psychic change in someone to the point that an obsession or desire for an addictive substance could be lifted.

but if I hadn't been beaten so badly by my addiction to food, I wouldn't have been desperate enough to give a spiritual solution a shot. And I am so grateful I was desperate enough to be willing to try the spiritual route to abstain from addictive substances.

I am grateful that while technically I have been a believer my whole life, I now feel that my nefesh habihamis is on board with that belief as well, because I am able to recognize that for me to remain sane, I need to be able to transcend my ego and desires and live my life with one purpose in mind: What does Hashem want from me ?

And when I remember that, I can remain healthy,

abstain from the food, and have peace and tranquility beyond my wildest imaginations.

I invite you too to come to believe. ■

Please Note: We at Embrace are not endorsing any programs. We are sharing one woman's perspective on how spiritual tools helped her overcome a food addiction. -Editors



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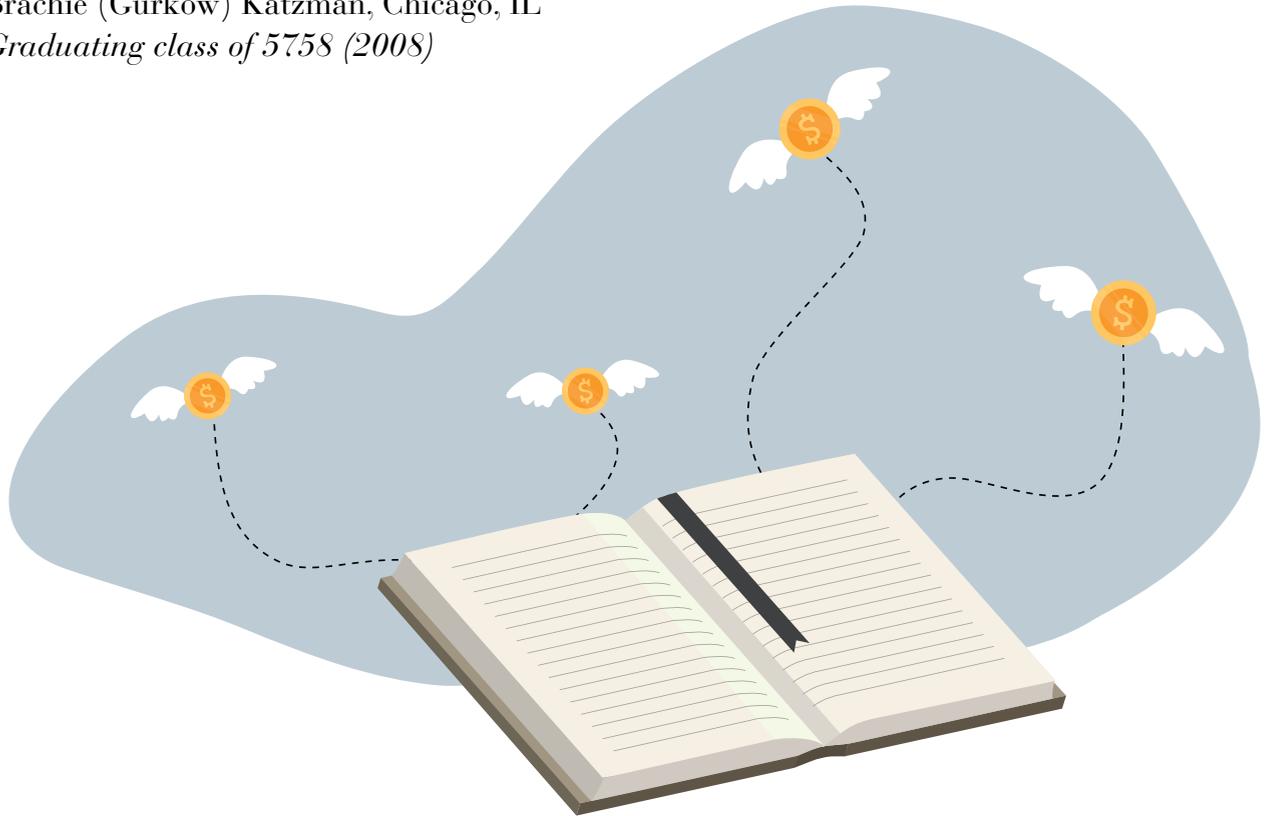
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Faith & Finances

Brachie (Gurkow) Katzman, Chicago, IL
Graduating class of 5758 (2008)



As a growing family with a fluctuating income, money is a worry that arises constantly. We need money to pay rent, money to buy clothes, money for tuition. This anxiety isn't constant, but when the landlord sends an email pointing out that the rent is late again I do feel uneasy.

Bad things happen- people lose their houses, people can't afford medical treatment. These scenarios were scary to me; anxiety would kick in. I would panic. I would worry. I would stress, because these are the ways we are supposed to react to such situations. After all, they help every time, right?

Once these avenues were exhausted without fruition, I would remember that there is Someone running the world and taking care of me. I would turn to Hashem. I would talk to Him. I would tell Him my worries, and I would conclude by saying that I trust Him to take care of me and my family. Then I would stand back and breathe. Unlike the other methods, doing this really calmed me down.

We learned a lot about Bitachon in school. Bitachon is trusting that Hashem will help you in the situation you're in. He runs the world, and He has enough to sustain all living beings in it. It's realizing that we don't have control. Now, facing bills that I have to pay (not my parents like when I was in school) it's a matter of internalizing the Bitachon.

I always knew money comes from Hashem; Hashem decides how much money we will get and distributes it accordingly. Yes, I had Emunah. I had a belief that Hashem runs the world. I just needed to take it a step further. I needed to strengthen my Bitachon and feel safe with this arrangement.

I had been trying to be in control of my life. Life is so full of twists and turns that we don't have power over what happens. The choice we have is how we are going to deal with what happens. When I stop putting effort into trying to control my life, I have more energy to deal with the challenges sent my way.

As years went on I got better at it. I don't need to worry so much anymore because I know that Hashem always comes through. Every time.

I would tell Him my worries, and I would conclude by saying that I trust Him to take care of me and my family:

Sometimes it's in the form of money, other times it's the things we need. There was furniture we needed that others were giving away and clothes that needed a new home. There were even surprise gifts that I wanted but didn't think were practical given our financial situation. I got a phone call one day from someone who had a new kitchen set they were giving away. Would my daughter enjoy it? It was just at the time I was looking for sales, used ones, trying to find the toy that kept her so busy in other people's houses but we didn't have. Hashem sent us one.

Look around and notice the little things, the little ways Hashem provides. Hashem will come through. Hashem has many messengers. We just need to notice it. ■

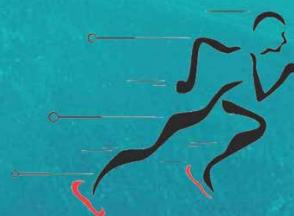
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LETTING GO *with* LOVE

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



If each family has a “fun parent”, my husband definitely earns that title. I read books, I play board games and card games and color pictures, but my husband — he brings all the fun.

A couple of days ago he was squeezing our daughter in a hug, her feet dangling off the ground. “Put me down!” she was squealing, and he asked, “But what should I do if I love you so much?!”

And with a laugh and a yell she said, “Just let go of me!”

Just let go of me.

We let go of our children because we love them, because we believe in them. We give them space to become their own unique people, because we realize what incredible people they will be. We let them bump and bruise and make mistakes, because that’s how you learn and grow stronger.

We let go as they learn to roll over, to sit, to crawl. As they begin walking, talking, exploring the world on their own. As they begin learning, teaching, reaching for the moon.

We let go, because we know they can.

Even when they ask us to hold tight, and maybe especially then. With love, with support, with every confidence. We let go.

And even if our children are wary of our trust, if they sit down after one nervous step, refusing to go on, we pick them up and encourage them to try again. And soon, they are running. Flying on chubby toddler feet, and it is we who are running behind, repeating like a mantra “I’m letting go, I’m letting go.”

Letting go isn’t always easy.

Sometimes, as adults, we find ourselves bruising and bumping and feeling in the dark. And we think

that Hashem might have forgotten about us, that He left us alone.

But in truth — He’s just letting go.

Hashem lets go because He loves us. Because He knows we can.

Sure, we may make plenty of mistakes. We might make wrong turns, and reach dead ends, and think that this was all a waste.

But in the space of our free-fall, we find that our feet are more steady than we gave them credit for. Our heart is more forgiving, our vision more perceptive, our souls at peace.

I know you can do it, because Hashem gave you the chance to try.

What should I do if I love you so much?

Just let go of me. ■



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A JOURNEY OF ACCEPTING *the* GIFT *of* CHILDREN

Chaya M. (Katzman) Raskin, East Flatbush
Graduating class of 5768 (2008)



THE SETTING

I remember the moment it hit me.

We had BH just bought our new house in East Flatbush, I had three children under four, and I was expecting my fourth in a couple of months. And there I was, schlepping up the stairs with a basket of laundry that I could hardly balance over my pregnant belly. Toys were strewn all over the house, and there were probably leftovers from supper (or lunch) all over the kitchen and dinette.

I like to think I'm a neat and organized person. This was not how I expected my house to look, but I was working a part-time job and running after 3 toddlers all day and was completely drained.

I remember thinking that things could not continue this way.

It just wasn't possible to raise a growing family when under so much physical and emotional strain. The kids were demanding, the housework wasn't getting done, and I didn't feel fulfilled. I was stretched to my last bit of energy and just about surviving.

I found myself mentally re-evaluating my life.

I loved my job. It was interesting to me, minimal hours, and working from home, and I found it relaxing. That certainly wasn't the problem.

But I was heavily pregnant and feeling it.

The housework was hard.

The kids were constantly needing my attention, not to mention my hands-on assistance, until they finally quieted at seven or 8PM, when, if I was lucky, I finally got some good hours of peace and quiet.

And so at that moment, a thought came into my head that I had never seriously considered before.

THE DILEMMA

You see, after the birth of each child, people had been asking me, close friends and family members from whom I least expected it, why I felt I had to have the kids so close together.

Honestly, I'd never thought twice about it.

I grew up in a family of ten children ka"h born in less than 12 years and thrived in it.

My husband loves kids and is an extremely devoted and hardworking father. (Without him this would be a different discussion.) He always said he was excited to be a father of twenty. I used to laugh when he said that. But I never argued; who knew what Hashem had in store?

But now I was doubting myself.

I was worn down and exhausted and I didn't even know if what I was doing made any kind of sense.

So I decided in my mind that after this fourth child, I was entitled to a break.

I planned to call a Rav who would surely give me a heter after I told him I was nearing a nervous breakdown.

And then I'd have a chance to be normal, right?

But if I expected to be relieved, I was very wrong.

I gained no peace from this resolution; in fact, it made me feel even worse.

And I realized it wasn't what I really wanted.

I *wanted* a big family. I loved my big family. I felt lucky growing up, still do today, and I knew my children felt lucky with their siblings so close to their age, and wanted more.

But I had lost my drive.

I was doubting my dreams and the path I had taken.

It just wasn't possible to raise a growing family when under so much physical and emotional strain. The kids were demanding, the housework wasn't getting done, and I didn't feel fulfilled.

I knew I needed to go back to the source and get educated.

SEARCHING

I remembered a class I'd had in school about the Rebbe's views on family planning, and decided that was a good place to start. Not being the type to keep high school notes forever, I contacted my teacher and asked her to send me the information she had.

It was hardly a few hours and she had responded with the notes from her class, an inspiring story, a link to some excerpts of Sichos on a website, and another Sicha she recommended I learn.

It was good stuff. I began reading and immediately felt my conviction return. But at one point I stopped. Sure, I was comfortable digging deep into a Sicha in its original form, but I knew I didn't represent the majority. What was there for my friends when *they* needed encouragement? Was this really all there was? Had no one put together a book about it, or even a few chapters that addressed these issues? Was



there no resource that put the contemporary questions together with their traditional answers?

I did some more searching and discovered that no, there was not. At least, not in the way I wanted to see it.

And so I decided to do my research.

I began with a list of questions I wanted to find answers to, and together with my husband, I collected and organized a pile of material from various sources: halachic, hashkafic, and practical, all about having children. Of course, a huge number of pages consisted of talks and letters of the Rebbe, showing us just how important this issue was to him.

We found some amazing stuff. Very soon I knew that I would not be calling the Rav so fast, and believe it or not, life suddenly became manageable again. And we weren't just managing - we were thriving. Our new perspective gave us new strength and passion to care for our family, in a way we could have never imagined.

BREAKING DOWN THE QUESTION

We discovered that while the halacha is clear on the issue, its application could be interpreted in numerous ways.

To summarize it in a general sense:

The mitzvah of having children comes from the posuk in Parshas Bereishis “...וּמָלְאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ וּכְבָשׁוּהָ...”
Be fruitful and multiply, fill the land and conquer it...”

The Rabbanim explained based on this that the mitzvah de'oraisa is to have one son and one daughter (that would live to have a son and daughter between them). That would fulfill the reasoning of the mitzvah to continue the human race.

But the mitzvah derabanan takes it a lot further. Taking into account the meaning and spirit of the posuk to “be fruitful and multiply,” they explain that, in fact, one is required to continue to have children “...as long as one can.”

Now, there were plenty of situations we knew of that certainly qualified for an exemption to this (a heter). Women with various health conditions, complications after birth, or other situations that limited their ability to carry, birth, or raise children are not hard to find.

[Not to mention those with conditions such as hyperemesis gravidarum, who basically don't have a life for nine months when they are expecting. These women are heroes for having even a single child in those difficult circumstances.]



But we were not them and they were not us. We were healthy, mentally and physically. My pregnancies were not symptom-free but nor were they anything crazy. My babies were not exceptionally difficult. We were both committed to our family and had family and community support. So we needed to find out: what did “as long as one can” mean for us?

FINDING ANSWERS

That's where our stack of pages of the Rebbe's talks came into play.

I've always believed that context changes a lot, and so we read not just the sichos, but we found the background in which they were shared.

Turns out, things then weren't that different to the way they are now.

Women like me were struggling.

They told the Rebbe how tired they were, how emotionally difficult it was to care for children so soon after birth, how they needed time to recover.

And what was most interesting was that the Rebbe did not counter any of their claims.

But nor did he agree with them.

He spoke about the tremendous value of each Yiddishe Neshama that would be brought into the world.

He talked about what a zechus we mothers have in raising these children, and that the grandparents have in supporting their children and grandchildren.

These children weren't just children. These were people, who may start off as children but after a short decade or two, they are independent grown-ups. Souls and personalities that have an irreplace-

able impact on the world, that bring bracha and goodness to their families and communities and ultimately the world.

He spoke about how each person was an entire world, how the one creation that Hashem created solitary was the human being. Everything else was created in pairs, dozens, millions or trillions, but man was alone to demonstrate that all of the world was equal and relevant to just one individual.

He talked about how these souls were waiting to come down, how they all needed to come down for Moshiach to finally come.

The Rebbe was trying to elevate us.

He wanted to inspire us, to help us realize and connect with the truth that we have capabilities beyond what we can imagine, that we must only open ourselves up to receive the blessings and they will come.

He told us to forget our ambitions for other Jews and shlichus when it got in the way of our family. He told us that Hashem has many messengers, that he would find a way to accomplish whatever is needed, but that no one could replace our role as parents for this one child that Hashem might want to send us.

He told us that shalom bayis would be increased, that parnassa would be increased, that every child brings with them a channel full of blessing that would really reach us all.

But as with any bracha, we need to be open to it.

And perhaps with all the negativity in the world with regard to parenting and children, it seemed that we as a couple weren't open enough.

So we studied the Rebbe's words, reading them not for what we wanted them to say, but for what the Rebbe was trying to say to us.

OUR ANSWER

Between the lines of more than thirty sichos to the public, some personal letters, and anything else we found on the topic, the message the Rebbe had for us was clear and unequivocal.

Stop, he was telling us. *Think about it.*

Remember what kind of decision this is.

Realize that potentially, there is a child in Heaven waiting to join your family, a child who will bring you joy, blessing, and so much nachas.

Remember that Hashem knows you so well, knows your family and situation, in fact knows far more about you than you will ever know about yourself.

And we weren't just managing - we were thriving. Our new perspective gave us new strength and passion to care for our family, in a way we could have never imagined.

And He is calculating the very best path for you, not just for now, but for decades and generations.

Think, he said. *Are you really sure that you cannot handle it? That you don't want to try, to let Hashem help you find ways to handle it?*

We read it. We internalized it. We thought deeply about our situation. And with some time, we realized that yes, we believed we did have the strength.

I don't know what would have happened had we come to our Rav for a heter. Perhaps he would have given it. Maybe he would have talked us through our circumstances and helped us find the strength to do what we really wanted deep down, and ultimately discovered that we could.

But we'll never know, because at the end we never got there. Our question simply disappeared after the Rebbe's words sunk in.

It was time to stop listening to others who doubted us, who didn't share our values or understand what we understood. It was time to shake off the doubts that were literally sapping the life out of us.

The Torah wanted us to have children as long as one



can. With the Rebbe's encouragement, we knew that Hashem wasn't going to set us up for failure. If he would give us a challenge, it would come with ample reward, and all the tools needed to overcome it. We only needed to give it our absolute best shot.

We were convinced, and filled with renewed strength and energy. We knew that whatever Hashem would send us, we were ready.

MY SOLUTIONS

Of course, we are still human.

I still schlep myself around every time I'm expecting. I still have difficult days and hours dealing with the kids, their fights, and their diaper changes.

We struggle, we try, and sometimes we fail, but we always get up again. And inside I am at peace because I am confident in the path I have chosen.

I have learned that a proper perspective actually gives strength, both mentally and emotionally, and in practically finding solutions. I know that I am fulfilling a tremendous mission with every child I have and every moment that I care for them. This realization motivates me to discover just how much I can handle if I set my mind to it.

I stopped worrying about all the "things" I wanted to do, and accepted the fact that whatever I couldn't manage to do was not something Hashem wanted from me right now.

This wasn't easy for my ambitious self. I always took pride in my ability to multitask seamlessly and fill my day with accomplishments. But learning to value time spent in a calm and serene state of mind for my family made all the difference.

These children weren't just children. These were people, who may start off as children but after a short decade or two, they are independent grown-ups. Souls and personalities that have an irreplaceable impact on the world, that bring bracha and goodness to their families and communities and ultimately the world.



I discovered that I need to focus on caring for myself, so that I have the strength to live up to Hashem's expectations in caring for His children. And when I am fed, rested, and fulfilled, our entire home is elevated.

I found that I needed to stop being distracted, to stop looking at the kids as something that was in my way, and remember that they were my main mission in life right now. And then everything else I truly needed or wanted to do somehow also fell into place. I learned to try to live in the moment, to cherish the time I spend with my children, to recognize that Hashem sent me each one at the time that is best for them, for us, and for the world.

I found that bracha sometimes comes in unexpected beautiful ways, like a spontaneous kiss from Hashem who is proud of our efforts. Watching a toddler meltdown vanish into thin air at the sight of baby brother, replaced by a cooing, smiling, and suddenly calm child, is a sight that I will never take for granted. Offers of help from unexpected sources, discoveries of the great advantages of our little house and neighborhood, and the greatest bracha of regular, good health regularly remind me of my father in Heaven who is looking out for me.

I see the pride that my children have in their sisters and brothers; their unique personalities full of curiosity, generosity, humor, and creativity each complementing the other; their love and concern for each other even at their very young age. We are convinced that we have not made a mistake.

And between the noise and the chaos that the Coronavirus lockdown brought with it, we also found the blessings in a close family like mine: The hours upon hours that my children spend talking, playing, and

And it occurred to me that, after two boys who were named after close family members who had just passed away, Mendel took the name of the Rebbe whose words had ensured that he would arrive.

imagining together, often with practically no adult supervision despite their young age. Boredom does not exist in our home. And thinking of the countless people locked up in a quiet, lonely, or difficult place, we feel blessed to live in an environment of carefree play, love, and joy of innocent, beautiful children.

THE NEXT ONE ARRIVES

Shortly after we made this resolution, when my fourth baby was about seven months old, I discovered I was expecting. But the joy and exhilaration that filled me this time caught me by surprise. It seemed ironic to me that I'd be so excited for yet another one when there were already four tiny babies in my home ka"h. But after all that time spent deeply considering the incredible gift that each child is, the zechus and the urgency of this mission, another baby now meant something else altogether.

Mendel was born a couple weeks earlier than expected, a beautiful boy with a head full of blonde hair. He immediately won our hearts with his sunny disposition, gentle and easygoing nature, and adorable tendency to burst into dance at the faintest hint of music.

And it occurred to me that, after two boys who were named after close family members who had just passed away, Mendel took the name of the Rebbe, whose words had ensured that he would arrive.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is so easy to get caught in the winds of the society around us. A society that understands little about the Torah's values, not just about children, but about our mission as people in this world. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and afraid, to doubt our own abilities to do something the people around us believe we can't do. But then that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

We are stronger than we think. We are driven, and we are supported. Hashem has a plan for every one of His children, and we need not be afraid.

Each person and family's circumstances differ, and many of us struggle with real challenges including mental, emotional, physical, psychological, behavioral, and other troubling dynamics. Some of us have more difficult children in various senses of the word. These are situations that must not be minimized and a Rav and mashpia should be consulted on how to navigate them, and whether the situation necessitates intervention. It is essential not to compare ourselves to others whose lives' details we'll never truly know.

With the support of our doctors, our families, and our communities, together we can succeed in this vital mission of rebuilding our nation and preparing it for the final Geula.

Join me at TheGiftofChildren.com to read more, and to follow my journey as I explore it from the angle of a mother in the trenches.

In 2019, I was grateful to hear that Mosaica Press had published a book on the topic. Here was proof that Hashem has many messengers, and while I focused on raising my children, a dedicated and highly qualified Chossid had done the work that needed to be done.

Shall We Have Another? was written by Mendel Dubov, a thorough and beautifully written masterpiece addressing the topic from the philosophical angle, focusing on the great meaning and import of this Mitzvah, while briefly touching on sources relating to the more practical aspects. It is available on Amazon and local Judaica stores. ■



The Making of a Healthy Mom

Chana Devorah (Bogomilsky) Feldman, Crown Heights
Graduating Class of 5768 (2008)



Mrs. Chaya Hecht relates that in the early years of the Rebbe's nesius, her husband informed the Rebbe that after several years without children, they were finally, Baruch Hashem, expecting a baby. Happy to hear the good news, the Rebbe asked how his wife was feeling.

"Oh, she's doing great," the husband replied. "She's traveling on buses, washing the kitchen floor... doing all the things a balebuste needs to do!"

The Rebbe listened carefully. A short time later, Rabbi Hodakov called Mrs. Hecht's home to relay a message. "The Rebbe doesn't want you traveling on buses or mopping floors," he shared. As she was finally expecting a child, the Rebbe wanted her to be as careful as possible to protect her health and the pregnancy.

As a Jewish woman, I've always been aware that one of the most important and holy aspects of my Avodas Hashem - and one of my greatest blessings - is the opportunity to bring more neshamos into this world. What I wish I had known earlier was that caring for my health in my child bearing years is a critical part of that avodah.

I welcomed each of my children with gratitude and joy. When my body continued to look pregnant even after birth, I didn't give it much thought. It was my badge of honor! Unfortunately, that was only the visible symptom of a more serious problem - the weakening of my core muscles - that was causing many complications, especially in childbearing.

Chances are if you passed me in the street you would assume that I was pregnant. Maybe our conversation would be something like this:

Hi! So nice to see you, too!

I feel fine Baruch Hashem! Thank you for your kind wishes. *wink, wink, nod, nod* Actually, I'm not pregnant.

Yes, I know about Belly Bandit and corsets. They're not recommended because they squeeze the abdomen and apply pressure to the pelvic floor.

That's awesome! I'm thrilled for your co-worker's sister-in-law. Even if I had the luxury of living in a gym I still wouldn't look "thin". As a matter of fact, crunches and situps are also not recommended to "lose the baby weight".

Yes! I did lose some weight! Thanks for noticing that my face looks thinner. But even if I starve myself I still won't look "pre-baby".

Well, it's because I have Diastasis Recti (DR). I was blessed to be able to bear and deliver four beautiful babies bli ayin hara. All that mass concentrated in one spot tore the muscle (linea alba) that keeps the six pack, aka abs, together. Similar to athletes who are expected to use their bodies for extreme physical feats, all that repetitive physical exercise creates wear and tear on the muscles and joints.

I'm a "Momlete"? Haha! That's cute!

No, you don't need a professional to check if you have DR. Simply search for videos to see how it's done. It's very simple and fast.

Certainly. Your OB/GYN should be able to tell you if you have DR but don't count on it. From personal experience I had DR as soon as my first baby was born, but it became very extreme after my third. Not once did my doctor mention it to me. When I naively asked him to check me after my third baby, he indifferently responded that he could prescribe PT. Oh, insurance doesn't cover it.

Yeah, I know. The American healthcare system's concern for postpartum mothers is a disgrace.

No. As of now I don't think it's known exactly why it happens or even better, how to prevent it. The standard answer is it's because of how a woman carries during her pregnancy. As I said before...

Right, it's not because they were "doing something wrong" when they were pregnant. Any woman can have DR, regardless of how fit they are.

Well, I'm paying out of pocket now for a physical therapist because my insurance won't cover it. Sometimes I do feel ridiculous spending all my time and money just on me when I can use them both in so many ways for

As she was finally expecting a child, the Rebbe wanted her to be as careful as possible to protect her health and the pregnancy.

my family. And then I remind myself that right now I have a responsibility to be healthy, my children deserve to have a healthy mother, and my husband a healthy wife. It's not about the figure - although fitting into conventional clothing would be nice. It's about the ability to function properly and care for my family as an akeres habayis. It's about the ability, b'ezras Hashem, to continue bringing Yiddishe neshamos into the world in good health.

Haha! Like the rehab that athletes have to do so they're strong again to play. (If only I had their salaries too.)

Me too. I need to rush back home to catch the kids' bus.

Sure! Call me later and I can tell you what else I did to heal myself. It's a long story.

I am now passionate that postpartum women should appreciate the importance of caring for the bodies Hashem has entrusted them with. As the Mezritcher Maggid teaches, "a small hole in the body causes a large hole in the neshama." Eating nutritious meals regularly, getting sufficient sleep, and having an exercise routine that is safe for their weakened core muscles and pelvic floor are holy endeavors. They give our bodies the koach to continue serving as vehicles for our neshamos, serving Hashem in the best way we can. ■



JUST A TARGET RUN

Goldie (Tenenbaum) Grossbaum, Folsom, California
Graduating class of 5759 (1999)



I had to get my two little ones home already.

I had been schlepping my little ones around all morning and they were ready to go home, but I had one errand left. I needed to stop at Target and pick up a prescription for my 9 year old, who'd just had his tonsils removed.

The kids needed to get home, and we also needed to get this done. What to do? *They'll manage one last stop*, I told myself. *We'll do this quickly*.

At Target, I hoisted my three-year old into the back of the shopping cart and strapped my baby into the front, pushing the fastest I could without running anyone over.

I was barely even half-way to the pharmacy aisle when my one-year old worked out how to wiggle out of the strap and stand up. I leaned over to hold onto him, while still pushing the cart quickly. He laughed and smiled, yelping "Hi!" to every and any passerby. My newly upshernished three-year old, never one to miss a party, leaned out the back to join the "Hi!" chorus. I knew from experience that stopping would only make things worse, so I played along and continued toward the pharmacy.

We got the prescription, zipped over to grab a few items from the grocery aisle, and made a beeline for self-checkout. My three-year old got the honors of scanning each item while I balanced my baby.

I was checking that he hadn't missed anything or scanned something twice when I heard it: "Oh

my, are you Chabad?”

Without looking up, I was certain the woman was talking to me. I turned toward her voice and saw her excitedly heading toward me, waving and calling out, “Are you from Crown Heights?”

I nearly dropped all the items I’d so carefully bagged.

This is Folsom, California. Many people in this idyllic suburb haven’t ever been to the East Coast, and they most definitely never heard of Crown Heights. In the twelve years that we’ve been living here, no one has ever stopped me with such a greeting.

“Have we met?” I asked the stranger. “Are you from here?”

She happily rambled about her friends in Crown Heights, how she lived in the Catskills for many years, how she knows the Satmars and she hates the New York traffic. I was intrigued, but I was also still balancing my baby, who was getting bored of being held and was trying to climb across the entire cart. I tried to get the kids situated safely while nodding along to the woman’s monologue.

“Oh my, are you the rebbetzin?” she asked next. “You’re the Chabad rebbetzin?!”

This is Folsom, California. Many people in this idyllic suburb haven’t ever been to the East Coast, and they most definitely never heard of Crown Heights.

For a very brief moment I thought of telling her that I was just the nanny. But instead I told her that, yes, that was me. “And these are my two little guys,” I introduced her to the kids clambering and clanking about in the cart. I needed to get them home already. This was supposed to be just a quick stop...

I took a deep breath and asked her for her number. “I’d love to talk with you - maybe over coffee? I just really need to get my kids home now.”

She graciously gave me her number and I promised to call her later that day. With that done, I secured

Even when on a Target run with two overtired kids, when I just want to get in and out unnoticed, I was still ‘doing much’!

both little ones in the shopping cart and zipped out of the store.

As we drove home, I thought about the conversation I had with a fellow shlucha just half an hour before, on my way to Target. Somewhere during the phone call, she’d casually mentioned that she felt like she wasn’t doing much with her shlichus.

“One second,” I interrupted her. “There’s no such thing as not doing much. Every single second, just by being here, we are ‘doing much’!”

After meeting the woman in Target, I realized it truly. There’s never a moment when we are “off the record.”

Even when on a Target run with two overtired kids, when I just want to get in and out unnoticed, I was still ‘doing much’! I was still a Chabad rebbetzin, there to connect with any Jew.

Programs and classes are easier to quantify. Yet, each errand and excursion - regardless of where, what or when - is shlichus. Teaching classes is easier in that regard. You prepare, you give it, you leave. Being a shlucha during errands is so much harder. You never know when someone will approach you, what they will want to talk about, or what you will be busy with at the time.

What a responsibility, yet what a privilege!

Being on shlichus means always ‘doing much,’ even when just stopping in Target. ■



Password for the Redemption

Odelia (Bitton) Shor, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5763 (2003)



To inquire, answer, remain unsatisfied and inquire again. It's particularly those incongruities in text and life that have drawn me to the teaching of literature these last eight years.

But in parsing away at what *really* brings me to textual studies, I've realized that my attraction to the written word is merely the faintest shadow of my love for Torah, born long ago and catalyzed in more than one Chumash class, but particularly that of Mrs. Feldman's at Bais Rivkah Elementary. Mrs. Feldman would have us guess Rashi's questions just before we were to dive into them, and I remember so deeply wanting to preemptively spot the words that needed clarification (to meet a challenge? or to see a speck of what Rashi first saw?). While in literature I sensed an obfuscation of ideas, a way to contort our experiences and stare at the contortion, *L'havdil*, with Torah, I sensed and later learned what the Frierdiker Rebbe teaches about our holy texts: that they *themselves* are invested with the power to embrace and invest us with new powers as we learn. It is not a *story* of life, it is life itself. This realization mirrors the morphing of this kid-talk: first my children would say Abba or Mommy is "reading a sefer" but over time have learned to say that we "learn a sefer" (or hopefully "live it") instead.

What matters most, I think, is what is done with *textuality*. I inquire, inquire, inqu--why? What's the worth of shaking up a text? Our mesorah has aimed to clarify in order to codify. I'm no ruling body, so why do I nestle into a corner and work out the hard parts of a pasuk? It is not for the end of uncoiling conceptual knots. It is not even to ascend the ladder of *Pardes*. It is to draw it down into one's living room. No, I don't know the intricate mechanism or rather the nuances of this live, life-giving interaction. But where does it all lead?

"It's Moshiach or bust!" said a shliach in a shul I dropped into one Shabbat. I think that was a Rabbi Mochkin from San Francisco. And I knew then that I agreed. This is not about connection to Hashem in a corner of one's home. This is not about the highs of grasping a part of Hashem's Torah or our own soul or the seen or unseen universe or about a "people of the book." As a generation, I think we've been imbued with the *want* for Moshiach; it's that or *bust*. And it's fascinating how the word "want" means desire and also "lack," and maybe that's like the rocks in a stream that make the water surge more forcefully, as the Rebbe Rashab teaches in the maamar "Shuvah Yisrael," which spotlights the left-vector mode of the *baalei teshuvah*. So, though we are the "heels," it seems like we're invested with something *new*, a special something that is particular to this era of *ikveta d'meshicha*. I'm not sure I can put my finger on it, but it's probably something about the well-springs that have already sprung. The work is done, so maybe we're the trumpeters heralding the King? No, not Eliyahu Hanavi's long-awaited unveiling of Moshiach. But like the infant who is taught Torah in the womb, it feels that our collective mind has been taught something particular, and when that chord will be struck, we'll remember.

The other day something like a shofar sounded as I washed the dishes. I quickly shut the faucet, and my 7-year-old Akiva, who noticed the sound and my movements, said "It's Moshiach right?!" And while he chattered about having a special meal because "Moshiach is here," and my 2-year-old Amotz rushed in with open arms to echo the statement (by recent encouragement of his Morahs Chaya and Zeesy), I knew the answer to Akiva's question. I might've felt a smidgeon silly, but, more importantly, I felt that when the real thing happens, my insides will know it's the real call, however that will be. Like my big sis Aura Chaya likes to say: it'll happen from the "bottom up" -- or does she say "from the inside out?"

Like the infant who is taught Torah in the womb, it feels that our collective mind has been taught something particular, and when that chord will be struck, we'll remember.

And it's like what the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya, Igeret Hakodesh (4), about Moshiach coming "be-hesech hada'at," that it is not so much that we will be "caught unawares" but that Moshiach's coming will itself be the "manifestation of the innermost point of our souls." It will transcend our understanding, because it will call upon the deepest (past-da'at) parts of us!

This concept that Moshiach will call forth something deep and united in all of us can be seen in the part of Shemot where Moshe asks Hashem how Bnei Yisrael will know that he's the legitimate messenger of Hashem. Hashem responds with one of the passwords that will call up the deep-seated memory of our burgeoning nation: (3:16) פקד פקדתי אתכם. It's the words passed from Yaakov to Yosef to the populace. I cannot express how I am moved by these words. Hashem is telling Moshe to go and drop those words into their ears. They will know them. And in a time as yet without a leader, they know them in the deepest way one can "know" something: when the teacher isn't there and hasn't been for some time. This, their password, is embedded in their being. I'm not sure it's Moshe's gateway to Hashem, but it's certainly in the pulsings of the populace, of us. And when Hashem says in reassurance (3:18) ושמעו לקולך, I couldn't believe Rashi's first word: מאליהם: on their own! Yes, it is the elders whom Moshe has gathered, but they act as the concentrated memory of the people. Rashi continues: "As soon as you say this expression ['I have surely remembered you....,' פקד פקדתי אתכם] to them, they will hearken to your voice, for this password was transmitted to them from Jacob and from Joseph, that with this expression they will be redeemed." As I learned from a beautiful article about Asher's daughter Serach! Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer tells how Serach served as a link in the chain: when the elders approached her about the "new messenger," she was nonplussed by Moshe's signs until she heard "פקד פקדתי אתכם" and affirmed him as the real messenger (48). In her longevity, she served not

Moshiach's coming will itself be the "manifestation of the innermost point of our souls." It will transcend our understanding, because it will call upon the deepest (past-da'at) parts of us!

as a leader who retaught, but as a link in the chain who echoed what they already knew, מְאַלְיָהֶם, on their own.

This double-pey "password" is no textual record of a promise: it is the living Torah's assurance that even the most downtrodden generation (short of breath from hard labor) will recognize (and herald) the Redemption.

May Hashem bring it in full now. ■



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Playing in the Field of Oneness

Aura Chaya (Bitton) Gispan, Crown Heights
Bais Rivkah Seminary Graduating Class of 5744 (1984)



There is a theme song to my childhood, one that surreptitiously wraps itself around me. "Hashem is here, Hashem is there, Hashem is truly everywhere..." It's on inaudible replay, awaiting me like a shelter. When I heeded the invitation to enter, I happened upon a young girl. Her spirit is bobbing up and down, on par with the rhythm of the song, "Up up, down down, right left and all around. Here, there and everywhere, that's where He can be found!"

As I think about this song, I almost feel myself bouncing. It is as if for a moment I am bouncing toward heaven, wrapped in the loving embrace of G-d.

My childhood was certainly a celebration worth bouncing for. It was the very best time to be alive, and a sense of privilege saturated the fabric of our beings. Moshiach was coming! We were soldiers in the Rebbe's army with a powerful mission: giving all we had. Everything around us radiated with holiness, and purpose.

Clearly, I was feeding off my parents' enthusiasm. I was born at the height of their teshuvah journey, and I was fed with the knowledge that they had crossed great literal and metaphysical paths to arrive at this place. They lived with a generosity of spirit and exuberance, that I would now call G-d centeredness. Later, I understood this was not to be taken for granted. When one is sent to the desert to irrigate parched lands, one must exercise caution as one grows distant from the source, but we had come to the well from a veritable spiritual desert. And the well was refreshing, delightful and soothing. Mitzvos were the center of our world; we were here by ecstatic choice.

My parents' devotion, sincerity, and passion were contagious and mirrored the empowered instruction I received at school. I flourished in the spiritual oasis of my home, my school, and Crown Heights in general. Identity and sustenance were one continuous flow, and Crown Heights was like no other. The excitement stirred up by Yomim Tovim was unrivaled. Guests were greeted with reverence as if we were awed by the arduous journey we intuitively knew they were on. Song and celebration were an everyday part of our lives. My father could most often be found singing the chapters of Tehillim with the te'amim, or read-singing the parsha. Davening was simple and pervasive. The distance from my mouth to G-d's ear was a whisper away. I used that power proudly as a front-runner in Tzivos Hashem and merited to recite a pasuk in front of the Rebbe on three different occasions.

I recounted Baal Shem Tov stories on-demand for our soul searching guests. And when my sister was in need of stitches, I instinctively whipped out my trusty Tehillim and read aloud. Soon though, my sincerity was swapped out for self-consciousness. I faded from an enthusiastic actor to a timid spectator. I was all of six - or seven - years old when my parents received a call from my well meaning teacher who informed them that the nusach, from which my grandparents and great grandparents prayed uninterruptedly for generations, (which happens to also be based on the Arizal) was not allowed in school. The only siddur that would be suitable was Tehillas Hashem.

This teacher must have been sincere in her attempt to streamline my experience, but also unaware of its long term impact. The Rebbe had given his shluchim explicit guidance about respecting

There is a theme song to my childhood, one that surreptitiously wraps itself around me. "Hashem is here, Hashem is there, Hashem is truly everywhere..."

the minhagim, tzaddikim and nuschaot of Sephardic Jewry. He had also spoken about Tehillas Hashem being a universal nusach, the Thirteenth Gate as it were, that included, but did not eliminate, the other twelve—a change to be made by choice. It is unclear whether she had consulted with anyone before asking my parents to conform, but my parents weren't about to make any waves. They were newcomers to Chabad and immigrants to America and had high hopes for their eldest daughter to integrate seamlessly into their new society of choice. So while the Rebbe had advised my father in Yechidus to “ask a Sephardi Rav” regarding an issue as simple as Kibud Av, my parents dutifully obliged the teacher's request and replaced my siddur promptly.

I felt that I no longer “belonged”, but I was still a star student. The unspoken wishes and rich heritage of my parents no longer meshed with the dictates at school. Up until then, I had been living as if in Eden, but now my idyllic garden had transformed



We need to invite them to reflect what they are learning in their own words and ingenious images, and then stand back and watch in wonder as they illuminate our world.

into a thicket featuring "us," and "them," I became a pro at blending in, or at least not standing out. Over time it developed into shyness. I didn't want my picture taken, I no longer felt comfortable singing out loud, and when Hi-8 video camcorders became a thing, I made sure to stay out of my brother's line of vision. The sad thing is that Hashem became less visible too. Apparently He wasn't big enough to accommodate the differences He Himself created, and I, for one, no longer thought I had His ear or interest.

There was still plenty of magic to be had. I experienced extraordinarily uplifting highlights like the legendary Lag Ba'omer parades and the Jewish Children's Expo at the Javits Center. These were pockets of time and space where I was able to revisit the euphoric spirit that dawned upon me when my surroundings were a wonderland of piety and purpose I felt like I still had a VIP Pass to the world's most epic performance: the unfolding of the Divine in plain sight.

For the most part though, my brain had become compartmentalized. I judged as I had been judged, and I hated the feature of my vision that no longer saw only good. I learned that the soul could be eclipsed by last names and where one stands on the totem pole. I saw Hashem in tiny mosaic fragments, but in those spaces I perceived as "in-between," I suffered from terrible emptiness. I would hear people talk about holiness, but I wondered what is holiness if not something to be exuded? I responded to the call for even greater homogeneity as best as I (unfortunately) could.

I noticed every instance where the walk cast a shadow that made the talk irredeemable, where someone would preach a G-dly concept but then turn around and gossip. The static only grew louder, but so did my longing for wholeness. I would pour over albums and magazine cutouts with headlines such as "Bitton made a change from Rock to Religion" and "the Founder of Hasidic Rock" whilst wondering about the Shabbos-

my father had envisioned when he came back to his roots, and what kind of Shabbos was really possible. I was actively trying to gain back my footing, climbing over boulders of perceived separation to overcome the chasm in my faith. I started to pay more attention to the wellsprings of Chassidus that drew my parents to Crown Heights in the first place. And the effort came highly rewarded. I found that when I dwelled on a Chassidic idea it was not only a wellspring, but an actual fountain that begged to color the earth with its truth. I imagined a day when this knowledge would fill the planet via theater, art and music!

Studying Chassidus in a formal setting made it prone to being constrained to abstract formulas, pat answers, and predictable aphorisms. There was a subliminal message not to get "too excited", lest I be considered too baal teshuva-ey, so I learned to temper my excitement. We were encouraged to "do, do, do, do" and much less to feel, communicate, reflect and create. The teachings remained obscure, but I thoroughly enjoyed the gift of many remarkable teachers who emanated profound sincerity. They became my guiding lights.

After I graduated, I channeled my enthusiasm into



education and began to notice the disproportionate amount of disenchanting youth. I couldn't understand why the 'gatekeepers' were shunning those girls that were too loud, too spontaneous, too "damaged." Why were these life-giving waters not reaching the thirstiest souls?! I began to ask myself: if children are losing their spark, are we doing our jobs as educators? Or are we (unwittingly) dumbing down their inborn spirituality?

And yet we are living in the most magical of times: matter has become more pliable than ever, and so have our minds! Prophecies are unfolding and science has become increasingly transparent as to reflect the G-dly realm.

"If you know Alef, teach Alef!" To me, Lesson One is to exemplify oneness. We are composed of polarities: two eyes, two arms, two legs and yet, we are supremely capable of uniting our faculties. Our eyes and ears are yearning for and capable of seeing, feeling, and reflecting G-dliness with a holy book in one hand and our medium of choice in the other. If we truly believe that our generation is the reincarnation of the Dor Deah, then we need to recognize that children have supersensory faculties and have the ability to "see the sounds." Creativity becomes self-destructive when it is not given a space to flourish. In addition to learning precious texts, they need to be provided with a supportive environment encouraging them to be themselves. We need to invite them to reflect what they are learning in their own words and ingenious images, and then stand back and watch in wonder as they illuminate our world. They are at the sea, and they will lead us forward. When we kindle the next generations their "bones will speak" of Hashem and they will show—not just tell—that Hashem is everywhere.



As for me, I'm still re-finding prayer. And I've unlearned a thing or two as well. In heaven there is no Jewish geography. It doesn't matter who you know and there is no monopoly on Hashem! Anyone with a mouth and spirit was granted equal access to the Divine at birth. And there is definitely way more than one nusach of prayer.

Luckily for me, and thanks to the outstanding parts of the Chassidic education I received, I still hear the echo of "Hashem is here, Hashem is there..." And even in the most disillusioned corners of my heart, I can revisit that child and gently raise the volume: "Hashem is here" and here, and here, and I will pray and paint and sing and dance until He fills those spaces once again, one nook, one cranny, one vacant space at a time.

Just like when I was four and five. ■





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A Photographer's List Of Frequently Asked Questions— And the Answers.

Leah Alenick, Family and Portrait Photographer, Crown Heights
Graduating Class of 5778 (2018)



Q: What time of day is best for photographing outdoor portraits?

A: You'll often hear photographers rave about "golden hour," the time shortly after sunrise and before sunset. The reason we love golden hour so much is because it provides soft, even, and flattering light. We try to avoid harsh shadows and overexposed highlights that come from direct sunlight. Early morning and late afternoon sessions are ideal for beautiful and glowy pictures. That being said, every family is on a different schedule, so golden hour may be impractical for some. I encourage my clients to consider a golden hour session, but I under-

stand that it might be unrealistic for them. For mid-day sessions, the most important factor is to find a shady spot so that the sun doesn't get in the way.

Q: What should I pack for photoshoot day?

A: Aside from your kids, some important things not to leave behind are: wipes for dirty faces, snacks and water for when they need a break, and accessories to change up the shots. If you have a baby, you may also want to bring his/her favorite toy and a change of clothes.

Q: What kind of outfits should we wear?

A: While some prefer everyone to be matching, I find that a mix of solid colors and patterns looks best in photos. For parks and grassy locations, my personal favorites are maroons, blues, pinks, or peaches as they compliment the green really well. White is most people's go-to, but it can often wash out a picture. I don't recommend that everyone wear it, but you may want to add it in somewhere. Be mindful of what looks best on each of you, and work around the season and location of your shoot. If you're not sure, reach out to your photographer. When clients ask me questions about their outfits or send me photos, I am always happy to make suggestions and help them choose.



Q: What if my kids are not cooperating on the day of the photoshoot?

A: This is probably every parent's worst nightmare, but it shouldn't be! Believe it or not, some of my best work comes from sessions where the kids were acting up or being silly. It is often the in-between, unposed moments that look best on camera. I try to come prepared with prompts just in case the child I'm photographing is unenthusiastic about smiling for the camera: Can you run to mom, tickle your sister, tell me about your most favorite thing? Kids need to be comfortable with the photographer before listening to any instructions. As a parent, you may want to get your kids excited for an upcoming photoshoot by referring to it as a "fun activity." If they feel that you are stressed or not looking forward to it, they will likely have the same reaction. Set a time that works best for your children's schedule so that they're not exhausted by the time the photoshoot comes around. And take along some treats even if bribery isn't your preferred form of parenting :) ■

*For bookings and inquiries,
contact Leah at 917.570.9223*



- BAIS RIVKAH - Tafent



ANTICIPATION

Etty (Pinson) Bogomilsky,
Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5764 (2004)

My bag is packed,
but still I doubt,
Will this baby
ever come out?

Nine months of
waiting and counting
Day by day
excitement mounting

When the due date
comes and goes
Any minute
we do suppose

Will it be now?
Is it so near?
Or still far off?
It's so unclear...

One thing is sure,
it's much closer
'Cuz nine months past
it's almost over

Every contraction
we hope and pray
Is this the one
that will make our day?

The pain, the pressure,
the unease
Are overpowered
by hopes as these

As each day passes
we certainly know
We're getting closer
to our goal.

2,000 years
in Golus so long
2,000 years
of bitterness told

It's almost over;
it has gotta end
Although it's hard
to comprehend



All the tragedies,
pains and suffering
Bring us nearer
to our king

כלו כל הקיצין,
we know for sure
Moshiach is waiting
at our door

Each day that passes,
a moment closer
Soon this Golus
will be no longer.

At times we feel
our hope we are losing
It's been too long,
and so confusing

Will we be redeemed?
Will we ever leave,
This bitter Golus
and all its grief?

Like a pregnancy
that overextends-
Both of them
are sure to end

With joy and happiness
and no strife
The celebration
of new life!

I NEVER MET THE REBBE

Shelbelle (Schusterman) Lapidus
Atlanta, Georgia
Graduating class of 5776 (2016)

I never met the Rebbe -
And I feel sad about it
sometimes.

Many times.

Yet, I feel privileged that
I can still establish a real
connection with him.

One that wasn't influenced
by being in his immediate
presence,

Being at his Chassidic
gatherings

Or having his piercing blue
eyes stare straight into my
soul.

It's one that comes from

learning and listening and
most importantly, doing.

I never met the Rebbe -

And his teachings are my
compass
instruction and guide

in navigating who I am and
how to fulfill my potential.

I never met the Rebbe -

And I know my purpose
That I have a purpose

I know my mission
That I have a mission -
From his example

I never met the Rebbe -



And I know that he doesn't want followers — he wants leaders.

I never met the Rebbe -

And I know that I need to use my talents to bring more light into this world.

I never met the Rebbe -

And I know that I don't need to have extensive knowledge in any particular subject to share and teach,

I can share and teach what I know.

I never met the Rebbe-

And I know that he loves every single Jew

Soul to soul love
And
that I need to work on myself every day to get to that place of limitless love, too.

I never met the Rebbe -

And I know that failure is okay, it's expected.

And getting back up is always the next step.
Stuck is never an option.

I never met the Rebbe -

And if I spend time evaluating myself, there will be no time to evaluate others.

I never met the Rebbe -

And I know that if I am deliberate with my time I will get everything done.

I never met the Rebbe -

And it's nice to know how to be something,
but the knowledge is worthless if I don't invest myself into being it.



I never met the Rebbe -

And I know that children deserve respect and to be listened to.

I never met the Rebbe -

And I know that the more I give of myself and of my own,

The fuller I will become.

I never met the Rebbe - And

I know that everyone is filled with a suitcase
goodness
capabilities
blessings and
worth
They just might need some help unpacking.

I never met the Rebbe -

And I don't deny myself the physical
I work hard to make it spiritual.

I never met the Rebbe -

And I know that my wholeness is found in my brokenness.

I never met the Rebbe -

And I need to work hard to become aware of my weaknesses and
Not to deny my strengths.

I never met the Rebbe -

And neither did my husband.

And we've dedicated our life to fulfilling his vision of a world of excellence,

where people accept one another for who they are,

where Hashem is recognized where the world is better

I never met the Rebbe -

And I live with his guidance in my head
And his instructions in my actions

Every day. ■

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A Taste of Bais Rivkah



Date: _____

Esther (Sperlin) Winner
Brighton Beach, New York

Graduating class of
5734 (1974)

REBBETZIN ESTHER WINNER is an inspiring teacher, a dynamic lecturer, a gourmet cook, and the director of her shul's Hebrew school. After graduating from Bais Rivkah High School in 1974, she went on to the Bais Rivkah Division of Higher Learning for two years. Shortly after her marriage to Rabbi Zushe Winner, the couple was sent as shluchim of the Rebbe to Caracas, Venezuela, for seven years.

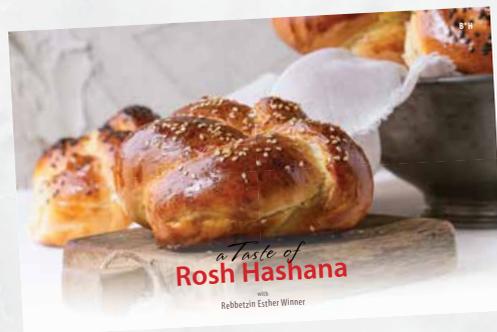
When they returned to the United States, Rabbi Winner became the spiritual leader of the Seabreeze Jewish Center and shliach of Chabad of West Brighton Beach, New York. As part of her Lubavitcher upbringing, Esther always reaches out and welcomes guests for Shabbos dinner, and one Friday night, she invited her pediatrician and his wife, Helen Schwimmer. Inspired by the "joy of living Jewish" she experienced, Helen encouraged Esther to share her expertise with a wider audience, and so the writer and the rebbetzin teamed up in 1994 to produce the video, "**A Taste of Shabbos.**"

The entertaining and informative sixty-minute video, which can be viewed on Chabad.org, has been enthusiastically received by diverse segments of the Jewish community. Today, more than twenty-five

years later, Esther gets regards from a whole new generation who is enjoying her timeless video.

Esther was chosen as the hostess for a program on Jewish cuisine that is part of the PBS series, "**The United Tastes of America,**" which has been viewed in millions of homes across Europe and the U.S.

Recently, she hosted Pesach and Shavuot culinary demonstrations on Chabad.org, where she shared several of her exotic and tasty Yom Tov recipes sprinkled with meaningful tidbits about the celebrations and her own personal Yom Tov experiences.





HEALTHY ROSH HASHANA CHALLAH

Servings: 5 large challahs or 30 rolls

INGREDIENTS:

- 5 lb spelt flour
(2 ½ lb. white spelt and 2 ½ lb. whole spelt)
(Can use whole wheat flour - half white, half whole wheat - or 6 grain flour)
- 4 tbsp dry yeast
- 2 tbsp salt
- 4 ½ - 5 cups water
- 1 cup oil
- 1 ⅓ cup honey
- 2 eggs

DIRECTIONS:

1. Dissolve yeast in 1 cup of warm water. Add 1 tbsp of honey. Allow to activate (until you see bubbles rise).
2. In your mixer (or by hand) combine the salt, 2/3 of the flour, and all remaining oil, honey, eggs, water, and the activated yeast last. Set the machine on medium for 12 minutes.
3. As the dough forms, add the remaining flour and continue mixing. Transfer the dough to a very large, well-greased bowl, cover with plastic and allow to rise in a warm spot for 1 to 2 hours or until double in bulk. (Optional: punch dough down after 1 hour and let rise again).
4. Separate a small piece from the dough and make the bracha.
5. Roll a piece of dough into a long rope, and form a round challah by turning the rope in and around to make a circle. You can add toppings such as raisins, apples, or chocolate chips into the dough while you are working with it.

6. Allow shaped challah to rise for 20 minutes in greased baking dishes. Paint the challahs with beaten eggs.
7. Bake in a preheated 400 degree oven for the first 15 minutes, and then reduce to 350 degrees for another 30 minutes.



HONEY ORANGE SALMON WITH CARROT STICKS

Servings: 3-4

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 tbsp orange juice
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ¼ cup honey
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp finely minced fresh ginger root
- 4 (6 oz.) pieces of salmon, filleted, skin on
- 4 medium carrots cut into 2" sticks
- Herbs of your choice (chives, dill, rosemary, or cilantro)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine first six ingredients, and pour over fish in a glass baking dish. Cover and let chill for at least 1 hour.
2. Broil fish for 10-15 minutes on 400 degrees, or bake on 350 degrees for 20 minutes.
3. Toss carrot sticks with olive oil and place in small baking dish. Bake for 5-10 minutes.
4. Before serving, scatter carrots over salmon and sprinkle with chives.



ROSH HASHANAH FISH DISH

Servings: 10

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 (2.5–3 lb) white fish or trout (whole, keep head on, tail off, and de-boned)
- 2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper (optional)
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tbsp honey
- 3 tbsp mustard powder
- 4 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 cup white wine
- 5 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp lemon zest
- 5 scallions, chopped

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Season your fish with salt, pepper (optional) and minced garlic. Whisk or blend all the ingredients except for chopped scallions and zest.
2. Spread the mixture over the fish, inside and out, to dress it completely. Sprinkle the scallions and the lemon zest over the fish.
3. Cover the fish and bake for 20 min. Then bake the fish for an additional 10 min uncovered.
4. Transfer the fish carefully to a serving platter using two spatulas. For an elegant presentation, line your fish platter with greens of your choice and lemon slices, place your fish in the center and enjoy!

OPTIONAL: As an added Rosh Hashanah twist, boil 2 cups of water. Add 1 lb baby carrots, 1/2 lb dates, 1 tbsp honey, and a pinch of salt as an accompaniment to the fish, and serve.



HONEY ROASTED SWEET POTATO MEDLEY

Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 large red onions, peeled and quartered
- 2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 can of chickpeas, drained
- 1 medium butternut squash, peeled and cut into large chunks
- 3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks



- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/3 cup apple juice

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.
2. In an extra-large pan, sauté onions until golden brown. Add chickpeas; cover with remaining vegetables. Combine honey and cinnamon and sprinkle over vegetables.
3. Drizzle oil over the top. Add apple juice. Place in large casserole dish and bake uncovered for 45 minutes, until vegetables are soft and well browned.
4. For an added dash of color, scatter finely chopped chives or herbs of your choice.



ROASTED POM SEED EGGPLANT

Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 large eggplants
- 1 pomegranate deseeded
- 2 tbsp honey
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 4 tsp toasted sesame oil
- Salt to taste
- 4 cloves of minced garlic

TAHINI DRESSING:

- 3 tbsp tahini paste
- 3 tbsp cold water

- 1/2 lemon squeezed
- 1 tsp garlic powder

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Slice eggplant into 2 inch rounds. Wash eggplant and pat dry.
2. Brush both sides with the 2 tbsp olive oil and sesame oil. Season with salt and garlic.
3. Place in the preheated oven and bake for 20-30 minutes.
4. Remove from the oven, drizzle with 2 tbsp olive oil, then leave to cool.

TAHINI:

1. To make the tahini paste, mix either by hand or in mini food processor. Add the tahini paste, water, lemon, garlic and season with salt.
2. On a larger platter place the roasted eggplant slices around the plate. Spoon the tahini paste around the plate. Drizzle honey around the plate and over the eggplants. Garnish with pomegranate seeds.



NAPOLEONS WITH A ROSH HASHANA TWIST

Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 box Honey Graham Crackers
- 3 (8 oz.) Dessert Whip
- 1 instant Vanilla Pudding

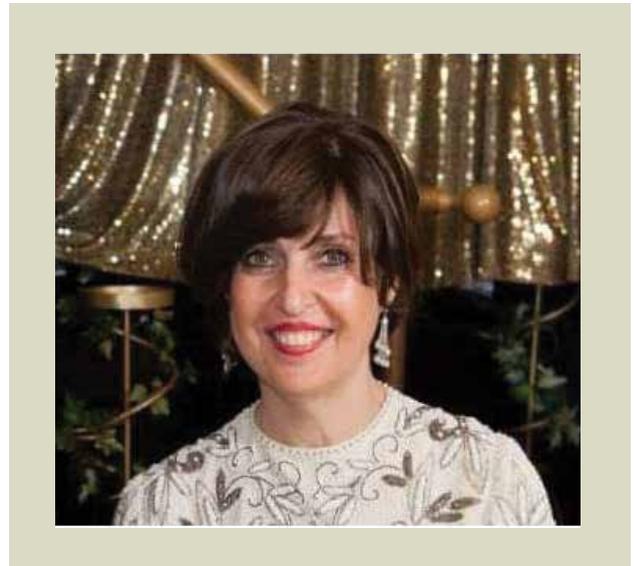
TOPPING:

- 1 can Cherry Pie Filling
- 1 can Apple Pie Filling
- Melted Chocolate to drizzle on top (optional)



DIRECTIONS:

1. Beat dessert whip until it is very stiff and peaks. Add instant vanilla pudding and beat for another minute.
2. Line a 9"x11" pan with one layer of honey graham crackers. Spread one layer of the dessert whip mixture over the graham crackers.
3. Place 2nd layer of graham crackers on top of the dessert whip mixture. Add another layer of the dessert whip mixture and top with a third layer of graham crackers (optional).
4. Spread another layer of the dessert whip mixture (optional).
4. Mix together both of the pie fillings and CAREFULLY spread over the top of the whip mixture. Drizzle the top of the pie fillings with melted chocolate. ▀




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EMBRACE MOMENTS



When I was in 12th grade, I was chosen as one of the representatives to join the Bais Yaakov Convention. Both of my older sisters attended the Convention, and I had always heard from them how many Bais Yaakov girls gravitate towards the ten Bais Rivkah girls who join. Until I sat down on the bus, I never truly understood this statement.

Right when I sat down, a few girls rushed towards me, and upon confirmation that I was Chabad, they started questioning me. Suddenly, I was forced to dig deep within and find the answers that I knew deep inside, but never shared. I spent the 10 hour bus ride farbrenging with girls who were having their first glimpse into the ethereal world of Chassidus. I patiently explained about the two nefashos within, and how every mitzvah they do is significant, along with other fundamental Tanya ideas I had learnt throughout High School. I realized the impact it made when I met a girl in a Walmart upstate this summer, and she excitedly told me how I had spoken to her about Chassidus on the bus ride and how she still remembers it! I must have spoken to hundreds of girls, teaching them Chassidus and all the treasures it offers. They all craved the truth and depth of Chassidus, and we felt like we were on a mission to teach them. I acquired a Tanya Chavrusah that I still keep up with until today. That weekend changed my life.



When I am asked why I love Bais Rivkah, I always answer that I love the energy. The hallways pulsate with a chayus that is not known elsewhere. Through the classes and the programs, each girl is impacted. They say, "you can take a girl out of Bais Rivkah but you can never take Bais Rivkah out of a girl". Each Bais Rivkah girl is left with a blazing spark that gives her the special power to change the world. She can find herself on a bus in the middle of Wyoming talking to a Jew, or in a convention with a thousand Bais Yaakov girls, and make a difference! We can change the world, and we *will* change the world. Thank you Bais Rivkah for lighting my flame.

Goldy Junik

What it Means to be in Bais Rivkah

Reprinted from 8th grade yearbook 1993

"Please give me a chance!"

As graduation time is arriving, many thoughts and memories come to my mind. I think about and remember my wonderful and dedicated teachers and principals of the years I've been spending in Bais Rivkah. I wish to express much thanks to all that had a share in my learning. We've had lots of homework and plenty of tests. BH we've learned so much, but I know it doesn't end with that. We learn and we also live what we've learned.

As I think about this, a story comes to my mind. It's about something that really happened in Bais Rivkah at graduation a long while ago. It's a story about a giant heart, and an example of what we're really living and learning.

That year, the graduating class was planning to wear white dresses at graduation, and each girl was to order a corsage to pin to her dress. One girl came from a poor family, and the situation was really sad. She knew that every penny counts and did not even ask for money to order a corsage for herself. Her family was not aware of this and she didn't tell anyone in school. As graduation time was nearing, the girls were happy and excited. Conversation went like this: "I'm going to have my hair cut." "My dress is stun-

ning." "I hope nobody stares at my braces." "My grandfather is flying here for graduation." "I don't have shoes. I'm going shopping today after school." "I better find my camera." "I can hardly wait."

The great day finally arrived. It's 8 p.m. The auditorium is noisy with excitement. The graduates are gathering in a room nearby, happy and glowing, all dressed in white with two beautiful roses on each dress, except one... "We must be ready now," said the teacher. "They are starting, and in about five minutes we'll be marching in." The first quickly got into line, ready to enter and marched in towards the front, as they'd practiced many times. Only two girls were out of line in an argument "No!" "Yes!" "But it's your corsage and you'll ruin it!" "It's all right! I know!" "But you paid..." "I tell you it's fine!" The teacher called impatiently, "Hurry, you'll discuss things later. What's going on here?!" But the argument continued. "If you don't let me share it with you, I don't feel like I can walk into that graduation. If I only learn and don't practice, what's the use? We learned "ואהבת לרעך כמוך". It's only a little flower. Please give me a chance!" And while she was saying these words, the teacher and classmates watched her carefully remove the pin, and give her the corsage. She pinned it onto her friend's dress. Just then they heard the music inside the auditorium and the girls marched in, having just learned another lesson in "ואהבת לרעך כמוך", and determined to bring this, and all they've learned, into practice in their everyday lives.

Thank you Bais Rivkah. ■

Liba Rapoport





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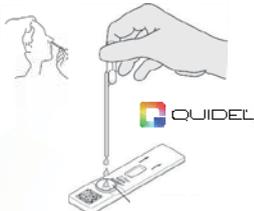
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Keepsakes

Jewish Daughters and Jewish Homes

A visit to the old Bais Rivkah school building
in the decrepit Jewish neighborhood.

Have more photos? Please send them to
alumni@bethrivkah.edu



*The following is a translation of an article written in Yiddish by Reb Nisson Gordon Z.L. It appeared in the December 5, 1980 (5740) issue of the *Algemeiner Journal*. It is with much appreciation to Larry Gordon, publisher of the *Five Towns Jewish Times* and son of the author of this article, Nisson Gordon, and P. Samuels, the translator, for allowing us to print this article for our Embrace readership.*

On one side of the Bais Rivkah's building on Church Avenue*, in Brooklyn, there's a storefront occupied by Gypsies, and the sign in the window notifies that inside there is a woman who can foresee the future through reading tea leaves.

On the other side, on Bedford Avenue, there's a steady stream of rushing youths and the loud noise of the blaring radios that emit the wild sounds of today's culture. The small street that cuts through Bedford Avenue is called Erasmus Avenue, and the high school on that street is called Erasmus High School.

If you stand there a while, you may imagine that you are on One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street and Lenox Avenue in the heart of Harlem. Teens drink from bottles hidden in paper bags. They yell, they scream and call each other names that would make a Cossak blush. Quite often, some youths run wildly into the middle of the street, the drivers start honking and the youths just ignore them. Countless times fights break out, and the police are called frequently.

You do not see a Jewish face in those streets. Two large shuls in the neighborhood became churches because they were left without congregants, and the one shul that is still open is struggling.

Here, in the midst of such a foreign forest, stands a building with the name Bais Rivkah. Inside, you meet an entire Jewish “shtetl” with girls and their teachers. It is too dangerous for a Jewish child to venture into the street, so a school bus brings them to school every morning and in the evening it takes them back home. Most live in Crown Heights, the “Lubavitcher Territory” in Brooklyn, which stubbornly refuses to give up its position which was established many years ago.

If the incidents which occur in the neighborhood on Church Avenue, where Bais Rivkah is now situated, would have happened in Moscow or even in Paris, Jewish organizations would raise up a storm of protests, and issue resolutions.

Because these incidents happen here, practically under our nose, you don't hear even the slightest murmur of protest. The only ones who yell are those who are hurting, and they are the ones who undertook the difficult mission of taking the children away from this dangerous place, and settling them into their new home, a former hospital building, which was specially purchased in the Crown Heights neighborhood where most of the Bais Rivkah students reside.

The close to three hundred girls in the Church Avenue building sat in their classrooms and listened to their teachers, who are also former students of the same school, which was founded thirty-eight years ago by the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe z"l. It started out in a storefront in Brownsville and later moved to the once-famous Stone Avenue Talmud Torah. Today they have, *kein ayin horah*, almost one thousand students. The main building is the former Crown Heights Yeshiva building, where the Bais Rivkah high school and seminary are situated.

One classroom in the Church Avenue building reflects the uniqueness with which Bais Rivkah excels in being a “teacher for the whole nation”. The walls have pictures of all the brochos that a Jewish child must make, and nearby everything is explained in Russian. Eighty newly arrived girls learn in the old building, besides the forty who are in the high school on Crown Street.

The Russian girls feel at home in a school such as Bais Rivkah, and so do the teachers, who are daughters and granddaughters of Chabadnikes, with a Russian past, who feel a special closeness to the newly arrived girls from that country. They

have a lot in common, and the result is that after a few months in a special prep class, they get mainstreamed into regular classes with girls of their own age.

The education of Jewish girls is a major issue, which was recognized by the Gedolim of Poland in the era between the two world wars. Who knows how many Jewish generations, how many Jewish homes were lost due to the neglect of educating Jewish daughters in the spirit of the Torah? Each Jewish girl who receives a Jewish education, builds another Jewish home, regardless of whether the school is called Bais Yaakov, Bais Rivkah, Bais Rochel, Bais Sora or Tomer Devorah.

One thing I am taking the liberty of saying: the education which girls receive in Bais Rivkah, in the spirit of Lubavitch, reaches further and wider in the map of Jewish life in America, thanks to the policy of Lubavitch to go out into the center of cities, and to the furthest and most forsaken areas and to gather Jews around the Torah.

We hear quite often about Lubavitcher shluchim in various cities and what they accomplish there for Yiddishkeit. But we hardly hear about the young Lubavitcher women, graduates of Bais Rivkah, who often surpass their husbands, and are even responsible for the success of their husbands in the Kiruv work which they do in many cities in America and also in foreign countries.

The “Chabad Houses” which are spread across this country's college campuses are a frontal attack against the main nests of assimilation and intermarriage. It could be compared to one who climbs into a pit full of snakes and scorpions and drags out of there semi-conscious people and brings them back to life. One who sees up close the type of people the Chabad Houses send to Eastern Parkway, how they work with them and in time what sort of dear Jewish children they become, can appreciate the role the Chabad Houses and their shluchim play.

But the Chabad Houses would never be what they are if not for the young women who are ready to accompany their husband to distant places and to occupy themselves with “Sara converted the women” as much as “Avrohom converted the men.”

These are the former students of Bais Rivkah who light Shabbos candles in homes where there never was a Shabbos: kosher kitchens where a kosher food was not served: and bring in family purity where



the word “mikvah” was never heard.

I heard from a father whose daughter accompanied her husband to a city in the South, that his daughter became the voluntary attendant in the Mikvah of the city which she single-handedly reopened after it was not functional for a long time, despite there being an orthodox Shul and an orthodox Rabbi in the city.

This is the spirit in which Bais Rivkah students are raised. It’s an education that does not only impart Jewish knowledge but also teaches responsibility for one’s fellow Jew. It does not matter if it’s as far away from New York as Albuquerque, New Mexico or some suburb of Melbourne, Australia.

In their appeal for help for the newly purchased home for Bais Rivkah, the activists imply that it’s a matter of saving the students from imminent danger; to get the students away from a hazardous place.

With all due respect, may I correct them? Yes, it’s Pikuach Nefesh (a matter of life and death) for the students but it is no less Pikuach Nefesh for American Jews from Maine to California and even further away.

The girl who is studying in Bais Rivkah today could be the savior of a Jewish family in California, tomorrow.

The girl who graduates today from Bais Rivkah Seminary could teach Jewish women in New Orleans the laws of family purity, tomorrow.

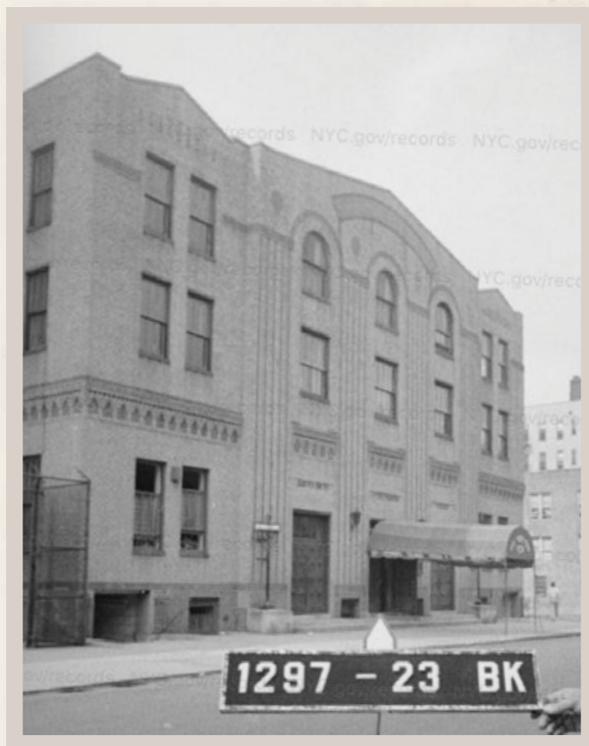
The newly arrived Russian girl, who is learning for the first time in her life how to make a bracha on a cookie, could save a girl in Minneapolis from intermarriage, tomorrow.

The building from which the younger classes must be removed as soon as possible is not just a danger for the children studying there, but it’s also a problem for those who do not attend the school because it is in a hazardous location.

As much as Bais Rivkah needs a home, so, too, does the Jewish home need an institution like Bais Rivkah.

**It is known that Rabbi Chodakov A”H would never refer to Church Avenue by name. Instead, he would call it “yener gas”.*

Featured Photo:



310 Crown St. in the 1940s





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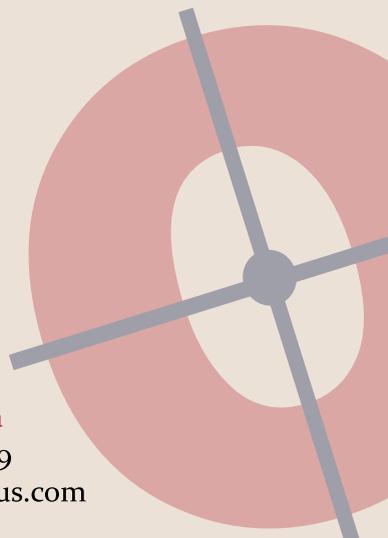
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TISHREI WITH THE REBBE

THE EARLY YEARS

Recollections by Mrs. Esther Sternberg
As told to Alte Raskin

TISHREI WITH THE REBBE.

Iconic words with many connotations.

Memories abound from those privileged to experience Tishrei with Malchus. Few, however, are lucky enough to call to mind the images that Mrs. Esther Sternberg recalls.

In the founding years of Chabad in America, most Chabad families lived in Brownsville, a good forty minute walk from Crown Heights.

Esther's father, Rabbi Zalman Guryary, insisted on living local, right on Lefferts Avenue. Young Esther had the good fortune to be a mere walk away from 770 during the holiest days of the year. EmBRace brings to you the memories of a young girl in the 1950s.

DISPLACED PERSONS

The average child today recog-

nizes 770 as a sprawling edifice, consisting of a spacious shul, women's balconies, offices, a courtyard and the original brownstone with the landmark address. When Esther attended shul, 770 was way, way smaller. Consisting just of the original three-pointed rooftop building, the entire 770 was the size of a spacious house.

If you've been honored to have Sheva Brachos in 770, you were sitting in the original shul of yesterday. The current Zal was the size of the entire men's section. "Chabad was smaller then, but it was still packed to the gills," Esther recalls.

With a one-room shul, there was no space for women. "We were like displaced persons. During the year, no women went to shul.

In fact, I remember once meeting Rebbetzin Chana in the street. She wanted to participate in the Lipsker/ Raskin ufruf, but obviously had nowhere to be in 770. On Shabbos, I walked her outside the Raskin and Lipsker



families' stores, where she paused and gave a bracha to the couple. This illustrates how we literally had nowhere to go in 770."

Tishrei time, the women were luckier. The small library in the anteroom of the Zal, known as the cheder sheni, was dedicated for the women's use. The connecting door to the Zal was shut, effectively closing the view. It was possible to hear men singing, but the women could not make out the Rebbe's voice.

The young girls lined up in the hallway, leaving the chairs in the room for the older ladies. Occasionally, they caught a glimpse of the men's section through a window on the side of the building. A small porch jutting out of 770 was also in use by women trying to see or hear something. The fortunate ones standing outside by the porch or window were even able to hear the tekiyos.

"We knew the Rebbe was inside blowing shofar and all that, but we couldn't see him and there was nothing to talk about."

ESCORTING ROYALTY

When she was fourteen years old, Esther was given a trusted task; to escort Rebbetzin Chana to shul on Rosh Hashana. At 11 AM sharp, Esther excitedly ran to the apartment on the corner of President and Kingston. Rebbetzin Chana finished her preparations, and they were off. Holding hands, they walked the two blocks together and entered the women's section. The ladies rushed to greet her and ushered her to a front seat.

From then on, Esther had the privilege to bring the Rebbetzin to shul until the Rosh Hoshana before Vov Tishrei.

LEKACH

"I knew the Frierdiker Rebbe was nistalek and heard a new Rebbe was appointed, but I never saw him." During Tishrei of 5711, Esther finally had her chance. The Rebbe was handing out lekach to men and children, and Rabbi Gurary took along his seven-year-old daughter. That was the first time Esther laid eyes on the Rebbe.

While women could not see the Rebbe in shul, many had a chance to meet him yearly in yechidus. Esther did not get so lucky. Her father met often

with the Rebbe to speak about communal matters. Due to the sensitive nature of their conversations, no children were invited to these meetings.

Esther took to walking the streets during the times the Rebbe went home from davening on Shabbosim hoping to catch another glimpse of his holy face.

Consisting just of the original three-pointed rooftop building, the entire 770 was the size of a spacious house.

HAKAFOS IN THE COURTYARD

Sukkos time was more expansive. The sukkah was built in an empty courtyard next to 770. Even after the halachic obligation of sukkah ended, hakafos took place outdoors in the more spacious sukkah. The women gathered in the elevated walkway between the courtyard and the adjoining building. Grabbing milk crates, they parked themselves for the night. Peering downwards through the schach, they were right above the Rebbe's shtender where hakafos were being conducted.

The overflow of women had second row seats in the driveway accessed from Union St. At that angle, they caught a glimpse of the back of the Rebbe farbrenging. Hakafos were seen from a side view. "We sat on milk crates and enjoyed whatever we heard or saw. To us, this was heaven. It was the closest any of us got to the Rebbe."

A preliminary farbrengen took place before hakafos on Simchas Torah. "A small crowd of women and teenage girls came to watch. Whether we understood what the Rebbe was saying or not was a different story."

While the women grabbed spots above, the men's section of the sukkah was unusually empty. Chassidim were marching on tahalucha, bringing other shuls a taste of Chabad's spirit. Eventually, the sukkah filled up with returnees.

One year, Esther recalls, it was pouring. From their perch above, the girls watched as men trickled into the sukkah with dripping hats. They saw the Rebbe point at chassidim entering. "Geven in shul? Were

After hearing for years from her brothers what a holy moment it was, she finally saw it for herself. Rotating with friends for the window view, she witnessed the Rebbe's silhouette covered by his tallis.

you in a shul?" the Rebbe pointed at a chassid with his holy finger.

"Seeing the Rebbe point to one chossid after another was surreal. I remember thinking, poor guy. I hope, for his sake, that he can tell the Rebbe he walked to a shul!"

In 5717 (1957), Esther sat next to Mrs. Rendel Alenik and her adorable two year old daughter (now Mrs. Kasowitz from Minnesota). As the women peered down, to their great surprise the Rebbe suddenly looked up. Catching the eye of the smiley toddler, the Rebbe gave a beatific smile and waved to the baby. "I still remember that smile until today. It was such a shock to us. What made the Rebbe look up?"

A NIGGUN TO REMEMBER

In 5717 (1956), the sukkah was witness to an unusual event. After Simchas Torah hakafos concluded and everyone went home, the Rebbe had his seudah on the second floor of 770, in the Frierdiker Rebbe's apartment. When the meal concluded, the Rebbe suddenly re-entered the shul. The few men present that late at night accompanied the Rebbe into the sukkah. The Rebbe gave out L'chayim to the men who took upon themselves a hachlata to study extra Chassidus. Then, to the amazement of all, the Rebbe taught a new niggun.

The next year, Chassidim made sure to be around in case events repeated themselves. Esther was present. It was hard to sit outside for so long, but she was well rewarded when the Rebbe came out to lead a farbrengen. She witnessed the Rebbe pour L'chayim to those deciding to learn more and was privileged to hear a new niggun being taught. As the night crept on, Esther and her friends were surprised to see the sky lightning. "Were we really just up the entire night? There was so much action and excitement, we barely felt it!"

Since that year, Esther made sure to be present ev-

ery Simchas Torah night. She merited to hear many niggunim being taught for the first time. "The niggunim of Shamil and Stav Ya Pitu are very difficult. They have harder tunes. The Rebbe asked the chassidim to repeat what they were taught, but the crowd stumbled over it. The Rebbe listened, then made a dismissive gesture with his holy hands, as if to say, "You don't know it?" All of us girls were wondering, *how long* will it take these men to catch on? The Rebbe is standing on his feet just to reteach it to them!"

THE SHALASH

Due to the cramped quarters of the shul, large farbrengens during yoma dipagra on weekdays were usually held outside 770. Neighborhood halls were rented and filled with eager chassidim. A pole was set up with a blanket slung over top. Voila, a mechitza. Now the women could enter.

Not much could be seen over the blanket partition in the hall, but a microphone did project the Rebbe's voice to the entire room. Rebbetzin Fradel Shemtov (soon-to-be Sudak) encouraged Esther and her peers to attend. "Come over here. I'll help you climb on a chair and peek over the mechitza so you can



see the Rebbe.” Across the room, Esther was able to manage a small glimpse from over a sea of hats.

Eventually, a tarp was stretched over the Sukkah-courtyard, leading to all farbrengens occurring outdoors. This meant the women were able to listen to Shabbos Mevorchim farbrengens from the walkway. It was cold, and hard to see and hear, but it was the best they had. No one wanted to miss it.

OUR WALDORF ASTORIA

At sixteen years old, Esther went off to seminary in Eretz Yisroel. She received thrilling news in letters from home. “770 is expanding. They are building a women’s section!”

Esther completed her studies and returned to Crown Heights just in time for Tishrei. The section commonly known as ‘the third shul’ was just completed. “It was fresh and new with a great big window to see the new men’s section. Chandeliers were hanging from the ceiling. A red velvet chair was placed in the front row for Rebbetzin Chana. I could not believe my eyes. I felt like I was in the Waldorf Astoria. It was the most beautiful place I’ve ever seen.”

This began the most breathtaking Tishrei of Esther’s life. “We were really lucky . We were able to see the Rebbe by tekiyos.”

After hearing for years from her brothers what a holy moment it was, she finally saw it for herself. Rotating with friends for the window view, she witnessed the Rebbe’s silhouette covered by his tallis. A paper wrapped bundle of pidyonos lay on the bimah in front of him.

Esther couldn’t get enough if it. The men below were pushing each other in a circular motion, trying to catch a glimpse of the Rebbe’s face during this holy time. Quickly, this crush became known as the “washing machine”. Seeing it all was tremendous, a dream come true.

That first Yom Kippur, Esther isn’t sure how much she davened and how much she stared at the Rebbe. In his white kittel and tallis, the Rebbe looked like a malach. At the end of the fast, the Rebbe jumped up on his chair to lead Napoleon’s March. “When I saw the Rebbe jump onto the chair, I was so frightened that I closed my eyes! Only after everyone was singing so loudly and enthusiastically was I able to open my eyes and behold that majestic sight.”

The Rebbe left shul greeting everyone with a loud, “Gut Yom Tov.”

Being part of life with the Rebbe was so beyond our grasp. Not having a shul for so many years makes me appreciate what we got so much more.

OUR 770

Now that the women had a place to be, 770 became free reign. The women came every Shabbos, during the week, for a farbrengen, or just to hear the regular minyan. Eventually the two apartment buildings next door were bought and added on to the big shul in 770.

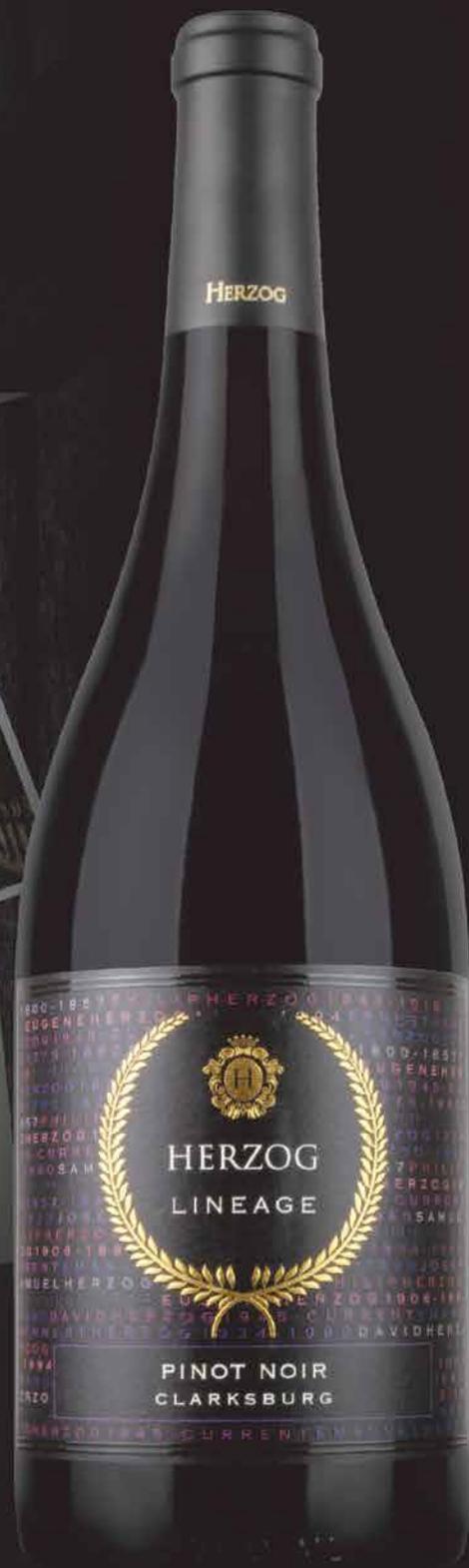
As Esther reflects, “That’s why I love 770 so much. Being part of life with the Rebbe was so beyond our grasp. Not having a shul for so many years makes me appreciate what we got so much more. Every time I walk into 770 I think that this is my shul that was built for me.” ■



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