

The Chassidishe Vibe

THE BEIS MOSHIACH MAGAZINE
FOR N'SHEI U'BNOS CHABAD

EXPANDED
PESACH
EDITION

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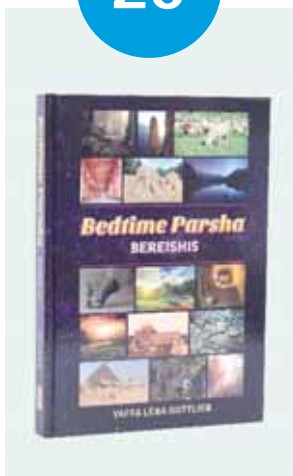
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**BEIS
MOSHIACH**

Can I Do Laundry on Chol HaMoed?

**& Other Things to Know
About Chol HaMoed Halachos**

By Ariella Dashiff-Elharar

Reviewed by Rabbi Yehuda Leib Nachmanson



AFTER a short survey, I discovered that not just in my family do all household members paradoxically claim that Pesach food is the most delicious compared to food during the rest of the year. It doesn't contain many spices, but it does have one spice, called 'mesirus nefesh.' (I tried to cook the same way during the rest of the year, just a few days after Pesach, but I couldn't achieve that special taste...)

Maybe I'm going to burst someone's bubble regarding Chol HaMoed. Generally, people think that Chol HaMoed is mostly "chol" with just a little bit of "moed," for example, increased eating and extra hours of rest. The truth is that the definition is the opposite; the holiness of the moed influences it to such an extent that for almost every melacha, we need to question - "Is it permitted to do it during Chol HaMoed?" And like Pesach food, the days of Chol HaMoed can be pleasant, enjoyable, and very happy thanks to preserving their kedusha.

Chol HaMoed has an additional virtue, as it is closely connected with the true and complete Geula and the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, may he be revealed soon, because proper observance of the moed hastens the coming of the Geula. It establishes the fact that Jewish souls will know how to give themselves over to their Creator with love, and He will give Himself over to them as only He can and knows - with endless love.

PROHIBITION OF WORK ON CHOL HA'MOED

The purpose of this article is to give a taste of some dinim, to encourage us to consult a rav if a question arises, and to encourage us to study the topic more deeply.

In the most general terms, any work that is for the purpose of the moed is permitted. What does "for the purpose of the moed" mean? The precise definition is found in the *poskim*, but the general meaning is that the result of the work is needed specifically for the moed. For

example: my backup refrigerator broke down. I can manage without it, but I try to play it smart: fix it and put Pesach food in it. This is forbidden during Chol HaMoed. But if the only refrigerator in the house broke down, or if guests are coming and therefore I need two refrigerators, it would be permitted to fix it.

This is also true in medical matters. Any medical procedure that immediately relieves or heals a person will be permitted. Medical procedures that can be postponed, such as dental hygiene and routine checkups, which have no immediate consequence, should not be done. In today's clinics in Israel, getting an appointment with a dental hygienist is almost like catching the President of Guatemala for a casual chat. Maybe it would be permitted because of potential loss? Ask a rav!

All tasks aimed at beautification and aesthetics are permitted, even if they involve considerable effort. A woman's haircut is permitted if it's for the purpose of a mitzva - such as tznius (when she can't properly cover her hair and it peeks out), and it's permitted to cut only the hair that is showing. Nail cutting will also be permitted only for the purpose of a mitzva. But cutting nails to prevent them from being a chatzitza when washing hands for bread is forbidden, and it's enough to clean them thoroughly so that the dirt underneath doesn't constitute a chatzitza.

During Chol HaMoed, under certain conditions, we are careful that any work that is permitted despite the holiness of the moed, such as cleaning the house, should not involve excessive effort; in other words: don't go overboard in doing more work even if it's permitted. For example, you can sweep the floor and wash it, but it would be inappropriate during the moed to move all the furniture and scrub the baseboards too, just because there's time! And it's clearly forbidden to postpone work, even permitted work, until Chol HaMoed because then there's time, even if you enjoy it during the moed.

Work to prevent a loss is also permitted. This means that if there would be a substantial loss in case the work is not done, it would be permitted to do it. Many mistakenly think that any prevention of profit is considered preventing a loss. Let's understand this through an example: Sarah is a talented writer. During Chol HaMoed, it's forbidden for her to write for profit, so it will be forbidden for her to sit and write in order to finish the writing more quickly. But, if one day inspiration strikes her, and she thinks of a new creative continuation for the plot of her current book, she is permitted to write an outline of the plot continuation and things she might forget, for fear of forgetting. But she should fill in the 'meat' of the story after the moed.

Another example: Malky is writing a research paper on "The Contribution of Locusts to Global Ecological Balance" for her doctoral degree. Suddenly, the college moved up the submission deadline for the research paper to the days of Chol HaMoed because a locust plague hit the fields and there was a need for research results. She will be permitted to complete the work because the information became relevant and immediately needed. Another example: A pipe burst in Necha's store. She is allowed to empty out the store so that the water doesn't damage the merchandise.

Under certain conditions, work for public needs and mitzva needs would also be permitted.

CLEANING AND POLISHING

Here are some areas many deal with during Chol HaMoed:

Laundry: Prepare all the clothes that will serve us during the Yom Tov. The clothes that are permitted to be washed, in case none are left clean, are: underwear, socks, baby and children's clothes, and kitchen towels and shmattes can also be washed as needed. If we also have no other clean clothes, we can wash. But if there are clothes suitable for wearing, even if they have been worn once, if they remain fresh and without stains - we should use them, and not wash during Chol HaMoed.

Sometimes clothes or bedding get dirty in such a way that if we don't wash them during the moed, they will be completely ruined. In this case, if it's enough to rinse them, and wash them after the moed - we'll wait until after Yom Tov, but if rinsing is not enough, it's permitted to wash. What happens if we want to clean a stain in a specific place on a garment? If it can be treated with a dry brush, that's best, and if not - then we'll wash only where necessary, as mentioned above.

The permission to wash is only for an amount sufficient for one day, and if a need arises again, it will be permitted to wash again. But there are authorities who believe that it's possible to wash for several days of the moed if future need for clothes is anticipated. Even when washing what is permitted, don't add clothes that aren't



included in the permission in order to fill the machine.

Ironing that isn't professional work is permitted during Chol HaMoed, but the permanent folds in the garment should not be made or reinforced.

Routine cleaning activities, such as: washing dishes, mopping floors, dusting, sweeping, or cleaning windows for those who are accustomed to doing so with high frequency - are permitted, but those who have always been strict not to do these tasks - should not change from their good practice. Regarding shoe polishing, each should ask her rabbi.

WHAT TO DO DURING CHOL HA'MOED?

Don't do work that is forbidden during the moed. So what is permitted?

Turn on music, have a barbecue because "there is no joy except with meat and wine." Rejoice with friends and relatives who come to visit, and have quality time with non-virtual people. Onward, to real life! It's good to spend money on tasty food and sweets, and to dress in Shabbos clothes. And thereby fulfill "honoring the moadim." And wonder of wonders - eat, drink, enjoy - and receive reward for the world to come. And on Shabbos - with an addition.

How good it is to be Jewish! And when a Jew is in a good position to do so, it's a mitzva to do good for others; we'll invite to our nicely set table (white tablecloth and possibly lit candles) also the poor and the lonely. And in the way of Jews who are 'bnei melachim,' in everything we do, we will act with grace and sensitivity.

That's for the animal soul. And what about the nefesh Elokis?

Chazal say that the moadim were given only to study Torah in them. So it's true that

A BRIEF WORD FROM ME AS A MOTHER:

Please maintain a good and happy mood. True, a home blessed with children is challenging, especially when everyone is at home. I recommend preparing in advance: soap bubbles (from kosher-for-Pesach dish soap), clean cardboard boxes to make a house, train, or car out of them, costumes for plays, appropriate nosh, inviting relatives or friends we haven't seen in a long time, arranging new books or thinking-challenge games in advance, coloring for the little ones, cassettes, (oops, sorry) audio tracks, and only at the end, after completing the obligations of davening, organizing games and crafts, eating, helping at home, walking with the little ones (if it's hot - you can take them out early in the morning, with an older sibling, to daven and eat outside), and so on and so forth, only then - computer time.

During Chol HaMoed, every "chol" thing is "moed" - holiness, everything that brings joy and is good. The enjoyment from it will be doubled and multiplied thanks to the holiness of the moed.

Enjoy!

they meant men, but with a little time, we can apply this to ourselves (as women of the Geula generation, waiting eagerly for "woman shall encircle man") and the children. Before Yom Tov, we can buy new books to read with the children - stories of tzaddikim, good middos, and medrashim, even comics work, and we'll sit together over a glass of orange juice, or play games of Chassidic trivia, or the like. Rabosai, the most wonderful attraction of all is to sit with Mommy and Tatty on the floor and play, have a pillow fight, and sleep late.

*This column was edited for accuracy by
Rabbi Yehuda Leib Nachmanson.*

IF THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A PLACE:

My Six Stops on the Shlichus Train

"I grew up in a home of shlichus, and I knew that when I grew up - I would be a shlucha. My husband wanted the same and with perseverance and bitachon we made it happen, even though it took us 6 "stops" of shlichus around the globe and a Chabad House Gala Dinner. We finally reached our current shlichus in the Three Islands neighborhood of Hallandale, Florida" ■ As told by **Batya Levy**

Bat Sheva Lifsh



FIRST STATION: ISRAEL

"I grew up in a home of shlichus, and I knew that when I grew up - I would be a shlucha," Batya Levy begins her story:

I married my husband, an American who was on shlichus at an American yeshiva, and together we decided to open a yeshiva for at-risk American boys. It requires a lot of courage and hard work, but we were motivated and ready to work hard.

We rented a large villa and started working. Boruch Hashem, we achieved great success. Bachurim came to learn and made real progress on all fronts. Everything looked promising. We opened for a second year with a sense of purpose, went through some significant steps, and from the outside everything looked very promising. However, since we were young and inexperienced, something had to fall between the cracks... and for us, it was the financial side. We started accumulating debts, and they grew. Not all parents paid tuition - obviously not with bad intentions, but in practice, the expenses were greater than the money we managed to raise.

In the middle of the second year, the situation became impossible. We needed to pay salaries, rent, ongoing bills, and more - and we couldn't handle it. We informed the bachurim they had nowhere to return after the Pesach break and closed the yeshiva with hundreds of thousands of shekels in debt. We managed to organize one last very successful summer camp for them, something completely supernatural, and that was the end. We were then a couple with two children, with enormous debts, and didn't know where to go next. But we weren't worried for a very simple reason - we didn't know how problematic it was to be deep in debt. Meanwhile, we tried to find our next shlichus.

SECOND STATION: LA PAZ, MEXICO

After a short period, my husband's friend suggested rebuilding his yeshiva, but in a place called La Paz, in a remote area of Mexico. He knew a wealthy local donor who would provide the location and budget, and just needed an actual menahel for the yeshiva. It was quite a surprising offer, but as we felt we had nothing to do in Israel, we decided to go for it - or more accurately, to fly. We left with everything imaginable - clothes, books, food, toys for the children - everything! This was a place where missing items couldn't be obtained. Even the flight there was very long, taking twenty-five hours, including two stopovers... Initially, it was supposed to be just a few months, a short shlichus. We thought we'd go, dedicate a year to establishing a yeshiva and return. We distributed



some of our belongings but kept the rest in storage because we'd be back soon...

We arrived in Mexico on Thursday night, in the middle of the night. Our suitcases were lost en route. There were no batteries for phones and no chargers. Due to a mistake, no one was waiting for us at the airport, and we couldn't even find anyone who spoke proper English. We rented a room for one night at a random "motel" near the hotel, and that was our "welcome..."

Not an ideal situation, we could have seen it as a low point, but we were filled with a sense of shlichus and motivation for new success, bezras Hashem, and saw it as an interesting experience.

In Mexico, two things happened to us: The first was that we realized we had left Israel just in time - we were one moment away from a travel ban, and if we had stayed, they would have started proceedings against us because of our enormous debts. So we escaped that, because we were in Mexico, but it meant we couldn't return to Israel now.

The second and perhaps more important thing is that, boruch Hashem, we experienced great success. My husband started teaching the boys in the yeshiva, I took on a role in the Chabad House, we organized a Chanuka event right when we arrived, we felt that Hashem had truly brought us to Geula in every which way.

THIRD STATION: ATLANTA

I was approaching my third birth and since hospitals in Mexico aren't particularly advanced, to put it mildly, we decided I would go to my sister in Atlanta (3-4 hours flight away), stay there for a short period and return to La Paz, to the shlichus we had already started investing in. I went as planned, my husband came after me with our two daughters, and I gave birth. The day after the birth, my husband came to my room in the maternity ward and said he had received an email from the donor

funding all our activities in Mexico. The donor wrote that he had decided to close all activities in the location... It turned out he had come and seen an empty place - just when we had left for a few days - and decided it wasn't for him. In essence, this meant we had nowhere to return to. Right at the beginning of a new undertaking. Right when optimism was at its peak and, no less challenging, right after giving birth.

We had no choice. We couldn't return to Eretz Yisrael, in La Paz we had nothing. We were forced to stay in Atlanta for now, and again we returned to square one. Actually, we were in a slightly lower place this time: a foreign country, almost no money, without work or shlichus.

At first, we stayed with my sister, but at some point she left Atlanta (she had come there for a short period), and we were left alone, caring for three little ones. Did we despair? No! Even in this place, we looked for opportunities to add to Yiddishkeit, Chassidus, and to influence others. My husband quickly found some people and established shiurim in Torah and Chassidus. Meanwhile, we checked where in the world we could go on shlichus (staying in Atlanta long-term wasn't possible.) Our requirements were basic - we looked for a place where there would be shlichus with parnassa. We couldn't find such a place.

FOURTH STATION: HALLANDALE, MIAMI

Meanwhile, on the advice of our mashpiim, we moved to Hallandale, Miami, with positive thinking and hope for improvement of course, although we didn't know what we would do there.

In fact, throughout this period, we put ourselves in the position of "mashpia" with joy and confidence, and stayed away from any feeling of sadness and despair, even though we had nothing to hold onto. We were like a "pipeline" - nothing of our own, but trying to transmit the Rebbe and Torah everywhere.



The Yeshiva for American boys in Eretz Yisrael

We were left without a shekel or dollar. We arrived at a new and unfamiliar place, in a jalopy car that miraculously survived the journey. After twelve hours of driving, we stayed with an acquaintance of my husband's family, knowing we couldn't stay with her for long. Therefore, my husband focused on finding shlichus, holy work, chinuch, teaching - that's what he knew how to do. And I also looked for myself, while moving from house to house, from friend to acquaintance and back again.

After a difficult period, we finally moved to "our own" apartment: two rooms on the fifth floor without an elevator, peeling walls in green paint and a smell of cats at a token price; there wasn't even a kitchen there... We were there with the children and didn't know anything about ourselves, except that we didn't want to ask for help from anyone.

In this whirlwind, when no one knows what's really happening with us - and we're at a loss, a sister who knew the community there suggested we go to the dinner of the local Chabad House. There was a huge contrast between our experiences and the existential

difficulty we were in, versus going to an elegant dinner, but she didn't know our situation... and we decided to go. Why not, actually? We managed to find a babysitter, wore the most respectable clothes we could find in our suitcases and went out to breathe different air, to be different people for a moment. That was the feeling.

We sat on the side, experienced every moment - like in a bubble. There we were, sitting amid this splendor, as they presented projects and successes, impressive lessons and results. There was a nice guy there who talked to us and tried to encourage us. We were very impressed by the amazing shlichus that Rabbi and Rebbetzin Tennenhaus were doing there - we enjoyed every moment, and inside we knew that from there we were returning to the green apartment and the gray reality waiting for us. So gray that we got up in the morning to take care of the children and look for work. I couldn't even cook...

A few more days of nothing passed. My husband looked for shlichus work, writing STa'M or chinuch, and I sent endless emails



Public Menorah lighting in Mexico

with resumes and looked for work as a teacher. We got nowhere.

FIFTH STATION: PANAMA CITY

At this discouraging stage, my husband providentially met a friend, who suggested he enter some business. Truth? We were skeptical. My husband had never dealt with business. All he knew and was familiar with was related to shlichus work and holy work. Nevertheless, on the advice of our mashpiim, he got involved in this business and started working. After about a month, there was a turn for the better, one that was written for us from Above long before the difficulties began.

A hurricane hit Miami with an intensity not seen in thirty years, and the business my husband had started dealing with became in demand at levels never seen before. Within a few days, we moved to the hurricane's impact center (which was in a remote hole inside Panama City) where my husband had non-stop work, day and night, and the profits flowed.

At the same time, there too, like everywhere else, Jewish ground was waiting for us to

cultivate - there were no shluchim there, and there was almost no Judaism. Within a week we opened a "Sunday School," held a Chanuka party (again, a year later, but in a completely different place...), opened classes, hosted Shabbos meals and more. Although we weren't there for a long period, in that short time we ran everything we saw was missing, from a Jewish perspective. It was a very good period in all aspects. But anyway, it wasn't possible for us to stay there. A couple of shluchim from Israel came to continue to build on the foundation we had started, and we returned to Miami.

Another amazing detail in this series of hashgacha pratit; when my husband worked nonstop he earned very large sums of money and we started paying the debts we had in Israel. Just as it was always clear to us that we wouldn't stay in this low state - that the debts were weighing on us and not allowing us to return to Israel, so it was clear to us that we wouldn't go again to fundraise to cover the debts. We were completely broken by fundraising and wanted to pay everything from our own money. After all, we did something good, the yeshiva received many brachos from the Rebbe and

accomplished good things with the boys. It was clear to us that this would be resolved in the best and most proper way. And indeed, in a miraculous way we couldn't imagine in advance - in a relatively short period we managed to repay the enormous amounts we owed in Israel.

SIXTH STATION: HALLANDALE, MIAMI

We returned to Hallandale, and now we had everything except shlichus. We found a good apartment there, my husband continued with his business, the children were settled, but without shlichus we felt it wasn't right enough. We hadn't come all this way just to live here quietly. Even if we wanted to do shlichus work - there wasn't a suitable audience... We lived in an area where many Chabad families lived, there wasn't even anyone to host for Shabbos meals. Despite the low probabilities, we approached the local shliach, Rabbi Tennenhaus, and asked if there was an open area for shlichus work for us. And there was!

He had a place for us, and we received it without any protektzia, and it seemed to us - completely above nature. We moved to the Three Islands neighborhood. Many Jews live in this neighborhood, and there too, like everywhere, we started the shlichus with all our strength. We created connections with the Jews in the area, and engaged in all other things that shlichus entails. It's not easy to start shlichus in a new and unfamiliar place, but with divine assistance and hard work we managed to gather the Jews into a large and united community. Today we have classes here, a shul, and a connection to everyone.

SEEDS OF PERSONAL REDEMPTION

And R' Tennenhaus's dinner, the one we visited as strangers and outsiders before we found ourselves? It turns out it's held every year...

After five years we participated in it again, and this time we were the ones called to the stage to receive an award for our shlichus

activities. For us it was an emotional closing of a circle, which taught us that already five years ago, in the green apartment, when we came to the dinner "unconnected," the seeds of our Geula were planted even though it hadn't yet been revealed to us when we were in such a low and difficult place.

In retrospect, we understand well the Chassidic saying "descent for the purpose of ascent," and as the Rebbe says that "the descent itself is already the ascent."

FOCUSED ON 'WHAT IS REQUIRED OF ME'

I think the secret during this difficult period was the understanding that Hashem is taking us through something. Nothing happens "just because." I could have resisted the difficulties, refused the process and work required of me, said "no and enough." Hashem could give me livelihood in Miami too, without us having to move to some remote hole... but the moment I understand that there's a lesson here that I need to learn - I let go and allow Hashem's will to pass through me.

And the more we learn our lessons quickly, without resisting, without dealing with the past or future - the faster and better we'll reach the final and perfect point. On the other hand, when someone resists the lesson Hashem is trying to teach them, runs away and sinks into themselves and their difficulties, Hashem brings them back again and again to the same point, until they learn. We went through journeys that could have taken a long time, but in each place we were there for a short period, gave our maximum to those around us - and moved on to the next stage. We learned quickly.

As long as I'm in the position of "giver" and not "receiver," focused on "what is needed from me" and not on "what I need," I won't sink into depression, no matter what happens around me!

CONT. ON P. 23

להתחיל את הלידה

Recruiting For The Divine Labor Force:

How Two Lubavitcher
Douglas Are Reimagining Our
Birthing Experiences

By Menucha Rochel Gellis



HOW DID YOU COME TO BE A DOULA?

Let's open with the question of questions: why did you decide to work specifically in this field?

Rivky: Truth be told, this is a question to which I have no simple answer. I didn't see this profession as the fulfillment of childhood dreams, nor did I have some inspirational or traumatic experience that led me here.

It came about through visible *hashgacga pratis*. After my fifth birth, I took a break from my work responsibilities. While at home, I noticed an advertisement for doula training at the Ohr HaGanuz Yishuv near Tzfas, where I was living and close to my husband's workplace.

I checked the course outline and schedule and thought, "Wow! This looks perfect!" The timing fit my maternity leave, and the profession interested me deeply both as a wife and mother.

The studies energized me during my maternity leave in a most positive way. The course touched upon the deepest aspects of both giving birth and pain management, and it was a privilege to learn how I could offer assistance in such profound moments. As Chabad women, we naturally incorporate charity and giving into every profession unconditionally. Here, everything aligned perfectly for me in many ways. So I began this journey.

Nechami: I need to emphasize that I don't view this as merely a job, but as a shlichus, a sacred mission. This vision motivated me to become involved in such a special, holy field!

I'm passionate about ensuring women have intensely positive birth experiences that leave them wanting more. Bringing a new soul into the world should connect every Jewish woman profoundly to the Creator, to herself, to her inner strengths, and to her newborn baby. Each of these connections matters deeply, both for the birth process and for life in general.

What drew me to this shlichus was, baruch Hashem, my own birth experiences. Twenty years ago, during my first pregnancy, I desperately wanted an easy birth. While the Torah states "In pain you shall bear children," we're now approaching the Geula—it's so close we can almost taste it.

I wanted my birth to be positive and good—a perfectly natural desire. After all, who brings the next generation into the world? We women do! It's clear to me that this greatest shlichus must be accompanied by brilliantly shining lights in the most revealed way possible.

I searched extensively and, baruch Hashem, found the answer: this shlichus can indeed be experienced positively! I researched thoroughly and providentially discovered materials from an organization promoting greater freedom in maternity choices. The knowledge I gained helped me make informed decisions, and with Hashem's kindness, my first childbirth was natural and not excessively long.

Baruch Hashem, I've since had seven natural childbirths, and I feel an inner calling to share this knowledge and these tools with other women.

When my firstborn daughter was just a year old, I accompanied a friend during her birth. It was a good, natural experience, and afterward I continued offering my services as a heartfelt hobby. I felt I could help using my feminine knowledge and skills. I escorted more and more women through childbirth, while my dream of becoming a professional doula continued burning within me.

Baruch Hashem, after becoming a mother to four daughters, I completed my professional training, acquiring additional alternative healing methods: reflexology, homeopathy, shiatsu, aromatherapy, guided imagery, movement exercises, and more. Since then, I've accompanied over three hundred expectant mothers, and another seven hundred women have prepared for birth through my "It's Natural

To Give Birth” course. With Hashem’s help, these tools assist not only in natural births but in any birth method a woman might choose.

My youngest child is two years old, so I experienced birth quite recently myself. Whatever I’ve found helpful, I share in my birthing classes. Women later share their moving birth stories after practicing this approach, and baruch Hashem, they enjoy truly positive childbirth experiences.

The course covers three preparation areas: physical, emotional-mental, and spiritual.

Women receive practical tools for each stage of the process. Emotionally, they learn to approach birth with greater confidence and faith in their abilities, releasing the fears that naturally arise in uncertain situations. Spiritually, when they learn about the tremendous privilege of bringing a new Jewish soul into the world and connect to thoughts of holiness and thanksgiving, the process becomes much more profound and moving.

We make the effort, but Hashem produces the results. Let go and let Him work. It’s amazing to see how these tools help women emerge happy and satisfied from their birth experiences.

WHY A DOULA?

Why should you have a doula as a childbirth escort, and what assistance can she provide?

Rivky: During my preparatory courses, when I meet with expectant mothers or couples, an interesting question often arises, usually from the husband: “If you’re coming as a birth assistant... do I still need to be there?” I always reply that yes, he does—his wife needs him. There’s tremendous importance in having supportive people around an expectant mother (while, of course, observing the laws of tznius, with men remaining outside during medical examinations and the actual birth).

At the hospital, the laboring woman is the queen of the delivery room. Anyone accompanying her is there to provide assistance and strength—both physical and spiritual—and to help with necessary decisions. By “decisions,” I mean choices made from a place of authority and awareness—understanding what’s happening now, the baby’s condition, what comes next, and the best course of action at each moment.

After taking prenatal courses, women acquire the knowledge needed to make conscious, informed decisions according to their free choice.

Women learn that every action has both benefits and drawbacks. They know what questions to ask to manage things optimally, preventing feelings of failure or disappointment afterward. I want every woman to feel: “I am the queen; I understand what’s happening. I make the choices”—whether through professional advice, consulting a rav or mashpia, or with birth support.

I always tell women: “As a doula, I perform my job professionally. I’m not replacing anyone.” There’s certainly space for the husband’s help alongside mine. Sometimes I step back when I see they don’t need me. The woman knows that whenever she needs assistance, she can call out for me or motion, and I’ll be right there. Another point I emphasize: Sometimes neither the mother’s mother nor the husband can attend. If the woman feels alone, I do everything possible to provide the support she would have received from others.

I bring professional expertise and offer emotional, technical, and spiritual assistance through important techniques, exercises, decision-making help, reflexology, oils, and homeopathy.

Baruch Hashem, beyond my professional doula training, I also work as a counselor using the “Amit Leida” (“Birth Buddy”) approach. This method, developed by Amit Ben-Eliyahu,

a frum woman, heightens awareness and includes physical exercises that significantly speed the birth process. This approach can reduce pain by up to 80%, and I incorporate it alongside my other professional tools.

Another advantage a doula brings is serving as an intermediary. Often, the mother experiences tension, pressure, sleep deprivation, weakness, and pain. Without prenatal education, this lack of knowledge can lead to unpleasant emotions and diminished confidence. Sometimes during birth, a woman needs private space. A doula can support her effectively through preliminary discussions about her preferences and needs.

Most importantly, we must pray and remember there is a G-d in Heaven who runs everything. There is one precise moment—no other—when each soul must descend into the world. We are there to support both the mother and the new Jewish soul, and with Hashem's help, everything unfolds with great joy and good health.

Nechami: The concept is what we call “treatment continuum.”

This means the same woman who accompanies the expectant mother—who knows her dreams, wishes, concerns, and fears, who has prepared with her throughout the process—should be the one accompanying her during birth. They already have a relationship. The doula understands what matters to the woman and what she wants; she strengthens her faith and provides physical and emotional support throughout. Hospital staff simply cannot offer this level of personalized care. When you engage a doula, she's with you 200%. The trust that develops and the mother's resulting confidence are, with Hashem's help, key to helping her realize her birth vision.

The knowledge a well-prepared mother brings allows her to make appropriate real-time choices when facing various suggestions and interventions. She knows when she can say

“No, thank you” and address issues naturally with the doula's help, and when the situation truly requires conventional medicine—which is also a gift from Hashem. All these are tools designed to assist the woman.

Research demonstrates the benefits of professional birth support. Statistics show that births with professional accompaniment improve women's satisfaction, reduce interventions, and contribute to shorter labor and healthier natural births.

THE CHOICE

How do we choose the right doula?

Rivky: There are many doulas, each with her own style, character, and approach. Every doula provides different support—some only accompany women at the hospital, others come to homes and remain throughout the entire process. Some professional midwives offer additional services like reflexology, birth induction, various exercises, or even post-birth massage treatments. Each doula brings her unique package of gifts. Every woman is unique, as is every doula.

When looking for a doula, it's important to identify your needs and desires and match them with her professional qualities. Also, check for personal compatibility. Some doulas are older with considerable experience, while others connect specifically with younger, more energetic women.

To choose a suitable doula, arrange a preliminary face-to-face meeting. If that's not possible, it's reasonable to request a photo and have a phone conversation. It's important to feel her energy, her presence, hear her tone, and determine if you connect with her style.

I remember someone telling me how, before one birth, she spoke with a doula by phone and arranged for her accompaniment. The expectant mother called this doula on her way to the hospital. When the doula arrived,

the woman was deeply disappointed—the doula's appearance differed completely from her expectations. Labor isn't the appropriate time for getting acquainted over coffee. With considerable awkwardness, this mother apologized and sent the doula home.

Nechami: I should mention that some women feel they don't need additional professional support, and I encourage each woman to pay attention to her needs and connect with what feels right for her!

As for how to choose? It's straightforward: pick up the phone, align your expectations, ask relevant questions, listen to the doula, and if you sense a connection—go for it!

A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT

H o w much does an expectant mother need to pay for a childbirth escort?

Rivky: The average fee ranges between two to three thousand shekels in Israel (and about \$700-\$1200 in the USA), though you should verify exactly what services are included. A less experienced doula will likely charge less.

As I became more involved, I realized we needed a contract—what I prefer to call a “letter of agreement.” This wasn't a simple decision. As a Chabad woman, taking such a step felt difficult. I believe birthing women need help and support and were trained to help when and where we can. Even women who attended excellent preparatory courses need constant reminders, explanations, and clarifications when the moment of truth arrives. I initially

wondered, “How can I possibly make a contract with an expectant mother?” Over time, I discovered that uncomfortable situations sometimes arise, and clear agreements help address them.

For instance, I make myself available to expectant mothers from the beginning of their ninth month until birth. This can span up to six weeks, including Shabbosim, Yomim Tovim, days and nights—all while managing my responsibilities as a mother to my own large family.

Another example: After a month of round-the-clock availability, sometimes a birth progresses extremely quickly—what we call a lightning birth. The mother barely has time to call. I organize myself quickly, but by the time I arrive, she has already delivered. This raises the question: How much do you charge in such cases? Having a contract prepared in advance prevents awkwardness.

When I commit to an expectant mother, I forgo many important personal commitments. If I have a scheduled event during the anticipated birth period (which can span several weeks) that requires my attendance, I always inform the mother in advance and obtain her permission to leave the city. I've missed numerous events and simchos because I was responsible for an expectant mother just beginning her labor.

Nechami: Regarding costs, there's truly a range of prices between novice doulas and those



with considerable experience and expertise. The simplest approach is to ask directly.

WEARING OTHER HATS

Do you specialize in other professions besides being a doula?

Rivky: Beyond my work as a doula and birth preparation counselor, I've been a sheitel-macher for over eighteen years, a kalla teacher, and a marriage counselor, providing support for depression and anxiety.

Nechami: I also offer personal training based on Tanya and Chassidus. I established the “Osot Chaim” club—a digital program teaching Tanya to women, designed to help overcome fear and anxiety while building a plan for survival and joyful living filled with confidence, as taught in Tanya. In my view, Jewish psychology through Chassidus forms the foundation for all emotional work.

In my preliminary courses, emotional and spiritual preparations are grounded in Tanya and Chassidus. It's remarkable how profoundly this influences the physical body. When a woman approaches birth from a secure place with sincere trust in Hashem, she remains calmer and experiences less pain.

Pain comes from muscle cramps—and muscle cramps result from fear and stress. To break this pain cycle, fear must be replaced with trust. When a woman feels confident and tranquil, her muscles relax, reducing pain. Similarly, endorphins—natural pain relievers—are only released during moments of calm and relaxation.

I'm also a high school biology teacher with fifteen years of experience preparing students for their five-unit matriculation exams in biology. With Hashem's help, with my master's degree and accumulated knowledge in biology, anatomy, and physiology, I can help optimize the connection between body and soul. I'm a kalla teacher as well. I position myself at every

developmental crossroads, from wedding to birth.

MY STORY

Do you have any special stories to share from your experience?

Rivky: One Shabbos, after the meal, I left for the hospital to escort a woman in labor. Baruch Hashem, a healthy child was born in good time, but I couldn't return home. I waited at the hospital until Motzaei Shabbos when I could travel again. Suddenly, another woman who had arrived unaccompanied asked for my help.

“With pleasure,” I replied, and we quickly got acquainted. I assisted her through her birth, which went smoothly. Meanwhile, another woman in advanced labor was panicking so severely she couldn't update her family about her impending delivery. I accompanied her too... In total, I concluded that Shabbos with three births! It was truly remarkable.

I should add that every birth offers me a new experience as a doula, just as it does for the new mother. It's amazing! I've escorted dozens of births, and I always learn something new.

Nechami: In my teaching work, intimidating questions about childbirth occasionally arise. I always pause the class to address fears and foster awareness that birth can be a positive, empowering experience. I remind students that when the time comes, they can acquire additional helpful tools.

One day, I received a call: “Morah Nechami, you told us good birth experiences are possible—can you help me prepare?” I accompanied this former student, and afterward, the midwife asked about our connection. When my student simply replied, “This is my teacher,” the midwife looked at us in amazement: “What is a teacher doing in the delivery room?”

A SHLUCHA IN THE DELIVERY ROOM

How do you combine spreading Chassidus with your work?

Rivky: As a Chabad woman, I bring Torah and Chassidus into this special space. I share calming niggunim (there's a great album online of Chabad melodies for infants), occasionally incorporate jokes and interesting Torah insights, and regularly check "HaYom Yom" for meaningful Chassidic teachings that might provide strength. I remain sensitive to other birthing women nearby, offering help when possible (without neglecting my primary responsibility).

I express abundant gratitude to hospital staff, acknowledging their tremendous privilege and mission in helping bring new Jewish souls into the world. I always say "Thank you" and typically bring wholesome snacks—homemade cakes, dates, almonds, or nuts—for the staff.

And most importantly, I encourage the use of "Shir HaMa'alos" cards, which has become increasingly popular among women after birth.

Nechami: Throughout this process, there's no separation between my Chassidic life and my work—they're unified. This profession is inherently a shlichus, supporting women during birth at the most profound level.

GIVING BIRTH IN WARTIME

With both of you being located in the North of Eretz Yisrael, how has the war since Simchas Torah last year affected your work?

Rivky: We're facing a complex situation fraught with fear and uncertainty. These times demand considerable adaptability, spontaneity, and readiness for change. Now, at the beginning of each birth support process, we provide guidelines for expectant mothers with reminders about our current reality. We must flow with these changing circumstances. Sudden warning sirens or mortar attacks can't be scheduled or anticipated. Some women

choose to give birth in safer regions, away from the volatile northern areas—relocating to Laniado Hospital in Netanya or moving to their parents' homes a week before their due dates. During this period, we've seen numerous home births.

Women today face unclear situations. At Sieff Medical Center in Tzfas, near Meron, they've relocated the maternity ward from the fourth floor to one level below the main entrance. Neither the nursery nor the ward remains in its usual location. Such changes can be unsettling, and we're not always equipped to handle them. Additionally, women face more fears now, sometimes complicating their emotional state. Of course, these effects aren't limited to the soul—they influence the body, often painfully.

When I encounter women in such circumstances, I refer them to appropriate treatment resources. Sometimes I counsel pregnant mothers myself, helping them process previous births to prepare for more positive, well-managed experiences. We have many discussions about past birth experiences, all aiming to approach the upcoming birth with greater calm and tranquility.

Nechami: War generally brings stress and anxiety, which affect the body's physiology during pregnancy. Realizing that women can't birth effectively while feeling pressured, I considered how I might help them fulfill this holy shlichus. I created an audio track with relaxation and guided imagery to implement helpful tools even before birth begins.

Every midwife tells laboring women to relax or breathe deeply. However, those who practice beforehand can enter deeper relaxation more quickly, enjoying tremendous benefits: pain relief, faster progress, and better oxygen supply for the baby.

I recorded this track in a professional studio with specially selected Chabad niggunim. The content is deeply moving and empowering.

When the war began, I distributed the track to women free of charge. Hundreds have benefited, with results appearing quickly.

One woman told me that her blood pressure was measured three times at the hospital, consistently reading too high for discharge. She paused, put on headphones, played the audio track, and listened. Shortly afterward, her blood pressure normalized. It's amazing to witness how positive relaxation and awareness bring healing and redemption to the body.

NOTE: Today, you can receive significant refunds for doula services from many health insurance companies, both in the USA and Eretz Yisrael.

THE FATHER'S PRESENCE IN THE DELIVERY ROOM

At a farbrengen in Kislev 5747 (1986), the Rebbe said that the “strange and peculiar” custom of allowing the husband or any other man, except for the doctor, to enter the delivery room at the time of birth should not be permitted. It runs in direct contradiction to Shulchan Aruch and it would be inconceivable that such an action against Jewish law is a good thing.

In light of the aforementioned, on the first day of Teves 5747, the N'shei Chabad administration asked the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach about his statements against a husband, etc., entering the delivery room, whether this also meant the “labor room”:

The Rebbe's answer was as follows:

It is not the concern [of the N'shei Chabad administration] to get into a lengthy debate.

In the two above stated instances, there is the opposite of tznius, etc. See Gemara Niddah 17a and in Shulchan Aruch.

If women always need to be meritorious, this is especially so when a woman is about to give birth (see Shabbos 31:2), and obviously one should not increase in the opposite – and on this point, they should make a tumult, etc.

Do they possibly not know that there is a printed letter from Rabbi Moshe Feinstein ruling on the matter!?



BIRTH IN CHASSIDUS

Birth in Chassidus serves as an example of the Geula. The birth process is the revelation of the child existing in the world, albeit in a concealed manner. His existence is hidden within the mother's womb. The birth can reveal his appearance in a manner of Redemption as it exists in the world, although we don't always notice its presence. The infant child is unfamiliar with the outside world, and in a moment, he reveals a completely new existence.

Thus, it will also be with us at the True and Complete Redemption. (For further explanation on this topic, see Likkutei Torah, Parshas Tazria.) ■

The thought that “I’m here, what can I give?” doesn’t leave room for other thoughts - and especially when channeling it into concrete action.

There were so many opportunities to fall into despair during the two years full of upheavals that we went through until we stabilized, and only the thought about what was required of us and the activities in every possible place are what held us until now.

REORIENTING AGAIN EACH TIME

There are no lives without ups and downs, questions, challenges and dilemmas. To fine-tune myself from where I am, from time to time you need to conduct an internal check. Like a guitar that needs constant tuning.

I ask myself and Hashem if right now I’m doing what is required of me. It sounds like a very big question, and it doesn’t seem clear how one can answer it...

But the truth is that if we listen, and aren’t just busy with the goals we want to achieve - we’ll notice that we’re constantly receiving small and directing messages. This is true in shlichus work and it’s true in personal life - in every situation. Of course it’s important to consult with mashpiim and write to the Rebbe, to ensure we’re on the right path. But with attentiveness. To be reflective and not be afraid to give myself criticism.

A small example from my life: In the last two years I’ve been giving Tanya classes to Israeli women outside our community. This past Rosh Hashana I did some soul-searching regarding the Tanya classes, because I noticed I had received some messages, women from within the community who approached me and asked why I wasn’t teaching them Tanya... I felt that some change needed to be made here, to change my time allocation so I would

dedicate more time to the American women in the community. I hadn’t done anything yet, just decided within myself to aim for that and wrote to the Rebbe.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, an amazing woman from the community who manages large high-tech projects approached me and offered to work with me with managing the Chabad House and give me tips for improvement, efficiency and better use of my time.

I had just understood the message within myself and felt ready to make a change, and wrote to the Rebbe of course - but still without knowing exactly what to do - and here Hashem sent me the guidance and how to do it in the best way. If I hadn’t received the message and directed myself - this simply couldn’t have happened...

Following what was said before, I made another revolutionary change. Until now we had taken several groups of Israeli women from the Tanya class to the Rebbe, and now we’re taking our a first group of American women who merit to travel to the Rebbe! I invest a lot in these trips, knowing that arriving at the Rebbe changes the essence.

Once I asked my mother how my father (Rabbi Motti Gal a’h) brought so many Jews closer - and she told me that he simply brought mekuravim to the Rebbe. So I took that on for myself too, and I see that a woman who returns from the Rebbe begins an avoda of teshuva from a much more internal and core place.

It’s very difficult to live in change. We reach a comfort zone and it’s easiest to stay there... but whether I’m an official shliach or not, in order to serve Hashem and not myself, and to truly always be on the Rebbe’s shlichus - we must do this avoda.

Good luck to us all. ■

Crumbs of Change

"I've been in shidduchim for over two years, meeting, checking. In short, I went to consult with a professional, you know," he smiled awkwardly. "Today there are consultants for everything," and the conclusion was that maybe Abba and Ima are trying to find me the girl that I'm not exactly looking for."

By Keren Kaplan

ALREADY six months had passed since she told Eli that the kitchen was too small. Esti gave the kitchen a critical look, from the cabinets to the old tiles. "Really antique!" she thought to herself quietly.

The antique table in the kitchen wasn't offended and remained loyal to her. She sat next to it, armed with a cup of coffee (no sugar, just something warm in the morning, she apologized silently to Dr. Alona, her family doctor, who insisted she adopt a healthier lifestyle). Reflecting, Pesach 5785 was approaching. Who would come to the Seder night? Yossi and Tehila had already confirmed their attendance, Mendy and Chaya were on their usual shlichus, Tzivya and Menachem were still undecided and would likely continue to deliberate until the very last moment. From whom did Tzivya inherit this indecisive nature?! Definitely from Eli's side. There was no way it came from her...

The phone rang exactly at the dramatic moment while she was using her magic formula to calculate the amounts of matza and wine precisely. She glanced at the number, hesitating whether to answer. There were still the calculations for the fruits and vegetables ahead. And the eggs! But the phone kept ringing insistently. The Demati family on the line! Surely it was about the daughter's shidduch. She immediately wiped her hands on a towel, cleared her throat lightly, and answered, of course, she answered. What do you mean? It's known that shidduchim don't get postponed, even in the middle of preparing Pesach lists or solving numerous equations of who-comes-when-why-and how many.

The conversation lasted quite a while, and Esti turned to the laundry. Although she was on pre-Pesach vacation from work, it was the most enslaving vacation in the world, she was sure of it. While working, she heard about the not-

so-successful meeting between Moria Demati and Yossi Weiss. Well, it happens...

Esti furrowed her brow and returned to her notebook. Yes, a notebook (almost) like the old ones. Brown, square, big. She wouldn't input precious daughters of diamonds and sweet 'tmimim' boys into dry Excel charts. Not at all! She writes a profile, and even (okay, full disclosure, only on quiet Fridays when the situation is difficult...) davens for them during the candle lighting. Being a shadchan is no easy task, but she does it truly *l'sheim shamayim*. She has all the tools, boruch Hashem, knows how to push, match, and convince. And of course, *siyata d'shmaya*.

It's just that her own Yisroel, she can't seem to match him up... But that's how it is, "A captive cannot free himself from his own prison." She sighed and returned to the shopping list, trying to concentrate and return to the point she had been at.



Tzivya was sitting at home, trying to guide Stella in cleaning the second room, the one that mainly hosts the laundry. She had never had a cleaning lady and didn't exactly know what to do with this creature that everyone chases after during the Pesach season, recommending and telling her that Stella was like ten iRobots in the house. She does in one hour what others do in an entire day. She assigned tasks to Stella with hand gestures, accompanied by broken English (Ahh... when her English teacher once said that English was a useful language, she didn't realize how right she was...).

Three and a half years have passed, she and Menachem have been waiting for good news. Maybe it doesn't sound like a long time, but for them, it felt like an eternity! Every day, prayer, longing, hope. And now, thank G-d, the blessing arrived, erev Pesach, and she had mild weakness and a clear instruction from her doctor: "Exert as little as possible!" Okay, let Dr.

Svetlana come and exert as little as possible in making Pesach. Yes, even with cleaning help. She preferred to update her mother with the good news later. Everything was still at the beginning, and her mother would immediately start asking. Did you go to a doctor? Which one? Who recommended them? Why? How? How much? So she consulted a little and decided to tell... in a little while. When everything was more stable. From previous disappointments, she had learned to wait just a little longer.

If they go to her parents' Seder night, maybe her mother will notice, maybe not. Meanwhile, her mother sends a message about twice a day, then they talk, and she asks again, "What about the Seder? We're waiting for you and want to organize... what's the problem? What's happening? Are you coming?" And she couldn't decide. She didn't know what the story was this year, to decide! As if it were some dramatic decision.

A knock on the door, oh, it's Yisroel, her little brother. Not very nice to say "oh" in this context. But, in her current state, focusing on her "Think positive, it will be good" mindset, feeling weak, and less open to hearing about Yisroel's shidduchim journey, but here it comes. Let it be.

"Look, we talked about this before, but I think I'm really right, the more I think about it..." The all of 25-years-old young man sat on the couch, trying to understand with Tzivya what was blocking him in the shidduch process. "I've been in shidduchim for over two years, meeting, checking. In short, I went to consult with a professional, you know," he smiled awkwardly. "Today there are consultants for everything," and the conclusion was that maybe they are looking for something for me that I'm not exactly looking for. For example, it's very important to Ima that the girl has yichus; it's not important to me. Not at all. It's very important to Ima that the girl has finished her studies; less important to me. Ima wants the girl to

be restrained, very refined. And I have very different priorities from her.”

Tzivya tried to understand what he actually wanted from her, reminded him that Ima was doing everything for his good and wanted him to be the happiest in the world. With devotion and love. Yisroel smiled a not-so-happy smile, “I know, I spoke with Abba and with Ima and again with Ima. She still hasn’t fully processed all of this.”

Tzivya was still trying to understand what he wanted from her. Was her new situation causing mental fog?!

“That’s it, actually, I just wanted to unload to someone else nearby who can understand me. Daven for me, sis.” He smiled, thanked her for the pickled delicacies – rare in the parents’ house, they were almost “forbidden.” “You pray for me too,” she called after him in the stairwell.



In another notebook, separate from the usual shidduchim she managed (This week she concluded two, just so you know!), she was handling Yisroel’s shidduchim. Yisroel, who since the age of three had been busy bursting her illusions. A hyperactive boy like no other in her house. A child who received comments from teachers, and his path had challenged her all along. How many nights did she toss and turn in bed, how much money had they spent on diagnoses and treatments. How much they had consulted until they found the right yeshiva for his temperament. And now, her beloved son, who not long ago, overcame all those diagnoses and treatments is updating her on what his future kalla would look like! “Well,” she apologized to the notebook, “he’s the one who’s supposed to live with her, with G-d’s help.”

“But he’s a child and doesn’t really understand the consequences of family background,

which is so significant to you.” The notebook responded.

“Hmmm. What does ‘to you’ mean? That’s how it is. And a kalla who didn’t finish her studies? It will be hard for her! And a kalla who’s lively and spontaneous... it will be hard for me.” She responded to the notebook. “It’s not worth starting life with such difficulty.”

The notebook, for some reason, remained silent.

Yisroel was cleaning the sefarim for Pesach with his explosive energy, humming a happy tune. She was praying so hard that next year, a helper would be here. She took a deep breath. It was hard, oh so hard. It was like a real birth for her, but to reach this Geula, one had to get rid of chometz. To shake it off, to bend, to reduce herself and her opinions a little. To shatter idols of prejudices and illusions – just like Eli wants, just like her mashpia reminds her. She... she would do it. Because what wouldn’t she do for children’s chinuch?!

Tzivya on the line. Two days before the Seder night. Esti was breathing again, reminding herself that the house, almost free of chometz, was ready to receive the Geula of Pesach, the revelation. And if she could remove even a small crumb of chometz from her heart, in something tiny, perhaps the exodus from Mitzrayim would already be waiting for them just around the corner. For them, for Yisroel, for Tzivya, and for Menachem. Who knows?

“It’s fine, Tzivya, not too crowded, it’s definitely workable, another couple for the Seder. We’re waiting for you with joy.”

The truth is, she always said this, but this time she really felt it from the inside. Maybe it was the internal crumbs of chometz that she managed to move with tremendous effort, making space for her small Geula. For their big Geula, and immediately, for the general Geula of us all. ■

8 GEMS FROM MRS. SARA BALKANY'S TUESDAY CLASS

FOR well over 30 years now, I have been attending Mrs. Sara Balkany's Tuesday class in her home. The participants are a varied cross-section of frum society. Each decade has had its "regulars." The class is generally on the parsha plus any timely date in the Jewish calendar. Mrs. Balkany prepares what she wants to teach and welcomes interjections, thoughts and anything anyone wants to add. In other words, it's not a formal lecture.

Over the years, certain themes have come up time and again and, like water on a rock, they seep in, informing our lives and responses. In this article, I will share eight of her gems (for eight days of Pesach) and leave some for another time, *im yirtze Hashem*.

1. Rather than say, "I'm not on that *madreiga*," about something spiritually great that you admire that someone does, she says: You were inspired? So do it!

2. People talk about taking baby steps with *hachlatos* - Don't give a *minchas ani* (poor man's gift) when you can give a *minchas ashir* (a rich man's gift)! You need to have something big to strive for!

3. She spoke at a program for mothers of special-needs children and said that what kept her strong, what kept her going with the craziness of her brother, R'

Sholom Mordedchai Rubashkin's, arrest and incarceration was taking herself out as the main character of the story and focusing on Hashem being the main character of the story. If you can do that, the ordeal is altogether different, she said.

4. Quoting Rabbi Moshe Wolfson z'l: Regarding anything you do, ask yourself: Will this bring Moshiach?

5. Quoting a letter from the Rebbe to someone who was in debt but wanted to attend her son's wedding, the Rebbe said it's the right to do, to attend, and don't think that if you don't go you will have that money for something else. She learned from this, if something is the right thing to do, do it, because not doing it won't save you what you think will be saved.

6. Anything in *ruchniyus* must be done *b'simcha* (and everything is *ruchniyus*).

7. If you focus on the good in a person, the negatives they have won't have any hold over you.

8. How do we make decisions? Why do we do something? The question should be: What needs to be done? Or, does it need to be done? (not "*what* can I do"). Then do it or have someone else do it. ■

| OUR CHILDREN'S FAVORITE AUTHOR

It was very special meeting Yaffa Gottlieb, whose storybooks are educating a generation of children to good midos. Her stories never fail to capture the attention of children of all ages, until the very last sentence, and leave them with an appetite for more!

Her first children's book, "A Gift of Challahs," was published in 5740, and followed by many others. Who doesn't remember "A Thousand Guests for Shabbos" and "Crazy Yossel," our children's favorites?! Yaffa also wrote children's stories for Olameinu, which was around in my day (!), and for Moshiaich Times. Together with Rivka Zakutinsky she wrote "Around Sarah's Table," with the goal of reaching out to women who are new to Yiddishkeit. They also co-authored "Last Day Laughter: Welcoming the Redemption with Courage, Vision, Faith and Joy."

THE PEOPLE OF WHICH BOOK?!

When I asked Yaffa about her upbringing and how her life's work began, she replied, "I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in a very Americanized home. But I learned Hebrew in Hebrew school. At the time we were living in Cortland, Ohio, a small town in the countryside, and were probably the only Jews there! I was ten and my brother was eight, and every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon

my mother would drive us six miles to Hebrew school in the temple, which was in Warren, Ohio. In the entrance there was a sign that we are the 'People of the Book,' but which book? My grandparents and great aunt kept Shabbos and were frum, but I assumed that this was just a remnant of their lives in Europe, and had no relevance to modern times.

"When we went to temple I would read the biblical stories in the Chumash, and I'd also pray, in Hebrew. I remember seeing the Thirteen Principles of Faith in the siddur and wanting to know more about them."

AN EPIPHANY OF EMES

Yaffa continues to share, "Despite my lack of knowledge of Torah and mitzvot, I always had a strong Jewish identity, and was an active member of USY. I studied anthropology, logic and biology, but majored in linguistics. After completing all of the classwork requirements for my doctorate, I went for a visit to Eretz Yisrael, and all of my plans changed..."

"When I was in Yerushalayim I met the unforgettable Rabbi Meir Shuster ob'm, the 'man of the Kotel,' who selflessly dedicated his life to Jewish outreach. He set me up with a family for Shabbos, and I remember looking out the window in their home and seeing elegantly dressed men, women and children

strolling leisurely outside. At that moment I had an epiphany. It dawned on me that **this** was the *emes*, and everything else that I had experienced beforehand was just a fairy tale.

“I’ll never forget that Shabbos,” she says wistfully. “I joined the crowd and struck up a conversation with one of the women. When I told her that my dream was to write stories for Jewish children, she replied that it was very well-needed. This response made me feel, for the first time in my life, that I’d be doing something necessary.

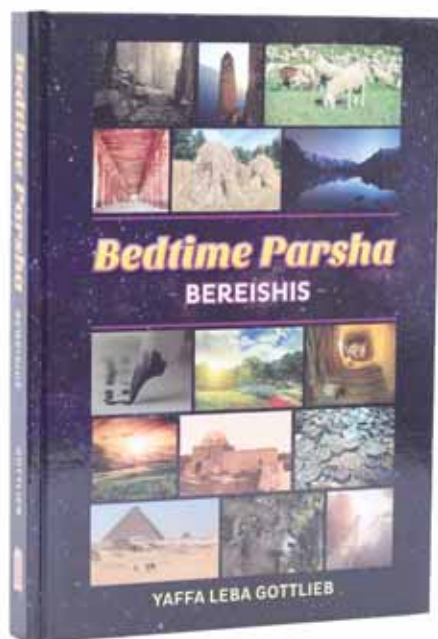
“The next day, Sunday, the couple who hosted me for Shabbos sent me straight to Neve Yerushalayim. It was the school break, but the girls took me in until classes resumed, and we attended whatever shiurim we could find in Yerushalayim. From the moment I walked in I felt that I belonged, and ended up staying in the seminary for the entire year. I had no desire to continue studying English literature, all I wanted was to learn Torah.

“It was wonderful going to shiurim, but I still felt that something was missing. By hashgacha pratis I was hosted for Shabbos in the home of Rabbi Aryeh Leib Kaplan ob”m, the head Shaliach in Tzfas. I recall seeing a Tanya in Hebrew in the living room and opening it up, but having no idea what it was...

“I became more familiar with the Lubavitch community, and ended up living in Crown Heights. At first it was a social connection, but it didn’t take long before I was taking classes in the mechina program of Beis Rivka. Chassidus began seeping into my neshama, illuminating my life, and the rest is history...”

BEDTIME PARSHA STORIES

Yaffa’s prolific writing continues to enrich children’s lives with Torah values. Her latest book, “Bedtime Parsha” stories for Bereishis, is thought-provoking, touching and delightful. “In a sense it’s like a guidebook, and I made it very interesting,” she says. “I am presently



working on Shemos, and uploading the stories as audios on to WhatsApp, Instagram and Spotify. It’s important that children wind down before bedtime, and listening to these stories is very helpful. I feel as though I’m actually talking to the child as I write.” I listened to several of the audios and, upon hearing Yaffa’s soothing voice, that’s exactly how I felt too!

The stories are addressed to Jewish children. But what’s fascinating is that a Ben-Noach who heard several of the audios is in the process of having them adapted to a universal language in order for non-Jewish children to benefit too. Yaffa emphasizes, “There should be an educational curriculum based on biblical values for all children.”

Every project that Yaffa undertakes is permeated with the most urgent call of the hour, kabbalas ha’malchus. She concludes with a heartfelt message, “I care about the Melech HaMoshiach! Everyone has to know that the Rebbe is **here**, watching everything we do. We must be fully present with our eyes fixed on our mission: doing everything necessary to prepare ourselves to greet the Rebbe MH”M!” ■

IS, WAS, AND WASN'T: RETROACTIVITY IN JUDAISM

Aviva turned around and ran, she ran and ran through the streets until she reached a public library, where she spent the rest of the school day. When she came home at the time she would normally have come home from school, she found out that her mother had called the police because the school secretary had called to say that Aviva had arrived late at school, and then ran away.

She had been so embarrassed by her lateness-with-no-excuse, that she could not face the eyes of some forty children looking at her. Aviva lived avoidance. People love to give advice, friendly advice, sometimes not so friendly. Aviva didn't like to be on the receiving end of all the advice or less than positive feedback she used to get from her environment.

Today we would call her neurodiverse as opposed to neurotypical, meaning that her brain was wired a little differently than that of many other people. So they would try to 'fix' her. Sometimes basic actions like filling out forms were a tortuous experience for Aviva, whose executive function was not up to par with that of most people. This made Aviva wary of getting involved with anything bureaucratic or technical, although she was very talented in the realms of art and poetry. So Aviva developed a negative attitude towards people. She could not understand why instead of receiving

accolades for her talents, she was constantly receiving criticism for her underachievement.

Inside, Aviva would seethe with rage, but since she was good-hearted and truly wanted to be a good person, that rage was not expressed usually towards others, only erupting from time to time, or it would turn inwards and manifest as depression or allergies. As Aviva got exposed to Chabad and the teachings of Chassidus, as well as Torah teachings in general and psychology and self-help literature, she embarked on a long process of self-discovery.

THE ZEALOT WHO RETURNED

One of my favorite stories in Sipurei Chassidim is that of the Jew who lived during the time of Reb Shmelke of Nickelsburg. He harbored a passionate revulsion to idols and other symbols of idol worship. He had a wife and children, but nevertheless one night he took his own life into his hands, snuck into the local place of non-Jewish worship, and smashed all the idols there. Soon after he was apprehended by the authorities and put to death for his 'sacrilegious' acts.

His bereaved wife presented herself before the tzedaka fund of the Jewish community, requesting the support that would normally be given to a widow. Those in charge refused to give her support, since her late husband's

actions were considered to be intentional suicide.

The case came before Reb Shmelke, and he was visited by the soul of King Menashe. He explained that it was his own soul that was incarnated as the Jew who smashed the idols, in order to reach a rectification and find respite for his own terrible sins of *avoda zara*. Reb Shmelke made sure that the hapless widow and her children would be taken care of.

It is not my purpose to discuss reincarnation here, but this story sheds a unique light on the events that we experience. King Menashe was one of several Jewish kings who unfortunately lived in a way that was diametrically opposed to the way a Jewish king was supposed to live and lead. Hashem in His infinite mercy does not let the story end with tragedy. Many generations later, the tortured soul finally becomes rectified.

As my Chassidic psychotherapy teacher used to say, ‘it’s a process,’ and she would repeat the phrase for emphasis.

We don’t have to wait to be reincarnated, because we are the last generation before Moshiach, but what do we do about what we didn’t do in the past, or didn’t do right?

The Maharsha explains that the idea of intentional sins becoming merits can work because when a person does complete teshuva, adding extra mitzvot to rectify and make up for the spiritual damage caused by his previous actions, then retroactively the sins become “*machshirei mitzva*” – preparatory tools for a mitzva. We know that the Rebbe often emphasizes that preparation for a mitzva is as important, if not more important than the mitzva. (Parshas Pinchas 5751)

TO RETROACTIVELY ELEVATE CHAMETZ

What are we supposed to clean out in preparation for Pesach? Chametz. Chametz according to Chassidus represents arrogance. (In a broader sense, general negative energy.) Matza represents *bittul* – nullifying oneself

before Hashem, which is the opposite of arrogance. Perhaps we can say that our efforts to clean out the chametz and beautify the holiday of Pesach by being super careful to avoid chametz and doing this with great joy, retroactively elevate the chametz...

How though, how can this happen, that my misdeeds and my negligence can change their ‘hide’ and manifest as merits? Okay, they can be a catalyst to reconnecting with Hashem, returning the (damaged) lower ‘Hei’ to the the holy name of *Havayah*, and this is obviously good, but how can they turn into something else?

Chassidus teaches us that when this teshuva process happens, what are we reconnecting with? We are reaching a place where there are no limitations of time or space. It’s as if our spiritual “free radical cells” go through a cleansing process and re-enter our souls as a positive spiritual charge, no longer negative.

So when we are able, let’s say, to influence a Jew in later stages of life to do a mitzva they hadn’t done before, like putting on Tefillin or keeping laws to do with the Jewish family, their new connection reaches to that place beyond time and space, and their spiritual make-up undergoes a change which affects their past.



By the way, today, Aviva rejoices in finding the good in others, rather than resenting them. She rejoices in life in general, and in having a positive outlook. She has been able to help many others who deal with various challenges, because of the process she went through.

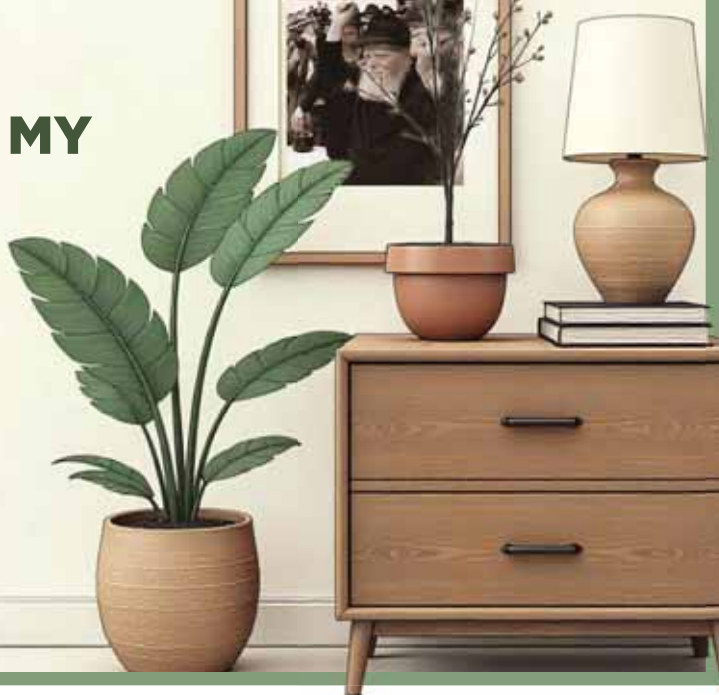
When we say the Shema, we contemplate how Hashem Is, Was and Will be. When we manage to get ourselves and our friends, communities and relatives ready for Moshiach, the negative aspects of our past will have gone through the process of Is, Was, and Wasn’t.

Moshiach Now! ■

WHAT'S INSIDE MY NIGHTSTAND

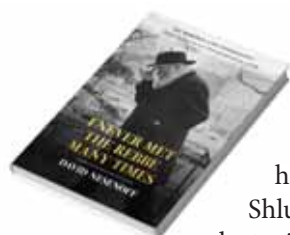
By Raizel Liberow

As the Shabbos afternoons grow longer, it's the perfect time of year to have some good books up your sleeve. Here are a few that I have in my nightstand at the moment as well as a new kids one that I just couldn't resist purchasing. Happy reading!



I'VE NEVER MET THE REBBE MANY TIMES

By David Nessenof



Right off the bat, the title is incredible.

The author is an internationally renowned speaker who has traveled to visit many Shluchim around the world lecturing. Each short chapter features a different location and

his inspirational encounters with the Shluchim there. He has fun with the English language, and it's overall a light, entertaining read where you feel like you recognize the author when you are done and leave a little more inspired.

AUSTRALIAN ENCOUNTERS

By Robert Kreminizer

I'm a little biased on this one, growing up in the same suburb in Australia as the author did and my grandfather, Rabbi Pinchus Feldman, having a major influence on Mr. Kreminizer's life; but I can honestly say that I thoroughly enjoyed this read. The author takes his audience

to be an intelligent readership as eloquently recounts his journey to becoming a Chassid and his relationship with the Rebbe; as an attorney living in the oceanside city of Sydney. Meet some colorful personalities and discover that we have a Rebbe and the Rebbe has a way of answering even the smallest requests - like a blessing to catch a hefty amount of fish on a sunny Sunday morning. Easy to read and hard to put down.



FROM THE REBBE'S PEN

Beis Moshiach Publications



Ever read a letter of the Rebbe and wonder who the Rebbe is talking to and what the background is? Enter 'From the Rebbe's Pen'.

First off, the cover picture of the Rebbe is incredible. Each letter that you read begins with a line or two of background to give context to

the *maaneh* (response) followed by a picture of the Rebbe's handwritten response. Then each answer is precisely translated. Although the different size fonts affect the reading flow slightly, it's very clear what's an exact translation and which words have been added for clarity. All around a beautifully laid out book and a great pre-bed read.



BETTER BEHAVIOR NOW

By Sara Chana Radcliffe

It's that moment between the trigger and our reaction where our free choice lies.

When my toddler flings his unfinished supper across the room, when my preschool student jumps on top of a friend in jest - knocking him over, when one of the big kids uses wildly inappropriate language - how do we react?

After reading this book, I find myself returning to Radcliffe's methods again and again as a response to inappropriate behavior for kids of all ages. And, when applied consistently, it really works!

A little bit more concentration needed for this one - so I would recommend a Shabbos afternoon read as opposed to half asleep.

THE MOTHER WHO ALWAYS SAID YES

By Bracha Goetz



Isn't the title great? It's a short kids book that tells the tale of a young girl who dreams of becoming a mother and always saying YES to her children. "They can do what they want. They can play in the dirt. They can fight with each other and even get hurt! But I won't say "NO!" They can be free! Whatever they want I will agree!"

The pictures portray unpleasant results of a household with not even one rule - the goat is eating clothing, the kids are sleeping outside in the dirt and their bellies are aching from endless candy mountains.

After reading, I asked my 10-year-old if he would have any rules when he is a Tatty. "I guess we'll have some boundaries" he mused. ■

I have recently been enjoying the podcast 'Chassidim and Niggunim' by Moshe Weinfeld - each episode featuring stories of a Chassid followed by a heartfelt niggun.

He shares a story of Rabbi Chaim Moshe Alperovitch who moved from Lubavitch to Eretz Yisrael and damaged his shechita knife so that he shouldn't take away the parnassa from the local shoachim. He went to work in a building company and his job was to schlep heavy stones and bricks. Recognizing his piety, his boss transferred him to a lighter division, where his role would be to manage some machinery. After a short while, R' Chaim Moshe requested to go back to his old job. "Operating this machinery requires me to use my mind and I'm no longer able to review Chassidus. Please allow me to schlep bricks once again."

Let us do our best to read, listen to and watch things that will fill our minds with Torah concepts, pictures and ideas so that we too can contemplate holy ideas until the time when the world will be flooded with the knowledge of Hashem like the water fills the seas.

Wishing all a Kosher and Freilichen Pesach.



129

Recap: *Shmuel is suddenly arrested and taken to the fortress near the river.*



THE SECOND HOUSEWIFE

—→ A SERIALIZED FAMILY DRAMA ←—
SET IN THE SHTETL OF TWO CENTURIES AGO

Gronem stands in front of the Rav's bed, listening to his instructions uttered in a quiet voice, his eyes filled with tears.

Appoint gentile attorneys, give them access to whatever material they need, and they'll immediately start getting to work during the two days of Rosh Hashana. Welcome the holiday joyfully and honor it as is befitting. Organize people to recite Tehillim around the clock during Yom Tov. If possible, there should always be at least a minyan saying Tehillim, preferably in the estate's synagogue.

"How is the *Gevirte*, Shmuel's wife?" the Rav suddenly asked.

Gronem shrugged. "She's in her room, Rav. The maidservant goes in to see if she's all right as much as she can." After a moment, he added in his own defense: "We ourselves still haven't come to grips with what has happened..."

"Why don't the younger women, like your sister, go in to talk with her?" the Rav sighed.

"She doesn't want to see anyone," Gronem muttered. "They tried."

“When she gets stubborn...” the Rav gave his first smile, “only the Rebbetzin can reach her. I’ll ask my wife to go up to her later.”

Gronem was silent. He didn’t know what he was supposed to say.

“Be strong, Gronem.” His hand trembling, the Rav shakes Gronem’s hand. “You are the man in charge now...”



There’s no sense of holiday feeling on the estate. In the living room, Gedalia, Zalman, and Gronem sit together with two gentile attorneys who rode in from the nearby town. Files of documents were on the table, piles of papers, quill pens, and arguments. They simply had no idea what could have caused Shmuel’s arrest or what they could do to ensure his release. In any case, where was he?

In the lobby, people just poured in, unable to believe their ears. They left all their Yom Tov preparations merely in order to confirm whether the rumors are true and their beloved *Rosh Ha’kahal* had actually been arrested. Why has this happened and what do they do now? Yossel was compelled to take responsibility for apprising the guests. He gave a brief explanation of what happened, sighing over and over again whenever some curious soul inquired further. After a minute or two, he also enlisted him to recite Tehillim in the estate’s Beis Medrash. The proposal led to an immediate end of their conversation – either he gladly accepts the suggestion, or the very suggestion reminds him that he has to hurry...

Upstairs in the lobby, the estate’s women sit in stunned silence. The private rooms and apartments are still turned completely upside down. “Even my children don’t know how to make such a mess...” Mirele sighed. The shock grew more intense. They cry a little, worry a lot, say some Tehillim. Many try to calm each other down through their shared emotions.

Pessia doesn’t join them right away. At first, she was in her room, unable to calm down, whether over the matter itself or the unpleasant task placed upon her – gently breaking the news to Aidel.

“I didn’t do what my father asked of me, Pesach Tzvi!” she constantly kept blaming herself. “She suddenly came in, and everyone together responded to her. Did you see how she looked? The poor thing...”

Pesach Tzvi tried to soothe her, reminding her that everything was in the hands of Heaven. Besides, she was very upset herself, and there essentially was no way that she could break the news to Aidel gently at that moment. She finally came out and tearfully joined her sisters-in-law, pouring out her heart to them. They seemed to understand more than Pesach Tzvi did. No arguments, they just sighed together with her.

Tzadok ran between the priest’s house and Nikita’s office. The two of them avoided him. Another moment and one might think that they were about to start celebrating their own holiday in less than an hour and a half, not the Jews.

Only Sophia and Tzirel were working as usual. Sophia was in the kitchen, preparing whatever she could in honor of Yom Tov, as per the Rav’s orders, while crying and constantly repeating Chapter 20 of Tehillim, the kapitel she knows how to recite by heart. Tzirel went from room to room on the estate like the wind, organizing shelves, clothes, beds, and sefarim. Every half hour, she leaves everything and goes upstairs to check if her *balaboste* was all right. Although she’s still crying, it’s not quite as bad.



Pesach Tzvi stands at the entrance of the room, watching his wife closely. When she appeared to be all right, and her sisters-in-law were serving as a comfort to her, he quickly

went into the room. “Pesach Tzvi!” Yossel cried. “Come downstairs, we need you here!”

“I’ll be right down!” he calls from upstairs. He’s not used to yelling at the estate, most certainly not as of late. “I’m finishing something urgent and I’m coming.” He now quickly washes his hands and puts on a real gartel! Not the belt from his coat. He takes a blank sheet of paper out of the drawer and opens the ink well with shaking hands. “This isn’t considered that I’m asking directly,” he reassured himself. “This is a matter of *pikauch nefesh!*”

Kevod Kedushas Admur Shlita,

Please arouse abundant mercy upon the soul of my father-in-law, HaRav R’ Shmuel ben Chaya, sheyichye, Rosh Ha’kahal of Lubianka. May he pull him out from distress to relief, from darkness to great light, and may Hashem lead him with His Righteous Justice. With Hashem’s help, may he prolong his days in his position.

Pesach Tzvi hesitated for a moment, biting his lower lip. It’s clear to him that the Rebbe has already received his father-in-law’s name more than once in letters and *pidyonos* – and not for the better. He sighed.

In the merit of his Torah study and his great fulfillment of the mitzva of tzedaka, in the merit of the Chassidim’s shul, which he is paying to renovate from his own personal wealth, in the merit of his father-in-law, the illustrious Chassid Moshe Leib ben...

He was surprised. He really didn’t know the name of that Chassid’s mother or father. In a split-second decision, he wrote: “Avraham Avinu. May Hashem avenge his blood.”

He doesn’t know if he’s supposed to sign the letter or not. He eventually signed: “Pesach Tzvi ben Ruchama.”

He now quickly dries the ink with gentle blows from his lips, removed his gartel, and dashed downstairs.

“Tzadok ran between the priest’s house and Nikita’s office. The two of them avoided him. Another moment and one might think that they were about to start celebrating their own holiday in less than an hour and a half, not the Jews.”

“Oh-ho!” Yossel was annoyed. “It’s a good thing you came! Gronem needs you to translate something for him. He’s upstairs...”

“Five minutes,” he replied, giving that gentle smile no one could be angry with, and ran to the non-Jewish section of Lubianka. Breathing heavily, he approached Peter, the fastest messenger in town. Strong and muscular with a wavy forelock. Pesach Tzvi explained about the letter that urgently had to reach the righteous man in Belorussia and gave him the address. Peter laughed. “I already know the address... Once every year or two, someone here has something terribly urgent to send to this wise old man... That will cost ten rubles. Eight now, three when I return.”

“That’s a hefty sum!” Pesach Tzvi was astounded.

“I’m going now to ride for two or three days without a break, finishing off my devil of a horse. That costs money!” Peter was unbending, continuing to smile.

“Eight now and three when you return is not exactly ten...” Pesach Tzvi smiles as he counts the coins.

"I'm not all that good at arithmetic..." Peter chuckled.

"When will you be leaving?" Pesach Tzvi was suddenly worried. Yom Tov begins at any minute.

"What does that mean?" He looked insulted. "I put on my boots, wear my hat, and within half an hour, I no longer see Lubianka. You can hear my cunning and lightning-fast steed cutting through the air, Jew!"

He hesitated for only a moment. Relying upon the Rav's *psak din* that the gentile attorneys can continue working on Yom Tov, he sends the messenger on his way.



Mamma, it's me again.

I already wrote to you once about how I only remember to write when things are going badly for me. I'm sorry. It's a good thing that you're always a mother.

Shmuel is in prison. No one knows why. They suddenly took him, and they were Russians, not Poles. That means the situation is far worse than I thought. He's sitting in a fortress located on a lonely island in the middle of a river, a place of no return. What does this all mean, Mamma? I won't see him again? My child won't know his own father, the tzaddik?

I don't want to see anyone, I just stick my head under the blanket and cry. That's what I do, save for a short break to write to you. If you were alive, Mamma, I would let only you come in to my room.

Above all, I don't want to see Shmuel's children, because if he's not here, what connection is there between us? What am I even doing on their estate?

I have a feeling that this imprisonment is connected to those stupid barrels belonging to that thief. This is also the only thing that they chose to take together with Shmuel. I came down

earlier to the haughty attorneys that Gronem brought and told them what I thought, showing them the document that I insisted the man sign. They listened to me with a kind of understanding look, as if they were saying to themselves, "Let her speak, relate to her earnestly. Poor thing..." Afterwards, they explained to me why there's no connection, while adding, "Yes, of course, this is quite important, it's good that you told us!" They didn't even take the document.

What more can I do for him?

Nothing. Nothing. Mamma.

A gut yohr, Mamma'le. I went to visit Tatte today. I didn't tell him, so please do so for me: Bèzras Hashem, you will soon be a Bubbie and Zeidy, although the child will apparently be born an orphan.

Love you. Hoping that it will be a good year. I have no idea how, if things have started this way...

Aidel



"Shmuel!"

Shmuel opens his eyes, blinking from the blinding sun, his head pounding again and again against a coarse piece of wood. Someone called his name, that was clear. It was Aidel's voice. Why was she screaming?

"He woke up," someone said in an especially heavy Russian accent. A deep gravely voice. He immediately remembered what had happened, where he was going, and his eyes again closed in despair.

He just imagined that he heard Aidel. He sighed. She wasn't even at home...

A pity that he woke up. ■

To be continued...