

The Chassidische Vibe

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



THREE SHLUCHOS,
THREE CONTINENTS,
ONE NIGHT.

SHLUCHOS TALK
ABOUT THE SEDER IN
CANTERBURY, NEW
ZEALAND · SALZBURG,
AUSTRIA & NEW
DELHI, INDIA



למה שמוך מוכתרת משהו?

NEVER BREAK A
PROMISE

ARIELLA ELHARAR
DASHIFF

Here They Come!

DOS & DON'TS FOR HAVING
THE MARRIED KIDS
FOR YOM TOV

ALUMA SHEMLI



למה תמיד תמיד תמיד?

THE STORY THAT
NEVER GETS OLD

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**BEIS
MOSHIACH**



**THEY
COME
AGAIN**

**WHAT NO ONE TELLS YOU
ABOUT HOSTING YOUR
MARRIED KIDS - AND WHAT WE
SHOULD PROBABLY TELL THEM**

A hand holding a broom, a stack of folded towels, and a silver pot against a red polka-dot background. The background is red with white polka dots, and a yellow curved band with white polka dots is visible. The hand is holding a broom with a wooden handle and a wooden head with light-colored bristles. The hand is also holding a stack of three folded towels, one pink and two blue. The hand is holding a silver pot with a lid and two handles. The text 'Y'RE', 'ING', and 'AIN' is visible on the left side of the image.

Y'RE
ING
AIN

SHE LOVES HAVING THEM. SHE ALSO RAN OUT OF SCHNITZEL BY SUNDAY. **ALUMA SHEMLI** GOES ON A CANDID JOURNEY THROUGH THREE VERY DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO HOSTING MARRIED CHILDREN — RULES, OPEN DOORS, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN — AND ARRIVES AT ONE HONEST CONCLUSION: EVERYONE IN THIS EQUATION NEEDS TO OPEN THEIR EYES A LITTLE.

The moment I broke down and decided I had to make some kind of change didn't happen on motzoei Shabbos when I closed the door behind the last guest. It came on Sunday, when I returned from the office exhausted, found four hungry children at home, and discovered there was nothing left from Shabbos to heat up for their Sunday lunch.

I'm sure there's no one who would disagree that Sunday is the hardest day of the week. That crash after the beautiful, uplifting Shabbos, the late hour you fall asleep motzoei Shabbos because Shabbos ended late or because you simply rested too much... and then straight to work as if nothing happened. Ugh. The only bright spot of Sunday is lunch. You don't need to cook it - the schnitzel and rice, the kugels, the cholent, all waiting patiently from Shabbos. Truly, *minei misbarchin kulhu yomin* (from it all days are blessed)...

Already the previous Tuesday I had invited Mushki and her husband Yossi for Shabbos. She had just returned to work after maternity leave following the birth of Brachush, the sweetest third baby in the world. I don't live close enough to pop in and help her every day, and I myself still work full time, so at least I could spare her from having to prepare Shabbos.

On Thursday, Levi came home for the weekend with a friend. They had some "toameha" and finished off half of what I had already prepared for Shabbos. Organized as I am. So I went down to the supermarket Friday morning. Boruch Hashem we have children, and we've married them off, and we can host them in good health and joy - right?

I came home with all the bags, put them on the floor and stretched a little. It was heavy! Five guests, even if some of them are tiny, require their share of groceries...

The phone rings. It's Shmuli. His wife Chani isn't feeling well, he tells me, she had a hard week. He heard Mushki is coming to us, maybe

they could come too? It's been a while since they've all gotten together...

I don't answer immediately, from the shock. He quickly reassures me. "Everything's fine, Mom. You know we barely eat anything, and the kids fall asleep right after Kiddush..."

I'm alarmed. That my own child should have to convince me to invite him? "We'd love it, Shmuli! Come, with pleasure! Chani deserves a rest! It'll be so nice to spend Shabbos all together!" He doesn't offer to bring anything or to help prepare. He only mentions that he's been craving my challa (which I hadn't been planning to bake...).

With a sigh I put my wallet back in my pocket, hoping the card still works, and head back to the supermarket. From that moment on, I'm in the kitchen. Baking, cooking, chopping, seasoning. Every so often I emerge to organize bedding, drag mattresses from the storage room, scrub the living room.

Shmuli and Chani arrive early, as if they picked up the kids from daycare and drove straight to us. They settle into their room, look for something to eat, and make do with a quick pot of pasta, one kugel, and a strip of fresh yeast cake. Then Chani takes over the bathroom, bathing child after child, going through a pile of clean folded towels. Mushki arrives a minute before Shabbos, trying to squeeze in twenty things before candle-lighting, enlisting her husband, me, and our four unmarried children for help.

Then Shabbos begins. Twenty-something hours of serving, clearing, washing dishes, chopping salads, telling grandchildren stories, and a bit of heart-to-heart conversation. With Mushki after the Friday night meal, with Shmuli instead of my afternoon nap.

Now it's Sunday. I'm making a pot of pasta and soy hot dogs, thinking about the beautiful, exhausting Shabbos. About the containers of food the children took with them as if it were

Erev Pesach and I had begged them to empty the fridge. I feel caught between a rock and a hard place. Am I allowed to complain when I have good children, when there are women who weren't blessed with any at all? Can I *not* complain?

HOSTING WITH RULES

The next day, Monday, I decided to embark on a journey in search of the answer to hosting. To try and figure out how others handle it - what goes on in their homes, and how they find that wonderful golden path where the parents are content and the children are happy.

I started with **Amira**.

She's always organized, sets things straight, manages staff at a hotel - a woman with a clear head on her shoulders whose word carries weight. I didn't feel comfortable saying I'd come just for that, so I simply asked to borrow baking powder.

"You know," I laughed awkwardly, "the kids were over for Shabbos and the house was cleaned out..."

"No, I don't know." She immediately swallowed the bait I'd dangled. "What do you mean 'the house was cleaned out'? If it doesn't suit you, you simply say no, right? You hosted? You enjoyed? Wonderful! There's no take-out service here..."

"I so want to make things easier for them..." I find myself defending myself, "a house full of little children, sleepless nights. I still remember how a box of frozen meatballs in the freezer saved me back in the day..."

"Listen to me," Amira places a confident hand on my shoulder. "Nothing good will come to your children from wearing out their mother, understand? Like a one-month-old baby who cries ten times a night and doesn't think of his

mother for a second? That's exactly how they are today too - they haven't grown up at all. If you allow it, they'll come every Shabbos, leave their kids with you every afternoon, clean out your fridge, and still complain there aren't the treats they like..."

"They're not quite that oblivious..." I disagree, gathering my courage.

"They're not oblivious," she corrects me precisely, "but they are definitely absorbed in themselves. Say it's a survival thing, say it's just this phase, we did it too, it's all true. Practically speaking, they're looking out for themselves right now; they can't see you. And if you don't take care of yourself, no one will, sweetheart. Not even your husband."

When I get a "sweetheart," it means my situation is serious.

"So how do you take care of yourself?" I ask carefully, in a whisper.

"I host when it's convenient for me," we're still standing at her doorway, a bag of baking powder between us. "If I don't have the energy, I say 'this Shabbos doesn't work for me.' And even when they do come, I have very clear rules: bedding they bring from home, naturally. And everyone who comes gets an assignment - they prepare a chicken dish or a side, something. And during the time my husband and I nap, everyone keeps quiet."

"And how do your children feel about that?" I try to picture my Shmuli obeying such rules and can't manage it.

"They don't like them," she smiles. "Did you ever see a child who likes rules? But it's only for their own good. This way they know I'm telling the truth. What's better for them - that every time they come they worry maybe it's not convenient for me and I'm just staying quiet?"



I nod. The words elude me. I can't picture myself formulating rules even privately in my own heart, let alone articulating them to my children.

"And does it really feel easier that way?" I try to stir up some hope, a little faith in the rightness of this approach. "You host comfortably, finish hosting refreshed and wanting more?"

Her answer is slow to come - unusual for Amira.

"Look," she sighs. "It's genuinely easier for me. The hosting becomes manageable and even enjoyable, except there's something slightly unnatural about it, as if they're restrained, not really letting loose. I'd want them to feel more at home, but they walk around on tiptoe as if we're the in-laws or something. As if they're afraid of upsetting me..."

HOSTING WITH ALL YOUR HEART

After a sleepless night full of thoughts, I called my older sister **Racheli**. She already has five married children, *bli ayin hara*. She hosts with love - her home is truly open. If it weren't on the third floor, she'd have opened four entrances like Avrohom Avinu.

She too had a fully formed philosophy ready for me, and was happy to tell me all about it.

"Children are all we have, do you hear me? What do we work for, toil for, clean our homes for? Only so they'll be comfortable. When some heretical thought comes to me, like: 'I also deserve to rest,' or something like that, I immediately remind myself how happy I was when they were born, how I promised to give them my everything. Every Shabbos has an end, and there are plenty of days when you go to sleep in a quiet house, without grandchildren. So when they're with you, let them be with

you wholeheartedly. Once upon a time our grandmothers in Tunisia or Hungary raised their children in their homes. They washed clothes in the river and plucked feathers from the chicken before kashering, and none of that stopped them from seeing every grandchild as a treasure, singing them an old song at night, and sewing them a doll from rags."

I try to get a word in, but she goes on: "It's this generation, with all the screens putting ideas in our heads about personal development and self-fulfillment. If we only connect to who we truly are, and stop trying to impress anyone, we'll discover that this is what's good for us, this is what we enjoy - giving our everything for their sake."



Racheli's home truly is a special place, and everyone knows it's wonderful going to her. She's a supremely devoted grandmother. Even my Shmuli once invited himself over when I had the flu and received royal treatment there.

"Are you never tired?" I ask, feeling faint.

"Of course I'm tired, what do you think?" she laughs. "But it's a pleasant tiredness, like the exhaustion after giving birth when you're holding the most precious treasure in the world. I'm tired because of hosting my children - what could be better than that? I could heaven forbid be tired from medical treatments, or from hard labor. Boruch Hashem, I merited being tired thanks to such a wonderful gift!"

"Your children must love it..." I compliment her with a feeling of despair when I compared myself to her.

She doesn't answer immediately, just sighs.

"Racheli?" I'm stunned. "Don't tell me they don't appreciate it! My Shmuli was by you, and to this day he talks about your amazing hospitality!"

“My five married ones genuinely enjoy it,” she suddenly says in a faint voice. “They’d probably move in with us if they could, I think. But I also have three still at home, and they...”

“And they?” I have to hear, I press on even though she seems uncomfortable talking about it. Part of my research!

“It’s not easy for them,” she admits. “I’m ready to give my everything, to forgo sleep and privacy, but they’ve run out of patience. Tamar makes a face at me every time another sibling arrives for Shabbos and she has to wash endless dishes and help serve. Bruchi simply disappears - finds a friend to stay with, comes back after the mess is over. And do you know what Gitty said to me?” She sounds genuinely hurt.

“What?” I’m afraid to hear what her youngest has to say.

“She said,” her voice drops to barely a whisper, “I wish you could get married at twelve, then Mommy would host me happily, and I wouldn’t just have to help with the nieces and nephews and give up my room...”

I have no way to comfort her. Gitty’s words stay with me the next day, making me ponder our right to waive our own needs, to erase ourselves. Does that right even exist? And are we allowed to sacrifice the privacy and comfort of those dear to us? And what about the married ones - aren’t they dear to us too?

SONS-IN-LAW AND DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW AT THE IN-LAWS

On Wednesday I run into **Bella** on the bus and immediately bring her in on my research. She already has three married children, *bli ayin hara*. She’s not like Amira and not like Racheli, and she has no organized philosophy - just a collection of worries of an entirely different kind. Her words open a new chapter in my research.

“You’re asking me about hosting?” she sighs. “Forget hosting. Buy, cook, whatever. Since the

very first Shabbos I hosted as a mother-in-law, two weeks after Libi’s wedding, I’ve been going crazy. Motti, her husband,” (here I hear the bitterness in her voice,) “arrived with such bad habits, and he doesn’t seem to understand the problem at all. My husband starts singing ‘Shalom Aleichem,’ and my children stand up like soldiers and sing in harmony. Motti plops onto the sofa, chatting, flipping through an album. What does he think? My husband’s singing is background music at a wedding? I don’t know, maybe that’s how it was at his house. The father sings and everyone mingles for the weekend... I still have younger children at home who are getting a bad example, and he’s no temporary guest! They’ve been married five years already!”

“Wow,” I say, finding no words, suddenly thinking about Chani, Shmuli’s wife, who casually goes off to read on the sofa in the middle of the meal. In our house there’s no such thing as getting up from the table before Birkas HaMazon.

“And that’s nothing,” she’s not done. “Chaya’s Dudi is obsessed with politics. Absolutely insufferable. He always knows exactly who is against what and why and because of what, and he carries on as if it were some dvar Torah. When they come I already know what our Shabbos table will look like. Only during the ten minutes when my husband reviews a sicha will we get a break from the debates about the Knesset and politics. Bless him.”

I nod, deep in thought. What would I actually do if Chani, Shmuli’s wife, showed up not dressed modestly enough for us? If my son-in-law made fun of things that are important to us, spoke in a way that didn’t fit? I blush to myself, because the truth is there is such a thing. He has strong opinions about almost everything - this extremist whom Mushki chose. And he has no problem speaking dismissively about anyone who doesn’t think

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Their Home Is Wherever a Jew Needs One





FOR YEARS, **MIRIAM BITTON**, NINE YEARS AS SHLUCHA IN CANTERBURY, NEW ZEALAND, **CHANI GRUZMAN**, NOW IN HER FOURTH YEAR AS SHLUCHA IN SALZBURG, AUSTRIA, AND **SARAH KUPCHIK**, SIXTEEN YEARS AS SHLUCHA IN DELHI, INDIA, HAVE NOT SAT AT THEIR OWN FAMILY'S SEDER TABLE — AND YET, EVERY PESACH NIGHT, THEY CREATE A FAMILY FOR THE MANY JEWS WHO FIND THEMSELVES FAR FROM HOME. THEIR STORIES REMIND US THAT ON SHLICHUS, HOME IS WHEREVER A JEW NEEDS ONE.



THE AUSTRIAN WHO CONVINCED JEWS TO JOIN THE SEDER

Chani Gruzman grew up on a shlichus in Russia. Today she is a shlucha in Austria, now in her third year, and a mother of two.

WHAT DOES YOUR PESACH SEDER LOOK LIKE?

In our first year on shlichus, we held the Seder in our living room. We didn't know how many people would come and wondered if there would be enough space. In the end, forty-five people showed up. It was crowded but it was just enough space. One of those who came was a local; the rest were tourists. We hadn't yet had the chance to get to know the local Jewish community.

A year passed, and for our second Seder in the city, we held it in a hall. Sixty people came, twenty of them locals we had managed to collect along the way. Every year, two of my brothers - yeshiva bachurim from Eretz Yisrael - also come to help. They helped us

enormously with the preparations and running of the Seder, explaining what is done at each stage, and more.

We begin the Seder event before Yom Tov officially starts. That way we can serve guests refreshments before diving deep into the Haggada - so they don't lose patience - and the women get to light candles while the men can put on tefillin before sunset.

The first year, we weren't able to conduct our own Seder while simultaneously guiding and producing the event. We planned to hold our private Seder after the public one ended, but that only half-worked. The event finished around eleven at night and we were completely drained. So the second year, we tried doing our own Seder with our own private food that we brought at the same time as we ran the public

one. That actually worked. Up until Shulchan Orech, we managed to run both the public and private Seders simultaneously, and after the public Seder ended, we completed the rest of our own.

LOGISTICS

Providing food for the Seder isn't simple. It's very difficult to prepare food on my own for sixty people, in my kitchen at home - especially on Pesach, when everything is more complicated. The nearest kosher caterer is in Vienna, four hours away. We ordered kosher-for-Pesach meals from there and had to arrange for someone to bring them to us on Erev Yom Tov.

The first Pesach we made here was also the first I ever organized on my own (before this, we always went to others). It was complicated also because the second day fell out right before Shabbos, giving us three consecutive days of Yom Tov. The day after the Seder, I discovered that the non-Jewish helper who came that evening had turned off the stovetop we had left on - meaning I couldn't cook for the rest of the holiday as I had planned.

There is a lot of work this year, and we need to find people who can help with this ever-growing production - but finding them and paying them is difficult. And this year, with two small children who demand their share

of attention, preparing the Seder will be a real operation and a costly one.

A SPECIAL STORY

In the second year, it was clear that we would be having more guests and there wouldn't be room for everyone in our home. We began searching for a hall to host our Seder, but no venue agreed to let us bring in our own food rather than use their catering. On top of that, we had all sorts of "strange" requests - like operating hot plates and burners, leaving our phones at the hotel for two days (since we started the event before Yom Tov began), and having access to a faucet for hand-washing.

The last hotel we tried gave us a negative answer. We were already exhausted from the search, but for some reason it occurred to me to ask the receptionist who had answered the phone one question: "Why, exactly, can't we bring our own food into the hotel?" She promised to find out. As a result, the hotel manager called us. It turned out he loved Jewish people, and once he understood our situation, he changed his mind and allowed us to use the hall. And that is how we came to have a venue for the Seder.

On the night of the Seder itself, an unfamiliar family arrived as a surprise. They explained they were staying at the hotel, and when that same manager realized they were Jewish, he had encouraged them to come to the Seder.

MATZOS FOR A GOY?

Miriam Bitton is a shlucha in New Zealand and a mother of four children who, as she says, "came to us after many years of waiting and with many miracles."

WHAT DOES YOUR PESACH SEDER LOOK LIKE?

We hold two types of Seders: a community Seder attended by about seventy people, and a Seder for Hebrew-speaking travelers.

Sometimes we also hold Seders in other cities, depending on where travelers are dispersed. Each Seder we organize has between eighty and a hundred people.

The number of travelers here varies by the secular month, and the size of the Seder varies accordingly. When Pesach falls earlier in the secular year, there are many more travelers. With Pesach falling later on the secular calendar, there are fewer.

Because we live abroad, we sometimes encounter the complexity of intermarriage. Jewish awareness here is low, and people, for whatever reason, don't always want connections with others. They might tell us: "Fine, we'll come, but only on condition that no other Israeli living here will be there." That makes running a Chabad House a bit complicated.

Moreover, our Seder is sometimes perceived by certain people as "too religious." One year, a woman from the community organized an alternative Seder at her home for thirty people.

Every year we hold a "nut quiz" at our Seder. We ask questions about Judaism - some related to the Haggada, others not, such as: what are the names of the Avos and Imahos, who are the twelve tribes, and other basic questions like that. If there's an opportunity to introduce another Jew to these topics, why not? For each correct answer, the guest receives a nut, and the participant with the most nuts at the end of the Seder receives a bag of black coffee and a bottle of arak - two things that don't exist in New Zealand and that we personally import from Israel (yes, there are kosher-for-Pesach versions).

At our Seder table, there are always matzos set out so that every traveler has a chance to eat matza on Seder night, even if they decide to leave early.

LOGISTICS

Pesach on shlichus requires extensive logistics, and in New Zealand we are quite literally at "the end of the world, isolated, and that sometimes complicates things. We sometimes find ourselves a bit stranded; it's not like Eretz Yisrael where everything is accessible.

One year, for instance, the matzos we had ordered didn't arrive on time, and we found ourselves at the Seder with fifty travelers and plenty of food, but not a single piece of matza to speak of.

We asked a religious family that lives here if they had some matzos for us, and it turned out they had been counting on us - the local Chabad House - to take care of that. In the end, they found a box of square matzos and the travelers divided it among themselves. Each traveler received half a piece of matza - the minimum quantity that fulfills the obligation. Only the next morning did the twenty kilograms of matzos we had ordered arrive.

We begin kashering the kitchen and cooking for the chag two to three days in advance - it really depends on which day the Seder falls. When, for example, the Seder was on Sunday night, that meant Shabbos still had chometz on the table, and we had to cook for Pesach on Sunday. Monday and Tuesday were Yom Tov, Wednesday we recovered a bit, Thursday we started preparing for Shabbos again, and after that there was one more day to get ready for the seventh day of Pesach (which is also two days, of course). The day after Yom Tov, on Wednesday, we had to pack up the Pesach kitchen, and Thursday we started preparing for Shabbos again. A calendar arrangement like that was really tough.

Travelers who come to us don't always get to celebrate the Seder with us. They don't follow the Hebrew calendar, and sometimes on the date of the Seder they've already scheduled themselves to be in the middle of a hike. When they come to Chabad, we send them off with matzos and wine, and they sometimes celebrate the Seder in the middle of nowhere surrounded by wild scenery.

Unrelated to Pesach, fruits and vegetables here are extremely expensive, so we bring as much as we can from Israel - either ourselves or with the help of travelers coming our way.



Right now, for instance, because of “green” environmental organizations, the only disposable products available in New Zealand are cardboard ones. These are very expensive, barely functional, and certainly not kosher for Pesach.

We keep personal stockpiles of every product that can’t be obtained here. We never know what we’ll run out of next year - oil, sugar, or salt. There’s no way to get oil with reliable kosher certification in the shops here. If I do find a kosher product, it’s very expensive and certainly not kosher for Pesach. In our first year here, the Christian holiday fell on Erev Pesach. We had no idea, and we went out to do shopping - only to find every store closed. We had no eggs. We managed somehow, through miracles.

A SPECIAL STORY

One year, a Jewish man from the United States called us to say that his friend was on a research voyage that would last half a year,

and the ship would be passing near our city shortly before Pesach. He asked us to bring his friend some matzos and Haggados. The Jewish researcher wasn’t allowed to disembark, so my husband went to him and brought a package we had prepared with everything needed for Pesach. This Jew, as he told my husband, wasn’t much of a “holiday person” and hadn’t planned to celebrate the Seder - if not for the friend who convinced him. It turned out there were four other Jewish friends on the ship with him, and while they were talking, two more came over and said they were also Jewish! We gave them matzos for Pesach too.

In our first year here, we searched but couldn’t find a non-Jew to help us at the end of the Seder. We needed to clean the hall where we held the Seder and turn off the lights there by midnight. Since it happened to fall on the Christians’ holiday, we couldn’t find a single non-Jew willing to work.

At that very same time, we were printing the Tanya in our city. In the middle of the

printing, a motorcycle pulled up beside us, and the motorcyclist called out excitedly: “Rabbi, I’ve been looking for you!” It turned out he was a non-Jew, a local, who had found some channel about Judaism on YouTube and become enthralled. We tried to find out if he had Jewish roots, or if his wife was Jewish - nothing. Not a single member of his family is Jewish.

By the way, he wasn’t just excited about my husband for no reason - he had a request. He

wanted matzos for Pesach! We tried to explain that he had nothing to do with matzos if he wasn’t Jewish, but he insisted. In the end, my husband agreed to give him matzos on two conditions: that he not use the matzos on the actual date of the Seder, and that he come to help us clean up the hotel after the Seder. He agreed, of course, “for the matzos.”

What was that, if not hashgacha pratis?

A STORY OF A DOUBLE SEDER

Sarah Kupchik has been a shlucha in Delhi, India, for fifteen years.

WHAT DOES YOUR PESACH SEDER LOOK LIKE?

Our community is made up of Jews from all over the world, and our Seder is very special.

We always conduct a “country count” - each person stands up and says where they came from. The diversity here is fascinating, and we always end up with ten to twelve countries represented. All these Jews - from Hungary, France, the United States, Argentina - recline



together at one Seder table with us. Some are tourists, others are Jews who live here in Delhi.

Sadly, intermarriage is very common here. Almost always, one member of a couple who comes to us is not Jewish. But despite that, you can see that our holidays matter to these Jews. It's important to them to participate in the Seder. Compared to other Seders held for travelers, ours is modest - "only" a hundred and fifty people.

Out of Israel, Yom Tov is two days. It might sound difficult to celebrate twice, but I actually see it as an advantage. On the first night, our public Seder takes place, during which we are very busy with all the guests who come. We welcome the guests, my husband leads the Seder, I translate everything into English, and all around there is a lot of noise and people and commotion. Our attention is primarily directed at the guests. The children are active too - they are little shluchim in their own right. My older daughters run activities outside for the children of the guests while the Seder is going on inside.

But on the second night, we have a smaller, more intimate Seder in a family style, and we very much enjoy sitting together. Even if guests come, it's only a handful. And then we can give our attention to the children.

LOGISTICS — A STORY UNTO ITSELF

Once a year we have the opportunity to send a shipping container with things we need here. We do our Pesach shopping already in the summer, around the month of Av. We purchase everything - except for the poultry, which we shecht here, flying in a shochet from Israel for that purpose.

We hold the Seder at a hotel near our home. In one of the early years, we tried to kasher part of the hotel kitchen and prepare everything there, to avoid dealing with transport. My husband lit a high flame to kasher something and the smoke detectors went off and fire

extinguishers began spraying. We were afraid they would never let us hold a Seder there again. Boruch Hashem, the hotel staff didn't get too upset - but we obviously didn't repeat that. We now prepare all the food at home. All the cooking is done in our kitchen and the food is transported to the hotel on Erev Yom Tov.

When Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos it's more complicated. We need to bring all the food earlier and reheat it after Shabbos ends. But this arrangement has an upside too - we'll have time to recover from the pre-Seder preparations and arrive at the Seder with a little breathing room.

A SPECIAL STORY

Our community includes both families who live here permanently and Israeli families who come temporarily - for instance, to work at the embassy - and return to Israel after a few years.

Two years ago, after we had finished celebrating the Seder and all the guests had already gone, a family from Israel arrived who had just landed in India - meaning their flight landed on the holiday itself. As you can probably deduce from that detail alone, the family was not observant. But despite that, the Seder was important to them, and they wanted to celebrate it with us. We sat down to another Seder at eleven or twelve at night with Jews who simply wanted to draw a little closer to Hashem. ■



בְּרוּךְ שׁוֹמֵר הַבְּטָחָתוֹ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

HE NEVER BREAKS A PROMISE AND NEITHER SHOULD WE

ARIELLA ELHARAR DASHIFF
EXPLORES WHAT IT TRULY MEANS
TO KEEP YOUR WORD

The root of the word 'promise' (הבטחה) is - beis-tes-ches (security/trust). It takes a lot of bitachon to keep promises... both active trust (Netzach) - meaning the bitachon that drives action, because we trust in Hashem that we will surely succeed; and passive trust (Hod) - trusting that whatever Hashem brings upon us is certainly good.

Rabbi Arad explains that in order to keep a promise, one needs a strong quality of Netzach. We must overcome the difficulties standing in our way and not surrender to comfort. And likewise we need a strong quality of Hod - to submit to the fact that keeping our word is an ideal for which we are willing to pay a price.

PARKING IN THE HEART OF TEL AVIV

We all know the joke about someone looking for parking. He drove around and around -

but to no avail. Time passes and there is no parking. In a moment of truth he raised his eyes to heaven and said: "G-d, if You send me a parking spot, I promise to put on tefillin!" Another hundred meters, and in the same spot he had already passed four times, he suddenly sees a car reversing and freeing up a space. He rushes to take the spot, and again raises his eyes to heaven: "Thank you G-d, I managed without You, no need."

Is it easy to keep promises? No and yes. Through physical eyes, sometimes it's not easy - but if one succeeds in leaping over the deceptive and obscuring hurdle of this world and moves on to living the heavenly management of the earthly world, great miracles happen even to simple people like us. That driver doesn't know what he missed out on.

Keeping a promise is a mitzva: "*What comes out of your lips you shall keep*" - and therefore

Hashem helps in every way those who are sincere in their decision to fulfill a mitzva. One only needs to believe, and begin to walk toward the goal.

Rabbi Aharon Leib Aberman was not born into an observant home, but his Jewish neshama was highly alert from a very young age. Imagine a child of eight whose soul is so drawn to Torah and Yiddishkeit that he forms a connection with a frum kiosk owner who enriches him with basic Torah knowledge. At age ten, little Aharon Leib switched to a real *cheder* in the yishuv of Komemiyus, where he lived in the home of Mrs. Malka, a kind-hearted woman, who raised him like a son.

When she was 63, she suffered a heart attack. It was clear to her that these were her final days.

“Promise that you will do something in this world in my name,” she asked Aharon Leib, “and I will help you from the World of Truth.” Aharon Leib promised, to put her mind at ease, and indeed not many days passed before Malka departed to her eternal rest.

Several years passed, and one night Malka appeared in Aharon Leib’s dream. “You promised me that you would do something in my name and you did nothing,” she said to him. “But you promised that you would help me from the World of Truth,” replied Rabbi Aharon Leib.

“What do you need?” she asked.

“An apartment,” answered Rabbi Aberman, whose family of nine was at that time living in a one-and-a-half-room apartment.

“Go to my brother and ask for an apartment,” Malka declared.

“I didn’t really understand how,” recounts R’ Aberman, “but I did as she said. I went to Malka’s brother, a rav in the Eidah Hachareidis, and asked for an apartment as she instructed. The rabbi told me: ‘If you can come up with ten thousand dollars, I will get you a plot of

land to build on. The rest you will pay with a mortgage loan.”

How does one come up with ten thousand dollars? You go to the bank. But remarkably, when Rabbi Aharon Leib arrived at the bank, he discovered that someone had deposited ten thousand dollars into his account. To this day he does not know who. He withdrew the money and ran to pay the rabbi. Through the power of this wondrous miracle, he also fulfilled the promise he had made to Malka in the dream, and under the guidance of his rabbi - Malka’s brother - he established a gemach for medicines in her memory. Later he worked on fundraising blood donations for the sick, until he founded the well-known organization *Lev Malka* for the care and support of sick children - in the name of the righteous Malka. A happy ending.

Twenty-five years later, he finished paying off the mortgage loan as well.

‘BLI NEDER’ – MITZVA OR ESCAPE CLAUSE?

That too is a question. And the answer is rooted in sincerity. True, if you said “bli neder” you are not obligated. But... woe to my reputation in my own eyes...

The reason one says “bli neder” is that halacha states that when one promises to do something positive - a mitzva between man and G-d or between one person and another - it is considered a *neder*.

I knew someone who from a young age was a yerei shomayim, but not particularly industrious. He wanted to avoid arguments with people and especially with his mother, so he would say “bli neder” about everything. He has grown since then, but at the time it was hard to think of his behavior as trustworthy.

A PROMISE TO MYSELF

The ultimate person I am obligated to fulfill my promises to is myself. The same mouth that

THE PROMISE IN JEWISH LAW

Adapted from answers to questions posed to Dayan Rabbi Yehuda Leib Nachmanson

The task of keeping our word is not always easy, and therefore, many brachos accrue to those who are careful with this:

The holy Rashi says: whoever stands by his word - his words are preserved. Meaning, Hashem helps him fulfill his promise. The Mechilta says it is as though he has fulfilled the entire Torah. And since the strength of Israel is in their mouths, one who guards his mouth to keep his promises - Hashem rewards him by having his tefillos heard (*Sefer Ben Yehoyada of the Ben Ish Chai*). He merits to dwell in the presence of the Holy One Blessed Be He (*Sefer Sheiltos of Rav Achai Gaon*), and the spirit of the Sages is pleased with him (*Mishna Sheviis 10:9*). Who would hear this and not want to make the effort?!

Here are a few laws in brief:

One who verbally gave any kind of promise is obligated to fulfill it, because not keeping a promise is a form of falsehood (*Shaarei Teshuva, Gate 3, 180*). And if he

promised a poor person, even a large gift, it is like a vow (*ibid.*).

In the Gemara, meseches Sukka (46b), Rav Zeira teaches us that a person should not promise a child something and then not fulfill it, because by doing so he is teaching the child to lie.

A promise is like a vow, just as Yaakov promised “*If G-d will be with me*” and called it a vow.

In general, a promise can be annulled for the one who made it, just as a vow can be annulled, except in certain cases, for example: A - If it is a promise to give tzedaka, this is a “vow of tzedaka” which can only be annulled in cases of hardship, and requires consulting a rav. B - If the promise was made to a minor, the child does not understand what “annulment” is, and to him the matter is perceived as a lie - and therefore (as above) the promise cannot be annulled.

made the commitment can also, in the blink of an eye, come up with endless excuses - and how often do we do that? It is disappointing to see myself in such a light... as one who promises and fails. What does one do?

One who does not want to fail at keeping a promise - should not promise!

To promise myself? Only something I already know right now that I will be able to fulfill. To know the right dose I can commit to, without biting off more than I can chew, please. And then, onward and upward, one success will pull another along, and after some time I will be able to look at my new past and say to myself: “*I am trustworthy toward myself. Impressive!*”

When we challenge ourselves with harder things, like a diet for example, it is worth taking into account that there will be failures, and to build them into the plan up front; making failure a part of the plan:

A - Once a week we allow ourselves something sweet as part of the original plan. B - For success we receive a reward (that is not food). C - We do not punish ourselves for failures, but instead immediately get up and move forward with joy.

Hashem has promised us, through the Rebbe, His prophet, that a great many good things will stand at our doorstep very soon indeed. And without a “bli neder,” the Rebbe promised, the Rebbe will fulfill! ■

like him, even if it's a rav or mashpia. When that happens I shrink into myself, unable to listen. When my husband firmly stops it, I curl up even more, already imagining Mushki not coming for Shabbos anymore. It's never actually happened...

OPEN YOUR EYES, PAY ATTENTION

Thursday passes with many thoughts - about boundaries and rules. About children who feel comfortable and about siblings who shouldn't have to lose out. About a mother who's ready to give her all but sometimes wants to breathe.

When Shmuli invites himself again, I begin the experimental phase of my research. "First of all, thank you for calling on Thursday before the supermarket run." I compliment him, introducing rules in a positive way. "And I want you to know - not only am I not baking challa this Shabbos, you're the one bringing the challa! So pick your favorite bakery and buy five challos, okay?"

"I hope so," he makes no commitment at all, politely declining. "I'll try, b'ezras Hashem..."

"You'll try and succeed," I warn him, "because otherwise there won't be any challa. You'll go knock on the neighbor's door..."

"Do you even want us to come?" The wounded tone.

"More than anything in the world!" I promise. "I'm already on my way to the supermarket to buy that treat your Mushki loves..."

"And you're not buying challa?" he asks, all bewilderment.

"Why would I?" I wonder at the question. "You're already bringing challa - what would we do with ten?"

So I cook and clean and organize rooms. I check with the children still at home about what bothers them and what is genuinely fine, full of thoughts. Trying to take only what fits us,

our family, from everything I've heard - without extremes. Looking for a way that sees everyone, that takes care of everyone.

I haven't yet found a path or paved a road, but on motzoei Shabbos, when they leave (I only packed up the meatballs for them - the schnitzel is waiting for Sunday lunch...), I sit down to write it all up, to share with loving and bewildered mothers like me. To share with young couples too, who go to their parents without thinking twice. They're also a part of this whole equation, and I believe they're capable of seeing others (sorry, Amira), and that if they haven't thought about it until now, it's simply because we haven't told them.

How would they know? They've never yet married off children themselves...

This article probably won't help me. My Mushki can't find time to breathe, let alone to read. They're not even subscribers... And Shmuli? He only reads checks and bank statements. But maybe, who knows, other couples will read it, will look again at the whole subject of visiting parents' homes.

You can come - your parents are happy! Don't misunderstand... But it's okay to ask how you can help, to bring something or buy something ready-made if it's really hard. It's not a sin to let them know a day or two in advance rather than at the last minute, and you don't have to clean out the fridge.

Oh, I almost forgot. Respect your parents and what matters to them. In your own home, behave however you like - but when you're guests, try to be considerate. And the siblings still at home - it's fine to give them a little treat too. They love their nieces and nephews, but it's hard for them when their privacy is invaded.

Maybe I can sum it up in one sentence: Open your eyes? Pay a little attention? Everything will look softer, more possible. ■

THE STORY THAT NEVER GETS OLD

WHY TELLING CHASSIDISHE STORIES TO OUR CHILDREN MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE DO

STORYTELLING ISN'T JUST A NICE TRADITION - IT'S A MITZVA, A TOOL FOR SHAPING SOULS. AND ACCORDING TO THE TZEMACH TZEDEK, THE VERY KEY TO LEAVING OUR OWN PERSONAL MITZRAYIM. **SARAH SASSON** EXPLORES THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE CHASSIDISHE STORY

WE ALL LOVE STORIES

We all love hearing stories. A good story fills us with wonder, conveys messages, instills important core values, ignites the imagination, awakens creativity, and moves us to action. And if that's true for adults - how much more so for children.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TELL STORIES TO CHILDREN?

The story serves as a wonderful tool for teaching coping skills and shaping the child's character and personality. Children have a high capacity for identifying with the characters in a story. Through stories, they learn to understand others and their feelings, and to apply this to similar situations they encounter later in their own lives. By identifying with the unpleasant emotions of story heroes and the ways they cope, the child learns how to respond properly

when feelings of anger, fear, disappointment, or jealousy arise within them. The story essentially helps the child understand themselves, cope effectively, overcome challenges, and master their emotions.

A story with Jewish or Chassidic content carries added value. It not only adds knowledge and stirs curiosity, but also gives the child a firm foundation of Jewish-Chassidic values such as emuna and bitachon, simcha, the power of prayer, and more. It is worth noting that stories from the Torah and Talmud have an additional special quality, in that through them the child fulfills the mitzva of Torah study in its most literal sense.

THE SPECIAL VIRTUE OF CHASSIDIC STORIES

A Chassidic story is one of the cornerstones of Chassidus. It plays a special role in



transmitting the Chassidic tradition from generation to generation and embedding the foundational values of Chassidus. Above all, the purpose of the story is to awaken a person and bring them to renewed strength in their avodas Hashem and in the ways of the Chassidim and Chassidus.

The Rebbe Rayatz related that two learned men approached the tzaddik, Reb Yisroel of Ruzhin to receive approbations for their sefarim. The first had written a book of chiddushei Torah, while the second had compiled Chassidic stories. To everyone's surprise, Reb Yisroel of Ruzhin instructed that the approbation be written first for the book of stories, and only afterward for the chiddushim - teaching us about the great importance of Chassidic stories.

The Tzemach Tzedek compared the Chassidic story to the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, which

we are commanded to recount, and said that the power and *segula* of the story is to take a person out of their own personal "straits": *"It is a mitzva for us to tell of the Exodus from Egypt. Even if we are all wise, all understanding, and all knowledgeable in Torah - it is a mitzva for us to tell. We must tell a Chassidic story, and through the story itself one leaves Egypt..."*

The Alter Rebbe once said: *"When we heard words of Torah from the Rebbe (the Maggid of Mezeritch) - it was for us like the Oral Torah; and when we heard a story from the Rebbe - it was for us like the Written Torah!"*

The Rebbe Rayatz related that on one occasion when he brought his father the Rebbe Rashab a book of stories, his father was greatly pleased and remarked: *"I value this more than if you had brought me a manuscript by a Rebbe!"*

To conclude, we bring the words of the Rebbe Rayatz in Likkutei Dibburim: *“A Chassidic saying is certainly good, and a Chassidic story is certainly necessary!...”*

Therefore, it is important to accustom children from a young age to hear and read Chassidic stories - rather than outside books and secular literature.

THE REBBE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CHASSIDIC STORIES

The Rebbe strongly encourages elder Chassidim to put in writing what they received, heard, and absorbed in their youth, so that the younger generation too may receive proper guidance through the stories.

In a letter to Reb Eliyahu Chaim Lipsker, the Rebbe writes: *“I was pleased to read in his letter about his efforts to instill Chassidic stories among his students... and surely he will continue to strengthen this, for this is the whole of a person.”*

The Rebbe recounts in one of his sichos that his father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz, once hired a teacher who refrained from telling children “puzzling” stories - and the Rebbe Rashab instructed that this teacher be dismissed immediately. The Rebbe Rashab explained the reason: *“One must begin specifically with emuna and kabbolas ol, not with intellect; even matters that can be understood intellectually must be done with kabbolas ol. And so it is with chinuch - one must tell children stories of wonders, which are beyond intellect - this plants emuna in them. The arguments that this is improper, and what is the need to start with things that confound the mind, etc. - these come from the Evil Inclination, the old and foolish king.”*

Chassidic stories awaken emuna in a child and plant within them the most fundamental values, which do not depend on intellect - emuna and kabbolas ol. This is the foundation for everything.

It is interesting to note that the Rebbe once wrote in a letter to Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin that it is permissible to print Chassidic stories

whose reliability is not fully known, because these stories - even if they did not actually occur - reflect the spirit and way of life of the Chassidim, and even if the story didn't really happen, it could have happened: (*“Oib di mayse iz nisht emes, hut es ober gekent zayn emes”*).

In this context, the Rebbe Maharash once said: *“I love the stories of Chassidim and their conversation, even those accounts that are not entirely precise, and even those that are exaggerated. Chassidic stories warm and illuminate the Chassidic home.”*

The only condition the Rebbe set for such stories is to state explicitly that they lack an exact source and tradition, and that their degree of reliability is unknown. (It is important to note that when it came to printing books, the Rebbe would generally instruct that the accuracy of the stories be verified - as he instructed, for example, R' Gershon Burkis, director of the Machanayim publishing house that produced children's booklets.)

HOW AND WHEN TO TELL STORIES

Having described the influence of stories on children and discussed the virtues of Chassidic stories, let us see how to put this into practice in everyday life.

Children love stories and are ready to hear them again and again. What's more, they are even willing to hear the same story many times without tiring of it.

When telling a child a story, a special atmosphere is created between the parent (or adult) telling the story and the child. It is therefore recommended to find the time, sit with the children, and tell them stories in a direct, personal way - from parent to child - rather than relying only on audio recordings and videos. Although this requires much patience and availability, it is worthwhile. It has the added value of strengthening the parent-child bond, in addition to the benefits of the story itself.

It doesn't matter how you tell the story - no special acting skills or dramatic flair are

MI K'AMCHA YISRAEL

A typical bustle filled the town on Erev Pesach. Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev made his way with characteristic briskness toward the local marketplace. He turned into a side street where, according to rumor, one could obtain any illegal merchandise for the right price.

Upon reaching the street, he approached the first Jew he met.

“Reb Chatzkel,” he whispered, “could you sell me some tobacco?”

Chatzkel nodded quietly and motioned for him to follow. In a nearby alley, he pulled some tobacco wrapped in paper from his pocket and handed it to Reb Levi Yitzchok. Money changed hands, and Reb Levi Yitzchok continued on his way.

He approached another Jew standing by the roadside and asked casually, “My dear Yoske, could you sell me some imported silk fabric?”

Yoske the merchant nodded and whispered, “I can sell you a piece at a special price.” The deal was completed to the satisfaction of both parties, and Reb Levi Yitzchok continued on his way, purchasing coffee beans, precious stones, and imported fruit.

After completing his rounds, he returned to Chatzkel the merchant and asked in a confidential tone, “Reb Chatzkel, could you please sell me a fresh bagel?”

“A bagel?” Chatzkel’s eyes widened in astonishment. “Rebbe, I burned and removed all the chometz from my home

just a few hours ago. Unfortunately, I cannot provide what you’re asking.”

“I’ll pay you ten gold coins,” Reb Levi Yitzchok persisted.

“Even if you pay me two hundred gold coins, I cannot give you what you want,” Chatzkel replied firmly.

Reb Levi Yitzchok went on to the other merchants, moving among them, asking and requesting - but no one was willing to fulfill his request, not even for the exorbitant price he offered.

“Master of the Universe,” he lifted his eyes to Heaven, “see Your faithful children! See how devotedly they observe Your mitzvos! Despite the Czar’s decree forbidding trade in imported goods across the border - almost anything can be obtained without great effort. Despite government edicts and the promised punishments - the merchants do not refrain from smuggling merchandise and continuing to trade in costly goods.

“But see Your children, Master of the Universe - even after more than three thousand years have passed since You commanded them not to eat chometz on Pesach - they do not transgress Your command. It is impossible to obtain even a single piece of bread, not for any price in the world.

“Who is like Your people, Israel!” Reb Levi Yitzchok concluded his heartfelt words and returned home to complete the final preparations for the festival of Pesach.

required. The most basic and important rule when telling a child a story is to be present with them in the experience and to set aside everything else.

A story before bedtime is recommended for several reasons. First, a bedtime story is important quality time for the child. It makes them feel loved, protected, and fortified. Such

quality time, where all our attention is devoted to the child, promotes deeper, more continuous, restful, and generally better sleep. Second, after a day full of learning and experiences, the story allows the child to unwind, relax, and listen.

This is an excellent time when the child is open to hearing and absorbing the messages we wish to convey through the story. Finally, a bedtime story provides the child with a quiet, calming space - a time when our attention is directed solely at them, and the focus on the story helps them settle down from the day and prevents worries and fears.

Mealtime can also be used as a successful “story hour.” At this time, children are occupied with eating and free to listen, making it a wonderful opportunity for meaningful, bonding family time.

Here are a few tips on how to do this wisely:

1. A Short Story — Choose a short and interesting story suited to the children’s age, so they can listen without feeling the story is too long or boring. A short story can be one you’ve read somewhere, or something you choose to invent on the spot, or a personal experience you share from your own life.

2. Assigning Roles — Turn the story into a unifying family experience by assigning roles. Each child (or parent) can play the role of a character in the story, and if it includes dialogue, each person can read their part.

3. A Story in Installments — If you know the children love stories, you can turn the mealtime story into a serialized one. Each day you continue from where you left off the day before. The children will be excited by the mystery and the anticipation of finding out what happens next.

4. A Question for Discussion — At the end of the story, you can ask an open-ended question to spark discussion: “What would you have done if you were in that situation?” or “What did you learn from this story?” The question allows children to use their imagination and develop creative thinking skills, and also contributes to a meaningful family conversation during the meal.

5. A Shared Meal — A Shared Story — Not passive listening but active creation of a story. Each child adds a part to the story. For example, one child can invent a new ending, another can add a character, and one of the parents can ask a question that leads to conversation and encourages sharing and discussion. ■

SPECIAL GILUI ELIYAHU

On Erev Pesach, an atmosphere of renewal filled the air. In the Rebbe’s home, one of the Chassidim made an unusual request: “Rebbe, I would like to ask for a special bracha. I long to merit seeing Eliyahu HaNavi this year on Seder night.”

“Do you truly wish to merit a revelation of Eliyahu?” the Rebbe asked, looking at him intently. The Chassid worried that perhaps he had gone too far with his request and was unworthy. But the Rebbe continued with a smile: “I will give you a simple way by which

you can merit seeing Eliyahu HaNavi this coming Yom Tov.

“In the nearby town there lives a Jewish family - simple people of very limited means. In a few days, as Pesach approaches, take with you all the necessities for the holiday - matza, wine, meat, and fish - and make your way to their home.

“During the Seder, at the moment when ‘Pour out Your wrath’ is recited, go to the door. Then you will merit seeing Eliyahu HaNavi.”

The excited Chassid hurried home to prepare and to share the news with his wife. She readily agreed to his journey - after all, one does not merit a revelation of Eliyahu every day!

A few days later, as the holiday approached, equipped with a wagon loaded with provisions, the Chassid set out for the nearby town and headed to the family's home.

The sun slowly began to set behind the rooftops of the town.

The sacred night of the festival arrived.

The family sat at the Seder table together with their special guest who had come to their home. They began conducting the Seder, and the Chassid eagerly participated, waiting for the long-anticipated moment - the revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi.

The time came to recite "Pour out Your wrath." With trembling legs and a heart pounding with excitement, the Chassid approached the door and opened it wide.

To his great disappointment, no one was waiting beyond the door. He waited a minute or two, but aside from the sound of the blowing wind and the distant howling of wild animals, he neither saw nor heard anything.

Disappointed, he returned to the house, wondering why he had not merited the sublime revelation.

"Apparently, I did not prepare myself well enough," he thought. "Tomorrow I will try harder and invest in proper spiritual preparation for the great moment." And indeed, the next day the Chassid spent the entire day engaged in spiritual preparation. "Tonight, on the second Seder night, I will surely merit it," he told himself.

After the Haggada was recited and the four cups of wine were drunk, the long-

awaited moment arrived. With awe and reverence, he approached the door and opened it with trembling hands. Beyond the door, deep silence awaited him. No one stood at the threshold. He looked here and there, searching - perhaps Eliyahu HaNavi would suddenly appear? But to his great disappointment, none of this happened.

The first days of Yom Tov ended, and the next morning the Chassid hurried to the Rebbe.

"Rebbe," he said to his Rebbe in a disappointed voice, "I did exactly as you instructed me, yet I did not merit seeing Eliyahu HaNavi. Perhaps I am unworthy?"

"Do not worry," the Rebbe replied, looking at him lovingly. "Return to the family's home for the end of Yom Tov, the seventh day of Pesach. But this time," the Rebbe emphasized, "before you enter the house, wait outside for a few moments and listen to the conversation of the family members."

Chol HaMoed passed, and as Yom Tov approached, the Chassid once again made his way to the family's home, loaded with provisions.

When he arrived, he stood outside for a few moments and listened to what was happening inside, just as the Rebbe had instructed.

Suddenly, he heard the young daughter ask her father, "Father, what shall we do? We have nothing with which to prepare for Yom Tov... The house is completely empty. Since this morning, nothing at all has come our way."

"Do not worry, my dear daughter," her father replied. "I am certain that the Creator of the world will take care of us this time as well. I am sure that today, too, He will send us Eliyahu HaNavi, just as He did on the night of the Seder..."

AIN'T IT GREAT TO BE (A LITTLE) CRAZY?

CHAYA'S PESACH SURVIVAL GUIDE — SORT OF

FICTION BY KEREN KAPLAN

On paper, everything looks so simple.

The Pesach preparation list is nearly complete - on paper, of course. When Chaya lifted her eyes from the page and collided with the unfortunate reality around her, she preferred to change the subject.

The fridge - she wrote in optimistic blue pen. That single line hardly captures the vigorous scrubbing they're about to wage in order to make the fridge kosher for Pesach. Moving on - the kids' beds. That innocent line also fails to mention the chometz crumbs those little ones hide in their rooms. Just yesterday she found a wafer that little Mendy had saved "from the mishloach manos you let me keep, Mommy," he innocently intoned. Go explain to him that it's already Rosh Chodesh Nissan...

But all of that is nothing. Zero. Less than nothing compared to the real thing. No, not kashering the kitchen - if that's what you were thinking - and not this year's interesting calendar situation either. Both of those certainly

o c c u p y
Chaya's
mind,
b u t
r i g h t
now she
pulled out a
bright orange
pen - the color
of several of
her beloved sons'
hair - to begin the
shopping list.

You're raising an
eyebrow? Two?

It's a complex task, and she
needs to study it properly.

The wise ones divide purchases
into sub-sections - categories. For
the house, and within the house:
the living room, the children's
room. And within the



category of boys and girls: clothing, footwear, hair accessories, and extras. And when Chaya begins to think about these shopping expeditions, she simply exhausts herself in advance.

Why???

Simple enough - the home must be outfitted in this year's collection, and not, heaven forbid, in something old. Same goes for clothes, shoes, and furniture.

So that on Pesach we may sit as free people - for real.

Yossi is already used to these shopping expeditions his "ezer k'negdo" undertakes, accompanied by an

assortment of explanations from Chazal. She quotes various Medrashim as well as such as from the Rebbe: "a

beautiful home," "every Jew is the only child

of the Holy One, a ben melech..." - so how do princes dress, hmm? she finishes in a tone that's half-challenging, half-triumphant.

What a burden...

Beis Nissan. The great and important day finds Chaya darting between the shelves of "KidiGold," solemnly lifting one item after another, measuring, matching, checking.

"Do you have this in a size 4?" she asked the saleswoman, who was simultaneously busy with six other customers. "No," she answered, angling a nod to the customer on her right, waving a matching pair of pants to the customer on her left. "It flew off the shelves, ma'am," she continued. "It came in yesterday and the sizes are already gone."

Oy. Chaya put everything back on the shelves. The whole matching set had gone kaput and she tried again to gather the sizes she needed for the boys and girls.

She leaves KidiGold and continues to the next store. Maybe she really should take her sister-in-law's advice and start buying online. But that's just how she is - she needs to touch things, to see with her own eyes. She's not built for all this online business... Onward.

She furrowed her brow.

She now turns to Leli the wig-maker, who has golden hands, steel patience, and iron wigs that always look fresh.

The problem is that her prices are also gold. But then, how often does she buy a wig... And besides, wig styles update constantly. What was beautiful two years ago isn't necessarily right now. Curls, straight, short, long. New wigs come to market, and she must reach out and stay current. She won't be the last *alte zachen* in the neighborhood. After all, it is written: "Bnos Yisrael are beautiful."

And so, in the days approaching Nissan, industrious Chaya flits between clothing and shoe stores, furniture and home goods shops



- and of course doesn't neglect the rooms and closets, the living room and bookshelves, as is minhag Yisrael kedoshim.

The park bench welcomed Chaya with open arms. She had longed so much to rest from the endless race - and in the company of Miri and Leah'le, no less. Perfect.

"Where are you spending Pesach?"

"At home, where else."

They immediately began detailing where they were holding, how much, and why.

"I'm exhausted," Chaya shared, breathlessly. Leah'le relates and adds her own cleaning stories. From there the conversation rolled along to the various *chumros* observed on Pesach. At Leah'le's house they don't eat this, and at Miri's they don't eat exactly the opposite. And more friends joined the conversation about the well-known Chabad *chumros* for Pesach, and additional *chumros* that exist but are less known. Chaya immediately furrowed her brow.

"Honestly, I don't understand the logic here. Fine, the *chumros* of not eating things with peels or not

eating processed foods. But what is all the rest of it? Haven't we gone a little crazy?" she asked in the tone of the wise and rational son, and felt very clever and sensible.

It was time to say these things out loud. To measure them on the scale of logic and reason - aren't we a wise and understanding nation? Someone here has completely lost control with all this, and she, Chaya, is bringing everyone back to the limits of logic and proportion. Have we gone crazy or what?!

Leah'le smiled and sent sweet Yisroel - mud-covered hands and all - to wash up, and lifted the baby who had run out of patience.

"You're absolutely right," she began.

"Oh!" Chaya was thrilled. Even Leah'le the *chanyokit* had opened her eyes a little.

"It's completely illogical - a lot of the Chabad Pesach *chumros* are totally over the top." Chaya began to worry a little. Leah'le's husband is a great stickler for these things. She hoped she hadn't just, with her powers of persuasion, created some shalom bayis problems over there...

"But you know, Chaya - everyone's crazy. In the world generally. You just have to choose *what* you want to be crazy about, and where you want to go beyond measure and limitation..."

Leah'le smiled for a moment, hoping she didn't sound preachy - while also wanting to land the point.

"You can be illogical about the things of this world. Why is everyone suddenly wearing straight hair? Or everyone with curls? Why is everyone wearing a certain color and length right now? And all the boys need yarmulkas in a particular style? And the girls need headbands of a certain kind? And these sofas, and that lighting? *Hmm???* What's the logic in that? Not so logical, right?"



“You can also be illogical about avodas Hashem. Like starting the days before Pesach with tefilla - that’s not logical, it would be more efficient to clean during that time, wouldn’t it? Sending your husband off for shlichus activities or Torah learning, even when it’s hard - that’s not always logical. And... yes, many *chumros*, even when they have explanations, aren’t always logical. But everyone chooses where to be crazy.”

The voices in the playground divided again.

Some mothers genuinely applauded Leah’le and felt like they were at a stirring *farbrengen* - and had they not been in a playground, they would have burst into song. Others felt a little stung. How could one call careful, deliberate purchases for a holy Jewish home *madness*? With all due respect...

“Maybe going to the kinus on Yud Nissan is also madness,” added Tami with her own example.

“And sending girls to the *farbrengen* on Yud-Alef Nissan instead of finishing the cleaning - that too,” someone else completed the thought.

Suddenly all the mothers stood a little taller.

One by one, they noticed that the Rebbe had taken them - had chosen them - and lifted them high, high above. Above all the righteous women who clean for Pesach and “go crazy.”

The Rebbe made sure we’d stand above measure and limitation, above the world, in so many things.

Even Chaya, who had nearly felt insulted, began counting how many things beyond measure and limitation she already does. It’s not logical to give tzedaka the way they give it. It’s not logical to let Yossi go to his shiur every single Monday, wholeheartedly, even on her hardest days. It’s not logical to encourage him to always daven with a minyan during her most complicated hours.

“The Rebbe also adds that when a Jew acts beyond measure and limitation, Hashem gives to them also from His full, open hand - beyond measure,” Leah’le continued to say.

Chaya heard her from a distance, already bundling her children up to head home to the “crazy” Pesach cleaning that is beyond measure and limitation.

She walked inside. The holy crew burst in like a storm. A ping. Another notification about a sale - a new collection.

A deal she absolutely *must* take advantage of because she’s a club member. And it’s exclusive - for the next 24 hours only.

Another message from Leli the wig-maker, asking another question about the dream wig.

Another notification about an exclusive sale on matching yarmulkas, matching headbands, matching socks that coordinate with a bow tie.

So?

Chaya began getting the kids into the bath, realizing along the way that she is already there - the Rebbe chose her, and placed her on a path that looks the world in the eye and doesn’t flinch.

In giving tzedaka. In Torah study. In raising her children. In flying to the Rebbe.

What’s the logic in not showing a child a non-kosher animal? In surrounding him with *Shir LaMaalos*? In sending one’s husband to the Rebbe?

So surely she can add something more to her beyond-measure-and-limitation.

And if we’re going to be crazy - let’s choose wisely *what* to be crazy about.

About Moshiach. About inyanei Melech HaMoshiach.

What else? ■

This story was inspired by the maamar “B’chol Dor V’dor” 5734

HAVE YOUR MATZA AND EAT IT TOO

Pesach brings with it an abundance of Yom Tov meals, traditional foods, and lots of family time. Alongside all that abundance, many people find themselves ending the holiday with a few extra pounds.

The good news? You can enjoy everything Pesach has to offer - without giving up the fun and without gaining weight. It all starts with the right mindset and a few simple principles that will help you get through the holiday feeling light and energized.

1. KEEP REGULAR MEALS

During Pesach, our daily schedule changes - and so do our eating habits. Sometimes we skip breakfast and then arrive at the Yom Tov meal extremely hungry. This often leads to uncontrolled eating. The secret is to maintain a structured eating routine:

Start your morning with a nourishing breakfast that includes vegetables, cheeses, and eggs. If you wish to wash and eat bread in the traditional manner, you can eat a *k'zayis* of matza.

It's important to eat every 3-4 hours to prevent energy crashes and unplanned snacking. Listen to your body and eat until you feel satisfied - but not stuffed.

2. MORE PROTEIN, FEWER CARBOHYDRATES

Protein is key for long-lasting fullness and maintaining muscle mass. During Pesach, there are plenty of delicious and varied options:

Meat and fish: chicken, lean beef, turkey, salmon, tuna.

Eggs are an excellent and accessible source of protein.

Low-fat dairy products (for those who eat dairy on Pesach): cottage cheese, white cheese, plain yogurt.

Nuts and almonds (in moderation) make a great snack between meals.

When protein plays a central role in your menu, you'll feel fuller and crave fewer unnecessary snacks.

3. WATER, WATER, AND MORE WATER

During Pesach, it's easy to confuse thirst with hunger, which leads to unnecessary eating. The best way to prevent this is simply to drink water throughout the day. Try to drink at least eight glasses daily. If you want some variety, add slices of lemon, fruit, or vegetables to your water. Another option is green tea or herbal tea.



4. WHAT ABOUT MATZA?

Eating matza is a mitzva so it can't be avoided entirely. However, it's important to remember that it is less filling than bread, which makes it easy to eat too much of it. The right approach is to incorporate it wisely into your menu and limit the quantity (it is a carbohydrate).

Don't make matza the centerpiece of your meal - rather, let it be a small addition alongside the other components.

5. IT ALL STARTS WITH BELIEVING IT'S POSSIBLE

One of the most important things is your mindset. Many people enter Pesach thinking, "There's nothing I can do about it - I'm definitely going to gain weight," and that's exactly the mistake. When you believe you can enjoy the

Yom Tov without feeling heavy or gaining weight - that's what actually happens.

Instead of feeling restricted, think about all the things you *can* eat: fresh vegetables, rich salads, satisfying proteins, delicious cooked dishes, and lighter desserts. Pesach doesn't have to be a holiday of deprivation - it can be an opportunity to enjoy food, family, and the atmosphere, while also taking care of your body.

SUMMARY

Pesach is a holiday of freedom - also freedom from heavy eating and automatic eating. With a bit of awareness, structure, and the right balance of nutrients, you can enjoy every bite - without feeling weighed down or adding extra pounds.

Because a Yom Tov is a time for joy, not guilt.

Wishing you a kosher and happy Pesach! ■



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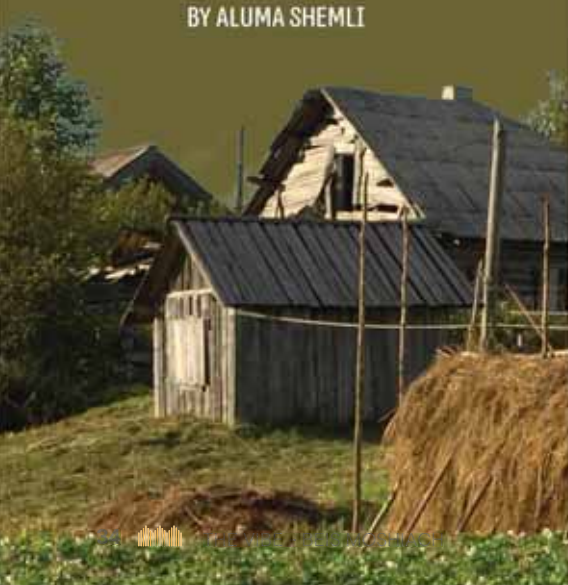
Recap: *Shmuel and Aidel speak about the challenges they have faced together.*



THE SECOND HOUSEWIFE

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

BY ALUMA SHEMLI



Aidel gently placed the baby in her bassinet. The infant's face twisted, threatening a new outburst of sobs. "Enough, my little chicklet," she whispered to her newborn daughter. "What's happening to you today? Every morning, we manage so nicely together, and now when I finally need to get dressed, you start crying?" She patted her softly on her back, humming something unfamiliar. Even she would cry if she knew that her father was about to call her Breindel... However, since this little angel knows nothing of that, then what is the meaning to this unpleasant mood?

The baby's small eyes closed. One more trembling breath and she was asleep – for now. Aidel got up carefully and silently, then walked over to the clothes closet. What should she wear? She passes her dresses from one hand to another, having no idea what would be suitable now. Her swelling had almost completely disappeared and even the weight she had gained in recent

months was now, thank G-d, lying in a crib. She decided to try the Bordeaux, how she longed to put it on again! *Ach*, it's not even close to being suitable. She grimaced.

She'll just continue to call her "Chicklet." After all, that's the name that he came up with...

Maybe the dress she sewed for Shavuot will be appropriate, the one with the button on the side that can be made to fit according to measurement! Yes, it actually does look quite splendid on her. She examines it in front of the mirror from every direction. Finally, she has returned to being the Aidel whom she always known. She'll call the baby Breindel, not Chicklet. That's the name her father has chosen for her, and she'll eventually get used to it. Breindel will very quickly become the name of three other sweet little princesses living on the estate. The most charming name there is – or not.

She changed her comfortable nighttime tichel into one more pleasant looking, then patiently tied it on in an appropriate manner. Good for those who invented the custom that you don't name a child in Lubianka until two full weeks have passed since the birth. So, she received some personal breathing space with her chicklet...

A tiny whimper could be heard from the bassinet. Aidel opened the jewelry box. "Ziskeit," she said in a graceful voice from the mirror. "You're already dressed in all your fanciest, now Mamme is trying to get organized. Just a moment, my little one." She now understands why *gevirtes* have nursemaids, someone who just needs to watch the child until the mother can get dressed...

A gentle rap at the door. "Yes, Tzirel, *tzadeikes*. I'm almost ready," she called out as she put on her second earring.

"It's me," Aidel could hear a familiar deep smiling voice. "May I come in?"

// Shmuel entered, beaming, still wrapped in his tallis, having come straight from shul. "Everything is just fine. I already explained to you once that those who respect themselves are always respected by others..."

"Certainly," she replied with surprise. "So late?"

Shmuel entered, beaming, still wrapped in his tallis, having come straight from shul. "Everything is just fine. I already explained to you once that those who respect themselves are always respected by others..." He examined her for a long moment in sheer astonishment, as if he was hesitating over what to say. "I hope that you feel as you look, because you look magnificent." Aidel was embarrassed. She continued dealing with the clasp on the chain behind her back, not knowing how to respond.

A small cry could be heard from the baby's crib. "That's right, it's good that you reminded me." Shmuel moved in the child's direction. "I actually came upstairs to tell little Perele what a beautiful name they gave her today!" He leaned over the baby, carefully trying to keep his tallis from slipping off his shoulders as he lifts her.

Just a few seconds later, Shmuel's words penetrated Aidel's mind. Her hands were trembling, certain that she hadn't heard him correctly. It's a good thing that she had finished with her chain, otherwise she would have fallen.

She turned around. “What did they call her?” she asked in a whisper.

“How should I know what they called her?” he replied, feigning ignorance with a chuckle. His laughing eyes crinkled while his infant daughter, resting calmly in his strong arms, leaned her head on his tallis. “Maybe Peri? Perush? Perele? Her mother decides, doesn’t she?”

Aidel’s legs shook as the room momentarily started to spin like a top. She quickly sat down on her bed. “Thank you,” she said softly, very excited. Shmuel caressed the baby’s tiny hairless head, singing “*HaShomer Shabbos, HaBen Im HaBas...*” How he loves this tender age. His children hardly ever had the privilege of meriting such closeness at that stage of their lives. Sometimes it was the nursemaid, other times it was his mother-in-law. Besides, in general, men don’t know how to hold a baby... He now feels that these last two weeks have made up for what his four children had lacked at this age.

“Shmuel,” Aidel murmured, “what about your mother-in-law?” She couldn’t seem to formulate a logical question.

“My mother-in-law?” His eyes crinkled. “My mother-in-law, of blessed memory, was a righteous woman, and I’m pleased to have been privileged to call my daughter after her...” After a moment of silence, he added: “I asked the Rav, and he said that I should go and appease her, but you come first.”

“What did she say?” Aidel inquired.

“Why do you have to hear that? It won’t give you a good feeling...” he smiled. “What matters to you is that she doesn’t want us to call any of our daughters Breindel, even if we have eight...” She noticed that he was talking to her with a grin, without blinking or diverting his eyes. Someone had changed, and it apparently wasn’t his mother-in-law.

// Aidel nodded her head, smiling between the tears. She wanted so much to embrace her Perele now, the little girl with the most beautiful name in the world.

“Shall we go downstairs?” he asked. “The whole world is waiting for us...”

Aidel nodded her head, smiling between the tears. She wanted so much to embrace her Perele now, the little girl with the most beautiful name in the world. However, she’s already in the loving arms of others, Baruch Hashem, trembling less than hers.

When she started walking down the stairs, she was thunderstruck. She hadn’t been out of her room for two weeks. She couldn’t seem to remember the last time she had climbed up this staircase. Sophia supported her, still a bit swollen and choking when she took a deep breath. Her walking was shaky as she tightly held the railing.

This was the moment when they entered the hall on the main floor. From that moment onward, she would be blessed and embraced by everyone, enveloping her with endless love. Shmuel made Kiddush on a cup of wine with great fervor as joyous singing broke out on the men’s side. Dressed like a true little princess, the baby lay in the beautiful bassinet that Zalman had brought down from the upstairs bedroom

and placed in the women's section, sleeping peacefully.

"I'm going to wake her up..." Rochel laughed. "I must see the color of her eyes."

Aidel didn't even have the chance to respond, when a pair of trembling hands grabbed her by the waist. "Aidel, my child!" The elderly Baila was moved to tears. She couldn't manage to say another word; she just kissed her again and again.

"Hey, Baila," Pessia laughed. "Save some kisses for the children to come as well..."

Feige also approached. "Aidel," she said with embarrassment. The last conversation between them wasn't much of a conversation. "I still owe you a big 'Thank you' for my Mendel's shidduch and for everything your righteous husband is doing for his health."

"Your daughter-in-law is simply perfect!" Aidel smiled. "And we owe so much to Mendel. It's mutual!"

She went over to the bassinet. "How nice it is that there's another Perele in our village," she smiled. "We've been waiting for this for over a dozen years now!"

Aidel smiled, deeply moved, also a bit dizzy. Mirele found her a seat. "If you don't eat anything, it won't be considered that you fulfilled your obligation to hear Kiddush!" She filled Aidel's plate with a variety of tasty Shabbos dishes that Sophia had brought to the other tables in great abundance.

Shmuel stood up to speak, feeling very emotional. He thanked Hashem "for all this good that we never anticipated, and for literal *techiyas ha'meisim!*" He then began to give over an incisive and razor-sharp drasha as was his custom.

In a corner of the large hall, among all the invited guests, sat a group of Lubianka's Chassidim. "I can't believe that we're here..." Avrum Ber whispered.

"You're exaggerating!" Shimshon replied angrily. "It's our obligation! It goes without saying!" "And don't forget that when all is said and done, this is also Moshe Leib's granddaughter..." Dov sighed, still longing for him as if he had only recently passed on...

Yaakov raised his hand. "*Rosh Ha'kahal,*" he smiled. "Please permit me to ask for a clarification..." Shmuel turned in his direction, looking at him in stunned disbelief. He was so confused that he asked: "I'm sorry, but I didn't quite understand. What did you say?"

Yaakov repeated his question, Shmuel tried to answer. After about ten minutes, he managed to finish what he wanted to say, then quickly approached the Chassidim's table. "I don't believe it!" He shook Yaakov's hand, looking at everyone. "You have truly honored me! Thank you very much that you're here at my simcha!"

"That's not even a question..." Yaakov quickly embraced him. "The honor is truly ours, *Rosh Ha'kahal!*"

"Fine, on your feet, go..." he laughed. "This is above and beyond, really. I wasn't expecting this!"

The Chassidim got up, each one shaking his hand. Shimshon literally hugged him. They deluged him with brachos like seeds in a pomegranate, also reminding him of their dear friend, his father-in-law. They turned to leave.

"Can I ask why you honored them more than anyone else here?" Yossel queried with astonishment, a little annoyed.

"It's Yud-Tes Kislev today, Yossel! Their big holiday!" He whispered, still deeply moved. "And they came here instead of remaining at their farbrengen!" He followed after them for another moment to the entrance of the estate. Suddenly, he remembered something. "Yaakov!" he called after him. "Aren't you taking Pesach Tzvi? This is his first time!" ■

To be continued...