

בית רבקה  
ALUMNAE



SPRING 5780

ב"ה 1, Issue 4 Volume

# EMBRACE

Uniting and inspiring the worldwide community of Beth Rivkah Alumnae



## THE FEMININE ERA

*"The feminine will supersede the masculine."*

HER BODY MAY BE PARALYZED,  
BUT NOT HER LIFE—A STORY OF  
COURAGE, CHOICE, & ENDURANCE

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I DON'T WANT THINGS TO  
GO BACK TO NORMAL, WE'VE  
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A VETERAN MECHANIC  
SHARES HOW TO RAISE HEALTHY,  
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# IT'S a WOMAN'S WORLD

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



*“After so many years of male dominance, we now stand at the threshold of a true feminine era. We’ve already proven that our strengths can slay the demons around us; let us now learn to nurture the sanctity and virtue within.” – The Rebbe*

**W**hen I read the above on JLI’s Rosh Chodesh Society home page, I stopped short. This is not the anti-feminism narrative I am used to hearing. There was nuance here.

I reread. This wasn’t the cliché dichotomy of men’s role vs women’s role, as much as a dichotomy between two ways of being. What did that mean? I did a little digging.

I learned that the “feminine way” of communication is more effective. I learned that the deeper meaning behind “Kol kevudah bas melech penima” means not only “the beauty of a king’s daughter is within,” but that when a woman speaks in a feminine manner, with respect and dignity rather than with aggression, a recipient can better internalize. I learned that traditionally, the masculine model was one of dominance and control and that the feminine role was subtlety. And I realized that the world is simply just catching on.

Take the way Sarah Imeinu responded to scoffers who doubted that she had given birth at such an advanced age. “Sarah must’ve fetched her baby from the mar-

ketplace!” the neighbors gossiped. Sarah responded by peacefully nursing her baby. And to their disbelief, she welcomed their babies into her arms, proceeding to nurse them as well. Sarah didn’t get defensive, nor did she argue heatedly. She lovingly nourished her neighbors’ babies until there was not a shadow of a doubt that it was she who had given birth to a child. Her subdued model was distinctly feminine.

Companies are just learning to value soft, or interpersonal skills, like communication, listening, and empathy, among others. Read more about this in Shani Freeman's article about the millennial Eishes Chayil. It’s a shift toward a feminine model.

Interestingly enough, back when Hashem gave us the Torah, the contrast in the terminology used to address the men and women was explicit. “Ko somar l’Vais Yaakov,” speak softly to the women, “Visageid l’Vnei Yisroel,” and speak assertively to the men. And even way back then, the women were addressed first.

As Creation continues to evolve toward its ultimate intent, when “the feminine will supersede the mas-

culine,” the narrative is playing out. As our anonymous writer shares in her article about marriage, and as Sarale Deitsch writes in her piece about Covid-19, there are new paradigms taking center stage.

Modern feminists got some things fundamentally wrong. Women are not the “new men.” There is no need to compete when women were created by G-d with their own energies and missions. At the same time, feminism got something fundamentally right. In this era right before the redemption, women are sensing a shift. We are tapping into “nekeivah tesovev gever—the feminine will supersede the masculine.”

And in the merit of righteous Jewish women, may we soon experience the completion of that shift with the coming of Moshiach. ■

Sara Blau

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*Hayom Yom: Tevet 22*

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



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# HELP US PLANT A SEED

# From The REBBE

נשיא דורינו

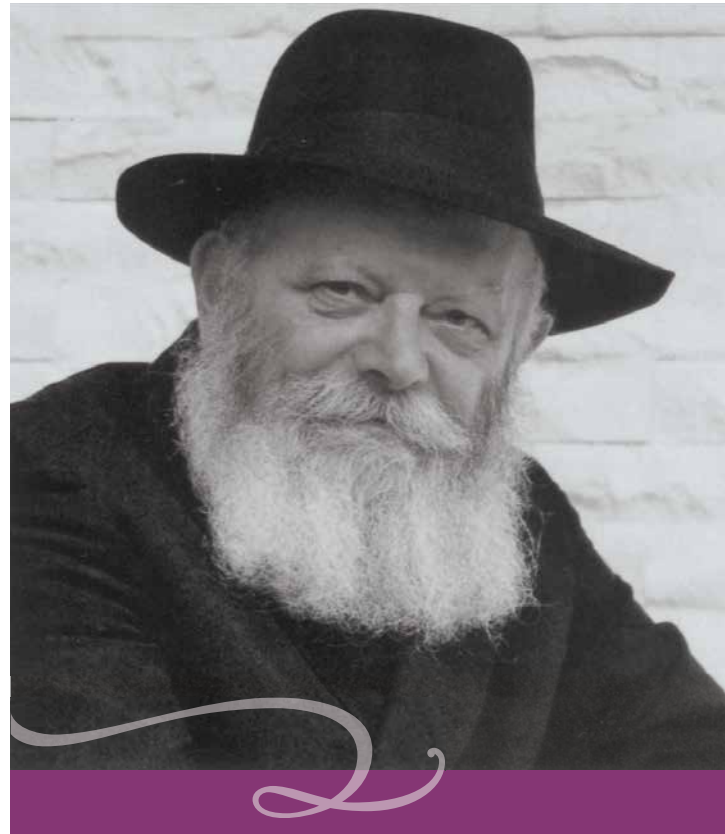
## Equal Rights

GRADUATES OF BAIS RIVKAH,  
22<sup>ND</sup> DAY OF SIVAN, 5742 (1982)

... **T**he above points concerning the special distinction of Jewish women is the rebuttal of all claims of “equal rights” — that a woman must demand equal rights to men. The reverse is true: Torah emphasizes the great merit and responsibility which were given specifically to Jewish women and girls.

True “equal rights” are when a person reaches perfection consonant to the abilities and opportunities given by G-d to each individual. Therefore men must occupy themselves in the tasks given to men, and women in those tasks given to them. There is no reason for a woman to try to imitate a man and do those things which belong to men. Indeed, when a woman tries to imitate a man, and demands to be given jobs equal to men, she is showing that she considers herself to be on a lower level than men — and therefore demands to be given a man’s task to justify her existence!





Such an approach is contrary to Torah. This is also one of the reasons why Torah commands (Devorim 22:5): “Man’s clothes shall not be upon a woman, and a man shall not wear clothes of a woman.” Male and female must each conduct themselves as created by G-d. Thus, when a woman inverts her life, and decides that she must engage in man’s work to show that she has reached the pinnacle of perfection, it contradicts the command “man’s clothes shall not be upon a woman.” It is the antithesis of the perfec-



tion of womanhood, for her perfection is expressed in the utilization of her womanly abilities. The way to receive G-d’s blessings is specifically when each person fully utilizes the abilities given to him or her — when a man fulfills G-d’s mission in his duties, and a woman in hers. This is the true “right” of every person, man and woman, and personal success is dependent on each person going in the way appropriate to his/her abilities given by G-d.

When a person conducts his life according to his G-d-given abilities, according to the nature implanted in him by G-d, he avoids inner stress that results from the clash between conflicting desires. And, knowing that his perfection comes from utilizing his abilities given by G-d, he does not covet nor is he jealous of another’s situation — he is “happy in his lot.” He is happy not because he has no other choice, but because he chooses to show that he belongs to the “wise and understanding people” by understanding that his greatest fortune is the opportunity to use his G-d-given abilities.

*Sichos In English Volume 14*



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A message from  
**Crown Heights Jewish Community Council**

The CHJCC Census team will be available to help at [www.chcentral.org/census](http://www.chcentral.org/census)



I received the *Embrace* today in the mail and the interesting article featuring Baila (Chanin) Stern caught my attention. I learned something new and it helped me correct a crucial word, just in the nick of time!

Baila relates how, when she was 8-years old, she wrote a Jewish version of the popular children's book, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?* One of the verses in the book read, "Candles, candles, why are you so bright? Because Jewish girls light me on Friday night." She tells how her mother submitted her book to the Rebbe and the Rebbe noted that the word "on" Friday night should be changed to "before" Friday night.

This caught my attention as I recently published *The Purim Big Book* and was working on an animated version of the book that can be shown in Chabad houses during the megillah reading.

One of the challenges in teaching the Purim story to not (yet) frum children is helping them understand why Esther did not want to be chosen as Queen. Wouldn't it be every girl's dream? To clarify this for the children, I tried to illustrate how Esther loved being Jewish. She did not want to be far away from the Torah and mitzvos. In the book, Esther is shown baking challah, and on her shelf are Shabbos candles and a kiddush cup. Mordechai is learning Torah nearby. This was the accompanying text:

*Mordechai took care of his cousin Esther,  
With wisdom and beauty G-d has blessed her.  
She loved Torah and mitzvot that make the world bright.  
She would light Shabbat candles every Friday night.  
She did not want to leave her warm Jewish home,  
The happiest place she'd ever known.*

It is hashgachah protis that I read the article in *Embrace*, enabling me to incorporate the Rebbe's correction into my animation. Instead of "on," the animation said "before" Friday night. I am grateful to the *Embrace* for sharing this story and I will insert this correction in the next printing of *The Purim Big Book*.

Yasher Koach and thank you for the publication!

– *Dassie (Gansburg) Prus, Doylestown, PA*



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The article about ADHD was so informative, non-sensational, and I imagine it was a helpful read for many. The article by Chani Okunov was also so real and encouraging. It's really beautiful how important ideas are brought up.

Really nice to read!

– Esther Rosen, Crown Heights

As director of Heichal Menachem in Lakewood, I was touched to receive the following inspiring message from a non-Lubavitch acquaintance:

*“Super random question for you. Been thinking for a while, but never reached out. Wondering if there’s a growth-oriented WhatsApp group that I can join? I got this Bais Rivkah Alumnae magazine in error - sent to the “wrong address” but not by accident! I enjoyed it so much! There was a piece in there (The Human Struggle) that led me to try to discover if there’s a group out there with Tanya inspiration... and growth ideas for busy moms.”*

The magazine may not have reached the intended address, but it was clearly the right one. Your magazine inspired a woman in Boro Park to reach out and search for Chabad Chassidus.

– Esti Meisels, Lakewood, New Jersey



### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Letters, comments, questions and suggestions are welcome!  
Write to us at [Embrace@bethrivkah.edu](mailto:Embrace@bethrivkah.edu)

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שולחות אנו את תנחומינו מקרב ולב עמוק - ובהמשך עבודת  
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# A SHIDDUCH *and a* NAME

FOREVER CONNECTED TO BAIS RIVKAH

---

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

When my husband's name was mentioned to me for a shidduch, I was also told that his mother's name is the same as mine. We are usually careful that a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law should not have the same name. Sometimes a name is added to one of them, so their names will no longer be identical. When the Rebbe was told about the name, he explained that in this case it is not a problem, because the mother also has an additional name.

I was named Chaya (after my grandmother) and his mother's name was Chaya Zelda. We then proceeded with this shidduch idea.

As was done in those days, both - the girl and the boy - would ask the Rebbe for his opinion about the shidduch, and when they felt ready to be engaged, they each gave the Rebbe a letter (both letters together) asking the agreement and bracha of the Rebbe. If and when they received the positive reply and bracha for the shidduch, they were then officially engaged.

It was on a Sunday, 13 Kislev, when we received the Rebbe's answer and we became chosson and kalla. It was very late that Sunday night when, as usual, my father entered the room of the Rebbe.

The Rebbe then said to my father that I should have a name added. (This was surprising to me, as the Rebbe



himself had said it was not necessary as my mother-in-law also had another name, but when the Rebbe says to do something, we do it, and there is - for sure - a very important reason.) The Rebbe also wanted that the additional name be given right away, the following day - Monday.

This conversation took place during the night, so my father mentioned that we need to decide on a name and in the morning I leave early to go to work (I was teaching in Bais Rivkah). The Rebbe mentioned the name Rivkah and gave reasons. One of them - the parshios of Chumash those weeks leading up to the engagement were about Yitzchok and Rivkah and their shidduch, and my husband's name is Yitzchok. Another reason the Rebbe gave would be of special interest to all who have the zchus of having learned, or are learning, in Bais Rivkah. The Rebbe said that I received my chinuch in Bais Rivkah, so I have a connection to the one after whom Bais Rivkah is named. The following morning, 14 Kislev, at Krias Hatorah in 770, my name Rivkah was added and

Chaya became Chaya Rivkah.

Bais Rivkah is named after the grandmother of the Frierdiker Rebbe. When we attend the school that carries her name, we are actually connected to Rebbetzin Rivkah in a very holy and special way.

A name is so special and is connected to the person's neshama. By going to a school named by the Frierdiker Rebbe after his grandmother Rebbetzin Rivkah, we have such an amazing connection to her (and I feel that through her we are connected also to all those connected to her...). Boruch Hashem we are so fortunate to have the great privilege of being Bais Rivkah students!

As we must be so careful to tell a Rebbe story with perfect accuracy, I wish to add that I do not remember the exact words to be able to quote the Rebbe, but the information is correct and well remembered, and I tried my best to tell this story properly.

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

## Thank you

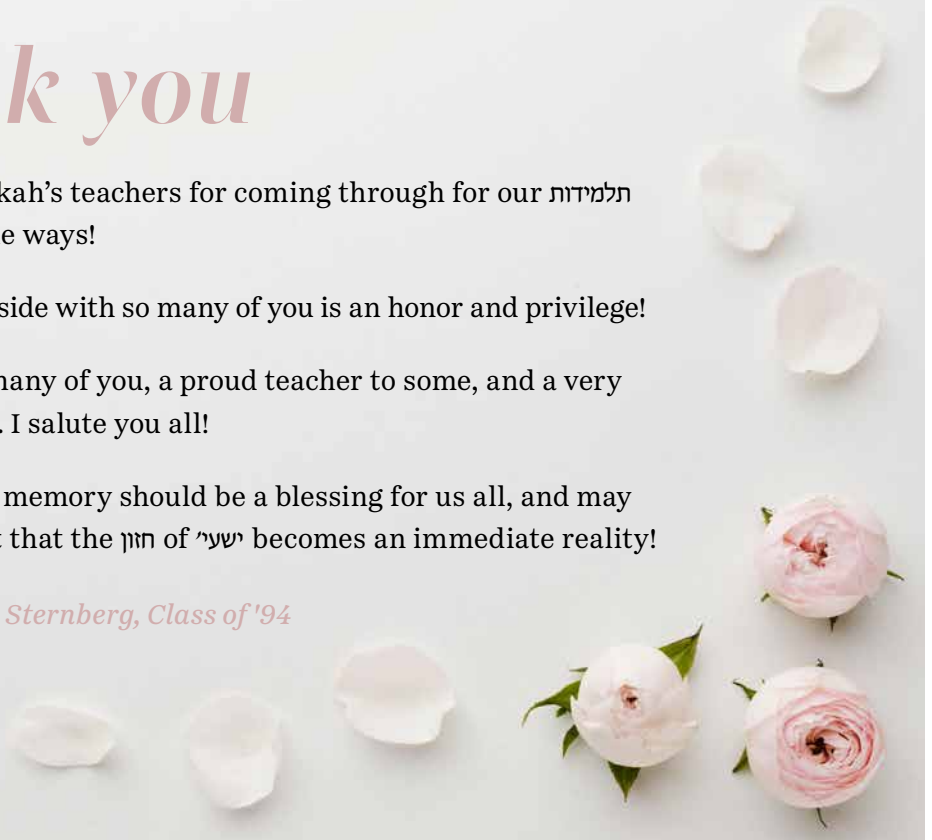
to all of Bais Rivkah's teachers for coming through for our תלמידות in such incredible ways!

Working side by side with so many of you is an honor and privilege!

As a student of many of you, a proud teacher to some, and a very grateful parent... I salute you all!

Morah Neiman's memory should be a blessing for us all, and may we quickly merit that the חזון of ישעי' becomes an immediate reality!

~ Mrs. Gittie Sternberg, Class of '94



# THE HEART *of* A MAN

Akedah Eze, Birmingham, Alabama  
*Graduating 8th grade class of 1985*

*We are presenting a write-up of one of our alumnae on the principal's message page. We think it will offer Rabbi Newman's inspiration even though - and especially because - it was written not by himself but by one of his many mechunachos. -Editors*

**T**here are Mechanchim who touch our lives with kindness, and through such effort, change our worlds forever.

Rabbi Leibel Newman, principal of Bais Rivkah School For Girls, was such a person for me. A slight man with a quick step and a quiet smile that radiated a love of Torah and Chassidus that was easily felt, he is today responsible for most for the Jewish life I am living today. Simply put, he taught by example.

I'm not at all sure what thoughts crossed his mind when my father escorted two scared but determined little brown girls into his office that day, but if he was at all incredulous he never showed it. He smiled warmly and hurried us down to our classrooms and without a second thought, prepared us to learn, eager to perform the Mitzvah of educating a Jewish child. If only he knew how much his exemplified Torah meant to me back then and how many of his teachings re-

*I'm not at all sure what thoughts crossed his mind when my father escorted two scared but determined little brown girls into his office that day, but if he was at all incredulous he never showed it.*

main with me still.... The teaching of Torah is a profound act of kindness, one that reverberates from child to child and from student to student for generations. This Torah that I share, I learned from Rabbi Newman back then. And now, a million Jewish experiences and four decades later, I am blessed to share a bit of that Torah with you today:

## *The Heart of a Man*

It is known that a man's strongest limbs are often located on the right side of his frame; the right leg, the right hand, the right arm, the right eye- they're all generally considered the stronger of the pair, on the stronger side of the human body. But what of the heart- it's different. The heart, the most vital of all organs, is located on the LEFT side of the body. Why is it not centered on the right side too?

Chazal teach us that Hashem's ways are perfect. The heart, in much the same way as our other limbs, is perfectly and strategically placed to increase man's strength, just as the other limbs do. In fact, the heart is also "positioned" where it can serve mankind best, on the left side. While a man's strongest limbs are on his right side to serve him physically, Hashem in His infinite wisdom placed the heart of every man on the left side, to serve him spiritually.

Our Chachamim teach that when two people stand face to face, each bearing the weight of his own weakness, his own shortcomings



and human frailties, the physical strength of each person is exactly where it needs to be to sustain him physically. But the heart is both physical **and** spiritual. It was not created to be a source of “individual power” or “physical strength.” The heart was meant for a different purpose; it was meant to be **shared**. As the seat of the human soul, it is a source of empathy, love, and support, not for ourselves... but for others.

*I'm giving thanks today for a man who cared enough as a Rabbi and an educator of women to live by the Torah he taught.*

As we stand man to man, face to face, our heart is located on our weaker side, on **our** left side... but facing him, that same heart is on our brother's **right** side. For **his** strength, for **his** benefit, where **he** can derive the love, strength, comfort and support **he** needs in that moment when **he** needs it most.

The heart is thus **positioned** with the service of humanity in mind- the rendering of love, empa-



*Akedah speaking at her 8th grade graduation*



thy, kindness and support to a fellow human being...

And so it is.

I'm giving thanks today for a man who cared enough as a Rabbi and an educator of women to live by the Torah he taught. His Torah was a blessing that blesses me still today. I pray that I too will one day be able to say to those around me that the Jewish students I've taught are now teaching Torah too, not just in word but by example. ■

*The heart was meant for a different purpose; it was meant to be shared.*





# ALUMNAE

## *Who, What, Where*

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



**Mrs. Baila (Rimler) Olidort**  
**Crown Heights**

*Graduating class of 5738 (1978)*

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

I am the editor in chief of the Lubavitch International Magazine and [lubavitch.com](http://lubavitch.com).

From an early age, I was a careful listener, the fly on the wall. As I got older, I noticed that it wasn't only what someone had to say that interested me, but also how they said it. Were they connecting to me, or speaking at me? *How* something was communicated, I realized, could be as important as *what* was being communicated.

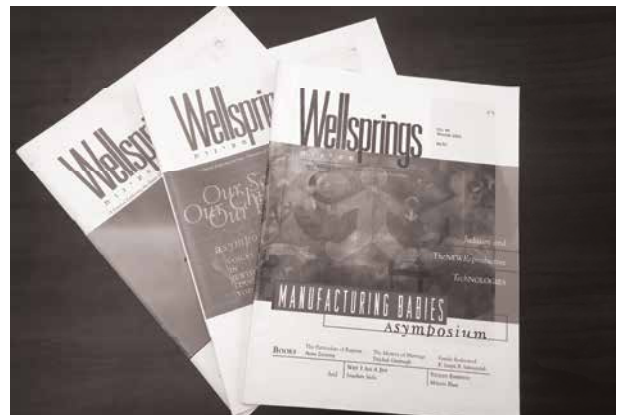
I also enjoyed playing with language. There are so many ways to articulate a thought. The words you choose and the way you string them together to express an idea can make all the difference in how it is received. So after getting my degree in journalism, I felt that I now had an invaluable tool to be an effective communicator for Chabad.

### **SO YOU BEGAN TO WORK FOR CHABAD AFTER GRADUATING?**

Yes. The very first opportunity that came to me just

as I graduated, was the invitation by Mrs. **Yehudis Cohen** to replace her as editor of **Wellsprings**, a publication by Tzach (Lubavitch Youth Organization) under Rabbi **Kasriel Kastel**. At the time, it was a small publication that seemed to be speaking to people who were already committed to Yiddishkeit. I wanted to broaden its readership, to reach readers who weren't affiliated. What did they care about, and did Chabad have something to add to these conversations?

I looked for writers who had the ability to explore contemporary themes from a Chasidic perspective, and I worked closely with them to bring something new and compelling to the conversation. I redesigned the magazine and gave it a modern aesthetic. I invested myself into this project with all my heart and soul, and it grew into a beautiful, substantial publication that addressed a wide range of contemporary issues and created a bridge with readers who were exploring their relationship to Yiddishkeit.



## WHAT KIND OF ARTICLES DID WELLSPRINGS FEATURE?

The magazine gained a reputation for its original pieces, many of which have become classics that are still reprinted today. Shluchim in foreign countries translated many of the articles into other languages. One example of an outstanding classic that has been widely reprinted is **Tzivia Emmer's** article: The Writer, the Philosopher, and the Chasidic Story. The article looked at how secular writers craftily—almost imperceptibly—revised popular Chasidic stories to distort their message. There were many others, and eventually, in 1999, in honor of my son's Bar Mitzvah, I put together an anthology—*Feeding Among the Lilies*—of Wellsprings' best pieces until that date. The magazine also featured symposia on different themes like educational theories or the halakhic and hashkafic ramifications of the new reproductive technologies.

## HOW DID YOU GET TO LUBAVITCH INTERNATIONAL?

In 1989, while I was working on Wellsprings, I began to work at Lubavitch Headquarters, writing press releases and other communications—including the introduction to the Sefer HaShluchim—which the Rebbe reviewed (was *magiah*). I soon realized that no one was reporting on the work that the Rebbe's shluchim were doing. This was before the internet days. Shluchim were already doing so many amazing things, but who knew about it? So together with others at Headquarters, we established the Lubavitch International Magazine. I continued working on both publications until 2004, when I finally put Wellsprings aside and turned my focus entirely on Lubavitch International. Over time, it went through many iterations. We also created an online version—Lubavitch.com. Today we feature a mix of articles that look at the work of shluchim around the world, as well as conceptual pieces.

## WHAT'S YOUR SOURCE OF MOTIVATION?

When the first issue of Lubavitch International Magazine was presented to the Rebbe by Rabbi Krinsky, the Rebbe went through it carefully and asked how many times a year it was published. Af-



ter hearing the response, the Rebbe said that we should "Double its frequency because it raises the prestige of the Shluchim" ("*Es heibt uf dem prestige fun di shluchim*"). He also said we should include a card in the magazine for reader feedback.

Those years, I prepared A Message From the Rebbe in each issue based on a *sicha*. The Rebbe would review it and make his editorial marks on it. He did that as well with my own editorials. It was apparent to me that the Rebbe attributed great power to the printed word, but at the time, I don't think I understood quite how powerful it is. Today, after years of reader feedback, I understand. The idea that it is possible to have critical impact through the magazine—that's a source of motivation.

## WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

The magazine has a readership of about 120,000. Among them are heads of Jewish organizations, from Reform to Satmar. People in leadership po-

sitions across the Jewish organizational world pay close attention to Lubavitch International. Our readers are the *baalei-batim* of shluchim across the U.S. and in many English-speaking countries abroad. We have readers who are only minimally engaged in anything Jewish, and many shluchim order the magazine in large quantities for their communities.

This success is the result of an amazing team that works with me—excellent writers, some who have worked with me for years, some new—and a production team without whom this magazine and website would never have grown as it has. Everyone involved is dedicated in a way that makes it possible for us to produce a publication that is of a consistently high standard.

### CAN YOU TELL US WHAT KINDS OF STORIES AN ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE INCLUDES?

The magazine has a lively mix of news articles, interviews, features, and book reviews. We've led with some of the most important conversations—very often before other Jewish media examine these issues.

Pick up a copy and you'll find stories on just about everything you can imagine shluchim are involved with: preventing cremation, countering intermarriage, combating antisemitism on campus, a feature on Jewish life in a particular country, or an interview with a lay leader about his relationship with his local shluchim... It's as varied as Chabad's activities are.

### WHO ARE SOME OF THE PEOPLE YOU'VE INTERVIEWED IN LUBAVITCH INTERNATIONAL?

I've interviewed many interesting personalities, people who have had close guidance from or relationships with the Rebbe, like Rabbi **Shmuel Azimov** A"H whom I visited in Paris, the Rebbe's doctor **Dr. Ira Weiss**, **Elie Wiesel**, Rabbi **Adin Steinsaltz**, Rabbi **Jonathan Saks** and others.

I also get to travel and visit Shluchim whom we want to write about, and it's always inspiring for me to see them at work in their communities. Most recently, I visited Serbia and Croatia and featured



each one as a cover story that looked at how they began their shlichus and how it evolved against the backdrop of their particular country, culture, and challenges.

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

After each new issue goes out, there's a period of anticipation... and then the feedback comes. We never know where the magazine will end up, and always, there are terrific surprises. We had no idea that this important judge, or this high-powered entrepreneur was reading it. A shlucha called me to tell me that the magazine saved a woman in her community who was about to kill herself. (The woman eventually wrote to me and we published her letter.) A shliach in Ukraine told us that as the result of a story we did about his orphanage, he got a check in the mail of \$50,000.00 from someone he never met. A Jewish woman—a journalist—stumbled upon the magazine and said that it opened a world to her that she never knew existed.

### WHAT WAS/IS THE DETERRENT IN YOUR PATH, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

I wouldn't call it a deterrent, but there are challenges. First of all, it's a huge responsibility. The printed word can't be deleted. Once it's published, that's it. Forever. So it can be stressful, and after each issue goes to print, I lose sleep. And invariably, once the issue comes out, I'll realize what I could have done better. That's tough, but you have to be willing to take responsibility and know that it's never going to be perfect. Personally, once I came to accept that, I could continue.

Then there's the challenge of writing for such an eclectic readership. How do we make one magazine work for such a diversity of readers? Even among shluchim, some want us to treat certain topics directly, others want us to avoid touchy issues. So it's about finding a balance and making sure that we can inform, educate, and inspire readers about our values, without offending or alienating anyone.

Producing an issue is a long, painstaking process of many months. For me, there is burnout. And always, after each issue, I ask myself, "How are we going to do better than this one?" BH, I feel we have the Rebbe's brochos and have managed to keep producing one excellent issue after another.

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

Bais Rivkah is where it all began. The *chayus* we experienced as the Rebbe's Chasidim is something that I absorbed in Bais Rivkah. My school days were so joyful. We were on fire with pride, with energy, with the conviction that we had real agency in carrying the Rebbe's vision forward.

### CAN YOU RECALL A MEMORABLE MOMENT THAT STAYED WITH YOU?

Rabbi Yaakov Majeski A"H was our elementary school principal and he had so much warmth and love for his students. His kindness made an impression on me—then a fourth grader. To have a principal who made you feel that he truly cared about you, a principal who exuded warmth and concern for his students—it has stayed with me all these years. I was once called into his office because I misbehaved, and I really expected to be reprimanded, yet there was nothing but kindness in the gentle way he spoke to me. I felt like I wouldn't want to disappoint him. I carry that memory with me. ■



# HEALTHY, HAPPY, FRUM

## A VETERAN MECHANES SHARES HER INSIGHT INTO EFFECTIVE CHINUCH

Dena (Greene) Gorkin, Crown Heights  
*Teacher, Bais Rivkah Seminary*

As told to Chanie Gorkin, Crown Heights  
*Graduating Class of 5776 (2016)*



*I've always grown up with chinuch being a big priority at home, since both my parents are very into education. Today I decided to sit down with my mother (I scheduled a meeting like every other citizen) and I asked her to share with the BR Embrace readership what motivated her to go into chinuch, and what insights she can share based on her many years of experience in this field.*

### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN CHINUCH?

I was fortunate to go to a small out-of-town school where most teachers really knew their students and understood their individual needs. There were two kinds of teachers in my school career that inspired me to go into chinuch: the first were the teachers who saw the potential in every student and really pushed each one to succeed, teachers like Mrs. Ha-



dassah Carelebach, Rabbi Yisroel Gordon, and others whose paths I was fortunate enough to cross. The other type were like my ninth grade math teacher, who said to me, “Dena, you’re a very nice girl, but you should never do anything in the future that requires knowledge of math.” The first category of teachers made me understand how an educator could make you soar. And the other made me realize a teacher’s power to break a student’s desire to succeed. Thankfully, I chose a career path where excellent math skills are not something that I need to rely on on a daily basis. I’m also thankful that although I still have not mastered the quadratic equation, I learned a life-long lesson about what not to do as a teacher.

## WHEN DID YOU START WORKING IN BAIS RIVKAH?

My first adventure in Bais Rivkah was as a seminary dorm counselor, which I did before I was married. I remember meeting with Morah Gorovitz and Mrs. Groner, and being awed by their knowledge and their intense focus on chinuch. I got married in the middle of that year, and my next foray into Bais Rivkah was a few years later, when I began teaching psychology in Seminary Alef. One of the things that I loved (and still love) about teaching in Bais Rivkah Seminary, is that Morah Gorovitz truly empowers her teachers to use their talents to reach their students.

I’ve been teaching in seminary since 1989, and my enthusiasm in this role has never waned. I now teach both Seminary Alef and Seminary Beis, and I love learning from my students as much as I love teaching them.

## SO... THEN YOU GOT DEMOTED TO HIGH SCHOOL? ;)

In 2000, I added ‘Ninth Grade Mechaneches’ to my job resume, and I found renewed energy in working with younger students. My interview for the job in Bais Rivkah High School took place in the checkout line at Kol Tuv, where Rabbi Benjy Stock approached me (hashgacha protis, huh?) and asked me if I wanted a job in Bais Rivkah, and if so, which department would I like to work in. Ever since I had graduated high school, it had been my dream to work in high school, because I always felt that

*Ever since I had graduated high school, it had been my dream to work in high school, because I always felt that the connections you can make with students in their teenage years are so powerful.*

the connections you can make with students in their teenage years are so powerful.

## WHAT DID YOUR JOB AS MECHANECHES ENTAIL?

I split my time between teaching Sha’as Chinuch, meeting with students individually (the girls called it ‘yechidus’), and running a program called “The Learning Co-Op”, where I set up girls who were struggling academically with seminary students, who tutored them. As part of The Learning Co-Op, I also created some non-academic learning opportunities that were open to ninth graders. At one point, we had a knitting club (sans rocking chairs), a work-



*Mrs. Gorkin as a child*

shop on handwriting analysis, and other interesting occasional programs. One of the programs that we ran consistently was ‘Study Skills’. We covered tips on memorization, stress-reduction, note-taking, and other strategies for more successful learning.

But the biggest project that I worked on in Bais Rivkah High School was ‘Health Day’. Health Day was the brainchild of one of my ninth grade students, Liba Bard-Wigdor, who said: “We spend our days learning to improve our ruchnius, but what about our gashmius? What about our mental health? Wouldn’t it be great if we had something in school that ad-

*People who know me have heard me say that, “healthy, happy, frum” is the path to being a whole chossid.*

## EMOTIONAL HEALTH? HOW DOES IT IMPACT SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND SCHOLASTIC SUCCESS?

People who know me have heard me say that, “healthy, happy, frum,” is the path to being a whole chossid.

The objective of raising children to serve Hashem is very difficult to reach without ensuring that the building blocks of physical and emotional health are stable. We are living in times where the number of mental and emotional health issues has skyrocketed. You don’t have a single class in any school today that doesn’t include 20% or more of students struggling with anxiety, depression, ADHD, and other similar challenges. Another 20% are living with difficult life circumstances that get in the way of their productivity in the classroom. Would it be correct for us to say that if we’ve reached 60% of our students, our chinuch is a success? The answer is a resounding no! Our job is to reach every single student. Therefore, I believe that in this day and age, focusing on students’ emotional health is priority number one. There are many letters from the Rebbe addressing mental health and the importance of attending to our emotional well-being. The Frierdiker Rebbe says that when a person is broken-hearted and has low self-esteem, the light of his intelligence is dimmed and his emotions are stunted. It is therefore the responsibility of every mechaneches to address the emotional needs of her students in order for learning to take place.

And when teachers cue in to the emotional needs of the students who *obviously* need this connection, they will provide the best possible education for *all* students, even the ones who seem to be emotionally more intact.

## WHAT ARE THE OPTIMAL CONDITIONS FOR A CHILD’S GROWTH?

An environment that is structured but not rigid, empathic but not pampering or pandering, and one that celebrates success, no matter how small. Sounds simple enough, right?



Recently graduated students at BCA

dressed those issues?” She then went on to tell me about a family friend who is a doctor, whom she could get to speak to the students. We sat in my office and brainstormed different topics that we thought would be of interest and help to the high school girls. Liba informed some of her grademates about the idea of Health Day, and it just took off! We put together a full-day program consisting of medical professionals, mental health professionals, a skin-care expert, a juicing station, and lots more. It came full-circle this year, when I was asked to introduce it to the current students in high school. It was inspiring to see how this initiative that we started years ago not only continues to live on, but has become an accepted and well-anticipated part of Bais Rivkah’s yearly activities.

## WHY ARE YOU SO INTO



Mrs. Gorkin and her Pre-IA teacher, Mrs. Carlebach

## 6. Get money!

This is a framework, but by no means an exhaustive list, of what is really involved in creating a growth-minded environment.

## EVEN IN SUCH A UTOPIAN ENVIRONMENT, HOW DO YOU ACTUALLY MOTIVATE CHILDREN TO WANT TO GROW?

Give them opportunities to succeed. If a child is good at only one thing, bombard her with opportunities to do that thing, and then celebrate the success. If a child is *not* particularly good at something, this does not mean she cannot succeed at it in some measure. When I taught in Bais Rivkah, I printed out a motto and gave it to each of my students on the first day of class. It said: “A mistake is a lesson; that’s why they say, ‘learn from your mistakes.’” When my students read a possuk and attempted to translate, I congratulated them even if they got one word correct. Rewarding effort

*The Friediker Rebbe says that when a person is broken-hearted and has low self-esteem, the light of his intelligence is dimmed and his emotions are stunted.*

motivates a child to try again and again, constantly moving closer to her goals. Of course the ultimate goal is to be able to translate the entire possuk perfectly, but she needs to understand that every time she exercises her learning muscles, she increases her capacity for learning, and through that her ability to achieve her ultimate goals.

It actually *can* be accomplished, in six steps:

1. Be constantly aware that chinuch is your shlichus, and your students are your community. Treat each student as you would treat an important “Balabos” who participates in your Chabad House activities.
2. Hire like-minded staff who are creative and who approach the shlichus with full ownership. (This goes for staff in administration, teaching, and guidance.)
3. Constantly seek practical ways to make the school environment one of warmth and, more importantly, one of meaningful connection between staff and students. Students who feel connected to their teachers will in turn feel connected to yiddishkeit and to learning.
4. Create clear rules and boundaries, with clear and consistent consequences. Of course, exceptions are always needed when dealing with human beings. In a school setting, students must be spoken to openly and honestly when exceptions are granted. A school must run on an educator’s understanding of fairness, not on a student’s understanding of fairness, and every student needs to know that fair means each person gets what she needs.
5. Respect the needs and input of parents. Parenting today comes along with so many challenges, and school can alleviate some of those challenges by listening and being responsive.

## WORD HAS IT THAT YOU'RE VERY INTO כללי חינוך והדרכה – WHAT ARE SOME INSIGHTS YOU HAVE GLEANED FROM IT, THAT HAVE HELPED YOU IN YOUR CHINUCH CAREER?

The importance of understanding the gashmius and ruchniyus background of each student is a prerequisite for teaching. How will you teach about כיבוד אב ואם in a classroom where a student's mother recently passed away? How will you alter the homework schedule of a student who travels an hour and a half to and from school every day? How will you present the idea of מתן תורה in a classroom where you surely have students who are questioning their relationship with Torah? How will you answer a student who is addicted to her cellphone, when she asks you about cellphone usage on shabbos? The Friediker Rebbe urges us to know where our students are coming from, so that we can effectively guide them to where they need to go.

Another crucial point for all educators to take to heart is the importance of self-awareness and self-inspection. We must constantly be growing both personally and professionally. Having a mashpia is essential

*Therefore, creating an association between what feels good and what is right, increases the chances that a child or teen will do what is right.*

to this growth process. The Friediker Rebbe speaks about self-love as the ultimate hindrance to an educator's success. Self-love desensitizes us to our own flaws, and keeps us in a state of complacency, which is the *opposite* of growth.

## WHAT CAN PARENTS DO IF THEIR CHILDREN ARE STRUGGLING IN SCHOOL?

First and foremost, try to work with the school. School principals and teachers are there to help students achieve their academic, social, emotional, and spiritual growth. If you see your child struggling in any of these areas, see where the school can be of help. If your child is spending eight hours a day in a school environment, it is tremendously important for her to have allies there. Identify one or two allies at your child's school and help them under-



*Mrs. Gorkin with former BCA students*

stand your child's needs so that they can provide him/her with an optimal educational environment. Aside from this, parents can work on creating a home environment that fosters a love of learning; parents should read with their children, play educational games, and express joy at learning a new concept or gaining a new skill-set. By setting the tone at home that learning is enjoyable, we help build more positive attitudes toward school.

## WHAT CAN TEACHERS/ PARENTS DO IF A TEEN IS DISENCHANTED OR JUST DOESN'T CARE?

Generally, if a teen is disenchanted, those feelings started years before they were apparent. Love of learning and love of Yiddishkeit are firmly intertwined with the love of trusted adults, whether they are parents, teachers or mentors. Children associate learning and Yiddishkeit with the adults in their lives who teach them either by example or through direct instruction. One of the most effective ways to turn a disenfranchised child back on, is to connect him/her with positive role models. Children, and teenagers as well, are prone to doing what feels good over what is right. Therefore, creating an association between what feels good and what is right, increases the chances that a child or teen will *do* what is right. Teachers inviting students to bake challah with them, or join them on a trip to the ohel, gives students a chance to connect a personal relationship with a mitzvah, thus endearing the mitzvah to them.

Several years ago, friends of ours visited us in the country. On Shabbos morning, my husband got ready to walk to shul with his guest, when the guest's nine-year-old daughter appeared at the door, ready to join. My husband expressed concern that this little girl would not be able to make the mile and a half trek to shul, and suggested that she stay home. The little girl responded, "No, I always go to shul. It's a time for heart-to-heart talks with my father." By the age of nine, this girl had already learned that going to shul is an enjoyable activity. And you can bet that even as an adult, when she no longer goes to shul with her father, she associates going to shul with quality time spent with a loving parent.

## ANY PARTING WORDS OF WISDOM? (WELL, NOT EXACTLY 'PARTING'— I'LL CATCH YOU IN A FEW MINUTES AT SUPPER.)

To be mechanech children today in any capacity, your #1 tool is unconditional love. The Rebbe is our greatest role model for this, as is evidenced in the way that he greeted and accepted people from all walks of life simply because they were Yidden. This by no means implies that firm guidance and discipline are out the window; the Rebbe modeled this as well, carefully crafting his words when giving a Chossid guidance in his behavior or a push to accomplish more. Without clear rules and guidelines, no child can thrive. However, discipline is effective only on a foundation of unconditional love. The two must go hand in hand in the education of the generation of Moshiach. ■



*Mrs Gorkin and her Bais Rivkah girls*

# A.D.D.

## STAGES FOR SHIDDUCH SUCCESS STORIES

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Rochel (Hecht) Duchman, Los Angeles, California  
*Graduating class of 5734 (1974)*

### FIRST LEG OF THE JOURNEY

It has been many moons since I walked the hallowed hallways of Bais Rivkah. In fact, I walked those hallways in multiple locations; first on Stone Ave, then on Church Ave, and finally on Snyder Ave.

As I reminisce back to those hallways, the sweet memories embrace me.

Bais Rivkah served as a foundational institution in my life. It imbued me with fundamental lessons and valuable tools, that will forever hold a place in my heart.

Life is a journey. At times, there are stops along the way, but those stops are not interruptions to life - they are part of that journey. I will illustrate this idea with a particular experience I vividly recall from my journeys to school during the earlier years.

My older sister would take us to school every day. One cold winter morning, she schlepped us to school via two city buses, only to reach school and find out that there was no working heat! We had to turn right around and embark on the return journey home. I have yet to find out how my sister felt about the situation, but I know that *we* were ecstatic; for us, it was another sweet day, as we made our way home laden with the candy that we picked up at the store adjacent to the bus stop. I valued and enjoyed school immensely, but I sure was thankful to Hashem that it was *school* that had no heat, and not the candy store. To me, this “stop” was a sweet part of my journey.

My school experience was truly a wonderful one. Mrs. Raskin and Mrs. Rubashkin OBM, would serve us lunch with such great love and care, ensuring that each student had something that *she* liked. Rabbi Golden OBM and Rabbi Majesky disciplined us with a deep affection that we felt and knew was real. As I peer back at some of these journeys, I am drawn to believe that all of it served as the ante chamber for what I am currently involved in.

### THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Well, you may be wondering what I do. Before I address that, I'd like to explain what I *did*, which led me to



*Do not allow miscommunication to derail a shidduch, and do not allow dishonest communication to hurt others.*

what I am involved in today.

I started off as a fresh-faced Shlucha in Cincinnati, Ohio, when I was newly married to my husband Rabbi Mendel Duchman. There I was on the frontlines of the Rebbe's army, implementing the teachings of Bais Rivkah in a real and practical way. I was following the Rebbe as my guiding light, and my father and mother as a living example of what it means to channel that light. I was so humbled by the opportunity I had to share the light of Torah and Chassidus with others.

From there, a shlichus opportunity came knocking at my door, in the form of Irvine, California. It was a roller-coaster ride and an absolute honor, all wrapped in one. I was raising my growing family of daughters (yes, only daughters), and then finally, I was baruch Hashem blessed with a son. At the same time, I was raising my 'spiritual family' of Jews. My family thrived, and our community thrived.

Hashem was and is the Divine designer behind every single step that we take. Moving to Irvine made me realize that all of my training and experience brought about a sincere love and desire in me, to help others.

Using a great deal of sensitivity to help people, was a quality that I modeled and held dear. From my school and camp experiences, as well as learning from my parents and the Rebbe, I saw the great significance in this noble trait. I also realized that uplifting those whom I interacted with, left me feeling uplifted myself.

I became set on the idea that helping people truly was my calling in life. As I took each step that Hashem had planned for me to take, I noticed that I had a particular knack for helping people deal with the shidduch process. With great effort and chasdei shomayim, I had married off my six daughters and my son. From my own experience, I recognized that chasdei shomayim and mazel played a huge role in the success of a shidduch, but there was more to it. I concluded that there had to be a method to the shidduch 'madness', and that there *surely* must be a better way of going about it than just shouting from the treetops that there is a crisis. I came up with practical steps that I could implement to help others through the process, and then took initia-

tive to implement them and make my vision a reality.

Attaining coaching credentials was important to me. It gave formality and tools to some of the ideas that I came up with, and enabled me to proliferate them.

As much as I am on a mission of uplifting others by doing this work, I am equally on a mission of hakaras hatov! The work that I am doing is an expression of my thanks to Hashem on behalf of the shidduchim that He helped me make for my children and for others.

## AIMING FOR SHIDDUCH SUCCESS

Every person involved in a shidduch must put his/her best foot forward by allotting the attention necessary to assisting those who need help; and while 'it takes two to tango', it takes many more to make a shidduch. Parents and people and *still* more people play vital roles in the shidduch process. This understanding led me to establish the first integral component of the shidduch process: COMMUNICATION!

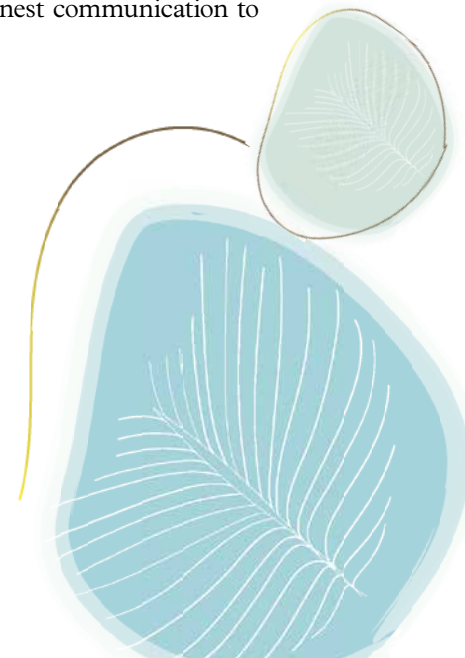
*The new method, known by the acronym A.D.D, qualifies the dating process into three stages.*

*Yes, communicate.*

Do it clearly, do it consistently, and do it honestly. Communicate with prospective shidduchim. Communicate with shadchanim. And most importantly, communicate with your sons and daughters throughout the entire dating process, before and after each date. Do not allow miscommunication to derail a shidduch, and do not allow dishonest communication to hurt others.

## EQUATION FOR CLARITY

A new measuring stick can be used to help dating couples determine where they are holding in the dating process. Leaving behind the old method of keeping tabs on



which number date the couple is up to, I like to focus on understanding where they are holding in terms of ‘stages in dating’. The new method, known by the acronym A.D.D, qualifies the dating process into three stages. Learning about and incorporating the concept of A.D.D will bring forth successful results.

### A IS FOR ATTRACTION

This seems basic, but it is often overlooked. Boys and girls in this stage should simply discern whether or not they enjoy each other’s company and whether there is chemistry or attraction.

### D IS FOR DIRECTION

Attraction is a good start, but it needs to be coupled with shared goals and aspirations. This means that the couple should discuss their values, and ultimately ensure that they have the same views on critical topics that will shape the general direction of their lives. This stage is the most lengthy part of the dating process.

### D IS FOR DECISION/DISCLOSURE

The skeleton-bone secrets at the back of your closet do not need to be dangled about on your first date. However, if you reach the point where you find that the attraction and direction indicate that this is a person whom you would want to spend the rest of your life with, then it is time to disclose information that should be known. This does not mean that we assume everyone has a grand old secret that is earth-shattering, but it does mean that a level of comfort and confidence must be reached.

By stage three, the couple would be ready to make a decision. Of course, a decision in the negative can be made a lot earlier, if the attraction and direction are not compatible. When a *positive* outcome seems to be on the horizon, then an exciting decision can be made.

My online courses have proven to be useful for parents of prospective daters as well as for the boys and girls themselves. (Separate classes are given for girls and boys.)

The online courses cover all sorts of vital dating topics, from planning dates to working through assumptions and preconceived notions. I teach some very practical steps that I took when mak-

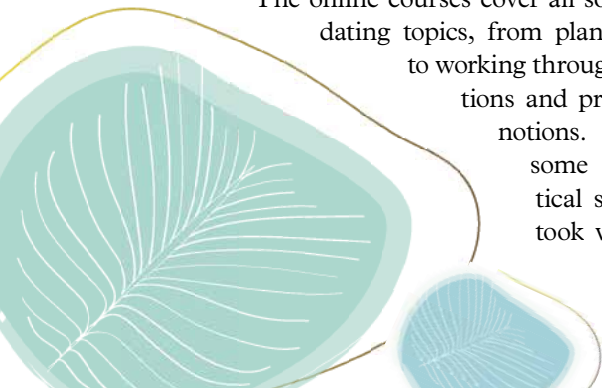
*I am not oblivious to the ‘crisis’, but I don’t think that the endless number of chats and sophisticated op-eds are the ultimate solution. With the attitude of “tut altz vos ir kent”, doing everything that we possibly can to help out, we will definitely produce real results.*

ing the shidduchim of my children, as well as some of the less-known tricks of the trade that can spark and inspire success.

I am fortunate to draw a wealth of inspiration from my father (a”h) and my mother- prototype Chassidim of the Rebbe with unwavering commitment to being part of the solution to any problem. As we all know, the Rebbe was well-aware of the problems of the world. But the Rebbe knew that kvetching about the problem is counterproductive, and therefore, as our leader, the Rebbe taught us that no challenge is too great to be tackled. I believe the same is true about shidduchim. I am not oblivious to the ‘crisis’, but I don’t think that the endless number of chats and sophisticated op-eds are the ultimate solution. With the attitude of “tut altz vos ir kent”, doing everything that we possibly can to help out, we will definitely produce real results.

The words of my father still ring in my ears. He shared with me what the Friediker Rebbe once said to the chassidim in 770: “American youth are a good dough, but you have to knead it, and if you knead it properly, it comes out right”. This was spoken on a general note, but it is strikingly true to my involvement with shidduchim. I strive to see the positive in all the boys and girls whom I deal with, and with the proper ‘kneading’ and coaching, I am sure that there is an abundance of blessings awaiting manifestation, with many more Simchas throughout the entire world. ■

*C. Rochel Hecht/Duchman  
ICT Certified Coach  
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*A previous virtual shidduch workshop Mrs. Duchman led for single ladies.*

# WHO BEGAN



## HOO'S JOURNEY

---

Zeesy Gurevitch, Crown Heights  
*Graduating class of 5774 (2014)*



“There’s not enough Chessed being done for our own families here in Crown Heights. What can we do to change that?” It was these words, being discussed on the couch in the G.O. room in the springtime of my eleventh-grade year, that led my cousin Mirel and me to launch a new program to help families in the community. Many of us can relate to the feeling of wanting to grow our *inreach* activities here within our own community, and Mirel and I wanted to do something to really make a difference. Now that the problem was presented, we were already on the way to finding a remedy. The practical solution now was up to us! Exhilarated with the opportunity for leadership and to make an impact on the community, we got to work developing our program. First, we had to clearly define our goal. Then came the discussions. Should Chessed hours be mandatory? Would we give incentives? How would each family coordinate with its volunteers? Which grades would take part? What would we name our community Chessed program? One thing was certain.

We knew our idea was on the launchpad for something powerful that would touch many people, volunteers and families alike.

It was a eureka moment for us when we had the idea to name our new program HOO: Helping Our Own. For us, the name HOO really expressed the program's nature. As Lubavitchers, we are naturally accustomed to doing Shlichus as *outreach*. We are implanted with the drive to distribute Neshek on Friday afternoons, run day camps, and to offer passionate answers to strangers we meet who are curious about Yiddishkeit. But what about our next-door neighbors? Why haven't we put more effort yet into helping our own community?

Now picture this: Imagine a capacious goblet with many spouts ingeniously designed to pour forth wine and fill all the shot glasses. The *becher* may be tastefully designed and made of expensive metals, but regardless of its value, it does not have the capacity to give wine to the other cups if it hasn't been filled. "If you know Aleph, teach Aleph" is a mantra we live by as Chabad Chassidim. It is our prerogative to share our knowledge and our resources with others, spreading Torah and Chassidus outward. For this, we must first ensure that our own cups are filled with what to share. We need to extend ourselves to help our own community, however the need is presented. It may be your daugh-

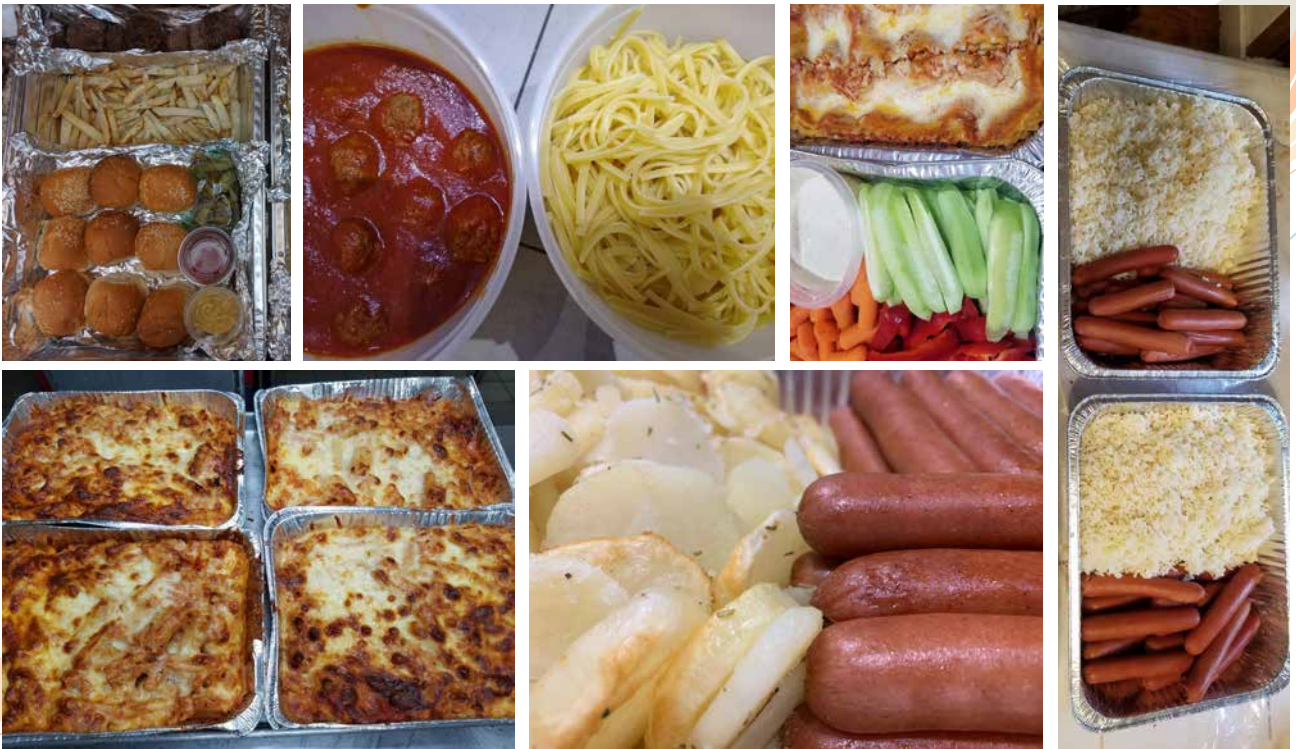
*It was a Eureka! moment for us when we had the idea to name our new program HOO: Helping Our Own.*

ter's classmate who doesn't have many friends or the pleasant neighbor who seems to have it all together but could really use an extra pair of hands with her kids. In truth, we can all benefit from more kindness and warmhearted gestures, and HOO is here to provide that for as many people as possible.

The HOO umbrella involves two groups:

The first is the families. Helping families starts by matching them with volunteers based on the kind of help each one needs. It also includes sending the children gifts before Yom Tov and ensuring that every family who reaches out is assigned a volunteer.

Second is our dedicated volunteers. Showing support to our volunteers means being there to listen, giving tips for playing with children, and showing appreciation by offering treats and prizes for their volunteer hours. We also have a system for logging points, volunteer appreciation events, end of year trips, and more.



*Suppers cooked by HOO volunteers*

While the students did have a quota of hours to meet each semester, we heard time and again of how the connection with their HOO families gave them a real sense of fulfillment and connection, compelling them to give time and energy beyond the mandatory quota. A tenth-grade volunteer shared: “I feel privileged to be part of something as special as HOO. It’s a meaningful and practical way to give of myself to others.”

We’re grateful to have never felt like our program was on its own, but had support from so many individuals who helped us. When we organized an auction for our committed volunteers, our classmates and community took part in contributing to an impressive collection of prizes. There were delicious muffins, personalized Tehillims, free math tutoring, and local store gift cards to name a few. This showed us that HOO wasn’t merely our personal project, and neither was it just a school-wide mission. Rather, HOO is our community’s project, and we all share the responsibility.

Our small acts of kindness have an exponentially growing impact on those around us. Giving to our own community, Crown Heights, is essentially giving to an infinite number of people who will impact many others in the future. Thousands of lives across the world have been shaped by the generosity and goodness taking place in our loveable Brooklyn shtetl. The convenience of supermarkets stocked with Kosher food, having strangers pay for our meter, and hosting vast

## *HOO is here to nurture the home-base of our Chabad-Lubavitch network.*

crowds throughout the year when we host conventions, events, and Shabbatons, are all part of what evokes the feeling of home and belonging for so many. While sending our teens and couples on Shlichus throughout the world, we need to simultaneously cultivate a sense of fulfillment at our home base to give our youth the tools and the confidence to accomplish their Shlichus. HOO is here to nurture the home-base of our Chabad-Lubavitch network.

We always dreamed that HOO’s projects would grow exponentially. When HOO first started, volunteers designed Chanukah games for HOO families. Now, HOO also offers home deliveries of freshly cooked dinners each week. Handing out mirrors & pens with our logo our first year has now evolved into giving our volunteers adorable beanies and sweatshirts. The volunteer base that started at 200 volunteers has now nearly doubled. Now, HOO and other local organizations provide an hour each week of free entertainment at the JCM, giving children the chance to experience exhibits along with their loving HOO volunteers. I am humbled



by the dedication, talent, and the commitment of Bais Rivkah girls; whether tenderly taking care of a newborn, giving children a fun time at the park, or visiting senior citizens and singing together, the generosity and kindness of Bais Rivkah girls are admirable.

I want to thank a very special person, Rabbi Benjy Stock, for being the visionary and biggest supporter of HOO, so that it has been able to evolve into what it is today. It was such a team effort. When HOO heads decorated the bulletin board with tracings of students' hands, our classmates came and offered their assistance. When we made iced coffee with whipped cream for an event, the Bais Rivkah kitchen staff stepped in to help us. On our way to our Six Flags trip with our volunteers, Rabbi Stock provided a delicious breakfast in his home after a meaningful Davening in 770.

*I once passed a Bubby on the street wearing a HOO sweatshirt with the logo we so carefully chose.*

When Mirel and I were graduating 12th grade, it was time to give our "Smicha" to the next years' leaders of HOO. As we explained the details of the program to them, we realized how the nuances of every project were mostly handled by so many others who took a personal interest in HOO as if the program was their own project.

In the era of Covid-19, HOO stepped up to the plate. Under the direction of Mrs. Shiffy Goldstein, HOO has been sending out fun sheets for families to print for their children and encouraging the volunteers to reach out in a virtual manner. The feedback has been tremendous.

HOO will always be my "baby"; my project. Looking back, I take pride when I see how it's grown on such a large scale. I once passed a Bubby on the street wearing a HOO sweatshirt with the logo we so carefully chose. She was likely wearing her granddaughter's sweater without giving it much thought, but to me, that's a nachas moment. To me, the design of the sweater symbolizes so much more than the mere hours spent choosing the colors. It represents the achdus our community has, the encouraging hand we each try to lend each other, and the Infinite Source of kindness that keeps on giving. ▀



*Mrs. Korf's legendary "raps" are a highlight of many alumnae's memory reels.*

*Here is a rap she dedicated to HOO to encourage her students to keep up the great work:*

## HOO RAP

We are making a community  
We're all one giant family  
We show we really understand  
We'll lend a helping hand

We won't do all your laundry chores  
Or wash your dishes, sweep your floors  
We'll take your children out to play  
And make it a great day

We understand your children's plight  
Especially when near to night  
Supper's early- then we'll go  
The mother- rest will know

The zechus will help us on our test  
The house so pleasant mom could rest  
And with this blessing, you will see  
We're a community

So if you're asking, HOO are we?  
We're helping our community  
We'll do our share, we'll show we care  
So join us you and me

# Back Towards the Future

---

Chiena Avtzon, Crown Heights (Hong Kong)  
*Graduating Class of 5766 (2006)*



We can't wait for things to go back to normal.

Yet I also know I don't really want to go back there. You see when things were normal, I was constantly on the run. I worked 12 hour days, constantly pushing myself to do more, to get ahead. After all, isn't life a game, with she who plays smartest and hardest winning? I lived with lots of pressure, mild anxiety, and a constant worry of making mistakes that were going to mess things up big time.

Then came corona. And I got early access.

As someone who works in the fashion industry with manufacturing based in China, I began to hear about this thing called the coronavirus in late January. When we got the packing list for the spring/summer line that our factories shipped, we were thrown for a loop. They had short shipped us on almost every single item. It was inconvenient and I was frustrated with my bad luck, especially after we had spent lengthy phone conversations addressing this issue.

This wasn't supposed to happen after all the work that we put in to get it right.

But we could also sort it out. We would reorder for immediately after their Chinese New Year break, which would involve air-freighting these fill-in pieces, but at least we would have full stock. What is fixable can't hurt you, right?

Then I started to hear the rumors of COVID-19 leaving China, and then a few days after that, news of China's decision to extend the holiday and lockdown the country.

Suddenly, our reorder wasn't probable anymore. Once again, I sighed at my bad luck. Why of all times to receive a short shipment, did it need to be right now, when I had no ability to reorder for the foreseeable future?

Then came the next piece of bad luck. I asked someone in the office to create a report on what was missing so that we could generate reorders as soon as the factories reopened, but she needed an updated packing list from the factory - and we couldn't get it because, that's right, the factory was closed.

This was taking too long. I wrung my hands as precious days slipped through our fingers. At the rate things were moving, it might not even be worth reordering. The items would come too late. Why did they factories not send us enough? Why did there need to be this crazy virus that shut the factories for extra weeks? Why couldn't our report get generated in a more timely manner? Why? Why? Why?

I reminded myself that this too is for the good, but it felt

like rhetoric. I figured this would be one of those times that I would look back at and sum up as "this too was for the good, but I still don't see why."

Then New York began its lockdown. Stores were forced to shut, and it became clear that we wouldn't need that much stock for reorders. I let out a huge sigh of relief. Of all seasons, the shipment was less than I wanted, but exactly what I needed.

I sat there in my office after everyone left - not just for

*Then came corona. And I got early access.*

the day, but the foreseeable future - and my despair gave way to realization. We truly don't know what good is. We don't know the plan either. But there is a plan and it's good. Embracing the reality and saying, "Gam zu l'tovah," gives us a special ability to see blessings in the bad. So as things went from bad to worse, I reminded myself that, just like the missing items in the shipment, this will be good.

And so I began to search for the good I knew was there.

It wasn't easy. So many things were happening that seemed bad. I mean really bad. On top of the unfath-



*Our store shuttered right before our biggest season, and while this posed a massive financial risk, it brought a tremendous opportunity as well.*

omable tragedies, there are the huge losses to people, their lives, and their livelihoods.

Our store shuttered right before our biggest season, and while this posed a massive financial risk, it brought a tremendous opportunity as well. I had been saying for a long while that I needed a break just to think and reorganize. I wished we could close for two weeks, but it was just impossible to shut without good reason.

In the end, I got even more than the two weeks I was hoping for. I had time to refocus. In the two months since we closed, I had time to restructure. Of course, there was a lot of *Siyata Dishmaya* as well. As we got ready to reopen in May, I am so grateful I had this chance to slow down and get in touch with my business.

On a personal level, I was left to confront the fact that I was stuck in NYC, something I never would have picked by choice. I felt stuck in Crown Heights - I had canceled my ticket to China because of the outbreak there and then I couldn't go to out of town relatives, with their green grass and fresh air, because I'd been exposed. I was stuck in Crown Heights, and as the days and weeks moved on, I began to realized that this was really the best place for me in the long run. It dawned on

me that we are always exactly where we are supposed to be. If we stick around long enough, maybe we'll begin to realize our purpose there.

I let go of the worry, the pressure to succeed, the disappointment, the struggle, the Monday morning quarterbacking of all the things I could've done differently. I began to realize that I just have to do my part, to try, and the outcome will be what Hashem knows is best. I always knew aspired toward those mindsets, but I never thought I could get there. The extremity of this situation pushed us to do the impossible, to move mountains and cross oceans.

So no, I don't want things to go back to normal. We've come too far to go back.

*I want us to continue toward the future instead, where we can live with old safety and security, but as the people we've become in the time since then.*

I want us to continue toward the future instead, where we can live with old safety and security, but as the people we've become in the time since then. ■

*Chienna Avtzon is the owner of Three Bows boutique.*







# אשת חיל עטרת בעלה



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# Feminine Influence

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Compiled by Chanie (Block) Zalmanov, Queens, NY  
*Seminary 5744 (1984)*

*“The* Alter Rebbe showed how Ge’onim could become Chassidim. The Mittlerer Rebbe showed how young people could become Chassidim. The Tzemach Tzedek proved how even non-Chassidic Rabbis could become Chassidim...”

Rabbi Ari Raskin's grandmother, Rebbetzin Chaya Tzirlya Plotkin mentioned the above to the Rebbe once in Yechidus. She continued to articulate how each successive Rebbe had expanded the movement of Chabad Chassidus.

“And now,” she concluded, “the Rebbe is turning the women into Chassidim!” The Rebbe was very pleased with her description of him as, perhaps, the first Rebbe to invite the average woman to actively participate in the Chassidic movement.

It is now sixty-three years since this Yechidus, and the Rebbe's vision has since created a new reality on the ground: A woman of purpose. A woman with clear marching orders. A shlucha.

We are all shluchos, empowered and instructed by the Rebbe to inspire others and make a difference wherever we live. The joy every Chabad woman feels when she has even the tiniest impact- that's the expression of a burning vision in each of us, implanted there by the Rebbe, the urge to bring Moshiach. It's in our DNA, a dream that demands realization, and we are making it happen.

How? It's that special ability to reach out modestly and to

conquer through love. Shluchos are those women who take their feminine qualities and channel them to areas where they can accomplish what no one else can.

EMBRACE magazine reached out to a few of the myriad Bais Rivkah graduates out on Shlichus to catch a small glimpse into the inner thoughts and daily struggles of their lives; how they utilize the incredible power of feminine energy to change the world.

## *Getting in to Pull Them Out*

*The Alter Rebbe once encountered a few men who were extending a stick to a poor man stuck in a muddy ditch at the side of the road. He said, “To shlep him out, you need to actually get into the mud.”*

*Similarly, in a sicha of Shabbos Bereishis 5714, the Rebbe describes how much the neshama wants to daven and learn to connect to Hashem. We tell the neshama: “No! Go play ball for half an hour with a child so that afterward you can teach him kametz alef ah.”*

*How do you balance your day to day life with these directives in mind?*

**CHANIE ZALMANOV:** I was lucky enough to witness firsthand how Chassidim “muddy” themselves to shlep others out of the “mud.”

Growing up in London, Ontario, Canada, in the home of my parents, Dr. Yitzchok and Mrs. Leah Block, we children witnessed living and loving examples of Hiskashrus and Ahavas Yisroel on a daily basis. Spreading the love of Hashem and His Torah in any and every way conceivable, we never felt that my father’s thirst for learning or my mother’s desire to live in a normal Jewish environment dampened their enthusiasm to impact a Jewish soul.

We watched as my mother shopped, shlepped, and cooked from scratch till the early hours of Friday morning in order to host students and community members at her Shabbos table. We watched as she ran out in the morning to her beloved Gan Gani preschool, and as she stayed up late planning programs and preparing shiurim. We watched as my father spent hours on end counseling and helping students.

We watched as he helped them shlep furniture to their dorm rooms and took care of their every need as they adjusted to being away from home for the first time. And

then we watched as one by one, they began to learn with my father and celebrate Shabbos and Yom Tov with us! We learned that as shluchim everything they did was a means to an end, even if it seemed mundane.

I knew my father was a famous philosophy professor but success in that arena never really seemed to be a goal he was striving for. The President of the university he taught at once told him, “Dr. Block, you are moonlighting here as a professor.” He was right.

When my father wanted to drop out of Harvard and stay in 770 to learn, the Rebbe said, “No.” The Rebbe had a vision for my father. A vision of his Chossid wading into the “mud” of Greek philosophy as a means to end. And so it was—the esteemed philosopher earned the respect of all who knew him, and he unabashedly used his position to inspire the students he met around the world to love and live Yiddishkeit.

Those lessons learned were not lost on me, and although I still struggle to put the daily grind in perspective, the Rebbe’s vision of using any and every opportunity available to me to inspire the Jews I meet is ingrained in me in a very real way.

Two summers ago, I was struggling to stay sane in the midst of a hectic summer season. Endless details, from bussing to catering to trip waivers to art supplies were wearing me down. Late one Thursday night, I went to the Ohel to daven for *chizzuk*. I felt so “stuck in the mud.” I remember thinking, “So much Gashmiyus for so little Ruchniyus?” I felt guilty that I was so worn out because I knew the answer was... yes. So much work for a *davening*, a Shabbos party, and even for a single *bracha* to be made. On my way out I stopped to watch the video and at that moment the Rebbe began talking about the *mitzvah* of *Tefillin*. An animal was born and raised; grass was created as food for this animal, all for the purpose of creating a pair of *Tefillin*!

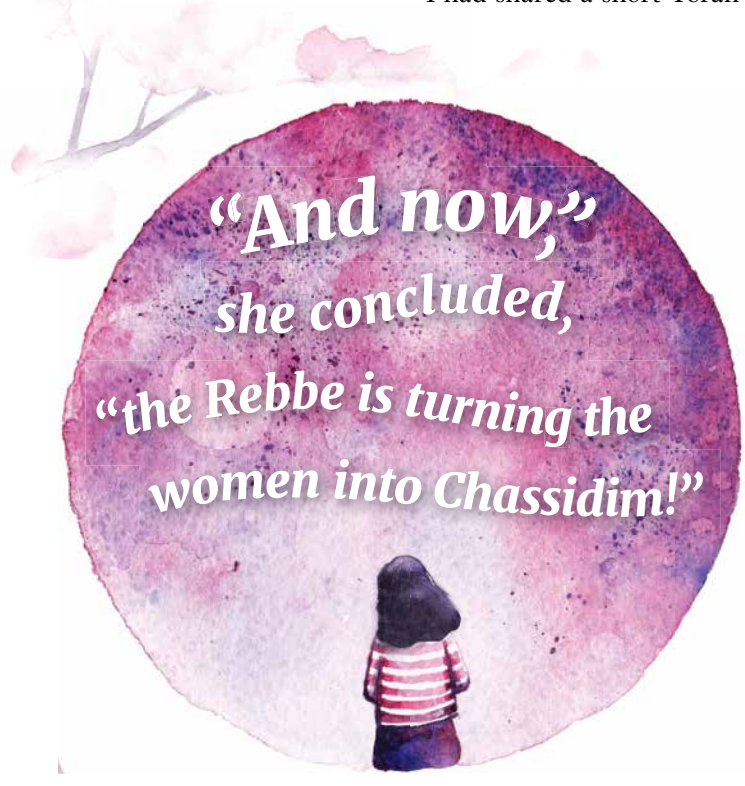
There was my *chizzuk*, loud and clear.

**GOLDIE GROSSBAUM:** About a year ago I made a Babka Bake event for women. With just a few emails, I had 35 ladies signed up. The event was great, but when I got home I felt so drained. Did it even make sense to spend so much energy just for babka? I just couldn’t help but wonder if it was all worth it. Sure, I had shared a short Torah thought, but that wasn’t

the same as teaching a proper class. There were so many other seemingly more meaningful ways I could have spent my time. I gave it more thought and realized that these 35 ladies who were so eager to come and learn how to make babka would likely not have shown up for a class. It’s my job as a shlucha to figure out how to invite their *Nefesh Habahamis* - without compromising on any of my

own standards! - so that their *Nefesh Elohis* can get engaged and involved. And sometimes, that means spending hours organizing and making babka, something not so high on my personal priority list, but that in itself is what can be the impetus to bringing these neshamos one step closer to *Yiddishkeit*.

**CHANIE KRASNIANSKI:** I feel so blessed that the *chinuch* we were given and the entire focus of Shlichus is *Ahavas Yisroel*. This applies not only to one’s Ruchnius needs but to their Gashmius, day to day needs as well. Day in and day out we have opportunities to help people in all areas of their lives, be it with their relationships, support system, health, *tzedakah*, as well as learning Torah, Jewish education, encouraging mitzvos, and building a Jewish family. I apply this to my own life as well. Although so much of my time is filled with the needs of our community, I



am constantly reminded that another Yid's Gashmius is my Ruchnius. This enthuses my whole life with a sense of purpose and drive. By extension, my whole family is involved in our Shlichus and excited by the sense of accomplishment and success that comes with each individual act of kindness and mitzvos.

## *Keeping it Hot*

*A Misnagid once remarked to a Chossid: "Your Shlichus is like throwing a boiling pot into the ocean! It's futile; it can't possibly have any effect."*

*The Chossid replied: "Yes, but if that pot is connected to a source of heat, it'll stay hot and will heat up the water around it!"*

*If it's a simple tip that works for you or lofty ideals that you strive for- what do you do to protect yourself from your "pot" getting cooled off? How do you keep your pot boiling?*

**CHANIE ZALMANOV:** Knowing that I am fulfilling my dream of raising a family on Shlichus helps me put things in perspective when life gets stressful. I am living the life I always wanted to live! How many people can say they are truly fulfilling their dreams?

In a very conscious and concrete way this keeps my "pot boiling" and helps me to stay calm and focused on my job in spite of all the very real distractions and detours on the way, of which there are many.

On a practical note, living in the suburbs, I enjoy listening to shiurim when I drive (even though it took a few decades of child-raising to be able to listen to something other than The Marvelous Middos Machine or Rabbi Burston). Having even just a few quiet moments to recharge goes a long way. I try to find some time each day to read or learn something inspiring from The Frierdiker Rebbe's Memoirs, A Chassidisher Derher, Sichos in English, Chayeinu, or Likkutei Sichos. We are very lucky to be living at a time where, thanks to technology, there is so much to choose from to get that daily injection of chayus. Sometimes the struggle is to focus for just 5 minutes!! I'm sure I'm not the first one to say that JEM Rebbe clips or Daily Lightpoints emails very often hit the spot and will lift my spirits for the day.

**GOLDIE GROSSBAUM:** "Keeping the pot boiling" is not just a side point; it has to be the 24/7 mode of

*An animal was born and raised;  
grass was created as food for  
this animal, all for the purpose  
of creating a pair of Tefillin!*

operating. Living in middle/upper class and super secular suburban America, the reminders are everywhere. Everyone is busy living the American dream, raising their 2 kids and dog, going on vacations, and saving up for retirement. We certainly don't fit the bill! It's something we actively remind ourselves of, and our kids know it too. We talk about how lucky we are that we live with the Torah and therefore have such a strong identity and focus on who we are. We look for every opportunity for our kids to get together with other shluchim's kids (Boruch Hashem we have shluchim as close as 25 minutes away) and to participate in whatever amazing opportunities there are for shluchim's kids. I would say it's specifically not the lofty - it's the day-in, day-out way of looking at where we live and why we are here that keeps us going. There's no way we could logically move here or be mekarev Yidden without the Rebbe's kochos, and we make an effort to constantly be aware of it and discuss it with our kids, too.

**CHANIE KRASNIANSKI:** As people age, many of them struggle with a mid-life crisis, redefining themselves, questioning their accomplishments and purpose in this world. One tremendous bracha of Shlichus is the absolute certainty that you have spent





your life doing what your neshama is meant to do. The only question is: did I do it fully? What other means can I use to succeed and reach even higher? The confidence that comes from not having to struggle with “what am I doing with my life” questions frees me up to focus on what’s really important: my family, my community, my relationship with Hashem and *Hiskashrus* to the Rebbe. I personally love learning *Maamarim* and now with the access to Torah classes online it is so accessible, I can start each day with a short class. I find that the ideas I learn pop into my mind throughout the day and invigorate me.

## *On Femininity*

*What is the most common discussion in reference to women and Judaism that is part of the ongoing conversation in your Chabad House?*

*The role of women in traditional Judaism, the high price many women pay as they juggle their lives in the secular world- what is your response to such dilemmas?*

**CHANIE ZALMANOV:** Many women I speak to will have similar questions but are really looking for inspiration or clarity on totally different issues. I find it’s so important to really listen carefully and try to understand *why* they’re asking that, realize where they’re coming from, and answer their questions with respect. But if they really have concerns or even an ax to grind, the most important thing you can do is just be a living example of how the Torah views women and our priorities. And that it is possible to be a powerful yet modest leader in every way. The more time they spend in my home or Chabad House, watching me and my family and community members interact, the more their questions will

just melt away. I’ve seen it happen often over the years.

No pie in the sky theories here, this has been happening for decades now and we are the lucky women to make it happen!

Our faith is strong, our positive energy is modest yet powerful...

If we want to change the world we need to put the focus on ourselves and our families and it will spread to the world. We must embrace our roles as the Rebbe’s Chassidim and shluchos and use our wisdom, sensitivity, and talents to lead the way in our homes, workplaces, Chabad Houses, and beyond. With patience, lots of patience, and our female intuition we can enhance the way others connect with Hashem, inspire the study of Torah, and nurture the mitzvos that grow naturally from this.

**GOLDIE GROSSBAUM:** The biggest challenge I find is to help these women differentiate between Torah and fiction. Before even getting to the woman’s role in Yiddishkeit, there are so many twisted misconceptions that they have been fed that have to be undone, piece by piece. For example, when talking about women in the Torah and they ask, “But in *The Red Tent* it says...” They have no idea that *The Red Tent* is historical fiction (at best) suiting a specific agenda, and has nothing to do with actual Torah. On the positive end, to see these women slowly open their eyes and see the beauty of Torah and its view of women is incredible. It’s not about putting women on the pedestal. I like to teach about the exemplary women in history and highlight through them the beauty of the Jewish Woman. I usually start by introducing the inherent internal char-



acteristics of the woman which perfectly complement the husband. It's not one better than the other. The man has external work and the woman's service is from within- it's simply different. The woman's unique attributes are all fueled internally. For instance, it was Miriam Hanevia's internal belief and conviction that, in a sense, spearheaded the redemption. Her certainty and gut feeling led her to be a noble leader, leading the Jewish women out of Egypt with tambourines and joy. It was this internal strength that enabled the women to bear children- a conduit to enable the women to be closest to Hashem. As they slowly sift through their misinformation and realize what is true and gain an appreciation and better understanding of who they are and their role, that is one of the many moments where I can truly feel that this is the Rebbe's koach, not something I could ever accomplish on my own.

**CHANIE KRASNIANSKI:** For many years, many questions regarding women and equality would come up. My general approach was that it's usually not about the individual question, but rather a general discomfort with what they perceive as the woman's role in Yiddish-



keit, much of it based on erroneous ideas. The need for equality is just the claim reflecting the inner search. The answers come from expelling the questions. I find that the longer I am on Shlichus, having BH raised a beautiful large *chassidische* family, as well as being very active in our Chabad House, running the preschool, teaching adult education, and so forth, the questions become moot. Our community sees firsthand the respect between husband and wife, the affection and attention to each child and by extension to each individual, and in general the total dedication equally of husband and wife, man and woman, boy and girl, to the love of Torah and Chassidus. They see how everyone's roles are seamlessly interdependent. It's



not about equal or better. Life is about balance and harmony working together for the larger picture. So although the questions still come up, nothing speaks to them better than real-life examples of the Torah's response: each individual is created in the image of Hashem and must use every one of his talents and live every moment to fulfill his purpose in making this world a better place. I find that when the questions are coming from the perspective of "What if I don't feel fulfilled with x, y, and z?" There is a lot of discontentment because the grass is always greener on the other side. My personal favored approach is less of what makes me feel fulfilled and more of what Hashem needs from me. ■



*Chanie (Block) Zalmanov is on shlichus with her husband and children in Queens, NY. She attended Bais Rivkah Sem Beis in the year 5742 (1982), and was a proud member of "The Chanie Class," comprised of many girls named after Rebbetzin Chana in the first year following her passing.*



*Goldie (Tenenbaum) Grossbaum and her husband are on Shlichus in Folsom, California for close to 13 years. Together with the help of their nine children ka"h, they run activities for seniors, adults, and children; Hebrew school, classes, holiday events, and anything else that can bring another Yid closer to Yiddishkeit. She graduated from high school in 5759 (1999).*



*Chanie (Jacobson) Krasnianski and her husband are shlichim of the Rebbe on the Upper East Side of Manhattan for the past 28 years. She graduated from high school in 5742 (1982) and from seminary in 5744 (1984).*

# The MILLENNIAL EISHES CHAYIL

Shani Freeman, Crown Heights  
*Graduating Class of 5779 (2019)*



**T**he first time I read Eishes Chayil I imagined large ships sailing out in blustery winds to fetch bread from afar. The words sung to the woman of valor painted a picture of an antiquated tale whose story had to be dusted off weekly.

The first remodeling of the Eishes Chayil, for me, was my eleventh grade class with Mrs. Gansbourg. The words of Eishes Chayil came to life, in fact, they were all around me.

\*\*\*\*\*

## TRUTHS ABOUT THE EISHES CHAYIL

The Eishes Chayil has an equal role  
in "אני נבראתי לשמש את קוני."

The Eishes Chayil has an entirely different role  
than the man.

The Eishes Chayil has her priorities straight.

The Eishes Chayil is hardworking.

The Eishes Chayil is wise.

The Eishes Chayil ensures her home runs smoothly.

The Eishes Chayil instills values into her family.

The Eishes Chayil is trustworthy.

The Eishes Chayil is regal.

The Eishes Chayil seems idealistic.

The Eishes Chayil can be you.



## DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

An Eishes Chayil is a real person. While the term Eishes Chayil can conjure images of housewives preparing lunches or singing goodnight lullabies, an Eishes Chayil isn't limited. She is focused. The Eishes Chayil has her priorities planted and identifies what is truly important. She acts graciously and kindly. The Eishes Chayil is deemed so by Torah. The key to her success? She prioritizes family over career.

This doesn't mean that the Eishes Chayil is a stay at home mom; she can be, but she can also be a businesswoman. A businesswoman whose family comes first. A woman who tosses and turns at night over her children.

## THE EISHES CHAYIL AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

“שקר החן והבל היופי אשה יראת ה' היא תתהלל”

“There will be a time when falsehood will be considered charming and emptiness beautiful. The G-d-fearing woman will be mocked,” expounded the Friediker Rebbe on these words. The G-d-fearing woman, however, will be rewarded. “תנו לה מפרי ידיה” תלים for ראשי תיבות is “Tehillim Yidden — Tehillim Jews”.

In an era fighting for women's rights, the falsehood is apparent and admittedly charming at times. Feminism is kicking itself in the leg with an erring battle cry. Where feminism tries to fit a square peg into a round hole, Judaism acknowledges that men and women are different. The Eishes Chayil thrives in her role through understanding the prominence of her role.

## THE EISHES CHAYIL IN YOU

### FOR THE HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE

Whether on the home front, in the business line, or even as students, women are recognized for their exemplary soft skills. Social skills, also viewed as feminine attributes, include emotional intelligence, communication, and work ethic. It is no surprise that women wear many hats, fill multiple roles, and are highly productive. Eishes Chayil highlights,

“דרשה צמר ופשתים ותעש בחפץ כפיה” - She seeks wool and flax and she works with the will of her palms. An inherent trait of the Eishes Chayil is to exceed her expectations and stretch her limits. This is all done with willingness and joy. The extra family game before bedtime, coffee for the work team, extending for another- all feminine touches.

The Eishes Chayil's willingness isn't deterred by rationale. צמר ופשתים - wool and flax, allude to *Shatnez*. The Eishes Chayil seeks to rationalize the meaning behind mitzvos. However, even when no reason is forthcoming, she performs these mitzvos willingly and happily.

The Eishes Chayil isn't only productive in her spry years. “ותשחק ליום אחרון” - she is happy until her last day. As people age, often, they lose their sense of self-worth to their age. This leads to debilitating progress and a lack of productivity. Not the Eishes Chayil. The Eishes Chayil is happy because she is productive until her last day. Her productivity is not limited to physical labor. “פיה פתחה בחכמה ותורת” - She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is upon her tongue. “צופיה הליכות ביתה” - She supervises the goings-on in her home. Wise and dependable, the Eishes Chayil infuses her home with wisdom and order. Additionally, the Eishes Chayil has foresight; she anticipates the future with the conviction that all will turn out well. In times of uncertainty, when the world endures a global pandemic, the Eishes Chayil isn't stuck. She moves on with belief and infuses her home with hope for better days. As it is noted, the Eishes Chayil is accredited for being the pillar of the home.

“צופיה הליכות ביתה” - The Eishes Chayil isn't merely a supervisor of order. Metzudas David explains that the goings-on refer to the *Tznius* and *Yiras Hashem* that is imbued in the home. Rashi explains it as *Tznius* and *Emes*. These explanations put perspective on what is truly important and which qualities are lauded in a Jewish home.

### TAKE HOME

It's Friday night. Eishes Chayil is being sung. I no longer imagine ships and rollicking waves. I see the women around me. The freshly baked challah, the happy children, the set table. I feel the warmth.

The Eishes Chayil isn't equal to man. She is different. She is extraordinary. ■

# Moonlight

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Sarale (Hecht) Deitsch, Columbus, Ohio  
*Graduating class of 5751 (1991)*



**As** the world battles a global pandemic, the Jewish world has been turned on its head and people are reeling. The transformation is everywhere and its rippling effects are palpable. It is a strange and foreign new reality, but something that has been anxiously waiting to happen for so long. The world has ripened into the fruit we've been salivating over for centuries. The home has become the center and forefront of Jewish observance, custom, and ritual while the shul looks on in despair.

We are in a new era, it has finally dawned and it is magnificent. A sleeping giant has awoken. "The power behind the throne" has stepped forward. Make way. Since time immemorial the shul was ostensibly the central core of Jewish faith and practice. The Rabbi at the helm, the chazzan leading the prayers, services taking place on the other side of the partition with women sitting somewhat on the sidelines, looking in, participating but not leading. Of course, we haven't been silent. We have undeniably made strides in the Jewish landscape, but in a faint whisper compared to the men's bellow.

Now we have found our voices and it emanates in a mighty roar. Women have taken hold of the reins and we are galloping forward. We have morphed into our children's school teachers, we are supervising services, we are keeping our careers intact, we are building up our marriages, we are holding down the fort. We are cooking, cleaning, comforting, directing, running the household, organizing schedules, arranging each day for the men, and reminding our proverbial congregants of their roles in the home construct. We are creating the Shabbos and holiday atmosphere and we are executing the rules and guidelines for each day's activities. Most importantly we are creating a positive and warm mood in the home and maintaining the upbeat emotional energy for everyone in our care.

Domesticity has become the new archetype of the Jewish edifice. Women, now more than ever have become the mainstay of the home and the home has been modified into the obvious pillar of our Jewish existence. This new norm is the way it was always meant to be, we just needed the world to be ready. The sun has set in sickness and the moon, our icon

of strength is no longer merely glowing, it is shining a fierce and radiant luminescence, worthy of unwavering veneration. As the moon receives its energy from the sun, so too it was with women. But that era has waned. We embody royalty and shine our own queen-like light.

To be sure, our function was always significant; we always held power and a crucial role in Jewish continuity. But what we truly accomplished was somewhat obscure, covered in a veil of concealment always tacitly yet strenuously finding our rightful place in Jewish leadership. Now the blanket has been lifted and the truth is apparent. The moon is ablaze and the power of women has been revealed in its true and ultimate form. The world is surely ready for Moshiah. **ביתה נשים בנתה ביתה** has taken on its literally and redemptive meaning. The wise among women, each builds her house. (Mishlei 14:1) That is each and every one of us. Our houses are built. Our Judaism has reached its pinnacle. The culmination of our purpose has been reached. The metamorphosis has taken place. Finally, the time is here. ■



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# RECEIVING LIKE A LADY

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By Anonymous



## A PARENTING CLASS GONE WRONG?

I always considered myself a pretty capable person with a put-together life. I had a satisfactory marriage, a passably organized house, and was a pretty decent mother. All was in shape most of the time. But I wanted to be even better.

So, I found myself one fine evening sitting on a hard chair in a big room, waiting for parenting pearls of wisdom to come from Rabbi Manis Friedman. With my notebook on my lap and a pen clasped between my fingers, I was ready to soak it in and become an improved mother to my children.

The class began. To my great surprise, the talk of the evening barely mentioned children. Instead, it focused on spouses. What? Did I enter the wrong place? Rabbi Friedman clarified, “Working on your marriage greatly affects your children.”

An unexpected marriage class. And that’s when I really discovered myself.

## A DREAM MARRIAGE?

From the get-go of dating, I knew how marriage would look. I would not be that meek, docile housewife biting her tongue while Tatty’s word was law. How timid, weak, and spineless, I smugly judged those women. No second-class backseat driver here! I was an assertive woman, one whose

opinions mattered. As a strong woman, I will run my home while supporting those around me. Mr. Right showed up and I began building the home of my dreams.

But, why did I keep getting burned out? Why did my husband get so defensive and turned off when I told him what to do? Why wasn't my husband taking initiative where he should be? Why were my successful take-charge methods employed at work failing miserably the minute I walked into my home? Weren't my husband and I equal partners with the same role of running our home and raising a family?

This class showed me where I went wrong, why the dream soured fast. I was mixing up vital information.

## DIFFERENT, NOT INFERIOR

Right off the bat, I discovered I was playing the wrong role. I fell prey to a big fallacy- feminism. "Women are just as good as men," women's lib claimed. I concurred, expecting to be at the forefront of my home, equal in role to my husband. My husband's proclamations were immediately contradicted. After all, I'm strong and capable too!

Women, I quickly learned that night, contribute in significantly different ways than men. Our role is *different* but not in any way lower. Much like a heart complaining it wants to be a brain, I was a woman trying to take charge like a man would. Truthfully, though, isn't that insulting to me as a woman? Why should I feel that men are the ultimate and a woman's goal is to imitate him?

כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה. My value stems from a deeper, internal source. I do not need to have the same strength or function as my husband. A woman has a distinct power, one I should not deny myself. My take-charge attitude was essentially putting down my exquisite feminine qualities. It was time to learn how to be a woman.

## WHAT IS A WOMAN?

Women come from royalty. Literally. We emanate from the tenth sefira known as Malchus. Malchus receives qualities from the six preceding sefiros and then confidently shines, casting her royal glow. In

essence, Malchus is a receiver.

A man is wired to give, yet his task is only achieved through a woman. She stays by his side, in all her Malchus glory, prepared to receive from him. In turn, her husband is more aroused to provide. *That* is the key to womanhood. We create space for the giver to initiate, empowering him to run our home. This is an honored, active role in the relationship, not a resigned, mediocre position.

## A WOMAN'S VOICE

Initially, I was convinced of the power of the authoritarian tone. With just the right phrases, I can have it my way. "Because I said so," was an oft-repeated phrase. That evening showed me there can be a different voice. The soft-spoken voice of a princess.

Did you know we women can communicate with Malchus? Our gently-worded requests stating our deepest desires successfully get the job done. Take Tzelofchod's daughters, for example. They influ-

*The dishes don't need to be washed to my standards or the laundry perfectly folded. That's all secondary to my husband being able to look in my eyes and know that he is valued.*

enced a radical change in halacha by passionately describing their yearning for Eretz Yisroel. Their father's land was inherited by them- true, sincere women.

Esther Hamalka did not immediately march into Achashverosh's palace to petition. With feminine wisdom, she wined and dined Achashveirosh and Haman. When her female intuition told her the time was ripe, she swiftly spoke her deepest fears, leading to our salvation.

Our well-placed words change worlds more than harsh demands.

## LIVING AS ME

I left that class with my head spinning. Boy, did

I have a lot of work to do. In the days and weeks that followed, I made some noticeable changes that had an incredible effect on my relationship with my husband. Instead of practicing masculine energy, I tapped into my feminine self. Our home began to fall into place with everyone feeling more at ease.

I used to take pride in my aggressive personality. But the more I learned, the more I craved the internal lifestyle. Oh, how I wanted to be on the same page as my spouse and have him contribute with joy, not grumbling. My previous method of dictating had to stop. I started requesting gently and he suddenly wanted to give what I asked for. There was a real shift.

Real receiving translates as respect. Am I inspired to help my child when he is yelling at me? My husband deserves the same respect. So, I lowered the criticism. A lot. The dishes don't need to be washed to my standards or the laundry perfectly folded. That's all secondary to my husband being able to look in my eyes and know that he is valued. He can make a mistake and not get a heavy dose of disapproval. I receive through accepting him fully, as he is.

*Receiving with such dignity and grace takes effort. I try to find ways to fill my own cup so I have energy to focus on my role.*

Instead, I now focus on finding ways he helps our family. What I used to consider his duty, such as going to work, now is viewed differently. He is showing up for me and being there to support my deepest emotional needs. I tell him this. "Thank you for going to work and providing for me so generously. You give me such a sense of security." Do you know what happens next? My husband wants to give more!

Receiving with such dignity and grace takes effort. I try to find ways to fill my own cup so I have energy to focus on my role. I ask myself, what do I need for me to feel centered and calm for my husband? Time out from the family? A good talk with a mashpia or friend? A nutritious meal? Taking care of me trickles into taking care of my marriage and children.

It's been a few years since then and I'm a different person. I focus on being a receiver and being truly grateful for what my husband gives. It wasn't easy and I'm a work in progress, but when I do, I feel

fulfilled. I'm fully relaxed and shine in my unique role.

This article is anonymous not because I don't have a backbone, but because my husband requested it. I've learned to respect what he wants. I now fulfill his will as a badge of pride.

I'm living my life as myself and nothing feels truer, better or more secure than that.

## MIRRORING MY WORLD

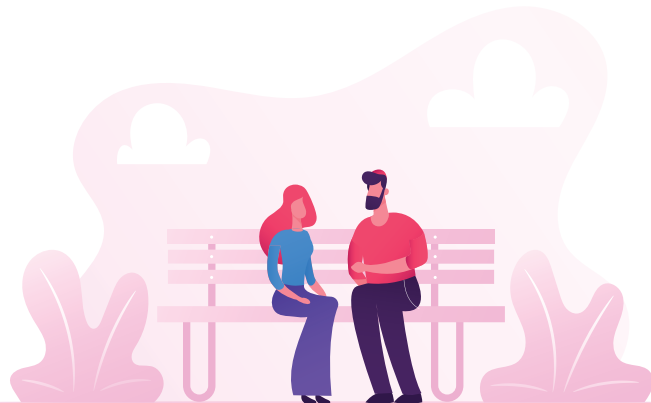
In truth, this inner journey I embarked on directly reflects the time we are in. Gone are the days of battering rams, of forced conquest and imperialization. Today, most countries smile upon diplomacy, discussion, and persuasion as methods to achieve their goals. Dictatorships have given way to democracy.

The whole world is realizing that sometimes, shouting and shouting until you're blue and hoarse isn't half as effective as speaking softly, creating a vacuum of space where you can be heard.

It's time to stop screaming and speak softly.

In the past, surrounded by masculine domination, one needed to look much deeper to appreciate the value of inwardness. Because until now what has been valued is the external- conquering and dominating. In our golus reality, femininity, the inner world has not been valued. This newfound appreciation of the feminine energy of Malchus, is one of the many indications of Moshiach's imminent arrival, a time when *Nekeiva tesovev gever*.

Yes, nothing is an accident, including a parenting-turned-marriage class. In fact, it may just be what was needed to be ready to greet Moshiach. ■





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# Birthing Brachos

## REAL TALK ON RAISING A LARGE FAMILY

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Mrs. Simi (Altein) Zalmanov, Tzfas, Israel  
*Graduating Class of 5737 (1977)*

As told to Mussi Grossbaum, Paramus, New Jersey  
*Graduating class of 5779 (2019)*



### MEET MRS. ZALMANOV.

An energetic, thin, soft spoken woman always on the move. Head of a large school in Tzfas. Oh, and a mother of 19 children, kein ayin horah.

How does she “do it all”? What gives her energy to persist? We at EmBRace decided to find out. We discovered, once again, that all great things begin at Bais Rivkah.



## FROM THE BRONX TO BAIS RIVKAH

“Where did I just land?” was the recurring thought that day. First, let me give you some background.

I was born as Simi Altein to a Lubavitch family living in the Bronx. Until tenth grade, I attended a local Bais Yaakov. While officially deemed a Bais Yaakov, there weren’t many frum girls there. By the time I entered my sophomore year, it was clear it was time to move on.

My mother didn’t really want to send me to Bais Rivkah. It was too long to commute and there was no official dorm setup. During a yechidus, my mother asked the Rebbe if I should switch to a school in Washington Heights. The school will provide core values such as derech erez, tznius, and yiras shamayim and she will take responsibility for my chassidishe education.

The Rebbe responded that while I may truly gain those values there, the Frierdiker Rebbe koched in sending children to a Chabad moisad.

And so I became a Bais Rivkah girl.

What a culture shock it was. My mother took the subway with me to Crown Heights for my first day of school. Emerging from the subway station, I balked. Instinctively, I raced back down the steps, re-entering the station. When I finally summoned enough courage, I made my way to Bais Rivkah for my first time. I landed in Morah Neiman’s Navi class. “This is too much,” my brain kept telling me. But soon enough, I recognized Morah Neiman for the stellar educator she was - a teacher whose students were able to repeat *pesukim* from Sefer Yeshayahu by heart.

While the initial adjustment was hard, eventually Bais Rivkah became my home. I found my place and became actively involved in school functions and clubs. Many teachers left a lasting imprint and still bring a smile to my lips. I enjoyed math with Mrs. Riter, soaked up Rosh Chodesh assemblies with Mrs. Tiechtel and appreciated my encounters with Morah Gorowitz. Teachers like Rabbi Gordon and Rabbi Mangel were real dugma chayas. They helped us get our heads on straight. I am still empowered by the Chassidus I learned in high school. Ah, those were good years!

It’s been many, many years since I attended Bais Rivkah. Living in a forgein country and being one of the last no-WhatsApp holdouts, I lost touch with

*So how did I, a typical American Bais Rivkah girl, end up as principal of Beis Chana high School in Tzfas while raising nineteen children?*

many good Bais Rivkah friends. Recently, though, I joined the WhatsApp world. Reconnecting with old classmates felt like the biggest hug! I was particularly warmed by the messages old friends sent me about my father, who recently passed away. It’s heart-warming to feel the tremendous impact Bais Rivkah had on me through connecting with true friends.

Every time I send a message to my grade’s group or regale my staff with memories from way back in Bais Rivkah, Bais Rivkah lives on.

## FROM BAIS RIVKAH TO TZFAS

So how did I, a typical American Bais Rivkah girl, end up as principal of Beis Chana high School in Tzfas while raising nineteen children? Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine living such a life. But the Rebbe did!



*Mrs. Zalmanov's Bais Rivkah yearbook picture.*

After graduating high school, I naturally taught in Bais Rivkah. In the middle of my initiation year, I met a Kfar Chabad bochur who could barely write his name in English. I couldn't string together a proper sentence in Hebrew so we communicated in Yiddish. It became a match, with the obvious understanding we would move to Eretz Yisroel. My chosson asked the Rebbe where in Eretz Yisroel he should attend kollel. The Rebbe chose Tzfas.

After finishing the year in Bais Rivkah as an eighth-grade mechaneches, in 5740 (1980) my husband and I were off to our life-long shlichus in Tzfas. I started teaching English in Bais Channa. After a few years, I became a mechaneches. Soon after, I took responsibility of the dormitory. In 5758 (1998), I officially became the principal of the high school, grades seven through twelve. Sixteen years ago, I left my position at the dorm, when my seventeenth child was born.

*Keep focused on the present. During difficult patches, don't think about what will be a year from now; don't think about next week or even about tomorrow. Get through the next hour, then the next. Taking it slowly is what will keep you sane.*



## RAISING A LARGE FAMILY

Raising varying ages can be challenging. My eighteenth child was born a month before my daughter had her first baby. Many of my grandchildren are older than my own kids. While juggling stages takes effort, it also provides me with a wealth of sweet anecdotes.

When one of my daughters was giving birth, I went along to the hospital. My son-in-law held my baby, number eighteen, while I helped his wife. The midwife asked him, "So, are you holding your oldest?" Smiling, my son in law replied, "No. It's my brother-in-law!"

I have a daughter who is a year and a half older than my oldest grandson. She quickly got smart. Whenever I refuse one of her requests, she tries again. "Bubby, can I have this?"

Yes, there definitely are humorous moments, but raising my children wasn't, and still isn't, an easy feat. I worked full-time during the day and returned to the dorm at night. It is only with a *lot* of siyata diShmaya that I can nurture a large family alongside this demanding job!

Over the years, I gathered tips that really help me:

- Get lots of help. I have two hours of cleaning assistance daily and a separate sitter in the afternoons. According to Israeli standards, I'm spoiled!
- Being organized makes a huge difference.
- You don't have to *always* be managing.
- Try not to say something you'll regret. Once something is out of your mouth you can apologize, but you can't ever take it back. It's always better to keep quiet when you're angry. Before

speaking, count to 10 . . . or 100 . . . or 1,000.

- Keep focused on the present. During difficult patches, don't think about what will be a year from now; don't think about next week or even about tomorrow. Get through the next hour, then the next. Taking it slowly is what will keep you sane. As my mother always said, it's not worth your while to get upset now about something that will take place in half a year.

As we know, a large family comes with lots of joy. It is always worthwhile to focus on it. Two years ago, during the busiest season for a principal, also known as summer, I attended an out of town wedding. While I was away, my children got the key to my office and hung a beautiful collage of family pictures. Each child wrote a special bracha to me for the coming year. When I came back to work and saw the pictures, I was so touched, especially since I was barely home that summer. Later, I started to doubt if it was appropriate to hang family pictures and personal messages in my office. Eventually, I realized it makes perfect sense. Being a mother is my real life. I want everyone who comes into my office to see that.

## WHY DO I DO IT?

Is it easy? I've been quite clear it is not. So why? Why do I pour all my kochos into creating the next generation?

A speaker once spoke to my high school students about Ahavas Yisroel. He told them, "I love every Jew and I'd do anything for anyone! I'll feed people in Africa, I'll send packages to Thailand. Truthfully, though, there are ten people who I can't stand. But what's ten people in comparison to the millions I love with all my heart?"

"Another thing about these ten people is that they all happen to live around me. They're my neighbors or the people I work with. They happen to get me nervous but that doesn't mean I don't have Ahavas Yisroel. Remember, I love the millions of Yidden who live around the world!" Does such a person have Ahavas Yisroel? Of course not! The real test of Ahavas Yisroel arises with the people who are close to you. You are challenged to actually change yourself!

This is a good litmus test in every aspect of our lives. Do we change when the assignment is really personal and challenging? Having children is very personal. Speaking to others about it is even harder. Yet, this is where we can prove the strength of our

*Though baking bread is necessary for the sustenance of humanity, nevertheless, one who has been trained in the craft of drilling pearls should not busy themselves with lesser work that can be done by others.*

hiskashrus. Am I *really* willing to do anything the Rebbe asks of me? The Rebbe said we should have big families and every child is a bracha.

I am not writing to say that having a large family is easy. I often question myself. Am I giving each child enough attention? I try to remind myself the yetzer hara comes in many forms. When something doesn't come easily and you toil and persevere, *that's* when you really know that you passed the test.

## TRUE EMPOWERMENT

The Rebbe empowers me to give family all I've got. Through my years of shlichus and fulfilling my role as a mother, I clearly see how Chassidus uplifts women to unprecedented heights.

My mother, Mrs. Rachel Altein, was personally instructed by the Rebbe to teach Torah and Chassidus. Through numerous letters and responses, the Rebbe strengthened her activities, bringing her many capabilities to the forefront. Here are some excerpts:

- *Though baking bread is necessary for the sustenance of humanity, nevertheless, one who has*



*been trained in the craft of drilling pearls should not busy themselves with lesser work that can be done by others.*

- *You shall be active in your sphere of influence not only to increase Jewish life in the ordinary sense, but also to disseminate Chassidic teachings.*
- *I am glad to note that you are now using your ability and qualifications with which you have been endowed, to exercise a good influence in your environment, especially among the women. I trust that you are also making an effort to spread the teachings of Chassidus in particular.*

—Letters from 1954

Where else in the world are women so empowered? It's Chassidus. It's the Rebbe! He gives us the kochoch to achieve what seems impossible. I don't think any other position in the world would have stretched me as much and revealed my hidden potential.

## WORTH IT ALL

I often watch a video where the Rebbe speaks about raising large families. In it, the Rebbe discusses many challenges, like health, *parnassah*, being able to give enough attention to each child. After expounding the many hardships, the Rebbe emphasizes that a large family is a huge *bracha*!

I see these brachos everywhere.

As a principal, my stomach starts flipping when a teacher tells me she's going on maternity leave. Of course, it's great news — but *oy vey*, is it hard to find substitute teachers! In Israel, teachers have four months of maternity leave. That can really turn a school on its head! Last year alone, thirty-three Bais Chana teachers were out on maternity leave. It's almost impossible to run a school this way.



Last year, whenever I became nervous about a teacher leaving, I would play that video where the Rebbe says how children are a huge *bracha* for the home. I told myself, “This school is my home. All these maternity leaves and newborn babies must be bringing a special *bracha* to Beis Chana!”

At our end of the year teacher appreciation event I played a special video. Playing into the many maternity leaves, I asked every teacher who gave birth, “How did this baby change you as a teacher?” I compiled a video of all of their responses. It was *so* beautiful!

One teacher spoke about her students in the Naale program. Many of the girls had a new sibling born that year. Being far from home, they hadn't seen their new siblings yet. This teacher shared how her baby was very therapeutic for them. What a *bracha*.

*I told myself, “This school is my home. All these maternity leaves and newborn babies must be bringing a special bracha to Beis Chana!”*

More than that, in one of the most turbulent years of teachers coming and going, ninety seven percent of the girls passed their high school government exams. That was the highest percentage we have ever experienced! Additionally, a government inspection was canceled because of the many maternity leaves. The school schedule kept changing.

*But, I hope I gain a better understanding of being a mother from my role as principal and a better understanding of being a principal from my role as a mother.*

Those were *our* special brachos!

Yes, we can view children as a frustration or we can see them as reasons to celebrate. The Rebbe modeled a positive view clearly in a letter to my mother:

- *I duly received your letter, in which you write that you accepted the position of Camp Mother at Camp Gan Israel. I was gratified to read this, and as G-d's reward is in kind, in a very generous measure, your decision to help the campers enjoy a healthful summer, not only physically but also spiritually, and moreover with Chassidische vitality and light—which is the inner purpose of Gan Israel—will surely bring you and your husband and family additional blessings to have true Yiddish Nachas from each other and from your children, materially and spiritually.*

—Letter from 27th of Sivan, 5717 (1956)

These are real brachos we're talking about! We are so, so lucky.

So yes, my life is very, very busy.

Sometimes I'm overwhelmed.

But, I hope I gain a better understanding of being a mother from my role as principal and a better understanding of being a principal from my role as a mother.

Ultimately, knowing that the Rebbe sent me here and that there are endless brachos involved, I am empowered to do anything! ■



*The Zalmanov clan.*

# Paralyzed, not Demoralized

## THE STORY OF A MIRACULOUS RECOVERY



Bruryah Silverstein, Crown Heights  
*Graduating Class of 5766 (2006)*



*6 Cheshvan, 5776.*

It was Monday.

Outside it was chilly, but not too cold. I'm pretty sure the sun was shining.

I was working part-time in an adorable preschool in Tribeca, introducing a class of two-year-olds to their first school experience. My colleagues and I worked well together, and thankfully all was going smoothly.

That unforgettable Monday, I went to reach for some supplies in a high cabinet and, out of nowhere, began to feel numbness and tingling in my arm. I tried to shake the bizarre feeling, but the tingling sensation started traveling to my other arm and I started to feel lightheaded. As someone fairly in tune with my body, these symptoms were foreign to me. My mom was called, my doctor was called, and shortly after, Hatzalah was called. The skilled Hatzalah member dismissed the initial concerns of heart attack (left arm tingling) or stroke, and he sent me directly to my doctor to get to the bottom of my peculiar and sudden symptoms. My worried parents came to pick me up, and I remember apologizing profusely for disrupting their day. I was surprised and a little

embarrassed about the fuss and concern around me. *I'm young and healthy, I thought, I exercise and eat well; surely everyone is overreacting.*

The rest of the day felt like a whirlwind, yet I recall every detail vividly. What started as an average morning escalated rapidly into a medical emergency. My body responded inappropriately to a basic reflex test done by my doctor, indicating that something neurological was amiss. My doctor, usually calm, cool, and collected, visibly panicked. I burst

*Within minutes, I was paralyzed from the shoulders down. It was that quick; it was that surreal.*

into tears. Within minutes, I was paralyzed from the shoulders down. It was that quick; it was that surreal. I was taken to NYU's emergency room via ambulance with an oxygen mask over my face as a precaution and a Hatzalah member monitoring my heart rate the entire ride.

This was the second time in my life that I was the patient in an ambulance. The first time had been a mere ten months prior. I was walking home from the gym, and, ever-conscious of the rules of the road, crossed at the crosswalk. Although I had the right-of-way, a tow truck came out of nowhere and hit me. Aside from some scrapes, bruising, and a startled spirit, I was fine and discharged from the hospital that same night. Only I was not completely fine.

We learned that the impact of the truck had induced incremental swelling to my spinal cord, suffocating all nerve conductivity from the shoulders down. This is what caused my current, sudden onset paralysis.

As I rode to NYU with my mom at my side, I felt grateful that station wagons were a thing of the past. *Backward riding just isn't for me, I thought.* Three days of invasive testing later it was determined that I'd never walk or move much again. The damage to my spinal cord was so intense it was deemed irreversible. "If you live," they said, "it would be a miracle." I was helpfully told that I would learn to adapt to life in a wheelchair. I remember feeling like I would lose consciousness from the fear. I was shocked that fear could be so powerful a feeling it could control your breathing. I also remember taking a strong political

stance against this death sentence. It became crystal clear to me that no one but Hashem should have the ability to take life or tell someone else that theirs was over.

I mustered up some oxygen, managed a deep breath, and with every fiber of my being, chose to live. Not just to live, but to thrive, survive, and prevail. At that moment, I realized that I was not finished with the world and the world was not finished with me. I had more to do, of that I was sure. I blocked out all the noise, all the doctors telling me what I couldn't and wouldn't do, and got to work.

I'm not going to pretend that recovery is anything short of excruciating, consistent work, both mentally and physically. I'm not going to say that I just power through, unaffected by the magnitude of what's needed from me day in and day out. I'm not going to say I don't cry, feel despair, want Hashem to do more of the heavy lifting, or that it's gotten easier with time. It hasn't. But I have figured out how to power through the work and be content with my life while never being complacent. I will proudly say that I don't give up. I never have and never will.

One of the greatest lessons I have learned so far from this recovery is to allow myself to feel whatever emotion comes up, but I don't let it take over the scene. I don't get to wallow in it for days on end. Wallowing doesn't allow me to push forward, and pushing forward and bulldozing through all the mess is the only way to get to the finish line. I decided early on that I, Bruryah, will win and I will not allow my injury to be victorious over me.

Having an incredible support system made up of family, friends, and expert practitioners has been paramountly significant. The Tefillos said for me created miracles, I'm sure of it. Nonetheless, recovery of any sort is something that must come from within. It's a decision and commitment that you

*I also remember taking a strong political stance against this death sentence. It became crystal clear to me that no one but Hashem should have the ability to take life or tell someone else that theirs was over.*

*We are a unit designed by Hashem to support and inspire each other. What a true honor to have helped this kind man be able to believe in himself. Our mind's strength plays such a crucial role in our physical abilities.*

must make *to* yourself *for* yourself. A decision you must recommit to every day. Some days the choice seems logical, "Okay, I need to work at 110% percent and tackle this monster. Got it." Other days, logic equates to nothing, and it's downright unfair that I still have to be doing this. Both those feelings are real and both are okay.

Often, on my hardest days, I'll bump into a stranger

and inwardly roll my eyes, sure that I'm going to be annoyed by what they have to say. Instead, I end up walking away empowered and confident that I am on the right path. The doorman at one of the buildings I frequented for appointments had always been kind to me, assisting me when necessary, but that was the extent of our encounters. One day, after not seeing him for a while, he ran toward me with the biggest smile. He told me that his real occupation was boxing and he supplemented his income with this doorman job. One night he shattered his finger at a fight. He was rushed to the emergency room where he was told that his finger would never be functional again. He looked at the doctor and said, "I know a girl with a walker and a really shaky leg; she works hard and walks on it despite how shaky it is and I see her getting better and better. Seeing her get better, I know my finger will be totally fine." As he proudly told me this story, my heart exploded, and tears filled my eyes. How humbling it was for me to realize that he saw me as so much more than

## *You Choose your Response*

One morning when I was still in the hospital, I wanted a banana. I was just beginning to use my hands a little functionally again, so my mom handed me a banana she cut in half. As she placed it in my hand, my wrist immediately gave out -- I clearly remember the feeling; the half-banana felt like a brick -- and it fell. My still-weak hand just couldn't hold its weight at all. At that moment, I could either burst into tears or laughter, so I laughed. I laughed and laughed and had this image in my head of a baby monkey holding a banana. "Goodness," I said, "how cruel is it to make a baby monkey carry so much weight," and I laughed some more. If anyone would have told me before my accident that a half of a banana would feel like a brick in my hand, I don't even think I would have been able to retain that concept or connect with that possibility. Sometimes, the unimaginable happens; a



banana is too heavy to hold, the entire world is plagued with something at the same time, our life as we know it pauses and we have to #StayHome. It's mind-boggling, scary, and bizarre. For me, one of the hardest parts has always been the unknown. The good news is that Hashem helps; it does end, it does get better, though creating change requires hard work, commitment, dedication, and *siyata d'Shmaya*.

Whether it's hours of physical training, the restraint of staying in, or taking precautions for others, it's in our hands to actively make this time a growth-filled, enriching, and lesson-filled experience. And we can choose to laugh.



my struggle. Our experiences are not our own. We do not live in our own worlds. We are a unit designed by Hashem to support and inspire each other. What a true honor to have helped this kind man be able to believe in himself. Our mind's strength plays such a crucial role in our physical abilities.

This journey I'm on is tough. It has a lot of ups and downs and my faith often feels tested. Luckily, I constantly feel inspired by the many such stories I often encounter. It is remarkable to see how our actions have a direct effect on those around us. Sometimes Hashem allows us to hear how we've impacted someone else's life; the rest of the time we have to believe that we are positively affecting the world. Whether we are dealing with hardship, pushing our limits, or soaring through our day, our actions can help others. When we create a space in our minds for unwavering self-love, it can help us carry through the tough times and be our extra sparkle during

the good times. Having love and support can surely make life easier to grasp, but it's still something we must create on our own. It's our secret superpower. The magic happens when we expect the very best for ourselves and do the work, fully trusting that Hashem will grant us the results we seek. ■



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# Inside Out

## An inner glimpse into the life of an introvert



Danit (Friedman) Schusterman, Crown Heights  
Graduating Class of 5758 (1998)



**W**hi, my name is Danit and I am an introvert. Some of you are thinking, “Hey, I know Danit and she is NOT quiet or shy!” True.

The most common explanation of introversion is when someone is drained by socializing and recharges by being alone. But there is a lot more to it.

Everyone has an innate temperament—a preferred way to interact with the world and gain energy. Whether you’re an introvert or extrovert is largely determined by your genes, meaning you were probably born that way.

Studies suggest that 30-50% of the U.S. population are introverts, which account for one out of every two or three people you know.

*When I started doing research on introverts, it was so liberating, validating, and really explained so much about myself that I didn't quite understand growing up.*

Yet not all introverts are the same. Some introverts will need only a little bit of alone time to recharge and can handle a fair amount of social time before feeling drained. Others drain quickly and prefer to spend very long periods alone. Others are somewhere in the middle.

### *All by Myself*

Unique and fiercely independent, introverts are more inclined to let their own inner resources guide them rather than follow the crowd. We do our best work and are our happiest when we have the freedom to explore ideas, spend time alone, and be self-directed and independent.

*It's important to note that no two introverts are exactly alike. What's true for one introvert may be quite different for another. Each introvert has a different level of tolerance for socializing and other types of stimulation.*

When I started doing research on introverts, it was so liberating, validating, and really explained so much about myself that I didn't quite understand growing up:

Why did I prefer studying by myself instead of with friends? Why did I not ask (or even think of) other people's opinions when it came to shopping and the like? Why did the lunchroom in camp, when everyone was standing on the benches and cheering at the top of their lungs, bother me so much? Why could I not wait to get home from the school Shabbaton to the quiet and comfort of my own room? I have found these scenarios replaying in many variations as I was growing up, on my shlichus in Maui, Hawaii, and now as a mother and teacher living in Crown Heights, I have a daughter who I see is very similar to me as a child and we discuss all these things. I am so happy that she has such a great sense of self at such a young age. Empowering your introverted child is one of the best gifts you can give them.

### *Drama-free*

So, what goes on in an introvert's head? They ponder the deep things in life and tend to really know themselves well, which is essential in becoming centered. They're able to focus and concentrate well, explore and cultivate ideas, and dream. They also tend to mind their own business. Although they may care deeply about people, introverts are generally not into gossip or 'keeping up with the Joneses'.

If a person is too confrontational or complicated, they usually will not be a part of an introvert's life for too long. We like to keep things simple.

### *By Appointment Only*

When we first moved out on shlichus to Maui, Hawaii, I dreamed of having an open home constantly filled with people. Little did I realize how incredibly hard this would be on me as an introvert. As a shlucho, I have had to set up many boundaries in order to keep my energy up and relationships healthy. Here are a few strategies I have incorporated into my life that allowed me to recharge when I need to and deal with daily life as an introverted shlucho.



## Socializing

We had a Chabad House in the middle of town, and Shabbos and Yom Tov meals in our home were a focal point of our shlichus. During our first few years on shlichus, I found that while I enjoyed socializing with our guests, I kept on finding myself extremely drained with no time to recharge as people were constantly coming over. I slowly realized that as much as I would love to have an open home all week long, as an introvert, I just cannot have people pop in on me at any moment on any given day. People in our community learned to call me to set up a time to meet, which I was always happy to do. When people did show up unexpectedly, I've found that serving as an active listener was a good way to prevent me from draining my social energy.

## Active Listening

When small talk would come up with guests, I'd steer the conversation toward the guests by asking them thought-provoking questions about their lives and letting them do most of the talking. Some good conversation starters include, "How are you enjoying your visit to Maui? What was your favorite part about it and what were some challenges?" "How's Sadie doing at her new school? How does it compare to her old school?" "How is that nutrition course that you're taking going? Tell me some interesting things about it that I can apply to my own family's eating habits."

## Self-Talk

Before Shabbos and yom tov, I'd make myself a cup of tea, put my feet up, and give myself 20-30 minutes to charge up. I'd focus inward, take some deep breaths, and mentally and emotionally prepare for the upcoming day. I tell myself that for the next 24 hours, we'd be having lots of guests coming in and out of the house at any given time. After allowing myself this time to prepare, I was happily willing and able to handle the meal and didn't feel exhausted after one conversation or thrown off by surprise visitors.

## Divide and Conquer

My husband, the extrovert, and I have divided the responsibilities in our lives and our shlichus was based on this too. He went out and met people, spoke

to them and invited them over for Shabbos or dinner (always giving me at least a few days notice, never just arriving home with surprise guests), and I enjoyed meaningful, thought-provoking conversations with them. He dealt with all the tourists, patiently answering all of their questions about where we buy our kosher food, how we educate our kids, how long we've been here, etc.—something that would otherwise completely drain me, yet energizes him.

## 30 Minutes

My husband now understands that at the end of the day, after all the kids are in bed, I need my "30 minutes." This means I need 30 minutes not to speak to anyone. My battery is officially drained and needs just 30 minutes of sitting with a cup of tea and a book to charge up a bit so that we can proceed with the rest of the evening. It is never anything personal. It is just my 30 minutes to recharge.

## It's a Gift

It's important to note that no two introverts are exactly alike. What's true for one introvert may be quite different for another. Each introvert has a different level of tolerance for socializing and other types of stimulation.

But being an introvert is a gift. The world has a need for people who go deeper, think before they act, and look at things in new ways.

The world has a place for people who value meaningful relationships over meaningless small talk. And the world is ready for thoughtful, contemplative people who bring calm and wisdom to a room.

These are traits that introverts offer. And precisely because the world has so many extroverts, when you step into these traits and own them, you will find that people appreciate and value you very much.

So, even if you may not be quiet or shy, you still might be an introvert. ■



*Danit Schusterman was on Shlichus on Maui, Hawaii, for 13 years. Ever since her family moved to Crown Heights three years ago, she has been teaching fourth grade in Bais Rivkah Elementary school.*

# Are You an Introvert?



Ask yourself this:

Would I rather stay home instead of going to a simcha?

Do I enjoy quiet, solitary activities like reading, writing, gardening, or drawing?

Do I usually choose the company of a few close friends over a large group of acquaintances?

Do I do my best work alone?

Do I avoid small talk or other unnecessary social interactions?

If you answered yes to more than two of the above, there's a good chance you are an introvert. Which may bring the next question: how do we introverts thrive in a world that can't stop talking?

## Time

All introverts eventually experience the dreaded “introvert hangover,” the feeling of being completely wiped out from too much people-time or stimulation. Your brain has used up all its mental energy and just doesn't have any left. Being hungover can leave you tired, unable to concentrate, or even grouchy.

## Talk

How was Shabbos? How are you? We can do small talk, but that doesn't mean we don't absolutely loathe it. Instead, we crave diving deep, both in our interests and in our relationships. We need something more. Not every conversation has to be a soul-searching moment; sometimes introverts really do just want to know what you did on Shabbos. But if fed only a diet of small talk, we'll feel like we're starving. We need those intimate, raw, big-idea moments.

## Silence

We contend with quiet and need others who can do the same. We need people who can sit in the same room, not talking as we each do our own thing; people who will leave the pauses in conversation so that thoughts can linger and ideas can digest.

One of the biggest gifts I share with my best friend is that we completely respect and understand each others' need for silence. When we were younger we traveled a lot, often for 4-6 weeks at a time, and there were days when we split up with the mutual understanding that we both just needed time alone. The same thing happens in my marriage. It took a while until I felt comfortable explaining that I needed time. That my social battery has been drained and my silence is nothing personal—I just need some quiet time to recharge.

## Space and Interests

A good book. Morning walks. Gardening. Painting. Cooking. Writing. Focusing on hobbies recharges us, because while absorbed in them, we enter an energizing state of flow. I love putting on my headphones and taking a walk to a local coffee shop so that I can sit by myself, study, read or prepare for work.

## Room

Admittedly, this is something most of us don't have. Introverts need a private, quiet space to retreat to when the world is too loud. Being fully alone, without fear of intrusion or interruption, is extremely energizing for introverts.

## Home

For introverts, socializing is all about dosage. In our lives, we need friends and loved ones who understand that sometimes we just can't “people”—we need them to accept this, without the guilt trip.

## Purpose

Everyone needs to pay their bills; for many of us, that's why we go to work. And some people are content with this arrangement. But for many introverts, it's just not enough—we crave work and a life that's purposeful and meaningful. We want to do more than just earn a paycheck and put a roof over our heads. Without meaning and purpose in our lives, whether coming from our job or something else, introverts will feel deeply unhappy.

## Permission

Sometimes, we just won't have the energy to interact. At these times, give us permission to remain quiet—it's what we need. After time to process and recharge, we'll likely return to you, ready to listen and with plenty to say.

## I Hear You

Introverts are great listeners, good at taking the information they know about a person and expanding on it. Being vulnerable helps others open up to you. Most people are very happy to talk about themselves and what's going on in their lives. Introverts can be real and down to earth, without coming across as judgemental. Asking for their opinion on things opens up a nice channel to the relationship, but, obviously, use your judgement when asking for an opinion.

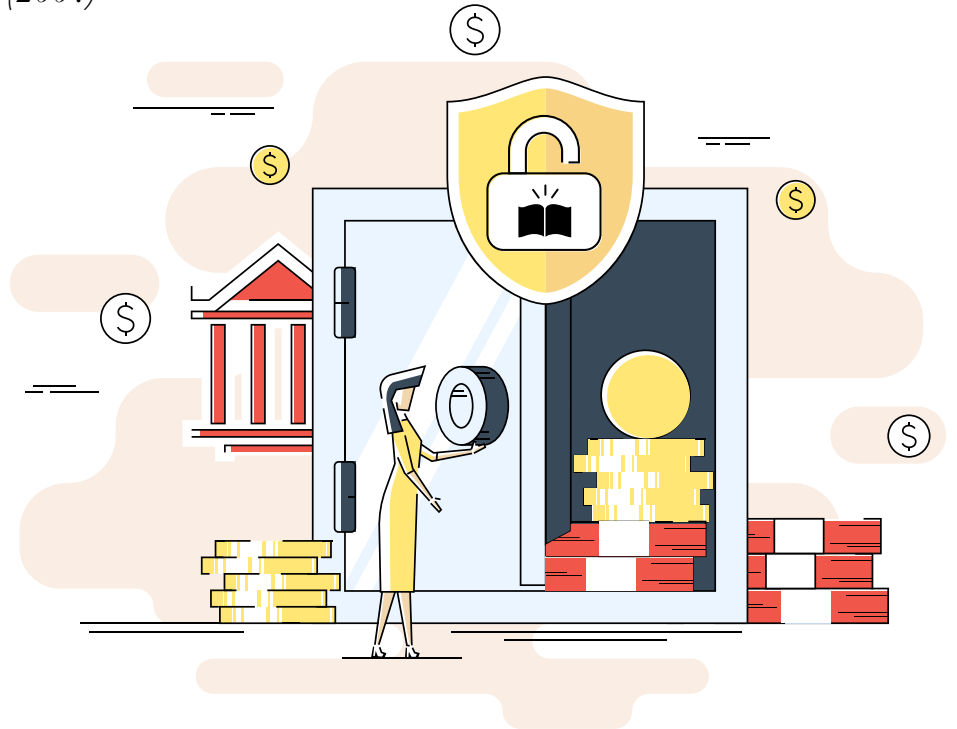
If the above resonates with you, you just may be an introvert.

# Transforming Gashmius *into* Ruchnius

## MANAGING YOUR FINANCES

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Chaya (Gopin) Margolin, Crown Heights  
*Graduating Class of 5767 (2007)*



THE TZEMACH TZEDEK OFFERS A SIMPLE PLAN ON HOW  
TO MAKE A LIVING:

1. Determine how much you need to support your family.
2. Create a means to receive it.
3. Pray for rain.

*A distillation of Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Tiglachas Metzora, by Rabbi Tzvi Freeman.*



I became a financial coach about five years ago and since then I've met with hundreds of couples and singles seeking to set themselves on sound financial footing. My goal is to help others achieve the financial freedom that I had to work for on my own.

Seven years ago, I realized that my husband and I needed to get our finances under control. We weren't always able to afford basic necessities, yet we were splurging on things that were completely unnecessary! Through careful budgeting, we paid off our entire debt and quickly began building up our savings. As I began learning more about budgeting and went through the process myself, I saw that there was a relatively simple formula that had worked for my family and could help others in a wide array of circumstances. It was then that I decided to become a financial coach. I am proud to say that since then I have helped countless couples get out of debt and begin building wealth.

When I was first studying to become a coach, a halachic issue arose regarding the location of one of the courses I was taking. I called a well-known Lubavitcher Rav for guidance, and eventually, the conversation switched to the topic of financial coaching itself. "Financial struggles are a *machlah* in our community," he told me. "What you are doing is literally *pikuach nefesh*."

When I heard these words my mission changed. No longer was this a part-time job for me. I realized that this was my *shlichus*.



Since I began coaching, I've been working one-on-one with couples, who come to me for many different reasons. Some don't make enough money to make ends meet, while others are earning a lot, but are still living month-to-month without surplus. A large number, although not all, are in debt. We go through their finances and create a plan that works for them. The first thing I do is create a budget based on the particular needs of their family. Then, we look at their income and see if it covers these expenses. If it doesn't, we need to get creative and come up with a plan to make sure their needs are met.

There are a few fundamentals I try to impart to my clients:

## 1. SOMETIMES, SOMETHING MIGHT FEEL LIKE A NEED BUT IS REALLY A WANT.

The want can be a luxury, or it can be a necessity that we *want right now*—but should be something we need to save for and buy later.

For example, a friend of mine told me that her fridge broke. Everyone told her, "Just buy a new one and put it on your credit card." She and her husband knew that putting it on the credit card would not be an option because there would always be reasons not to pay for it immediately. Then, other things that they *needed* might come along and join the club, and their debt would only grow. So, instead of just buying a big new

*However, the purpose of money is so that we can spend it on mitzvos: to be able to fulfill Hachnosas Orchim with abundance, to buy a more beautiful esrog, to buy pounds and pounds of matzah.*

fridge, they borrowed a mini-fridge from a neighbor. It was very uncomfortable. There was only a limited amount of food that could fit in. During that time of relative discomfort, they saved every dollar possible and researched which fridge would be the best fit for them. After sacrificing for a few weeks they were able to buy a refrigerator debt-free and without the stress of wondering how they would be able to pay for it. They bought it, it's theirs; the story is over.

## 2. START THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE.

You're young now, you're healthy now, and you're working now. What happens down the line? Do you want to be able to pay for your children's weddings? Do you want to still be paying your mortgage when you're in your 70s? Do you want to be a financial burden on your children or your community? The easiest time to get your finances under control is when you're young.

I have worked with many clients in their 60s and older. Their circumstances are always far more chal-

lenging than their younger counterparts. Their habits have long been set. They realize now that their Social Security checks won't cover their expenses. Many have taken out second mortgages on their homes to pay for things they could have saved for once upon a time, and by now it's become much more difficult and physically taxing to earn the income they need to cover their expenses. Although there is no such thing as a hopeless situation and there is a way out for everyone, it is far easier to start young.

### 3. SAVE IN ORDER TO GIVE.

Wouldn't you want to be able to give more *tzedakah*? Imagine if on top of *maaser* you were able to give even more. Imagine you could swipe your (debit) card and not think to yourself, "*Where is this money coming from?*" It's true that not everyone is destined for wealth and no amount of budgeting can change that. But that doesn't mean you can't be a giver, someone who happily and readily directs large amounts of their hard-earned money to *tzedakah*.



Not too long ago, most women stayed at home and took care of the children and their home while their husbands worked to provide for their families. Today, in 2020, most families need two incomes, or at least two partners working together towards a common goal. This is all the more necessary in the *frum* world where we have huge expenses by any standard. We always need a bigger home, more food, more money for tui-



tion, and, with each Yom Tov, to pay for all the *mitzvos* that come with it.

Regardless of whether the wife needs to work or not, managing the finances responsibly has always been up to both partners equally.

As couples, husbands and wives already share the same goals and values in most areas of life. Together we decide where to live, which schools to send our children to, and what we want our future and children's' future to look like.

On a more practical level, let's be honest; we are the ones spending so much of the money! I don't mean on luxuries, I mean on groceries, clothing, and children's needs. These are all expenses we, as women, usually manage. One of the common scenarios I encounter when meeting with couples is when the husband says, "But, my grocery bill is XYZ," or "I have no idea how much she's going to spend on Pesach clothes."

Before I paid attention to our finances, I would tell my husband things like, "I need a diaper bag. The one I need is \$80 and the cheaper ones won't cut it for me." He would think to himself, "*Well, we don't have \$80 for a diaper bag right now, but if she says she needs it so that means we must buy it.*" I'd promptly swipe a card and get my bag. In all likelihood, had I known what our finances looked like and how much debt we were in, I would have reevaluated my need for an expensive bag and realized that because it's an extra, I'll be just fine using the basket under the carriage and my purse. This is just a small example that can manifest itself in a million different ways.

In my own life, I've found that there are many things I once spent money on and have since cut, and I don't feel like my life is missing them. I have structured my life in a way that I don't feel like I am sacrificing so much. For example, in my family, we don't use paper goods on a daily basis. We stopped when I realized that we were spending a minimum of \$100 a month on something that we throw out while our beautiful dishes sat in the cupboard. I was washing pots and pans anyways, what's a few more plates and cutlery added to the mix?



Last year, I was asked to speak about finances at one of the Junior N'shei Chabad of Crown Heights' evening events. The day before my speech, my husband called me excitedly and said I needed to add one more thing



to my speech. It was Chof Zayin Teves, and that morning he had read the day's Hayom Yom:

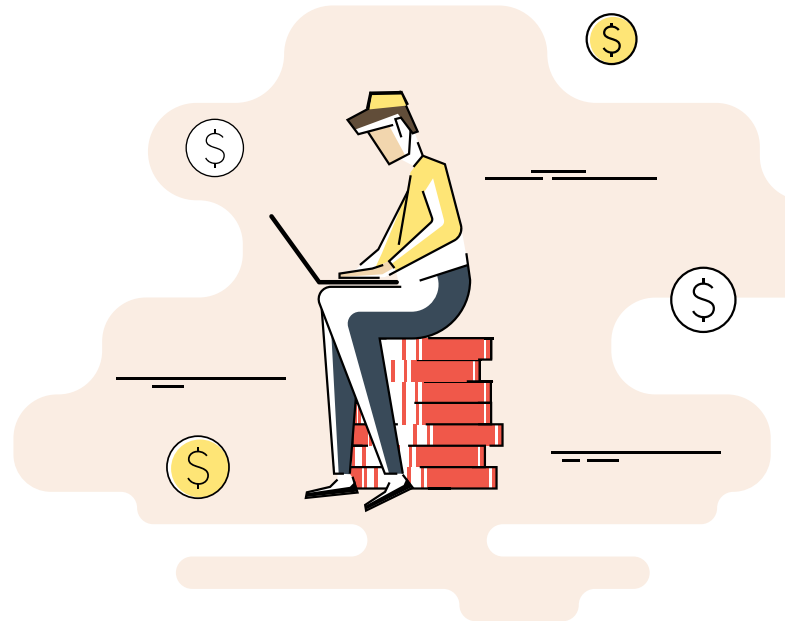
רבינו הזקן אמר: אידישע גשמיות איז רוחניות, דער אויבער-  
רשטער גיט אונז גשמיות, מיר זאלן דערפון מאכען רוח-  
ניות. אמאל אז עס איז לרגע נישט אזוי, דארפן געבען דעם  
אויבערשטען אפילו מנחת עני גיט ער א פולע.

“The Alter Rebbe said: Jewish physical matters are spiritual. G-d gives us material bounty for us to transform into something spiritual. When occasionally it is not so at the moment (G-d has not provided the material wealth), then we must give G-d whatever we can, even a ‘pauper’s offering,’ and then He gives generously.”

I loved this and have been repeating it ever since. It is not always easy to remember why we work so hard to earn money or why we *should* be working so hard to make money. However, the purpose of money is so that we can spend it on *mitzvos*: to be able to fulfill *Hachnosas Orchim* with abundance, to buy a more beautiful *esrog*, to buy pounds and pounds of matzah. There’s nothing more important than giving *tzedakah*, the ultimate *mitzvah* we can do with our hard-earned money to bring the Geula closer. We won’t always have an abundance of money to spend on all these things, but the Alter Rebbe teaches that money is important and we have a specific

mission to accomplish with it. And if we give even when it’s hard, Hashem will repay us generously. ■

To reach Chaya Margolin feel free to email her at [Chayamargolin@gmail.com](mailto:Chayamargolin@gmail.com).



## Uh Oh!

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FALL 5780

בי"ה 2, Volume 1

# EMBRACE

Uniting and inspiring the worldwide community of Beth Rivkah Alumni



# SCHOOLGIRLS' TAKE

Compiled by Baily Vail, Crown Heights  
Graduating Class of 5757 (1997)



## LEAH GURVITCH, GRADE 1



**What do you like about going to Bais Rivkah?**  
The teachers, they are nice.

**What's your favorite subject in school?**  
Learning words

**What do you want to be/do when you grow up?**  
Nurse

## LEAH MOSKOVITS, GRADE 1

**What do you like about going to Bais Rivkah?**  
Lunch, because they give you a lot of food.

**What's your favorite subject in school?**  
Parsha, it teaches you lessons.

**What do you want to be/do when you grow up?**  
Morah



## SHAINA MINKOWITZ, GRADE 1

**What do you like about going to Bais Rivkah?**  
It's the Rebbe's school.

**What's your favorite subject in school?**  
Math, I could use my pencil.

**What do you want to be/do when you grow up?**  
Teacher



## SHAINA ZAKLOS, GRADE 2

**What do you like about going to Bais Rivkah?**  
I get to learn stuff and do fun stuff in school.

**What's your favorite subject in school?**  
Math

**What do you want to be/do when you grow up?**  
I don't know because I'm not older and I don't know what's good.



## FRAIDEL REITER, GRADE 2

**What do you like about going to Bais Rivkah?**  
Well I like learning to read and I just like to go to Bais Rivkah! When my mother says you need to get up for school, I'm happy to just get up and go, even if I'm tired. I can sleep on the way. *(She lives in Long Island)*

**What's your favorite subject in school?**  
Parsha 'cuz I like the stories.

**What do you want to be/do when you grow up?**  
I don't know, maybe a teacher or a doctor.



## CHAYA FREUNDLICH, GRADE 2

**What do you like about going to Bais Rivkah?**  
That there are lots of friends there.

**What's your favorite subject in school?**  
I like reading, I like reading big words.

**What do you want to be/do when you grow up?**  
I'm not sure yet, but I'm pretty sure a teacher like lots of mommies.



## HENNY WOLOWIK, GRADE 2

**What do you like about going to Bais Rivkah?**  
I can choose so many people to be with and I can make other people happy.

**What's your favorite subject in school?**  
Chumash, it teaches me about the Torah and Yiddish and being a Yid and so many things.

**What do you want to be/do when you grow up?**  
I'm thinking an artist or a painter.



## NAOMI SUGAR, GRADE 3

**What do you like about going to Bais Rivkah?**  
I like how they teach things in a fun way. And they always make it interesting.

**What's your favorite subject in school?**  
Parsha, they always tell you the details and I love learning more into things.

**What do you want to be/do when you grow up?**  
I want to be a speech therapist so I can help kids.



**RACHELI ILYAYEV,  
GRADE 3**

**What do you like about going to Bais Rivkah?**  
It's the Rebbe's school and its fun.

**What's your favorite subject in school?**  
Math, 'cuz it's fun and I'm good at it.

**What do you want to be/do when you grow up?**  
Teacher



**FREEDA**

- BAIS RIVKAH -  
*Tafent*



## MOON-DANCE

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

Searching the sky  
With a hopeful eye,  
In the chilly night air  
Until the moon will appear.

At last the clouds part,  
The prayer can start,  
First a dance with their feet  
Then one another they greet.

“Can you please explain  
In words simple and plain:  
What are they saying?  
For whom are they praying?”

Over fifteen days the moon waned small  
Until it wasn't even seen at all.  
Rosh Chodesh a silver sliver appeared  
As a symbol of our nation it became endeared.

Though its crescent's mighty tiny  
A glowing presence no less shiny  
As precious as a jewel  
A portend of renewal.

We, too, a nation seemingly small  
Serve to reflect G-d's light upon all.  
Even at night when it's so very dark  
In the long, long golus difficult and stark,

That sliver of moon lights our way  
Assuring the sun will return by day.  
Each coming night the moon grows stronger,  
Hoping now to be obscured no longer.

Until the middle of the month, on day fifteen,  
When the moon's full disc reflects a source unseen.  
The next fifteen nights it does however shrink  
Not a positive sign, one is liable to think.

But when we perceive it taking a dwindling course,  
Actually it's heading closer to a much higher source  
Bowing to the will of G-d the moon submits  
Gathering more light to shed on all that Exists.



So when it seems to be getting darker  
we are drawing closer to the One

Who will soon remake the moon  
big and bright as the sun

On that day it will become clear  
for all the world to see

How much pure light we generated  
by serving faithfully...

## TOGETHER APART

Sara (Herson) Brafman  
Morristown, NJ

*Graduating Seminary class of 5744 (1984)*

Am Yisroel...  
One family...

Like strands of rope,  
Inextricably intertwined;  
Essentially connected.

You are me...  
I am you...

Standing together...  
Even now,  
Forced to stand apart;  
But together apart...

When all's well  
in my little world,

I go about my way...  
You go about yours...

But when the sun  
hides its rays,  
And dark shadows  
take their place,

You are there for me.

I am here for you.

Helping hands outstretched,  
We stand together...  
Together apart...

There is by far  
More that unites us than  
divides us.

Yes, there are differences...

Opinions, dress, language &  
customs.

But when you're essentially  
connected,  
Does it essentially matter??

Even now;  
Especially now,

We stand together...  
Together apart...

When a child was lost  
In a thick forest overnight,  
Who rushed to the site  
to help search??

When a Yid was released  
from jail  
After eight long years,  
Who danced & celebrated  
jubilantly In the streets??

And now,  
As dozens of weddings are  
celebrated  
Absent of family & friends,  
Who joyously sings & claps  
From a distance??

You!

Acheinu B'nei Yisroel!  
Hearts linked,  
We stand together...  
Together apart...

And today,  
As the earth trembles,  
So do I...  
Not in panic,  
But in the awareness  
That Hashem is speaking...

We hear You...  
Though we may not  
know exactly  
How to interpret  
Your message,

It is clearly a sign;  
A wake up call;  
A call to action...



And as only Your children  
know how,  
We are responding...  
With chessed;  
Tears;  
Heartfelt tefillos...

We pray alone,  
But we pray in unison...  
Together...  
Together apart...

We believe.  
We trust.  
You will protect.

You will heal.  
Like strands of rope,  
We are inextricably  
intertwined;  
Not only with each other,  
But with You.

Hashem, please see  
Our inherent goodness  
And G-dliness...  
Accept our pleas & draw  
closer to us,  
As we struggle to draw  
closer to You...

And then,  
Finally,  
Take us home,  
So we can forever be  
close to You  
And to each other.

But this time,  
We will all be together  
Together...



## THE MIND RULES OVER THE HEART

Rochi Ehrentreu,  
Crown Heights  
*Graduating class  
of 5778 (2018)*

The mind rules over  
the heart marionette  
style, inspired by the  
Hayom Yom of Yud  
Tes Adar.

This painting was  
made for @neshama-  
talk, a crowd-sourc-  
ing Instagram  
account that shares  
the Hayom Yom  
of the day in a  
creative way. ■



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average minds  
discuss milchigs;  
small minds  
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AND LATER FOR THE STOMACH



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# A Taste of Bais Rivkah



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

Shifra (Korolitzky) Klein  
Crown Heights

Graduating class of  
5760 (2000)



## ZA'ATAR CHICKPEA YOGURT BOWL

*Servings: 6*

Combine crispy chickpeas, cucumbers, and radishes with the unique, herbaceous flavor of za'atar and the tanginess of creamy yogurt, and here's what you get: the quintessential modern and fresh Israeli-inspired cuisine.

Whether you choose to go with mini yogurt cups as an appetizer (best-served in small mason jars), or

opt for the family-sized, center-stage salad bowl, this light dish will be the creamy highlight of your meal.

### INGREDIENTS:

3 cups plain yogurt  
1 ½ cups roasted chickpeas  
(recipe follows)  
1 cup sliced cucumber  
1 cup radishes, thin slices  
½ cup fresh chopped parsley  
½ cup sliced olives  
Za'atar

### ROASTED CHICKPEAS:

*Yield: 2 cups*

1 can chickpeas, drained  
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
1 tablespoon za'atar  
½ teaspoon kosher salt  
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.

2. Place chickpeas on baking sheet lined with parchment. Mix with za'atar, salt, pepper and extra virgin olive oil.
3. Roast for 20 minutes.
4. Add salt to taste.
5. Fill six bowls with 1/2 cup yogurt each.
6. Top with roasted chickpeas, sliced cucumber, parsley, olives and radish rounds.
7. Garnish with a dusting of za'atar.



## MUSHROOM & SWEET POTATO BALSAMIC SALAD

*Servings: 6*

This incredible mix of roasted sweet potatoes, mushrooms, and tangy-sweet balsamic dressing is both healthy and delicious. Served on a roasted portabella mushroom, it makes for a very elegant starter to your meal.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 6 portabella mushroom caps
- 3 medium sweet potatoes, cubed
- 4 cups spring mix
- ½ cup toasted almonds
- ½ cup feta cheese (optional)

### BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE

- ⅓ cup balsamic vinegar
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- ⅛ cup honey
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper

- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard or 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 475°F.
2. Place portabella caps on baking sheet. Drizzle with a bit of oil and roast for 15 minutes.
3. Place sweet potatoes on baking tray, drizzle with a bit of oil, and roast for 25 minutes.
4. Combine dressing ingredients: balsamic vinegar, olive oil, honey, black pepper, Dijon mustard, and garlic.
5. Combine greens with sweet potatoes and balsamic dressing. Place sweet potato and greens mixture on portabella caps.
6. For dairy meal: top with toasted nuts and feta cheese.

*Alternative presentation:* slice mushrooms and mix all ingredients together for a casual meal.



## GREEK QUINOA SALAD

*Servings: 8*

“Greek-salad-meal” is the best way to describe this nutritious, flavorful, and stunning dish. You can serve it during a milchig meal, or omit the feta cheese and serve it with pareve or fleishig food. I like using black quinoa for esthetics, but all varieties do the trick. You can also use less quinoa and add some mixed greens to amp up the salad factor.

A great dish for Shabbos lunch!

## INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups cooked black quinoa
- 1 can (10 oz) artichoke hearts, drained and sliced
- 1 cup thin slices roasted red pepper (from the jar or homemade)

## VINAIGRETTE:

- ¼ cup vinegar
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried mustard powder
- ½ cup feta cheese, crumbled, for garnish
- Fresh oregano or microgreens, for garnish (optional)

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine quinoa, roasted red pepper and artichoke hearts.
2. Combine vinegar, olive oil, garlic, sugar, salt, crushed red pepper, oregano, and dried mustard powder in a covered container and shake until fully emulsified.
3. Spoon into serving dish.
4. Top with feta, and fresh oregano.



## CARAMELIZED ONION SQUARES

*Servings: 8*

A flaky pastry joined with sweet and savory onions makes for a perfectly satisfying bite. For a dairy meal, you can add goat cheese which will take this dish over the top with its extra, rich creaminess.

## INGREDIENTS:

- 4 Spanish onions
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey (optional)
- 1 sheet of frozen puff pastry dough, defrosted
- 4 sprigs of thyme
- ½ cup goat cheese, crumbled

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Thinly slice the onions.
2. Heat oil and butter in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add onions and salt; cook on low/medium heat for about 30 minutes, until onions are caramelized and gold-brown. It is best to keep the heat on the lower side, as you don't want the onions to fry, but rather slowly soften and achieve a gold-brown color.
3. Once onions are gold-brown, add balsamic vinegar and honey. Cook for an additional five minutes.
4. Preheat oven to 400°F. Roll out puff pastry and shape it into a 9x13 rectangle.
5. Fill pastry with caramelized onions, leaving a 1-2



inch border. Fold edges over to create a crust. Top caramelized onions with thyme.

6. Bake for 40 minutes, or until pastry is gold-brown.
7. Top with crumbled goat cheese and return to oven for five minutes, to melt the goat cheese.



## CAPRESE LASAGNA ROLLS

*Serves: 8*

I am always fascinated by how a slight change in the presentation of a dish can impact the wow-factor and the enjoyment of the people eating it.

A few simple but impactful presentation methods are: serving salad in a flat salad bowl as opposed to a deep one, garnishing fish with microgreens and roasted lemons, and using a squeeze-bottle to drizzle sauce over chicken or greens.

These lasagna rolls are another example of simple but significant presentation choice. Interestingly enough, cooking lasagna in individual portions not only looks good, but it intensifies the flavor of each roll, as the edges of the noodles and the cheese achieve crispy perfection. Of course, you can prepare them in the traditional lasagna format, but rolling them up is an extra step that delivers great results in both taste and presentation.

I love the simplicity of this dish. The taste is so clean, fresh and gourmet, and is a good break from some of the heavier dairy cuisines.

### INGREDIENTS:

2 balls (8 oz each) fresh mozzarella

8 lasagna noodles, cooked according to package directions

16 fresh basil leaves

16 slices fresh tomatoes

Extra virgin olive oil

Kosher salt and freshly crushed black pepper, to taste

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Cut fresh mozzarella into 16 thin slices.
3. Place one slice mozzarella on noodle. Top with basil leaves and two slices tomato. Roll up the lasagna noodle and place on baking tray. Repeat with remaining noodles.
4. Drizzle rolls with extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper.
5. Top lasagna rolls with remaining mozzarella and a drop more freshly cracked black pepper and bake for twenty minutes or until mozzarella is melted and bubbly. ▀



*Shifra Klein is the editor-in-chief of Fleishigs Magazine, a gourmet cooking publication that celebrates kosher food in a modern, revolutionary way. As a food writer and food stylist, Shifra has spent the last*

*decade revolutionizing the kosher food scene. In 2010, she became the creator and editor-in-chief of the award-winning Bitayavon Magazine, which then merged with Joy of Kosher Magazine in 2013. She is all about having fun in the kitchen, cooking flavorful and mouth-watering food in a simple and approachable way. In her spare time she can be found scouring the aisles of food markets and book stores. Shifra lives in Long Island, NY with her husband and three children. ▀*

# EMBRACE MOMENTS



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

During my last year of high school, my family was going through a difficult time. Bais Rivkah just felt safe. I was able to approach my mechaneches, Mrs. Shterna Zirkind, who provided a listening ear and words of comfort. Later on, when I worked in Bais Rivkah High School as a secretary of the English principal, Bais Rivkah once again provided an outlet from life's challenges. Whether as a student or employee, Bais Rivkah's staff offered security and comfort. The stand-out moments shared with my friends in class, studying together, or working on extra-curricular activities provided cherished memories of achdus, spirit, and camaraderie. I cherish those moments forever.

“אחותינו את היי”

*Tzirl Goldman*

Here's a specific shout out to a few of my daughters' teachers:  
“Girls, I miss you! I wish I could see you now. I can't wait to see you again.”  
That's what Mrs. Strauss told the girls when she spoke with them. She called

every one of her over 100 students the week before Pesach! Such a connection accomplished a lot more than any rules could have ever achieved. My daughter is always looking forward to her online classes now.

My daughter was so excited to tell me that her teacher Miss Miller from Flatbush called her! It really brightened her day.

Mrs. Nechama Samuels prepared her students with beautiful Divrei Torah for the whole Pesach. My daughter really enjoyed the conference call Mrs. Deitsch arranged with her class. Mrs. Chanie Sorkin is so organized, well prepared, and equipped to give her fascinating lessons even over zoom. Bais Rivkah is so lucky to have such phenomenal teachers!

## *A grateful parent*

Dear Mrs. Korf,  
Sixteen years after I left high school, I still keep my 5-point extra credit hachlata from the Halacha final. All these years later I am still careful not to brush my hair on Shabbos.

## *Breindy Tarshish*

I spent the summer after tenth grade as a counselor in an overnight camp together with a friend. We were two sixteen-year-old girls responsible for twelve eleven-year-old girls. It was intense, it was a blast, and I loved every minute - even as I cried from sheer exhaustion on each counselors' night out. I made new friends with girls from other grades and high schools, girls from Bais Rivkah.

I don't know if it was the starry night sky or the too few hours of sleep, but I came to realize somewhere in the third week of camp that it was time for me to switch schools. Having grown up on shlichus in Kansas, I had been living out of town since 8th grade. I enjoyed my classes, I had friends, but I was ready for a change. As was crystal clear in the crisp country air, my Neshama was looking for more.

My parents were wary. I hadn't been significantly un-

happy in school, and never before had I complained about needing more. They were afraid of a rash decision, especially if it was thanks to too few hours of sleep. Yet even as I discussed it with my parents, again and again, and even as I fielded calls from old friends asking why I wasn't coming back, I was sure. Bais Rivkah was calling my name.

Camp ended three weeks before the school year was set to begin. It was pretty clear pretty quickly that I would never be able to get into the dorm on such short notice. And then my father called me one day, "Hey, what do you think of living in Mrs. Tiechtel's house?"

"As in, the principal?" I asked.

"The very one."

So, ready to jump into the Bais Rivkah experience, I became one of Mrs. Tiechtel's privileged boarders. I never quite figured out what to call her after hours. Mrs. Tiechtel? Too formal. Mrs. T? Didn't fit. My co-boarders were her great-nieces who called her by her name, but for me to do so would be disrespectful. Somehow, though, we muddled through for two wonderful years.

Because really, she was my bonus mom, and her home was mine. She went to bed hours after we had finished partying and by the time we woke up, she was pouring cups of orange juice and popping frozen waffles into the toaster. Some call her Mrs. Tiechtel, some call her Morah. But to me, she was another mother, the kind who remembered to buy me natural peanut butter instead of Skippy.

I watched her take phone calls at all hours, advocating for students, advocating for teachers, advocating for everyone under her care. What I saw was just the tip of the iceberg, I'm sure. I watched her endeavor to balance the conflicting needs of the Rebbe's children, warmly remembering the names and lives of each student, generation after generation. She cares for each of us and anyone privileged to be Bais Rivkah alumnae. We are her girls! ■

## *Esty Perman*





REMEMBERING

# *Morah Neiman*



**I** was a student of the last tenth grade to have Morah Neiman as a Navi teacher. I recall being told what a zechus we had to have been the last class to have her as a teacher, and I envisioned the closing of gates, the closing of an era in Bais Rivkah. A petite woman, Morah Neiman actually looked up to each student, but it didn't stop at the aesthetics. Morah Neiman looked at each students' potential, setting high learning standards and great expectations. Her good humor and wit didn't disappoint. I remember Morah Piekarski walking into our classroom to take attendance on that first day. This class will be magical she told us, and she rattled off pesukim of Yeshayahu that Morah Neiman had taught her. It was impressive to share pesukim of Navi offhand, but as Morah Neiman brought the Navi to life, I understood why generations of Navi students boasted these pesukim. It wasn't about the memorization skills cultivated. Morah Neiman infused each lesson with rich depth, heartfelt passion, and life lessons. Navi wasn't history- it was the story of our lives. As we reminisce and elevate the



neshama of our venerated teacher who influenced over 30 years of students, there's a common thread. Between the lines of memories, from different people, with diverse trajectories, there's one underlying theme. Morah Neiman embodies a woman full of love for Hashem, His Torah, and His people. Morah Neiman didn't encourage memorization, she wanted to share her fervent love. I will never look at Navi without thinking of Morah Neiman. Chazon Yeshayahu, Morah Neiman had a vision too, to instill generations with a love for what is true. In her honor we have collected memories and anecdotes that shed some light onto the person Morah Neiman was.

והחי יתן אל לבו - May we have the *zechus* to take this to heart.

*Rivkah Katz*



**H**ello, Morah Neiman was such a special, memorable, and inspiring teacher. She challenged us and we (tried) to rise to the occasion. Morah was able to push us to limits with memorizing the Navi, learning and translating into the Yiddish, as well as performing it in front of the entire class. A lot of which I still remember today.

I remember glowing with pride when I would work hard and do well in one of her on the spot quizzes!

It felt like I had a humorous connection with her personally, and I'm sure a lot of her students felt that way.

I'm so glad I appreciated her as a high school student and what would I give to be able to learn from her again! Iyh with the coming of Moshiach!

Thank you,

*Mushki Neubauer*

**I** have been wondering what Morah Neiman loved more – the Navi she taught or her Bais Rivkah students. I have come to the realization that she loved us equally. We always felt her love and we all loved her in return.

Our respect for Morah Neiman was not only because of what a phenomenal teacher she was but because it was a reflection of the respect she always treated us with.

*Batya Goldberger*  
*Graduating class 1973*

**H**ello, Just a “tidbit” as there as so many from the 12 years I had the *zechus* of working alongside Morah Neiman.

Echoing the sentiments of Morah Raskin, to whom Morah Neiman made feel comfortable in a shy and nervous time... When I began teaching Yeshayahu (to one of the B”H 5 tenth grade classes) as an amateur teacher, having never taught Yeshayahu, Morah Neiman was generously sharing her knowledge and material with me, and (in her ever so *aidel* and gentle manner) asked me “Morah Cotlar would it be possible for you to share your worksheets?” I was humbled and completely blown away. Yet she asked so genuinely, as if she truly wanted them?!?...And this is how our relationship was, she humbly made me feel like it was a “give and take”, as if I had anything to offer to this most remarkable and extraordinary teacher of multiple decades, a living embodiment of Torah and Yiras Shomayim. I also had the privilege of driving her frequently to Williamsburg after teaching when my work there overlapped with her teaching days, and heard the love, care, respect and devotion that she had towards her students and, of course, towards her family. She was always eager to enrich her already rich teaching with Chassidus. Being in the *דיאמות* of Morah Neiman just made you want to be refined in *דיבור*, *מחשבה*, and *מעשה*, and try a bit harder.

Thank you for the beautiful evening of inspiration enabling so many who knew and loved her to soak in the lessons learned and so eloquently presented tonight and help us live with her- והחי יתן אל לבו.

May we only hear besuros toivos. Moshiach Now!!

*Leah Rochel (Cotlar) Ciment*


**M**y name is Dini Reichman, I'm 5'7 tall and I was in 10th grade over ten years ago. I want to share with you some of my memories of Morah Neiman. When Morah Neiman would walk in the hallway with her bag - always in an organized way - there was no way I could miss her. I may have had physical height but Morah Neiman, the way she carried herself with grace, purpose and pride made her a giant of a woman in my eyes as a student. I was always greeted with a warm smile that would reach her eyes. There isn't a Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur that goes by that I don't search for pesukim that I learned in her class. And whenever there is a Shabbos that has an additional specialty (Rosh Chodesh, etc.) I always say to my family - Morah Neiman is making two kugels!

I just took my notes from her class out and some of her sheets that I kept over the years, looking forward to reviewing them.

May we have the true nechama of the Navi's nevuos being fulfilled and may we meet in Yerushalayim with Moshiach NOW!

A grateful student,

*Dini*



**H**igh School is tough. No one goes through it unscathed. Some of us carry the wounds of childhood throughout our lives. Hopefully, we heal from our trauma and become stronger in our emunah. For me, the person that embodied the path of righteousness and overcoming adversity was our dearly cherished, "Morah Neiman". She was a mentor and an example of how one person can change the world. She changed mine.

Morah Neiman was not only the best Navi teacher, but she was our mashpia. She had private talks with all of us and nurtured us with unconditional love. She seldom scolded us. She consistently, pointed out and focused on our positive qualities; this motivated us to WANT to excel in her class. When Morah Neiman smiled at us, it was like the sun warming us after a brutal winter. She was that bright of a light. She carried Hashem with her in every nuance, every word, and every lesson. Her quiet demeanor did not diminish from her reputation as a "force of nature." She was not only a force of nature, but, a force of "Hashem" himself.

She was an angel sent to us and deep down we knew it. We treasured her, even as "know-it-all" teenagers, with tendencies to be rebellious. We loved her and she loved us.

I have many memories of Morah Neiman, but more than mere anecdotes, I remember the way she made me feel. In fact, I can still recall how happy and joyful I was in her presence; how important she told me I was, even when I wasn't feeling good about myself. She once praised me for being kind to everyone, especially the girls who were encountering many difficulties at school and at home. I, truly, believe that my love for chesed was fostered and encouraged by Morah Neiman. She developed and expanded the "good" in each student. I was no exception. Our dear Morah imparted her passion for Yishayahu to us, as a perennial gift that we would, as mothers and teachers, entrust to our children and students. With Morah Neiman, we were not just her students; we were her beloved Yiddishe Kinder. She left us each a priceless legacy of Torah and Ahavas Yisroel. Most of us still remember the pesukim we had to memorize for her class. It is a testament to her excellence as a teacher and most of all, as a precious human being.

When I heard that Morah Neiman was niftar, I felt an immense pain in my solar plexus. In fact, I'm crying as I write this, but interspersed between the pangs of sorrow, I can see her smiling in her holiness, because I know she is probably at the kisei Hakavod, learning with all the naviim and gedolim she emulated. All I can say is Gan Eden is lucky to have her.

May she be a meilitz yosher to help us usher in Moshiach and may her family be comforted by all of us who have been privileged to have had her in our lives.

*Henshi Gorodetsky*



**I**t was time for Navi, and we trickled into the classroom. Morah Neiman would usually show up promptly, and sit down with her roll book to take attendance. Her piercing eyes would gaze at each student as she called out their name.

We chatted around, keeping an ear open for Morah Neiman's arrival. Minutes ticked by, and we started to wonder. Finally several students left the classroom to find her.

They returned smiling, sharing that they had peeked through the teachers room window to find her sitting alone with a tehillim, reading each word with intent concentration.

Turns out, she hadn't realized that she was meant to be teaching our class that day, and thought she had free time between classes.

It was so simple, yet the simplicity of it struck something in me. Her action taught me more than any well planned lesson could. The value of the words of tehillim, and the value of every moment. She was authentic. She lived what she taught, and the example she set remains with me until this day!

*Anonymous*



**D**ear Mrs. Perl,  
I was so sorry to hear of the petira of Morah Neiman.

I wasn't a regular Bais Rivkah student. I grew up in a traditional home out of town and became more frum than my family (who B"H later followed suit). Never having had the opportunity to get a proper school chinuch, as an older girl, I sat in on a few Bais Rivkah classes in 1980 (which Bais Rivkah was kind enough to allow me to do) while I was between jobs. I was in Morah Neiman's class several times. Lacking background, I didn't understand the full content of the subject. But I did understand Morah Neiman's yiras shomayim, the breathtaking gracious eidelkeit, the kindness, the simchas hachaim and the other beautiful middos. I never forgot, and I tried to imitate her where I could. Later when my own three girls were her students, they always came home with positive things to say about Morah Neiman -- never a complaint, even from the feisty ones -- and I know they learned well in her class B"H. For me, it was always a treat to go to PTA and have a few minutes to sit and bask in Morah Neiman's presence.

A preschool teacher once told me that she davens intensely to have a significant positive hashpa'ah not only on her students, but on their families. I imagine that Morah Neiman davened for the same. Whether or not she davened for it, she achieved it.

Hamakom yenchaim es'chem besoch shaar aveilei

Tzion veYerushalayim. You surely know that if not for the quarantine, Crown Heights girls and women would be lined up outside the shiva house and around the block to visit you. That's not to even mention the many hundreds on shlichus around the world who would wish to visit. May Moshiach come immediately and bring Morah Neiman back to teach all the women at the Mikdash Hashlishi... of course, while we are learning from the Nevi'im themselves as well...

With all good wishes,

*Mrs. Chana Shloush  
Crown Heights*

**L**ast night I couldn't get these words out of my head. Last night I found out that my 10th grade Navi teacher, Morah Neiman, passed away. In some schools, all teachers are referred to as "Morah" (Hebrew/Yiddish for teacher) but in my alma mater, where almost all of us speak English as a first language, most teachers were Miss, Mrs, or very rarely Ms. Morah Neiman was the only teacher that I always referred to with that honorific.

She was one of the tiniest women I'd ever met. By the time my peers and I entered her class, she'd taught generations of students, thousands and thousands of girls. And yet, we all felt that she genuinely cared about each of us, that she took it as an honor to be able to impart the holy words of the Navi Yeshayahu to a new generation.

She was an old-school teacher who took no nonsense but knew that despite being "young ladies", we were still children. She was strict, but she was funny. My classmates and I have been reminiscing since last night about all her witty remarks made in a mixture of Yiddish, English, and Hebrew; how she could reprimand without embarrassing, and how she made us feel that what we were learning was important. She was a Vizhnitzer (I believe) chasidiste with a love for her Lubavitcher girls.

On the first day of class she told us, "Maidelach, Yeshayahu HaNavi is standing by the door listening to you learn his words!" And she proceeded to teach, "Nachamu, nachamu ami. Treist treist mein fulk..." May Hashem bring her family, her students, and all her people true comfort.

*Raizel Shurpin*



**D**ear Mrs. Perl,  
HaMakom yenchem eschem b'soch sha'ar  
aveilei Tzion v'Yerushalayim. Your, and  
our, loss is incalculable.

I was told that you would like Bais Rivkah students to share their memories about your mother, Morah Leah Neiman, a"n. Saying Tehillim for Maras Rochel Leah bas Chaya these past few weeks has given me time to think about her, and to remember, so please forgive me if this is long.

I came to Crown Heights in 1973 at the age of 14. I immediately loved Bais Rivkah; it was utterly different from the co-ed dayschool I had been in before, and I appreciated those differences.

Although I was far from a perfectly well-behaved student, and I liked making everyone laugh, I never misbehaved in Morah Neiman's class. I would never. I was endlessly fascinated by Morah Neiman and took careful notes of the deeper meaning of Tehillim that she taught us. I was also fascinated by how she looked and dressed, her lack of lipstick, the little hat neatly perched on the short sheitel, the twinkling eyes and ready humor. Even when she disciplined, it was with humor.

After I graduated, got married and had a few children, I met Morah Neiman at the wedding of a friend. I took the opportunity to thank her for the lessons and to tell her that when I say Tehillim, I remember the mefarshim she taught us. Then I said ruefully, "But now that I have all the little children, I don't daven or say much Tehillim..."

She looked me in the eye and replied slowly (she always spoke slowly, deliberately, never impulsively) in her Hebrew-accented English, "If you can't daven and say Tehillim now because of the children, that's nothing to feel bad about. As long as you're not wasting your time on the shtuss-filled goyishe women's magazines."

Well, of course that is EXACTLY what I had been doing. I was a subscriber to all the shtuss-filled secular women's magazines, the weeklies, the monthlies, all of them. I would save them and right after licht-bentchen, I would take them to the couch and read while the children played. As soon as Morah Neiman said it, it struck me: they really were filled with shtuss: nonsense. I got home from the wedding and threw out the magazines. The next day, I canceled my subscriptions. Instead, I began, on Friday nights right after licht bentchen, to sing Kabalas Shabbos with the children. Some of the tunes I took from my Camp Emunah days, and my oldest, Alta Shulinke (now known as Shula Bryski), put other parts to different tunes.

The years have passed. My children are grown. Now

I visit my married children, and my grandchildren sing those same tunes. After lichtbentchen, in all their homes, Kabalas Shabbos is the order of the day. Every time I hear it I send up a little prayer of thanks to Morah Neiman who saw a former student and quickly, without hesitation or worry of offending, told her the truth.

As the years passed I began working for the N'shei Chabad Newsletter, and every time I went to high school PTA for my daughters and saw Morah Neiman, I would beg her to let me interview her. I offered to come to Williamsburg and find photos of her life and make copies (only later did I understand that she would never want photos of herself published). I told her that people needed to know her opinions about everything. She consistently refused, explaining that she wasn't anything special, and why don't I interview this woman, or that woman (pointing to the other teachers). There was no way to convince her that she was something special. But then again, a few years later, when my daughter Chanel (now Chanel Lipskier) was graduating eighth grade, Bais Rivkah held a Mother-Daughter Tea. They asked me to speak, so I decided to reminisce about my 1974 beginnings in Bais Rivkah. I said, "When I came to Bais Rivkah and met Morah Neiman, I was shocked. It's not that I didn't know anyone like Morah Neiman before. More than that, I never knew people like her existed."

After the Tea, Morah Neiman came over to me and surprised me by acknowledging what I had said about her and concluding, "What you said was very good because the new generation does not understand what's important."

I saw Morah Neiman continue to come to Crown Heights from Williamsburg to teach, although it was clearly difficult for her as she grew older. I think she once told us that the Rebbe had told her to continue teaching in Bais Rivkah, so she did (not sure about this).

Twice I was zocheh to be in the car when she got a ride home (mostly she took the bus).

Back in the 1970s, on one occasion when my father came to Crown Heights to visit my sister and me, he gave Morah Neiman a ride home with us in the car. We drove to her home on Division Avenue. And another time, in the 1980s, I was driving up New York Avenue and there, standing at the bus stop, was Morah Neiman. Baruch Hashem I didn't have any pressing obligations right then and I was able to give her a ride to Williamsburg. That was our last real conversation (and I'm afraid I wasted half of it begging her for the interview and photos she never wanted to give).

I was blessed to have Morah Neiman educate me and

care about me, and so were my daughters. I hope for the sake of my granddaughters that Bais Rivkah will be fortunate enough to have more “Morah Neimans” who will set the shining example that she set, and also be courageous enough to say what needs to be said.

*Rishe Deitch*

## My Memories of Morah Neiman<sup>ע"ה</sup>

**Batya R. (Wolvovsky) Engel**

Morah Neiman was one of my most favorite teachers ever. She taught me Navi in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and I was also lucky to have her as the official mechaneches of my tenth grade class. This meant that we had an extra period each week, called Shaas Chinuch.

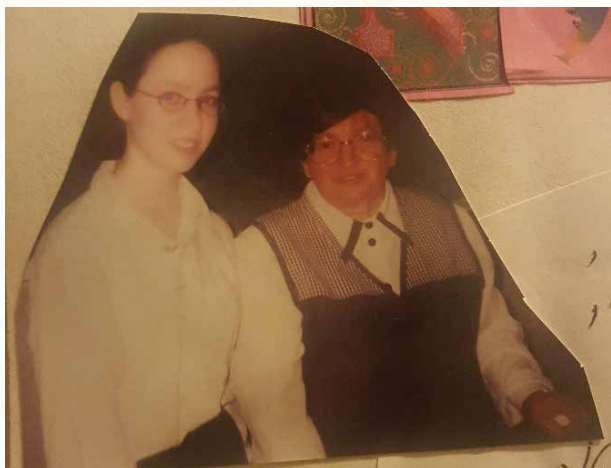
Different teachers looked at Shaas Chinuch in different ways. Most teachers chose topics that they felt were pertinent and had a discussion on it. Not Morah Neiman. She brought in lots of different sources to teach us very valuable lessons. I still remember the grumbling when she told us she wants us to keep a Shaas Chinuch notebook and we will be graded on it. In our minds, Shaas Chinuch was like a “free” period where we would get to have discussions with our teacher, but would not have to work hard. That notebook is something that is dear to me and I still have it today. I will never forget how she taught us to be grateful for all the little things in our lives. She brought in a Yiddish poem about a man who randomly made a Seudas Hodaah thanking Hashem for all of the things that could have gone wrong, but didn't. I still remember her voice reading the poem: *מה יום מיומים? וואס האט פאסירט ביי ר' חיים* Each Shaas Chinuch lesson she taught was a gem, though I'm not sure we appreciated it then as 10th graders.

As part of Shaas Chinuch, she divided us into groups. The Wednesday before the Rosh Chodesh of the next month (or on Rosh Chodesh, if it fell on Wednesday), each group would prepare something about the specialty of that month and the days that are in it. The first few groups all used “A Day to Recall, A Day to Remember” to prepare their presentations. I remember how after the group of Teves presented, she asked in surprise why no one had quoted the *ספר התודעה* I came home that night and asked my father if we owned that

Sefer, never having heard of it before. Being that my group was assigned the month of Shvat, we made sure to include all of the information we found out about it. I will never forget Morah Neiman's beaming face when we presented and included information from this Sefer.

Before Purim we wanted to have a Purim party instead of the usual Shaas Chinuch. But we weren't sure if Morah Neiman would let. Being that I had a very good relationship with her because I spoke Hebrew and Yiddish, I was nominated to ask her if we can use one period before Purim for a party. I remember asking her and with a twinkle in her eye she answered me, “what greater party is there than learning?” But she relented and we had our party. She obviously made sure that we would include some toichen to it. On the day of the party, she came laden down with bags. After we all presented whatever we had prepared for the party, she handed out one bag to each student and gave out a poem written in her flawless script in Hebrew. She went on to read it and translate it for those that did not understand Hebrew. The poem described everything that she included in the bag and why. It began with the words: *ויהי ביום הרביעי ב 10-3 הכתה. ללמוד לא הי' חשק לאף תלמידה והמורה פחדה שתהי' מהפכה לכן הסכימה לעשות לעשות מסיבה* (It was Wednesday in class 10-3 and no one was interested in learning. The teacher was scared there would be a rebellion so she decided

The image shows a handwritten Yiddish poem in Hebrew script. The title is "מורה ניימאן" (Morah Neiman) and the subtitle is "ספר שבת" (Sefer Shabbat). The poem is written in cursive and appears to be a reflection on learning and the teacher's influence. The text includes phrases like "ויהי ביום הרביעי ב 10-3 הכתה" and "מהפכה לכן הסכימה לעשות לעשות מסיבה".



to allow a party.) She included in it homemade hamen-tashen that were a triangle shape because if they would have been square, they would have needed tzitzis. She also included homemade rosettes since we all are blossoming like roses and a Lahit chocolate bar since our Rosh Chodesh projects were a “real hit.” She added in a safety pin in case our shirts would be open too wide and a pack of tissues so that she wouldn’t have to give the pass to go out of class. She really did not like giving out the pass because she felt that it was a waste of precious learning time. Beyond the fact that we appreciated the thoughtfulness of these little packages, the way she tried to instill in us these values is something that I only appreciate years later. She had no problem almost making fun of herself, if only we would learn something from it.

Towards the end of the year, around final time, my father was hit by a car. Though BH he came out with injuries that would not leave a lasting impact, at that time, it was a very stressful time for me. I remember seeing my mother cry in her friend’s arms right when she found out and went to the hospital to be with my father. As the oldest girl, I had to take charge. I pushed my feelings deep inside and didn’t really tell anyone about the worry, the fear and the stress. The day after my father was hit, Morah Neiman called me over. She asked me if everything was okay at home because she noticed that I was not myself and something seemed to be bothering me. She was the only teacher who took the time to notice and to ask and the only one that I was able to express the worry and the fear that I had pushed deep down. She asked me for my father’s name and mother’s name and said she will say tehillim for him, even though his injuries were not life-threatening.

When final time came, Morah Neiman spent an entire day—from 8:00 in the morning until 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening, testing the entire grade orally. I think each class was given a timeframe of a few hours when they were responsible to come into school. Each girl needed to be

in school on time and stay until she was tested. Obviously whoever was tested of the first, got to go home earlier, but Morah Neiman would not take any requests of the order to test in. At that point, it was a week or two after my father’s accident and he was home from the hospital, though he still needed care and help, having broken his hip and shoulder. I told Morah Neiman that someone needed to be home with my father and that my mother had to go to work on the day of the Navi final. I asked if I can be first at 8:00 in the morning so that I can go home to be with my father. She made an exception for me but made me promise that after the final I would go straight home and would attend to anything my father needed until my mother came home. She wanted me to realize that she wasn’t giving me a free pass to spend the rest of the day as I pleased. She was changing her policy to teach me the importance of kibbud av and of honesty—that if I needed to take the test first in order to be with my father, then I needed to honor that and actually be with my father. And though I learned that lesson in a very real way, I also believe that she understood the stress that I was under, that no one else understood, and in her own way tried to alleviate some of it by allowing me to get over with the final first.



**S**HE WAS A WOMAN WHO WAS SMALL IN STATURE, BUT LARGER THAN LIFE.

When I was in seminary in Bais Rivkah, I was asked to substitute for a math teacher in 10<sup>th</sup> grade who had a baby six weeks early. I walked into the teacher’s room to get something and felt so out of place among all my teachers. Morah Neiman was the first who greeted me and told me how nice it was to see me on the other side, as a teacher. Though I did not teach in Bais Rivkah again after that brief subbing stint, I did go on to teach preschool and elementary school for many years, before moving into administration. I will never forget that the first one who called me a teacher was Morah Neiman. And the warmth that she said it with, with a huge smile on her face, is something that will stay with me forever.

She was a woman who was small in stature, but larger than life. In her own quiet way, with her sense of humor and a true understanding of the teenage mind, she instilled life lessons and values that can’t be underestimated.



# Morah Neiman

THIS POEM WAS WRITTEN FOR THE FIRST  
MOTHER DAUGHTER TEA 5751

Morah Neiman is what we call her,  
Sincerity is her middle name.  
Devotion, dedication, and unwavering determination,  
Are not they the only factors that bring her such fame.

"Can I speak to you a moment, please -  
It'll only take a second."  
With such an introduction and invitation  
to refuse is just beyond question.

All your doubts, hesitations, and confusions  
come out in that little talk with her.  
Afterwards, you feel so very relieved,  
She's so sincere," you'll believe for sure.

A student can almost feel,  
when a teacher means her best.  
A student is usually so aware,  
of which teacher to put to test.

Yet when introduced to Morah Neiman,  
it's evident right from the start.  
She undoubtedly wins her students' trust,  
as she proves she's "straight from the heart."

Morah Neiman is constantly guiding us,  
We provide her with quite a gang to tame.  
Each girl is cared for like a gem  
To her no one is "just a name."

Morah Neiman, of course, relays to us  
much more than her subject - Navi.  
She faithfully instructs us step by step,  
instilling in us middos - the real way to study.

Morah Neiman, your middos we'll try to emulate,  
Ahavas Yisroel, Yiras Shomayim are just a few.  
There are so many things that you represent,  
Be it teacher, or friend, or just being you!

How can we possibly convey to you,  
dear teacher and mechaneches of ours,  
You'll stay with us throughout our lives,  
your presence Bais Rivkah treasures.



# Keepsakes

Meet some elementary school faculty!  
From the yearbook of eighth grade 5759–1999

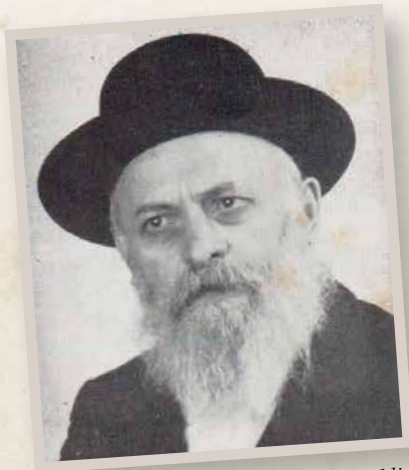
Have more photos? Please send them to  
[alumni@bethrivkah.edu](mailto:alumni@bethrivkah.edu)



*Morah Maatlin*



*Morah Sudak*



*Rabbi Goldin*



*Rabbi Majeski*





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# SEMINARY SAGA

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

Growing up in Chicago in the '60s and early '70s, there weren't many Jewish schools to choose from. There was just Bais Yaakov for elementary school, and for high school, there was Ida Crown Jewish Academy; Girls' Branch, enigmatically named ICJAGB, but more often called "The Girls' School."

Because it was the only frum girls' high school, the seventy students in the whole school were of varied backgrounds. Students and teachers represented the frum Mizrachi, Satmar, Ger, Yeshivish, Telshe, Lubavitch, Yekish, and other communities. I was the very vociferous Lubavitcher. I always enjoyed standing out in a crowd and would jump at every opportunity to point out differences in customs and laws. Looking back, I wonder how those teachers found patience for the nudnik that I was.

During the last year of high school, everyone was talking about where to go for seminary. My classmates had many

schools to choose from. There were a handful of seminaries in the U.S., mainly in New York, but the buzzword was "Eretz Yisroel." Everyone who was anyone was going to spend the year after graduation in the Land of Our Prayers and Dreams. I, too, was swept up in the tidal wave of milk and honey. I told myself that I don't always have to stress differences and that Eretz Yisrael is one of those things that all Yidden have a connection to.

As we had been doing for at least a decade, our family packed into the car and made the thirteen-hour trip to be with the Rebbe for Shavuos. While we were in New York, someone suggested to me that I write to the Rebbe about seminary. I sat down and wondered how to formulate the letter. I could either just write that I plan to spend the year in seminary in Israel and ask for the Rebbe's bracha, or I could ask the Rebbe for advice on where to learn. "It's not respectful to present the Rebbe with a fait accompli," I thought, so I wrote about the choice and not the decision. A full page of my letter was about why I should go to Eretz Yisrael for seminary -- there was

even a Lubavitch seminary there! At the end of the page, almost as an aside, I wrote: But if the Rebbe says that I should learn in Bais Rivkah in New York, I am ready to do that.

Then, sure I would get the answer I wanted, I finished off with a request for the Rebbe's *hadracha* and *bracha*.

A day or two passed before the secretary called with the Rebbe's answer: the Rebbe had circled "Bais Rivkah in New York."

Oy, did I cry!!

I contemplated writing again to elaborate on more

*In the two years I spent at Bais Rivkah, I made life-long friends and soaked in the atmosphere of being in the daled amos of the Rebbe.*

reasons why I NEEDED to spend my seminary year in Kfar Chabad, but on account of it being the height of chutzpah, I held myself back. Since I was in Crown Heights at the time, I went to visit Bais Rivkah. If I was going to be stuck in New York for seminary, I might as well go to see what it would be like.

The two classes I sat in on were AMAZING!

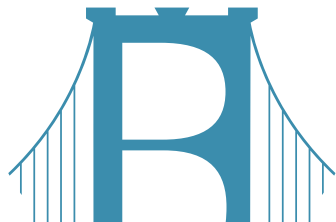
In the two years I spent at Bais Rivkah, I made life-long friends and soaked in the atmosphere of being in the *daled amos* of the Rebbe. I got to hear the Rebbe speak at *fabrengens*, put his directives into action, and learn and absorb the unique approach of Chabad Chassidus. The values and direction that I received from seminary stood by me throughout my adult life. Looking back, those two years were crucial; they set the template for my future.

And at Bais Rivkah, I couldn't have been too much of a nudnik because the principal later made my shidduch... with my teacher's son. ■

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