



WINTER 5782

ב"ה Volume 3, Issue 2

EMBRACE

Uniting and inspiring the worldwide community of Bais Rivkah Alumnae



א חסיד מאנט א סביבה A CHOSSID IS AN INFLUENCER

**EIGHTY YEARS LATER:
FOUR GENERATIONS OF
BAIS RIVKAH PRIDE**

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HADDASSAH'S GLOW

She turned each of us into influencers who went out to share her light.

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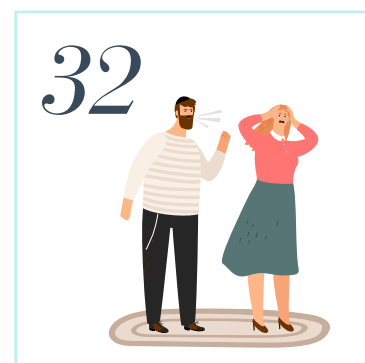
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ב"ה



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INTENTIONAL CONTRIBUTION

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



I opened a Facebook account around eight years ago to market my children's books. I was a bit of an awkward poster at first; I think I posted my first post five times because I didn't realize it had already been posted.

Slowly, I got more comfortable. I shared links, joined groups and discussions, and started to find my footing. Eventually, I dared even open an Instagram account. And while I originally opened my social media accounts to market a product, something funny happened. I found myself becoming a consumer as well.

I encountered the world of influencers, was inundated with other people's opinions. And that is when I realized what a discerning customer I had to be. Was I there for the inspiring soul words, yummy new recipes, and communication with international friends, or was I there to be influenced by others' viewpoints?

Am I allowing the Facebook algorithm to dictate my outlook, or am I sharing inspiration and light with the world?

I would always take the *pisgam* "A Chossid Macht a Sviva" literally — a Chossid affects his physical environment. But I've come to realize that this refers to the virtual environment as well. Am I contributing to my virtual surroundings? And if I am contributing, what am I contributing?

Am I looking for my most important life views in

someone else Instagrams post? Am I relying on social media to shape my values?

I think this is a question we all grapple with, in both our physical and virtual environments. What is my sphere of influence? How am I actively impacting

Am I allowing the Facebook algorithm to dictate my outlook, or am I sharing inspiration and light with the world?

it, both in my immediate domain and in the world at large? How careful am I with what I allow into my home, and what I project to the world? Is my outlook completely and solely shaped by the truth of Torah and Chassidus — and is that what I am emanating to my "audience?"

We hope you'll find some inspiration in these pages, and that you will capitalize on your ultimate ability to be a positive feminine influence in your home, and subsequently the ripple effect it has on the world. ■

Sara Blau

Sara Blau

From the REBBE

נשיא דורנו

Serving as a Positive Influence for Others

*The identity of the recipient of this letter was
not released.*

B”H

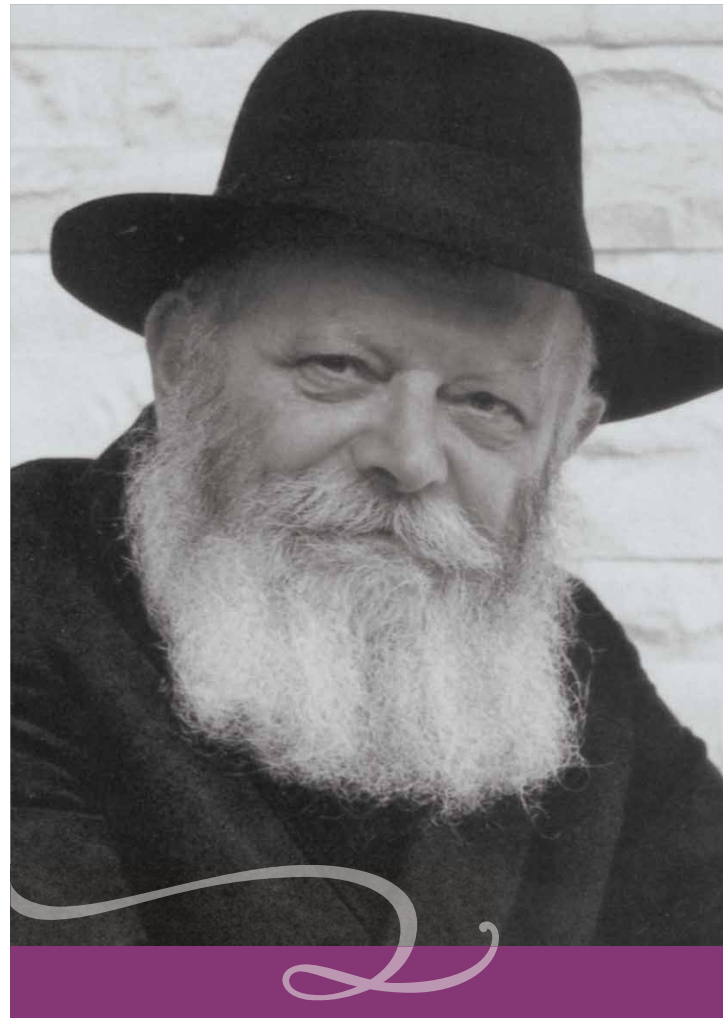
20 Adar, 5710

Greeting and Blessing:

Rabbi C. A. Chodakov conveyed to me the difficulty of your present situation and the extent that you feel the obligation to serve as a positive influence on your family and your surroundings.

As is well known, my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, הַרְבֵּנוּ, sincerely asked all those who merited to gather under his wing, and how much more so, to those who merited to be his students, to be candles that shine forth light. Moreover, he did not merely make a request, he also gave of his spirit and empowered them so that, with the appropriate efforts, they could fulfill this request.

It is up to each one of us to bring this power



from a potential state into actual expression even though at times this requires a greater measure of inner strength and effort...

*To those who merited to be his
students, to be candles that
shine forth light.*

With blessings and with greetings and with the hope of hearing good tidings from you,
Rabbi Menachem Schneerson

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Message from *the* Chairman *of* the Board

Brochov Vesholom!

There are many milestones that deserve to be remembered and highlighted as we celebrate eight decades of the glorious history of Bais Rivkah.

As we approach the Yahrtzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka זצ"ת, I would like to share what was, undoubtedly, the most memorable experience for me as well as for all those involved at

The totally unexpected happened. The Rebbe, on his way to the Ohel, told Rabbi Krinsky that he would like to pass by the groundbreaking.

the time.

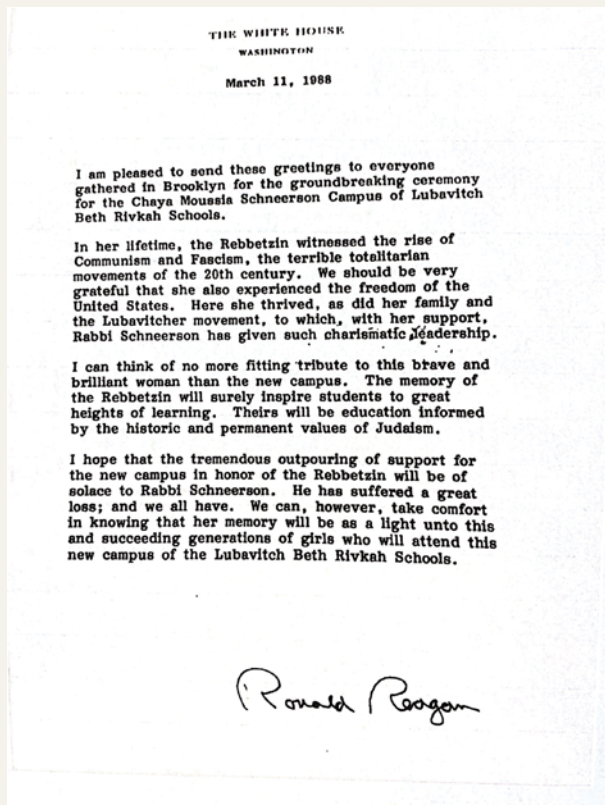
The worldwide family of Anash was still shocked and pained in the wake of the histalkus of the Rebbetzin. Many ideas were suggested to the Rebbe זצ"ת to honor her memory. There were several initiatives that the Rebbe took a special interest in, one of them related to Bais Rivkah.

The idea that a new, spacious campus for Bais Rivkah in Crown Heights would be a most fitting memorial for the Rebbetzin זצ"ת, was presented to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe agreed to the project and to the suggested name in honor of the Rebbetzin, **Bais Rivkah — Campus Chomesh**. Preparations were made for the groundbreaking ceremonies that were to take place with great fanfare on the day of the Shloshim. A special greeting was sent by President Ronald Reagan to be read by his personal representative, Mr. Max Green.

Shortly after the program had begun, with the attendance of thousands filling Lefferts Avenue, in front of the site where the new building was to be built, the totally unexpected happened. The Rebbe, on his way to the Ohel, told Rabbi Krinsky that he would like to pass by the groundbreaking.

This was unprecedented in the history of the





Rebbe's *nesius*. Never had the Rebbe altered the most direct route on the way to the Ohel.

As we saw the Rebbe's car approach and stop, the Rebbe's window opened and I was told that the Rebbe was asking for me. The Rebbe handed me four hundred and seventy dollars (equivalent to the *gematria* of "Chaya Mushka") and told me the following in reference to the Rebbeztzin:

"Tonight is her birthday. I am now on my way to the Ohel. I will also stop at her resting place. This is a participation in this project, on my behalf as well as hers. May we hear good news."

That evening, I sent in a complete written report of the event to the Rebbe. As it was the night preceding the twenty fifth of Adar, I had dated it as "אור ליום כ"ה אדר".

The Rebbe underlined the word "אור" twice, and wrote alongside it:

כבהמצוב"ב - וה"ה מהעיקריים בכ"ז ובכל המסתעף מכ"ז
וכו'.

ת"ח במיוחד על הזריות דמכ' זה ו[ש?]נתקבל בתחילת
יום ההולדת ואור ליום ההולדת וק"ל.

The first Roshei Teivos, which reads as "כבהמצורף", means "like what is attached to this." The implication is that the Rebbe considered the content of the report to be אור — light — and therefore the word "אור" used in the dating of the letter was not just descriptive of the date, but also served as an appropriate title and description of the content of the report.

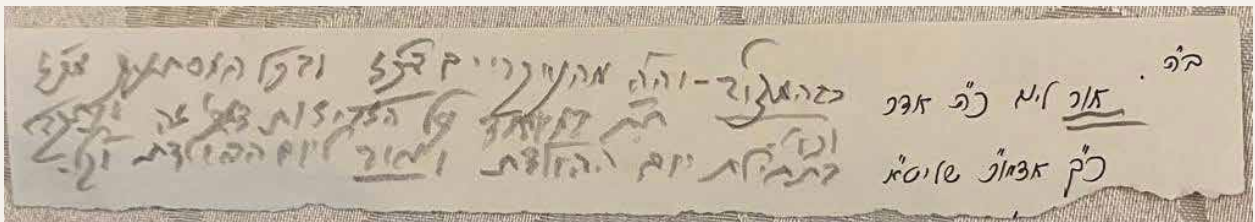
This cryptically written message that I was privileged to receive from the Rebbe accompanied me from then on, giving me strength during the most challenging moments while carrying out my responsibilities at Bais Rivkah. Bais Rivkah and all that is related to it is אור — light.


Bais Rivkah and all that is related to it is אור — light.

The report about the groundbreaking was written in the evening, on one of the most painful days for the Rebbe and Chassidim, and yet the Rebbe saw and showed us one thing: אור, light. Bais Rivkah is a source of light for all of us, a light that can always lead us to the right way.

As we celebrate eighty years of Bais Rivkah's glorious history and accomplishments, we must not lose sight of the ultimate goal: bringing the light of Torah and Chassidus to the world, thus preparing ourselves and the world for the האולה האמיתית והשלימה!

Rabbi Avraham Shemtov ■





Around fifty years ago, I was teaching a class of girls who came from public school to Bais Rivkah. One of the young girls, when she learned to read, was given a *siddur*. I showed her in the *siddur* where kiddush is, taught her how to make kiddush so that on Friday night she can make kiddush for her family, and she did. She learned about many mitzvos like Shabbos, etc., before she had to leave Bais Rivkah when her parents moved far away, sadly to a location where she went back to public school and was not able to continue learning much about Yiddishkeit. I kept in touch with her all these years. Unfortunately, she passed away recently; however, I still keep in touch with her family.

It was on Erev Shabbos several weeks ago when I received an email from her son. He wrote that he was going through his mother's books and among them found two *siddurim*. Both *siddurim* were from Bais Rivkah, given to his mother. He added that, in memory of his mother, he makes kiddush every Friday night, using his mother's *siddur* that she received from Bais Rivkah!

A continuation from over fifty years ago! Always connected to Bais Rivkah and the powerful connection continues for generations! Forever connected!

I am so grateful to Bais Rivkah that *b"h* I had the opportunity to do this work which is a great privilege and *zechus*!

Thank you!

– Chaya Rivkah (Hodakov) Kramer

The article “Prison Without Walls” was very informative and helpful for understanding those in our families, circles, and the community at large who struggle with this neurodivergence — that is, those whose brains work differently than what would be considered “typical.” However, I would like to note that the diagnosis of “Asperger’s Syndrome” has been removed from the DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association) since 2013, and those who had been diagnosed with Asperger’s are instead diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Research has shown that it doesn’t differ enough from other types of autism to warrant a separate diagnosis.

While there are those who feel it is a more “hopeful” diagno-



Disorders



sis than autism, it's important to note that the disorder is named after a researcher named Hans Asperger, a Viennese pediatrician in the 1930s and 40s who was later discovered to be a Nazi collaborator. His research on neurodivergent children led him to recognize that there were those who displayed abnormal patterns of behavior and struggled to fit in socially — but also possessed superior cognitive and linguistic abilities. These children were teachable and therefore “useful,” while those with more disabling forms of autism, were seen as “lost causes.” Asperger sent them off to be killed by the Nazis.

Those who learn this can realize that Aspergers was created to separate out who is disabled and who is a “superperson,” when in fact we know that each special child possesses a unique mission in this world. It would be a shame to use this term when we can view autism as the multidimensional, heterogenous syndrome that it is, with the acknowledgment that each person is unique and holds an individual potential.

The Rebbe taught us that limitations found within an individual are evidence of extraordinary capabilities in another area; may we always respect that potential within each soul.

– Geula (Katzman) Gniwisch



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Letters, comments, questions and suggestions are welcome!

Write to us at Embrace@bethrivkah.edu

BECOMING a BAIS RIVKAH GIRL

Chami (Webb) Engel, Long Beach, California
Graduating class of 5759 (1999)



I lived in Monsey as a child and didn't attend a Chabad school. In the summer of ninth grade, I signed up to Pardas Chanah, and after a fun and inspiring summer with other Chabad girls, I wanted to join them and attend a Chabad school.

I told my parents that I was ready to switch schools for the upcoming school year. They wouldn't have it; I was to continue my education at home. Frustrated and disappointed, I turned to the Rebbe for guidance. If my parents could not understand my sincere desire to learn in a Chabad school, maybe the Rebbe would. I opened the Igros Kodesh to a letter from the Rebbe to Rabbi Pewzner (I believe) in Paris, where the Rebbe wrote that he should name his school Bais Rivkah.

This was my ticket out. I took this letter and

I feel like I am supposed to be here, but I can't keep going to school every day feeling miserable.

showed it to my parents. With the letter and some begging and persuading, my persistence won out. I was finally going to become a Bais Rivkah girl.

The reality of joining a big, dynamic high school in tenth grade wasn't as blissful as the picture I had imagined. I was lonely and miserable. The girls I met in camp had their own circles of friends that they had been with since forever. The adjustment was rough, and I didn't take it so well. I called home every night and cried. My mother responded to my tears by telling me that I was welcome to come back home, but I couldn't see myself leaving Bais Rivkah. I had worked so hard to get there.

The following year, I was in eleventh grade and the situation hadn't gotten any easier — I still felt like an outsider. On Vov Tishrei I poured my heart out to the Rebbe in a letter. I told him everything. I shared that I was miserable and that my family was ready for me to come home. I expressed my deep hurt and how despite the difficulties I was going through, I felt that I was supposed to be in Bais Rivkah. I ended off with

All it took was a hello from a Bais Rivkah girl to make another Bais Rivkah girl feel at home.

a little deal. I told the Rebbe, "I feel like I am supposed to be here, but I can't keep going to school every day feeling miserable. If I'm meant to be here, show me a sign; otherwise, I'm going back home."

As I came out of the Ohel and walked towards the bus, a girl approached me. She introduced herself as Rochie and asked me for my name. We sat together on the bus ride home and met up after school to do homework. That chat on the bus was the first of many conversations between Rochie (Piekarski) Sandhaus and me. Twenty five years later, she is still my closest friend, and the group of friends she pulled me into is my sisterhood. We talk all day, every day. All it took was a hello from a Bais Rivkah girl to make another Bais Rivkah girl feel at home. ■



The EARLY YEARS

Rabbi Herschel and Mrs. Debby Slansky, Five Towns, New York

Interviewed by

Liba (Kramer) Rapoport, Cedarhurst, New York

Graduating class of 5757 (1997)



In a recent interview with Liba Rapoport, Rabbi Herschel and Mrs. Debby Slansky of the Five Towns shared their unique experiences with the start and inception of Bais Rivkah in New York. Mrs. Slansky was a student in the early years of Bais Rivkah and Rabbi Slansky was the principal for one year before Rabbi Majesky took the lead.

“**B**ais Rivkah began as a Talmud Torah with only one teacher, under the supervision of Rabbi Jacobson,” Mrs. Slansky began. “At twelve years old, I would walk to Bais Rivkah on Riverdale Avenue at three o’clock p.m., after public school hours. Rebbetzin Hodakov and Chavi (Lasker) Hecht were my teachers and we learned in Rebbetzin Hodakov’s house, on her daybed.” They learned in the rebbetzin’s home and not in school because the rebbetzin was expecting her first and needed to rest.

Mrs. Slansky does not remember how many girls were there, but she recalls learning Chumash. When asked about the grade divisions, she laughed and said, “There were grades? We just went!” When she was twelve or thirteen years old, Mrs. Slansky asked Rabbi Jacobson when they would graduate. He responded, “*Vos darf men graduarene? M’geit un m’lerent*, (Why do we need to graduate? We go and we learn).”

When asked why Bais Rivkah was only a Talmud Torah and not a full school, Rabbi Slansky explained that they couldn’t begin as a Yeshiva because they needed their own license and an English department, which they didn’t have money for. Over the years, Bais Rivkah gained capital and grew in the number of teachers they could afford to employ.

“*Vos darf men graduarene? M’geit un m’lerent*, (Why do we need to graduate? We go and we learn).”

In 5713 (1954), at only twenty two, Rabbi Slansky was selected by Rabbi Jacobson to become principal. At the time, Bais Rivkah was running a full-day program and Rabbi Slansky was tasked with overseeing the three or four classes that Bais Rivkah had grown to accommodate. He remained principal for approximately a year before being taken over by Rabbi Majesky.

Rabbi Slansky spoke fondly of Rabbi Hodakov and mentioned that he would often ask him for advice. Rabbi Hodakov was the administrator of education in Latvia and was therefore well respected and many looked up to him. If one had a problem that needed a discussion, they would speak to him instead of Rabbi Jacobson. Although Rabbi Slansky admits to not always following his advice, he reports that it was always good advice and that he was able to form a close relationship with him.

Rabbi Hodakov wanted to go back to the old way of teaching “Kamatz Alef ‘uh’ and Kametz Beis ‘buh.’”

Rabbi Slansky recalled a story of Rabbi Hodakov and his methods for teaching *kriah*. “Rabbi Hodakov did not like the way that Chayeinu (the *kriah* workbook) taught *kriah* and that he preferred the “old method.” Chayeinu’s method was to teach words at a time so that the children can associate them with forming sentences. To this, Rabbi Slansky remembers Rabbi Hodakov responding, “*Beshum ofen nisht* — Absolutely not.”

Rabbi Hodakov wanted to go back to the old way of teaching “*Kamatz Alef ‘uh’* and *Kametz Beis ‘buh.’*” Teachers applied this by teaching the Alef Beis one by one. Only once the class completed learning all of the letters, they would move on to teaching the nekudos. One might assume that children who went to public school were behind in their Hebrew learning, but Rabbi Slansky reported that they mastered their skills through repetition.

Rabbi Slansky reflected on how the world has changed. “We were about the only ones who were Orthodox. Bais Rivkah was very small and didn’t have many students. Brownsville had some *shuls*; on Shabbos, people went to *shul* in the morning and opened their businesses in the afternoon. *Shuls* would have early *minyanim* so people can go to work... it’s much easier to be Orthodox today.”

Mrs. Slansky replied that when she went to school and the girls found out that she was Orthodox, they would say, “Don’t you find it hard?” To this, she replied in the negative because she was born into it, but then admitted that it was very hard to be *frum* then. However, the Frierdiker Rebbe came and said ‘*America is Nisht Andersht.*’ And with that, he started the Yeshivas.

When asked what message they would like to give alumnae and current students in Bais Rivkah in honor of the eightieth year, Rabbi Slansky responded with how amazed he is at how Bais Rivkah was “*Mamash* nothing and now it’s a *meluchah!*” ■



Eighty Years Later: **Four Generations of Pride**



Dovid Zaklikowski for EmBRace Magazine



Sara Stock-Shemtov as a student

“I’m a Bais Rivkah girl.”

While these are common words to hear today, eighty years ago they were not. At the turn of the century, Jewish education in the United States was almost nonexistent, and there were even fewer places of learning for girls. Indeed, the matter of educating young women was stigmatized culturally. It was widely believed that girls did not need exposure to philosophy or theology; instead, any education provided was geared toward vocational skills.

This changed in 5702 (1942), but first, a little background.

Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson was a legendary chossid who moved to the United States in the mid-1920s (5680s). Several years later, he returned to Riga, Latvia, to visit the Frierdiker Rebbe. “It was a most memorable period in my life,” he wrote in a 1967 (5727) article in the *Yiddishe Heim*. “For a chossid to travel to see his Rebbe from America in those days was rare indeed.”

During his visit, he had several audiences with the Rebbe. To his surprise, the Rebbe told him of a new and encouraging development, “which he knew would inspire and affect me.”

The Rebbe told Rabbi Jacobson that in Riga there were already fifty eight girls studying Chassidus. They were divided into three groups and each group was taught by a learned chossid. Rabbi Jacobson wrote later that he was shocked to discover that girls were learning Chassidus. “Women are obliged, of course, to study and know accurately whatever pertains to the *mitzvahs* they must observe, and that in itself is a considerable amount of Torah... But women learning Chassidus, the deepest facets of Torah, the mysteries of Kabbalah...”

The Rebbe explained to him that the girls were studying texts relevant to daily life, and that they were successful in their studies. “The oldest group has shown great progress... and more so, we have seen that the learning has had a positive, beneficial influence on the attitudes and behavior of the students,” the Rebbe said.

In the United States, the Rebbe continued, this would also be beneficial. Thus, upon Rabbi Jacobson’s return, a learning group was formed in Brooklyn. The first students were daughters of Lubavitcher chassidim, who gradually brought their friends.

This was the initial effort of the Frierdiker Rebbe to expose young women to the philosophical foundations of Jewish life. It would take some sixteen years for another dramatic event to take place, one that changed the lives of countless women for decades to come.

Just after Sukkos in 5701 (1941), the Frierdiker Rebbe informed Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Isaac Hodakov that he would fund a girls’ school in Crown Heights for half a year. He requested that it be named after his maternal grandmother, Rebbetzin Rivkah, with whom he shared a close relationship.

At the Rebbe’s behest, Rabbi Jacobson joined the effort to open more classes. It was no easy matter to persuade shuls to give use of their premises to a girls’ school since it was a strange and new concept “even for observant Jews.”

The Frierdiker Rebbe penned stories he’d heard from her, and in his introduction to those memories, he wrote, “I had the great merit to know my maternal grandmother, the well-known righteous woman, ‘for as the person is, so is her strength’ [based on Shoftim 8:21] in mercy, kindness and immense knowledge. [She was] a refined woman, unparalleled in her pleasant character and unfathomable humility.”

A few days later, Rabbi Hodakov told the Rebbe



Sara Stock-Shemtov as a student

I have seen it grow from its very embryonic stage when there were only several children, housed in an inadequate building, until now when our children number close to five hundred, including eight afternoon classes.

that there were families in Crown Heights expressing interest, but there was additional demand in the neighboring community of Brownsville, known at the time as the “Jerusalem of America,” where many Lubavitchers and religious Jews resided. The Rebbe agreed and asked that the school be established as soon as possible.

Two weeks later, Rabbi Hodakov reported that a class had been opened there and that there were plans to open an additional class in Boro Park. Rabbi Hodakov wrote in his diary that upon hearing this the Rebbe was very happy.

Together with locals in Boro Park, plans were made. While the initial classes – in Brownsville, and other locations across Brooklyn – were solely in the afternoon, the Frieddiker Rebbe wanted the Boro Park

branch to operate as a full-day program. At a meeting with Borough locals, Rabbi Yehudah Goldberger and Maurice Pappenheim, the Rebbe quoted, “And your beginning shall be small, but your end shall increase exceedingly (Iyov 8:7).”

When one of the attendees requested the Rebbe’s blessing for the school, he answered, “There has to be concrete action that can serve as a vessel for blessings.”

In 5702, the first class in Boro Park opened in a Chabad *shul*, Tzemach Tzedek, where Rabbi Eliyahu Yachil Simpson was the rabbi. His daughters served as its first teachers.

As the Boro Park branch became more established, and support from Lubavitch was no longer necessary, the movement reallocated its support to other branches that had fewer means. The school, which started in a small *shul* on 46th Street, later changed its name to Bais Jacob of Boro Park, today one of the largest girls schools in the United States.

Soon, there were half a dozen locations of Bais Rivkah operating in the afternoon. Later, when Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah passed away, some were renamed Bais Sarah. Under the newly established Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Rabbi Hodakov and the Frieddiker Rebbe’s son-in-law, the Rebbe, oversaw and directed the fledgling school.



The first full day Bais Rivkah school in Brownsville, 1946.



Establishing a Day School

The Frierdiker Rebbe wanted some of his chassidim to be further involved, and he called in Rabbi Jacobson and told him, “Yisroel, organize Bais Rivkah schools, one or two, for girls. Our mutual concern has always been the study of Torah and Chassidus with boys in yeshivos, but here in America, we have to do everything.”

At the Rebbe’s behest, Rabbi Jacobson joined the effort to open more classes. It was no easy matter to persuade *shuls* to give use of their premises to a girls’ school since it was a strange and new concept “even for observant Jews.”

He understood their resistance, recalling his initial reaction to the Rebbe’s discussion with him about the girls studying Chassidus back in Riga. The Rebbe, he said, acutely recognized the needs of the time in light of the role women played both in the home and outside, “and the increasingly negative influence of the environment.”

Over the next three years, in New York and beyond, there were twenty-five branches of Bais Rivkah afternoon schools. Still, the Rebbe wanted more. His goal was to establish a multitude of full-time day schools for girls. After much labor, Rabbi Jacobson successfully established the very first Bais Rivkah day school in 5705, located in Brooklyn.

In 5707, a supporter of the school, Murray L. Eigenberg, wrote, “I have seen it grow from its very em-

bryonic stage when there were only several children, housed in an inadequate building, until now when our children number close to five hundred, including eight afternoon classes.”

At first, it was an intense struggle to recruit students. Rabbi Jacobson approached the Stock family, hoping they’d agree to send their ten-year-old daughter Sarah to the newly-founded day school.

Yaakov Ephraim and Feiga Stock were Amshinover chassidim who lived close to Rabbi Jacobson’s *shul* in Brownsville. Yaakov would daven there frequently during the week, and joined many *farbrengens* at the *shul*. They agreed, and Sarah was enrolled with two

“The Bais Rivkah graduate,” she noted, “is well-rounded, high energy, and has a very positive outlook on life.”

other students.

The school consisted of only a single class, so the following year, Sarah attended a school further from home. Nonetheless, Sarah would proudly declare, “I am the first Bais Rivkah girl.”

As the school continued to grow, Rabbi Jacobson increased his efforts, never settling for the status quo. Despite the financial burden, he accepted girls into the school who could not afford to pay tuition.

“Through tremendous efforts,” the 5707 dinner

On a daily basis, she looks out for students who may have fallen between the cracks and works on integrating them into the student body. She also looks for creative ways to make Chassidus more tangible in their lives.

journal reported, “hard work and stubbornness, and mainly thanks to the good and wide educational program of our schools, under the supervision of the best qualified Jewish and English teachers and principals, the Bais Rivkah Schools have made such phenomenal progress and have thus attained their present achievements.”

A New Era

In 5711, a year after the passing of the Frierdiker Rebbe, the Rebbe accepted *nesius* of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, including Bais Rivkah. During that time, the Rebbe wrote, “I join those who do mitzvos in taking part in the special fundraising for

Bais Rivkah, to rid it of debt. It is my hope that every one of my fellow Lubavitchers do the same for the institution the Rebbe established and was precious to him. He will arouse mercy for them and their families, and they should be blessed with all their material and spiritual needs.”

Five years later, in 5716, Sarah Stock became engaged to Mendel Shemtov, son of legendary chassidim Rabbi Bentzion “Bentche” and Rebbetzin Esther Golda, shluchim in London, England. The matchmaker was Rabbi Shlomo Aaron Kazarnovsky, whose daughter married Sarah’s brother. From a distance, when the Shemtovs learned their son was dating an American girl from a non-Lubavitch family, they were not pleased, fearing that she was too modern.

After Sarah met several of her fiancée’s relatives in the New York area, they gave good reports to his parents. In addition, Sarah wrote them a letter in Yiddish, and they were impressed with her beautiful handwriting and manner of expression. “Imagine what the world was hearing about America at the time,” they said, “but we realized Sarah must come from a special family after receiving her eloquent letter.”

When it came to their daughters’ education, Mrs.



First grade class, 1964. Standing on the left is Mrs. Teichtel, and Mrs. Feiga Duchman is top row, third from the right.

Duchman says, it was a given that she and her sister Bassi Treitel would attend Bais Rivkah. She cherished her time at the school. Despite the diversity among the student body – girls with American, Russian, or Polish parents, including students from non-Lubavitch or marginally traditional homes – their class was unified and friendly.

The school was still expanding and soon moved to Church Avenue. She fondly recalls many of the teachers, but the most memorable was Morah Chana Gorovitz. “She was so devoted and had mesiras nefesh for the school. She knew everyone and everything. She was, in a positive sense, a powerful woman.”

In all her years of learning at the school, she says, Morah Gorovitz rarely missed a day. Mrs. Duchman recalls how shocked the students were when Gorovitz returned to teaching after her son’s bris, a mere eight days postpartum.

With this knowledge, she wholeheartedly sent her daughters to the same institution.

One daughter, Chevy Kogan, lives today in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where her brother Rabbi Levi Duchman is a shliach.

While her husband is a businessman, Mrs. Kogan is a Rebbetzin at the local Chabad House. “I am a Bais Rivkah girl so naturally I got involved in the community,” she says. “Even if you are not on official shlichus, you automatically assume that responsibility.”

Her education in Bais Rivkah, Mrs. Kogan says, provided the foundation for who she is today. “The Bais Rivkah graduate,” she noted, “is well-rounded, high energy, and has a very positive outlook on life.”

Her sister, Mushy Stambler, says that at the school she learned to be accepting of everyone, despite their background. This, she said, is the impact of women learning Chassidus, as the Frierdiker Rebbe so desperately wanted. “Chassidus makes the world a positive place, and this message was something Bais Rivkah constantly encouraged.”

Today, all of Mrs. Duchman’s daughters have graduated the school, setting out on *shlichus*, and it is now her grandchildren attending. Shani Azimov of South Brunswick, New Jersey, was a student at Bais Rivkah High School.

As a student coming from a small school, she says, the transition was drastic and intimidating, but as a proud, fourth-generation Bais Rivkah girl, she was committed to making it work.

While she was always involved in shlichus, Bais Rivkah, with its hundreds of students, was “a happening, eventful, exciting place. There was always something going on, and always an opportunity.”

At Bais Rivkah, she says, you are not just a student; you are a leader and a project manager. Now, as one of twelve official student shluchos, she is giving back to the high school, which has grown to six hundred and fifty students. On a daily basis, she looks out for students who may have fallen between the cracks and works on integrating them into the student body. She also looks for creative ways to make Chassidus more tangible in their lives.

As the school marks eighty years since its founding, Mrs. Duchman says that she, her daughters and grand-

As the school marks eighty years since its founding, Mrs. Duchman says that she, her daughters and granddaughters, are proud Bais Rivkah girls “who have unbelievable love for the Rebbe and what he stands for.”

daughters, are proud Bais Rivkah girls “who have unbelievable love for the Rebbe and what he stands for.”

With countless guests frequenting her home, she says that Bais Rivkah girls stand out. “The school has a special *bracha*,” Mrs. Duchman remarked. “It was, is, and will always be very special. Honestly, it is a big *zechus* for our family to have had four generations educated there.”

We can do this. In a world of entitlement and self-centeredness, let us help our children develop the traits that truly define a Yid and a *chossid*: א חוש מיט א געשמאק א איד א טובה טאן ■

1. *Sefer HaSichos* 5699 p. 339

2. *Sichos Kodesh* 5741 Vol. 4, p. 144

3. *Shabbos* 31a

4. *Tanya* Ch. 32

5. *Based on teachings of the Baal Shem Tov*

6. 8 *Menachem Av*

7. 6 *Adar I*

A SCROLL THAT UNITES



With awe, trepidation, and intense love, B'nei Yisroel stood at *Har Sinai*, ready to accept the most precious gift they would ever receive. The Torah, the binding thread throughout the generations. The consistent foundation through all of history's struggles, victories, and accomplishments. The Torah — the blueprint of every creation, including the *neshama* of each one of us. The essence of every individual is infused in the Torah, which would not be complete or Kosher without every single letter. Every letter, every *Yiddishe neshamah*, is needed in order for the Torah to be whole.

It was Erev Rosh Hashana 5742 (1982) when the Rebbe addressed complaints that the campaign for buying a letter in the Sefer Torah was geared only to children. The Rebbe validated this by announcing a new campaign, where adults could buy a letter in a Sefer

Torah. The Rebbe said that the initiator of this campaign should be Tomchei Tmimim, an institution that is involved in Torah study daily. The Rebbe said that no time should be wasted; immediately after *Havdalah* on Motzei Yom Tov, a plan should be initiated, and the campaign should begin. The committee formed by Tomchei Tmimim did not waste any time, and as soon as Yom Tov was over, they began to execute the new project. The *hanhalah* of Bais Rivkah reached out and asked the Rebbe if the girls could get involved. The Rebbe responded that a separate Sefer Torah should be written for them. The Rebbe said they can extend the privilege to their families, and allow them to buy letters in this Torah as well. The Rebbe said that by buying a letter, one becomes an automatic supporter and promoter of the incredible unity that the Sefer Torah will bring! As people began buying letters, a *duch* was sent to the Rebbe, reporting that one thousand letters were purchased for the Bais Rivkah Sefer Torah. The Rebbe said that this number must multiply, and within two and a half months of this announcement, fifty thousand letters were purchased! Over the years, seven Sifrei Torah have been completed, with letters bought by anyone associated with Bais Rivkah worldwide. This included men, women, and children, ranging from parents to alumnae and supporters as well.

“ובמעמד ומצב ההוה, הרי זה ענין שהזמן גרמא – כי העולם נמצא עתה במעמד ומצב ד'חושך יכסה ארץ גו'... ולכן מובן בפשטות עד כמה נוגע וחשוב להתעסק בזמן זה בקירוב ואחדות כללות עם בני ישראל, על ידי זה שכולם נכללים בכתיבת ספר תורה, תורה אמת ותורה נצחית...”

“In the current state of the world, this is particularly relevant — the world is in a state of incredible darkness... It is therefore clear how relevant and important it is to help promote unity and closeness among the Yidden, through everyone being included in the writing of a Sefer Torah, which is true and everlasting...”

Every Yid is connected to a specific letter in the Torah and its channel of *brachos*. By buying a letter in the Torah, they are accessing the *brachos* and opening themselves as a *keili* for *shefa*. In honor of Bais Rivkah's eightieth birthday, join us by buying a letter to complete our eighth Sefer Torah! ■

Reprinted from Chabad.org

Use this link to purchase a letter:
bethrivkah.edu/sefertorah

1. *Sicha Shabbos Parshas Haazinu 5741*

The Rebbe said that by buying a letter, one becomes an automatic supporter and promoter of the incredible unity that the Sefer Torah will bring!

B"H





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My Dear Child

**Tracht Gut Vet Zein Gut: Harnessing the Power of
Positive Thinking to Strengthen our Belief in our Children**

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



Af·firm·a·tion, /,afər'māSH(ə)n/ *noun*

1. the action or process of stating as a fact; asserting strongly and publicly.
2. emotional support or encouragement.

Affirmations refer primarily to the practice of positive thinking and self-empowerment — fostering a belief that “a positive mental attitude supported by affirmations will achieve success in anything.”

Vis·u·al·i·za·tion, /,viZH(oo)ələ'zāSH(ə)n/ *noun*

1. the representation of an object, situation, or set of information as a chart or other image.
2. the formation of a mental image of something.

★ ★ ★

The mind is an extremely powerful force within the body. The mind dictates the wellbeing, behaviors, and achievements of a person. When the mind is conditioned to think in a specific way, the life trajectory of that person tends to follow that train of thought. A “change in mindset” is arguably one of the most effective ways of changing a given situation.

Within the mind are beliefs that we have adopted based on experiences we live through. There are some beliefs that we may not even be aware of, but play a role in our thoughts, emotions, decisions, and reactions.

The *avodah* of “*moach shalit al halev*” is one that tackles the mind head-on. Rather than just a form of self-control, we are taking control of the beliefs running through our heads. “*Moach shalit al halev*” requires us to examine which beliefs aren’t serving us well and which beliefs we can adopt to serve us better so that our mind can have a positive effect on our emotional responses and our behavior.

We all want our children to have a healthy sense of self-worth, self-acceptance, and the capacity to venture out of their comfort zones. When a child believes in himself, anything is possible. But a child’s belief in himself is only made possible by our belief in

him. If we see him or his challenges in a negative light, it’s hard to truly help them believe in their ability to overcome their challenges.

“*Tracht gut vet zein gut*”, an age-old *pisgam* of the Tzemach Tzedek, has been proven to be a most powerful mind tool in changing reality. Thinking about a situation in a more positive light can actually have a major positive effect on the outcome. “*Tracht gut vet zein gut*” is a way to create a new reality through our beliefs. In this context, we would “*tracht gut*” about our children to help create a new, positive reality for them.

Realistically, how can we adopt a new set of beliefs so quickly? How can we come to truly “*tracht gut*” when we are having a hard time with our children, so that it truly “*vet zein gut*”?

That’s where the power of positive affirmations and visualizations can be effective tools.

Affirmations:

Affirmations are statements we assert strongly as facts. We can say the ideas that we want to firmly believe daily, or even multiple times a day, to ourselves. When we say these statements we bring intention to our thought process. Instead of the instinctive and subconscious beliefs that stand in our way of anticipating a good and positive reality, we retrain our minds to think differently by saying it will be different. We switch out the faulty thoughts and beliefs for ones that serve us better, and in turn, will recreate a new reality for us.

Visualizations:

Visualizations require us to form a mental image so that we can actually see the positive changes we want. When we visualize a difficult situation having a positive outcome, it fortifies our belief that things will be good. And the more we believe it, the more we can visualize it, so we create a reality for ourselves that is deeply rooted in trusting that Hashem has our back, that He is here for us and helping us every step of

the way.

By incorporating daily affirmations and visualizations into our life, we can quickly align ourselves with a new set of beliefs about any challenge or difficulty we face. When we repeat them often, we reinforce the beliefs that create the *keili* to draw down and receive Hashem's *brachos*. We affect actual change because we are harnessing the power of positive thinking.

Positive affirmations and visualizations help us truly embody about our children. When we focus on the good, Hashem sends more of it our way. Our daily affirmation and visualizations strengthen our belief in our children on a *neshamah* level, by recognizing our child's true essence, the unlimited potential of their *neshamah*. This allows us to truly give our children the emotional support and encouragement they need to reach their full potential.



Tracht gut vet zein gut **Daily affirmations and visualizations exercise:**

My dear child,

You are perfect just as you are.

Hashem created you exactly as He intended for you to be.

You are perfect, with your strengths and with your challenges; you are not broken because of your challenges.

I see you and I love you fully, wholeheartedly. Please love and accept yourself too.

Your challenges are an invitation for me to get to know you better. When I feel triggered by you, it's an opportunity for me to grow.

Our life's *avodah* is to work through our challenges, to go out of our comfort zones, and I am here to help you.

I am here to nurture your nature. To bring

out the best in you. To help you see how your greatest challenges are also your greatest strengths. To help you believe in yourself.

My dear child,

I am here to help you see your worth.

I am here to witness your challenges.

I am here to help you see that your challenges don't detract from your worth.

My dear child,

You are worthy because you are a child of Hashem.

You are worthy because you are my child.

I am blessed because I am your mother. ■

Head *to* Heart



Mindful Parenting
for **Heartfelt**
Relationships



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Early Childhood Consultant,
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Certified Temperament Specialist

A Relationship-based Approach

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In Crown Heights
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ASKING FOR *a* FRIEND

FINDING THE
BALANCE



DEAR CHAYA,

Having a bunch of little kids is adorable, entertaining, and challenging all at once. One of the things I'm struggling with is when siblings start fighting with each other. It might be in the middle of a game when one accuses the other of cheating, or a younger child breaks a Lego structure of another, or the older kids simply want to exclude the younger ones. How do I know when to intervene and "make them apologize" vs. let them figure it out? Should I jump in with timers and turns or let them work it out between themselves?

I would appreciate any clarity that you have.

Signed,

Drained Mother



DEAR DRAINED MOTHER.

What a great question — I can relate! I love being a mother and I enjoy my children's joy and energy, but nothing saps the life out of me like hearing them fight.

So how do we respond?

Firstly, it's important to ensure that we are **responding** (with thought), rather than **reacting** (instinctively).

Consider what your role is. Your job as a parent is to educate: to teach your children how to conduct themselves as healthy, good people according to the ways of the Torah. Remember that your job is NOT to be the judge, jury, and executioner of your child's actions. Nor is it your job to be their lawyer.

Beginning with the cheating scenario:

Children fighting over a game is a natural and normal scenario. There is nothing wrong with a child who attempts to cheat, nor with the child who is upset about it, (or even the one who falsely accuses the other of cheating when they themselves are the cheater!). It is

How do I know when to intervene and make them apologize vs. let them figure it out?

natural for a kid to try to turn things to their advantage.

This is important to recognize because often our first reaction is to be shocked or upset at seeing our child behaving dishonestly, possibly leading us to respond in a hurtful or angry way, which will likely have little benefit in the long run.

Recognizing that it's natural and normal, albeit wrong, allows us to see it for what it is: an opportunity to teach our children about playing fairly even when it may not feel good at the time.

Once we recognize our role in the situation, we can respond appropriately, by discussing with the children how games work, and that if we don't follow the rules, then no one will want to play. Try to avoid being the enforcer of the rules themselves; running a game (that is age-appropriate) according to its rules is a great skill for children to learn, and the way to facilitate the development of that skill is by practicing it themselves.

Firstly, it's important to ensure that we are responding (with thought), rather than reacting (instinctively).

You might need to clarify the rules or to advise on how to navigate a particular situation. There is no issue with that. But by leaving the decisions ultimately up to the children, they will internalize the lesson more, as well as learn important life skills, like negotiation and compromise, which are sure to serve them well as they grow older.

Now, what about when a child breaks a sibling's creation, whatever it is? Consider the same thing: You are the educator that is there to give your child skills for life. You are not their judge or referee. What do your children need to learn from this situation and how can they learn it best?

I would suggest a few lessons, both for the “perpetrator” and the “victim”:

1. It is wrong to destroy another's property.
2. It is hurtful to ruin another person's hard work. We need to consider another's feelings.



For very young children, I would also consider that perhaps they need to be better occupied themselves so they wouldn't feel the need to bother their siblings.

3. When someone does something hurtful to you, it can be upsetting, but there's always a solution. Perhaps we need to find another place to create where others are less likely to disturb.

4. When we do something wrong, we need to apologize and try to make it up to them.

The ways that you might approach these lessons would depend on the children's ages (and are beyond the scope of this column). For very young children, I would also consider that perhaps they need to be better occupied themselves so they wouldn't feel the need to bother their siblings. I find these situations often come out of a sense of boredom or a need for attention.

Of course, some of these lessons may require more than just a pep talk, also depending on the child's age. Whether it's to help rebuild what was destroyed, or not being allowed to play with that toy or in that area, consider something that is connected to the act that was done, and remember that it is about education,



not about enforcing justice.

As for older children excluding younger ones, I believe that forcing them to do anything that they don't want to wouldn't be beneficial to their education. If I could redirect the younger children to do something else that makes them happy, I would try to do that instead. It is normal in life not to be included in everything, certainly where there are age differences involved. At the same time, if I felt that the older children could use a lesson in inclusion, I would speak to them about it at a time that they would be more receptive. Remember the goal: education, not control.

Remember the goal: education, not control.

In the same vein, I would not enforce turns or timers myself (unless the children request it). I would insist that in order to have a particular toy they are fighting over, they need to find a way to get along, and if they are unable, I may take it away from both of them. I might offer suggestions on how to compromise if I feel they need it, but by leaving the decisions up to the children, I am giving them tools and a greater sense of independence that will benefit them greatly in the future.

In truth, this is quite a broad topic, and I certainly haven't covered it all, but I hope this gives you some food for thought in helping you navigate this challenging aspect of parenting.

Wishing you much nachas from all of your children, today and always!

Hatzlacha Rabba <3

Chaya ■



Have a question you want to see addressed? Trying to figure out the balance in a specific area of your life? Send in your AFAF question to embrace@bethrivkah.edu to have an answer featured in an upcoming issue!

ב"ה

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How to **Hurt Less** *and* **Trust More**

Menucha (Kalmenson) Schochet, Los Angeles, CA
Graduating class of 5763 (2003)



Ever heard the phrase “Your children’s wellbeing is fifty percent *tefillah* and fifty percent *shalom bayis*”? I’m not sure about the source, but if that doesn’t motivate you to work on your *shalom bayis*, I don’t know what might.

The other day, I was coaching a client. She asked me, “How can I feel less hurt by my husband? He is a good person, but when he criticizes or snaps at me, I find myself reeling and feeling crushed. It is so hard to get over it and move on.”

Great question. Wouldn’t it be amazing if there was a formula to help us feel less intensely hurt when our

husband says something that feels mean or insensitive?

So we know what doesn't work well — it's all too familiar to most of us. We feel hurt and find the need to start to talk about and explain how hurt we are, and our husbands just become more defensive. They feel bad, so instead of being empathetic and apologetic, they are busy trying to protect their sense of being a good man and husband. We get more frustrated.

We think maybe we need to lay on the guilt even more. Bring up what happened last week which shows how this comment was even more hurtful, triggering. How could they not see how inconsiderate and insensitive their behavior is?

But instead of getting the apology that we're waiting for, we end up feeling more frustrated, more unheard, and even worse than we did by the initial comment. We may even say some pretty unkind things that we are not so proud of. And now we and our husbands feel miserable and hurt and misunderstood. But of course, it is really all their fault. Why couldn't they just admit they were wrong and say sorry? And even if we manage to *schlep* an apology out of our hus-

“Your children’s wellbeing is fifty percent tefillah and fifty percent shalom bayis.”

bands, it doesn't feel like one, and it doesn't give us the healing and peace we were looking for.

So what is a more effective way?

Start by simply telling them, “That hurt,” without intensity or blame. There is no need to explain it; your husband can figure out why his criticism might be hurtful. The less talking you do, the more space you allow for your husband to reflect and take responsibility. As tempting as it is to go on and delve into a lengthy speech about how and why you're so hurt, show incredible self-restraint by not going on — it ultimately does not serve you well.

Now you might want to take a break — leave the room, take some deep breaths, a quick walk around the block — whatever it takes to help you calm down.

With a more relaxed mind, you might also want to consider: Is there anything I may have said or done that contributed to the atmosphere leading into my husband's critical/hurtful/controlling comment? Did

Don't be stuck on the apology looking or sounding a specific way because that is what you envisioned you need. What you really want is to know that he cares and is connected to you. And he is.

I say something disrespectful, critical, or demeaning to him? That does not give him a license to say mean things, and he is always responsible for what he says and does. But I want to take ownership of *my* side of the street. If I said or did something disrespectful to my husband, I need to be accountable and clean that up. I need to apologize to my husband for being disrespectful.

But wait! He is the one who said something really mean!

Still. I do my part. I am not a victim. I am powerful. I own my behavior and I am accountable.

This is brave! There is almost nothing more attractive than being accountable. Go ahead and apologize for your part in the conflict, keeping it short and simple. This will go a long way in restoring peace and connection. It is very likely that your husband will own his part and apologize as well. Even if it is not in the typical form of an apology, it may be in another form — being extra helpful, complimentary, or kind. Receive that as his apology, his desire to make it up to you. Don't be stuck on the apology looking or sound-



You need to change the narrative, trust that he really does care for you, and lean into your connection. This is very powerful work.

ing a specific way because that is what you envisioned you need. What you really want is to know that he cares and is connected to you. And he is.

What if you thought about it and you really did nothing to contribute to the negative vibes and energy — his hurtful comment was completely unwarranted? He was stressed or exhausted or in a bad mood and let it out on you?

That is on him. Your side of the street is clean. Take care of yourself. Do something you enjoy or find nurturing or reenergizing. And most importantly, use your mind to help your emotions (remember, Tanya 101). Did your husband specifically want to hurt your feelings? Was he out to crush you? Most likely not.

If you think about it, you probably can come up with lots of evidence that your husband cares deeply for you; he loves you, cares about your feelings, and wants to make you happy. Most of the time, it isn't the actual comment or criticism that is so painful, it is the story we attach to it. You need to change the narrative, trust that he really does care for you, and lean into your connection. This is very powerful work.

It is so liberating to know that we don't have to feel so



hurt from an insensitive or rude comment.

We could say, “That hurt,” and trust that our husband cares deeply for us. Maybe we could even find his heart message, how that comment might in fact be coming from a place that cares about us? A heart message is a feeling of concern, of love, or a value that may be hidden behind his words or behavior.

Take the woman whose husband criticized her for not getting their son to school on time. It had been a long, chaotic, and stressful day. Instead of getting sucked into the blame game, she said, “I know you're not out to blame me (trust the connection) and I appreciate how much you care about our son's *chinuch* (heart message)!” Her husband agreed.

He said, “Yeah, I don't expect you to do everything yourself, but if you see you aren't managing to get our son to yeshivah on time, please call me for help! I would have helped you figure it out.”

That's the magic of hearing a heart message.

Best of all, we chose connection and intimacy over conflict and pain.

When we train our minds and hearts to go into the space of trusting the connection, we don't feel as hurt — it just isn't as intense or painful — and the hurt doesn't last nearly as long.

Our husband feels the positive energy that we are emitting, and most likely will reflect that back to us. Best of all, we chose connection and intimacy over conflict and pain.

Possibly the greatest gift Hashem has given us is the gift of marriage. Why waste precious time — hours and days — feeling hurt, lonely, and miserable, when we could be enjoying connection, friendship, and intimacy?

And of course, fifty percent *shalom bayis* is enough to bet on. What wouldn't we do for our children? Not to mention for ourselves. ■

Menucha is a Shluchah, mechaneches, public speaker, and Relationship Coach. She is passionate about helping women create more shalom bayis by shifting deeply held patterns and beliefs within their relationships.

א חסיד מאכט א סביבה
A Chossid is an influencer.

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A Discerning Influence

Mushky (Pewzner) Kotlarsky, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5769 (2009)



Influence. It's a big word. It carries layers of meaning, especially in this day and age.

The Rebbe charged us with a mission: to influence our surroundings, make a positive impact, and change the world. At the same time, we are cautioned to not be influenced by our surroundings, not to be impacted negatively, and not to allow the world to change us.

How can we isolate one from the other, intertwined as they are?

This is the big debate around *shlichus* and the Rebbe's mission for his *Chassidim*. How is it possible to remain steadfast in our values while putting ourselves in the midst of so many foreign influences?

The answer is surprisingly simple. The Rebbe tells us that if we are focused on being a 'Lamplighter' — when we know that we carry a light that isn't our own, it's the light of Hashem — we can traverse vast deserts and deep seas to light each lamp without losing our flame.¹ When we hold passion and fire, then the *kaltkeit* of Amalek has no power over us.²

Our approach to influencing is one of strength. One of ChaBaD — true wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of our identity and values. One of *emunah* and *bitachon* that when we follow in Hashem's ways, we are on the right path. One of passion and commitment, with dedication to the Rebbe and willingness to fulfill the mission. With this, we are equipped to light up the wilderness and the ocean, which cannot make our flame waver.

Now, we see the truth in this idea and believe in its efficacy. But what about the newly-emerged meaning of the word "influence," when we're not going out to make our impact, but we're dealing with the outside influences right in the palm of our hand? How are we to approach this new territory?

The answer again is surprisingly simple. It's all about evaluating what we allow in, how we allow it in, and the impact it has.

The Rebbe's approach to media consumption is clear. The Rebbe did not mince words speaking about the pain, confusion, and damage that can come from bringing devices into our homes.³ Nowadays, it's blatant — we use the word "influencer," an unmistakable acknowledgement of the effect on us. We know that social media is designed to constantly draw consumers back and influence

Okay, so now everyone's buying a specific style shoe or parting their hair in the middle; is that really a concern? Isn't that pretty innocent?

their choices and behaviors. Sometimes these influences seem *pareve*; okay, so now everyone's buying a specific style shoe or parting their hair in the middle; is that really a concern? Isn't that pretty innocent?

In a sense, yes, part of living in the world means being influenced by trends and adapting to society. But the Rebbe cautioned us to constantly check in with our own values and independent thoughts. Am I wearing this just because someone decided that this will be the next trend so they can continue to sell new products?⁴ Even deeper than that, what ideas are forming in my subconscious based on the messages I absorb? Are they values that add to my *Avodas Hashem* or *chas v'shalom* the opposite? Am I using it as a tool to connect with people and have a positive impact, or am I adapting to outside values and ideas that are being "normalized" on social media?

As a *kallah* teacher, high school teacher, and women's educator, the influence that social media has on our values is something I'm often confronted with. The media we consume impacts our perception of what's normal. The way we think a wedding should look and what kind of *chosson* and *kallah* photos should be taken; the way we think a "healthy" and "happy" marriage should look, whether through the fake lenses of the social media highlight reel or the equally fake lens of curated social media "reality"; the things that we believe create a meaningful and fulfilling intimate life; the way we envision how an ideal family looks, behaves, and is structured; the deepest values of our feminine identity, marriage, motherhood; the way we present ourselves to the world; and the choices that we make in the privacy of our own homes are all greatly impacted by the influences of social media.

Of course, there are many positive influences on social media, and it is a great tool for learning and *hafatzas hamayanos*. This isn't an absolute dismissal of all the potential good, rather a call to remain

Am I using it as a tool to connect with people and have a positive impact, or am I adapting to outside values and ideas that are being “normalized” on social media?

mindful in its use. We have to be incredibly cognizant of this powerful influence in our lives. We must think about the messages — direct or subliminal — we are exposing ourselves to, the sources from which they originate, and the impact they have on the way we think and act.

Part of our *Avodas Hashem* is to set proper boundaries on what our eyes see⁵ and what we share. Are we contributing in a positive way? Are we having a meaningful impact on this world? In the age of materialism and the culture of comparison,⁶ which the Rebbe spoke about, we have to be mindful about oversharing, *tznius*, and maintaining boundaries and privacy,⁷ recognizing the influence that we have on others.

There is so much that is easily accessible now that one no longer has to leave the home to buy secular media or even rent it. A full spectrum of content is readily available, ranging from things that are completely *assur* to totally *pareve*. Aside from blocking out the negative entirely, our *avodah* is to sift through the “innocent,” the “*pareve*,” the things that are within our *reshus*, and ascertain whether or not they help us in our *Avodas Hashem* and whether the sources of “influence” are truly in line with Torah and *chassidische* values.⁸

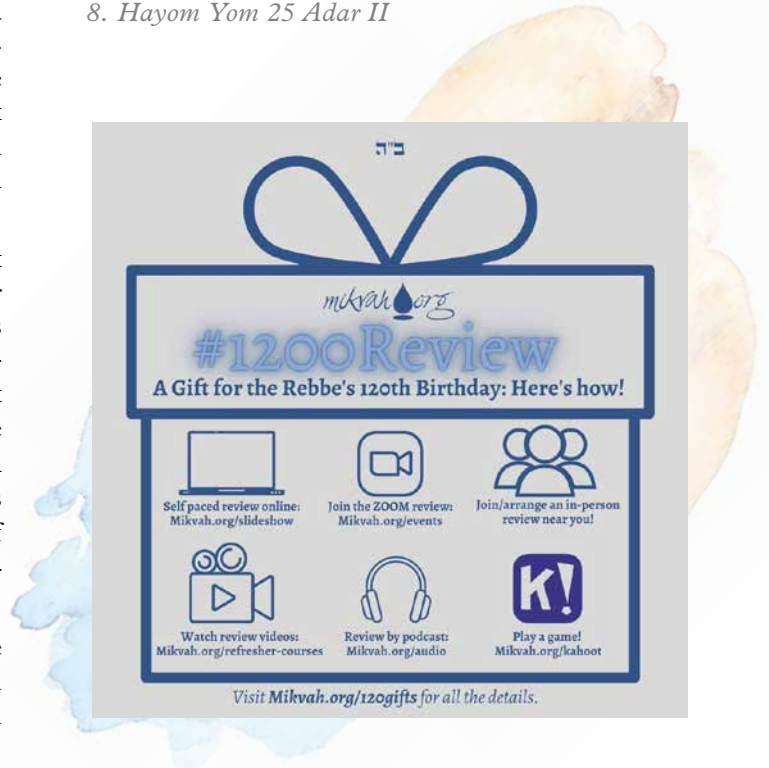
The key is to turn to our Torah sources. To learn the *halachos* of what we are allowed to see, hear, and expose ourselves to. To look at the Rebbe’s words and take them to heart.

It is imperative to have real, honest conversations with ourselves and our *mashpim* about the role these influences play in our lives. It also takes careful consideration to assess how and what we should be sharing, if at all. We have the *zechus* to connect with the Rebbe and receive our mission in this world, to be a Lamplighter, to make a positive impact, and to be an influence for good.

Yes, the answer is simple, but that doesn’t make it

easy. The delicate balancing act of being involved in the world but not being influenced by it, is an *avodah* that needs constant work. May Hashem *bench* us all that with the *kochos* of the Rebbe, we are empowered to go out and be ambassadors of light, be a positive influence on the world, and bring Moshiach now! ■

1. 13 Tammuz 5722
2. Hayom Yom 13 Adar II
3. 12 Tammuz 5741
4. Kfar Chabad 1115 p. 57
5. Kuntres Avodah Perek Bais
6. Torah Menachem M”S Parshas Vayeishev 5717
7. Toras Menachem 5742 vol. I p. 340 sec. 42
8. Hayom Yom 25 Adar II





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Art-Assisted Therapy

Art-assisted therapy helps individuals experiencing a variety of emotional and psychological challenges achieve improved levels of daily functioning. You may assemble a collage, work with clay, paint, create a visual journal, or participate in any number of other artistic processes while working toward your treatment goals. In this class, you will visualize your own success.



Drama-Assisted Therapy

As Shakespeare famously wrote, "All the world's a stage." Drama-assisted therapy is an experiential group that uses showing rather than telling when trying to share or rewrite our life stories. By using the entire body, not just our speech, we unfreeze stories that may be holding us back and keeping us stuck. It is a gentle process that allows us to move from one stage in life to another.



Dance-Assisted Therapy

This versatile form of therapy is founded on the idea that motion and emotion are intricately connected. The way you move your body impacts how you feel. Dance-assisted therapy facilitates improved physical and emotional health by using controlled, supervised movements, nonverbal cues, and dance. This therapeutic intervention is for anyone ready to take the first step!



Fitness-Assisted Therapy

When physical activity is combined with social or emotional activity under skilled direction, the result is a win for your body, a win for your mind, and a win for your heart. Mental and emotional wellbeing comes naturally as you focus on the wellness of your physical body. In this therapeutic fitness class exercises are designed to individual needs and goals to help you be of sound body and mind.



Baking-Assisted Therapy

Advenium's group baking activity has all the ingredients needed for effective therapy. This group incorporates skills that improve executive functioning, like focus, organization, problem solving, emotion regulation, and time management. Baking-assisted therapy engages all of your senses and is an excellent avenue for individuals looking to regulate sensory input. Adding decorations isn't merely icing on the cake!



Guitar-Assisted Therapy

Learning to play the guitar helps clients learn to manage stress, enhance memory, and develop fine and gross motor skills. In a group setting, guitar-playing is an effective way to make nonverbal connection with peers. Our therapists are trained to make guitar-assisted therapy accessible to students with all different ability levels, making this group ideal for any age. (No previous guitar experience is required.)



Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Therapy

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) is a type of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) that teaches people how to live in the moment, cope with stress in a healthy way, regulate emotions, and improve their relationships with others. Because for most, mind over matter still matters.



Gymnastics-Assisted Therapy

Each of us has the ability to achieve strength, agility, and poise. Therapeutic gymnastics groups develop these skills and contribute to improved physical and social-emotional wellbeing. Our gymnastics-assisted therapy is especially suited for younger participants. We focus on building confidence, a positive body image, healthy self-expression, and discipline.



Jewelry Making-Assisted Therapy

The creative process begins with imagining the final product. Visualize its color, texture, and form – how might you display this beautiful piece? As you work on your jewelry, our experienced facilitators will incorporate mindfulness techniques to help you increase your awareness of your emotional state and sense of being. You will not only learn to create masterpieces, you will learn to master yourself.



Nutrition-Assisted Therapy

Science has known for a long time that the foods we eat make a big difference in how we feel – physically and emotionally. But, 'eating right,' as you may have found, is a matter of the mind. The support of our qualified professionals in this nutrition-assisted therapy group will help you develop learn the mind over body techniques and mechanisms that will help you not only plan your eating but also provide nutrients for your emotional well-being.



Journaling-Assisted Therapy

Do you tend to shut down when feeling intense emotions? Is it sometimes challenging for you to identify, experience, and process your feelings? If so, writing them down can help. The guidance of a skilled therapist can help even more. Journaling-assisted therapy allows you to express your thoughts freely, openly and productively. Don't worry – they don't get the key to your diary.



Woodworking-Assisted Therapy

Woodworking has become increasingly popular in recent years as a highly effective alternative therapy model. For many, this is a great way to manage symptoms of anxiety. Woodworking is also especially helpful to veterans and individuals recovering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Our experienced woodworking facilitators will help you each step of the way as you engage your hands, heart, and mind on your project.



Kangoo Jumping Assisted-Therapy

Reach new heights in this innovative class which uses special shoes designed for mobile rebound exercise. Yes, you really will be jumping in this group, and yes, you really will have fun! In our therapeutic Kangoo Jumping sessions, individuals enjoy heightened self-confidence, reduced stress and other benefits while improving balance, coordination, and lower body strength.



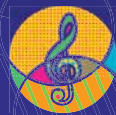
Yoga-assisted Therapy

Yoga-assisted therapy combines psychotherapeutic concepts and this age old holistic form of healing. Our yoga groups address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of participants through gentle movements, deep breathing, specific yoga postures, and guided meditations.



Music-Assisted Therapy

Music has been an established therapy method proven to improve self-esteem and confidence. Advenium's skilled music facilitators help individuals improve their overall mood and sense of wellbeing. You may listen to music, write lyrics, play instruments, dance, sing, or talk about music as part of your treatment. Research shows that music is one of the few activities that can stimulate all parts of the brain. Who doesn't like the sound of that?



Zumba-Assisted Therapy

Zumba is a Latin-inspired dance routine that has been growing in popularity over the past 30 years. When used as a therapeutic intervention, this movement-assisted routine combines dance, music, and traditional psychotherapy techniques to help individuals achieve emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration. What's more – it's fun!

Baby Development, But Make It Holy

When the Environment Makes a Chossid

Mushka (Bogomilsky) Gopin, Crown Heights
Graduating Class of 5772 (2012)



We fret so much over our babies' eating and sleep... but are we concerned enough with what they do when they are awake?

There's a short period of time — just three years — during which a baby's brain grows exponentially. An infant is born with one hundred billion neurons that fire every second. His brain will be ninety five percent complete by age three — and in the meantime, it's the quality of his experiences that shape it.

The most crucial period of learning is also the simplest. The infant has a “subconscious absorbent mind” that, like a sponge, effortlessly absorbs its surroundings. For this reason, the “prepared environment” is a key tenet of Montessori pedagogy as an indirect teacher of the child.

What struck me when I learned this science was that I already knew it — from a Torah perspective.

The Rebbe always advocated for and appreciated the importance of the developing mind. His response to a couple who asked for advice on educating their six-year-old son: “Why are you coming to me so late?”

The Rebbe's “*Mivtzah Chinuch*” campaign of 5736 (1976) stressed that chinuch begins before birth because a fetus is affected by the spiritual state of its parents and surroundings. Similarly, we know that conception is influenced by the observance of *Taharas Hamishpachah*; the pregnant woman is affected, like Yaakov's patterned sheep, by what she sees; and a *malach* teaches the entire Torah to the fetus in the womb.¹

The Rebbe's *hora'os* intuitively support a *chassidish* “prepared environment.”

Over the entrance to the infant's room, Chassidim hang a *Shir HaMaalos* card. It's inscriptions generate a positive influence over the baby's character, even though the newborn can't see it.² I pinned a card to my laboring gown (double wrapped) and tucked another inside the hospital bassinet, together with a dollar from the Rebbe and photos of the Rebbeim.

We set up our homes, each a *mikdash me'at*, so it is conducive to *chinuch*. The bedroom holds a Chitas and *pushka*. Our Aleph Bais chart is hung at child eye level. I am particular about using the *siddur* font (the form given at Har Sinai and retaught by Ezra HaSofer after it was forgotten in *Galus Bavel*). I avoid photos of non-kosher animals³ and cover those up in baby board books! Our storybooks are all from Hachai, which follows the Rebbe's printing guidelines.

The Rebbe's “Mivtzah Chinuch” campaign of 5763 (1923) stressed that chinuch begins before birth because a fetus is affected by the spiritual state of its parents and surroundings.

As high contrast cards become more popular on the market of developmental toys, I created the world's first ever Jewish set. These designs are intended to be placed within baby's eyesight and can help extend tummy time.

Black and white images before three months of age, and primary colors afterwards, stimulate the ocular nerve, strengthen the baby's immature vision, encourage focus... and with my cards, imbue the absorbent mind with Torah images.

Because if baby can look at anything, why not make it Jewish?

We can consciously and intentionally educate our children... from birth. ■

Download the cards free at MyMotheringMindset.com (instructions are included). Look out for Mushka's classes at Miriam's Center in Crown Heights and for online courses coming soon to her website, MyMotheringMindset.com.

1. *Niddah 31A*

2. *Sefer HaSichos 5747, Vol. I, p. 146ff*

3. *Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXV, p. 309*



CONTRAST CARDS: A GUIDE & EXPLANATION

by Mushka of MyMotheringMindset.com



@MOTHERINGMINDSET

Why these images?

The infant has an absorbent mind that, like a sponge, subconsciously takes in everything in his environment.

Why not expose him to holy scenes? The Aleph Bais are black on white, as in the Torah scroll. The candlesticks show two for mother and one for the young daughter. The mezuzah and tefillin are both Biblical mitzvos.

Why contrast cards?

Your newborn's eyesight is very limited and can only make out high contrast images (the hair against your face, the pupils of your eyes). Practicing gazing at high contrast cards (black and white before 3 months, primary colors after) helps strengthen baby's vision and get her little brain growing as she works hard.

What age is this for?

These images are detailed and intricate, geared towards an older baby (3m+) but still fine for a newborn. Place them within eyesight and see how your baby focuses!

How do I use these?

These are highly stimulating, so use during awake time (do not keep near the crib).

Print, cut, and incorporate into playtime:

- Tape to a picture frame and place within baby's sight
- Insert into your Lovevery baby gym (pictured)
- Tape to the top of your baby gym play arches

Where can I learn more?

Follow me on Instagram @MotheringMindset for more real life parenting that incorporates Montessori, developmental psychology and gentle/respectful theories.





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Sphere of Influence

Rebbetzin Fruma Schapiro, Sydney, Australia
Graduating seminary class of 5748 (1988)

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



“A Chossid macht a sviva.” To what extent is our influence? How can we utilize our influence to catalyze real change? We asked two alumnae who are veteran Shluchos and are involved in the sphere of chinuch to weigh in. Here, they discuss how to structure a home that is a beacon of influence spreading outward.

It's common to absorb the trends of what is going on around us. We pick up language, emotions, and often mindset as well. Is it okay to be a product of our environment?

Mrs. Schapiro: This is largely dependent on the environment we are referring to.

We are all products of our environment to some degree and of course, it is more than fitting to be a product of an emotionally and spiritually healthy environment. However, if the environment creates self-doubt, doubts regarding our core Torah values and beliefs, unhealthy attitudes and relationships, prejudice, or lack of love, then we must use our inner strength, (with the guidance of a *mashpia* and those whom we trust) wisdom, and free choice to ensure we don't become a product of those unhealthy influences in our environment.

Mrs. Laber: During our formative years, our home, school, and camp environments shape us. Our upbringing and education give us the foundation to become a leader and influence others in a positive way. I am forever grateful to my parents and Bais Rivkah for the solid Jewish education where the Rebbe's teachings were constantly instilled in us. We listened to the Rebbe speak about not allowing the negative influences in our environment to affect us in an adverse way. The Rebbe empowered us to dispel darkness with just a little bit of light. Throughout my high school and seminary years, I had many opportunities to help *Shluchim* and learned from them what it truly means to be a lamplighter.

Once I embarked on *shlichus* with my husband to Upstate New York, creating my environment meant combining the inspiration with my own strengths to inspire others. Today, I empower girls and women at Jewish Girls Unite to recognize their strengths and use them to be a positive influence in their home or community.

I remember when an online student was feeling despondent about living in a small rural town without a strong Jewish environment. Through our classes, she came to realize that she could turn her challenge into an opportunity to become a lamplighter. She became more involved in using her writing abilities to inspire others. After attending

the Jewish Girls Retreat, she shared, "Through the Jewish Girls Winter Retreat, I've been inspired to recreate the unparalleled environment of familial love and constant *simchah* and song, wherever I go." (Jewishgirlsunite.com)

How do we "create" an environment in our lives and homes?

Mrs. Schapiro: A healthy environment is created by an honest effort to live a life with the values of Torah and *Chassidus*. There is a difference between learning and knowing, and actually living what we

We often suffer from cognitive dissonance, where there is an inconsistency between what we believe and how we behave.

learn and believe.

We often suffer from cognitive dissonance, where there is an inconsistency between what we believe and how we behave. However, if we want a home that is filled with *shalom bayis*, mutual respect, and love, we need to acknowledge how loudly our actions speak. Our families are exposed to our real selves. Hence, we need to ask ourselves who the "real me" is.

We have to try to be consistent and genuine and teach



our children respect for Rabbanim and teachers. Our children should not feel that we are cynical about the very beliefs we are trying to instill within them.

The home should be a haven of positivity, where Torah learning, Torah mindset, and giving to others

The very act of giving builds a foundation for our children's values; they are exposed to the beautiful gift of selflessness, which becomes critical as they grow up.

are seen as a priority.

Another important aspect of creating an environment at home is having a structured home and an organized life. This is a home that values physical, mental, and emotional health, where all members of the household are heard and feel safe to express themselves without judgment. Every member of the family should be made to feel as though they are respected and valued.

Mrs. Laber: As a mother, Shluchah, educator, and retreat director, I am aware that my demeanor

creates the atmosphere in my home, my classroom, and at retreats. At retreats and in my (online) classroom, our program focuses on creating a positive environment that expresses the joy of *Yiddishkeit* and reveals the strengths in every person.

It is both my spiritual growth and the way I communicate with others that creates this environment. I strive to create a warm and loving environment using the three tips that my father, Rabbi Azriel Wasserman a"h received in *yechidus* in 5734 (1974). The Rebbe gave him three ways to succeed as a Torah educator: 1. Teach with joy, 2. Words from the heart will enter the heart, 3. Be a living example of the lessons you teach.

Can the effort to influence others come at the expense of ourselves and our home?

Mrs. Schapiro: Often when we dedicate our lives to influencing others, we feel that we are compromising the time we should be giving to our families and even to ourselves.

This is a genuine challenge that we are faced with.

We need to be mindful of setting appropriate boundaries without guilt and know that we can only influence others positively when we are living happy and healthy lives ourselves.

We need to be guided by a *mashpia* regarding this



I want my children and students to recognize that each one has something unique to contribute to the world at large. They can be a star, a beacon of light, and a source of warmth to others.

delicate balance, and make a plan that works for our individual needs.

However, at the same time, we should always know that the Aibishter looks after those who care for His children. The very act of giving builds a foundation for our children's values; they are exposed to the beautiful gift of selflessness, which becomes critical as they grow up.

Mrs. Laber: It is always a struggle to balance giving to others with caring for self and family. During my childbearing years, it was a constant juggle and I did my best. My husband and I share family and *shlichus* responsibilities. We involve our children in our *shlichus* and we are all one team with one mission.

After hosting a family with several children for the entire Sukkos, the mother who was going through a health challenge at the time wrote to us, "You have created a whole family of incredible givers and we were all nurtured and cared for." When we give, we stretch ourselves and expand our blessings too, and the greatest blessing is that we have the ability to give and influence others with the gifts Hashem has bestowed upon us.

I am also grateful to the incredible staff who assist us with Jewish Girls Retreat and Jewish Girls Unite. For over two decades, they have been positive influences and role models for my children. We often find that when we think we are the ones giving, we receive so much more than we gave.

A *neshamah* comes to this world to give to others. Just like a flame doesn't decrease when it lights up other candles, we don't lose by giving to others. A candle can't keep its light to itself, it must benefit others. When we ignite another person's soul, the world becomes brighter for us too.

Is there a possibility to get influenced by those whom we are working to influence?

Mrs. Schapiro: In all of our relationships, we should aim to be a positive influence.

We should hopefully be secure within ourselves and strong in our convictions so that we are positively influencing others and not being negatively influenced by others in the process.

The Rebbe strongly believed that if we remain connected to our source (by learning his teachings and following his guidance) and are preoccupied with being a *mashpia* and influencing another positively, we will not be influenced negatively ourselves.

However, there is no guarantee that we will not be influenced in a negative way as we do not always feel connected to our source. Hence, we need to be honest with ourselves and be acutely aware of the influence that others have on us. This is where we need a *mashpia* to help us navigate difficult situations by being objective and realistic.

One would hope that when in a position of influence, we do stay connected to our source and fully focused on our mission. In doing so, we hope to only learn positive lessons from those whom we are impacting as there is so much we can learn from everyone.

Mrs. Laber: As I wrote previously, I am constantly learning from others. I have found that in times where I wasn't sure how to break out of my limitations and grow our organization, Hashem sent me the right mentors and coaches to guide me. I learn new skills and apply them to my life in order to achieve new goals in my personal life and in my *shlichus*.

It is through my ongoing thirst for knowledge and personal growth that I can grow and guide others. In addition to daily Torah study, I have taken several courses in coaching and continue to learn and grow every day. In my work, I combine coaching tools with a basis in Torah and *tefillah*. I founded the Grow Connection Circles for women to grow emotionally and spiritually through intentional *tefillah* and connecting to a social network online. (the-connection-project.com)

My life experiences and challenges also have shaped me and the way I influence others. I could have been influenced in a negative way by the loss of my

Every Jew, man or woman, has the moral and spiritual strength to influence friends and acquaintances and bring them into the light.”

father at a young age and become bitter. Instead, I chose to turn it into my mission to help others going through similar challenges, and created a community where women and girls receive the support they need. Through this, they too can use their strengths and challenges to become a positive influence.

Who/what influences you in your life?

Mrs. Schapiro: The Rebbe has the greatest influence in my life in terms of my hashkafos and my life mission as a *Shluchah*. Learning Torah and *Chassidus* has a tremendous influence on my daily life.

My parents, my husband, my children, siblings and fellow *Shluchos* are a huge source of influence as well. Each one, in his/her own way, brings out the best in me, encouraging me to become a better version of myself, helping me maximize my potential.

I am largely influenced by the daily encounters that I have with those within my community that causes me to reflect, often dig deep within myself, enabling me to strive to be a role model and mentor to others. I learn so much from the beautiful qualities of those around me.

Lastly, the choices and mistakes I make and subsequently learn from certainly influence my life.

Mrs. Laber: I am a vessel receiving direction, energy, and blessing from the One Above.

I listen to the voice of my *neshamah* to clarify my goals.

I study the Rebbe’s talks and letters and share the lessons with others to further internalize them.

I am a receptacle drinking wisdom from others who are all messengers of Hashem and the conduit through which the inspiration I need is passed on

to me.

I am fortunate to receive guidance from my husband, my *mashpia*, friends, educators, and coaches who inspire me to grow and push beyond my limits.

“I have learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues and most from students.” I learn from my students and eleven children KAH who constantly teach me about parenting and education.

Leadership is learning from everyone in our lives.

Only if we receive do we have what to give.

What is your approach to finding a mentor? What qualities do you look for?

Mrs. Schapiro: The Rebbe says not to be too fussy and not to look for perfection. Many find it hard to find a suitable mentor/*mashpia* because they find reasons why that person is not suitable.

I feel one should look for someone who has wisdom, empathy and who lives their life with the values and practices of Torah and Chassidus. I feel that trust and respect are key components in this relationship. An ideal choice would be someone who is able to understand where you are coming from and who is non-judgemental.

Mrs. Laber: I have a spiritual mentor, a *mashpia*, who is older than me and has gone through similar life experiences. I admire her approach to life. I am inspired by her wisdom and warmth, and most importantly, I feel seen and safe when speaking with her. She sees my potential and can lovingly push me to grow, while also celebrating who I am.





How can we raise kids to influence instead of be influenced?

Mrs. Schapiro: I believe this can be done by being a living example of an influencer. Children learn by example and if they see these leadership qualities in their parents, they will likely grow up with the knowledge that they are here to influence as well.

Additionally, whenever your child shares an encounter with you, it's important to praise them for being a leader and to encourage them to see every experience as an opportunity to influence.

Being on *shlichus* is a tremendous opportunity for children to become positive leaders from a very young age. If you are not formally on *shlichus*, try to create *shlichus* opportunities for your children in your community where they become involved in giving to others.

Don't underestimate the *dvar Torah* your child shares at your Shabbos table with your guests. Every opportunity for your child to have a positive influence helps cement the idea that they have the ability to be a positive influence.

And of course *tefillah*.

We need a lot of *siyata d'shmaya* for our children to not be influenced by the challenges of today's society. Saying their kapitel of Tehillim daily can only help!

Mrs. Laber: I encourage my daughters and sons

to recognize their strengths and resources, including technology, for the purpose of spreading the greatness of Hashem and the light of the Torah. If a child has an interest or talent in art, photography, cooking, music, writing, etc., these are channels to reveal Hashem in the world. I want my children and students to recognize that each one has something unique to contribute to the world at large. They can be a star, a beacon of light, and a source of warmth to others. We even sing a song that shares this message.

The Hayom Yom of 5 Cheshvan references a letter from the Frierdiker Rebbe, which by *hashgacha protis* is the day I am answering these questions: "The Jewish people are likened to stars that sparkle in the heavens. Thanks to their light, even a person walking in the darkness of night will not blunder. Every Jew, man or woman, has the moral and spiritual strength to influence friends and acquaintances and bring them into the light."

"This concept is especially relevant in our time, in the last moments before the arrival of Moshiach. People are searching for truth and meaning, which is becoming increasingly difficult to find in the broader world. Never has there been a greater need for every Jew to be a beacon of light in their environment." ■



What, Who, When, Where, and Why

The *Mashpia* Report

Malka Forshner, Estero, Florida
Bais Rivkah Mechina 5739–40 (1979–80)



Dedicated, with love, to my first mashpia, Miriam Yudis bas Reuven, A”H, who set the mashpia bar very high!

A few years ago, a local young lady asked me to be her *mashpia*. My response? “I’ll have to ask my *mashpia*!” The answer from my *mashpia*, much to my surprise, was, “Yes!” The *mashpia/mushpa* relationship didn’t last much more than a year, but it was of great benefit to both of us, *b”h*.

What is a *Mashpia*, and Why Do We Need to Have One?

Most of us are quite familiar with the *mishnah Pirkei Avos (1:6)*, “*Aseh lecha rav — Make for yourself a teacher.*” We see that the term “Rav” is sometimes translated as “master” — and that’s an indication that we need to take his advice seriously, just as a servant must listen to his master. And when you’re educated in Lubavitch, we all know that this *mishnah* is referring to a *mashpia*, not just “any old teacher” (no offense meant to any of you, myself included, in the teaching profession). In any case, the directive from the Rebbe to get a *mashpia* is one we should not ignore. I know the list of excuses, “I can’t find a good *mashpia*,” “The good *mashpios* have no time,” “I have no time,” “I can always ask my mother, best friend, husband, etc.” Nope. That’s not what the Rebbe meant.

When Do We Need a *Mashpia*?

We should always have a *mashpia* so that when we need to ask, she’s already “on duty.” Some peoples’ lives just have more questions than others, but the Rebbe’s advice applies to us all. I write here with the perspective of a long-time *Ba’alas Teshuvah*, so I am not totally familiar with the chain of command, so to speak, of when a young lady makes the transition of going to Mommy for advice, to a *mechaneches*, and then to an official *mashpia*. I assume it’s somewhere post-seminary when a young lady must take action to ground herself with this life-saving and life-giving concept and find a spiritual mentor. Many BT girls, being schooled at Machon Chana, actually started out with Rabbi Majeski as their first *mashpia*, and they generally moved towards having the more traditional female-for-females *mashpia* later. I was blessed to meet my first *mashpia* right in the classroom of Bais Rivkah Mechina. She was a fellow student, who not only had been living in Crown Heights several years longer than I, but had more years of experience as a Lubavitcher woman, married, with kids, and blessed with age-old wisdom and insight.

What Does Our *Mashpia* Do?

The Mittlerer Rebbe explained to us that the *Nefesh Habehamis* is selfish and can’t be bothered to come to the aid of someone else’s *Nefesh Habehamis*. On the contrary, the *Nefesh Elohis*’s only desire is that the will

of Hashem is fulfilled, so it can certainly team up with another *Nefesh Elohis* to achieve that purpose. Hence, we see how successful it is to “rally the troops” and have another *Nefesh Elohis* to join up with yours to win, two against one, whatever battle it is that you’re fighting!

I know this firsthand, and it’s a balancing act for us all — the givers and the receivers — to figure out the time when we can say to these toddlers in mitzvah observance, “Go ahead and walk on your own, you don’t have to crawl!”

You’ll see the power of the joined forces in the following stories. I hope they inspire you, either to find a *mashpia* for yourself, call yours more often, help/inspire a friend to get one, or a BOGO situation — find a great *mashpia* and share her with a friend!

I was taking my husband on his first trip to Eretz Yisroel. I had been there quite a few times. “Where should I take my husband? It’s his first trip, and he only has two weeks...” She gave me a quick response, “The four holy cities — Yerushalayim, Chevron, Tzfas, and Tiveria!” And what a trip that was; so focused, easy, and inspirational!

My *mashpia* is super practical and never gives answers that are beyond my ability to comprehend and follow through. Almost all her advice comes with a story and some personal experience of hers that is relative to my situation (so I never feel like a “neb”). And, she never veers off into Rov territory. If it’s a complicated issue, she breaks it down into manageable pieces: which things need to be addressed by a Rov, what part of the issue she can assist with, and where I need to find more clarity and/or information before taking action.

A local *Shluchah* wanted help with her Hebrew school. I’m qualified, and I wanted to be paid for my work. With her tiny budget, I felt uncomfortable to ask at all, but my *mashpia* came up with an elegant solution. “You deserve \$X for the two hours a week at

Hebrew school. Ask her to pay only ½ X, and you'll consider the second half your *maaser*." It worked out great!

I've had more difficult *mashpia* questions, too, and learned that there is a vast range of things that you can work through with your *mashpia* (and you should never know from any *tzaros* at all):

- Financial stress
- *Shalom bayis* issues (often related to financial issues)
- Pregnancy or pregnancy loss related
- Divorce and remarriage issues
- Step-parenting situations
- Children who choose different lifestyles than the way you raised them
- Oy, and the list goes on...

Some women have clarity in those areas of life but have “policy” questions about *chinuch* of children, family *minhagim* (Pesach is a big one!), the appropriate amount of *davening* while raising children, etc. These are very important questions that a *mashpia* can help you to navigate, and hopefully will refer you to a Rov when necessary.

A question might be asked, what do all of these above difficult situations have to do with my *Nefesh Elokis*? Are we treating our *mashpia* as a therapist? Actually, sometimes a Yid does need a therapist, but the best place to start is by asking a *mashpia*. Why waste

Hence, we see how successful it is to “rally the troops” and have another Nefesh Elokis to join up with.

the money, time, and effort when sometimes a more simple, Rebbe-recommended solution can fit the situation perfectly?

I would love to be able to say that I've always turned to my *mashpia* for help in a sticky situation, but that's not entirely true. Under difficult circumstances, when I thought I could handle things on my own or when pressured to “just figure it out,” I haven't made that call. I can't go backward and redo those tough times, but I can tell you, from my whole heart, I should have, and so should you!

How to Find Your *Mashpia* — Since You Do Want the Perfect Fit!

That's the hardest question. How do you find her?

There used to be a list back in the day, in Crown Heights. These are the *mashpios*, pick one! Basically, that worked back then. We're a bigger, more diverse group of women these days, and we need a bigger and broader list of choices. As I mentioned earlier, I became a *mashpia* because of the need of one Jewish woman, who needed and asked. There's also the saying, “When you need something done, ask a



Bais Rivkah Mechina

Before Machon Chana had full-time learning, Bais Rivkah offered full-day learning for Ba'alos Teshuva women, with the same teachers that taught in high school. I was single when I attended, but many women were married, some with kids. They had come from Bais Chana in Minnesota, gotten married, and needed to learn more. It was run by Mrs. Yehudis Groner.

I want to make a point about those holy Jews who are becoming close to a Torah-observant life through their local Chabad house. In the beginning, they generally get their *halachic* and *mashpia*-type advice from the *Shluchim* of their Chabad house (and, of course, via the internet, a source of immense spiritual resources, greatly enhanced, shall we say, by Covid — the number of *shiurim* and virtual retreats increased dramatically due to lockdowns, much to the benefit of those not living close to many or any live classes, seminars, and retreats).

There's a transition that must occur somewhere along that path of growth. Not every *Shliach* is equipped to be a Rov and not every *Shluchah* can be a *mashpia* for every woman who walks in the front door.

I know this firsthand, and it's a balancing act for us all — the givers and the receivers — to figure out the time when we can say to these toddlers in *mitzvah* observance, “Go ahead and walk on your own, you don't have to crawl!” That is a crucial aspect of spiritual growth and not something that can be calculated from a chart, it's more from the heart. Not that a Jew should go out alone, *chas v'shalom*, but just graduate to a different level of support staff i.e. a Rov and a *mashpia*.



busy person,” — a busy person, meaning one who is busy with many *mitzvah*-oriented things, including being a *mashpia*. She has experience, and she obviously knows a bit about time management as well, so ask her! The worst thing that could happen is that she says, “No, I'm too busy,” but then helps you brainstorm about who your *mashpia* might be.

Also, every relationship with a *mashpia* is different. Some *mashpios* want you to “check in” monthly, like a progress report. Others are fine when you contact only on an “on-need” basis. The two of you can figure that part out once you find each other.

I'm not in the Crown Heights loop for this type of thing, so perhaps there still is a recommended *mashpia* list (updated, no doubt). Ask a friend, a teacher, a well-known older *chassidishe* woman — no, don't ask them your *mashpia* questions, ask them if they can recommend a *mashpia* for you! (ed: visit liveandlearn.ch/mashpia for a current list of *mashpios*, as well as a general database for all things *mashpia*-related)

(And a word of caution: don't ask a friend your

If it's a complicated issue, she breaks it down into manageable pieces: which things need to be addressed by a Rov, what part of the issue she can assist with, and where I need to find more clarity and/or information before taking action.

mashpia questions. She loves you, wants you to be happy, and likely won't give you the hard-but-best answer. Also, don't ask a family member — you don't want to enter into the *lashon hara* zone, albeit unwittingly, as you seek advice on things close to home.)

Hatzlocha to you all... in finding a *mashpia*, keeping in touch with your *mashpia*, and maybe, one day, being asked that question, “Will you be my *mashpia*?” ■



Mera Skoblo, Crown Heights

12th grade student in Bais Rivkah High School

As told to Malka Hershkop, Crown Heights

Graduating class of 5778 (2018)



During my Junior year, I began going on *mitzvoim* with Bais Rivkah's Shine a Little Light program, and immediately loved it. Every Thursday after school, we would go to Borough Hall and hand out Shabbos candles to Jewish women and girls. It eventually became a part of my Thursday routine and something that I looked forward to

every week. To me, I found *mitvzoim* to be an area in which I can impact another Yid and share the light and beauty of *Yiddishkeit*. When the girls in charge of *mitvzoim* in Bais Rivkah asked me to take on partial leadership and assist with the Thursday *Mitvzoim*, my answer was a resounding yes. By the end of the year, coordinating *mitvzoim* was chosen to be my twelfth grade job.

After the tragic and untimely passing of Haddassah Lebovic A”H, her sister, our schoolmate, asked if we could arrange a *mitvzoim* outing *Lei’lui Nishmasa*. We organized the trip, and even though it was the middle of finals, many girls joined. Haddassah’s impact on all of us turned each of us into influencers who went out on the streets to share her light. That week, so many candles were handed out — so much light was added to the world in Haddassah’s merit.

Still, I felt that we needed to take our efforts to the next level; Haddassah’s light deserved to shine more brightly. With the help of Miri Stolik and a group of incredible friends, we started a summer *mitvzoim* initiative in honor of Haddassah. It was named Haddassah’s Glow. Over the summer, hundreds of candles were given out. Girls had the opportunity to send in photos and stories to be shared. Pictures were submitted from all over the world. Haddassah’s light was illuminating the

Haddassah’s impact on all of us turned each of into influencers who went out on the streets to share her light.

Amazon Jungle in Peru; shimmering in Italy; twinkling in Paris; and sparkling in Puerto Rico. The pictures came pouring in as Haddassah’s beams of light dazzled around the world. The incredible girls of Mrs. Swerdlov’s YTT program in Eretz Yisroel gave out over one hundred and fifty candles in the Tel Aviv Shuk. Stories of candles traveling and lighting up soul after soul continued to inspire everyone involved. It was amazing to see that through this initiative, summers were transformed into opportunities for girls to influence another and share the light.

I did not know Haddassah, and I never got the chance to meet her and experience her glow and her smile, but I feel as though she is my friend. I feel we are connected on a *neshamah* level, beyond time and physical space. I am told of her love for Shabbos, and how she found so much joy in sharing the beauty and glow of Shabbos with others. Her family regularly hosted Yidden of all backgrounds, and Haddassah would sit near her new friends, joyfully explaining the reasons and beauty behind



the Shabbos traditions. She inspired these women, and through Haddassah's Glow, she continues to inspire more women about Shabbos.

With every candle given out, Haddassah shares her light with people she has never met. Haddassah is an influencer, during her lifetime and beyond. She smiled so brightly that she lit up the world. She glowed and still continues to glow. I know I will meet my new friend soon, with the coming of Moshiach, may it be now! ■

*Pictures can be submitted via WhatsApp to:
Haddassah's Glow 646.883.4513*



ב"ה



JOIN BAIS RIVKAH'S

התחלת כתיבת ספר תורה

An event for men and children

The Rosa Hall | 470 Lefferts Ave

Sunday, אי"ה 9, January 9, שבת

2:00 - 4:00 PM

In תשמ"ב, the Rebbe instructed Bais Rivkah to write a ספר תורה compiled with letters bought by everyone associated with the מוסד. This year, as part of the year of celebration, Bais Rivkah is writing their 8th ספר תורה to date!

Fathers, join us for a chance to write a letter in this brand new ספר תורה and make a L'chaim!

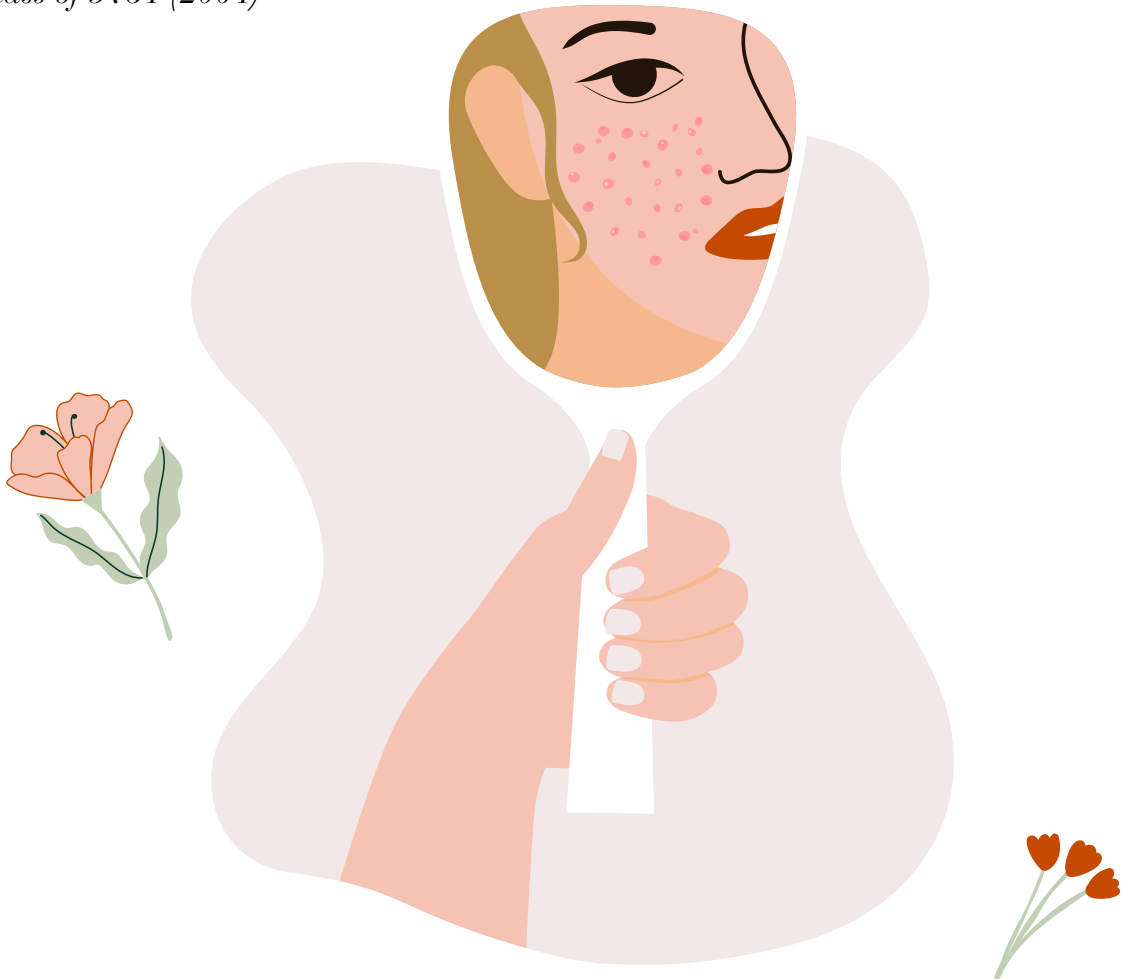


Buy your families' letters at bethrivkah.edu/sefertorah

Surrender

By Anonymous

Graduating Class of 5764 (2004)



*M*y grandmothers broke the ice in order to go to the *mikvah*. I go despite having an excoriation disorder. The external challenge might look very different, but the commitment to overcome challenges — both within and without — is the same.

This is not an article that will give you all

The external challenge might look very different, but the commitment to overcome challenges — both within and without — is the same.

the good feels about the beauty of the *mitzvah* of Taharas Hamishpacha. There are plenty of those. This is about sharing how I am here, though it is trying and difficult, to do a *mitzvah* that may seem like an insurmountable challenge.

Let me take a step back. When it comes to one's body, repetitive behaviors and disorders can be tricky. If someone is picking at a scab and making themselves bleed it seems so simple to say "stop." But for someone with a skin-picking addiction, or excoriation disorder, it seems impossible. For whatever reason, Hashem wired me in a way that once I start, my brain sends me commands to pick until I cave in to its demand. Picking my skin gives me a release from my anxiety. When the tension builds up my automatic response is to indulge in this self-destructive behavior. If you can't relate, I am truly happy for you.

With lots of outside support, I have learned to manage day-to-day life. I have learned many healthy coping mechanisms, and I abstain from behaviors that can lead to a picking episode — that is, until it comes to *mikvah*. It would seem like *halachah* itself is the biggest obstacle and trigger for my old behaviors. The preparation of checking the body for intervening substances is, and has been for many years, an absolute nightmare.

I used to cry for hours before, during, and after *mikvah*. I felt so alone and at a loss for how to go about fulfilling this *mitzvah* without hurting myself.

I am so grateful that today my experience is far from the disaster that it used to be. Keeping it a secret was a form of torture and only buried me in shame. Being honest with the right people helped me come up with a plan that would support me emotionally and spiritually. I am grateful to have a very patient and understanding Rov who has given me guidance on how to prepare in a way that would be the least triggering to me. My friend is a nurse, and when I finally unburdened myself to her she helped me come up with a plan in the most unassuming way possible. I am blessed to say that I have only encountered the kindest *mikvah* ladies and understanding women along the way. I have come to realize that *halachah* is my biggest protector, and that my triggers are manageable when I can properly identify them for what they are, false triggers.

The most important part of this journey was my learning how to surrender. Before I prepare for *mikvah* I say a *tefillah* from the depth of my heart,

Being honest with the right people helped me come up with a plan that would support me emotionally and spiritually.

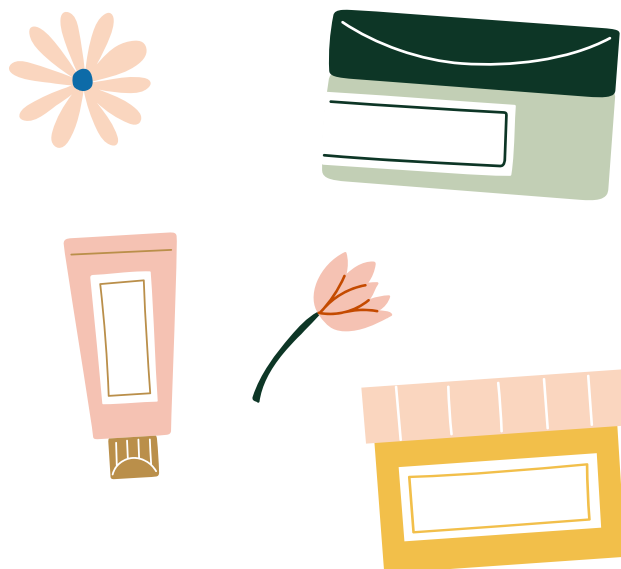
“Dear Hashem, this *mitzvah* is so so so hard for me. You gave me this mental illness, and I am doing the best that I can to serve you in a way that won't lead me to negative behaviors. Please help me accept the imperfections of my body and help me to surrender and do Your will.”

Even today, fulfilling this *mitzvah* comes with anxiety and internal battles. I continue to ask for help before and after I go to keep me focused on what I should actually be doing and not on what my internal voice is telling me to do.

I also spend time meditating. I think about how the same Hashem that commanded me to fulfill His *mitzvah* gave me this challenge. How I would not have this exact life's circumstance if I didn't have the deep inner strength to overcome it. I think about how unlimited my *neshamah's* capacity is, how infinite it really is.

I am conscious of my thoughts, because if not my mind will wander. I have learned the hard way that it is up to me to direct my train of thoughts, so it doesn't take me to the wrong destination or fall off the tracks altogether.

Despite the deep struggle, I go. I go because this is my ice to break and my icy water to tread. I go



*I am transcending myself,
surrendering to Hashem's will
for me.*

because I am a soldier in Hashem's army. I go, not because it makes sense, but because I am committed to doing Hashem's will no matter how much effort I have to put in. This is my private battle — one that almost no one in my life is privy to — yet the Most Important One, Hashem, is “*bochen klayos valev.*” Hashem looks deep into my heart, sees the absolute challenge and how much I invest in overcoming it, and it gives Him so much joy and pleasure.

And so, while it is not the emotional spa experience I would choose to have, I would not give it up for anything in the world, for it is the most profound spiritual experience. I am transcending myself, surrendering to Hashem's will for me.

As I submerge in the water, my heart is light, for I know that this is the purpose of Creation. I feel so close to Hashem, and nothing, not even an excoriation disorder, will get in the way of my serving Him. And all the icy waters melt in the warmth of my surrender. ▀

Editor's note: If you have any challenges preparing for mikvah, please consult a competent Rov. See also resources on Mikvah.org.



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Tears of Faith



Shaina (Wolff) Greene, Oxnard, California
Graduating class of 5772 (2012)



A year ago, I thought I was headed for a great life, the one I had dreamed of. I have two beautiful children and a husband who would literally jump in front of a train for me. I was happy and optimistic.

That was until the day I was diagnosed with PDTC: Poorly Differentiated Thyroid Carcinoma.

Shortly after my diagnosis, I got on the phone with Racheli Muchnik, my fellow

Shluchah in Oxnard, and amongst other questions, I asked her what she thought of the idea of me “going public” with my journey (meaning, sharing my story on my Instagram page). Without missing a beat, she advised me to do it. “You can’t begin to imagine the difference you’ll make with your optimistic attitude...” she said.

And she was right. I promised my Instagram followers that I would stay positive as I blogged about my journey. I did exactly as I promised, even through some pretty challenging moments. I was a big girl and didn’t cry. And as much as I was providing positivity in my story, the feedback and support I received through sharing helped me stay positive, too.

I have always felt that names carry a lot of meaning and there is a deep connection between a person and who they are named for.

I vividly remember how one Friday night at the age of ten, I sat down next to my mother on the sofa and asked, “Mommy, can you tell me about the person I’m named after?” My mother looked at me and said softly, “You are named after Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka’s little sister, Rebbetzin Shaina.”

“Can you tell me about her?” I asked, intrigued. She had caught my (very short) attention span. My mother began to tell me about my namesake, and it didn’t turn out to be a simple happy-go-lucky description I had anticipated. It turns out that Rebbetzin Shaina had a very hard life. She was never able to have her own children, and she was 37 years old when she was killed by the Nazis *yemach shemam*.

My mother then told me that there was not a lot of information about Rebbetzin Shaina’s childhood, other than that when she was young she would often cry. When her family would attempt to soothe her, she would eventually calm down but say not to worry because, “I’m not finished crying, I’m just taking a break.” So you can tell that she had a great sense of humor, but it seems like she was the polar opposite to my disposition and personality.

I remember feeling sad for the tragic life she lived. But I also remember feeling that I didn’t have much in common with her. I saw myself as a happy, upbeat person who took on life with ease and tried not to get beaten down by the struggles

“You can’t begin to imagine the difference you’ll make with your optimistic attitude...” she said.

I was facing. My glass was always half full.

The next part of my story began on Chol Hamoed Sukkos. I haven’t shared it much, so bear with me if I begin to get emotional while I write because it’s still so brand new to me, and something I’m still struggling to come to terms with.

I was scheduled for my first follow-up appointment after the treatment. The appointment was arranged over Zoom, and the goal was for my doctor, Dr. Smooke, to talk about the next steps for me and to answer any questions.

The appointment was factually informative and uneventful, until we were beginning to wrap up the meeting and I asked a question that I will forever regret asking.

I said to Dr. Smooke, “What are the chances of the cancer coming back?” She paused. I could tell she was hesitating and concerned about my question; she must have been wondering how to



Shaina with her family

deliver the bad news.

She answered slowly, “There is a 50% chance of resurgence.” I knew from earlier appointments that a recurrence of my cancer would have a really bad prognosis.

I had known that there was a possibility for the cancer to return, but somehow, I naïvely thought that the chance was small, 5-10% at most.

This new information changed my life more than the diagnosis had a few months before.

Until then, I showed bravery and courage, exactly like Racheli had predicted I would. I was able to inspire so many people with my positive attitude. But It felt very different now. I stopped sharing what I was going through. I felt like I needed time to process this new information alone.

I found that I needed to do a lot of inner work, (it’s only just the beginning of it) and it wasn’t going to be about my influence on others anymore. I had to begin drawing strength and my own inspiration from the people around me.

This article was written on Rochel Imeinu’s

When her family would attempt to soothe her, she would eventually calm down but say not to worry because, “I’m not finished crying, I’m just taking a break.”

yahrzeit. One of my favorite Parsha stories is the story of Rochel’s selfless sacrifice when giving away her signs to her sister Leah on what was supposed to be her own wedding day. As far as Rochel knew, she might never have wed Yaakov, and she forfeited her own happiness for the sake of sparing her sister from embarrassment.

From all of our ancestors, she is considered the ultimate Jewish mother, buried “on the road” so that we can pass by on our way into exile and beg her to pray on our behalf.

I see a clear common denominator between Rochel Imeinu and Rebbetzin Shaina. They both suffered from so much pain and had been through unthinkable struggles.

Our sages teach us that many of the most righteous women in our history were not blessed with children for many years. An explanation for this is that Hashem views them as exceptionally special people and wants to hear their prayers.

So, it was only two weeks ago that I found out how much I had in common with my namesake Rebbetzin Shaina. It took me 27 years to appreciate the very special person I’m named for.

You can’t always be happy. Not allowing myself to feel pain and cry is the biggest disservice I have done to myself.

When I was first diagnosed, I had promised to take it on like a champ and I can proudly and honestly say that I did. But I can’t keep my promise anymore. I am constantly going to that “what if the worst happens” place in my mind. I am feeling so far from that place of positivity and optimism I showed when I went through my surgery and treatment.

I’m realizing that it’s okay to cry. It’s good to let myself feel the sadness of what-if. I’m not there yet, but I’m confident that one day I will get to





a place where I can challenge myself each and every day to be my best self, because now I know the transience and fragility of life. For now, I'm going to take some time to let myself feel the pain.

The day after that nightmare appointment I was at my in-laws; they made a small private Simchas Beis Hashoeva just for their grandchildren to celebrate the *simchah* of Sukkos.

I was dancing with my son Yehuda, and there, in front of everyone, I felt warm tears roll down my face. I started thinking about the likelihood of me being there to dance with him at his Bar Mitzvah.

There is a tear-jerking song written by Abie Rotenberg of a woman, a post-Holocaust survivor, who had absolutely nothing left- no family and destitute. With the only coin she had, she decided to buy a candle for Shabbos. She lit the candle and right then a wind blew out the fire. It was from the loss of that flame that all her emotions that were bottled up and suffocated by her bravery came up to the surface. She finally let go and began to cry about her past.

The song ends with the line, "The heavens had told her it's alright to cry."

I have learned from this story and from Rochel

Imenu and Rebbitzin Shaina that Hashem doesn't need me to be the bravest person. I realize now that bravery comes with ego. "I got this," but actually no, we don't got this. The way I can show my faith that I truly believe in Hashem and His decisions is by *davening*, crying and begging Him to never bring my cancer back.

From here onwards there is no timeline where I will feel the relief of being "out of the woods." There won't be a point in time that I will feel relaxed and safe, the feeling of relief from being in remission. I am going to view it as Hashem choosing me to be the person that He wants to

The way I can show my faith that I truly believe in Hashem and His decisions is by davening, crying and begging Him to never bring my cancer back.

hear *davening* to Him. Not to show off or anything, but He chose me because He wants to hear my voice. :) He did this by giving me the fear of the unknown. I have to *daven* like my life depends on it, because it does. ■



Why your child may not taste new food, AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP.

Chaya (Hershkop) Stern, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Graduating Class of 5766 (2006)



Chaya playfully enjoying some veggies with her son

You can probably relate to this. You offer your child something new to taste and they tell you right away that it's yucky, gross and they don't like it. You roll your eyes, sigh, wonder what will be with this kid and offer them a yogurt or piece of plain bread instead. You breathe a sigh of relief that at least they are eating something.

Well, I'm here to say, all hope is not lost! Through my work as a feeding therapist and specialist, I have learned that there are a few reasons why children won't even taste a new food and simple strategies you can use to help them.

Children need to feel safe around food. The first time they see a new food, it is unfamiliar to them and they are likely worried how it will taste or feel. Children crave predictability; it makes them feel safe. That's why children can eat the same food every single day. The less the food changes the more they prefer that food. That's why processed food is king. It's always the same color, shape, flavor and texture.

There are some opportune times to offer a child a new food to taste, in a way that the child will feel safe to try it. For example, when a parent is eating it (especially if it's mom and she just sat down for the first

Children crave predictability; it makes them feel safe.

meal of the day), when it's from the parent's plate, and when other children are eating it.

Another way to offer new food is by letting the child know exactly what they are eating. This means NOT HIDING NEW FOOD in an already accepted food. Children are not looking to try anything resembling mystery meat. They want to know what to expect. They want to trust that we are offering them what we say we are offering. Things you can say are, "Look at those blueberry bits in the smoothie- they add some blue color." Or, "I tried a new recipe; these pancakes have some almond flour in them. Let's see how that tastes."

Children need exposure. If I got a penny every time I heard a parent say, "I don't even offer anymore. I know he is not going to eat it", my money jar would be very full. It can get so frustrating offering food that will be rejected that parents just revert to offering the same old and accept the status quo. The thing is, if we stop offering new food, for sure our children won't taste it!

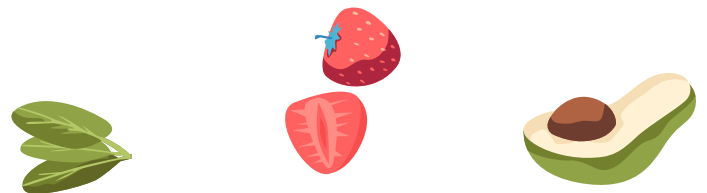
It's important for children to see new food often. Take them grocery shopping, put a new fruit or granola bar in their lunch box. Serve it as part of a meal. Offer it as a choice for a snack. Keep a few new foods in the

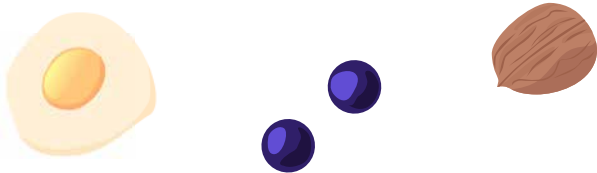
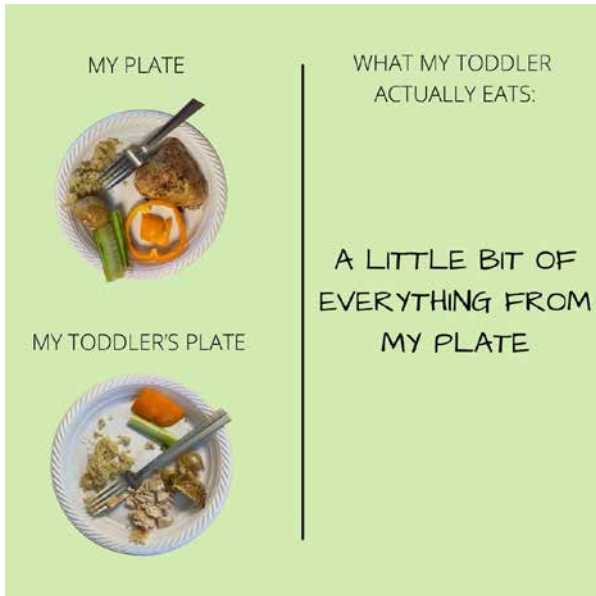
The thing is, if we stop offering new food, for sure our children won't taste it!

house every week and offer something different as an option every day. You can start with food others in the house are already eating and offer just a small amount to decrease waste.

Children need to interact with food. Most parents are used to telling children not to play with their food. They don't want food wasted or messy mealtimes. But, here's the thing, the mouth and tongue are very sensitive. So it makes sense for children to hesitate to put things in their mouth if they are not sure it will be a pleasant experience.

Children need to learn about a food before they taste it. They need to be prepared and to have an idea what to expect. This learning happens through interacting with food. This can be by playing with food, helping prepare food, and describing the food using their other senses. The more children see, smell, and touch food, the more likely they are to taste it.





Children need pressure-free mealtimes. When children are put under pressure or even perceive pressure during mealtimes, they go into fight or flight mode. This releases adrenaline which shuts down appetite. Often children will tantrum (fight) or leave the table (flight) when they see a new food. Children anticipate that if they accept a new food near them or give it a small taste they will be expected to eat it and they may not be ready for that yet.

The key to offering new food is to do it in a casual way. Saying things like, “We are serving broccoli today” or “I’m putting rice on everyone’s plate” let’s the child know that this food is just being offered. A very anxious child may need to be reminded that they don’t need to eat it. For all other children, just serve and continue to eat or chat about your day.

Children need mealtime boundaries. This one is the tough one. It’s the one parents struggle with the most. It’s the moment that the meal is served and your child says, “I don’t like anything. I’m having cereal.” Here is where parents need to remember that their job is to choose what is being served, as long as a food your child will likely eat is included. This boundary creates the opportunity for your child to at least contemplate the food being offered so it’s not completely

When children are put under pressure or even perceive pressure during mealtimes, they go into fight or flight mode.

ignored while they eat a preferred alternative.

When parents allow children to choose a different food, they are usually parenting from fear. Fear that a power struggle will ensue, fear that the child won’t eat, or fear that mealtime will become chaotic. However, children need gentle, respectful boundaries to thrive. They need to know that they are capable of trying a new food. They need to know that their responsibility is to choose if they eat, what they eat (from what is available) and how much. Try following this rule and you may be surprised at the results! ■

Chaya Stern lives in Philadelphia with her foodie husband and three food explorers. Chaya is an OT and picky eater turned feeding specialist. She is passionate about empowering parents so they can raise successful eaters.





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The Real Thing

Danit (Friedman) Schusterman, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5757 (1997)



I got an email last night that there will be a fire drill at school today. Sometimes we're given a heads up and sometimes not. The nice thing about the heads up is that when I'm in the middle of class and hear the sirens going off, I know it's a drill and I was expecting it.

When the fire alarm goes off, I take my students, and we calmly walk in a single file line down the left side of the staircase and line up outside. We take attendance and once given the clear, go back inside.

In life, we collect tools. We learn Torah, Chassidus, psychology, listen to podcasts on self-growth, read books, hear other people's experiences, share inspirational quotes with each other. All of those is like preparing for a fire drill.

The real test is when we're faced with a struggle. That is when we need to dig into our tool chest filled with everything we've learned and use it accordingly.

A few weeks ago, I had a health scare, and I needed to get some testing done. I got the tests done on a Wednesday, and the next day I received a call from my doctor. He told me that he could not discuss anything over the phone and that I needed to come in to his office first thing Friday morning.

"I can't come tomorrow. I'm cooking and getting ready for Shabbos. Can I come sometime next week?"

"I'll see you tomorrow," was the doctor's reply.

As I noticed myself spiraling, I took a pause. This isn't a fire drill, Danit. This is the real thing.

I had twenty four hours until my appointment. At first, my mind went everywhere. Having a great imagination, I was able to think of every kind of worst-case scenario possible.

I was nervous. While I do understand the concept of "Tracht gut vet zein gut," I am also very realistic. A doctor doesn't call you in to his office right away to share positive results.

As I noticed myself spiraling, I took a pause. This isn't a fire drill, Danit. This is the real thing. This is not 'liking' someone's inspirational post. This is not sitting down with a friend and learning a sicha for the pure joy of it. Now is the time to take everything I have learned and put it into practice.

So I took a deep breath. I said, "Hashem, I know you've got this. I know that whatever those results will be, You have given me everything I need to handle it. You have given me wonderful people in my life: A good husband, great kids, an amazing boss. Whatever it is that the doctor will tell me, I will handle it because You have brought me to this point in my life and prepared me for it."

As the day unfolded, something interesting started to happen. I began to notice how blessed I am in ways I never would have before.

And so, I handed it all over to Hashem. As the day unfolded, something interesting started to happen. I began to notice how blessed I am in ways I never would have before. I thanked my cleaning lady for showing up and doing such a great job. I walked into work only to have my wonderful colleagues greet me with warmth and smiles, none of them knowing what was going on inside me. I appreciated this unconditional kindness so much. I appreciated the security guard's pleasant greeting as I walked into the building. The crossing guard's smile. The parent of one of my students giving me a friendly wave as I walked home from school. The neighbor who said good morning. My students and their great attitude. My kids arriving home and sharing their day with me.

Although I was nervous, I had given it over to Hashem, trusting completely that He knows I can handle this. And because I gave it over to Him, I was not only able to get through the day, but I was able to see, appreciate, and not take for granted all the goodness that was surrounding me.

There is a well-known saying, "You should always be kind because you never know what someone is going through." Every single person who smiled, was kind, and shared warmth, was appreciated in ways that they will never know.

Be that person who brings a little light into someone's life. It could be a smile, a greeting. It doesn't cost anything, but it can do wonders.

So here's to remaining calm through whatever goes on in our lives, using those tools we have acquired, doing what we need to do, and then hopefully, just "take attendance, go back into the building and continue doing what you were doing." ■



Fed *is* Best

Leah (Dubroff) Abraham, East Flatbush
Graduating class of 5761 (2001)



For six years, while navigating the world of infertility, I day dreamed about my future babies. I thought about what they would wear, what stroller I would buy, wondered who they would look like, and whose personality they would share. I thought about how I would raise them and what I would never do, but I never thought twice about feeding them. I come from a family of great eaters; my mother always nursed, as did all my friends. I didn't know much but I knew that when Hashem would bench me with children, I would, without a doubt, feed them the most natural way, by nursing.

When my daughter was BH born on chol hamoed Sukkos, my life changed forever. I went from being responsible for myself and my marriage, to being entrusted with the care

and future of a whole tiny person. Holding that precious baby in my arms, I silently (and not so silently) promised her the world. I promised her and myself that I would do everything to provide for her needs. Right away, the nurses encouraged me to nurse her, and when she seemed disinterested and sleepy, they told me it was normal. “They don’t eat much in the beginning anyway,” I was told. A few hours later, the nurse came in to check, “Is she feeding?” I told her that she wasn’t latching and the nurse promptly and kindly taught me how to help her. I was a diligent student and I followed her directions exactly. The baby suckled for a few minutes and that was it. “Maybe she’s a fast drinker,” they said. I nodded proudly. It soon became clear that there wasn’t going to be anything fast about our nursing journey.

With some help from the hospital lactation consultant, and the use of a silicone shield, the baby did nurse better. I was hopeful. When I came home and my mother observed me nursing, she looked a little concerned and sent me to another lactation consultant. I went to her home and waited anxiously. When she did a physical exam on me and the baby, she exclaimed that there was nothing wrong and that this was normal for new mothers. She advised me to nurse on demand and relax, and it would all work out. I nursed around the clock, feeding for, at most, five minutes at a time. I even tried to relax.

When my baby was about four weeks, colic set in. The doctor said she also had reflux. Now, I had a baby who wasn’t really nursing and also constantly crying. At that point, I decided to try pumping since I was told I had enough milk but maybe the baby was struggling with her suck. Thus began stage two of my nursing saga. I would rock a crying baby while I pumped. I always tried to nurse her first and only then offer the bottle (I told you I was a diligent student!). She would suck for a minute or two and then start crying. I would then offer her the bottle of pumped milk and for the next ten minutes, there would be calm. A short time after she ate and burped, the crying resumed until she fitfully fell asleep.

Through all this, I didn’t give up. I had promised her the best and I would keep to it. I had no other babies, was not working at the time, and she became my whole life. We went to doctors, we managed the reflux, we got her lip tie clipped, and I continued to pump and feed and rock my baby. She always nursed through the night (yes, we also tried feeding in a dark silent room during the day), but by the time she was five months old, she was almost never nursing during

She advised me to nurse on demand and relax, and it would all work out.

the day. My body was out of whack and I was a mess. I had waited so long to be a mother and all I could think of was how I kept messing up on this most basic responsibility. I was at high risk for PPD and my mother begged me to just give the baby formula. By six months, my milk supply had completely depleted and we found out I was miraculously pregnant with another baby. Only then did I switch to formula.

While pregnant with my second, I was determined to get it right. I was not going to be naive about labor, delivery, or nursing. I bought the books, did the research, and even met with a lactation consultant pre-birth, who reassured me that lots of mothers struggle nursing their first and that it’s no indication of how my future nursing experiences would go, especially since “you have enough milk.”

My baby boy was born a few weeks early and had a similar start with nursing. This time, I called the lactation consultants in the hospital, discussed my history, and we set up a plan of action. I also had a lactation consultant come to my house to watch me nurse and weigh the baby before and after feedings to ensure that I was doing it right and he was getting what he needed. He was a small baby but I was told not to worry as he doesn’t need much as long as he’s growing.



I began phase one- feeding around the clock. He ate, but he wasn't gaining weight. The doctor sent me to a lactation consultant who advised me to use the SNS system which would supplement the nursing as I was feeding him. He was also a colic baby and cried constantly. He fussed at my chest while I tried to feed him but I cuddled him and kept on trying. When he was three months old, I had a botched medical procedure that landed me in the hospital over an extended weekend and I was not allowed to nurse him or use my milk. I dutifully pumped around the clock in the hospital so that when I got home I could go back to giving him what he deserved - the best. When I came back, he was hardly feeding at all. I thought maybe he was teething or sick but the doctor said he was in perfect health aside from his low weight. I tried to pump and give him pumped milk but he wasn't gaining properly and my supply was depleting. At about four months old, he too was on formula. I couldn't believe it. I had planned better for him, I was more experienced, he was supposed to be nursing until he was two. If my oldest's failed nursing plan was because I was inexperienced, this one was chalked up to an early delivery and a hospital stay. I still told myself, the next time could be different.

Three years later, I was BH expecting my third child. I switched to more natural practitioners, I was taking better care of my health, and I had even more experience and research under my belt. My friends and family were all rooting for me, encouraging me to take each baby as their own experience and to not worry.



I remember holding her against my chest, sending up silent prayers that she would just try to suck, and watching as she instead cried and cried. I cried along with her, asking her, as if she knew or could explain, what was wrong and why she would drink my milk, but she wouldn't drink it from me.

This time I decided to document and update my biggest nursing cheerleaders each step of the way. I don't know if it was because I wanted their ideas or encouragement or because I felt the need to prove that I was truly trying everything. My daughter was born a week early but seemed to be nursing okay, besides for short nursing spurts. Armed with great support, I was not going to do this alone. I had experienced mothers, in the form of friends and relatives, from across the globe and time zones, willing to dispense advice at any given moment.

I was desperate. Desperate to get it right and desperate to prove (to myself?) that I had truly tried everything. As soon as my milk supply evened out and the baby started nursing more, at about six weeks, the crying began. I wasn't even fazed. I knew this stage. I have "colicky babies" and my babies don't calm until about six months. I wore her in a baby carrier constantly, I went off dairy, and then wheat, and then all 13 allergens, until I was dreaming of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. At first, she would scream after eating (hence the allergy and reflux assumption) but soon she started screaming whenever I held her to my chest to nurse. "Maybe it's an infection," I thought, but ruled that out. When I asked for advice, I was told to try the SNS method, but she still screamed. I was told to feed her through a dropper and then hold her close to me. She didn't calm down, she still wouldn't nurse, and I still refused to give a bottle. I messaged everyone I knew that might be of some help, I got all kinds of practical, spiritual and psychological advice, some of it shockingly ridiculous. I indiscriminately tried it all, until it became clear that my baby didn't want to nurse at all.

This wasn't my first, she wasn't premature, or fed bottles while I was in the hospital. I had so much practical and emotional support, I could not understand or accept that once again I couldn't nurse my baby. I remember holding her against my chest, sending up silent prayers that she would just try to suck, and watching as she instead cried and cried. I cried along with her, asking her, as if she knew or could explain, what was wrong and why she would drink my milk, but she wouldn't drink it from me.

The fact that there was nothing "wrong" only made it worse. There was no explanation and I carried the weight of this failure personally. Seeing studies and articles about the importance of nursing babies only exacerbated my shame: I couldn't feed my baby in the way Hashem intended us to.

Nursing a baby is one of the most beautiful and foundational experiences a mother has with her baby and my experience was nothing of the sort. It was a loss I was mourning and I grieved it in private. While I searched for advice and constantly wanted to learn more, sometimes the comments and advice people gave would just fuel my simmering guilt. I had enough self doubt without other people making claims as to what I was doing wrong and why my babies wouldn't nurse.

I remember hearing the relief in my mother's voice when I would tell her that I'm putting the baby on formula. I could only imagine, as a mother myself, how hard it was for her to watch me struggle through this. My *mashpia*, who was also an incredible



support, after listening to me go through this over and over asked me, "Have you been to your daughter's Purim party? Can you tell which kids were nursed and which were formula fed?" I remember laughing in such relief. My kids would be just as well adjusted as anyone and I was not shortchanging them by not nursing.

Fast forward five years, I was, BH, expecting again and I once again thought about nursing. I wondered if I would even try this time. I thought about it a lot, reminded myself that every baby is different and I decided I owed it to this one to try again. My expectations were very low, but I was willing to be pleasantly surprised. Soon after birth, the baby's temperature had trouble regulating so

My husband gently responded, "Don't put yourself through this again. She may not nurse, but she will eat, and you can feed her."

they had me hold her skin to skin for almost twenty four hours. What a perfect way to nurse and bond. However, when it was time to actually nurse, she wouldn't suck. She just cried and cried. I cuddled her, rocked her, calmed her and tried again. My chest tightened, I felt those knots of dread and guilt. Not again. Not yet. My mind knew this was likely and kept telling me it would be okay, but my postpartum heart ached. I ignored all 'mazel tov' calls, except my husband's who, after hearing the baby crying in every phone call, asked if she was okay. I broke down and told him that I couldn't feed her. He listened to me and then said, "Leah, do you have a bottle?" I said, "Yes, I can get one, but if I give her a bottle now, she'll never nurse!" My husband gently responded, "Don't put yourself through this again. She may not nurse, but she will eat, and you can feed her." With that one sentence, he lifted off years of guilt and my body flooded with relief. This time, I will choose to feed her. The nurse asked me if I wanted to take a pump home. I refused, knowing that the road once traveled led to a terrifying combination of anxiety, PPD, and guilt. I went home on Erev Yom Kippur and fed her a bottle of formula. This time, when my baby

“Don’t you need to nurse her?” It stung, it hurt, even after all this time.

cried, I knew she wasn’t hungry, I knew it wasn’t something I ate. But what surprised me the most was how I felt feeding her. Every time I fed her, there was this profound peace and bonding, gone was the dread and the shame.

This baby also had colic, and there were hours that I just held and rocked and comforted her. Guilt free. I didn’t second guess myself every time she cried and I started trusting myself as a newborn mother for the first time in ten years. I knew and I know, that I nourish my babies with more than just food, even if it took all these years to accept the alternative direction it took.

Feeding a new baby around the clock is exhausting, and although I could’ve handed over the responsibility to someone else to feed her when she was hungry, I didn’t. I relished the opportunity to bond with my daughter as I nourished her, realizing there is nothing more pure than a mother feeding her child, regardless of what’s in the bottle.

A few weeks ago, I was at a community event with a neighbor and her newborn baby. I was holding the baby while the new mother ate. A mutual friend saw me with the baby and thought it was mine. “It’s our neighbor’s baby, mine is at home with her Tatty,” to which she responded, “Don’t you need to nurse her?” It stung, it hurt, even after all this time. I took a deep breath and told her that she takes bottles. As is common, the woman tried offering ideas and information about lactation consultants. With an in-

credible amount of restraint, I just answered, “She doesn’t nurse, I feed her formula.”

At one point in my journey, I remember sitting down and writing a poem about what it felt like to try to nurse and to have to give it up. I sent it to my pediatrician’s office and until today, they show it to women who are struggling with the pain and guilt of the inability to nurse their babies.

Thank you to each mother (and my kid’s pediatrician and staff) who constantly remind me that I need to do what works for my baby and myself, and that hunger, crying, and anxiety is not the definition of working. Some women tell me I should enjoy it. It’s true that there are “perks” to bottle feeding but I would have never chosen them had Hashem not chosen them for me. I would give up my sleep and my nights out, if it was up to me. Nursing your baby is a huge *brachah* and should not be taken for granted. I believe that every woman should try and *IYH* their story will end with lactation success even if mine didn’t.

What I did learn is that it’s not up to me or the lactation consultants. I thought I knew what was best, but Hashem showed me otherwise. He taught me that sometimes the best is when we let go of our preconceived notions and dreams of what should be and let His plan be. He taught me that attachment parenting isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach. That putting my baby’s needs before my desire to provide in a specific way, is true parenting. And most importantly, that the love and devotion I feed my babies is what nourishes them best and most of all. ■



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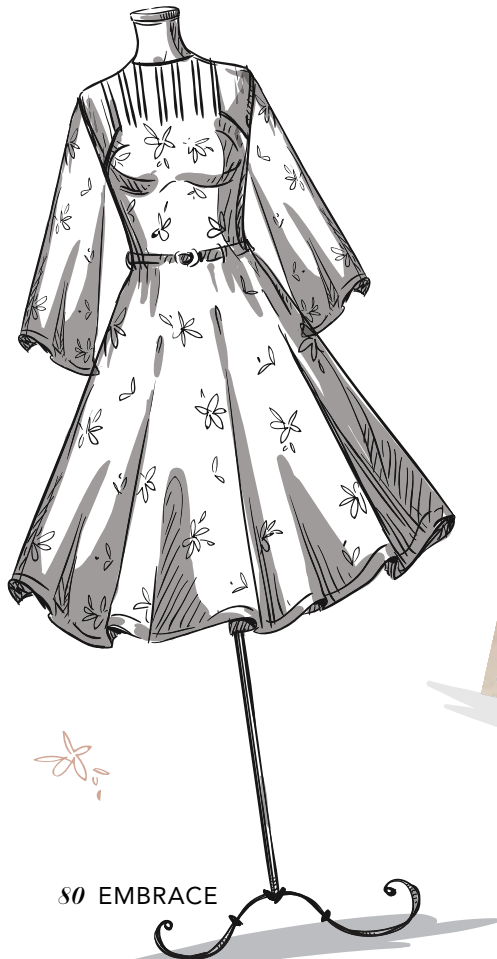
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A Unique Boutique

Hadasa Hecht, Crown Heights



80 EMBRACE



Rabbi JJ Hecht A”H found one of the campers in Camp Emunah crying all alone. She tearfully recounted that the other girls were making fun of her. She owned only three dresses; they were all dirty, and laundry wouldn't be done for another week!

Rabbi Hecht went to her bunkhouse, brought her clothes to the laundry room, and did her laundry on the spot. That Friday, Rabbi Hecht brought a special delivery to her bunk — a beautiful package, wrapped with a pink bow. Inside, were two brand new Shabbos outfits!

The heartbroken little girl was now glowing with happiness, not only because of the gifts she received but because somebody cared for her and went out of his way to make her feel happy.

This story is one of the inspirations that moved me to establish the Bridal Giving Boutique. It portrays the love and attention that every *kallah* deserves.

Throughout my childhood, I watched my parents constantly look for ways to help people. Our door was open to anyone in need. Our family of ten expanded to include many who lacked a loving family of their own, and they became part of ours. By sharing a home with those who have less, I have learned to appreciate the value of giving and giving back.

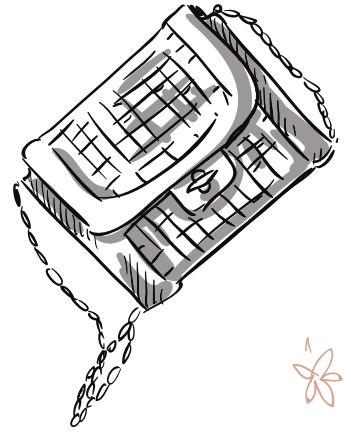
That Friday, Rabbi Hecht brought a special delivery to her bunk — a beautiful package wrapped with a pink bow. Inside were two brand new Shabbos outfits!

Now BH I am thankful to have a family of my own in Crown Heights, a neighborhood that is home to many wonderful chessed organizations of almost every kind!

After getting married and experiencing all the pressure and expectations that *kallahs* go through, I knew there had to be a way to help those who can't afford to live up to all the pressure. I wanted to give brides in need the opportunity to feel beautiful as they transition into their lives as newlyweds. The Bridal Giving Boutique was born.

My vision was to open a beautiful place where each *kallah* would be welcomed warmly at a private appointment with personal attention and care. She would be able to choose brand new Sheva Brachos





outfits and accessories that would be a gift for her to keep. It would be just like a regular shop but without price tags!

I approached Rebbetzin Laya Klein, an alumna and former teacher of Bais Rivkah, for support and involvement in this initiative, to which she happily agreed. Mrs. Raizel Wolvovsky AH was another member of our board, whom many of you remember fondly as a long-time Bais Rivkah preschool teacher! Mrs. Miri Gourarie and Mrs. Subie (Dubrawsky) Rubashkin complete our wonderful support team who are there to give advice and assist in running the Boutique. Subie, a Bais Rivkah alumna as well, runs many of the appointments, meeting *kallahs* and helping them make their selections.

We asked Rabbi Hecht at NCFJE if he had a space for us to use, and he graciously donated a room with a private entrance in the basement of Machon L'Yahadus. The room was the perfect size for us but not in great condition. When Mr. Yossi and Batsheva Popack heard that we needed to renovate the space, they immediately came on board and funded the renovations to make it a beautiful and welcoming place for the *kallahs*. The community really came together to make it happen.

Many people ask about the dresses we purchase with the donated funds. We have beautiful, high-quality tznius dresses from fashion companies who sell them to us at a heavily discounted rate. We also buy tichels for *kallahs* to choose from, as well as a large number of dress shoes, jewelry, and handbags that were donated!

Since our launch in 2019, the Bridal Giving Bou-

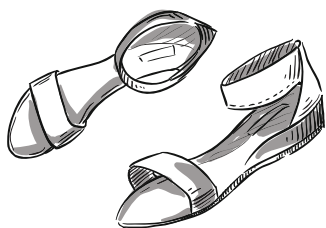


It would be just like a regular shop but without price tags!

tique has helped over two hundred *kallahs* by gifting brand new clothes and accessories to them which they shop for at our Crown Heights showroom at no cost. Our goal is to ensure that each *kallah* celebrates her *simchah* feeling beautiful and special. ■

To reach out or make an appointment, email bridalgivingboutique@gmail.com.

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ALUMNNAE

Who, What, Where



MOTHERS
of CROWN HEIGHTS

Mushka (Friedman) Leiter, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5768 (2008)

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF.

I was born and raised in Crown Heights. I enjoy dabbling with graphic design and I'm learning the art of delegating. I am very blessed to be working on the Motherhood Center, a project of Mothers of Crown Heights.

HOW DID YOU COME TO CREATE THE MOTHERHOOD CENTER?

There was a progression. Mothers of Crown Heights was created about five years ago, after I was blessed with my first child and became a mother. Truth is, before then, I never really noticed the mothers of

Crown Heights. You know the way it is, only once you need to purchase a baby carriage, do you start to pay attention to them as you're walking down the street.

I became aware of the fact that recovering from childbirth can be hard — harder than people tell you. I learned that nursing a baby could be hard and that it doesn't happen by itself. I learned that adjusting to motherhood could be hard and that it's a journey. And yet another surprise was that although there are so many women in Crown Heights raising their toddlers — it could still be a very lonely time.

These realizations led me to create a website — which was a realistic venture for me at the time. I was able to do it from the comfort of my own couch and it didn't cost much money. It's called mothersofcrownheights.org, and it contains lots of resources and info that an expecting or postpartum woman in Crown Heights could benefit from. BH



The lounge



The office

it's being used! Doulas direct their clients to the site and even young men in kollel share it with their married friends. With the help of generous volunteers, I slowly introduced new programs, like delivering baby gifts to new mothers and creating the Baby Box gemach for families in need. I also work with Shifra U'Puah to coordinate extra hands for postpartum women. For the purposes of this article, I'll focus on the website in general. This central and elegant destination was step one. Step two was to bring that virtual space to a brick-and-mortar location, where women can enjoy social, educational, and recreational opportunities. Just a year ago we signed a lease at 781 East New York Ave. and with a dedicated team, transformed a warehouse into Miriam's Motherhood Center.

WAS IT HARD? HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES?

My husband and I spent a long time looking for the right spot to house this new center. We had very specific requirements: It had to be stroller accessible. It had to be in a central location. It needed lots of sunlight, and it had to be big. And affordable. You can see why it took time. But we were patient and Hashem guided our steps.

Another challenge was the finances. I was hesitant to take on such a costly project. The model for our Motherhood Center was not a for-profit business but rather a non-profit, community center. That means charging nominal fees and not covering our budget. My husband has shouldered the fundraising responsibility and that allows me to work on the programming end. It's a good shidduch! We took out a loan, and with generous support from friends, family, and the larger community, this initiative will succeed, B'ezras Hashem.

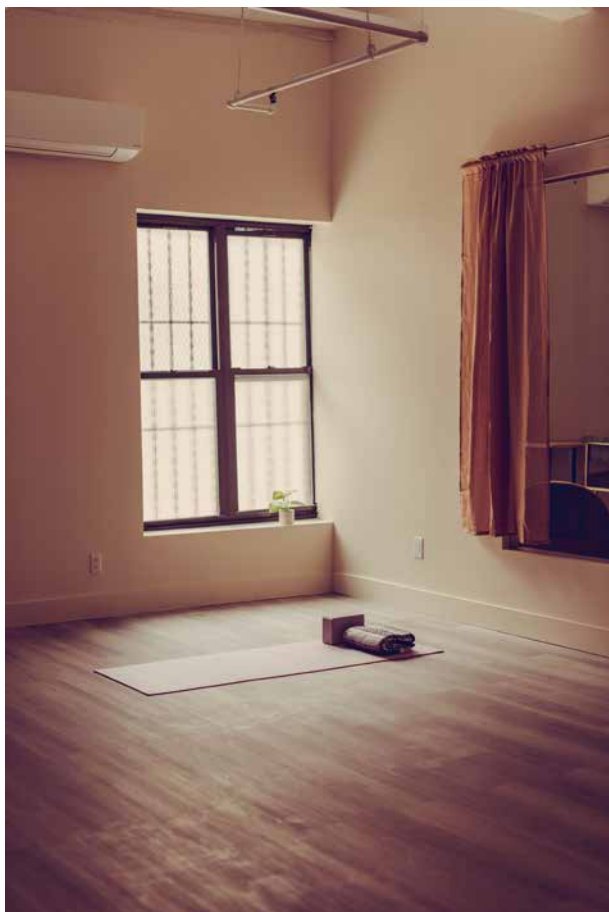
I'll mention here that the community has stepped up and so many have generously offered their expertise and assisted in making this a community center in the truest sense.

Another challenging bit to my new, full-time passion project is balancing Mothers of Crown Heights with my own personal life. I am blessed with three beautiful, vivacious children and I am struck with the irony whenever the center pulls me away from my children. How can I justify being busy with the Motherhood Center at their expense?

As an example: I was considering sending my eighteen-month-old to a playgroup this year. Everyone



The playroom in use during a recent Taharas Hamishpacha review class



The studio

does it. Part of me felt it was a bit premature for her, but I really needed more time at the center. I had to remind myself that Mothers of Crown Heights is meant to celebrate motherhood and restore glory to *just being a mother*. After a lot of back and forth, I decided to keep my daughter home with me. And for now, I trust that that was the right decision for us.

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

I'll break it down: The goal of the website was to centralize resources so that no mother in Crown Heights should feel like she's the first one to navigate pregnancy or motherhood. She is not alone. There are clear lists of providers, gemachs, and helpful documents like a hospital packing list and Chabad minhagim for pregnancy and birth.

In creating that website, I got to know so many individuals who do good work in the community. You see,

I had to understand what they do or the services they offer to clearly describe it on the website. This communication brought about collaboration between so many organizations/individuals and continues to do so.

The goal of the center is multilayered.

One element of the Motherhood Center is to bring those resources and make them readily available. Education and information empower us. For instance, a woman who is expecting (especially her first), should know where to take childbirth classes. Where to join a postpartum support group. Where to bring her baby for a Mommy and Me. Where to access relevant parenting classes and *shiurim*. Or, when unfortunately necessary, where to join a pregnancy loss support group. All this is offered at the Motherhood Center.

There's another layer: With busy schedules and many feeling isolated over Shabbos, it's difficult to get a sense of community among the womenfolk. Things are fast-paced here in Brooklyn and with toddlers in tow, there's usually only time for hi and bye. One goal of the center is to create a welcoming, beautiful, baby-friendly place for mothers to meet other mothers. Being able to feel at ease and have this social opportunity is so uplifting and goes a long way.

So many young families are living in small apartments with no space for that dream playroom that they put together on Pinterest. Outdoor destinations are limited and bad weather limits them even further. The Playroom in the center is designed to bring little crawlers and children up to age four to explore age-appropriate toys and enjoy a bright, indoor toddler play space.

So many young women are living in small apartments



Class at the center

with no space for that office or a quiet corner to get work done. The Office in the Motherhood Center functions as a shared workspace for women. It's the perfect spot for freelancers, entrepreneurs, students, or busy mothers.

Lastly, having large families is a value of ours. As a community, I feel it's only right to provide the right infrastructure and environment to do so! The fitness classes in our center, for example, all include optional babysitting. This way a mother can join an exercise class, even though she has a baby at home with her.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

The Motherhood Center is dedicated in honor of my bubby, Mrs. Miriam Tzimmel Friedman, of blessed memory. She was 'Bubby Friedman' to many more than just her hundreds of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. She is an inspiration to me. My grandmother modeled pride and joy in being a mother — the kind of pride and joy that my generation has to work towards. She embodied the *tznius*, *aidelkeit*, and *Yiras Shamayim* that is unique

to a Jewish mother. My bubby had an art to living. My hope is to give a taste of that to every mother that walks through the center.

HOW DID BAIS RIVKAH IMPACT YOU?

When in high school, I always noticed the importance that Morah Tiechtel placed on imparting the value of *shlichus* with us students. We would often be late to our first-period class because a visiting *Shliach* or *Shluchah* was in town and was invited to address us after davening. The message was clear: all our learning here is ultimately to give, to join the ranks, and aid in the mission of bringing Moshiach.

Creating Mothers of Crown Heights is not the conventional *shlichus* I always imagined but feeling the responsibility to contribute and make a difference is something I credit, in big part, to the education I got in BRHS.

I invite you to check it out for yourself! ■

www.MothersofCrownHeights.org

www.MiriamsCenter.org

LANNIE'S FAVORITE STYLING TIPS

*How to look classy,
presentable, and proudly modest!*

Lannie Althaus, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5780 (2020)

As told to Moussie Berkowitz, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5780 (2020)



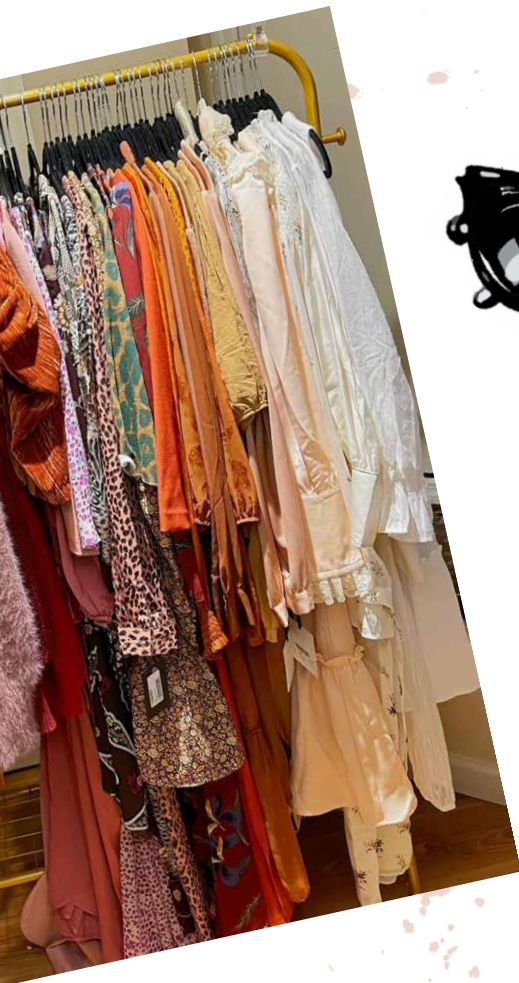
Ever since she was a little girl, Lannie gravitated towards anything fashion and style-related. Always down for shopping, she loved flipping through catalogs and helping her family and friends score good clothing finds. Lannie spent some time really figuring out what people want by working as a personal shopper and then opened Lana's, a boutique that carries great-quality tznus clothing for all occasions. Located on the basement floor of 1458 President Street, she carries a range of modest styles, including majorly discounted designer, everyday wear, vintage, and even consignment. She carries a large selection of sizes and prices so there's something for everyone, and always something new as her inventory updates weekly! For those of us who tend to buy clothing and then not wear it because we can't figure out what to pair it with, Lannie created a section with pre-styled outfit combinations to make it simpler to match new pieces!

Styling Tips:



1. Staples are called staples for a reason. Always have a few neutral-colored items that you can dress up or down and style for any season. Think out of the box; you'd be surprised how many things you can mix and match with what you already have!
2. On the days when you're just not feeling it but still want to look put together, try to wear at least two accessories. A pair of sunglasses, a purse, or statement jewelry can take your basic outfit very far!
3. Try to be mindful of colors and shades that enhance your skin tone, hair color, and features. Find the right shades that don't wash you out — sometimes it can mean just going one shade darker or lighter. Even though I got my color palette done, I don't strictly stick to it, but whenever I do, I feel such a difference. Wear your clothes; don't let them wear you!
4. It's better to spend a little bit more on a good classic. When you pay for better quality, it lasts longer, and the fabric and cut make a big difference to your look.
5. When you're shopping, if you like what you see but feel like it's not so you, you're best off trying it on! So often I see that when people try things on, it looks totally different off the hanger and they like it so much better.
6. When it comes to shirts and skirts, simply doing a half-tuck can make your outfit very stylish. Try tucking in your shirt just on the side, in the front, or in the back. ■

For more information and to get in touch, you can contact Lannie at 718-344-3477, or via Instagram @lannieonthedaily



A Taste of Bais Rivkah



Date: _____

Tani (Minkowitz) Lerman
Crown Heights

Graduating class
of 5774 (2014)



I ALWAYS LOVE SETTING A TABLE!

I've been doing it for years as it allows me to get into a creative flow. You can make fun of how focused I get when I'm preparing, but that's just because I'm in my element! When I set up a table, I usually go for an informal aesthetic. I love when things look natural, a bit unpredictable, and beautiful all at once. Of the many elements that I like to use, food boards are one of my favorites. I feel like it keeps food looking appetizing and clean, and allows for pretty presentation, while still having a natural look.

I've been making all sorts of boards for years. Most of them are made on Shabbos (hence the limited pictures) and they're always a hit, not to mention being a feast for the eyes as well. Boards can be made with all sorts of things like cheese, charcuterie (a fancy word for cold cooked meat), veggies, fruit, crackers, spreads, and yes, I've even made herring boards!

Making a food board may seem overwhelming and intimidating. By keeping a few tips in mind, it is pretty simple to make and fun too! And of course, the



more you do it, the better and quicker at it you'll be!

Here are some pointers that I like to keep in mind when creating a board:

TEXTURES, SHAPES, AND SIZES

Mixing textures makes things look more alive and dynamic, rather than flat and boring. For example, combining broccoli, cherry tomatoes, and daikon radish will do more for your board than choosing kohlrabi, turnip, and radish, which are all similar in texture. It is also pleasing to the eye to see dimension in shapes and sizes. Instead of slicing all your veggies into sticks or discs, you can do some and some and throw in a few vegetables that have a shape of their own, like mini peppers or cauliflower. Besides just food, I usually opt to add another texture by using small bowls in different shapes and colors that I can put dips and spreads in.

COLORS

When it comes to creating a board I choose between making it multicolored or monochromatic. For creating a colorful board, think all different colors! Literally “Eat the rainbow.” Use as many different colors and shades as you can — cucumbers, purple cabbage, snap peas, tomatoes, yellow beets, radishes, carrots, etc.! The more vibrant your colors, the more vibrant your board.

For monochrome boards, try all different shades of the same color! You can do a fruit plate with watermelon, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, and white peaches.

Another point on this topic — I love adding a few fresh vegetables to grilled veggie boards. I feel like it adds vibrancy and makes the dull colors of the cooked veggies come alive. I usually go for mini vine tomatoes and some fresh spring mix for a pop of color. Try fresh herbs as well!

HEIGHT

I like having different heights on my board to create an illusion that the fruits or vegetables are “flowing” on the board, kind of like it happened by itself. It also creates more dimension. You can place bowls under your vegetables to give them a lift. I often put a long, narrow, two-inch high board across the middle of my base board. This assures height all across the board. Another thing you can do is pile high. Literally pile a bunch of one vegetable in one area and then put a smaller amount of another ingredient right near the high pile.

SYMMETRY

If I’m using tomatoes on one side of your board, I’ll find another spot on the board (it doesn’t have to be exactly on the other side) that I’ll put tomatoes as well. I like using this rule to help create the illusion of “this happened by itself” — a look that I usually go for.

ODD NUMBERS

Use an odd amount of veggie or fruit choices, use an odd amount of the sample colors, use an odd amount of bowls... whatever you add, make sure it’s in an odd amount. I don’t know how it works, but I see how it always looks better and more accurate.

DIRECTION

I try to make the ingredient facing in different direction. So if I have grilled beets on the left top side of the board going down towards the center, I’d make sure that whatever I’m putting near the beets goes in a different position or direction. I keep away from having everything moving or facing the same way as that makes things look more rigid and thought out.

I hope you’ll find these suggestions useful and challenge yourself to create a board too!

** Check out these pictures and spot how many tips are being used on the boards! ■*



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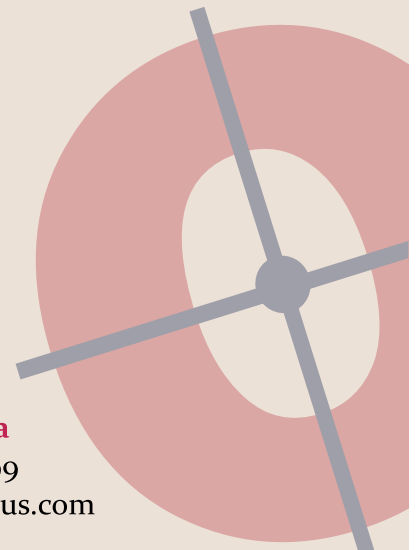
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- BAIS RIVKAH - Talent



FORGIVE?

Chani (Zalmanov) Vaisfiche
Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5765 (2005)

Forgive?

How can I forgive?

She was the one who did me a slight

I'm so mad, this just isn't right

Okay, so you say I've done wrong, too

I'm human and she can be, too

I hear you

That is true

So I'll forgive her mistake

G-d gave her a *yetzer harah*

And therefore it may be hard

To always follow the Torah

So now, G-d, am I supposed to forgive You?

For pain and suffering and the *yetzer harah*, too?

But G-d you're not human and you don't have an
evil inclination

How can I forgive You for life's frustrations?

Maybe

I'm not supposed to forgive

Since we need to demand

Geulah with a perfect world

With good revealed as it should

But I'm not supposed to be mad at Him, right?

I'm supposed to accept suffering with love, I'm told

So how can this be explained, maybe you could?

Maybe because G-d is infinite I can also be

Since I have a part of Him in me

And hold two opposites at once: I accept and I
demand

That all is good — that I accept and

That the good be revealed — that I demand!



THEIR BLUE EYES

Etty (Pinson) Bogomilsky

Crown Heights

Graduating class of 5764 (2004)

As I gaze into my baby's
precious blue eyes
And wipe away a tear
from her gentle soft cries

My grandmother's blue eyes
peer back at me
Those wise eyes
that saw history

Those blue eyes kept her
from the enemy then
The kind gentile family
hid her in their den

My thoughts ponder
the challenges we face
As I give my baby
a stronger embrace
I pray that forever
I'll be at her side
Sharing her joys,
rejoicing with pride

Hearing her giggle,
my mind drifts away
When Golus is over,
I picture the day...

Savta's beautiful blue eyes
and my daughter's will meet
And she'll plant a kiss
on her small chubby cheek

I'll introduce my little one
who carries her name
The sparkle of their blue eyes
will shine just the same

May we no longer suffer,
not worry nor fear
No wars and no illness,
no death and no scare

May our futures be brighter
than the generation before
As we dance to Geulah,
before G-d we implore



DEAR TEACHER

Chana Perman,
Toronto, Canada
Graduating class of 5750 (1990)

You, dear teacher,
are a gardener
Tending to each seedling
with dedication
The culmination of
your tireless effort
Bearing beautiful fruit
in future generations

You, special teacher,
are a captain
Steering your ship
through high seas
Imparting precious wisdom
to your students
With commendable
skill and expertise

You, amazing teacher,
are a magician
Day in, day out -
you appear
Bringing out the best
in your students
With love,
dedication, and care

You, precious teacher,
are a lamplighter
Neshamos you inspire

and ignite
Your impact
everlasting
A forever-burning light

You, remarkable teacher,
are a wonder
No words can
truly express
The extent of our
hakoras hatov
For truly being
THE BEST

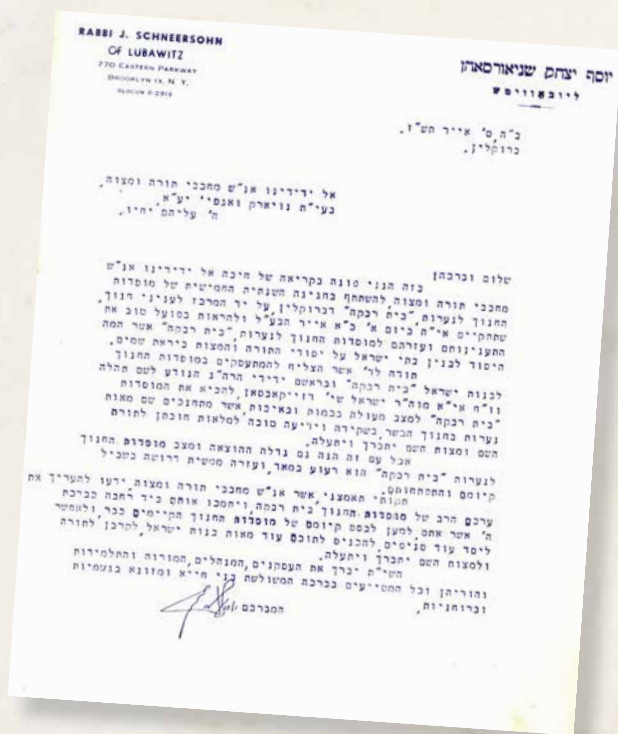
We extend our
heartfelt thank you,
and very best wishes--
l'chaim!
May we merit celebrating
this Zos Chanukah
with Moshiach
in Yerushalayim.



Keep sakes

A letter from the Frieddiker Rebbe regarding Bais Rivkah.

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



building of Jewish homes based on Torah and *mitzvos* observed with *Yiras Shamayim*.

With thanks to Hashem who has given success to activists of the above institution and their head, my colleague, the praiseworthy Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson. They have brought, quantifiably and qualitatively, the institution — where hundreds of students have diligently studied — to its current good standing. They have suitably educated them to fulfill their mission, as guided by the Torah and *mitzvos* of Hashem, may He be blessed and exalted.

However, with that, expenses have grown, and the financial future of the institution is on shaky ground and needs concrete assistance to be able to survive and develop further.

It is my strong hope that Anash will appreciate the great value of this institution, and support them with open hands, from the *brachos* that Hashem has given them. [They need] to strengthen the survival of the existing institution, and establish more branches in order to educate hundreds of additional Jewish daughters, and bring them closer to the Torah and *mitzvos* of Hashem, may He be blessed and exalted.

May the activists, principals, teachers, students, parents, and all those who assist them, be blessed materially and spiritually by Hashem, with the trilateral blessing of children, life, and livelihood.

The one who blesses them,

[The Rebbe Rayatz's signature]

Free translation from the Hebrew letter

By the Grace of G-d
Iyar 9, 5707 [April 29, 1947]
Brooklyn

To our brethren, Anash, lovers of Torah and *mitzvos* in the city of New York and its suburbs, may Hashem protect and give them life.

Greetings and Blessings!

Behold, I turn to Anash, in a heartfelt call, to participate in the fifth annual celebration for the Brooklyn educational institute for girls, Beth Rivkah, a division of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch that will take place on Sunday, the 21st of Iyar. To show interest and assistance to this institution which is a foundation for the

ADANK, REBBE

Anonymous

THE AIR WAS STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, AS THOUGH IT NEEDN'T BOTHER BLOWING WHILE MOST PEOPLE SLEEP.

It's not what you want greeting you when you wake up from a nightmare. Sounds travel further, nothing to intercept them. Every slight movement shocked my heartbeat into a new, faster rhythm.

I lay still, stiff, under the covers, waiting for the exhaustion to be stronger than the fear. Until that moment, sleep would continue to evade me.

The cup of coffee is probably what gave me away in the morning. "Another bad dream?" my mother asked. I nodded, grabbed my school bag, and ran to make the first bell of the day. There was no time to discuss, and either way, I wasn't sure I wanted to. What

is there to talk about when you're a teenager, still afraid of the night?

My father walked in from work when I was already nestled on the couch with piles of school notes spread in front of me. "Are you almost done studying? I'll drive you to the Ohel."

I don't remember when I answered, but I remember breathing out. Someone was going to help me. Hours later, I stood at the Rebbe's tziyun and whispered the words of *Maaneh Lashon*. My father had long left the enclosure and it was just me, davening there.

The stone floors were freezing; my toes were going numb. But I wasn't rushing, because someone was listening to what I had to say. Whether or not I would be afraid that night was peripheral because I knew now that when I was awake, someone else would be, as well.

A year later, I sat on my camper's bed during the post-Rebbe Time conversa-



tions, where guards are down and the moon's gloom welcomes the deepest of questions. "Even if I cared to have a strong *hiskashrus*," she said without meeting my eyes, "how would I pass that on to my kids?"

How do you answer a question that you have yourself?

The strong quiet outside the window brought me back to another night, years ago. For weeks, I'd memorized the lullaby of silence when I lay awake in bed. Those hours were the ones that came back to me while I searched for an answer to her question. I never met the Rebbe either, but his force is present in my life. I know it's possible to pass that on — because my parents did it for me.

"When I used to have nightmares, my parents' first response would be to bring me to the Ohel," I started. The words weren't all there before I said them; the thoughts only formulated as I passed them along.

If the Rebbe is now my mentor, my compass, my guide; he's always been and always will be. My Zaidy's words came to mind — that those who don't have a

Rebbe now never had one before, either. Maybe if we show others how present his role is still today, like my parents did for me that night, they will look to the same place, I told my camper.

I never met the Rebbe either, but his force is present in my life. I know it's possible to pass that on — because my parents did it for me.

She fell asleep moments after we finished talking, while the curtains fluttered in the country air and my mind was still running. The next afternoon, just before rest hour began, she asked me how to write a pan. *Adank, Rebbe*, I thought. I needn't struggle to pass on the life that only others lived — because it's mine to give, too. ■



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The Wives of BAGGAGE CLAIM

Anonymous

Art by Mushky (Vaisfiche) Junik, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5776 (2016)



DISCLAIMERS:

This is all for humor purposes; there is no intent to make fun of any person in any way, *chas v'shalom*. We love you. We even contributed \$37.82 on your engagement and wedding — the L'chaim gift, shower, *shtick*, and bridal cup, plus the extra \$10 for balloons. And that's not including our own dress, hair and makeup, and transportation for the wedding. So this is really all out of love.

For those who don't know what “baggage claim” is, it's the porch of 770 and its general vicinity, where women wait for their husbands to collect them after *davening*. The official term implies newly-married *chassanim* and *kallahs*, but poetic license.

Baggage claim is a term, it's not meant to offend anyone. If it does, imagine the luggage being full of diamonds of the highest quality — your sterling *middos*.

TYPE 1

She stands on the porch, smoothing her sheitel as she waits for her husband. When he comes, she immediately spots him *b'hashgacha protis* and goes down to meet him.

TYPE 2

She dawdles in *shul* after *davening* and totally loses track of time. Once it's at least seven minutes past the time they made up to meet, she cuts off mid-conversation and dashes to find her husband, who is:

TYPE 2A: waiting faithfully. Or,

TYPE 2B: not even waiting/just coming out. Like-marries-like.

TYPE 3

She comes out exactly on time so she doesn't end up like type 2A, but she's smart enough to bring a friend along to wait with.

TYPE 3A: Deep in conversation about how she chose her ring, she turns her head to see her husband waiting at the foot of the stairs with an “I've-been-waiting-a-few-minutes” look. Oops.

TYPE 3B: She sees her husband as he comes out, makes a gesture towards him, and finishes the conversation with her best friend. It's the thought that counts.

TYPE 3C: Chatting animatedly about her favorite dinner recipe, she's interrupted by her dear friend who points out that her husband is there, waiting. Thank Hashem for friends.

TYPE 3D: The second she spots her husband, she darts over mid-sentence without saying bye. It's been real. (She's the one who said she wouldn't change or become awkward after she gets married. We know better than to believe that.)



TYPE 3E: She has a great conversation with her friend, and she's still waiting when her friend has to leave for her meal. So she goes back inside 770 to find a new friend, and the process repeats itself multiple times until her husband comes (see types 3A, 3B 3C, or 3D).

TYPE 4

Her husband *thinks* she said she was coming to *shul*, but he's not sure, because he's been waiting and waiting. In fact, he's still waiting and it's already Tuesday. She fell asleep on the couch in her freshly-set Shabbos *shaitel*. He would go and get her, but she has the Shabbos key.

TYPE 5

They've got it down to a science. She waits in a strategic spot so that when he appears she makes a beeline down the steps and they meet seamlessly, without any awkward searching. Points for them.

TYPE 6

They make up to meet on the corner of Union and

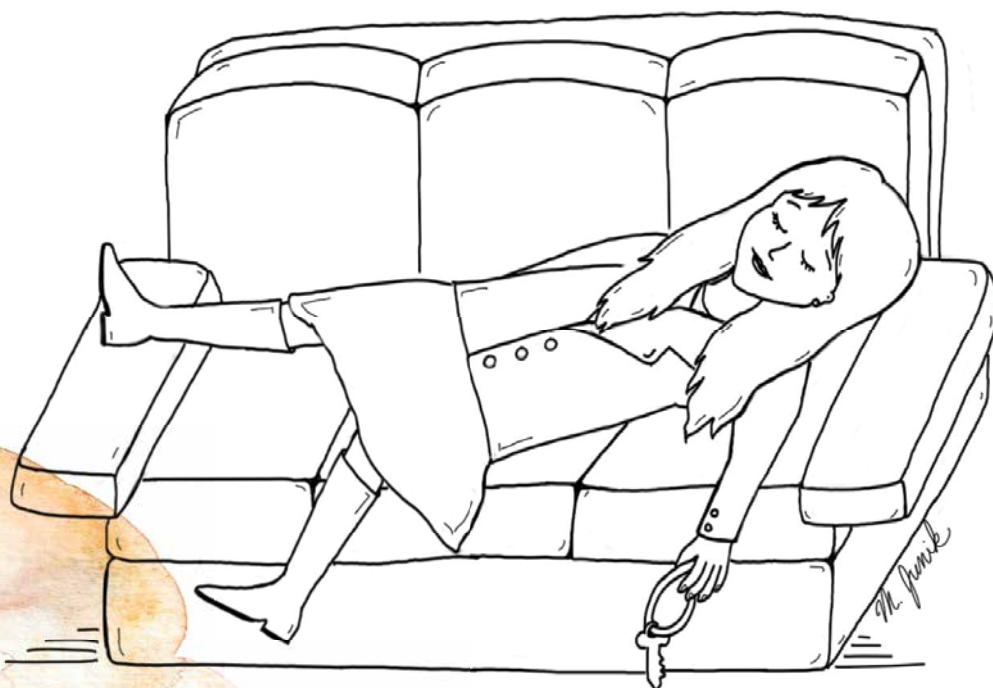
Kingston, to avoid the crowds. The only *chisaron* is that she waits together with a few husbands who are waiting for *their* wives.

TYPE 7

She tells all her friends that she has to be out in five minutes so she's just going to talk for three so she can have enough time to put away her *siddur* and get outside. Fifteen minutes later, she's deeeep in lamenting about her *sheitel's* woes, completely oblivious of the time. The next week she decides to *daven* ahead so she can maximize her time to socialize. As she finishes *Aleinu*, the minyan is just starting *Lecha Dodi* and she has plenty of time to chat. She gets so caught up in chatter that she misses the end of *davening* and only notices the time once it's too late. It's a never-ending cycle for her.

We'd like to thank Hashem for giving us girls the opportunity to come to *shul* and socialize every week. Better cover everything there is to talk about before you have a baby and these *yentashafts* are over.

Lchaim and happy waiting. We should only share good news.



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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

with experienced mother and veteran educator

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Our mission is to optimize the Chinuch of our daughters by inspiring, uniting and celebrating the foundations of Bais Rivkah's families - we the mothers!

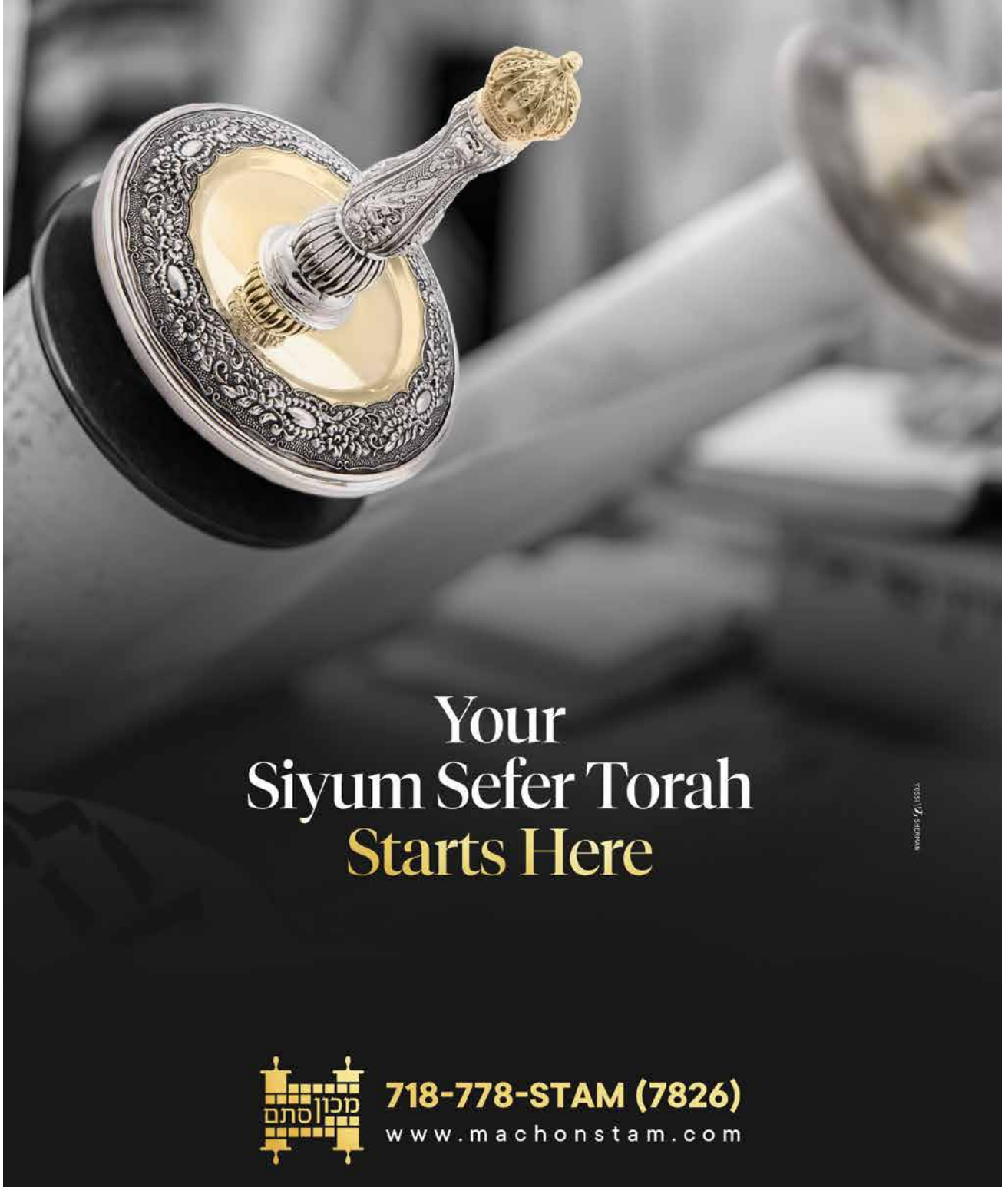
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