



EMBRACE

Uniting and inspiring the worldwide community of Bais Rivkah Alumnae



GROWTH – ONE STEP AT A TIME

LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGING, THEY WILL TELL YOU WHAT IS GOING ON INSIDE. THEN YOU HAVE WHAT TO WORK WITH.

28

MY JOURNEY FROM A STRUGGLING READER TO A LITERARY ENTHUSIAST

34

"BECAUSE YOU WANT TO PERFECT YOUR WORK, YOU WOULD PUT MY CHILD BACK IN THAT OPERATING ROOM?"

42

Contents

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LOOK INSIDE



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IN EVERY ISSUE

5
GROWTH IS VERY, VERY QUIET
Sara Blau, Editor

6
FROM THE REBBE

9
A MESSAGE FROM
THE CHAIRMAN
Rabbi Avraham Shemtov

12
DEAR EDITORS

22
ALUMNAE
As told to Chanie Vogel

94
A TASTE OF BAIS RIVKAH
Sara Wolko

98
BAIS RIVKAH TALENT

100
EMBRACE MOMENTS

102
KEEPSAKES

104
BR CONNECTION
As told to Chaya Goldberg

BR STORY

18
HAND IN THE MOVE
Mashi Lipskar

BR HOME

28
AISHES CHAYIL: JWI EDITION
Zohar Sasson

30
A GROWTH ORIENTED FAMILY
Estee Lieblich

BR VALUES

34
ASKING FOR A FRIEND
Chaya from East Flatbush

THEME

42
EMBRACING IMPERFECTION
Chana Scop

48
A GROWING RELATIONSHIP
Anonymous

52
BE AN ARTIST
Leah Abraham

BR EXPERIENCE

58
TAKING THE SCENIC ROUTE
TO KRIAH FLUENCY
Nechamy Segal

66
OUT OF TOWNER
Zlatie Mochkin

68
AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE
Mushka Greene

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38 ON PERSONAL GROWTH

As I think of those deeply impactful moments in my life, I wonder what works for others. I have turned to several Bais Rivkah alumnae, shared my story, and asked, “What works for you?”

BR LIFE

72
KISCAPING
Aidela Rabiski

76
TEACHING THE MOST
USEFUL SKILLS FOR LIFE
Frumie Piekarski

80
INVESTING IN INFINITY
Esty Blau

84
CHINUCH –
A SHLICHUS FOR TODAY
Chana Rose

88
THE GEULAH BOX
Rivky Belinow

BR BIZ

92
FROM SHARPIE TO
APPLE PENCIL
Interview by Esther Procaccia



DER AIBISHTER FIRT DI Velt
While I can think that I know why my life took some of the twists and turns that it has, I truly never will.



ב"ה



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GROWTH IS VERY, VERY QUIET

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



By nature, I like noise. I enjoy concerts, crowds, the rush of a Manhattan cross-street. I get energized from interacting with lots of people and enjoy ceremonies, productions, and events. A true extrovert. But beyond all the hubbub and hallelaloo of life, there is something sacred to me. And that is the stillness of growth.

Because growth happens when no one is watching. Growth doesn't look like accomplishment. It's not a name on a building or a ceremony. It is during the quiet moments inside my own head where I win over my personal challenges that real growth happens. It is the steady and persistent improvement of myself, transcending myself, and giving to others. The things I am most proud of are things that no one will ever know about.

I always appreciated the Hayom Yom of my birthday, Vov Iyar:

Our sages said: "One should not take leave of his friend other than with a parting word of Torah-law, a *d'var halacha*." Our forefathers, the saintly Rebbeim, explained: The parting word should be the kind of Torah-teaching that transforms the listener into a *me-haleich*. "Progress," *hiluch*, means to rise from level to level, with one ascent after another. Such progression embodies the superiority of the human soul over the angels, for this ascent is greatest through an act of goodness - extending a favor to another, a material

favor in general, a spiritual favor in particular.

(free translation by Yitschak Meir Kagan)

When I am home alone with my children, when I curb the temptations of my nefesh habehamis, I do not get validation from anyone. When I flex my middos muscles during Sefiras Haomer, and make one small change at a time, then that is *hiluch*, progress. There are no charts to fill in on Mashpia.com, and there are no medals granted. There are no flashing lights and no loud noises. And yet even this extrovert has come to value and appreciate the beauty of silence, the value of introspection.

In this issue, you will read the touching story of how Chana Scop came to embrace imperfection. You will read from alumnae of all ages and stages sharing their journeys of personal growth and how they keep developing and maturing far beyond the years spent in school. You will read about how the Rebbe describes a fledgling nation that grew forth in the spring, just in time for the giving of the Torah on Shavuot. And I hope that you, too, can feel encouraged and uplifted to experience your own personal Matan Torah, a time when the world was silent, and to lean into the stillness of growth. ■

Sara Blau

Sara Blau

From the REBBE

נשיא דורנו

*By the Grace of G-d
1 Iyar, 5711
Brooklyn, NY*

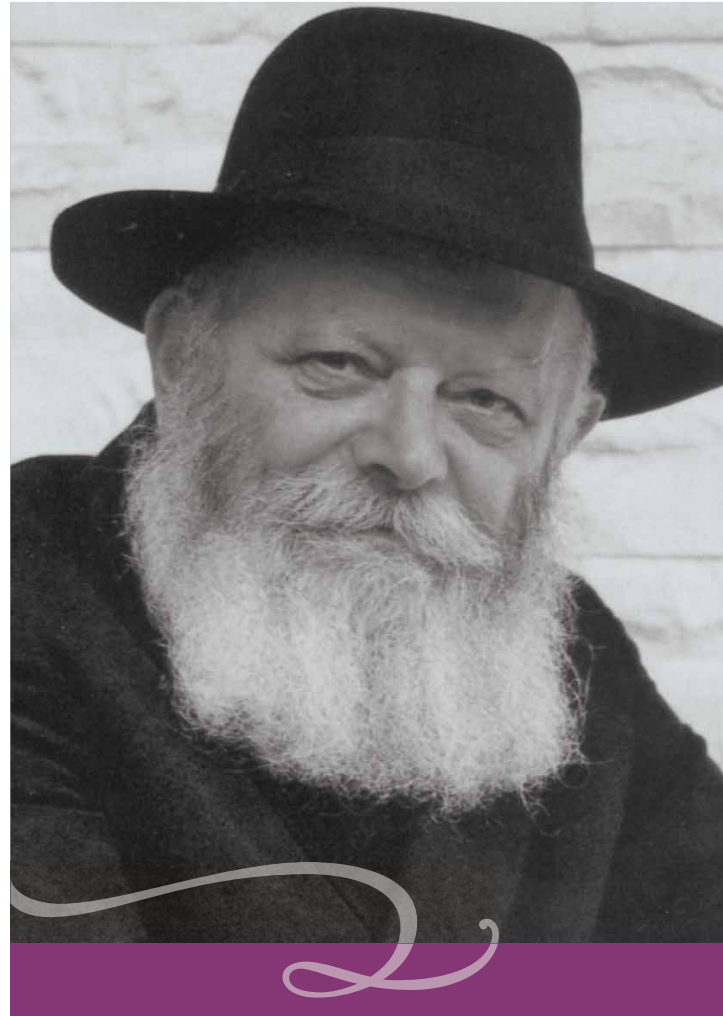
Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge your letter of Nissan 13 and to thank you for your good wishes for Pesach. I trust you had an enjoyable and inspiring Yom Tov.

Pesach ushers in sunny and warm springtime. In nature, spring brings forth to the surface the natural forces which were hidden during the winter, and out come the blossoms, which turn into ripe fruits later on.

Applying this idea to the human element, there can be a state of “winter,” of apparent unproductivity in the life of a person. But no Jew or Jewess should consider themselves, and certainly should not be considered by others, as having terminated their usefulness, even though a long time of fruitlessness has elapsed. Given the proper inspiration and stimulus, the state of “winter” can easily and suddenly be changed into “spring” and blossom time, which eventually will ripen into good fruits for G-d and man.

The significance of “springtime” in Jewish life is suggested by the festival of Pesach which we have just celebrated, as indicated in Torah: “You are going forth (from Egypt) this day, in the month of spring.” For two hundred and ten years the children of Israel lived in Egypt, in physical and spiritual slavery, stagnating in the abominations of Egypt. It did not seem that there could be a



But no Jew or Jewess should consider themselves, and certainly should not be considered by others, as having terminated their usefulness.

revival of Jewish life. Yet, then came the Exodus in the middle of the Month of Spring, and the children of Israel were quite free, so free in fact that in a very short time they became worthy of receiving the Torah - the zenith and completeness of the entire universe.

With all good wishes,

(signature)

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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

Message from *the* Chairman *of* the Board

חֲבִיבֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנָּתַן לָהֶם כָּלִי חֻמְדָּה,
חֲבָה יִתְּרָה נֹדְעֶת לָהֶם שֶׁנָּתַן לָהֶם כָּלִי
חֻמְדָּה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: כִּי לָקַח טוֹב נְתַתִּי
לָכֶם, תּוֹרַתִי אֵל תַּעֲזֹבוּ.²

Beloved are Israel, for they were given a precious article; it is a sign of even greater love that it has been made known to them that they were given a precious article, as it is stated³: "I have given you a good purchase; My Torah, do not forsake it".⁴

As we approach the completion of the current school year, I am reminded of the yearly highlight and unique experience that Beth Rivkah graduates would have, namely being addressed by the Rebbe זי"ע as they prepared to enter their next stage in life. You are the only student body in the world that merited to have this privilege.

It seems to me to be quite obvious that the Rebbe wasn't just addressing you, but through you the Rebbe was addressing all Jewish women and girls the world over. This is obviously a great privilege and implies a special level of trust that the Rebbe placed in Beth Rivkah graduates, delegating to you the responsibility of sharing his message to the rest of "Bais Yaakov".

Privilege comes with responsibility.

Our Rebbeim have taught us that just like one must be aware of one's shortcomings, one must be aware of one's capacities.⁵

One of the ways to identify and evaluate our strengths is by knowing and understanding what our G-d given mission is. The mere fact that we are entrusted with a specific mission implies that we are provided with the powers, talents and abili-

Our Rebbeim have taught us that just like one must be aware of one's shortcomings, one must be aware of one's capacities.

ties necessary to carry it through successfully.

What is the Beth Rivkah mission statement?

On the 25th of Iyar, 5706 (1946), the Rebbe addressed the participants of the fourth annual dinner held in honor and support of Beth Rivkah.⁶

The Rebbe opened his address with a short intro-



duction regarding the genesis of the Beth Rivkah and Beth Sarah schools network founded by the Frieddiker Rebbe זצוקללה"ה and went on to address several questions and doubts that people had expressed regarding the revolutionary idea of providing girls and women with a robust Torah education.

There are, indeed, several aspects to Limud Hatorah and their relationship to women, the

The Rebbe's answer sheds a new light on what contemporary חינוך הבנות, Torah education for girls and women, is really all about.

Rebbe pointed out, some more and some less directly relevant to women:

The obligation to acquire Torah knowledge , דיעות , "התורה";

The obligation to study Torah at every opportunity, even after having acquired Torah knowledge, "והגית בו יומם ולילה";

The permission to study Torah even when not obligated, 'אינה מצווה ועושה';

In order to know how to behave in any given situation, "הכשר מצוה";

Sharing in the reward of her husband's and sons' Torah study by encouraging and supporting them, "חולקת עמם בשכר כמצווה ועושה".

The Rebbe then went on to focus on the last aspect: the merit and responsibility that a woman has regarding encouraging her husband and sons to fulfill their obligation regarding Torah study. There is an obvious question here: was it necessary for a woman to study Torah herself —beyond the practical halachos relevant to her— in order to be able to encourage her husband and sons to fulfill their Mitzvah of Limud Hatorah as מצווה ועושה?

The Rebbe's answer sheds a new light on what contemporary חינוך הבנות, Torah education for girls and women, is really all about. Their Torah study is not merely a means through which to attain personal development and academic accomplishments; it is essential for the very existence, health and perpetuation of the Jewish people as a whole. Its importance is therefore equal to Torah education for boys and men.

In days gone by, the Rebbe explained, supporting the Torah study of husbands and sons consisted in sharing the burden of Parnasah in order to free up time for their husbands and sons to be able to study Torah. Husbands and sons did not need any special motivation to learn Torah; they were already motivated. It was a given that they would be learning Torah at every possible opportu-

Context

Beth Rivkah was established at a crucial juncture in the history of the Jewish people. Jewish life in Europe was being physically destroyed, ל"ע, and Jewish life in America was in the process of disappearing, ר"ל, due to assimilation; "אמעריקע איז אנדערש" ("here in America, things are different"), was the prevalent attitude.

There were different approaches as to how to address the unprecedented challenges regarding Jewish education in the New World, especially for girls.

There were those that felt the need to introduce compromises into the traditional Torah Chinuch system, so that their students could better adapt to the American way of life. There were those that estab-

lished educational institutions that would maintain the systems of education in Europe and protect their students against any outside assimilationist attitudes. The Rebbe's vision and goals were unique and truly revolutionary. The Rebbe saw great opportunity and responsibility where others merely saw threats and were concerned with preserving their communities. Beth Rivkah was established in order to empower women to respond to this historic call.

The results are well known: Beth Rivkah alumni are at the forefront of the Rebbe's Shlichus revolution that has redefined what it means to be Jewish in America as well as in over 100 countries the world over.



nity. The women merely provided the logistical support necessary to create those opportunities.

The reality nowadays is very different, however, and is reflected in the greater, more crucial role of the woman vis-à-vis the Jewish character of her home and the members of her family.

There are two attitudes prevalent in today's world that present unprecedented challenges, the Rebbe pointed out: the need to 'Make a living' and the desire to 'Have a good time'.

When overly concerned with earning a living, there is no energy nor interest left for Torah study. When one finally succeeds in making a comfortable living, the next all-consuming goal becomes to 'enjoy life', rather than dedicate more time to Torah study. They also often see a Torah-true life as restrictive—repressive, even—rather than as a unique and exalted privilege and opportunity.

In order to assure that their husbands and sons do not succumb to these numbing attitudes wives and mothers must have the necessary preparation and training. Their education must provide them with a wide ranging knowledge of and enthusiasm for the details of that which they will need to encourage their husband and sons to engage in, namely: a Torah-inspired way of life, nourished by Torah study in all of its varied dimensions.

"This is one of the functions of Beth Rivkah," the Rebbe concluded: "to impress upon the hearts of the students the fact that they are Bnos Yisroel; to explain to them the holiness of this status, the goodness and purity that are implied by it, and to explain to them

It goes without saying that the responsibilities the Rebbe spoke about then imply a great privilege and are accompanied with the necessary blessings and empowerment to accomplish them.

the responsibility that they were entrusted with.

"...Our goal is that every student be a Bas Yisroel that is aware of her responsibility as a member of the Jewish People, as a future builder of a Jewish home and as a mother within the Jewish People."

It goes without saying that the responsibilities the Rebbe spoke about then imply a great privilege and are accompanied by the necessary blessings and empowerment to accomplish them.

אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו!

Wishing you all בשמחה ובפנימיות,

Rabbi Avrohom Shemtov ■

1. משלי ד ב


2. אבות ג ד

3. *Mishlei* 4:2

4. *Pirkei Avos*, 3:14

5. *Hayom Yom*, 26 Cheshvan

6. *Quoted here is an excerpt of the full version published in Reshimos*, Vol. 30.



Thank you for a fantastic magazine and all your hard work on behalf of Alumnae worldwide! It is no exaggeration that when I receive EmBRace in the email, I immediately sit down and read it cover to cover.

I did have one comment to make though. The editorial of the Winter Edition left me scratching my head. It had a modern, “self-care” tone to it. Something felt off. When I went back to the original sicha you quoted, the Rebbe was not talking about gashmius at all. The Rebbe was talking about ruchnius avodah — you can't get so busy with *tzorchei tzibbur*, working for the public, that you neglect your own personal spiritual growth.

I think your editorial was misleading.

Thank you,

– *Anonymous*

Dear Anonymous,

Thank you for taking the time to research the sicha I quoted from Parshas Chukas. I value your input.

I will concede that you are right. I owe an apology to our readers for applying a concept without clarifying what the Rebbe wrote and what was my interpretation. In the Sicha, as you paraphrased, the Rebbe speaks about not neglecting your personal growth in the name of public service.

What follows is my interpretation :

A Yid's gashmius is ruchnius. Just like biruchniyus one can't only give to others but also must ensure he is growing himself, a parallel could be made with the Torah concept of taking care of one's health. As the Mezritcher Maggid expressed: “*A kleine lechle in guf is a groise loch in neshama*” — a small deficiency in one's body becomes a large deficiency in one's neshama, one's avodas Hashem. As Yidden, and especially Chassidim, Mesiras Nefesh is a value that we admire and aspire to. We also have a mitzvah of “*Venishmartem meod l'nafshosechem*” that applies on a regular basis.

My intention in the message I shared was this: The goal of setting aside time to care for our health, physical or mental, is not because we deserve to be selfish; it is because Hashem wants us to have the health and strength to be able to continue giving to others. Finding the appropriate balance throughout our lives requires a Hashem-centered mindset and the guidance of a mashpia. Like the question I ended the original editorial with, which was the key idea: “What does Hashem want from me in the moment?” That is a Yid's focus.

– *Sara Blau, editor*



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I recently picked up a copy of the winter 5781 Embrace magazine and I am thoroughly enjoying it! I am not even a Bais Rivkah New York alumna (I went to Bais Rivkah Montreal) but I am loving the articles. They are interesting, thought provoking and extremely well written. The aesthetics give a calm female vibe. Yasher Koach for all that you do for our school!

– Baila Greisman

I want to sincerely thank Mrs. Wolf for her article in the past Embrace magazine, “It’s a Joy!”. I found her piece almost last, but I appreciated the title and found it very cute and catchy.

Sometimes a person reads something with exact hashgacha pratis timing. I had just been discussing with my husband about feeling like I’m “not enough” re giving my family enough varemkeit. We spoke about how much of that is from the Yetzer Hara, and how one shouldn’t worry about incompetence when raising your family IS doing exactly enough.

Her article really really spoke to me. After having read it, I feel a lot more solidified. Here’s something I can do, which I feel I need, that’s both practical and less definable at the same time. I also appreciated her specific examples and the style of how it was built up, and the message especially hit home for me today.

Thanks again,

– Anonymous



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Letters, comments, questions and suggestions are welcome!

Write to us at Embrace@bethrivkah.edu

DEVOTED *to* THE REBBE'S MOISED

Dina (Feldman) Deitch, Samara, Russia
Graduating class of 5753 (1993)

Mrs. Chana Etka Feldman served as the dedicated principal of Bais Rivkah Primary for over forty years. She was born in Montreal, Canada to her parents Yakov Chaim and Rikel Rosenblum, who had emigrated from Poland after WWI.

At the young age of ten, Mrs. Feldman moved to Crown Heights to live with her sister, Sara Kahanov, and her family. Growing up in Crown Heights, she experienced various encounters with the Rebbe, which eventually led to her position as principal of Bais Rivkah.

Mrs. Feldman was a true *dugma chaya*. She personified real *tmimus*, *tznius*, *Yiras Shamayim*, and *middos tovos*. She had true *Chassidische hanachos* and stood her ground on all occasions. She was a humble woman; making others a priority, she would give her afternoons, Sundays, summer vacation, and any time necessary to accomplish what had to be done without fanfare. "This is the Rebbe's *moised*," she would say. No tumult, commotion, nor honor. That was just the way it was for her.

Mrs. Feldman encouraged and came up with solutions, always in a respectful and caring manner. She had the unique inner strength to do whatever had to be done to ensure a student's growth. Mrs. Feldman

was completely invested in her students and followed through until the end. She overcame every challenge positively, pleasantly, and peacefully; she always encouraged the good and highlighted the qualities in each child.

I treasured that colorful eraser I received for a long time, and I was never late again!

One of the many times her delicate way of guiding showed, as related by Mashie L: "I was a little girl in second grade. Day after day I came late to school; I just couldn't seem to wake up in the morning. As was the rule, I had to go to Mrs. Feldman each morning in order to be let into class. One day, Mrs. Feldman made a deal with me. If I would come on time for three days in a row, she would give me a prize. I was exhilarated! The next morning, instead of my mother having to wake me up ten times, I begged my mother to wake me up early so that I would be on time. And true to her word, after three days I received my prize! I treasured that colorful eraser I received for a long time, and I was never late again!"





A response she received after sending the students mazel tov wishes and hachlatos to the Rebbe and Rebbetzin in honor of the Rebbe's fiftieth wedding anniversary

In 5734 (1974), Mrs. Feldman was asked to fill the position of assistant principal of the primary division of Bais Rivka in Crown Heights. Being a full-time mother with a baby at home, Mrs. Feldman was unsure if this was the proper position for her. She wrote to the Rebbe, "How can I take this job if I have a baby?" The Rebbe answered her at a yechidus that summer, "*Vos is der chiluk oib zi vet shluffen bai dir oder bai di babysitter* — what's the difference if the baby will sleep with you or at the babysitter?" With the Rebbe's guidance, her decision was made. For over forty years, day in, day out, rain or shine, Mrs. Feldman devoted herself wholeheartedly to Bais Rivka which she fondly called, "the Rebbe's *moised*."

Her dedication permeated every aspect of Bais Rivkah, from greeting staff and students alike every morning and starting each day punctually, to giving endless support and encour-

agement. She trained each teacher extensively. Every stencil was to be checked to ensure that every letter and nekudah was accurate. Every young teacher in training was treated with the utmost respect. She guided each one with patience and care to create dedicated teachers who are teaching our girls today. She spent





hours meeting with parents to discuss matters that would help improve the students' progress.

She kept a consistent correspondence with the Rebbe, detailing all the goings-on in Bais Rivkah and always received the answer, *"Tshuos chein."*

Mrs. Feldman once brought a class, who had just received their Chumashim, to walk by the Rebbe. She brought her daughter along, and while all the girls in the class were wearing crowns to celebrate their Chumash party, Mrs. Feldman's daughter was not, since she was in a grade above them.

When she passed by the Rebbe, the Rebbe asked "Where is your crown?"

Mrs. Feldman answered, *"Zi iz gekumen mit mir — zi iz mein tochter — she came with me, she's my daughter..."*

The Rebbe pressed, *"Farvos hut zi nisht kein keser — why doesn't she have a crown?"*

For over forty years, day in, day out, rain or shine, Mrs. Feldman devoted herself wholeheartedly to Bais Rivka which she fondly called, "the Rebbe's moised."

She continued to explain that, *"Zi hut shoin gekru- gen a Chumash fahr a yahren — she already got a Chumash last year."*

The Rebbe asked, *"Darf zi nisht huben kein keser — does she not need a crown?"*

Mrs. Feldman smiled and agreed, *"Zi ken huben a keser — she can have a crown."*

And then the Rebbe concluded, *"Zol ir der Oiber- shter helfen — Hashem should help her!"*

Mrs. Feldman gave all of what she was and all she had to Bais Rivkah. What Bais Rivkah is today is a result of her unbelievable dedication and the out- standing example she was for the thousands of girls who passed through her division throughout the years. She will forever remain embedded in the hearts and minds of all who knew her.

Mrs. Feldman passed away this year on Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sara, 27 Cheshvan 5781. May we be zoche that very soon, when Moshiach arrives, she will stand by, looking at each and every one of her *talmidos* and call out with pride, *"Re'u gidulim shegidalti."* ■



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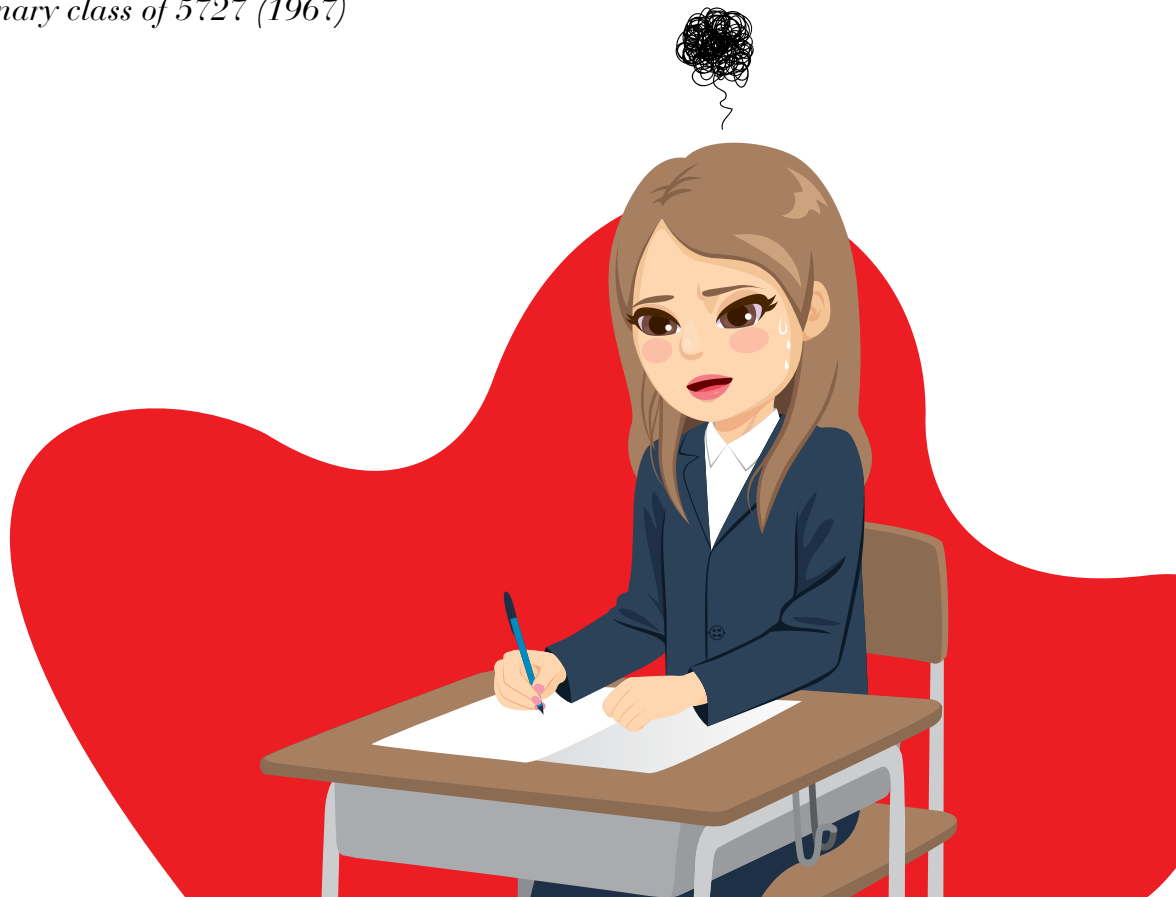
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HAND *in* *the* MOVE

Mashi (Popack) Lipskar, Johannesburg, South Africa
Graduating seminary class of 5727 (1967)



I was born in 5709 (1949) in Brooklyn. When I was four years old, my parents moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At the behest of the Rebbe, my father, Rabbi Aaron Popack, took a job as the director of a day school called Beth Jacob — a small Jewish day school for boys and girls that had no connection to the famous Bais Yaakov schools. The Rebbe instructed my parents that their children should not attend any limmudei chol classes until the law mandated it. And so, while the teachers just couldn't understand, despite the awkwardness, my siblings and I would attend our age-appropriate limmudei Kodesh classes and

then any other class that was available. This went on until we turned eight and only then did we begin to learn English, math, history, and other secular subjects with our peers. When I reached high school age, a girls' high school was formed. There were very few girls, and every year another grade was added to the school.

It was a brave new world in Philadelphia — a world where an overwhelming number of Jews just wanted to be American. My dream was to become a nurse after I graduated high school. Knowing that nursing was not a career consideration for a Jewish girl then, I figured that I would try for my second option — to go to university and become a journalist. As a journalist out in the world, I thought, I could best help spread the message of the Chabad Movement. My parents, however, felt that I should go to seminary.

Well, there was no way I was going to become the stereotypical seminary girl. I had this mental image of Bais Yaakov seminary girls who all seemed to me like copies of each other, and I didn't want to become a copy of anyone. I pictured these carbon copy seminary girls, all with short brown hair pinned to the side, dressed in white button-down shirts, pleated skirts, and saddle shoes — and this was before Jewish schools had school uniforms. With my limited reasoning at the time, I concluded that the logical way to avoid becoming like everyone else was to stay away from seminary.

At that time, every chossid would go into yechidus with the Rebbe once a year in honor of his yom huledes. That year, my father went, and as usual, discussed each of his children with the Rebbe. When it came to me, my father told the Rebbe that I had completed high school. The Rebbe asked what I was planning to do next.

My father told the Rebbe of my thought to become a journalist, and the Rebbe responded that I should go to seminary.

My father asked, "Which seminary?"

The Rebbe replied, "Bais Rivkah, if there will be one."

You see, Bais Rivkah was in dire financial straits. The teachers' salaries hadn't been paid for a few months and after Pesach, the teachers had gone on strike, effectively closing the school for the rest of the year.

Almost all the twelfth graders had made plans to attend other seminaries.

And so, while the teachers just couldn't understand, despite the awkwardness, my siblings and I would attend our age-appropriate limmudei Kodesh classes and then any other class that was available.

I was in camp in Detroit at the time. All of the head staff there were from last year's Sem Alef and they didn't know what to do; they were waiting to hear whether Bais Rivkah would be opening up or not.

My father was a clever chossid. When he called to tell me the Rebbe's answer, he told me only to say that the Rebbe had told me to go to Bais Rivkah (omitting the words "if there will be one"). The joy in Detroit when the girls heard the response of the Rebbe was indescribable!

We made plans, and Bais Rivkah did indeed open up once again in the old Stone Avenue building. There were nine girls in Seminary Beis. I still remember Alta (Deitch) Shwartz A"H, yblch"t Rochie (Bukiet) Stillerman, Ita (Friedman) Marcus, Chani (Minkowitz) Lipskar, Shevy Zladowits, and Cherna (Pinson) Light. In my group — the Sem Alef class — there were seven. Shterna Sara (Ceitlin) Kalmanson A"H, Rochel Leah (Deitch) Shusterman A"H from Crown Heights, yblch"t Sima (Eidelman) Goldstein from Springfield, Massachusetts, Sara (Rubashkin) Balkany from Boro Park, Chaya Leah (Gerlitzky) Berger Pinson, and Ruchy (Sputz) Grossbaum. Rochel Leah Deitsch was the only Bais Rivkah high school girl who continued to seminary with us.

I hardly remember most of my teachers. One teacher, however, stands out in my mind: Rabbi Sholom Ber Gordon, A"H from Maplewood, New Jersey, whose warmth, breadth of knowledge, and teaching abilities made us look forward to his classes.

The Stone Avenue building was a big, dank, and dark place — a sorry sight. When the school year started and it was still warm outside it was manageable, but soon enough November came and there was no money for electricity. The weather was miserable and we were freezing; when it

rained, the rain came in. Imagine what that did to the morale! I would call my parents in Philadelphia crying my eyes out. I was seventeen years old, it was my first time living away from home, and I was feeling very down and depressed. I was extremely lonely. At one point, I wrote a long letter to my parents, pouring out all my feelings, but told my mother not to read it unless she wanted to cry.

Finally, my father advised me, “The Rebbe told you to go to Bais Rivkah, so you have to tell the Rebbe what is going on.”

I wrote to the Rebbe, and I got an answer: “She should speak to Merkos L’inyonei Chinuch about this matter.” That, explained the mazkir, meant that I should speak with Rabbi Hodakov. I was to call and make an appointment with Rabbi Hodakov.

I arrived for my appointment and was directed to his office. It was all the way down the corridor in 770. I walked down there on my own, thinking, “How am I going to do this?” I was in such bad shape that every time I spoke to someone I would cry.

I entered Rabbi Hodakov’s tiny office, with seforim piled up to the ceiling that appeared as if they would come crashing down at any given moment. I told him everything. He heard me out completely, with his special way of listening. I left, not knowing what would happen, but I knew that I had done what the Rebbe told me to do.

After midwinter break, we were no longer in Stone Avenue — we moved to Church Avenue and the seminary was in another building across the street. It was clean, bright, freshly painted, and of course, learning became a different experience.

I remember being downstairs in 770 later that year, at the N’shei Convention, one of the few times in the year that the women would go downstairs and the Rebbe would come out and deliver a sicha to us. As we waited for the Rebbe to come in, Rabbi Binyomin Klein A”H, who was always warm and friendly, came over to me and said, “You should know that you had a big hand in the move.” It took me time to absorb what he had said. Really? Me?

Only years later did I begin to grasp what had happened.

I reflect now on how important each person is to the Rebbe and the role each one plays in the bigger picture. My feelings were important to the Rebbe.

My feelings were important to the Rebbe. He cared about the feelings of one young girl living away from home.

He cared about the feelings of one young girl living away from home.

Although the school would inevitably have to move at some stage, my difficulty and the Rebbe’s response to it made things happen sooner. Who would believe that a seventeen-year-old out of town would be heard to the point where she would have “a hand in the move.” ■



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ALUMNAE

Who, What, Where

Chani (Hurwitz) Vogel, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5748 (1988)



Henny (Lipsker) Bartfield,
Coral Springs, FL
Graduating class of 5748 (1988)

HENNY (LIPSKER) BARTFIELD is an alumna of Bais Rivkah and an accomplished mother, bubbly, friend, sister, shlucha, educator, kriah specialist, and so much more. Growing up as Henny's classmate, I remember her as the girl you could count on for a great laugh. While she managed to achieve fine grades, she was not an exceptional student and was not drawn to the academic aspect of school. She was a practical joker on whom one could depend for a good time and a serious game of machanayim. What stands out in my memory is that when she did get called out for certain things in school, as every student is wont to do, she would respond with humor, yet always remained respectful. If anyone would have asked me back then what Henny would be when she grew up, a teacher would be the last thing I would have guessed. I sat down with Henny to hear more about how she got to where she currently is.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO TEACHING?

“Man plans and Hashem laughs!” My initial interest was in desktop publishing, and I had planned to pursue a career in that field. In the interim, I would teach. That was my plan, but Hashem directed me.

I was all of eighteen years old with zero marketable skills. I was good at running camps, so I figured teaching couldn't be that different.

My first teaching job was in a school in Queens, NY where I worked really hard for a minimal salary. My friend was getting married in Eretz Yisroel close to Yom Tov, and she gifted me with a ticket to the wedding. The school's policy was that teachers may not take off before or after a Yom Tov. I spoke to my principal who told me that I would not be able to take off the two days I was requesting for this wedding. My ticket was booked, and I had to weigh the options. One of my strong convictions in life is that loyalty belongs to friends and not to a livelihood, so I



Daven: self reflection by viewing self through the lens of their siddur.



Mishkan: Asu li mikdash – make learning relevant to self.

arranged for a substitute and went to the wedding. After Yom Tov, I was informed that I was fired.

Through an acquaintance, I found another job opportunity in Manhattan where I was paid practically triple my previous salary, and I felt appreciated for my work. I was in a school that appreciated excellence, and I was happy to deliver. I continued with that school until my husband and I were brought out on shlichus to Coral Springs. The plan was that I would teach and my husband would work on the financial aspects of a Chabad moised. We were part of the last group of shluchim who passed by the Rebbe prior to departing on our shlichus.

Once I started teaching, I found fulfillment and success and I stuck with it. By default, since I made my own curricula, I had to learn the programs to create workbooks, projects, etc. So I definitely learned a lot of desktop publishing tools!

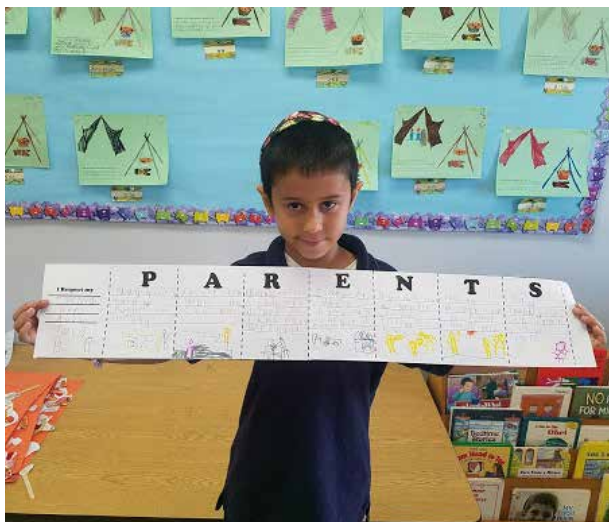
WERE THERE ANY TEACHERS IN PARTICULAR WHO INSPIRED YOUR TEACHING?

In elementary school, Esti (Gourarie) Fogel was our fifth grade teacher and she had a great impact on me; I learned a tremendous amount from her. She came into class with a loving heart and a strong hand. She was fair, had clear lines drawn in the sand, and she lived by the rules she set for us. She had high expectations, respected us as students, and was well prepared to execute her lesson plans. She certainly tried to address the needs of every student in the class. I remember her having extra worksheets in the back of the class if anyone ever needed them. Her classes

were engaging, she was interesting, and by default, there were no behavioral issues. There was an incentive for everyone to stay on top of their game in that class because the merit system was all-encompassing and demanded excellence in behavior, academics, and everything in between. No one wanted to miss out on anything she had planned. I remember winning an award that year. Though Ms. Gourarie was a fifth grade secular studies teacher, she evidently had a huge impact on my life. I developed a lot of my own methods based on my experience in her classroom.

Another teacher who inspired my journey was Chavie (Dubrowsky) Rappoport. She taught me Language Arts in eleventh grade. Oftentimes, Chavie would give us writing prompts and then read aloud the work that she found to be remarkable. The author was never divulged. On multiple occasions, my papers were read aloud by the teacher as exemplary work. This gave me a tremendous boost of confidence. I was touched by the lengthy feedback the teacher would leave on our graded papers. I realized that the teacher took the time to give each student constructive criticism and positive feedback and this was most impressive to me. Chavie's dedication spoke louder than any Language Arts lesson ever could. Thanks to Mrs. Chavie (Dubrowsky) Rappoport, I am so much more cognizant to recognize my students' strengths and give them specific constructive and positive feedback.

I also fondly recall my principal, Mrs. Laine. I found her to be a principal who understood where teenagers were coming from. She did not expect us to be angels. She was fair and even-handed in



Respect: students apply what they learn to their own life experience.

her dealings with us. She was not judgemental, and her consequences were within reason. Mrs. Laine taught me an important lesson that she carries with her as a mother and educator. Kids will do what kids do; don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Sometimes an educator can even accomplish her goal by simply allowing the child to perceive a victory. Her approach added a positive twist to the concept of "*Mach zich nisht visendig* — make yourself seem ignorant." When dealing with children, this is often what is necessary. All people make mistakes, yet not every misstep must be highlighted. The ultimate goal is to have children develop into mentchen and we must use our discretion as to how to approach each and every situation with wisdom and patience.

WHAT DRIVES YOUR CHINUCH PHILOSOPHY?

"Students will not remember everything you taught them, but they will remember how you made them feel." Emotion and self-concept are a huge part of human development. I treat my students like little adults. I think about how I would talk to their parents and use that same kind of attitude, body language, and sensitivity with the students.

I seek out a child's strength and help them achieve their potential. Each child is complex and unique. When you think of a teacher's job, imagine audio mixing, where the process of combining multiple soundtracks and components achieves the best music. The producer must adjust the timing, depth, pitch, and the like. He must consider frequency and equalization, deciding which sounds to

enhance and which to mute. The quality of the music will be the result of fine-tuning all the levers of the digital mixing console. I view each child as a digital music console, and the levers are their unique strengths, weaknesses, talents, and challenges. When I teach through this lens, it is easier to stay in tune with what a child needs in order to complete a task. Providing proper scaffolding and support to help a child overcome a challenge allows him/her to achieve success. A teacher must always adjust to meet children where they are and constantly adjust lessons, expectations, and support to help children achieve their potential. By constantly adjusting the levers on the "music console," we facilitate children in their quest to produce their best "musical renditions."

In New York, I taught secular studies, but when I was brought to Florida to spread Yiddishkeit to children from non-observant homes, I became a Limmudei Kodesh teacher. As time went on, I realized that more and more students were having difficulties in various areas. When I began teaching, it was normal for one or two students in a class to have issues, be it social, emotional, or scholastic. Today, it is not unusual for a class of twenty students to have thirteen or fourteen with some sort of issue. Looking for the "why" became my next project, and I learned to be an educational therapist. The goal of an educational therapist is to zero in on the issue that is stopping the child from achieving their potential and figure out how to help them work through it.

WHAT HAVE YOU DISCOVERED IN THE EDUCATION FIELD?

My quest for knowledge in pedagogy and human de-



Discovery: cooperative learning allows for discovery what are the arba minim all about.



Tzitzis: creating a model and generating facts about it

velopment is ongoing. I am certified in the Feuerstein method and Primitive Reflex integration. I realize that every child is unique and they do not come with instructions. Remediation itself does not help. Take five students in one class who are failing the same subject. Tutoring them with the same methods they are learning in the classroom is not going to change the end results; you are not improving their skill or abilities. The one-on-one is where the success is, because if you can isolate the issue, the foundation of their issue, and the actual weakness, then you can figure out how to actualize the child's success.

I am actually embarking on a new endeavor. Blossoming C.H.I.L.D (Center for Holistic Integration of Learning and Development). It's a project inspired and dedicated to all children who have fallen through the cracks. Over the three decades I have spent in the classroom, I've come to understand the pitfalls of special education and resource rooms. The mission of Blossoming CHILD is to address the whole child and to discover the source of the challenges. We often focus on what the child can't do, but it's time to discover *why* the child can't. With that "why" answered, we can employ tools and techniques to help them overcome their challenge at its core, so they can develop confidence and competence to achieve in the classroom and in life.

WHAT HAVE YOU TAKEN WITH YOU FROM BAIS RIVKAH?

I have to answer this for Henny. Her humility is inspirational. What she did take from Bais Rivkah is that

a chossid is an anav. The saying, "There is no "ICH" in Lubavitch," comes to my mind when thinking about her. "ICH" in Yiddish means I. The whole notion that I am great, I am the best, is one of boastfulness. The concept of ICH is antithetical to the Chabad philosophy. We must remember where we got our talents from, and keep ourselves humble. Henny's accomplishments are so numerous, I would need a few pages to fill them all, but she is so modest about them.

I remember when one of my boys was having an issue with kriah. I called her to ask for direction. She took the time to tell me how to zero in on what the issue would be. Once I figured this part out, she would help me with the rest. Her testing methods were fascinating. At one point, she told me to take a spoon and cover one eye, and then have him read. Then I should do the same with the other eye. It was different for my son, and it was engaging. Today this child is an academic success and the issue has been completely resolved, BH. I never forgot Henny's patience and perseverance to get to the bottom of what was preventing my son from moving forward.

HOW HAS THE BAIS RIVKAH SCHOOLING SYSTEM INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE?

As we travel through life, our experiences fill our luggage for the journey. Firstly, I must thank my parents for sending me to Bais Rivkah and for always standing by my side through thick and thin. They are amongst my greatest supporters until today. Reflecting upon my years in Bais Rivkah, camaraderie comes to mind. I was fortunate to grow up with a wonderful group of friends, many of whom I am still in contact with today.

Through the halls of Bais Rivkah, there was a constant theme of *Hafatzas Hama'ayanos*. Bais Rivkah empowered us to be leaders and ambassadors of Yiddishkeit. From as early as fourth grade, we went on Mivtzah Sefer Torah every Sunday. In High School, we were entrusted with running Tzivos Hashem's annual Jewish Experience in the Javits Center. This early training in leadership and communication empowered me to organize events and programs in Coral Springs and to give classes to women who were years ahead of me in age, secular education, and life experience. Such tasks could be intimidating to any twenty two year old, but I credit Bais Rivkah with inculcating their graduates with the values, conviction, and ability to rise to the occasion, persevering until the goal is accomplished.

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THE GIRL WHO IS MORE INTERESTED IN HAVING FUN IN HIGH SCHOOL THAN DEVELOPING HER KNOWLEDGE AND TAKING HER STUDIES SERIOUSLY?

A tale is told of a girl who was often reminded by her mother that the key to life is happiness. Some years later, she was asked by a teacher: "What do you aspire to be when you grow up?" Her response was, "I want to be happy." The teacher smiled and said, "You don't understand my question." The student smiled back and said, "You don't understand life."

I always wanted to enjoy life and for my friends to be happy, too. Simchas Hachayim guided me through my high school years. But there comes a time in life when one realizes that perhaps they should have planted their garden a decade prior. To that I say, the best time may have been then, but the second-best time to plant it is now! I often remind myself that we are not the results of circumstance, rather everything is hashgacha pratis. Nevertheless, Hashem grants us free will to make our own choices. Therefore, in part, we become the product of our own decisions. "Ein davar haomed bifnei haratzon." I sincerely believe if there is a will, there's a way. Hashem endowed each of us with a unique composition of talents

and capabilities. If we choose to utilize them to their fullest potential, Hashem will help us fulfill our mission.

Personally, I believe that one day there will be a perfected method of education, and Henny will go down in history as having created the "Bartfield Method - Success for the Child as a Whole." I know I am going to look out for it. We will know where it all started. ■



Each child is presented with a framed year end memento that personifies them and highlights their strengths and area of growth over the year.

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Aishes Chayil:

JWI EDITION

Zohar (Tamir) Sasson, Crown Heights
Graduating seminary class of 5752 (1992)

B"H

The Mashpios Project Presents
WHAT DOES THE REBBE SAY ABOUT...

Shalom Bayis
How to Reach True Peace & Rise Above

Live Panel - Q & A
Mrs. Sarah Karmely
Mrs. Rochie Pinson
Mrs. Chani Wolf

Mrs. Shterna Spritzer
The blessings of Mashpia

Host: Zohar Sasson

SUNDAY
Hey Teves • Dec. 20 | 8:30 PM
Didan Natzach

ZOOM INFORMATION
Meeting ID: 936 925 1229 Passcode: 696502

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This Hey Teves, Jewish Women Influencers, together with N'shei Chabad, hosted a panel entitled, "What does the Rebbe say about Shalom Bayis?" Together, our panelists wove a beautiful depiction of what an Aishes Chayil today looks like.

“

Sarah Karmely:

“I wanted to reach and teach women; I wanted to grow myself, but my husband was obstructing me at every turn.”

“So you stopped?”

“No, the Rebbe showed me how to do what I needed to do in a ‘diplomatic’ way.”

STRONG, YET RESPECTFUL.



“

Chanie Wolf:

“Shalom Bayis is most crucial before the Geula. That’s why the yetzer hara makes it so challenging.

“Some women feel they’re not getting what they need: emotionally, financially, spiritually.

“The secret to being a successful mekabel is to graciously receive what is being offered. This empowers our husbands to be able to give even more.”

WISE, YET GRATEFUL.

“

Rochie Pinson:

“Women need to be able to make themselves happy, from the inside out. He didn’t buy you that gift? It can’t undo you. Protect yourself from culture and media that disparage marriage.”

CONFIDENT, YET CARING.

We all know some women today who, through incredible challenges, have risen to the occasion: Leah Rubashkin, Dina Hurwitz, Shternie Wolf, Sarah Dukes...

But our panelists showed us that we’ve got it in us, too.

Spouse said something outrageous? You can rise above and keep the peace.

Need help?

Mrs. Spritzer reminded us that a caring mashpia is just a phone call away.

To watch this panel and others, visit [The Jewish Woman Influencer’s Youtube channel](#).

To learn more about Mashpia, visit [liveandlearn.ch/mashpia](#).

To find a Mashpia from our database, visit [LiveandLearn.CH/mashpia-meet](#).

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A GROWTH- ORIENTED FAMILY

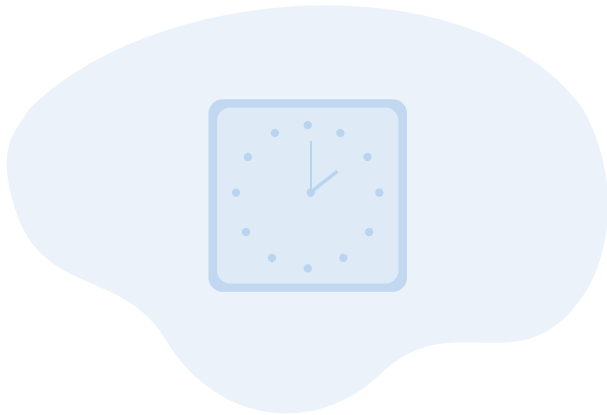
Estee (Goldberg) Lieblich, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5759 (1999)



Children learn a lot about themselves when we reflect on the nature of our internal worlds together. The greater our ability to think about and make sense of our inner lives, the more flexible we become; we are more self-aware and less stuck. As children come to understand more about themselves, their internal world becomes healthier.

Our busy and distracted lives usually prevent us from tapping into our own inner life and those of our children. But when we only focus on the outside world we miss out on developing our true selves.

Reflective dialogues are conversations we have with our children where we help them develop a better understanding of themselves. If we want them to feel comfortable sharing their inner world with us, we need to be open to hearing about their feelings and thoughts. We need to be curious about their



hopes and dreams and ask them questions about their opinions on different matters.

Helping our children tap into their inner world is the key to their inner growth. When we make sense of our experiences, challenges, relationships, and memories, we start to see connections and patterns. When we connect the dots in new and helpful ways, we gain insight and have those “Aha!” moments that propel us forward. And this is a vital skill we

Let's celebrate the little steps we take to go out of our comfort zones, to refine ourselves, and ultimately to redeem ourselves.

must give our children.

When our children see that we respect their perspectives and their challenges, they become more receptive to our support and guidance. They are more open to gaining insight from us. They also become comfortable communicating with us again the next time, which enables a cycle of sharing, receiving insight and guidance from us, and gaining self-awareness. And the more insight our children have about themselves, the greater their ability to empathize with others and see things from their perspectives.

As our children's first teachers, we can cultivate this culture of growth within our families.

Creating a safe space for our children to open up to us, where we receive what they share with kindness and respect, helps children gain our trust and draws us in together as we navigate the journey of life.

Pesach gives us the strength to go out of our personal *meitzarim*, the boundaries that limit us from reaching our full potential. The seven weeks of Sefiras Haomer are our opportunity to work hard on refining ourselves so that we are polished and ready to receive the Torah on Shavuot. So let's embrace our imperfections and talk about our challenges. Let's celebrate the little steps we take to go out of our comfort zones, to refine ourselves, and ultimately to redeem ourselves.



DINNER TABLE CONVERSATION STARTERS

These cards can be cut out and put into a box or ziplock bag to easily access at the dinner table (or when hanging out before bedtime!) to encourage conversations, sharing, and growth-oriented discussions. You can even add cards of your own!

Each family member chooses one card. Going around the table, they answer the question first, and then everyone else has a chance to respond too. Some questions are fun, others are deep and reflective. Keeping the general vibe at your table lighthearted and positive will ensure that family members feel comfortable answering all the different kinds of questions and enjoy this activity.

- What is a great memory you have of our family?
- What is something fun you would love to do with our family?
- What is something positive that we can learn from the family member sitting on your right?
- What makes you happy? What makes you laugh?
- What is the weirdest dream you ever had?
- What is your dream vacation?
- If you could stay home from school and do whatever you wanted, what would it be?
- If you had a chance to ask for five things that we would say yes to, what would you ask for?
- What is something you are thankful for?
- If you could have a conversation with anyone – from the past or present – who would it be and what would you discuss?
- If you could ask Hashem one question what would it be?
- Would you rather travel back in time or into the future?
- What would you do if you could be Mommy or Tatty in our family for a day?
- How did you see someone showing kindness to another person today?
- What are three positive words to describe yourself?
- What is something that you did today (or recently) that felt really hard for you?
- What is something that is really uncomfortable for you to experience, say, or hear?
- When do you feel most proud of yourself?
- What is something you wish more people knew about you?
- Is there something that you really want to talk about that we haven't yet discussed?
- What does love mean to you?
- When you are having a hard time, what do you wish the people around you would do?
- When you think of our family, which words come to mind?
- What is something you wish was different about our family? (In general, not about a specific person)
- What is something our family could be better at / improve upon?
- If you could invent something what would it be? What would your invention do?
- If you had a thousand dollars to help someone, how would you spend the money?
- What is something that you are good at? Is it a gift from Hashem that you naturally have or something that you worked really hard at to achieve?
- Is there something that feels weird or uncomfortable that you have done where you really had to push yourself past feelings of discomfort / out of your comfort zone?
- What's an example of something that at first was difficult or uncomfortable for you to do, that after a while became a lot easier for you?
- How do you envision yourself in 20 years? ■

Estee (Goldberg) Lieblich lives in Crown Heights with her husband and 4 children. Estee is an early childhood consultant, a parent educator, and a certified temperament specialist. Her Head to Heart workshops focus on Mindful Parenting for Heartfelt Relationships.

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ASKING FOR *a* FRIEND



DEAR CHAYA,

I keep seeing ads for Zooms and amazing online events to get inspiration from, but I seriously can't figure out how everyone has time for these things. In theory, I am a growth-oriented person, and I definitely listened in class growing up, but I find it so impractical with my hectic life.

Between working, family obligations, and needing some downtime, I can't wrap my mind around making set times for learning and personal growth. I get overwhelmed by the sheer number of options that when I do have a minute to listen to a podcast, I freeze and don't even know where to begin.

Any ideas?

Overwhelmed, But Open to Growth



DEAR OVERWHELMED.

I would like to begin by saying that I LOVE this question. Not because you say you are looking to grow, which is a special thing too, but because you put your finger on an issue in our world today that is so important to acknowledge.

Yes, this world is OVERWHELMING. No longer do we live in our own little homes surrounded by our close family and perhaps some neighbors, but we are connected to thousands, in fact, millions of people and their voices through social media and the internet.

Sure, there is a good side to this, in that technically we have access to so much Torah, inspiration, and in the age of COVID, endless virtual inspirational events that we can choose to attend.

But I want you to realize that this isn't really the

In theory, I am a growth-oriented person, and I definitely listened in class growing up, but I find it so impractical with my hectic life.

natural way of life. It isn't natural to be constantly bombarded, to have to virtually connect to dozens of groups and countless events all of the time.

In other words, it isn't overwhelming because there's something wrong with you, but because the situation itself is less than ideal, and frankly, extremely overstimulating.

So let's take a step back. Let's forget for a minute about the thousands of events and shiurim that "exist" out there.

The question to really ask yourself is what you actually need.

It is very important to tap into a real source of inspiration, some amount of learning to keep us in touch with our neshamos and the Torah that guides our lives.

For this, I would suggest you shut out the noise of all of the events and podcasts and figure out what would actually fit in your life. If it's a podcast you'd like to listen to, set aside up to half an hour to locate that one podcast you're going to focus on for now.

The question to really ask yourself is what you actually need.

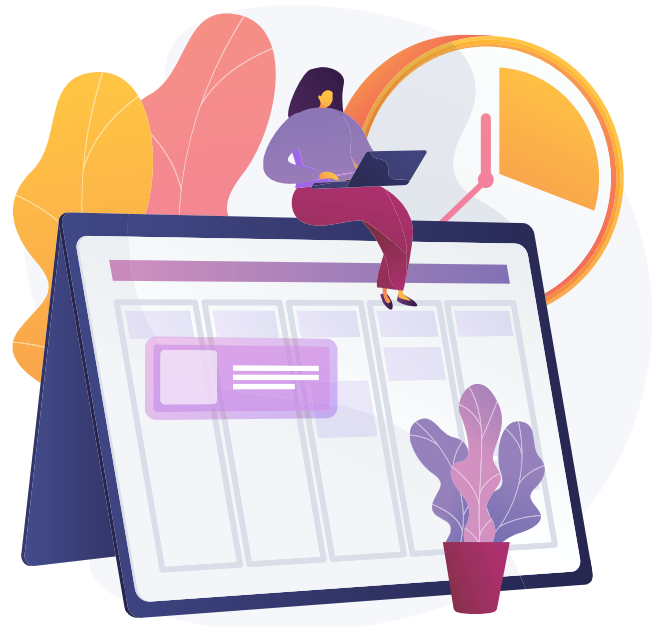
And go with that for as long as that works. If it's virtual events you'd like to join, work out which type of events you'd be most interested in and inspired by, and focus on that when it comes up.

Most importantly, make time for the learning that will uplift you and fill your need for inspiration. Seek the opportunities to help you grow in the position you are in now. Realize that the more you learn what applies to you, the more you can put into practice.

Or, if all of that is still too overwhelming with all of the options, consider taking on a chavrusa with a friend, even to learn something as small as the Hayom Yom of the day, the Tanya, or, if you prefer, something longer on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. And since it is a priority for you, set an alarm or put it in your calendar as a repeating event so you won't forget as easily.

I would also like to mention an epiphany I've had in the years I've been out of school myself.

As a naturally intellectually-inclined person, there



Seek the opportunities that will help you grow in the position you are in now.

was one point when I was feeling very bad about the almost-complete lack of learning in my life while I was busy caring for my babies and young children. I felt like, as the expression goes, my brain was fried. Like I was losing a part of myself.

And then I had an experience working with some younger teens when I suddenly realized that I had actually learned a tremendous amount in my years out of school. Perhaps it wasn't quantifiable knowledge, not this sefer or that, but it was a very fair amount of wisdom that I had learned in the classroom of life that gave me many scores above the young girls I was speaking with.

As they say, life is the greatest teacher, and my life and the struggles it came with taught me a whole lot.

I say this because I want you to recognize that while you may not be learning much in the sense of

"knowledge" as you did in school, you are certainly gaining much in insight, understanding, and personal growth working through the real challenges of daily life today.

As a final note, real personal growth is measured not in the books but in the choices you make on a daily, hourly, and minute-to-minute basis. The times you stretch yourself just that much past your limits, the times you pause when that is what's needed, and the ways that you work on your relationships and connection to Hashem and Yiddishkeit. ■



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“Progress,” *hiluch*, means to rise from level to level, with one ascent after another. Such progress embodies the superiority of the human soul over the angels.

ON PERSONAL GROWTH	38
EMBRACING IMPERFECTION	42
A GROWING RELATIONSHIP	48
BE AN ARTIST	52



ON PERSONAL GROWTH

Tzirl (Simon) Goldman, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5739 (1979)



It wasn't until many years after I graduated that I really internalized the value of learning. Having been the lucky winner of a ticket to the N'shei Chabad Mid-Winter Convention (5751), I traveled to Kansas City for a life-changing weekend. At that time, my son was a toddler who was diagnosed with a neurological disease, my baby daughter was no longer nursing, and I was in need of a getaway. This winning ticket couldn't have come at a better time.

At the Shabbos morning Chassidus shiur before davening, I listened spellbound, as if I had never heard these words before. When was the last time I had opened a sefer to learn? When was the last time I attended a block shiur to hear words of Torah or the Rebbe's message on a particular Parsha? My study days were long over, and it was a long time since I had the need to open a sefer, much less any academic book at all.

Chassidus gives me support, guidance, and understanding of what it means to live every single day with the plan the Aibishter has in store for me.

Yet that Shabbos, away from my stresses and worries, I basked in the message of learning and Chassidus in particular. This would be my saving grace! This will help me cope! I approached the woman giving the shiur and asked her for more. Where, once I return home to Crown Heights, will I have access to these words?

During the Melave Malka of this convention, I had an opportunity to catch up with my brother-in-law, Rabbi Yossy Goldman, who was the keynote speaker of the convention. We chatted in the lobby while the women were dancing in the hall. When he asked me, "How's life?" I told him exactly how things were, especially with my son who was not well. His words, too, impacted me forever: "You have to learn Chassidus." Plain and simple, in line with my realization that Shabbos morning at the shiur Chassidus.

And so it's been for the past 30 years.

Although I learned Torah and Chassidus in Bais Rivkah, I have to admit that I realized its value so much more once I was out of school, married with children, living life, having experienced major challenges.

Chassidus gives me support, guidance, and understanding of what it means to live every single day with the plan the *Aibishter* has in store for me.

That is what works for me. As I think of those deeply impactful moments in my life, I wonder what works for others. How do others ensure that they don't buckle under the stresses and challenges of life? I have turned to several Bais Rivkah alumnae, shared my story, and asked, "What works for you? How do

you cope with challenges, and how have you grown since you left BRHS?"

Here are some of their responses:

SARA VARON CROWN HEIGHTS

GRADUATING CLASS OF 5771 (2011)



Remember the first time you worked through a long math equation? The kind that has lots of parentheses, exponents, and x 's.

You learned the steps in a specific order (PEMDAS, anyone?) and your teacher helped guide you in dissecting and solving each part of the equation, step by step.

After solving each set of parenthesis, you added them all together and got to the answer — the correct answer.

When you look at that same math puzzle years later, you may not remember how you completed each step of the equation, but you're still confident that the answer you got is correct. After all, you spent time and knowledge to work through that equation.

I think the same is with inspiration and growth.

We spend our younger years doing the equation — visiting parenthesis, exponents, multiplication, and many x 's. And if you get to your answer — your truth — it never really leaves you.

Even if you no longer remember all the steps to how



While the inspiration (and maybe even some of the knowledge) may have worn off, your answer — your truth — stays solid.

you got there, you can rely on the fact that once upon a time, you walked through the equation and confirmed its truth.

While the inspiration (and maybe even some of the knowledge) may have worn off, your answer — your truth — stays solid.

On a personal level, there are many days that the inspiration isn't fresh. I can't remember what the S in PEMDAS stands for (is it Stress?), the teacher is no longer guiding me, and things are just not adding up the way they once did.

Yet, since I worked through the equation and got to my answer — I am positive it's still true. And that answer is enough to keep me going and growing.

SHEINA FRAIDE (RUBASHKIN) LEVIN **CROWN HEIGHTS** GRADUATING CLASS OF 5740 (1980)



Two years after Gimmel Tammuz, I got a call that there are some great houses for sale in Long Island. "When are you going to leave Crown Heights? There's nothing to stay for."

However, after Gimmel Tammuz, Crown Heights



fulminated! I realized that I'm not going anywhere! Bais Rivkah was now on Lefferts, and people were buying houses expanding the borders of Crown Heights. The Rebbe is with us and there's no reason to leave.

After Gimmel Tammuz, I felt a growth spurt.

I was faced with an issue with one of my children. How should I handle it? What should I do? My job is to be there for her, for all my children. I was lost and didn't want to lose my child. Then I thought, "What would the Rebbe tell me to do?"

It was like a light bulb went off one morning when this thought occurred to me. *What would the Rebbe tell me to do?*

The Rebbe would tell me to love my child exactly the way she is. *Chanoch l'naar al pi darko*. That thought completely changed everything for me.

I love learning how relatable Chassidus is in our everyday life. It blows my mind how in tune Tanya is. Tanya is a foundation, and there's nothing new out there that's not in Tanya. That basis is needed in our day-to-day lives.

When thinking about where life has taken me and how I've grown after high school, it all goes back to growing up in Crown Heights with the Rebbe. Whenever you hear talk about Chinuch today, it's something the Rebbe said years ago; we have clear directives. Part of growing is being able to look back at the lessons left for us to utilize. As I rise to the challenges that life throws me, I think of what the Rebbe would have wanted of me in this specific situation. If I am unsure, I look into the Rebbe's directives and learn.

DEVORIE (LEVITIN) KORNFIELD **SEATTLE, WASHINGTON** GRADUATING CLASS OF 5731 (1971)



I experience personal growth from a variety of sources. But for me, the area that supersedes the others is my teaching. Teaching is a conduit to constant learning.

Although I have taught various grade-levels, when I teach young students at the Cheder in

Teaching is a conduit to constant learning.

Seattle, I am always inspired by the *tmimus* and the desire to learn. The Rebbe stressed, over and over, that Torah is *miloshon horaah* — Torah stems from the root word “lesson.” This forces me to take the ideas in the Chumash and think about helping my students implement them in their lives. At the same time, this enriches my own personal growth, as I always get a boost to strengthen myself.

When I am involved in adult education, although the audience is vastly different, I try to focus on the same ideas. It is amazing how the women absorb the teachings of Chassidus, the foundations that were instilled in me while I was a student in Bais Rivkah.

Again I am inspired to make my teaching relevant, meaningful, and transformative, not just for my students, but for myself as well since *hamaseh hu haikar*. Kudos to Bais Rivkah, which I have such fond mem-



ories of, for giving me the foundational tools for ongoing learning and teaching!

SHEINDEL (LEVITIN) AKSELROD CROWN HEIGHTS

GRADUATING CLASS OF 5726 (1966)



For me, it's very simple. Saying Tehillim is what inspires me the most. That's my inspiration.

I also find Modeh Ani to be very powerful. Waking up, finding myself with everything working, I'm at ease. I'm okay. ■

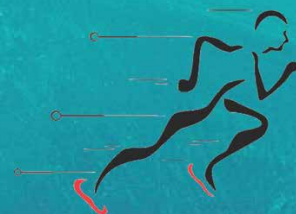
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EMBRACING

Imperfection

Chana (Meyer) Scop, Mill Valley, California
Graduating class of 5755 (1995)



Fourteen years ago, we were benched with a beautiful baby boy who we named Chaim Boruch. From the moment we found out that there were complications in my pregnancy, four weeks before he was born, to this very day, the Rebbe helped us along the way. Chaim Boruch was diagnosed with Microdeletion syndrome (he is missing five percent of chromosome number six). He is nonverbal, in diapers, has a feeding tube, and many other challenges. Yet these challenges do not describe him; he is the light and life of our home, imbuing love, happiness, and gratitude for everything in life. The love and acceptance he and his nine siblings ka”h have for each other are heartwarming and inspiring.

One year ago, a mere few weeks after his Bar Mitzvah, I found myself in the operating room with Chaim Boruch. I have been there many times throughout the years, and still, I never allow him to be put to sleep by anyone else but me. Because no matter how I try to prepare him for what he is to go through, he simply does not understand. What he does understand is fear, and for some reason,

he only realizes the severity of the situation when he is in the operating room. This time, Chaim Boruch had to have an eleven-hour spinal fusion surgery for severe scoliosis.

It was a mere twelve hours after surgery that the surgeon, doctors, and staff seemed concerned with the fact that there was no movement in Chaim Boruch's right foot. To be honest, I was more concerned about his breathing after surgery than the lack of movement in his foot. Yet it didn't take long for the rush of medical staff running in and out checking his foot to make me a little uneasy.

Yet these challenges do not describe him; he is the light and life of our home, imbuing love, happiness, and gratitude for everything in life.

While my husband went home to put the kids to sleep, I sat next to Chaim Boruch, overwhelmed, scared, and exhausted. The room was dim and I was lost in thought when Dr. Diab, the surgeon, walked in. He is a highly respected and brilliant surgeon who basically wrote the textbook on spinal fusion surgery for children. Dr. Diab and a few nurses, student doctors, and interns walked in to do their rounds and discuss Chaim's care.

The room was quiet and Dr. Diab began, "As you can see, we are concerned that Chaim has no movement in his right foot. We have never seen this before and everything looked great in the operating room, yet I think we should schedule him for a CT scan first thing in the morning to make sure there is no metal pressing on a nerve."

I took a deep breath. I knew that a CT scan was non-invasive, so I consented. Dr. Diab continued, "The problem is that when I see the CT scan results, I will then see every detail of my work, and if there is anything less than perfect I will want to go back in and correct it."

The entire team of staff, about ten people in total, were quiet, diligently taking notes. Unbeknownst to them, there probably was a lengthy, detailed paragraph (or two!) somewhere in Chaim Boruch's charts that mentioned the patient's mother and her protec-



tive (read: tiger-like) energy.

I sat there, reeling from the surgeon's words. We had just gone through a nightmare. Eleven hours of anesthesia, intense pain, three blood transfusions, an entire spinal re-design, complications with his oxygen and breathing, and so much more. I had no more strength. But I also had no choice. There was no way we were going back into surgery.

I began, "With all due respect, Dr. Diab, you're telling me that just because you would want to perfect your own work, you would consider placing my child back in that operating room?"

The entire room was silent. Nurses were looking down at their notepads desperately trying to not look my way. The interns' gazes were fixed on the floor and the tension in the room was palpable.

I continued, "Dr. Diab, I have learned to love and embrace imperfection. THIS is imperfection and HE is beautiful," I pointed to Chaim Boruch. "There is no way I will ever agree to do a CT scan unless you agree that the purpose of the scan is to gather information to benefit my child's life and nothing about perfecting the work that was done."

"With all due respect, Dr. Diab, you're telling me that just because you would want to perfect your own work, you would consider placing my child back in that operating room?"

Silence.

To advocate for someone you love in a hospital takes an emotional and physical strain, the nature of which

“Dr. Diab, I have learned to love and embrace imperfection. THIS is imperfection and HE is beautiful.”

cannot be described in words. I did not know how my response would be received and the heaviness of the moment lingered. I was drained.

Dr. Diab remained quiet and thoughtful and then looked up at me and smiled. “Chana, after we get out of the ICU and Chaim recovers from this surgery, I need to have a cup of coffee with you, to learn about embracing the imperfections in life.”

My eyes filled with tears. The people in the room seemed to breathe more easily and the nurses began to smile, sending me looks of approval and respect.

Not only did Dr. Diab and I continue our correspondence and discussion about embracing the imperfections in life, but he continued to care for Chaim Boruch with a deeper sense of respect. In addition, he has since asked me if he could send his patients to me to learn how parents can advocate for their child going through surgery.

For me, I did what was natural, yet what had transpired touched me in a much deeper way. Raising a child with special needs naturally guides the family to embrace and love imperfection, yet this new layer of



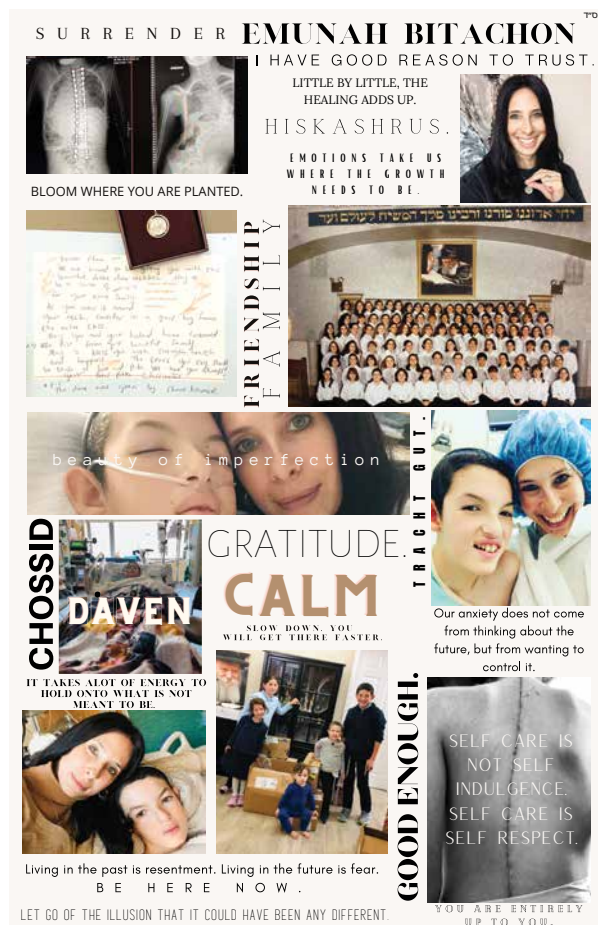
understanding impacted me in a way where I could look at myself in the same light. I could see things in my personal life through a lens that embraced my own imperfections with the same love I had shown for my child. I could balance better the innate desire to strive, succeed, become better, and also love the perfectly imperfect parts of myself and my life.

This very situation in that dim ICU room, with machines beeping and buzzing, added a layer of majestic colors in what we often deem as ‘not good enough.’ A lens that only deepened my encouragement of my children to reach for the stars while knowing their worth and believing that their imperfections are part of the beauty of who they are and who they are becoming.

Embrace, love, and welcome the imperfections, because from this very place we truly learn how to stand, walk, grow and heal.

P.S. I have recently made a vision board, including all things that I am trying to work on, remember, and imbue into my own life and the lives of those around me. If you would like a link to copy this vision board and make it your own, please email me at chanascope@gmail.com. ■

Chana is a proud wife and mother living on Shlichus in Mill Valley, California. Chana writes DIY projects, crafts, and recipes sharing her shlichus on her blog www.chanasartroom.com. She also writes about a mother’s journey of raising a son with special needs on her other blog www.jewishmillvalley.com. She welcomes you to be a part of her creative and touching journey, including her Judaica boutique store, lovingly called BROOKLYN, which has changed the face of her shlichus in the past three years since its inception. Check it out on Instagram @brooklyn_millvalley.



Chana's vision board



BR Family



My story really begins when I was about six years old. I grew up in Richmond BC, with my parents, and truth be told, other than knowing I was Jewish, I knew nothing about being Jewish.

At the time, my father a”h was curious and searching. Pondering the meaning of life, he explored whatever seemed to come our way — Reform, Conservative... and then Chabad. I clearly remember that at Chabad there was a genuine warmth and authenticity. Even at a young age, the joy and meaning that Chabad brought into my life were enough to have me yearning for more. Slowly, with guidance, and many Shabbos meals at local Shluchim, we began to keep kashrus and Shabbos, and our lives transformed from ordinary to extraordinary.

By the time I was fourteen years old, I had experienced Camp Gan Israel. Friendships were sparked, as well as the idea of joining a few of my bunk-mates who were leaving home to attend Bais Rivkah. I returned from overnight camp and asked my parents if I could join my friends in Crown Heights and spend my last two years of high school there. With much discussion and support from local Shluchim, it was suggested that I write to the Rebbe for a bracha to attend Bais Rivkah.

My mother will never forget the day that Rabbi Groner called her to say that the Rebbe had nodded yes to my question and that indeed, I should leave home and attend Bais Rivkah. So at age sixteen, every dream of mine was coming true.

Little did I know how the chayus and camaraderie of Bais Rivkah, and especially the incred-

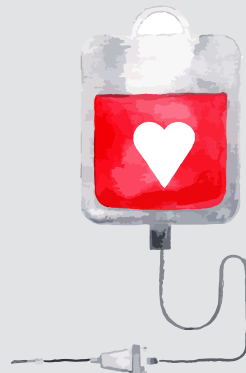
ible class that I was joining, would shape the wife, mother, and shlucha that I am today. The Rebbe saw beyond those two years, to multiple times in my life that my classmates would be my ultimate support.

Chaim Baruch’s eleven-hour surgery last year was a time where the reserves of those brachos overflowed. Eleven hours of anesthesia for the placement of two metal rods, wires, and screws to straighten his spine, were eleven hours of deep fear and panic. As always, he ended up going straight into the ICU and thus began our week in the ICU followed by complications that would take a year to resolve.

What none of us knew was that for some reason the impact of the surgery affected his ability to hold up his head, sit, stand, and walk for about three months. These were things he had taken years to learn and now it seemed we were at square one, again.

It is hard to describe the twenty-four-hour care he needed from both my husband and me. We had to set our phone alarms for every two hours throughout the night so we could reposition him, which required both of our strengths. The days were just as exhausting; we could not hire a nurse to help because our needs did not reach the minimum requirement.

My Bais Rivkah class has always stuck together through the many experiences our classmates were going through. We hardly journey through life alone, as the connections and consistent daily interactions on our group chat and beyond are what the Rebbe surely blessed me with when giving me a bracha to join this special class.



I reached out on our group chat asking everyone to daven for Chaim Boruch's surgery and gave updates as I could. The messages both on the chat and in private came pouring in, my classmates checking in on me and asking how they could be of help. I was so overwhelmed, I could hardly think of what kind of support I needed.

But my dear friends knew.

Being on Shlichus in Northern California means that milk, meat, and the typical kosher products are sent on a refrigerator truck from Southern California (about a seven-hour drive). Within days, without me knowing, my class raised funds to place a food order of over one thousand dollars with everything I needed for easy meals for the family. These were things that I wouldn't have usually indulged in, yet this gift lasted longer than the meals themselves, bringing me so much comfort and warmth.

And the support did not end here.

One by one, each of my ten children ka"h started receiving gifts. Games, toys, crafts, lego sets — every single gift was handpicked, keeping the age of the child in mind... to this day I still cannot fathom how it was all coordinated! Three of my older children were away from home and they were worried, feeling far from home, wishing they could do something. My classmates did not forget them and sent them gift cards. My children deeply appreciated that they were thought of, not just by one person, but by an entire class!

One evening, in the midst of caring for Chaim Boruch and the other kids, I found myself in the kitchen trying to quickly throw dinner together while keeping an eye on the monitor I had set up for the few moments I couldn't be in two places at once. My husband had run to fill another prescription and returned with another package from my class, this time addressed to me.

Only Hashem knew I needed it right then and there.

My body was aching from maneuvering Chaim Boruch and my heart was broken for what we were all going through. I was exhausted, crushed, and depleted of all strength.

Standing at the counter, I opened up the package. With tears streaming down my face, I read the card with overwhelming emotion. My dear classmates had made the most exquisite necklace with gold and diamonds encasing a precious dime that one of our classmates contributed.

This gift was more precious to me than any other gift I had ever received in my whole life. It was everything I had always dreamed about, as I had always yearned to be zoche to receive a dollar or a dime from the Rebbe. I had not, and my desire never dissipated.

I dried my tears and clasped the necklace around my neck.

A gift of love, support, friendship, warmth, connection, and a reminder of the very first bracha I received as a young girl, to indeed join Bais Rivkah. A gift from the incredible class who to me are more like family. I wear this necklace with so much emotion. It's a pendant of strength, love, dedication, support, acceptance, friendship, shlichus, life, and all the brachos the Rebbe has surrounded me with. Every diamond sparkles around the very gift the Rebbe has given me: my life as a Bais Rivkah girl and the power of growth. The synchronization of healing my child's spine while watching my own heart break. Surrendering to exactly how Hashem wants it to be while embracing the here and the now with emunah and bitachon, simcha, gratitude, and love.

Thank you to each and every friend who makes up this incredible class.

You are forever holding my hand tight, never letting go.

Thank you, Rebbe, for looking into a young girl's heart and neshama, and seeing into her future. Thank you for placing her in a garden and helping her to keep growing. Thank you for inspiring her to bloom where she is planted.





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A *Growing* Relationship

Anonymous



Only started to realize the intricacy of the matter during this class, but it was a deeper-rooted issue. I don't remember the particulars of the lecture, but I do remember hearing my voice escape me impulsively lamenting Hashem's unfair ways. Followed by the lecturer's blunt response, "You're projecting your feelings onto Hashem." A bashful person, I turned crimson at being called out publicly.

However, those words pinpointed the struggle. I was always that pester child, incessantly questioning, "but why" to all the unfairness in this world. When things didn't work out as I planned, be it making it to an appointment without traffic or experiencing rejection, I'd turn to Hashem and ask, "But why? This isn't fair. Why me?"

Although the feelings were valid, and a side effect of life is obstacles on the path, my motives weren't sincere. I questioned because I felt targeted and angry.

There's space in our lives to question. There's even a place to demand, and in certain instances, beseech with defiance. However, there are premises required for this to be acceptable. I didn't follow that route. Instead, I was like the student that asks too many questions and gets frustrated by confusing herself and dragging the class for the bumpy ride. Questions have a place, but the questioner has to create space for answers. Even ones the questioner won't agree with. Despite this, I questioned Hashem.

"Why do some people get away with everything?"

"Why are good people always the underdogs?"

"Why don't I feel like I have luck?"

The fallacy of these questions was the fuel behind them. When questioning Hashem without believing Him, well, you can end up quite frustrated and angry. Think of trying to park in a spot that is full because you don't believe a car is there. Frustration at its max.

As Yidden, we are told that Hashem is our father and we have this intricate, delicate, but ever pleasurable bond with him, if we partner with him. To secure this bond, Chassidus delineates a three-step relationship guide. The formula is called Naseh, Nishma, Emunah.

First and foremost, one has to believe that Hashem is the sole All-Powerful being. Asking about the un-

fairness, questioning tragedy, sulking about daily frustrations — if these come from a place of anger, you're lacking phase one: Naseh. Fulfilling Torah and Mitzvos simply because Hashem is in control.

With a Type-A personality, it was hard. Hard to let go of my control to a seeming stranger. Difficult to surrender my expectations to a sometimes conflicting reality. Tough to let go of the ropes. True, I never had any control, but the illusion of it was quite deceiving.

When we don't have a foundational belief in Hashem, we end up, as the eloquent lecture pinpointed, "projecting our feelings onto Hashem." In our immaturity, we take our perception, our

True, I never had any control, but the illusion of it was quite deceiving.

feelings of reality, and our experiences, and put Hashem in our shoes. Really though, it's a childish stubbornness that holds us back from letting go of our perceptions and fully viewing that Hashem is and always will be running the world.

Seizing control, I did not let the lecturer's comment slip by. I had a little "get over yourself chat" with myself. I knew I believed simply because it's a Yid's DNA. I knew I was being stubborn and holding on to a reality I chose to believe which wasn't innate. I had to pop the fragile bubble I created. And I did.

It wasn't a eureka moment. It was a growth spurt. Like when you look at your child and wonder how just a few days ago his clothes fit well. And you



try to fathom when in the span of the past few days those pants got too short. But you can't pinpoint it. It's something about the growth process. It's not a moment, it's an ongoing accumulation. Like growing up. It just happens. Then I was ready for the knowledge. Nishma, I wanted to hear to understand. Hashem, I want to know you. Is my knowledge compatible with yours? Frankly, it's not.

“Ober Ver hut dos geton- but who did this?” These words empowered Reb Michael to restart.

I pored over those texts, trying to find Hashem in the small things. Trying to understand His ways. Sometimes I did. Like the time my daughter got rejected from her seminary of choice but ended up having a productive year in what she originally thought to be her second choice. Or when I had a bumper-car day of back-to-back schedules which seemed to be an inevitable doomsday. Then, it turned out to be seamlessly productive. I definitely saw Hashem there. I learned about Hashem in my daily grind, and through lots of text-based learning. Questioning to understand, not to defend. I listened and absorbed.

They say you get to know people's true colors through the tough times. That's when I started feeling doubtful about Him. How can You be kind-hearted when you seem backstabbing? If I know You as generous, why do You come across as stingy? Would withholding my parking ticket take that much effort? I know it would save me extra stress. Can You spare me the heartache of my child testing his borders? The Hashem I knew so well seemed out of sorts.

Then I learned, “My thoughts are not your thoughts.” “No thought can grasp Him,” the Tanya explains. This, with the help of my six-year-old child, explained it all.

While setting out dinner, my teenager was muttering under her breath. She was annoyed at me for voicing my disapproval of an outing her friends had planned. My buoyant six-year-old saw her sulking and innocently said, “Mommys loves you and knows best. Don't be sad.”

This assuaged some of the *Yiddishe Mamme* guilt I was feeling and my parenting doubt. But this also helped my relationship with Hashem. It's painful when something negative happens. What hurts even more is when the initiator is someone you believe in and know well. That's how I would feel when disaster would strike.

When you sandwich your Naseh, your actions of





simple faith, and knowledge with a seal of Emunah, there's no space for these feelings. When you believe in Hashem and have a relationship with Him, then even in the gray areas you know that even if you may not see it, He has your back.

It took me time to digest this because sometimes, the bite was bigger than I could chew. When disappointment or tragedy hits close to home, you want to duck and run. Not stand secure. That's when I have to learn, count my blessings, and maybe give myself a pep talk. There's security in the knowledge of knowing what you don't know. Acknowledging the space for Emunah enhances Avodah and enables a person to flourish knowing that they have faith to hold on to.

But then, it became too difficult. Where did we go wrong that mustered-up efforts of genuine positivity got slapped with calamity? In the face of feeling overtly let down, Hashem, show your face to defend yourself! Through Covid, this reality became a conundrum I've revisited too often. As my childish anger began to resurface and fester, I tried to compartmentalize all my contradictory thoughts, feelings, and knowledge. Something didn't jibe.

Until I chanced upon a story. Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl was a Yid who lived through the horrors of the Holocaust. He tried to save many Yidden, but a promising deal with the Nazis fell through. This left Rabbi Michael Ber feeling very dejected. He lived with guilt and heartache due to his failed efforts which prevented him from saving many lives. Once in America, Reb Michael had a Yechidus with the Friediker Rebbe and expressed his anguish. The Friediker Rebbe pulled Reb Michael out of his pain and hurt with one sentence, "*Ober Ver hut dos geton-* but who did this?" These words empowered Reb Michael to restart.

At the end of the day, after living by the truth and after all efforts are exhausted, it's up to Hashem. If the coveted outcome doesn't materialize, it's not

on us.

I found this eye-opening. I'm not dumping my burden on Hashem effortlessly. I do my part. Part of my efforts is doing, knowing, believing, and then leaving it up to Hashem. I can't take responsibility for His actions. He doesn't need a defender. However, this is very different from projecting myself onto Hashem. Since I have developed a three-tiered relationship with Hashem, I have ownership of my relationship with Him. I can be hurt, disappointed, and even feel slighted by His ways. But I'm not angry. This won't uproot my relationship with Him or hinder my Avodah. Instead, I'll

I'm not dumping my burden on Hashem effortlessly. I do my part. Part of my efforts is doing, knowing, believing, and then leaving it up to Hashem.

have a conversation. I'll ask Hashem to own up. Even if He may not answer. I'll beg Him and try to hear his voice in the silence.

Though I've grown in my journey in developing my relationship with Hashem, I can't attest to have broad shoulders to carry the world. That, I believe Hashem will do. I know He will, even if sometimes I can't tell you why. ■



BE AN

Artist

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



It's mid-morning and I'm walking through my house, tripping over the remnants of my daughter's creativity.

Literally.

In our house, we clean up every evening (yes, that's once a day, I'm not cleaning the hurricane as it's storming), and every morning, the bits and pieces have taken over again. The kids play, create, destroy, and build, and the mess steadily conquers the expanse of our living room until six p.m. At that point, regardless of how many trains still need to pick up cargo,

or baby dolls need feeding, playtime is officially over (for all of us) and I bring out The Broom to begin my grand sweep.

I'm sure there are more efficient ways to tidy up but I have minimal patience for piles of inanimate objects and so I do it this way. I sweep the whole room into one big pile and start calling out my kid's names. They (usually) come running. They know the drill, if it doesn't get picked up in the next five minutes, it's going to the garbage (or away until they earn it back). I know, I know I'm supposed to take one toy out at a time and not let the kids play with the next toy until it's put back. Been there, done that, working on cutting out sugar instead :)

Realistically, every evening all the toys are out at once, and since I prefer not to police my kids' creativity and (shockingly) allow the toy animals to visit the lego firehouse which was built on a Magna-Tile road, the pile resembles a demolition site. The cleanup begins simply; the toys are returned to their boxes, the books go back on their shelves, I sweep everything that's left into a now smaller pile, and then I call her name.

I can't possibly make sense of the papers and paper towel rolls; some crayons are broken in half but are not garbage, and half my plastic cups have been used for everything but drinking. So she directs me as she works through the pile with vigor, "I need this," "I need that," "Don't throw this out," "Don't throw that out."

I take a deep breath and let it out slowly. That was my GARBAGE pile.

But you should see her gather those scraps of papers and peeled crayons like she is saving them from an untimely death sentence. I cringe because I know I'll be seeing them again — in tomorrow's sweep or under her bed or in unsuspecting coat pockets. I question their purpose and their value and my daughter looks at me, sincerity on her face and a pleading in her eyes. "Mommy, it's my art stuff."

Where I see mess, she sees purpose. My daughter is an artist.

I walk past her playing and I see empty cereal boxes and wonder where the contents are now. I see diapers being used as packages and toy bins as mailboxes and think about how much time it's going to take to reorganize the toy bin system that preceded her post office. I see silver foil presents

and tissue paper projects and half a dozen popsicle sticks glued to the floor next to her brown box-castle.

I'm tempted to say something and I have, often enough, but today I hold back. I watch an idea develop in her mind, I listen to her work out what she can use, or what to use instead, I see her eyes light up as she finds solutions and brings her imagination and creativity to life.

What I need to do is to embrace the mess.

I close my eyes to the waste and to the clutter and give myself credit for not opening my mouth either.

But the credit is all hers. Her eyes are very much open.

Open to the endless possibilities that lay within each mess and every scrap. She sees things broken or crumpled and she is not deterred. She sees potential. She doesn't just see it as good, she sees it as valuable. She sees mess as Art.

I may be her mother, but I have a lot to learn from her.

When Hashem created the world, he created it *yesh me'ayin*, something from nothing — He created the world with no raw materials. *Yesh me'ayin* can also be explained as "something out of nothingness." The material world is, in actuality, nothing, and when Hashem created the world with the intent of



dira b'tachtonim, He gave the nothingness value. He made something of the nothing. Hashem, the original artist, gave purpose to "waste" and then made us a partner in His creation.

I am an artist in training and this is what I have come to learn:

Artists don't see things in black and white, they see things in shades of colors. There is no good or bad; there is only how you chose to blend the hues. Art is alive and vibrant and invigorating.

There are some things in our lives: some projects, some goals, some relationships that are just a mess. They clutter our minds and our time and I take out my broom. I don't need this, I don't need that. I have all these bits and pieces lying around and I crave order. This didn't work out as I thought it would, this is taking up too much time, this is getting too complicated: trash, trash, trash.

What I need to do is to embrace the mess.



Some of life is neat and tidy; it fits into boxes and systems and is perfectly predictable. We know what it is, we know where it goes, and we know what it's there for. It is clear that we need it. We keep that schedule, those jobs, that project, those friends.

Then there's the rest. The messy reality of unfinished businesses and undefined experiences. We question: Why this? Why me? What for? This person drives

me crazy; that traffic jam was ridiculous; the schedule switch is ruining my day. This kid is up all night teething; that friend is always complaining; I can't ever seem to remember to silence my phone. The mess is accumulating and you want to do a grand sweep. Its so tempting to get rid of everything and anything that doesn't have a clearly marked bin or obvious value.

You have it all labeled. Waste.

Waste of time, waste of money, waste of effort, waste of resources.

Now, take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Maybe this is your garbage pile, but there is so much that can be saved.

Even my five-year-old knows that.

Think like an artist. See the potential. Imagine the product of your creativity as you find goodness and value and purpose in what you could have easily thrown away.

Artists don't see things in black and white, they see things in shades of colors. There is no good or bad; there is only how you chose to blend the hues. Art is alive and vibrant and invigorating.

And messy.

Be an artist.

And on behalf of your Mom, please clean up after yourself. ■





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”דער אויבערשטער פירט די וועלט”

Batya R. (Wolvovsky) Engel, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5761 (2001)



I often think about how I had envisioned life back when I was in high school. I imagined going to seminary in Eretz Yisroel, teaching in Bais Rivkah for a year or two before eventually getting married. We would move out on Shlichus and establish a successful Chabad house. In my mind's eye, my days were busy running a Chabad house with all of its programs, and my evenings were spent reading bedtime stories to my children, and as they grew, talking to them about all different topics.

The first bump in my vision was not getting accepted to the seminary of my choice. It took a lot of internal work to realize that Hashem had a plan for me and that going to seminary in Tzfas was not a part of that plan. While I had wanted to spend a year away from home and enjoy a full-time seminary experience, I instead stayed home and attended Bais Rivkah Sem Aleph. That year taught me to take control of my own life and my own decisions. Over the next three years, I began working in a preschool with just two children, and watched my good friends get married.

At twenty-three, I got married. At the end of our first year of marriage, the various shlichus options we looked into didn't materialize, yet I knew that we would eventually find our place. I never dreamed that we would end up remaining in Crown Heights and that my husband would be offered a position as program coordinator of the Jewish Released Time program. It was a shlichus that he was very passionate about but it shattered my dreams. Once again I reached

Years later, I appreciate that living in Crown Heights has afforded me opportunities that living elsewhere does not.

for the lessons that I had learned in Bais Rivkah and realized that it was a part of Hashem's master plan for me to live in Crown Heights.

One of the things that I have learned from my husband is the power of emunah. Bitachon means trusting Hashem so profoundly, that you trust everything WILL be good. And emunah is when you realize that everything that He does IS good. Over the years, I have seen how Hashem has rewarded this unwavering emunah and bitachon and provided for my family in ways that I would have never imagined.

My husband and I made the decision to purchase a house once we had decided that we were going to live in Crown Heights. The year was 5768 (2008), right when the housing market crashed, and housing in Crown Heights was still relatively affordable. We spent the summer looking at various houses and going through different contracts but ultimately they all fell through after a few weeks. Finally, we found a house on Lincoln Place between Schenectady and Utica. Having grown up two blocks away, I was comfortable with that area. As a result of attending seminary in Crown Heights while living at home, I was able to save up a significant amount of money. Together with our chasunah money and some loans from family, we almost had enough for the twenty percent down payment that was required as a down payment on the house. Despite our best efforts, we were still short twenty thousand dollars. While looking into gemach options, I came across the Hebrew Free Loan Society which provides twenty thousand dollar loans to teachers, payable over ten years. I had a strong feeling that this was exactly what was going to help us cover the rest of the down payment. It seemed like I met the qualifications for the loan because I was a teacher at a school in the area. I filled out the application and asked my director for a letter stating that I worked in the school, in compliance with the loan application requirements. About a week later, I received a response from the HFLS. I was denied the teacher loan on the grounds that they did not recognize the school that I was working at. The best they were able to offer me was a five thousand dollar general loan payable over five years. I was feeling dejected but my husband refused to give up. He had strong bitachon that things would work out. A few days

later, my director followed up with me about the status of the loan. I explained to her what they had responded. She told me that she will speak to her father-in-law on my behalf since he knew one of the main board members. Within a few hours, we received a positive response from the HFLS and were able to purchase the house.

Years later, I appreciate that living in Crown Heights has afforded me opportunities that living elsewhere does not. New York City has the best services available for children with challenges and having that option has definitely been a bracha. Though Hashem could have easily not given me a child with challenges that require the services we have available here, I trust that the reason I am her mother is that it is a part of Hashem's master plan for me, for her, and for the world at large.

Over time I have repeated the phrase "*Der Aibeshter fihrt der velt* — Hashem runs the world," over and over and over when things get hard. And I have seen many times how when things were tough, He really did pull through for us. Like the time when we were struggling to pay our bills and Mr. Bogolubov generously donated a stipend to each Shliach family. Or when things were tough financially and someone returned a few thousand dollars that she had borrowed from me years earlier when I was still single! (We had to ask a Rav about whether we could even keep that money because so many years had passed and I had given up on ever getting it back.)

Throughout the ups and downs of my life, I often had to reach deep within me to access that power of bita-

Over time I have repeated the phrase "Der Aibeshter fihrt der velt — Hashem runs the world," over and over and over when things get hard.

chon and really trust that everything Hashem does is truly the best. I don't know why I had to end up in the ER on the day of my brother-in-law's L'chaim, nor do I understand why when most of my children were born on or before their due date, my last baby was born two days late on the day of my sister's wedding, causing me to miss my last sibling's wedding. While I can think that I know why my life took some of the twists and turns that it has and still continues to do, I truly never will. But I trust and believe that Hashem has His master plan, and whether or not I may see it, every moment is part of His master plan. ■

Taking the Scenic Route to

KRIAH

FLUENCY



Nechamy (Kessler) Segal, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5762 (2002)



Ten facts you would never guess about me:

1. When I was in second grade, I couldn't read the word 'the'.
2. My father was a librarian at the Levi Yitzchok Library, so I spent many hours looking at books. While my siblings read books from cover to cover, I tried to piece together the stories by reading the pictures.
3. Weekly spelling tests caused a lot of anxiety, frustration, and confusion. Why couldn't I remember the words like everyone else? Why couldn't I remember the "easy" words?
4. I never completed the assigned chapter reading.
5. I only read about a handful of novels by the time I graduated high school. I only discovered my love for reading after high school.

6. I failed the English Regent in high school.
7. I failed my undergraduate English language exam.
8. My son read faster than me when he was in second grade. I still read slower than some of the learners I work with.
9. I still do not know how to spell many words that I use every day, especially homophones. I rely heavily on spell check, mnemonics, and complex rules to spell words like tomorrow, advice, and advise.
10. My deficit is my passion!

LITERACY LEARNING DIFFERENCES

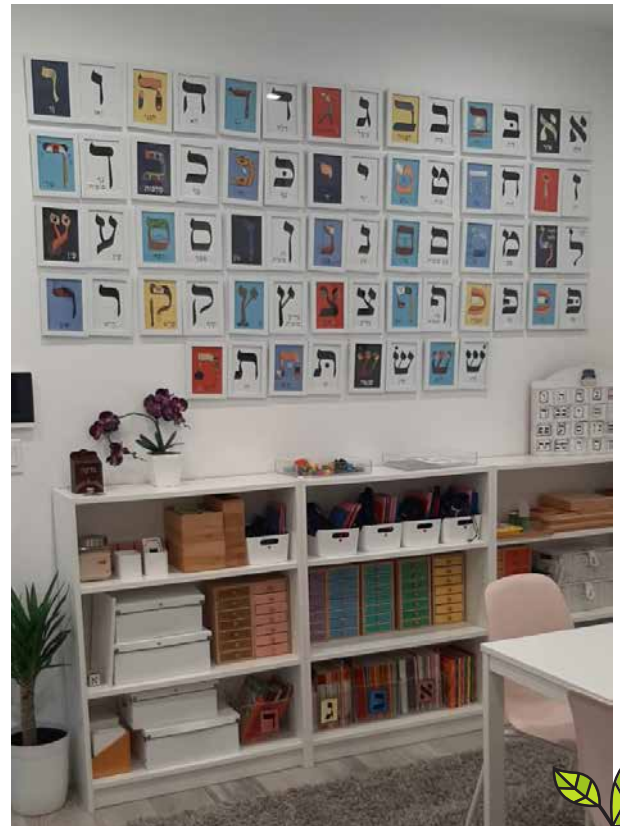
One out of every seven children has a literacy learning challenge. If you imagine a typical classroom with twenty students, there would likely be at least three students who struggle with literacy acquisition. Although many times they could hide it well, I bet you all remember classmates or friends who did not have an easy time learning to read. Maybe you just recall children who were not “book smart,” or who struggled to keep up in various subjects. Literacy learning differences, such as dyslexia, are extremely prevalent.

Most reading challenges are due to a deficit in phonological processing or symbol imagery. Phonological processing includes the awareness of the sound system that makes up our language, including syllables, rhymes, and distinct letter sounds (phonemes). For example, in order to spell the word *sprint*, a learner needs to hear all six individual sounds in the word. In order to understand that *kamatz beis* is ‘buh’, a learner needs to have some rhyming and initial sound awareness. Phonological processing also includes memory and speed. Many learners may know the letter names and letter sounds; however, their retrieval process is slow, which can make reading a slow and laborious process. Symbol imagery challenges other learners when it comes to working with symbols, where they confuse b, d, p, and q, or they confuse similar words such as through, though, and thought. Their brain is not yet efficient in working with and remembering symbols, impeding their ability to read successfully.

Many of the world’s most famous scientists, engineers, inventors, and artists have been known to have dyslexia. Dyslexia is a two-sided coin.

Both of these processing deficits have nothing to do with a learner’s overall intelligence. On the contrary, many people with reading challenges are extremely intelligent and accomplished. Many of the world’s most famous scientists, engineers, inventors, and artists have been known to have dyslexia. Dyslexia is a two-sided coin. While many dyslexics have a deficit on the left side of the brain which is in charge of memorizing facts such as letter sounds or multiplication tables, most dyslexics are stronger on the right side of the brain which is in charge of reasoning, creating, and visualizing, and this is where they excel.

Before the printing press, if one had a deficit in phonological processing or symbol imagery, it



would not matter. Most of society's function was not literacy-based. If we think back to the era when the Gemara was written down, we would remember that most of the process was oral. Even if a pupil was not fully literate, he would still be able to participate in learning because most of the learning was centered around oral discourse. However, today, so much of our society is text-based that a literacy challenge can have a serious impact on a student's educational and professional success. Many people today still gauge intelligence based on the way others read and write, assuming that a couple of spelling errors indicates that the writer may have a hard time understanding and remembering. To me, a spelling challenge would indicate that the writer must be smart in a different way. It makes me curious.

What drives me to help exceptional learners is that I, too, struggled with literacy acquisition.

MY WORK

What drives me to help exceptional learners is that I, too, struggled with literacy acquisition. I have endless patience with my students because I see myself in them. I am motivated to work with all kinds of learners using approaches that are most suitable for them.

My clinical practice in Crown Heights is where I work with students to figure out why they may be struggling with literacy acquisition. I then use



The idea of using the Kabbalah and Chassidus of the Alef Beis to create stories and pictures really resonated with me. Especially when I happened upon the Hayom Yom from Ches Adar:

The Alter Rebbe once summoned a young disciple of the Maggid and said to him in his customary chant: I have the mitzvah of 'Teach them to your children.' You have the mitzvah of sustaining and providing for your family. Let us make an exchange. I will give you what you need to fulfill your mitzvah, and you will teach my son (who

later became the Mittlerer Rebbe).

Then the Rebbe explained the method of instruction: The first thing is to teach the letters, alef, beis, and so on. What is an alef? A dot above, a dot below, and a line between; this is an alef. A child must know that the alef of Torah is a yud above, a yud below, and a line of Emunah that joins them.

I thought to myself, "Why just teach alef in this way? What if we would teach all of the Alef Beis this way? What if we taught children Hashem's stories for all the Alef Beis?"

an array of resources and strategies to design and implement an intervention that would allow the learner to reach grade expectation in the most enjoyable and efficient way possible.

I also work with educators. One of my pet projects is helping educators learn how to screen children for the early signs of literacy learning risks, beginning in kindergarten. Our hope is to identify these children as early as possible and to close the gap before it widens. In my experience working with older children and adults, the work is much more daunting when there is years' worth of learning that needs to be caught up. Academic failure can take a toll on a child's confidence, resilience, emotions, and behaviors; early intervention is crucial.

When it comes to English literacy, there are mountains of research, standards, textbooks, published programs, and blogs available for new teachers and experienced clinicians. This is a stark contrast to

I thought to myself, “Why just teach alef in this way? What if we would teach all of the Alef Beis this way? What if we taught children Hashem’s stories for all the Alef Beis?”

what is available for Lashon Hakodesh literacy, or *kriah*. While there are a handful of educators who are scientifically exploring how to teach Lashon Hakodesh as a foreign language, we have yet to create a supportive and informative system for educators to follow. We have yet to prepare materials that would meet the needs of all kinds of learners, across the grades.

After more than a decade immersed in English instruction, I came to Lashon Hakodesh instruction armed with insight and training in the literacy learning process. Obviously, this instruction was different as it had an added component. I wasn't just teaching literacy. I was teaching Torah.

An important key to reading successfully is having an understanding of the text. The rush of pleasure that a child experiences when they successfully read a story that they understand is its own reward.

Comprehension also allows a child to self-correct when a word doesn't fit the sentence. Reading fluency isn't merely about doing phonics quickly; it requires vocabulary and comprehension, too.



There is a misconception that using traditional *Mesorah* is outdated and will not work for many children. In a *sicha*, the Rebbe addressed those who believe that following alternate methods of teaching Alef Beis and Nekudos seems to be more effective. To this, the Rebbe said, “*Not as those who mistakenly claim that by using the Mesora’dike method we slow down the child’s development and progress in reading. This is not true, for the opposite is true!*”

In the past, children were struggling because they did not understand what they were reading. They were not getting the natural feedback they would hear if they were familiar with how the language

WHEN SCIENCE AND TORAH MEET

To help learners remember the alphabet, one of the most effective methods I use is called embedded pictures. It is a technique that pairs letters with a picture, allowing the learner to make a memorable association between the two. We then remove the picture, and the learner can still remember the letter. Basically, the learner is able to use visual memory for pictures to compensate for a deficit in memory for symbols. I wanted to use this technique for the Alef Beis, but I could not find anything suitable for young learners. I found beautiful materials for more mature learners, and I found resources for English mnemonics, but I wanted Lashon Hakodesh mnemonics that would be appropriate for the youngest learners.

I wasn't sure if the embedded picture method would conflict with *Mesorah*. With the help and knowledge of Rabbi Levi and Baila Risha Goldstein, we realized there was a way to do this right.

Admitting that we can't do something on our own can be difficult, but having the ability to ask for assistance is a life skill. We all need additional support at times. I am no exception.

AT FIRST

I began sculpting miniature objects for each letter story. Some of my middle school students were interested in making their own sets. One student even sold two sets to educators! The experience was so meaningful and empowering for these learners because they were able to use their talents to learn and share the Alef Beis on a deeper level. More encouraging, there was an interest from educators to have similar resources in additional learning envi-

ronments. I had to make it reproducible.

I reached out to Esty Raskin, a graphic artist and Bais Rivkah alumna, and asked her if she would illustrate these letter stories with me. She showed me a sample of the letter Alef and I knew right away that she was the right person. I loved her Alef. I loved the way she wrapped the light around the Torah! It really demonstrated the true essence of the story.



THE ALEF BEIS CARDS

FIRST THE SIDDUR LETTER:

When Hashem gave us the Torah, the letters were of black fire atop white fire. Therefore, according to Jewish tradition, the Alef Beis should first be introduced using black letters on a white background.

THE ILLUSTRATION:

Esty and I worked ceaselessly to create these thought-provoking renderings of each letter incorporating its "story." We wanted each drawing to truly express the story of the letter while making sure the illustration was clearly recognizable as a letter. Some were easy, such as the mem. The water cycle was a natural fit with the circular shape of the letter, and *mayim* is a basic word that many children know. Other letters were quite challenging, but we knew we would get it right. We were determined to fully love each letter. Our first attempt for the letter yud, a yad, was a hand holding a lulav and esrog, symbolizing unity. It didn't look good and it didn't feel right. We brainstormed, we looked back in the seforim, and we got it. The letter yud is a neshama, the *pintele Yid*, whose purpose is to be a lamplighter, to help another. Esty drew the hand lighting a lamp, and we knew right away it was perfect. The picture looked great and it told the true story of the letter.

THE KEY WORD:

Many may think that using Lashon Hakodesh keywords may be too ambitious and lofty. How could we use unfamiliar words, especially with such young children or children with language deficits? Children can master these new words using a few different techniques. Exposure to the new vocabulary will familiarize them with these new Lashon Hakodesh words, helping them absorb the meanings just as easily as the names of ice cream flavors, or of their favorite toy characters. Additionally, most of the keywords are important terms that children may already know or they should learn. Words like *echod* (one), *bayis* (house), *ayin* (eye), or *peh*

My hope is to help children find their track to Torah Literacy that is sweet and successful.

(mouth) are really good words to know. Finally, to understand the job of Alef Beis, children need to learn early on that Lashon Hakodesh letters are used to create words in Lashon Hakodesh. We would not illustrate the usage of *beis* with a ball; we would demonstrate usage with a Lashon Hakodesh word. We also emphasize the holy energy that each letter has, and how each letter is a building block in Hashem's continuous creation of the world.

THE STORIES

My challenge was to capture the essence of the letter without overwhelming my target audience. I had to sift through a myriad of beautiful lessons and focus only on the most essential components. Some mind-blowing stories are told in just the sequence of the letters. The *ches*, *tes*, and *yud* tell us about the purpose of life: *ches* is a story of a *chuppah*, *tes* is a pregnancy, and *yud* is the neshama, the baby. It was difficult to omit some very interesting concepts, but it proved possible with the hope that there would be future opportunities to learn more about the letters.

LESSONS FOR LIFE

Learning Alef Beis can be an experience of its own. Each story is a lesson for learners to apply to their own lives. Young children would benefit from having the time and support to understand and internalize the concepts of the letters. For example, with the letter *beis*, children can relate how when they learn Torah and do Mitzvos, they can actually feel the goodness and light filling their environment. With the letter *gimmel*, children can relate to their own acts of kindness. Learners would benefit from taking the time to demonstrate their comprehension of the letter's story, by drawing, painting, or sculpting, or by engaging any other forms of art and discourse.

ASKING FOR HELP

I often stress the importance of asking for help. Admitting that we can't do something on our own can be difficult, but having the ability to ask for assistance is a life skill. We all need additional support at times. I am no exception.

Each step of creating these cards became possible for me with the guidance of others. When I began



by doing research, I quickly realized that the best sources of information were *seforim*. To be honest, I can only read Lashon Hakodesh with *nekudos* and I did not have the vocabulary to understand the kabbalistic concepts. I was fortunate to have



my mother help me with some further research. Among many things, she helped me understand the spiritual differences between *shin* and *sin*, *beis* and *veis*, and between the regular letters and the final letters.

To help bolster my limited spelling and writing abilities, I sent the work to two editors and a professional writer. My website was the result of hiring a web designer. I had spent time puzzling over the instructions and trying to figure out the technology, but I finally conceded defeat. There is always that inner conflict between trying to be independent and knowing when to ask for help.

ALL KINDS OF LEARNERS AT HEART

Now that this project is completed and available for the public, I have a few next steps that I hope to work on. We have been developing a tabletop version with mini cards that would provide learners with hands-on opportunities for practice. These tabletop cards are almost ready for market. We are also planning on making group-sized posters, journals, storybooks, and more. I would also love to film tutorials on how to create the clay miniatures. Young children love exploring and manipulating miniature objects.

I plan on using these same cards to make Lashon Hakodesh prefix mnemonics. The same stories that we used for the Alef Beis can be used to help children remember the Lashon Hakodesh prefixes. *Mem* is water, water is the source of all life, everything is from water. *Mem* means “from.” *Beis* is a house. The purpose of a house is to protect what is inside. *Beis* means “in.”

Everything that we do is with the intention to support teachers and learners in the journey to literacy success. My hope is to help children find their track to Torah Literacy that is sweet and successful. I also know that if we can teach learners with the most profound struggles, we can teach everyone. ■

Nechamy is a Hebrew and English Literacy Specialist and the founder of Scenic Route Literacy and the Letter Lab.

To reach out to Nechamy to ask questions or to learn about her services, you can write to nechamy@scenicrouteliteracy.com

To buy your own Kabbalah Alef Beis curriculum and cards, visit <https://scenicrouteliteracy.com/products>



OUT *of* TOWNER

Zlatie (Edelman) Mochkin, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5736 (1976)



I am an out-of-towner. It is a badge that I wore proudly through my four years of high school.

I grew up on shlichus in Springfield, Massachusetts; I was the only student in my grade. The sixth, seventh, and eighth grades consisted of me, my sister Sheina, and one other girl. That was it! I was only thirteen and a half when my parents sent me to Crown Heights for high school. You can imagine the anxiety I had about coming to a new school filled with girls I had never met.

It was the beginning of the year and the time came for me to get acquainted with the new life I'd be living for the next four years. My parents drove me to

Crown Heights and I unpacked and settled into my new home away from home. My sister Cyrel and her husband Zalman Deitsch welcomed me with open arms. I told Cyrel how nervous I was about the first day of school. School was in Flatbush, and I was to take one city bus and switch to another one. How was I going to figure it out? But Cyrel saved the day for me. She had been at the jeweler, who had a daughter going to ninth grade too, and they arranged that she would pick me up in the morning. What a relief!

And that is how I met Devora Leah Levertov, who picked me up and made sure I got to school in one piece! My first friend.

The first day was so overwhelming — so many girls in one classroom! In those days there was only one class per grade, and we were around forty girls. What a challenge for the teachers! I looked around, trying to see if I knew anyone, when Sheine Krinsky introduced herself to me and said that her family knew mine. I knew the Krinskys from Boston, so now I had another friend. Then Rochel Biston introduced herself to me, “Hi,” she said, “Your cousin and my sister are best friends, and this is my first day at BRHS too (she was coming from Bais Yaakov in Boro Park),” so now I had another friend.

Lunchtime came around, together with a new challenge. All the girls raced downstairs to the lunchroom, eager to talk and compare notes with each other about their summers. I looked for a seat, but I couldn’t find space at the tables full of chatting girls. I sat down at a table on the side, and I can still remember the giant lump in my throat as I tried to chew and swallow my food. I don’t know how I made it through lunch, but I did, only to face English afternoon studies.

During first class, the teacher did a roll call and then asked, “Is anyone here that is not on the list?”

Well, my name had not been called, so I raised my hand.

“Name?”

I responded, “Zlata Edelman.”

“HOW DO YOU SPELL YOUR NAME?”

And I said, “Z-L-A-T-A.”

This repeated itself *five times* that afternoon, but by the end of the day, the entire classroom was spelling my name out loud with me! Did I feel singled out? No, I felt the love and warmth of an entire roomful of girls who were on my side, helping me get adjusted to

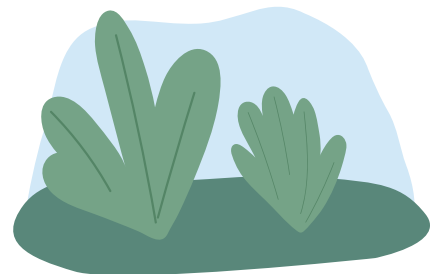
Did I feel singled out? No, I felt the love and warmth of an entire roomful of girls who were on my side, helping me get adjusted to a new environment, and laughing with me!

a new environment, and laughing with me!

That was my first day at Bais Rivkah, and it only got better from then on. I had the lead role in the school play, *I Remember Momma* (I played the daughter who remembered Momma), I figured out how to get to school on my own (taking the Bedford Avenue bus cut out ten minutes if you were running late, but it was an extra nickel), and I made many life-long friends who I rely on to this day. I even married the brother of my classmate, Faygie Mochkin, and my brother married my classmate Gutel Raskin!

Being an out-of-towner can be very difficult. Being away from the safe space called home is daunting. While those initial move-in days and first weeks in a new place and new school proved challenging, eventually it all does fall into place. The process happens organically. Ninth grade may turn out to be the learning curve but by tenth or eleventh you carve out your niche. Every girl creates the collective beautiful group called Bais Rivkah. There is a place for everyone. Being outgoing, putting yourself out there, finding what makes you unique and what you have to offer can help you find your people.

Nothing compares to the energy and loyalty of high school friends, girls who know you so well that you can close your eyes and be yourself with them, no matter who that self is. Bais Rivkah brought that to me. Thank you! ■



An ATTITUDE of GRATITUDE

Mushka Greene, Crown Heights
 Graduating class of 5770 (2010)

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאן
 ליובאוויטש
 770 אסטערן פארקווי
 ברוקלין 13, נ. י.
 היילאנד 3-9250

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
 Lubovitch
 770 Eastern Parkway
 Brooklyn 13, N. Y.
 HY 4626 3-9250

By the Grace of G-d
 22nd of Elul, 5730
 Brooklyn, N. Y.

Dr. Velvl Greene
 1601 Spring Valley Rd.
 Golden Valley, Minn. 55422

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased, first, to be informed by Itzhak that you had volunteered to come and participate in their activities, and subsequently to see you during the reading of the Torah in Shul, where my father-in-law of saintly memory had prayed for many years since he dedicated it on the first day of this week (Nitrovim), thirty years ago.

Needless to say, you are included in the good wishes, explicit and implicit, in the enclosed letter to your wife. Indeed, I trust that you will add some explanatory words to the letter, if this be required, which will help you also to accept it in greater depth.

May G-d grant that all the blessings and good wishes of Jews to one another at this time of the year, should be fulfilled.

Again, wishing you and all yours a Kesivo v'Chasimo Tovo, for a good and sweet year, the kind of good which is revealed and evident,

With blessing, *M. Schneerson*

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאן
 ליובאוויטש
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By the Grace of G-d
 22nd of Elul, 5730
 Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mrs. Gutel Bunis Greene
 1601 Spring Valley Rd.
 Golden Valley, Minn. 55422

Blessing and Greeting:

I received regards from you through your husband Dr. Velvl Greene, who also told me of your present frame of mind. And while this is quite understandable, it is necessary to bear in mind that the ways of G-d are inscrutable, but always good, since He is the Essence of Goodness, and it is in the nature of the Good to do good - however difficult it may sometimes seem to comprehend. Yet it is not at all surprising that a human being should not be able to understand the ways of G-d; on the contrary, it is quite undemanding to see why a human being should not be able to understand the ways of G-d, for how can a created being understand the Creator? We must, therefore, be strong in our trust in G-d, and let nothing discourage us or cause any depression in G-d and in His benevolence, the stronger the Bitochon when this becomes plain even to human eyes. You should therefore be confident that G-d will eventually fulfill your heart's desire for good, as well as that of your husband, to be blessed with additional healthy offspring.

Your husband's activities and contribution to the strengthening and spreading of Yiddishkeit, as well as your share in it, will stand you in good stead to hasten that time.

Inasmuch as we are now in the auspicious month of Elul, I trust you surely know the explanation by the Alter Rebbe, author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch, of the significance of this month. He explains it by means of an illustration of a king returning to his residence, when all the people of the city turn out to welcome the king in the field. At such a time, everyone may approach the king, even dressed in ~~work~~ work clothes, etc., to present a personal petition to the king, while the king accepts each petition graciously and grants the request. Such is also the period of the month of Elul - a time of especial Divine grace and mercy.

May G-d grant that this be so also with you and all yours, in the midst of all our people Israel.

Wishing you and yours a Kesivo v'Chasimo Tovo,

With blessing, *M. Schneerson*

I took on a Thirty Days of Gratitude project in honor of Yocheved Gourarie, and I ended up learning something about myself.

When I started the project, I wondered what daily items I would be grateful for every day.



I imagined my posts would be deep, meaningful, and inspiring. I was expecting brilliant moments, life-changing sentiments, and hard-core lessons.

What I experienced in the last thirty days was something greater than all of that.

My daily gratitudes were not grand gestures or miracle stories. They were small, simple, and basic moments from throughout my day.

Yet these moments brought a smile to my face and changed my entire perspective.

Incidentally, at the same time that I finished my thirty-day project, my father, David Greene, shared a beautiful letter my grandmother Gail Greene received

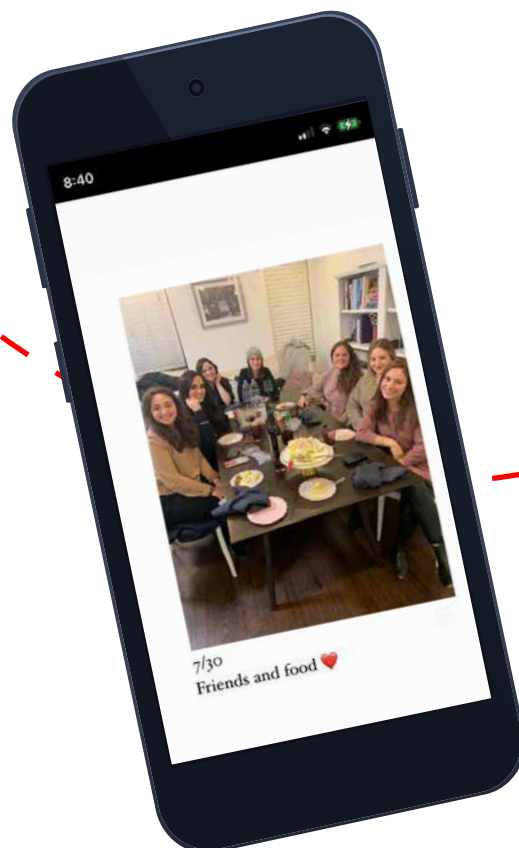
Once I opened my eyes to see the kindness in my life, I was able to be more receptive and accepting of Hashem's gifts.

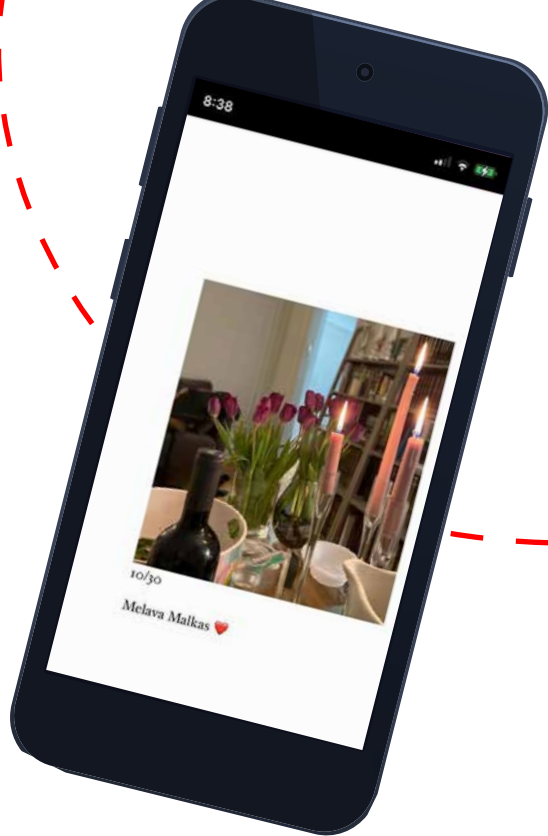
from the Rebbe. She had been experiencing a stage of sadness and depression due to several miscarriages after her first three children.

In addition to a cover letter for my grandfather, the Rebbe wrote to my grandmother kind and empathetic words:

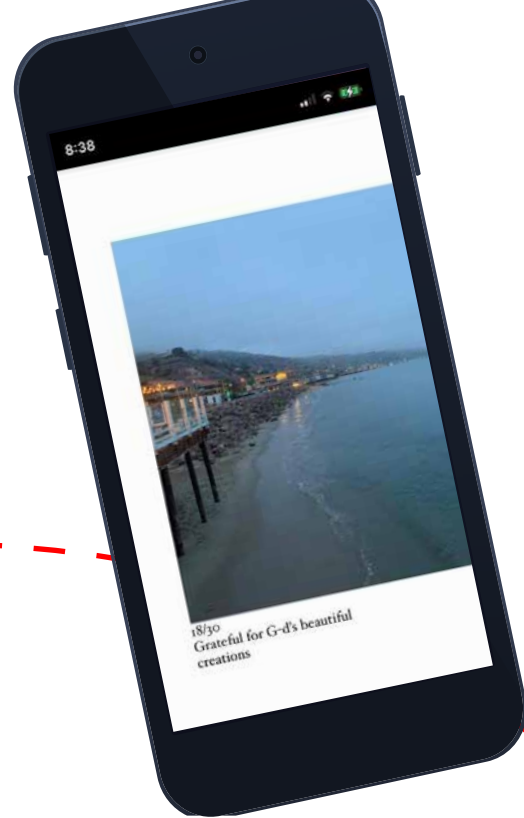
... We must therefore be strong in our trust in G-d and let nothing discourage us or cause any depression, G-d forbid. As a matter of fact, the stronger the bitachon in G-d and in His benevolence, the sooner comes the time when this becomes plain even to human eyes.

Hearing that my grandmother was experiencing





10/30
Melava Malkas ❤️



18/30
Grateful for G-d's beautiful
creations

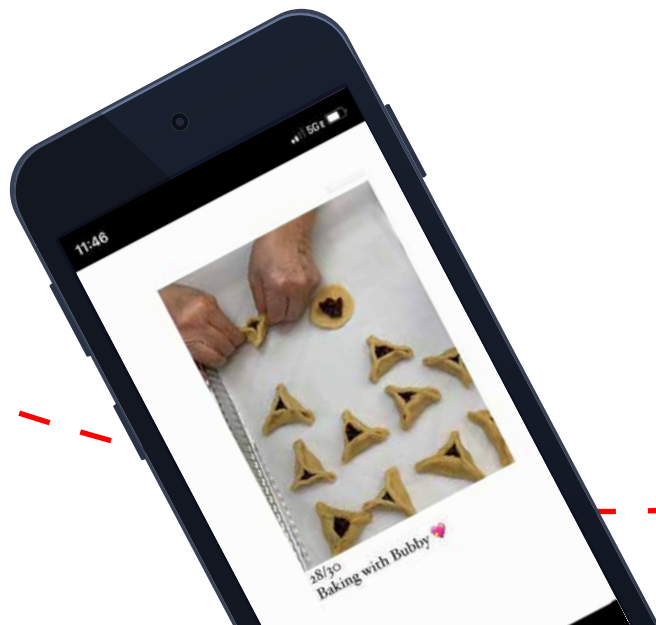
deep pain, the Rebbe replied with an empowering message: trust in Hashem's plan and allow yourself to recognize the good He does.

One year later, my grandparents were blessed with a daughter, followed by a son two years later.

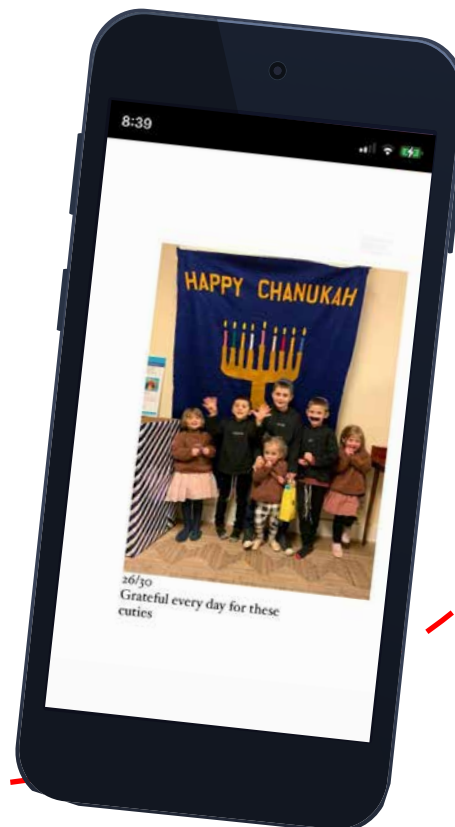
My grandmother accepted her reality, stayed strong in her trust, and eventually good came.

Once I opened my eyes to see the kindness in my life, I was able to be more receptive and accepting of G-d's gifts. Focusing on my gratitude empowered me to let nothing discourage me and taught me how to live with the Rebbe's words.

Life will not always grant us moments of fireworks and grandiosity. Rather, it is up to us to tune in and appreciate the little sparks of joy. And be grateful. ▀



28/30
Baking with Babby ❤️



26/30
Grateful every day for these
cuties

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KIDSCAPING

CREATING A KID-FRIENDLY SHABBOS TABLESCAPE

Aidela (Moscowitz) Rabiski, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5769 (2009)





SHABBOS WITHOUT THE ENTHUSIASM

My daughters absolutely love to craft. Sundays are crafting events in our house. Pull out the supplies, glue, paint, etc. and the kids are busy for hours. I don't know what goes on in your house, but as my kids were getting older, Shabbos was becoming more of a challenge for them. Over the last few months, I was hearing my seven-year-old and then my five-year-old whine, "I don't like Shabbos; it's sooo boring." Shabbos, without crafting, was a challenge, even with the enormous amount of toys and games we have.

I should probably confess that my unspoken lack of enthusiasm might have added to their young-child's reasoning for not enjoying Shabbos. For me, cooking gives me joy and excitement when I get to experience new foods and express my creativity. Over the last few years, my work has consumed much of my time and brain space. At the same time, my family was growing — my workload and responsibilities grew. As things got stressful between home and work, I would resort to cooking a simple Shabbos, and honestly, I didn't find much joy in putting up a roll of gefilte fish, a pot of soup, chicken, and kugel. With life unfolding and growing more overwhelming, I started to feel like Shabbos was a burden, instead of the beautiful gift Hashem blessed us with.

THE BIRTH OF THE IDEA

It all came to me when I was expecting my fifth child, ka"h. At this point, I knew I had no choice; something would have to go. Although I'd begun delegating responsibilities in the after-school programs I direct, I understood that now I had to take a big step back and focus on my family. It was a hard decision for me; these programs were my "babies," too. I cut back my work hours tremendously, staying available in a coaching capacity, leaving me with plenty of time to take care of my beautiful growing family ka"h.

With life unfolding and growing more overwhelming, I started to feel like Shabbos was a burden, instead of the beautiful gift Hashem blessed us with.

While working less, I looked for ways to spend my time and energy on my family. I wanted them to see Yiddishkeit as fun, that we can have a good time doing things that are acceptable and kosher. I wanted them to be able to look back at Shabbos in our house and remember how fun it was. I wanted something that would excite them about Shabbos, include them

in the preparation, involve them at the Shabbos meal, and enable me to find joy in it as well. That is when the Parsha Tablescapes idea was born.

One of my main goals was that I could create the crafts, treats, and desserts *with* my kids during the week, teaching them new skills while spending quality time with them. I remember hearing at a talk about chinuch that the best way to ensure that you spend quality time with your children is to do something that *you* enjoy, with them. So for me, having my kids with me in the kitchen or crafting is the best way I can spend time with my kids (I leave the book reading to my husband).

PARSHA TABLESCAPES

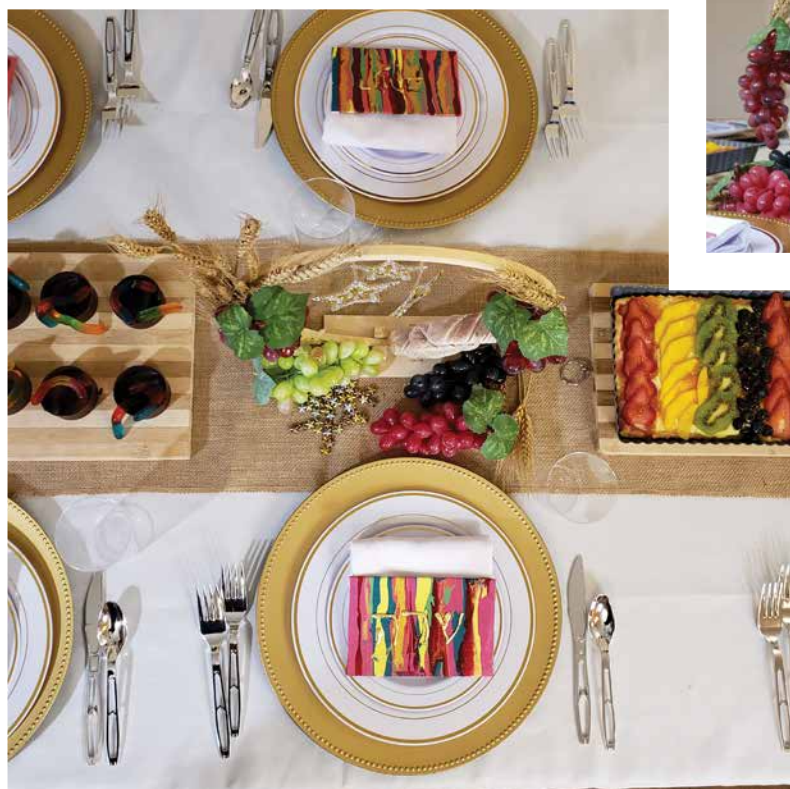
Every Shabbos we create an elegant tablescape connected to the parsha. The tablescape includes one or two DIY crafts, one or two parsha-themed desserts/Shabbos treats, and decor to match the parsha's theme. For Parshas Noach, we created a beautiful *teiva* out of scrap wood, raindrop place cards, and rainbow cupcakes. The table was set with a blue table runner to represent the water.

I try to have the full table ready Thursday night. First thing each Friday morning my kids run to the dining room to see the final results. They are so enthusiastic to see their crafts and treats displayed as part of our full tablescape.

With the elements of the parsha displayed through crafts, treats, desserts, and decor, discussing the parsha and its lessons became so exciting. During the Shabbos meal, we go around the table, giving each of the kids a turn to tell us the story of the parsha and the connection to the items on the table. Since beginning this project, our Shabbos table has become so much more enjoyable. My kids are proud that they were part of the creation of the Shabbos table and the parsha elements, and that they can share its meaning.

SHARING IT PUBLICLY

I decided to publicize my work to inspire others. If I was already doing it, why not share with others so they can create and add to their family's Shabbos experience as well? It does take much longer to document and post photos and tutorial videos, but I feel



I wanted them to see Yiddishkeit as fun, that we can have a good time doing things that are acceptable and kosher.

it is important for people to share ideas and inspire each other while raising the next generation. Now that I share my work publicly, it also makes me more committed to actually pulling through each week. It is so motivating when people interact or ask me questions about what they need to buy or how to do something. I feel like there is a purpose in my posting publicly.

Creating the full tablescape with all of the elements can be too much for many. The goal of Parsha Tablescapes is to inspire you to add something extra to your table or encourage your children to create something during the week for the Shabbos table. Many of the crafts and desserts can be easily created by ten- or twelve-year-olds on their own, and lots of the supplies are from the dollar store, keeping this a bud-

get-friendly adventure.

I really enjoy this experience with my family. It is teaching me to be present, to give my children as much as possible, and to create fun memories with them. As an after-school program director for many years, it is so rewarding to use the crafting and baking ideas for my own children, to bring joy to their Shabbos. With this project I have checked off so many family goals:

- Quality time with the kids
- Giving the kids a fun Shabbos
- Personally finding joy in Shabbos
- Teaching them cooking and crafting skills

Whatever time or energy we have to give, we must keep ourselves focused on our job as women and as mothers, to give our kids what they need physically, spiritually, and emotionally. And the best way to do it is in a way that brings us joy. ▀

You can follow our Shabbos tablescapes on Facebook and Instagram @campcratesummer

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Teaching *the* Most Useful Skills *for* Life

Frumie (Deutsch) Piekarski, Kensington, New York
Graduating class of 5765 (2005)



It wasn't long after my mother, Goldie Deutsch, began teaching in the English department of Bais Rivkah High School that she realized her students needed more than just a teacher of a subject. What these young girls needed was a teacher who truly cared and tried her best to understand each student as an individual. When speaking to her recently about her years in Bais Rivkah, my mother told me, "Kids, especially teenagers, need to know that they can ask without being judged. They are going through upheavals in their lives and should never feel that what they say will be used as a judgment of who they are. When you listen without judging, they will tell you what is going on deep inside and then you have what to work with."

My mother taught in the 1970s and eventually became the English principal for a few years. In those days, a girl was able to choose a track for her English studies. There was the commercial track, which was focused on office skills, or the academic track, which was more math-based. She taught the commercial track classes of bookkeeping, typing, speed writing, and first-aid. "I taught five periods a day, and I always stood while I taught," she recalls. It warmed her heart whenever she heard that one of her students had landed a job as a bookkeeper or secretary using the skills she had taught.

She tried her best to enable her students to develop useful skills for life. She allowed the girls to speak with each other while typing as long as they handed in their assignments at the end of class. The girls didn't realize that she was teaching them "the skill of how to type even with distractions." As they busily typed up their assignments, the girls schmoozed with each other. But more importantly, there were times when her students opened up to their teacher and shared the thoughts and questions weighing on their hearts and minds. They knew that Mrs. Deutsch's typing room was a place where they would be understood and not judged.

Growing up, I knew how much my mother cared for her students. Sometimes she would be on the phone raising money for a student. Other times she brought girls home and would speak to them privately. Often, she would tutor a student who had been struggling with the bookkeeping class.

One student told me, "She took me under her wing and welcomed me as part of the family. I was from out of town and I did not want to go back to Bais Rivkah, but the Rebbe told me it would be alright —

and your mother was always there for me."

When I walk into a certain store on Kingston Avenue, the proprietor reminds me, "Your mother once saved a student's life. I know this because, as one of her students, she asked me to befriend that particular student as a favor. I was able to see her involvement and what she accomplished."

When you listen without judging, they will tell you what is going on deep inside and then you have what to work with.

My mother did not have an easy life before teaching in Bais Rivkah High School. Her earliest memory is standing on the deck of a ship, sailing away from the Austrian displaced persons camp where she was born.

Both her parents were courageous, proud, and brave free-thinkers who had each survived the war with Hashem's help, using their ingenuity to evade the Nazis. Her father was dubbed "der feigele" by the Nazis because they could not seem to keep him in their grasp. He was light-footed, small, and swift. Her mother, a young widow with two children, escaped the ghetto at night to sew for gentiles and returned in the morning with some bread which she shared with her children and neighbors. After the war, her parents met and married, but the war had taken a toll. Her mother had been married, widowed, and had lost a child in the war. Her father had been engaged before the war, but his kallah and her father were killed by the Nazis as retribution when he once again escaped their clutches. When her parents arrived in America, they were broken in a way we should never understand.



When she came home and proudly told her parents what had happened and how the boy, with blood pouring from his nose, threatened that he was “gonna get my dad to come to school and take care of you,” her parents panicked. That was my mother’s last day of public school.

Her parents settled in the Bronx. They were traditional people, lighting Shabbos candles, making Kiddush, and going to shul on Shabbos, but they could not afford yeshiva tuition and were too proud to ask for financial help. They duly enrolled their daughter in the local public school in their Puerto Rican neighborhood well known for its gangs.

My mother inherited her parents’ spunk and spirit. To their chagrin, in third grade, she got into a fight with the son of a Puerto Rican gang leader and punched his nose until he bled. When she came home and proudly told her parents what had happened and how the boy, with blood pouring from his nose, threatened that he was “gonna get my dad to come to school and take care of you,” her parents panicked. That was my mother’s last day of public school. A family friend grabbed the opportunity to convince her parents to switch her to the local Bais Yaakov where she would be safe. There she

began learning more about Yiddishkeit, how to read Lashon HaKodesh, and daven.

My mother’s maternal half-brother survived the war, but he was a lot older and did not live at home for most of her growing years. Living as the only child at home with two parents enduring the aftershocks of the Holocaust was extremely challenging. Throughout all her struggles, she stayed in the yeshiva system, commuting for close to two hours each way every day to attend Bais Yaakov High School in Williamsburg.

Perhaps her own personal challenges were the impetus that drove her to really take interest in and understand her students. She was very fair and tried to get each student to achieve to the best of her ability. She was extremely careful to give each student a fresh chance in her class. She made sure not to listen to reports from other teachers about their experiences with a particular student. She did not concern herself with how a student behaved in any other class. In her class, each student had a chance to decide how she would like my mother to know her. “I never wanted to hear from past teachers what they thought of a certain girl or her past reputation. I wanted each girl to start fresh with me and have a chance.”

What truly amazes me about my mother is that she never defined herself by her background or used it as an excuse to do less. She struggled to list the entire Alef-Beis in order because she had missed those early years in yeshiva, married at seventeen, and did not have an opportunity to attend seminary. Yet when a job opened up in the Kodesh department for a ninth grade Chumash teacher, she decided she would fill it. I still remember her sitting for hours with my father preparing her Chumash lessons. Her favorite *meforesh* was the *Me’am Lo’ez* which had not yet been translated into English. She taught two periods a day of Chumash. This meant that she taught seven periods a day, standing.

When it came to teaching Chumash, her philosophy was, “more important than the amount of pesukim covered is how well the students will *remember*.” It wasn’t too long ago that one of her former students visited the retirement community in Deerfield Beach, Florida where my parents now live. When she met my mother in shul she enthused, “Mrs. Deutsch, so many years have passed since you were my Chumash teacher, but until this day when we read Parshas Shemos, I hear you say, ‘*Vayakom*



melech chodosh!”

“When I taught Chumash, I tried to help the girls connect to Moshe Rabbeinu and his trials and tribulations. I reminded them that though Hashem promised Moshe that this would be the end of Golus Mitzrayim, when Moshe was standing in front of Pharaoh, he did not yet experience the ending as we know it in the Torah. I wanted them to realize that having a cushy life is not what makes a leader of Klal Yisroel. Most great leaders of Klal Yisroel faced tremendous hardships. Each one could have said, ‘Why me? Why do I have to go through this?’ I wanted the girls to relate to Moshe as a human and see what they could become.”

She also became the ninth grade mechaneches. “The girls were very candid with me in expressing

Perhaps her own personal challenges were the impetus that drove her to really take interest in and understand her students.

their thoughts. I guess it’s because I never had airs; what you saw is what you got.”

When she became the principal of the English department, she hired some of her former students to replace her in some of the subjects she had taught. “I had never taught the subject she hired me for,” one former student shared. “I felt complimented that she felt I could do the job. She always found the time to help me. Her style was easygoing and at the same time no-nonsense. She wanted me to get the job done, but I didn’t feel threatened as a teacher. She had the patience to explain things. She guided me and gave me tips. She always had time to take care of everything. She squeezed a lot into her day.”

Eventually, my mother left BRHS. But she really never stopped teaching and caring, regardless of the profession she was in. Over the past decade, once she retired, she wanted to get back into teaching full-time again. Numerous times she told me that her years in Bais Rivkah High School were her best years, but she understood that the generational gap was too great after so many years of not dealing with

What truly amazes me about my mother is that she never defined herself by her background or used it as an excuse to do less.

teenagers. When a woman from her community asked my mother if she would teach her Tanya, my mother courageously and bravely agreed. No matter that she was not well versed in Tanya. She could learn it from Rabbi Miller’s sefer, from Rabbi Friedman, Rabbi Silberberg, Rabbi Gordon, and ask her questions to her grandchildren. She currently has a Tanya shiur every Wednesday night in Deerfield Beach, FL. She began from *Likkutei Amarim* and is currently teaching *Sha’ar HaYichud Vaha’Emuna*. As her knowledge of Tanya grew, so did her student body. Her students are great-grandmothers from various backgrounds, sheitel wearers and non-sheitel wearers. Some are knowledgeable of Chassidus; others are completely new to the study of Chassidus, even though they have been from all their life. Now during Covid, she’s giving her class over Zoom. When I marvel at what she’s accomplished, she doesn’t understand what the big deal is. You see, she doesn’t think what she is doing is so special. She has no airs, she just really cares and wants to teach her current students Chassidus, the most useful skill for life. ■



Investing *in* Infinity

A Look at the Bais Rivkah Seminary Teacher Training Program

Esty (Newfield) Blau, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5768 (2008)



My Humble Beginnings

“What?! You’re not planning to teach? You belong in the classroom! That’s where your passion is. How could you waste the talents Hashem gave you?” These few sentences motivated me to become a teacher. Eleven years later, I can see how Mrs. Hindy Gurwitz’s words rang true. Mrs. Gurwitz is the director of the Bais Rivkah Seminary Teacher Training program. Ironically, this was not the career that I had envisioned for myself. I had originally enrolled in Teacher Training as an interesting learning experience, and it was! Upon reflection at the end of the year, I decided teaching was not for me. Although I had a

successful and fulfilling year in the program, it required a tremendous amount of time and energy to prepare and deliver each lesson. Each day I came home worn out and exhausted!

Mrs. Gurwitz stopped me on my way out of the seminary building at the end of the semester and asked me about my plans for the coming year. I innocently explained my decision and was not prepared for her reaction. She looked back at me in horror. That is when she told me that my talent is in the classroom and that is where I belong. I was blown away by Mrs. Gurwitz's confidence in me. She made me realize that while teaching certainly requires effort, it is a labor of love. Although I came home tired, I felt so happy and proud of all that the children had learned. I was also eager to share with my family the humorous and inspiring things that happened in my classroom. BH, I started teaching the following year and have not looked back. It was my good fortune that I was able to use the model lessons I had spent so many hours preparing in seminary since I now taught the same grade and curriculum.

Learning by Example

The Teacher Training Program consists of multiple components. The first leg of the journey is the opportunity to observe master teachers in Bais Rivkah as well as in other schools. Mrs. Cipi Junik, one of the supervisors who would oversee the group of student-teachers, took us on many "field trips" to schools noted for their high-quality *chinuch*. She hand-picked top-quality teachers for us to observe. Their lessons were saturated with excellent methodology, *midos tovos*, and *yiras shamayim*. I remember writing copious notes as I watched the teachers explain difficult concepts, answer challenging questions, and instill in their students a love for Torah, all the while modeling effective classroom management. I was so thirsty for knowledge! The more I looked around, the more I was in awe.

Mrs. Junik insightfully guided us to internalize these powerful lessons and taught us how to empower our own students with independent self-discovery skills. A favorite adage of hers is, "Don't be a sage on the stage, rather a guide on the side." She trained us to apply our new skill set to prepare quality lessons. Many of my best lessons were prepared under Mrs. Junik's expert tutelage in my teacher training year.

Mrs. Junik stresses the importance of teacher training, "Teacher training is not merely about planning lessons. It is primarily about integrity, responsibility, and charac-

She looked back at me in horror. That is when she told me that my talent is in the classroom and that is where I belong.

ter development. As the saying goes, 'You cannot teach what you do not know; you cannot lead where you do not go.' Teaching is the only profession in which we must constantly be learning and working on ourselves to become better people. We wouldn't hire someone without training to do our taxes or repair our washing machine. Children, our most precious commodity, deserve people with skill to teach them. They should not be experimented on. Our children deserve the best, and the goal of our teacher training program is to provide **that best.**"

Morah Rochele Blau, a graduate of the program, presently a *Kitah Bais* teacher in Bais Rivkah, describes her experience as follows, "There are teaching skills that can take someone years to discover on their own. Yet, in the Teacher Training Program, we were trained in so many of these techniques and skills, which I was able to implement in my own classroom as soon as I began teaching. This made my first year successful."

From Theory to Practice

Another component of the program is fieldwork. The seminary students come to elementary school once a week and are each assigned a mentoring teacher. The student works with that teacher preparing model lessons that she presents in the classroom. The mentoring teacher critiques the student on the lesson and gives her detailed feedback on how to improve the following week. In addition to the elementary Teacher Training Program, Bais Rivkah also offers a parallel program for students interested in early childhood care. Here the students can benefit from a curriculum specifically geared to early childhood education.

Mrs. Gittie Sternberg, presently the English curriculum director in Bais Rivkah Primary, is a former supervisor in the Teacher Training Program. She explains, "When I began teaching, I was young and inexperienced. However, I had the drive and the ambition to bring to my classroom the techniques which I had seen used by the teachers that I loved when I was a student. Back then, I couldn't wait to get to school each morning. I looked up to my teachers and wanted to be like them when I grew up. When I was approached

*“Don’t be a sage on the stage,
rather a guide on the side.”*

to supervise the Teacher Training Program it was the perfect fit for me. It meant taking a new teacher who was filled with passion and determination and giving her the opportunity to experience a year teaching in the classroom. Ambition coupled with practical tools, set the student-teacher up for success the next year when she took on her own class.”

The Teacher Training Program guides the seminary students in how to prepare quality lessons. The lessons I prepared as a student-teacher are gold. Until today, I have those papers saved with handwritten comments from my mentors. They are now part of the curriculum for all the second grade teachers.

As a mentoring teacher at present, I cherish my students’ lessons as well! I am fortunate to have seminary students come to my class who are eager to be successful. They try to apply the instruction I give them and then dedicate themselves to creating engaging and creative lessons. As I tell my second graders, “Today we have a treat! The Morahs will be teaching us!” The girls light up with excitement because they know the lessons will be fun and unique with the added bonus of new innovations and energy. Morah Blau says of the program, “I was given the opportunity to develop my teaching skills in a hands-on way. I received personal, valuable, detailed feedback and guidance from the patient and dedicated mentoring teachers.”

I want to emphasize that being a student in the Teacher Training Program is a tremendous undertaking. The preparation for each lesson is time-consuming and requires much effort. However, the results are priceless. Mrs. Chana Esther Slavin, an assistant principal in Bais Rivkah, explains, “It is a fantastic year of learning. The teachers who had been through the Teacher Training Program and applied themselves become excellent teachers. The mentoring teachers are extremely dedicated and caring and really go out of their way to work with the seminary students so they will succeed. They know it is worth the investment since the students will be teachers the next year. We can easily see the results, even in their first year of teaching.”

The Chain of Continuity

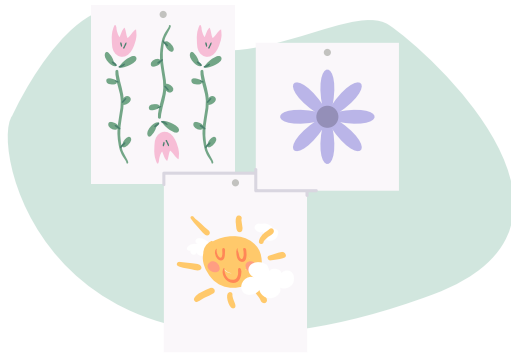
The mentors in the program are highly motivated to work with their seminary students because they feel it

is an investment. Morah Shira Avtzon, formerly a first grade teacher in Bais Rivkah and presently supervisor of the first grade Teacher Training Program tells me, “Esty, you were a student-teacher in my class. You then became my daughter’s teacher and a few years later two of my granddaughters’ teachers. The mentors want to teach their students because they become effective teachers and this makes a difference in our families and community. By investing in the student teachers, we see a direct impact as it raises the bar of the education in our *schunah*.”

Mrs. Sternberg echoes the same sentiments. “It really comes full circle. I began as a young teacher. Then, my daughters started going to school. Girls who were my third grade students or mentees in my seminary class are now my daughters’ teachers. For example, Morah Miri Stolik is teaching my fourth grade daughter. She had been my third grader and she was also my student in the Teacher Training program. When my daughter comes home and repeats to me what Morah Stolik taught her, she is so excited about each topic. My daughter Sara is gaining points now, but not for a prize. She proudly told me that the biggest prize is to go on *mitvzoim* with Morah Stolik!”

Mrs. Sternberg goes on to explain, “This program is literally an investment that keeps earning dividends exponentially. We Bais Rivkah teachers are *shluchos*.





We invest our lives into our students, whether they are in grade school or seminary. It is our *shlichus* to prepare the girls in the best way possible so that they can impact the next generation of the *Rebbe's kinder* in their homes and classrooms.”

Mrs. Laufer, another supervisor in the program, shares, “The Teacher Training Program provides many hands-on learning opportunities in the classroom. Students are able to observe and be supervised by experienced teachers, who host the student-teachers, as well as by the directors, who will hire them after completing the program.”

Since my year in seminary, the Teacher Training Program has undergone many upgrades. Many new courses are being offered by masters in their profession in order to meet the needs of the rapidly changing tide of education.

Creating a Culture

Children are highly impressionable and soak in all their teachers have to offer. Mrs. Chanie Silman, supervisor of the 3rd-5th grade Teacher Training Program explains, “We are teaching *neshamos*. As teachers in the *Rebbe's moised*, it is not sufficient to only teach the curriculum with a focus on *yiras shamayim* and *midos tovos*. Our lessons need to be infused with horaos from Chassidus and they should inspire the students to strengthen their *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe. We need to do everything in our power to ensure that we are able to guide them in the ways of *Yiddishkeit* and *Chassidishkeit*. In the Teacher Training Program, we don't only train the student teachers in how to teach the academic curriculum. Rather, we emphasize the importance of *Chassidische chinuch*. This sheds a whole new light on every subject we teach as the motivation and approach are guided by *Chassidus*. The Rebbe has spoken emphatically as to the long-lasting impact *chinuch* has on a child. The children are delicate seeds that must be carefully nurtured, lest they develop a minuscule scratch that would affect their future. The *chayus* for *Yiddishkeit* and *Chassidishkeit* that our students have will carry on for generations and it is up to us to set that in motion.”

I recall my student-teaching experience in Morah Dini Avichzer's second grade class. She told me that when she first started teaching in Bais Rivkah, Mrs. Feldman A”H invited Morah Kahn to mentor the teachers. Morah Kahn came before they started teaching each perek in Chumash and guided them as to which messages they should give over in each of the pesukim. A recurring theme that she always repeated was, “You have to bring the Rebbe and the

Mrs. Junik concludes, “In teaching, there are no ‘days off’.”

Aibershter into the classroom!” Beyond teaching the storyline or the meaning of the words, was the underlying message that when teaching Torah you need to focus on the Rebbe and Hashem.

In addition to gaining experience in actual teaching, the participants of the Teacher Training Program are witnesses to a special phenomenon. Mrs. Slavin explains, “The seminary girls see what is so unique about Bais Rivkah. Some of them have not been Bais Rivkah students and now they can experience first-hand the warm relationship the teachers have with their students. They see that all the staff and students in Bais Rivkah form a family that is connected to each other way beyond the curriculum.”

Looking Towards the Future

The Rebbe has spoken many times about the importance of proper *chinuch*, and the great *brachos* that *mechanchim* and *mechanchos* receive. All students in the Teacher Training Program participate in classes on *Chassidische Chinuch*, studying the words of the *Rebbeim* in an inspirational, practical way. Surely, mentoring teachers and students in the Teacher Training Program are *bentched* for their efforts in improving the quality of *chinuch*.

Mrs. Junik concludes, “In teaching, there are no ‘days off.’ Even participating in the building of the Bais Hamikdash does not exempt one from teaching Tinokos Shel Bais Rabban. On the other hand, as we march to the Bais Hamikdash Hashlishi, our children will be on the front lines, and their ever-present teachers will be the ones leading them towards the Geulah Shleima. What greater reward can there be?” ■

CHINUCH -

A SHLICHUS FOR TODAY

Chana (Poltorak) Rose, Monsey, New York
Graduating class of 5765 (2005)



s teaching an art, a science, or a calling?

The simple answer is all three.

We have all met the “born” teacher, who has been playing school since age five. If you teach, you know the experience of a lesson that seems to teach itself, as you orchestrate and respond and lose yourself in the thrilling creative endeavor of teaching. And certainly, there are matters of discretion and sensitivity, matters of the heart, that no training course can ever teach you.

However, my experience has been that the “born” teacher usually has a particular aspect of teaching that comes naturally, and motivates her to pursue teaching, but this is not the whole picture. For example, a teacher might have found that they were a “natural” at riveting children’s attention in camp or Mesibos Shabbos programs with masterful storytelling and dramatics. However, a teacher who relies on her ability to hold a class’s attention by simply walking into the classroom and talking - however masterful the delivery - is compromising student learning by making teaching one-directional. The students may be riveted, but do they understand? They may be impressed and inspired by the material you presented, but have they made it their own?

Another kind of “born” teacher has a way with children. She is overflowing with love and understanding for the precious neshamos in her care. She can make a student’s eyes shine and her heart sparkle with the right word at the right time, and by reaching out to a child who needs it. However, can this teacher with a heart of gold command enough respect and discipline in the classroom to truly achieve her objectives? Can she organize a lesson plan to effectively convey her deeply held values, or is her rapport mostly felt at recess or in extracurriculars?

Teaching is certainly a spark. There must be passion, and there must be love - whether for the children, the Torah being taught, or the creative art of teaching (and hopefully for all three!). This is what motivates a teacher on the long upward climb to achieving mastery in the classroom. But clearly, it is just the first step.

Teaching is also a science. It is comprised of many micro-skills that can, and should, be learned. If a teacher’s aim walking into the classroom each day is to inspire students with pride in their Yiddishkeit and the knowledge they need to support that, there are a myriad of tiny moments that can be orchestrated in order to support that goal:

How does the teacher enter the classroom? Where should the students sit? Which lesson objective to aim for each day? What to do for the students who are more able and need more stimulation? How to support the child who is falling behind? What kinds of routines preclude disruptions, and if disruptions occur, how to respond? These are all questions that a responsible teacher, however passionate, needs to ask. And these are all questions that have answers.

The answers might not be one size fits all. A routine that works for one classroom might not work for another, and a disciplinary approach that fits one teacher might not fit another one. However, there are so many tools that teachers need to have and know about in order to be able to choose the best course of action for their classrooms, each day. There is a practical side to teaching that can go very far in enabling an idealistic teacher to meet her goals.

The Rebbe spoke and wrote much about teacher training, and even organized a weekly teacher training program for young men in Kollel. Similarly, Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim, under the auspices of the Rashag, organized a teacher training course taught by a frum professor, Dr. William Brickman, and the syllabus included the fundamentals of pedagogy, child psychology, lesson planning, and so forth. The Frierdiker Rebbe as well had begun organizing such programs and encouraging educators to attend.

In numerous letters, the Rebbe expressed in quite strong terms the need for teacher training to be organized in appropriate settings for Chabad teachers. It does not need to take years of training and certainly does not require going to college, the Rebbe emphasized - just a few months of accelerated learning to get the tools of the trade. Even experienced teachers should participate in periodic training, the Rebbe maintained, because there



is always something new to learn. The Rebbe also very much encouraged organizing and participating in teacher training opportunities during summer vacation.

Teacher training does not *chas v'shalom* replace the passion, Yiras Shamayim, and proper perspective a *chassidische melamed* needs to have! These prerequisites are the “make it or break it” of teaching. However, once these things are in place, the Rebbe asked and expected that a *chassidische melamed* learns tools in an appropriate setting to make their teaching the best that it can be, to reach the hearts and minds of each of their students. (For more clarity as to the Rebbe’s approach on Chinuch, see the publication “Revisiting Education,” which is available on mymef.org.)

Boruch Hashem, today we have such opportunities for teacher development to choose from. For example, I work at the Menachem Education Foundation, where professional development for teachers and school leaders takes place during the summer and throughout the year, both in-person and online. At MEF, when teaching a concept in pedagogy, we bring the sources in Torah and Chassidus to show what we are aiming for and why this is important. Only then do we work with the specific tools and techniques that have been tried and proven to bring



this ideal home.

For example, every educator knows and values the principle of “*chanoch lena’ar al pi darko*”, but grapples with how to run a cohesive classroom for students on multiple levels of learning and ability. Practical tools, such as tiered learning, setting up independent group work, and so forth, have been developed in order to enable us to realize this ideal and reach every student.



In order to fan the passion for teaching, and give it arms and legs with the training and tools that it needs, a person needs to view Chinuch as a calling, and more than that, as a Shlichus. Truly, it is the most challenging job in the world - and the most rewarding, the most important, and the most vital to our community.

There are many individuals who relate that they were told by the Rebbe to pursue Chinuch as a Shlichus. What is the difference between teaching as a Shlichus, and teaching as a job? The Rebbe drew that distinction when R' Shloma Zarchi asked the Rebbe if by accepting his position as Mashpia in 770 he could be considered a Shliach. The Rebbe answered, "If it is done with *mesira unesina*" - with utmost devotion and dedication, then yes.

The Rebbe identified Chinuch as an urgent task for our generation, and in one letter wrote that if someone identifies within himself that he is *shayach* to be a teacher and has that ability, it is his obligation to pursue Chinuch. And even to those who don't, the Rebbe instructed that every Chossid today must find an area of his life where he can be *mechanech* and influence others to the extent that he is able.

Teachers are the "*noter karmo*" - the tenders of Hashem's garden, and also of the Rebbe's garden. Teachers are the ones who guard and give over all of our ideals, all of the Torah and Chassidus, the identity and the Emuna, the character building and the self-efficacy, that we want for our children, all of our children. They literally shape the future.

The art, the science, and above all the Shlichus - this what our teachers dedicate themselves to, this is what they embrace with more devotion and self-sacrifice than any other job in the world might call for. Our community needs to view our teachers through this lens and celebrate and support them as holding the most impactful position in our community. As for the young people who are looking for a way to make their own impact, this is what we need to communicate - the multifaceted, sacred, urgent, and precious task that the Rebbe set out for us in the Shlichus of Chinuch. ■

Mrs. Chanah Rose is the Educational Director of the Menachem Education Foundation. She can be reached at c.rose@mymef.org.



The principal task that rests upon our generation is that of Chinuch.

(Likkutei Sichos, vol. 24, p. 424)

In our times, the call to education is in the category of Pikuach Nefesh.

(Igros Kodesh, vol. 8, p. 222)

"Happy is your lot that Hashgacha Ha'elyona (Divine Providence) has placed you in the most fortunate position of one engaged in Chinuch, which draws near the hearts of Jewish Children to our Father in Heaven. The great reward for this defies description."

(Igros Kodesh, vol. 17, p. 313)

"An educator requires specific preparation in order to be fit to teach and to guide, and in order that his teaching and guidance should bring about the desired effect. Not everyone who wants to call himself a teacher is able to take upon himself such a great responsibility...."

(Sefer Hasichos of the Frieddiker Rebbe, 5703-5705, p. 219)

"The suggestion to hold accelerated teacher training classes during summer vacation is very correct... And it is certainly important to do this with great vigor. It is also worthwhile for certified teachers to also take part at least in part of the training in order to review, as there is no learning that does not yield something new."

(6 Tammuz 5714, Iggeres Hakodesh v. 8 p. 168)

"...Although he is already a teacher, he should nevertheless advance his education independently, by attending one of the higher classes or by creating a special class for them."

(29 Teves 5754, Iggeres Hakodesh v. 8 p. 134)

"It is clear that establishing professional development classes for teachers from our community, is a very worthy endeavor."

(8 Cheshvan 5716, Iggeres Hakodesh v. 12 9. 56)

The Geulah Box

Rivky (Mishulovin) Belinow, Aubervilliers, France
Graduating class of 5752 (1992)



Women first. At the time of Matan Torah, the women were the first to receive the laws in the Torah, as expressed in the possuk, “*Koh somar l’Veis Yaakov v’sageid l’Vnei Yisroel.*” Those women, under the guidance of Miriam Haneviah, prepared tambourines with tremendous bitachon to bring on their way out of Mitzrayim. It was in their merit that Bnei Yisrael was redeemed then. And it is in the merit of this inherited faith, im-

planted in women today, that we will be redeemed from this final Golus. (Sicha Parshas Beshalach 5752)

This is what inspired the creation of “The Geulah Box,” released in honor of the Rebbe’s 119th birthday. The goal is to empower women, bolster their confidence in Hashem, and, most importantly, help them prepare for Moshiach’s imminent arrival.

This box brings together various materials that assist each woman to be ready to greet Moshiach: A card with the five Brachos that will be said when the moment arrives so he can be greeted with confidence; a beautiful Haggada, which so clearly portrays Hashem’s love, describes in vivid detail the original redemption of our people; supplies to

create a beautifully decorated tambourine verify that each woman will have a personal instrument with which to welcome Moshiach. The Geulah Box can be incorporated in a women’s circle, Rosh Chodesh class, Teen/Bat Mitzvah Clubs, or birthday farbrengens to empower women and girls to take an active role in bringing Moshiach. We can and will make it happen, may it be speedily in our days.

The Geulah Box is lovingly dedicated in memory of Guta bas Peretz, who lived a life of mesiras nefesh and giving to others and raised generations of proud Chassidim and shluchim of the Rebbe who live around the world.



DIY Geulah Box

What you will receive:

- Tambourine
- Various paints
- 1 brush
- Ribbon, rhinestones, puff paint, 3D flower and birds stickers
- Moshiach card with the five brachos
- Haggada with a letter explaining why tambourines are included (based on the Rebbe’s Sicha)
- JLI Rosh Chodesh Society Booklet (Code to Joy, The World’s Happiest Kept Secret, Journey from Oy to Yay, Overcoming Stress Through Positivity)
- Box

The Geulah Box



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RUTHY THE ARTIST

From Sharpie Pen to Apple Pencil

Ruthy Procaccia, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5774 (2014)

Interview conducted by
Esther Procaccia, Crown Heights
Graduating class of 5778 (2018)



Q: Tell us what you do.

A: I am an artist and illustrator, illustrating a range of subjects, including custom portraits, typically commissioned by couples or young families with small children. I also illustrate very unique custom work for events, such as weddings, bar mitzvahs, and bas mitzvahs, in addition to lots of clothes and accessories.

Q: Describe your art style in three words.

A: Modern, minimal, and chic.

Q: How did you get started?

A: I was always the girl drawing her way through class, constantly sketching and illustrating, period after period. In eleventh grade, using three fine-tipped Sharpie pens, I developed my own unique style of drawing skylines and faces with large hats and earrings, which was the foundation for my current style.

More recently, (about two years ago,) I purchased an iPad — a goal I'd had for YEARS — and started pursuing digital art. After some trial and error, I worked out my own unique fashion illustration look. I began to share my art on Instagram and started taking commissions, until finally, a few months ago, I launched my website, ruthyprocaccia.com, to start selling prints of my art and taking commissions in a more organized fashion.

Q: What are your favorite and least favorite parts of your job?

A: My favorite part of my job is bringing a client's dream to life. There's nothing more satisfying than when I can perfectly capture a person's likeness, a well-crafted garment, or a beautiful scene. As for my least favorite part — well, I'm really struggling to find an aspect of what I do that I do not enjoy!

Q: What tips do you have for aspiring artists?

A: My first, second, and third tips are practice, practice, and practice. The only way to really excel at anything is to do it over and over again. There are entire paintings that I've restarted multiple times until I was satisfied with how they looked. Especially if you've started with traditional art media and you're moving to the realm of digital art — there's a substantial learning curve. You have to push through it and be persistent.

Q: What advice would you give to someone trying to build a business out of their hobby?

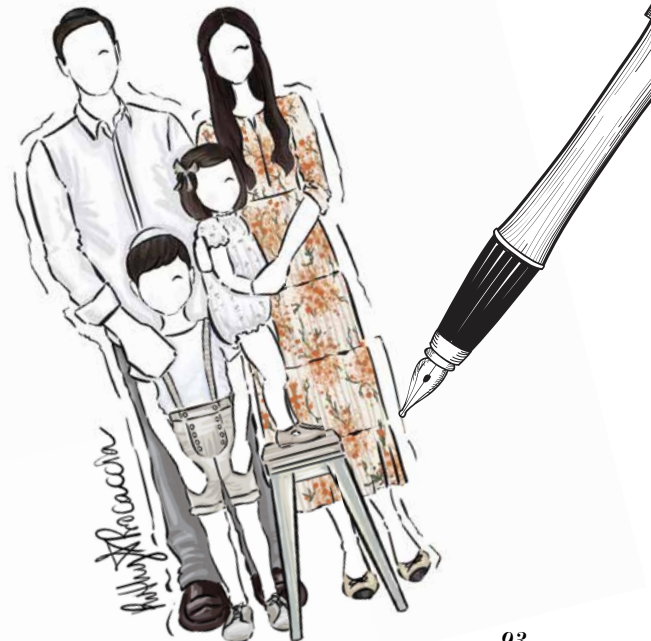
A: The first and most important step is to showcase what you do. Share it with family, with friends, on social media — tell people about it.

Q: You mentioned digital art earlier. Can you tell us more about that?

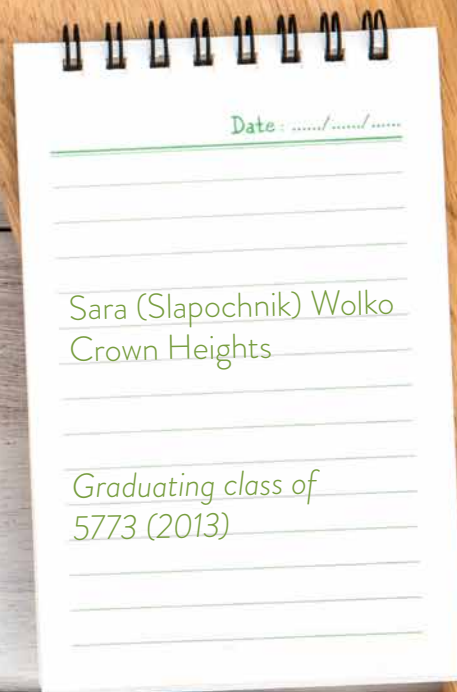
A: Today, I work almost exclusively digitally. All the art you see on my website has been illustrated digitally. I'm a big fan of digital art. The convenience is unmatched — in everything from mixing colors, reusing those colors later, and creating color palettes. Digital tools are also very mobile, there is no clean up, and you can always pick up exactly where you left off. There are lots of tablets, art programs, and styluses on the market. The program I use is Procreate, which I really love, and I use it in conjunction with the Apple Pencil, which functions very much like an actual pencil.

Q: One final question — where can we contact you?

A: You can contact me via my website, or by emailing me at hello@ruthyprocaccia.com. You can also contact me on my Instagram page, @ruthyprocaccia, where you can also catch some behind the scenes of my business. ■



A Taste of Bais Rivkah



HELLO THERE FELLOW ALUMNAE!

Sara Wolko here, AKA @thecravehaven.

It's no secret what has always been my passion. Since I was a child, I enjoyed hosting guests and cooking up a storm. The kitchen is my personal safe haven where I create exquisite, edible delights and explore what food truly has to offer.

Food is so much more than just sustenance. It's a love language and a way to connect with our heritage and traditions!

The dishes we consume spark nostalgic memories. We can all relate to various aromas and flavors that leave an imprint on our minds and have the powerful ability to transport us to a particular person, place, or experience much more intensely than a visual or auditory reminder!

Here are a few recipes from my kitchen to yours that you can whip up for your loved ones and guests.

♥ @the_cravehaven



PESTO SALMON

This herby, earthy, citrusy salmon is bound to get those taste buds dancing! Perfect for Shabbos Day Seudah or to brighten up any Yom Tov table.

PESTO INGREDIENTS:

- 1 head washed cilantro
- 3/4 cups EVOO (Extra Virgin Olive Oil)
- 5 cloves garlic
- 1/2 cup of shelled pistachios
- Zest of 1 lemon plus juice
- Salt+ pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp. dijon mustard
- 3 pound side of salmon (boneless, skin on or off, your preference)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine all ingredients in a blender and voila! Lightly salt and pepper your salmon, then slather on pesto and decorate with thinly sliced lemon, capers, sliced red onions, and garlic. For a slab of salmon: bake uncovered at 375° for 30-35 min.

For cut single portion fillets: bake uncovered at 375° for 15-20 min.

Note: Cilantro tends to be infested with numerous types of insects. Make sure to check it thoroughly before using: www.ok.org/consumers/your-kosher-kitchen has a helpful food checking guide.

**HONEY HARISSA GLAZED CHICKEN**

This honey harissa glazed chicken on the bone is a winner every time! Sticky, spicy, and all-around scrumptious. Your regular chicken dinner just got a major upgrade!

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 Bone in, skin on chicken mix of thighs and legs
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 8 garlic cloves
- 2 medium sliced yellow onions
- 1 small bag Yukon baby potatoes, sliced
- 2 Tbsp. harissa paste
- 2.5 Tbsp. honey
- 1 tsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- Salt + pepper to taste
- Fresh thyme and rosemary

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400° and line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Lay your sliced onions, Yukon baby potatoes, and halved garlic

cloves. Drizzle EVOO (Extra Virgin Olive Oil) and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

2. In a small bowl whisk together oil, honey, harissa, wine vinegar, and lemon juice.
3. Lay chicken thighs onto your prepared baking dish, season with salt and pepper, then baste each chicken thigh (top and bottom) with the harissa mixture and place back on the sheet pan, skin side up. Garnish with fresh thyme and rosemary. Place in oven, bake for about 30 minutes then baste the chicken thighs with remaining harissa mixture. Continue baking for another 30 minutes.
4. Keep an eye on the chicken near the end of cooking time to make sure the skin doesn't burn.

Note: Fresh thyme tends to be infested with numerous types of insects. Make sure to check it thoroughly before using.

**CARROT CAKE** (*Milchig*)

Super moist, cinnamon carrot cake with a divine cream cheese frosting and candied walnuts is bound to brighten up your day!

FOR THE CARROT CAKE:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour (spooned & leveled)
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 and 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup (180ml) canola or vegetable oil
- 4 large eggs room temperature
- 2 cups light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup (125 grams) unsweetened applesauce
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3 cups (300 grams) grated carrots, lightly packed

FOR THE CREAM CHEESE FROSTING:

- 1 1/2 package brick style cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3/4 cup of milk

FOR WALNUTS:

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cups raw walnut halves
- 1/8 teaspoon coarse salt

DIRECTIONS:

To make the carrot cake:

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Spray two nine-inch round cake pans well with non-stick cooking spray (you can also line the bottom of each pan with parchment paper for easier removal) and set aside.
2. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and salt until well combined. Set aside.
3. In a separate large mixing bowl, whisk together the oil, eggs, brown sugar, applesauce, and vanilla extract until fully combined. Add the grated carrots into the wet ingredients and mix until well combined.



4. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix with a whisk or rubber spatula until just combined, making sure not to over mix the batter.
5. Pour the cake batter evenly between both prepared cake pans. Bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes or until the tops of the cakes are set and a toothpick inserted into the center of each one comes out clean. Remove from the oven, transfer to a wire rack, and allow to cool in the pans for about 20-25 minutes. Once the cakes have cooled, remove from the pans and return the cakes to the wire rack to finish cooling.

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or in a large mixing bowl using a hand-held mixer, beat the cream cheese until smooth. Add the butter and mix for about 30 seconds-1 minute until well combined and smooth. Add in the powdered sugar, vanilla extract & milk and continue mixing until fully combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed.


WALNUTS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Use middle rack in oven. Lay walnuts out on a baking sheet in a single layer. Bake for 5 minutes, until slightly darker in color and fragrant.
2. If not quite toasted enough, toast for 1 or 2 more minutes. Be careful not to burn. Remove from the oven and let cool in a pan on a rack. ■






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- BAIS RIVKAH - Talent



Inspired by Rabbi Simon Jacobson's MyLife Chassidus Applied contests, a Bais Rivkah version, aptly named "Chassidus is Ki," was launched in memory of a dear member of our community, Yocheved Gourarie, יוכבד טובה ע"ה בת יבדלח"ט ר' אברהם. Students were encouraged to submit ideas in an essay or any

creative format, presenting an idea in Chassidus and how that idea is "close" — how it is applicable to our daily lives.

When the submissions began pouring in, the extracurricular department knew this was going to be way bigger than they had planned.

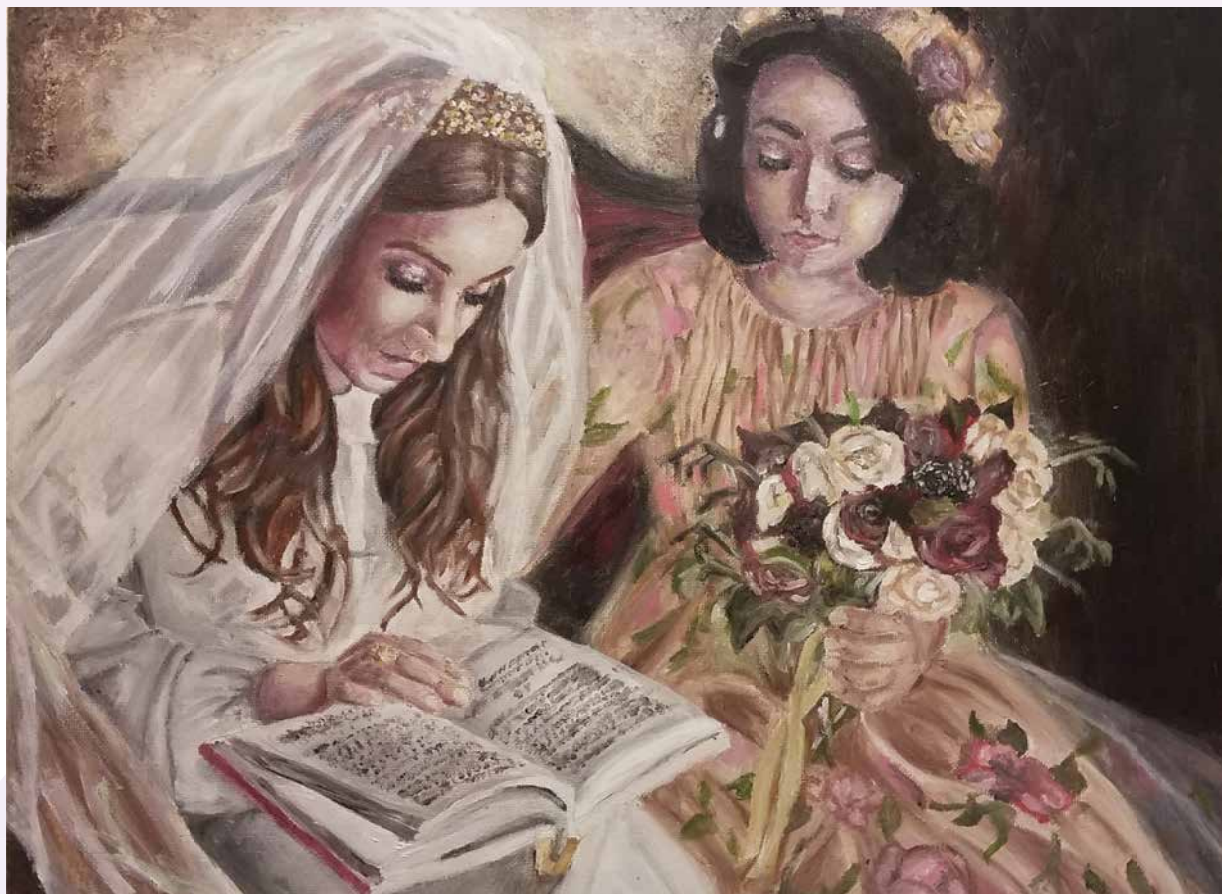
UNVEILED

Chana Leah Lesches, 12th Grade

Like a kallah, we are veiled, traveling a far, winding path, on our way to the chuppah. Each step, each mitzvah, brings us closer.

This darkness, this Galus, may seem long, but we are only moments away from the Geulah.

— *Ma'amar Bosi Legani, Sichos Vayishlach '52, Sichah p. Miketz 5752*



OUR GUIDING FORCE

Batya Katz, *11th Grade*

The Rebbe is our life source and incessantly provides motivation for us as we embark on the journey of life with the mission of making this world a dwelling place for Hashem. Through the trials

and triumphs of life, the Rebbe is always with us and prevalent throughout our lives on a daily basis. Beyond his remarkable qualities, the Rebbe empowers us by revealing who we truly are.



EMBRACE MOMENTS



Mrs. Piekarski (the 12th grade principal) warmed my heart when I came back from Sukkos break – my grandfather, Dr. Yitzchak Block, had passed away on Erev Sukkos and as I walked into the shul she came over to me and gave some words of comfort. That itself was so nice but she then took me out of the shul (!!) and shared a beautiful story of my grandfather with the Rebbe: It was in the earlier years when there wasn't a farbrengen every week and by a farbrengen the Rebbe led the sheva brachos for a couple who had gotten married that week. My grandparents had gotten married the week before and their sheva brachos were all done so the Rebbe told this chosson, R' Gurkow, to share some of his wine with my zaidy. Many years later this chosson and kallah became mechutanim with my grandparents (their son, Lazer, married my aunt, Basie)! I had never heard this story

before and it was so nice to get that type of attention from a principal.

Mina Zalmanov

In the spirit of the theme of kindness, I would like to share (just) some of the kindness I witness in my position as principal:

- The parents who generously help sponsor different programs and projects we arrange for our students to celebrate Yimei Dipagrah in a special manner and for events and appreciation organized for teachers.
- The parents who take the time to email words of gratitude for various school related matters and acknowledge the positive experiences their daughters have in school.
- The teachers who open their homes for Farbrengens and Shabbos Mevochim Tehillim, working over time for one more way to inspire and connect with their students.
- The teachers who notice a student lacking proper winter outerwear or in need of new footwear and care enough to make sure the students

receive a new coat or pair of shoes in a dignified and discreet manner.

- The student who won the book in our Hey Teves raffle and offered to have the raffle drawn again to give another grade-mate an opportunity to win.
- The student who brought in a check of her maaser money from her Bas Mitzvah gifts to help finance a school project.

Kindness is one of the pillars of the world at large and certainly one of the pillars of Bais Rivkah. I am proud and humbled to interact with the students, teachers, and parent body of Bais Rivkah.

May all the kindness be reciprocated by Hashem's kindness to bring us the Geulah Hashleima Miyad Mamesh.

Thank you for a wonderful magazine and for keeping us connected through the EMBRACE magazine. We will forever be warmed by the EMBRACE of Bais Rivkah.

Respectfully yours,

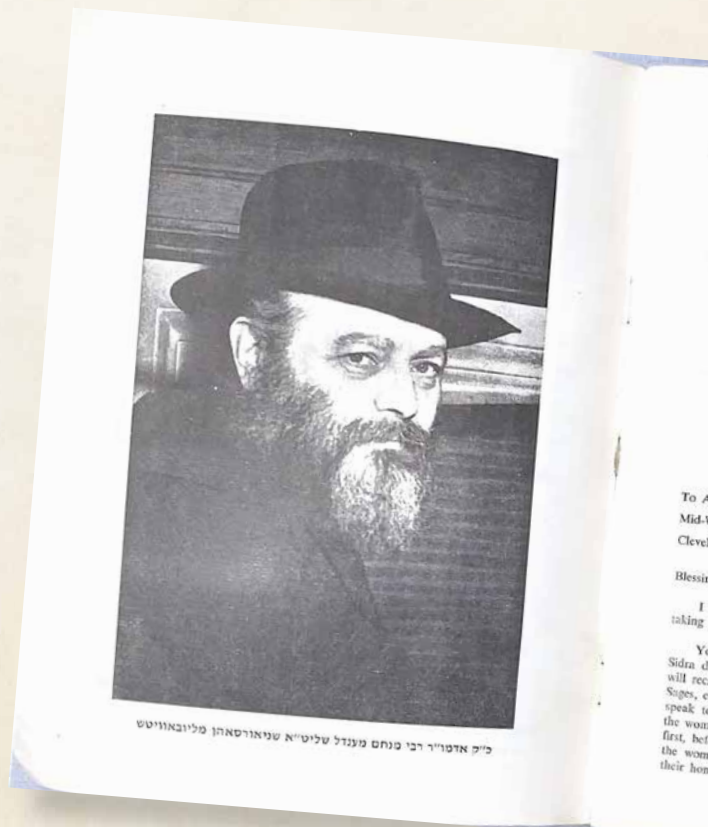
*Mrs. Gitty
(Minkowicz)
Rosenfeld*



Keepsakes

*Bais Rivkah Publication
from 1971, including
submissions from Bais Rivkah
students worldwide.*

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



EDITORIAL

תש"ל marked the first issue of the *הד בת רבקה*, which was dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Rebbe Shlita's leadership of *Ada Yitroel*. This year we produce the 2nd issue with the hope that it will realize our dream—a dream of unifying all the girls' schools under the general administration of the Rebbe Shlita through the medium of a magazine which will be read in classroom and homes throughout the world.*

We have asked for, and subsequently received, essays from many of our sister institutions, some of which you will read in this magazine, and others which will appear in the future issue.

We have capitalized on the Rebbe's recent emphasis of the *p'sukim in T'hilim*:

כי אלקים יושע ציון ובנה קרי יהודה וישבו שם וירשנה.
והיע עבדיו ויחללו והרחיבו שמו וישנו בה (פרק טז).

with several articles delving into various aspects of these verses.

You will also find a few pages devoted to original interpretations of what current events may mean to an observant Jewish girl.

We hope that the ideas contained in this magazine, whose name *Hed*, means "echo," will indeed reverberate throughout our world—the world of Torah permeated with Chasidus, and that *s'tores tovot* of success in all of our sister schools should echo back to New York, where the Rebbe may have *Yiddishe nachas* from all of us.

* There are presently Lubavitcher girls' schools in Australia, Canada, Casablanca, Israel, France, New Haven, Pittsburgh, Boston and New York.

הקדשה



הרבנית נחמה דינה עיה

*Deep inner beauty emanating
from a great soul
Finds its repose upon a
countenance of unequalled grace.
The Rebbeztin Nechama Dina,
regal and sublime
In mind and heart
capacitates, encompasses, all.*

It is with profound love and reverence that we remember the Rebbeztin, with great pain that we contemplate our loss, with courage that we ease the pain, knowing that she lives on in the perpetuation of those good deeds that are our aim.

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11213
Hyacinth 39250

מנחם מנדל שניאורסאהן
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ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Hillo of Yud Shevat,
Parshas Yisro, 5731
Brooklyn, N. Y.

All Participants in the Ninth Annual
Winter Conference of Neshei uBoos Chabad
land, Ohio

ing and Greeting:

was pleased to be informed of your forthcoming Mid-Winter Convention,
place during the weekend of Parshas Yisro, the Sidra of Mattan Torah.

ou surely know of the teaching of the Alter Rebbe to seek in the weekly
irectives and inspiration for the events of that week. Accordingly, you
all the special role of Jewish women at the time of Mattan Torah. Our
ommenting on the verse "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and
to the children of Israel" declare that the "House of Jacob" refers to
en. Consequently, the Torah indicates that the "House of Jacob" refers to
ore the men, when the Torah indicates that the women were approached
en's primary role in the preservation of the Torah and Mitzvoth in
es, as well as for the Jewish people as a whole.

לפרצות

Dear girls,

We were very happy to receive your copy of the *Hed Beth Rivkah* last summer. We were even more excited when asked to contribute to its content of this year and thus help the relationship between our sister schools and ourselves to flourish. We find ourselves in one part of the world, you exist in another, still others find themselves elsewhere. Thus we would like to paint for you all a little picture of our school with all its underlying motifs of study, "Tznius," character molding and activities.

For many years there has been a need in the Anglo-Jewish community for the type of school for which Lubavitch is now famous—its aim being to produce staunch, Jewish daughters, dedicated to fulfill their mission in life with love and devotion. Our Beth Rivkah, like the many others dispersed throughout the continents, personifies the materialization of this goal and imbues us with true Torah knowledge, true Chabad spirit, and at the same time a thorough secular education so that we be better prepared to approach and deal with persons from all walks of life.

The extra-curricular activities of the school are primarily aimed at bringing joy to less fortunate members of our community. For example, we visit hospitals, entertain for various charitable purposes, send attractive parcels to the sick for *Yom Tov*. At the same time we preserve the spirit of *Achdus* in the school by arranging clubs and activities which bring the older and younger pupils together. The senior pupils see as part of their responsibility the need to care for and encourage their younger colleagues in a motherly and warm manner. Furthering this paramount aim of *Achdus*, we "though many still one" go for biannual visits to a beautiful country estate now owned by the Lubavitcher Foundation, but which once belonged to the great Jewish philanthropist, Sir Moshe Montefiore.

Our school was founded some ten years ago with a mere handful of pupils. Today, it is a thriving vibrant educational unit and the number of pupils is, thank G-d, growing beyond all expectation. The Anglo-Jewish community now looks with pride upon its Jewish daughters educated within the walls of such a system, who prominently stand out against the permissiveness that engulfs society today.

We hope that we have succeeded in getting you "into it" a little bit. By comparing and contrasting the various factors of our respective schools, we are sure that we will be imbued with spirit and heart that evolve inevitably from mutual understanding. We hope to work together on various projects and thereby further our association.

With best wishes for Hatzlocho Rabbo in your journalistic venture,
ESTER ADLER
BAILA SUFRIN
ESTHER BENEAKER
LOUISE WEINGARTEN
School Captains



A SHLICHUS AND A SHIDDUCH

Mrs. Freide Friedman
Current Teacher in Bais Rivkah
High School

As Told to Chaya (Mochkin) Goldberg
Dunwoody, GA
Graduating class of 5772 (2012)

DUVID SLOMIUC WAS ONLY SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD

when he traveled from Uruguay to study in New York at the Mir Yeshiva. He was a Viznitz Chossid but still held an appreciation for visits to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. When he first came to New York he had a private audience with the Friediker Rebbe and continued to have a close relationship with Chabad when the Rebbe assumed leadership.

During one Yechidus, the Rebbe told the young bocher about a summer shlichus opportunity in Mexico City. The

local community needed young rabbis to assist with the spiritual needs of their members. Raised in Uruguay, Duvid spoke Spanish fluently making him a perfect candidate for the job. While Duvid respected the Rebbe and trusted his guidance, this seemed like a considerable job to accept. He was not ready to move far away from home, even for a short period of time. At this time, travel was uncommon and communication was low-quality which made leaving for Mexico City seem scary to the young man. He was certain that his parents would be opposed to the idea as well and left the Yechidus having decided that he would not accept the offer.

Though Duvid regularly attended farbrengens in 770 and even motivated other boys to participate, he now avoided partaking. He knew that if he went to 770 the Rebbe would inquire if he had accepted the summer position and he was intimidated to report that he had not. One weekend



his friends coerced him to once again join for a trip to the Rebbe's farbrengen. Duvid was tall with a big black beard, making him stand out in the crowd. Still, it was impressive when, from the thousands of people present, the Rebbe noticed him in the bleachers. Sure enough, the Rebbe's mazkir informed Duvid that the Rebbe would like to speak with him.

Duvid made his way through the endless throng of Chassidim towards the Rebbe's podium. As expected, the Rebbe inquired as to whether or not he had accepted the Rabbinic position in Mexico City and asked when he planned to travel out. He reluctantly informed the Rebbe that he had ignored the offer until now but was planning to politely decline the op-



portunity. Duvid told the Rebbe that the trip was too far from home and that his parents would never agree to him going. Smiling, the Rebbe dismissed his hesitations and assured Duvid that this would be a perfect Shlichus opportunity for him.

With the Rebbe's encouragement, the complications were resolved and Duvid got on a plane to Mexico City. He assumed his position in Mexico City only to find that he was too religious and strict for the community's taste. The job fell apart and it seemed that the trip was purposeless and a waste of time. Being twenty-two at the time, he hoped to use the rest of the summer break to look into potential shidduchim. He spent that Shabbos in a different community in Mexico City before his scheduled trip back to NY.

The Rebbe's guidance did not stop at the Chuppah. Throughout their life, the Rebbe maintained a close connection with the couple.

The Betch family, a hospitable family who lived in the area, was accustomed to hosting the local yeshiva bochorim, guests, and visiting families for the Shabbos meals. Duvid joined the Shabbos festivities at the Betch's house. While sitting in their dining room, he noticed a girl who seemed to be part of the family. In a respectful and tznius manner, he inquired whether she could possibly be a suitable shidduch for him. He was informed that she was the host's sister. Duvid was a frum, handsome, and capable young man, and the host happily assisted in arranging the shidduch. After a few short meetings, the couple was engaged.

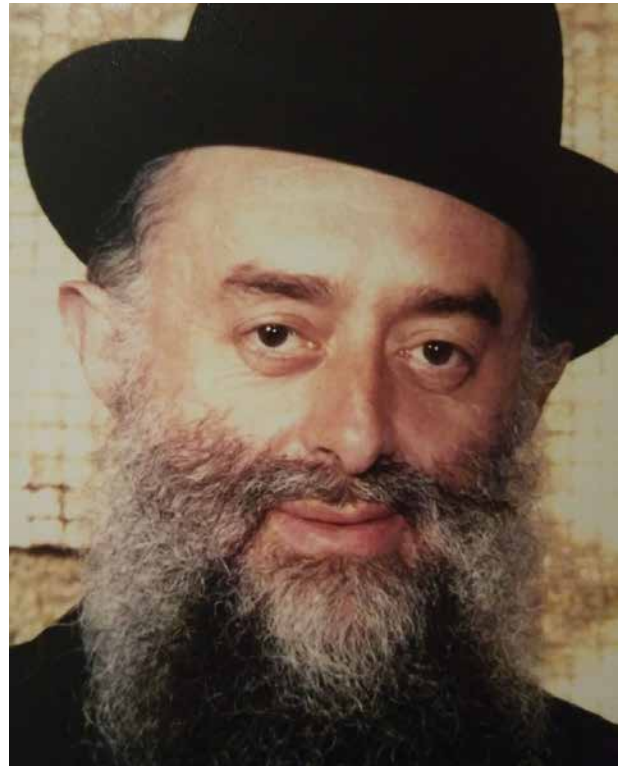
Together Duvid and his new Kallah, Olga, traveled to New York to give thanks and share the wonderful news with the Rebbe. The Rebbe's guidance did not stop at the Chuppah. Throughout their life, the Rebbe maintained a close connection with the couple. Whenever Duvid or Olga (or as the Rebbe called her, Elka) wrote letters to the Rebbe, they received an immediate response. Eventually, the couple moved back to Mexico City where they led the Sephardic Community.

Today, their daughter, Freide Friedman, teaches

With a little encouragement, he embraced the change that was necessary for his growth.

Spanish to the ninth-grade in Bais Rivkah. Her parents' shidduch came through the Rebbe's direction and she feels an immense amount of *hakaras hatov* for all that he has done for her family. She feels that it is a tremendous opportunity to work in the Rebbe's *moised* and teach the Rebbe's spiritual children.

The Rebbe had presented what seemed to be a daunting challenge, one that Duvid hadn't felt qualified or ready to accept. With a little encouragement, he embraced the change that was necessary for his growth. He received more blessings than he could have ever imagined. Oftentimes we resist traversing uncharted territory or situations that are out of our comfort zone. Remember that our life stories are not random and that wherever we are and whatever we experience is with reason and intention. ■



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