

נשמהלה Neshamale magazine

Sharing Our Special Experiences: Chizuk & Inspiration



RAISING MOISHE

A STORY OF EMUNAH & BITACHON /4

EXPLORING:
GRANDPARENTS /19

תשפ"ב // CHANUKA EDITION // ISSUE #9

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*With gratitude to Hashem for a
year of good health, growth
and smiles!*

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Dear Readers,

One evening, I opened my front door with one hand while holding onto Avrumi with the other. Suddenly I found myself falling awkwardly onto the front step, pain shooting through my right foot. As I swayed and fell, the following thought ran through my mind: “I’m sorry! I’m so, so sorry, Avrumi!”

I guess I should explain the background. It had been a trying past few hours. Avrumi couldn’t attend his after-school program the entire week because his usual driver wasn’t available and, despite much effort, I had been unable to find a replacement. Now it was Thursday, always a busy day. I was feeling overwhelmed by the looming Shabbos preparations, along with some extra commitments I had accepted. There didn’t seem to be enough hours to get everything done. And Avrumi was acting out. Since I brought him home from school, it was non-stop, alternating between him flooding the kitchen floor and hurting his brothers. The floods I could handle; the hurting not so much.

The younger boys’ cries were getting to me and I was getting very frustrated with Avrumi. I kept talking to him, moved him to different spots, tried to get him interested in something else. But he seemed determined to continue his destructive activities. I tried baking a cake in an effort to engage everyone and accomplish something on my list, but it just made me more distracted and gave Avrumi more leeway. When he saw that I was preoccupied, he launched another attack on his two-year-old brother. In my frustration, I yelled at him and roughly separated them once again. I abandoned the cake baking and we continued to muddle our way through the evening. When things started to get out of hand again, I decided to take Avrumi outside to wait for his volunteer, who was coming soon. That was when I fell, twisted my foot, and landed in a heap of pain.

Fortunately, Avrumi remained upright and stood there looking at me silently. I just sat there, breathing through the waves of pain in my leg. It was crystal clear to me why this happened—Hashem was sending me a message. “Remember, that’s My precious son you are caring for! Don’t be rough with him; he’s a person and it pains him when you treat him that way.” Strange as it sounds, I actually felt a sense of happiness, sitting there immobile on the front step. I felt happy that Hashem cared enough about Avrumi to protect him, to advocate for him. And I felt happy that Hashem cared enough about me, to guide me and let me know how important my job was.

In an interesting twist (excuse the pun!), this occurred on *Erev Shabbos Parshas Noach*. I knew the *medresh* about how Hashem allowed the lion to bite Noach’s leg because he came late to feed the lion. Hashem expected Noach to properly care for all of the animals; the fact that it was a very difficult job was not an excuse. Though I am lightyears away from Noach’s *tzidkus*, (and Avrumi’s antics are a lot easier to handle than a whole zoo!), I found the timing to be a sign that my interpretation of the event was correct.

Dealing with our special children’s difficult behaviors is a very challenging job. I’ll speak for myself when I say that it’s not easy to stay calm and patient, while successfully intervening and making sure things are safe for everyone involved. Especially if we are trying to communicate with a child who seems to be in their own world, or who seems to derive pleasure in defying your instructions (and may even seem to enjoy causing pain to others). But we have to remember that harsh words and rough handling hurts – emotionally and physically. It hurts the child, and it hurts us too. It’s not really who we want to be—we feel guilty afterward and, usually, it doesn’t even solve the problem.

So, what should we do? There are no easy answers. As much as we don’t want to be harsh, we also don’t want to be too permissive. We need to guide our children by setting boundaries and teaching them appropriate behavior. The first step is to think deeply about what seems to be triggering the behavior. No child wants to be bad, and certainly not our precious *neshamales*. So there must be a reason why they are acting out. We can start by observing, speaking to others in similar situations, and trying out different types of intervention. Maybe they need extra sensory input, a better reward system, or more positive attention. If we invest effort to solve the underlying triggers, we will, hopefully, succeed in disciplining more positively and effectively.

I already knew these things, but hadn’t internalized them, so I’m glad I got reminded. The message continued to penetrate as my foot remained swollen and painful for many days. Every time I started to get upset with Avrumi, I would feel my leg, aching and sore, and remember – it hurts!

Sheva yi’pol tzadik v’kam. Sometimes we have to fall in order to rise again, better than before.

Wishing all of us much success in parenting calmly, pleasantly, and effectively!

Chayala

Raising.

Moishe:

A Story of Emunah & Bitachon

As told to Fraydel Dickstein by Leah Rubashkin

A Special Neshama

The Torah says: *Kol HaShivin Chavivin* (All sevenths are special). Moishe is our seventh child, and what a special *neshama* he is! Moishe was born twenty-eight years ago on 5 Tamuz, a summer baby. At the time of his birth, we were living in the Twin Cities of St. Paul, Minneapolis. My husband, together with his brothers, ran AgriProcessors, their father's meat packing plant. It was in Postville, Iowa, about three hours away. Our family could not live there, as we needed schools for our kids. Our oldest child was B"H already in fifth grade, so we lived in Minnesota, where they attended school. My husband came home for Shabbos, and would try to come home one night during the week as well. Shortly after Moishe was born, we moved to Postville, Iowa.

When Moishe was born, my husband went to visit him in the nursery. He noticed that our son looked blue, and he told the nurses to give him oxygen. Other than that incident, there was nothing else significant about his birth. But as Moishe grew up, we realized that he was delayed. We honestly didn't think much of it; I just thought that all children grow at their own rate. Probably a lot of other people were concerned about Moishe before I even realized there was something to be concerned about.

The Son-Rise Program

Postville, Iowa, was as "hick town" as you could imagine. To illustrate: The center of town consisted of one small street with a few stores. There were not many resources available for special needs children. Whatever we thought Moishe needed, we had to

provide on our own. At one point, our doctor gave him a "failure to thrive" diagnosis. Moishe received Early Intervention services, which did not turn out to be very helpful.

Being out in Iowa with nothing available, we needed a plan for Moishe. Discussing this with my friends and family, my sister-in-law told me about the Son-Rise program. We researched it and really liked what we heard. The program felt very in line with Torah values. They believe, as we do, that each child is a gift; it's a very *chesedik* approach. The idea is that we bond with our autistic children and show them that we accept them. Through this relationship, we teach them what they need to know, all in a very non-judgmental manner. There is a strong focus on positivity and seeing the good, which we connected to very strongly. It was exactly how we want to treat our Moishe.

When Moishe was six, I made a trip to Massachusetts to learn and be trained in the Son-Rise program. I remember calling my husband and telling him excitedly about the many beautiful concepts being discussed: how happiness is a choice, how special these children are, and how much we will grow from raising them. I came home invigorated and ready to implement the concepts I had learned.

When Moishe was approaching school age, I went to visit different special needs schools. One morning, I went to tour a public-school program for Moishe, and when I came home, my head was swimming. I felt so torn and confused; the environment I had seen was not the place for our special *neshama*. Remember, this was Iowa - home of the hillbillies, as remote from Judaism as possible. How could I place Moishe, my *heilige neshama*, in this very alien atmosphere?

Sitting there, I asked HaShem to please send me a sign about the right thing to do with Moishe. I noticed a book about *chinuch* next to me on the table, and opening to a random page, I started reading a note from the Lubavitcher Rebbe—saying that every Jewish child deserves a Jewish education!

I felt that HaShem was talking directly to me, so I made the decision to keep Moishe out of public school. In the morning, Moishe attended our own Jewish Nursery school, which we ran for the local frum families. After lunch, Moishe went home to the Son-Rise playroom we set up, where we worked on bonding with Moishe and teaching him different skills. The playroom was Moishe's window to the world and helped him make sense of his chaotic environment. My daughters and I spent lots of time in the playroom with Moishe. He responded so nicely that I took him out of our nursery school and did Son-Rise full time.

My husband and I set aside a special room in the basement for Moishe's playroom, with most things high up and out of his reach. The goal was for Moishe to request what he wanted to play with.

We ran his Son-Rise program in a very structured way, deciding together what Moishe's goals should be. There is a high level of parental involvement in the program; we observed how Moishe was doing across all settings, and witnessed his real growth.

While he played in the playroom, we charted in detail what happened there.

For example: "Moishe gave me eye contact for one minute while playing with the red car" or "Moishe sustained a n interaction for three minutes."

The Son-Rise program puts a strong emphasis on observing and giving feedback. Although there are no worksheets and workbooks, there are clear goals that we documented daily.

I constantly gave direction to Moishe's team of facilitators, especially with new staff. As per Son-Rise philosophy, we encouraged the team to be very positive and upbeat, and tried to help the facilitators grow into the best they could be. It was not easy to find the time, but I worked with Moishe's program when my other kids were in school.

We stuck with our Son-Rise program and saw beautiful strides. At six, Moishe had a few words like Mommy, *Totty*, up, down, and some food words. With the Son-Rise program, his language really started to take off. I feel the program revealed Moishe's personality, and we were so happy to get these glimpses of him.

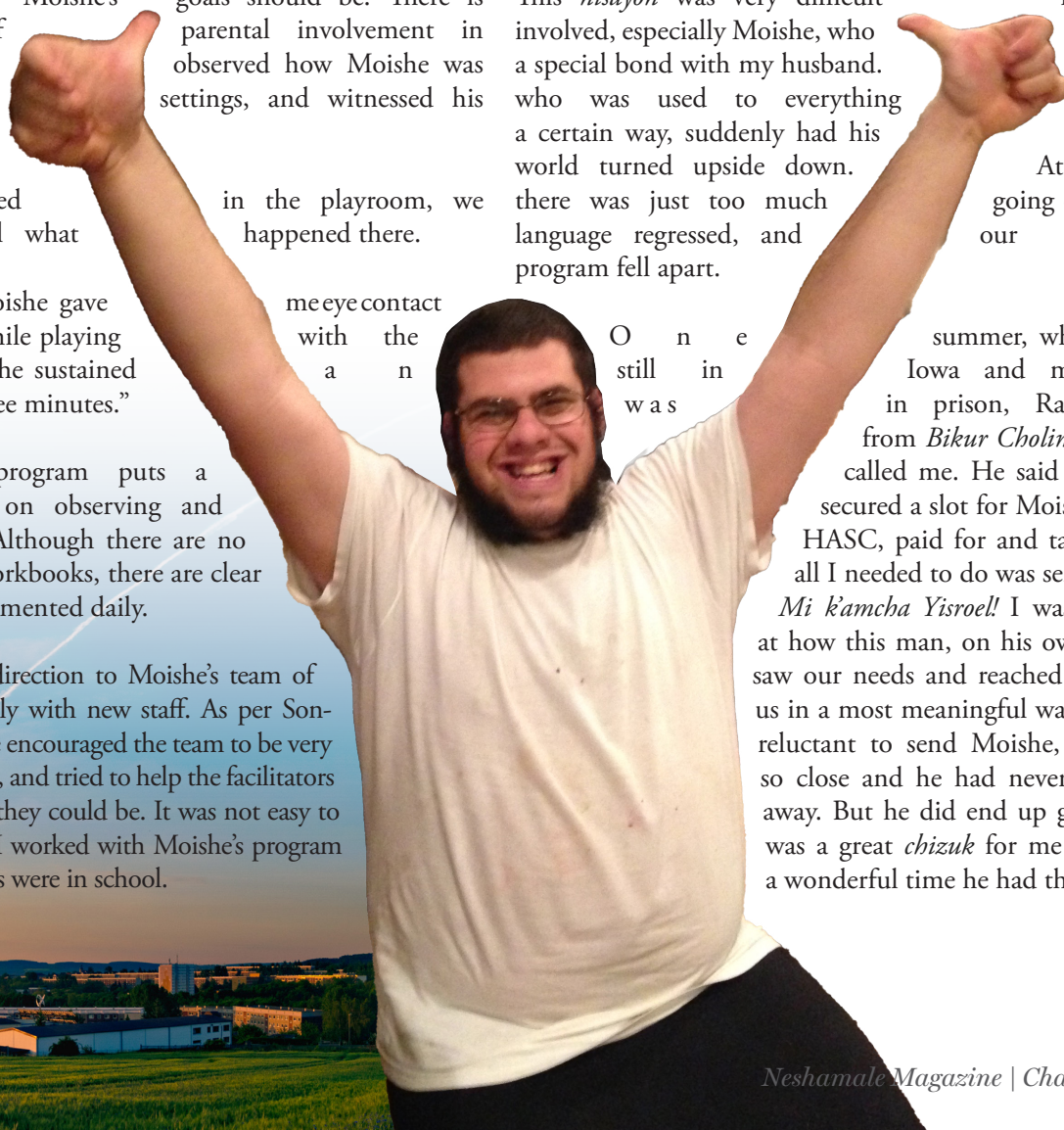
Although we no longer run Moishe's Son-Rise program, I try very hard to ensure that whoever works with Moishe has the Son-Rise program mindset.

A Difficult Nisayon

Our Son-Rise program lasted until my husband got arrested. In May of 2008 there was an immigration raid made on AgriProcessors, the family's meat packing plant. Although ultimately the false charges related to the illegal immigrants were thrown out, my husband was sentenced to 27 years in prison. There was a great outcry to right this injustice from within the legal community. With incredible *siyata d'Shmaya*, a miracle occurred, and President Trump pardoned my husband after eight years in prison. (You can read the full story in the Israel Bookshop book: *Shalom Mordechai Rubashkin*.)

This *nisayon* was very difficult for everyone involved, especially Moishe, who had such a special bond with my husband. Moishe, who was used to everything running a certain way, suddenly had his whole world turned upside down. At that point, there was just too much going on. Moishe's language regressed, and our Son-Rise program fell apart.

One summer, when we were in Iowa and my husband was in prison, Rabbi Lauber from *Bikur Cholim* in Monsey called me. He said that he had secured a slot for Moishe in Camp HASC, paid for and taken care of; all I needed to do was send him over. *Mi k'amcha Yisroel!* I was so amazed at how this man, on his own initiative, saw our needs and reached out to help us in a most meaningful way. I was very reluctant to send Moishe, as we were so close and he had never really been away. But he did end up going, and it was a great *chizuk* for me to see what a wonderful time he had that summer.



Living with Emunah

The *Eibeshter* puts people in different situations, to enable them to grow in the areas they need. He puts certain parents in certain places, and He handpicks each sibling and relative. We have a special needs son, and my other children have gained so much sensitivity. Everyone is filling the exact *tafkid* HaShem wants. The *nisayon* of having Moishe, in many ways, gave us the strength to deal with the *nisayon* of my husband's imprisonment.

When my husband was in prison, I constantly spoke to HaShem. Now I try to thank HaShem every day for the multitude of gifts He gives me. I thank Him for my husband being home with us. I thank Him for Moishe and all the good he has brought out in all of us. When my children were little, I could not finish *davening* every day. Some days, my *tefillah* would simply be: "HaShem, I want to stay connected to you." Truthfully, all mothers are like *Kohanim* working in the *Bais HaMikdash*, always intimately connected to HaShem. Even so, a *kapitel* of *Tehilim* can help foster our connection to HaShem even more. The more connected we are to HaShem, the better off we are.

Bitachon - Accepting the Daily Struggles

We struggled with volunteers. Cancellations happened often and were really inevitable. I tried to put things in HaShem's hands. My mindset was that if HaShem made the volunteer cancel, He must not want Moishe in the playroom today. So, I tried to be easy about it, and brought Moishe upstairs and gave him something else to do. It's all from HaShem; He alone knows what is best. If something doesn't work out, then this is exactly how it's supposed to be.

The *Yetzer haRa* is always challenging us. Often, once we are ok with one thing, we are then challenged with something else. Another tactic of the *Yetzer haRa* is to make us feel we should be doing better. It takes incredible strength, but we don't need to beat ourselves up. I had to feel that I did the best I could do with what I had.

Our goal is to strengthen our *Bitachon* muscle; every time we react with *bitachon*, we are doing that. A lot of the emotional

ups and downs would be so much easier if we had *bitachon* and realized HaShem is in control.

We have to let go of control.

The effect of this touches every single relationship we have.

Trust in HaShem is an unbelievable thing.

HaShem Has No Limits

After my husband came home, we were asked to join the Ben Ish *Shabbaton*. At this *Shabbaton* were many families with sick children. A mother came over to me at the *Shabbaton* and said: "You must have noticed my son. He is a very sick young man, attached to all kinds of machines. It's a miracle that we managed to bring him here. Until this Shabbos, I davened that HaShem should keep my son comfortable and without pain while he goes through this degenerating disease. But after hearing your husband talk about *bitachon*, I am starting to daven for a *refuah shelaymah*. HaShem can do anything!"

This got me thinking – do I daven every day that Moishe should have a *refuah shelaymah*? I realized the answer was no. Maybe I davened that he should be able to express himself, or that he should reach his potential, but I never davened that he should have a *refuah shelaymah*. From that point on, I decided not to limit myself, and I started davening for Moishe to have a *refuah shelaymah*.

Moishe has made great strides since, and each small step is a call for tremendous celebration. In the past few years, he started expressing his feelings and telling us what he feels about things. Once, Moishe came home and, in his very limited way, expressed to me that he wanted to do something another boy was doing. I was so excited that he could express a thought of more emotional value, that I tracked down the boy and asked his mother what the boy was doing. Then did what I could for Moishe's wishes to come true.

When my husband was released, Moishe was excited, but you could also sense an uneasiness about him. He didn't fully trust the reality — he was not sure that my husband would not disappear again. A week later, they sent my husband all his stuff — seventeen

boxes in all. When Moishe saw all the boxes, you could see him visibly relax. Then he believed it was real, that *Totty* was home for good. Due to his limited communication, it's always challenging to know what Moishe understands and what he doesn't. In this case, I was so happy to see that he did understand.

We never stop believing in our son's abilities and potential. Nowadays, Moishe is my kitchen manager. He washes the dishes, plans menus, and goes shopping with his helpers.

Recently, I asked my husband to start learning a *Halacha* a day with Moishe. I really believe he understands much more than we realize.

Family Dynamics

Our attitudes greatly impact everyone around us. If we accept and love our children, everyone around us will do the same. Sometimes, though, we just need to come up with solutions to practical issues.

When Moishe was young in Postville, he would wake up in the wee hours of the morning and go into our kitchen. We had a tremendous pantry and Moishe had a heyday in there! Picture oatmeal, cereal, rice, pasta, and applesauce all mushed together in a big mess – this was our daily greeting. When I told this to Son-Rise, they looked at me and said: “Why don't you put a door on your kitchen or lock the pantry?” It was so simple, but

somehow, we had never thought of it. Sometimes you need an outsider to show you the simplest solutions.

When my children, and now my grandchildren, would come crying that Moishe bothered them, I would first try to think of a practical solution. Let's say Moishe messed up a game they were playing. Telling them to play it on the table would not work with Moishe around; perhaps they could go into a room with a locked door instead. I try to be creative with solutions. Yom Tov is challenging, as it is overstimulating for Moishe, and he often gets frustrated and takes it out on the grandchildren.

I try to make things positive, to convey how lucky we are to have Moishe in our family, and what a gift he is. During the Corona lockdown, we got a lot of care packages from local organizations. I would give the gifts to the kids and say: “This is a present from Moishe.”

When my boys were younger and they did something not so nice to Moishe, I had to admonish them. I told them that our family was chosen to host Moishe, and if we are not nice to him, we are going to have to answer to HaShem about why we did what we did. I explained to them that Moishe was sent to our family to help both him and us to be the best we can be!

May we all be *zoche* to raise all of our children to go in the *darchei HaShem*, to inspire them at whatever level they are on, and may we be *zoche* to see the *Geulah Shlaymah* now!





On the Lighter Side...

The Chanukah Gift Giving Guide for Parents of Special Needs Children

Moishy's Mommy

Chanukah is a time to give thanks to the One above for saving us and performing miracles for us. Nowadays, this has somehow evolved into our spending eight days frantically trying to thank every person, big and small, in our lives. Since I have already done this for a few years, I am now an expert Gift-Giver (GG) and would like to share my experience with you. For the uninitiated, there are four simple steps to follow:

1. Decide how many presents to buy. In my case, sometime before Chanukah (preferably a month before, but usually the night before, just as the menorah is being set up), I sit down with a pen and paper and write down everyone I can think of who has helped Moishy this past year. This can be somewhat overwhelming, so I think of one topic at a time. I start with school and think: teacher, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist. Then things start veering slightly: He also has a co-teacher. I have no idea what she does and have never met her, but with such a prestigious position she should probably be on my list. There are also many other therapists who work with Moishy in school, such as his feeding therapist, aqua therapist, floor time therapist, ABA therapist, so I better add them on. (There's also the music teacher, the security guard, and the janitor, but even I know how to draw the line somewhere!)

My son is also lucky enough to have, not one, but two shadows: one in the morning and another after lunch. Yes, of course I should give something to both of them! The only problem is that now I am giving to four out of the six adults who are always in the classroom. This seems exclusive; perhaps I should add the two other shadows who do not work directly with Moishy—except it's a bit strange, because I don't even know their names. Come to think of it, I don't know a lot of these people's names! (Tip for the name challenged: just write "Morah Leah" or "#1 PT"). This has me currently holding at nine or eleven giftees, depending on what I decide to do about those shadows.

Next I think about Moishy's volunteers. This should be easy: one for each day of the week (I did not say that they all actually show up every day of the week—only that they are supposed to). One of them comes twice a week, but I'm not giving her doubles (though she actually deserves it—maybe I should?),

and on those longer summer Shabboses more than one girl comes, so I need to factor that in. The question is what do I do if the "official Monday girl" is Raizy, but Raizy usually doesn't show up. Sometimes her younger sisters Chany or Elisheva show up. Do I give a gift to Raizy because she is "official," or be nice and give to them all? Lots of names and lots of question marks. And I mustn't forget the two girls who arrange for all the volunteers. So now I am holding at nine to eleven plus nine to eleven. I'm not so bad at math, but this equation is sort of stumping me.

2. Decide what present to buy. You are looking for something original, presentable and affordable. The reason this is difficult is because your list is comprised of people from every age bracket, every nationality, and every personality. As far as I know, the only things that are universal are money and chocolate. So, you can wrap chocolates with money or put a check into a box of chocolates, but that's about as original as you are going to get with these two ideas. I'm not telling you my idea, because then it won't be original anymore! Once you hit upon that perfect present, take pains to guard it zealously (I am currently working on getting my gift idea copyrighted).

What I will tell you, is that anything that has to be pre-ordered should be done with enough time for it to arrive by Zos Chanukah, or you will be paying through the roof for overnight shipping (not talking from experience, just saying). Keep in mind that these people on your list get gifts from other parents also, so they probably have a lot of salad bowls, mugs, diffusers, and chocolate. Nonetheless, you can never really have enough chocolate, or money for that matter. That's another reason to go with the cash and chocolate idea. A very non-simple idea is to buy different things for different people. I don't recommend this (and I am talking from experience!).

3. Write a card. Everyone knows that the main point of this whole headache situation is to express your appreciation. Writing a generic "Thanks for being the best!" is just not enough. Specify what it is that you appreciate, whether it's their time, skills or attitude. This is the perfect time to insert what you wish they would do, too. As in: "Thank you for always coming on time to pick up Moishy." Poems are





Lets Get Educated

Son-Rise Program

Fraydel Dickstein

What is the Son-Rise Program?

The Son-Rise Program is a child-centered educational approach, using a step-by-step process to inspire the child's love of learning. Parents are their child's main teachers and therapists, and the home is the nurturing environment that helps him improve in all areas of learning, development, communication, and skill acquisition.

Who developed it?

Son-Rise was developed by Barry Neil Kaufman and Samahria Lyte Kaufman after their son was diagnosed as severely autistic and said to be incurable. It is said that he had a complete recovery. Kaufman is currently the director of The Autism Center of America and has been teaching the program to parents and family members since 1983.

Whom is program meant to help?

Children and adults with Asperger's, autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and general developmental challenges, are all potential candidates who can be helped by this program.

How does it work?

The premise is that the world is too overwhelming for the autistic child's sensitive sensory system to process. Instead of forcing him into our world, we create an environment that minimizes sensory input. For example, we meet the child

where he is at, using a process called "joining." In practice, we do what the child is doing, until he somehow acknowledges our presence. For example, if the child is flapping his arms, we flap ours, until he looks at us or indicates he is aware of our presence. When this happens, we do something to interact with him, such as saying "Hi," or doing something to motivate him. If he reacts to our overture, we go further and teach more.

How much does it cost:

The Son Rise Program is now offered online in numerous formats. They have live zoom options, as well as pre-recorded options. Beginner's courses start at around \$1850. They have numerous other options and pricing varies per course.

Does it really work?

Although there are no independent clinical trials or scientific studies of Son-Rise to prove its success, there have been many documented success stories. More than 30,000 families from over 120 countries have participated in the Son-Rise Program in the past 30 years.

Please note that this article is for informational purposes only. Neshamale Magazine does not endorse any particular type of therapy or program.

nice, but only if you have the ability! If you need to send along a pronunciation key in order for the rhythm to work out, better just write it out in sentences. Depending on how many cards you are writing, you may want to consider typing it out once and then just changing the appropriate words. This makes it less personal (they know that you did that!), though probably more legible.

4. Present time! Once Chanukah arrives, pack your car and drive the loot to school. Order a luggage cart in advance or make a few trips to haul it all in. Give them out with smiles and compliments. I personally have a very strong minhag to give out presents only on the last day of Chanukah, so I

can enjoy seeing them all wrapped and ready on my dresser waiting patiently until the last day (Ha ha, don't I wish!).

Note: Don't expect thank you cards in return. Though, if someone does send you one, are you supposed to thank them for their thank you? I haven't figured that one out yet; I'm still deciding how many presents I need to buy.



The Other Side of the Desk

| *CBC Crash Course*

Yehudis Blavin, PA-C

Q: I get confused when looking at blood draw results. Could you please give us a crash course on when a CBC (Complete Blood Count) result is more viral or bacterial and when counts are of concern? Sometimes, when I look at the results and compare them to the “expected range,” the hemoglobin or neutrophil levels seem low, but the doctor says everything looks great. Why is that?

A: In general, blood tests are interpreted in two ways: 1) based on the objective numbers and 2) based on the particular patient and his/her individual situation. There are certain numbers that are “too out of range to ignore,” while other numbers may be out of range, but are not concerning. It is very confusing, so your question is justified!

Because you mention a CBC, I will quickly go over that test.

In general, the four main numbers on the CBC are: 1) the white blood cell count (WBC), which raises concern for infection if the result is high or very low, 2) the hemoglobin and 3) hematocrit levels, which tell the amount of blood in the body, and 4) the level of platelets, which are necessary for clotting.

There are other blood components in the CBC that give clues to a clinician as to the kind of anemia or infection a patient has, but these levels are complicated and hard for the average person to interpret. (Because you asked, a high neutrophil count can be associated with a bacterial infection, and a high lymphocyte count may symbolize a viral infection. However, a non-medical person should not use this to interpret a CBC, as results may be variable based on the particular patient and situation.)

Another important blood test is the “chemistry,” or Basic Metabolic Panel (BMP). It measures the levels of important electrolytes in the body (like sodium, potassium, glucose, etc.), and also gives information about the patient’s kidney function.

When interpreting any blood test, the patient situation is always taken into account. So, for example, since older people are commonly anemic (ie: have decreased blood levels), a lower-than-normal hemoglobin/hematocrit level will not always prompt further work up. On the other hand, a young person should not be anemic, so if their CBC shows significant anemia, a work up would be necessary.

As another example, two people may have high glucose (sugar) levels on their blood tests. However, if one of them is diabetic, the out-of-range result may be within the expected range for him, while for a non-diabetic, that same number would be concerning.

Another thing to keep in mind is that a clinician evaluates blood test results in the context of the patient’s physical exam. A patient with an abnormal blood test result who is having symptoms would be more concerning than a patient with the same test result who has no symptoms or exam abnormalities.

In terms of the amount a result must be “off” to be concerning; usually, that is dependent on the particular test and patient. All blood tests have “reference ranges,” but numbers that are out of range (even seemingly significantly so) may still be close enough to normal to not be concerning.

For example, the normal blood platelet range is 150,000 to

300,000. That is a huge range! So if someone's platelet level is 140,000, even though it is out of range by 10,000 (which seems like a lot!), it is close enough to normal that a patient can usually just get another CBC in the future to monitor it. However, if the platelet result is 50,000, that is enough out of range for the patient to require another work-up to find out why their platelet level is so low.

Because lab test results are so variable and patient-specific, they are best interpreted by a clinician, who will take the patient, the lab test, and the particular scenario into consideration and develop a treatment plan accordingly.

Yehudis Blavin is a Physician Assistant who specializes in internal medicine and surgery.

Please note: The Information expressed in this column is for educational purposes-only and should not substitute for the advice of your personal medical professional.

Do you have a medical question that you would like answered? Send in your question to Neshamale and we may feature it in a future article.

Chizuk Boost #2

Rabbi Baruch Rabinowitz

The *Ba'al HaTurim* comments that the word ישראל (Israel) stands for יש ששים רבוא – There are 600,000 letters in the Torah. The *Arizal* points out that 600,000 *Yiddishe neshamos* were created, from which all future *neshamos* emanated. Thus, each letter of the Torah corresponds to one *Yiddishe neshama*.

There are many interesting *halachos* regarding the letters of the Torah. Each letter must stand by itself, it cannot touch any other letter, and it needs to be surrounded by the white of the parchment. If one letter touches another letter, or if a letter is missing or misshapen or broken, the entire *Sefer Torah* is פסול, invalid. Each letter needs to be as perfect as possible, shaped perfectly and in sync with the other letters, to take its place in a complete *Sefer Torah*. So, too, 600,000 individuals come together to form one Klal Yisroel.

However, there are various times in the Torah when we write the letters somewhat differently than usual. It could be a larger size font, for example in the *pasuk* of *Shema Yisroel* where the ו and the ת are extra-large; it can be a smaller size font, such as the א in the word ויקרא, the first word in *Chumash Vayikra*. Or it can even be the ל of שלום in *Parshas Pinchos* where the ל is *katuah*, split. These differences are *halacha l'Moshe m'Sinai*. Each of those letters *must* be written in that way. The *shleimus*, the completeness, of the Torah depends on the letters written exactly as Hashem commands. The big ones have to be larger, the small ones have to be smaller, and the ל of שלום has to be split.

The *Mishna* (*Sandedrin* 67b) tells us that since *Adam HaRishon* was created as an individual, every single member of *Klal Yisroel* is obligated to declare, “בשבילי נברא העולם, the world was created for me. I am an *Olam Malei*.”

This applies to every single human being – ones that are “normal size,” ones that are “larger size” and even ones that are “smaller size,” people who remain *kitanim* their whole lives who will never get to the stage of *gadlus*. They are the small letters.

Hashem selected the א to be the small letter in *Vayikra* to tell us that *alufo shel olam* – the אחד - Hashem Himself, is hiding within that *katan*. And even if a letter is split, cut, or seemingly disfigured; which, if it were to appear in other *pesukim* of the Torah would actually make it *pasul* – Hashem is sending us a message: The world is created for that letter as well.

My Rebbe, HaRav Moshe Shapiro zt”l, used to say that even the child who lies in a crib in a vegetative state, incapable of interacting with anybody else in the world, that child also has the right to say “בשבילי נברא העולם, the world is created for me.

If I am blessed with a child who will remain a *katan* his entire life, my job is to look at him and know that, hiding in that *katan*, is א - is *alufo shel olam*, is Hashem Himself. Hiding in that *katuah*, in that broken letter, is a person for whom Hashem said: “בשבילי נברא העולם”

Hashem created the world for the child who has a developmental disability as well; the entire world. And if that child needs my assistance, then that child is being sent down to this world for me to become the best that I can be, to embrace him with love and joy. I'm doing my part in sustaining the world - my world, the world of my child, and Hashem's world, too.

This Chizuk Boost is excerpted and adapted from one of Rabbi Baruch Rabinowitz's weekly 10 minute Chizuk shiurim for parents of children with special needs. There are now over 130 recordings, which can be accessed on Kol HaLashon (718-906-6400, press 1, 4, 97, 2).



Dreidel: 8 days, 8 ways



Chanukah is one of my favorite *Yomim Tovim*, because we get to spend quality family time. It's cold and dark outside, which means everyone's happy to be at home. I try to do a small family activity each night, after candle-lighting and supper. I especially enjoy when Avrumi can join his siblings in some way and have fun together with them. It's not always easy to include him, but with some thoughtful planning, we can usually think of a creative way to involve him. Playing *dreidel* is always a favorite, but not for eight nights straight! Here are eight activities that all use a *dreidel*, but with some twists. See which ones will suit your special child's interest and abilities.

- 1. Oh, Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel:** Start off the first night playing with the good old-fashioned rules. Use money, chocolate coins, or small candies. Winners get to keep/eat their loot.
- 2. Dress up Dreidel:** Here's a wacky version: Have all players come to the table prepared with four items that can be worn. Each item should begin with the same sounds as the letters on the *dreidel*. For example, you could bring Neon green socks, a pair of Glasses, a Hello Kitty mitten, and a SHtrielmel. Everyone takes a turn spinning the *dreidel*. Whichever letter you spin, you put on the corresponding item. Continue doing rounds of *dreidel*. Whoever puts on all four items first is the winner!
- 3. Spinning Contest:** Whose *dreidel* can spin the longest? You'd be surprised how much kids enjoy this one and how long they continue their competition. You can do this tournament style to come up with a Grand Prize winner.
- 4. Timed Dreidel:** This one is perfect for a short, exciting game. Set a visible timer for a predetermined amount of time. Start playing *dreidel* in the usual manner. Whenever the timer rings, the game stops there. As you start to run out of time, everyone will be scrambling to win as much as they can. The last 60 seconds can be quite intense—and fun!
- 5. Dreidel Scattergories:** Have each letter of the *dreidel* stand for a category. (Chanukah songs, Chanukah foods, etc.) When the player spins, he must shout out a word in that category. It gets harder as you go, because you can't repeat what was already said. Last one left in is the winner.
- 6. Spin to Win:** Everyone will need a pen and paper to keep track of their points. Everyone starts out with 500 points. When the player spins, he calculates points as follows: *Nun* gets 0, *Gimmel* gets 100, *Hei* gets 50 and *Shin* has to subtract 75. At the end of the game, the player with the most points wins. You can stop the game there or continue on to a pre-planned auction. Hold up prizes and let the players bid on them with their points.
- 7. Spin Art:** Give every child a box or a box cover that has sides that are about 2 inches high. Place a piece of paper inside each box. Set up plates of colored paint. Each child dips their *dreidel* into the paint, then spins it on the paper in the box. Wipe off each paint color before using a different one. Keep adding colors and spinning to end up with a gorgeous masterpiece!
- 8. Nosh your way around:** Fill up four large bowls with snacks such as popcorn, pretzels, chips, and bissli, and set them up in the middle of the table. Designate each snack to correspond to each of the four letters on the *dreidel*. The first player spins and starts eating the corresponding snack. When another player lands on the same letter, they take over for the first eater. Continue the game in this manner. (Tip: Play this version of *dreidel* AFTER supper, or no one will have an appetite for the meal!)



Q

IN SESSION

Dear Shira,

Regarding Neshamale's grandparent theme, what advice can you give to encourage my parents' involvement in our special needs child's life when they find it difficult. As grandparents, they don't have the same "tools" to deal with this nisayon that we do and, I feel, they take it much harder. My parents just pity me and feel sorry for me. Could you please address this?

A

Dear "Sandwich Generation" Parent,

Yes, I know that you did not sign your name that way, but I am really glad that you noticed to whom I addressed this letter! I'm calling you that, because you are "in between" both the older and the younger generation; dealing with your relationship with your parents, while at the same time, busy with raising your children.

Due to medical inroads and other factors, our older generation has been blessed with longevity. The average life span for women is in the 80s, and a few years less for men. How fortunate you are to have parents, who are grandparents of your children, and who hopefully will be there for you and your children for many years to come, *im yirtzeh Hashem*. Grandparents and great-grandparents who are actively involved in their descendants' lives provide endless benefits to both 'bookends' of the family.

I do not know the specific concerns of your child, so my advice to you will be more generalized. As such, my perspective will be applicable to other readers of *Neshamale Magazine*, as well:

Never underestimate how much your parents want to be involved and help you, so allow them opportunities according to their capacity. If they have health issues and can't do strenuous activities, brainstorm with them what would be meaningful to them, then follow through with their suggestions. The more involved they can be, the more purpose they will experience, and they will no longer feel like 'outsiders.'

When grandparents are included more frequently, they will gain a better understanding of your situation—the negatives and the positives—so it won't just be a "pity" party from spectators; they'll have a better picture of what's happening and will be more invested.

While your parents want to protect you, and you want to protect them, the missing 'puzzle pieces' can be very stressful. Although you might not want to share all the details with them, try to maintain an open, honest dialogue. You might be surprised at their reaction.

If it is too difficult for them to be involved with your child with special needs, ask how they would like to be involved and help with the rest of the family. No one can give unconditional TLC (tender loving care) like grandparents. Yes, even more than parents!

May you have the *koach* and fortitude to be the "middle" of the sandwich generation, for many more years! Grab the opportunity while you have this privilege! Wishing you much *nachas* from this child and the rest of your family,

Shira Speiser, LCSW

Shira Speiser is a social worker in Lakewood, New Jersey and has helped children and families for many years. You can contact her with your own individual concerns and needs at: (732) 367-1503 or shira732@live.com

Understanding & Affecting Our Child's Behavior

Rabbi Ezra Klein

When our daughter Nechama was approximately three years old, an incident occurred that stands out as perhaps the most important lesson I learned about understanding our special child. Her language was considerably delayed, as is typical for children with Down syndrome, and everyone told us we needed to check out her hearing.

We took her to an ear specialist for a full examination, which included a hearing test with a tuning fork. He held the vibrating tuning fork right next to her ear to see her reaction. She had no reaction whatsoever. He turned to us and said triumphantly: "It's clear she's not hearing; it's impossible that she wouldn't react to the loud sound vibrating in her ear." He showed us how loud it was by holding it next to our ears. It was extremely loud, and I understood his point. However, as we left the office, I turned to my wife and commented: "I'm not convinced. It could be she did hear it; she just reacts differently than typical people do." After more doctor and hearing center visits, it turned out that her hearing was fine. She just reacts differently than typical people do.

We tend to understand our special child according to our understanding of human nature. Yes, we know that there are some obvious differences between our child and typical children. We think it stops there, but it doesn't. Our precious children are wired completely differently than we are. This is important for us to absorb, in order to avoid the frustration common among us parents. "What is his problem? Why is he doing this weird behavior?" His behavior is only "weird" relative to our sense of normal among typical people. He is behaving totally normally (most of the time!) according to *his* sense of what is normal. Realizing this will help curb our frustration and anger when he doesn't behave the way we would like.

Even more important is the fact that any type of *chinuch* or behavior modification has to be tailored to his way of thinking. Typical parenting and educational methods will not work well in many situations. This is not to say that typical parenting should be thrown out the window. Much of our customary parenting is still relevant and helpful for our special child. We

just need to know that we will often need to modify, or even use completely different techniques, to achieve the result we want.

So, how do we get our children to behave? Parenting even typical children is one of the most challenging jobs in the world, with no simple answers. Figuring out how to modify the behavior of our special children is challenging. I will share some techniques that have worked for me, and hopefully you can use some of them to help your child.

One of the big challenges of educating our children is that, because of their disability, they don't always understand what we are telling them, or why it is important for them to improve their behavior. Sometimes we feel like this leaves us with no other option than to raise our voice, which doesn't work well for anyone. We have found that calmly explaining in detail what we want and why we want it, helps, even though the child may not understand everything we have been saying. Try to establish eye contact while speaking to them. Even though they may not really get our point, they understand that we are telling them something that is important, and that we are concerned about their welfare. Although it seems illogical for this to help if they don't completely understand what we are saying, we explained that these children are wired differently. Speaking to them in this manner may not always be effective, but "sometimes" is also success.

Another technique that has worked with our daughter is creating Social Stories. The main idea behind this, is to write about the desired behavior in a narrative form, rather than in an instructive form. In other words, we write what people do, or should do, rather than writing: "*You* should do this" (a sample will follow). This makes the instruction nonthreatening. Often, it's more effective if we write it in the first person, making the child the star of the story.

Reading the narrative often, gives the child many opportunities to absorb the concepts. Write only a few sentences on each page. With a younger child, one or two sentences on each page is fine. You can also include simple illustrations or photos of the child modeling the desired behavior. There are even software programs on the Internet that may help with this. Don't try to create the perfect social story; it's better to keep it simple and have something to use quickly. We created some simple stories without any pictures, and they were quite effective.

The literature suggests social stories are effective with many types of children with special needs, including those on the autism spectrum. Down syndrome children, in particular, enjoy them, since many of them don't seem to mind reading (or watching) the same thing over and over again. This "quirk" can be of great assistance to the child's parents, who may be able to read the same social story every day, or every couple of

days, without a struggle. It also helps if your child can also read along with you, or even read it by herself, if she so desires.

What follows is a social story I wrote for our daughter, who struggled to behave properly (in a mainstream setting with an aide), due largely to her not understanding much of what was being taught. Each chapter denotes a new page in the “book.” Notice how it starts on a positive note, motivating her to read the rest (You should be able to figure out which behaviors we were targeting!).

Title Page: Watch and Copy The Fun Way to Have Friends and Be Liked by Everyone!

Chapter 1: Do I want friends?

Do I want people to like me?

Do I want girls to be my friend?

Do I want people to enjoy being together with me?

Of course, I do! Everyone does.

Chapter 2: Watch and Copy — and Blend In [WAC]

In order for people to like me and feel good about being with me, I have to “blend in.”

This means that I should try to do what everyone else is doing.

If I do things that are very different from what others are doing, they will not feel comfortable with me.

They will not want to spend time with me. They will not want to talk to me.

I don’t want that to happen.

So, I will make sure to do what everyone else is doing.

I will always try to **Watch** and **Copy** what others are doing.

Chapter 3: Interesting Examples

For example, the other girls in my school don’t use the elevator; they walk up the stairs. If I use the elevator, I will be doing something very different. I will **Watch** and **Copy** what other girls are doing.

If the teacher tells the girls to take out their Siddurim or Chumashim, they all take them out. I will **Watch** and **Copy**, and take out whatever they are taking out. This will help me blend in and have more friends.

The girls in my class don’t do other things while Morah is teaching. They have the right books or sefarim out, and they are following along and listening carefully. They also daven carefully, following along in their Siddurim. I will **Watch** and **Copy** them. I will do what I am supposed to do during class. This will help me blend in and gain friends!

Chapter 4: Even More Examples!

The girls in my class stay in the classroom when the teacher is teaching. They don’t leave the room during class, unless a teacher gives them permission. I will also stay in class, in order to blend in. When I get a Yetzer HaRa to leave the class, I will **Watch** and **Copy** the other girls, and just stay in the classroom like all the other girls. This will help me blend in and be liked by the other girls and the teachers.

Other girls fill in the sheets the teacher gives out. They don’t color other things during class. They also take notes by writing the words the teacher is saying. I will also try to blend in and write only what I am supposed to. I can do my own sheets if a teacher tells me it’s okay. I can try to write some words the teacher is saying. Even if I can’t write all the words, I can still write some of them, and then I will blend in.

continued on page 17



Cutting Through *All the Noise*

Yitti Berkovic

When my oldest son Naftali was born, weighing less than two pounds, I almost laughed aloud when the team of specialists rushed to my bedside to seek my consent before scheduling some emergency medical procedures. Who, me? Did I look old enough to provide consent? I was barely old enough to drink!

And every time one of the nurses referred to me as “the mother” and asked me even the most general of questions, I felt like a child playing dress-up, clomping around in my mother’s high-heels. I wasn’t fooling anyone, least of all myself. I had *no idea* what I was doing. *It’s normal*, I reassured myself. *My baby is premature. My motherly intuition will kick in when I reach my due date.* (Ha!).

In the meantime, I relied on the other women in my life – my mother, my mother-in-law, and friends who were mothers longer than I was (their babies were already crawling!) – to be the wise womanly voices in my life.

They told me what I shouldn’t eat because I was nursing. They reminded me to take it easy and allow my body to recover before even thinking about diet or exercise. They convinced me that stressful moments called for chocolate, or for sneaking out to get a manicure (and who could argue with that?). I was happy to have people older, smarter, and more experienced than I was making decisions for me – honestly, it felt safer than making decisions myself.

But then some of the women started giving advice that didn’t sit well with me. “Take pictures of your baby!” they urged me. “He’s your first child! You’re going to kick yourself later when you don’t have pictures of your time in the NICU!” It was reasonable advice; who could argue about the necessity of baby pictures? And yet I stubbornly resisted.

It was a feeling – sharp and visceral – that stopped me from picking up my camera. I loved my baby – deeply, wholly, fully – but I didn’t want to remember him this way. He was tiny and fragile. His skin was translucent. There was no fat on his body. He could not control his own body temperature, could not

suck from a bottle, did not even have a *name*. There would be a time for pictures, in a few weeks or in a few months, when he looked like a baby who elicited smiles and coos instead of gasps. Now was not that time.

But as loudly as my inner voice sounded in my head, it got lost beneath the din of other voices. “Of course you should take pictures!” they insisted. “You’ll want pictures to show him one day, so he can appreciate the miracle that he is. You’ll need pictures to show his *kallah, im yirtza Hashem!*” My inner voice was drowned out by the drumbeat of popular opinion. What did I know? These women had been mothers for much longer than me!

Reluctantly, I took the camera we’d received as a wedding gift (yes, it was the era before cellphone cameras) and snapped a few pictures of his tiny body, or at least the parts of his body not obscured by wires or tubes. I winced when I saw the translucency of his skin, even more jarring under the camera’s white flash, and I winced at the frailty in his tiny frame. It didn’t feel right to me, but I did it anyway. I quieted my own feelings to do what everyone else thought was right.

But then, before I had a chance to develop the film (yes, I’m that old!), a funny thing happened. One of my friends came to visit me at the hospital, but she had some trouble convincing the front desk to let her into the NICU. To help my friend get her visitor’s pass, I left Naftali’s crib for maybe *three minutes*, but by the time I returned to the little nook Naftali and I called home, my camera had disappeared.

It had been stolen; snatched by someone who had watched me walk away. Here’s the weird part: I wasn’t even upset. Instead, I did a little happy dance (I think my friend thought the stress had caused me to lose my mind), and I thanked Hashem for what felt like a beautiful gift.

Yes, the camera was expensive, and on our *kollel* budget, it wouldn’t be easily replaced. But to me, trying to navigate the overwhelming maze of brand-new motherhood, it felt like Hashem was sending me a sign: *Yitti, you were given binah yiseira for a reason. Listen to your inner voice. Trust your instincts.*

And trust my instincts I did—I didn’t take another picture of Naftali until he hit the all-important milestone of four pounds. By then I thought he was *huge*. There was a little roundness to his cheeks, a little fullness in his arms and legs. He was ready for his photo op. Now, so many years later, when I look at his baby pictures, I can’t visualize how tiny and fragile he once was. Instead, I only remember him the way I want to remember him, and that, too, feels like a gift delivered straight from Heaven.

*Instead, I did a little
happy dance, and I
thanked Hashem for what
felt like a beautiful gift.*

Baruch Hashem, it has been a while since I walked the halls of the NICU. Naftali just celebrated his fifteenth birthday, and though motherhood has been lifechanging, it is fair to say that my motherly instincts did not come roaring in after we reached his due date. On too many days, I still feel like I'm clomping around in my mother's high-heeled shoes (despite those stubborn gray hairs I hide under my snood). I still feel like I am groping my way through the dark; each new age and stage of child-rearing feels intimidatingly foreign.

But thanks to the camera that miraculously vanished, I better understand how easy it is for our instincts to be drowned out by other people's opinions. And I fight – hard and stubbornly – to hear and respect my inner voice.

"He's ready for sleepaway camp, you know," a well-meaning person assures me about my son, and I feel pressured to fill out an application. *Inner voice:* "No, he isn't ready. I know him better than anyone."

"She really shouldn't be going to bed so late," someone else says chidingly, and I feel a smidgen of shame. *Inner voice:* "This isn't a fight I want to pick with my daughter right now. I will deal with her bedtime when I think it's necessary."

"You allow all that junk food in your house?" someone asks in horror, and I'm tempted to throw all the chips into the trash. *Inner voice:* "Everything in moderation. I don't need to apologize for what is in my pantry."

Sometimes I waver and often I buckle, but always I try to remind myself: "Yitti, you were given *binah yiseira* for a reason. Listen to your inner voice. Trust your instincts. Because that's what *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* wants you to do."

This article was originally printed in The Voice of Lakewood.

continued from page 15, Understanding and Affecting Our Child's Behavior

Chapter 5: What If I Forget?

If I ever forget to do what others are doing, I can just look around and **Watch** and **Copy** what other girls are doing.

I will be happy if a *Morah* reminds me to "**WAC**" (**Watch** and **Copy**) since that will help me have friends, and I want people to like me and be my friend. A *Morah* will sometimes just raise her three fingers to show me a "**W**" 🖐️. This will remind me to look around, **Watch** and **Copy** what the other girls are doing. Or, she may just write a **W** on a piece of paper and show it to me. This will also remind me to **Watch** what the other girls are doing and **Copy** them in order to blend in. I am very lucky I have such nice *Morahs* who remind me to **Watch** and **Copy**.

Chapter 6: When Should I Not Watch and Copy?

The only time I should NOT **Watch** and **Copy** is when I see people who are doing *avairos*. I should never do an *avairah* just because other people are doing it. I know I only want to do what Hashem wants me to do.

WAC— Watch and Copy —it's so much fun!

You don't have to a celebrated author to write a social story. Give it a try! If you would like a social story for a specific behavior for your child, and you feel incapable of doing it yourself, let us know at *Neshamale* and we may write one just for you!

Rabbi Klein is using a pen name. He can be contacted through Neshamale Magazine.

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WOW! MOMENTS

compiled by Fraydel Dickstein

Hashem is with us every moment of the day, whether we see it or not. Here are some beautiful stories that make us all stop and say "Wow!" – Thank You Hashem!

I overheard my 10 year old singing beautiful camp songs. He told me, with a mixture of shyness and pride, that his learning *rebbe* always tells him what a good head he has and how talented he is. He told his *rebbe* that he has a special needs brother. His *rebbe* told him that his talent must be in the *zechus* of his brother. His *rebbe* then shared with him that he, too, has a special needs brother.

Thank you, Hashem, for enriching my childrens' lives and sending special *shilichim* who further enrich their lives!

My neighbor called me two hours before Yom Kippur to ask me what our plan was for Avrumi. I said: "Hashem will help!" She didn't like that response very much. I told her that I was not comfortable asking girls to help when they belong in *shul* davening. I would just have to manage on my own and that's it. She responded: "Avrumi is a *heilige neshama*. Hashem chose you to be his mother, and He chose me to be your neighbor. We are going to help you."

At 10:45 Yom Kippur morning, my neighbor knocked on my door and took Avrumi home with her. Thirty minutes later, a different neighbor, a girl, knocked on my door and asked to take him. I told her she could "fight it out" with the other neighbor. I didn't see my son until five thirty! I knew that on Yom Kippur, those davening in *shul* are compared to *malachim*, but I think that people like my neighbors definitely qualify as "angels" as well.

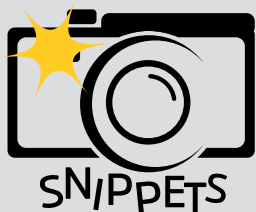
On *Simchas Torah* we brought our special needs son, Dovi, to *hakafos* along with our other children. After throwing him up in the air for "Moshe Emes" and dancing a bit with him, I had to focus my attention on my other children, so I put Dovi in his wheelchair and locked him in place off to the side (out of pulling range of *tallaisim*, glasses, and pre-upsheren boys' hair). I then danced around with my other sons. As we came back around, I was momentarily shocked to see Dovi's wheelchair gone! A quick glance around the room calmed my fears, as I saw one of the *gabbaim* wheeling him through a circle of men and boys joyously dancing around him. Dovi was laughing so hard I thought his lungs would burst! The *gabbai* explained to me that he noticed that Dovi was rocking back and forth in his wheelchair, looking like he wanted to go dance, so he hoped I didn't mind that he took him to do just that! *Ashrei ha'am shekacha lo!*

This one is from Adina Cahn, who designs and lays out our beautiful magazine:

I want you to know what *hashgacha pratis* your magazine has! B"H, it was really hectic at my house before *Rosh HaShana*, between my sister's wedding, me being sick with what I think was Covid, the kids starting school, a little baby at home, and Yom Tov coming. I really wasn't sure that I would get the magazine out on time; I figured it wouldn't be ready until *Succos*. However, I'd been told that *Neshamale* readers were waiting for the *chizuk*, so I pushed myself to find the time to finish it and get it in early.

Well, B"H I sent it in when I did, because on Friday the hard drive on my computer crashed. By *Motzei Shabbos* my computer wouldn't read any of my files. On Sunday I sent it in to my repairman, who didn't have much hope of retrieving anything. I viewed it as a *kapparah* before *Rosh HaShana*.

The *Tishrei* edition of *Neshamale* had not been backed up. If I hadn't managed to get it in, I would have had to start from scratch, and the magazine would never have been ready in time!



**Rav Elya Ber Wachtfogel Shlita
getting a Bracha from a special
needs boy.**





The Letter My Son Would Write

R. Schreiber

Dear Zaidy and Bubby,

I cannot talk to tell you how much I appreciate you; I cannot hold a pen to write the heartfelt words of admiration that I feel for you. But if only I could, this is what I would say:

I see your frustration in being partially involved; of learning bits and pieces but not getting the whole story. I hear your heated discussions: "Should we give this piece of advice, or leave it up to our kids?"

I want you to know that I clearly see how much easier it is for my parents after they pour their hearts out to you. I have been there to witness the calming effect that your words of encouragement have on them.

Sometimes, I hear you talking to each other, wondering how I will progress and what will become out of me. I sense your discomfort with the role you play as the grandparents of a special needs einikel but I want you to know that I find strength in the love and excitement you shower me with. Your belief in me and my potential propels me to progress.

So I want to say thank you to you, my very dear grandparents, for overcoming your frustrations, worries, and fears; for loving me fiercely, and always being there to help out! Thank you for opening your door and your heart to me and my parents, always.

Love, Your Special Einikel

Special Bubbys

Chaya Gitty Grunbaum

Hashem gave Shaya the very best *Bubby*. She is literally his biggest fan, always there to cheer him on as he grows and matures into the little /big man he is becoming. She loves him unconditionally, and is super proud of him and of each milestone he reaches.

Today Hashem showed us just how lucky we are to have our Bubby, and what an important role she plays on Shaya's "Support Team."

For the last couple of weeks, we've been getting ready to move into a new house that will *iy"H* accommodate Shaya's unique needs a lot better than our current setup.

We keep going back and forth to the house, and of course Shaya comes along to monitor the construction! Boy, is it an adventure! He touches everything he sees, finds wood, grabs screws, gets powdery and dusty, as we run after him, trying to keep him safe (and the house intact!).

He really knows the place well from his frequent visits, which is why I found it puzzling that every time I asked him about his new house, he vigorously shook his head to say "No." I tried preparing him and wanted to get him excited, but each time I asked him "Shaya, you are moving to a new house? A big house where you can run and run?" he consistently shook his head "No." At first, I thought he was not paying attention, and then I figured that maybe he is simply afraid of the change.

Today however, with *siyata d'Shmaya* and Bubby's help, the mystery was finally solved.

I came home from the house to find him freshly bathed, playing with a very special volunteer. After a quick update, she told me how funny it was that she kept asking him about the move and his new house, and the more she spoke, the more he kept shaking his head left to right, his way of saying "No."

My mother, with whom I was on the phone, overheard what the girl was saying and something clicked in her mind: "Who knows?" she interjected. "Maybe he thinks he is going on his own, without his dear family! We kept telling Shaya that he was going to a new house, but no one told him that Totty and Mommy and his beloved sisters and brothers were going too! My heart dropped and I felt tears fill my eyes. I was speechless.

Suddenly I remembered the many conversation I had with him before he went to camp. "Shaya is going to camp! Shaya is going to a new camp! The best one! You'll be able to run and run and run! It's going to be so much fun!"

Each time I would talk about it or ask him if he is going, he would shake his head "No" with the exact same focus and precision as now.

I scooped him up in my arms and gave him the biggest hug ever, as I sat him down to a little talk. (Ok, he didn't sit. I sat in all seriousness, and he jumped around grabbing and mouthing everything in sight!) I looked at my little boy who couldn't yet speak to verbalize his confusion, and tried to fix this mess. I said: "Shaya, you thought you were going to the new house on your own? Just you?" Instantly, he stopped jumping around so he could concentrate. I continued. "No way! Of course not! We are all going to go—Totty and Mommy and Chany and Chesky and Zanyl and Sury and you! Everyone, together! We are all going to the new house!" At this point, he was staring right into my eyes. "That must have been scary for you to think that just you were going..."

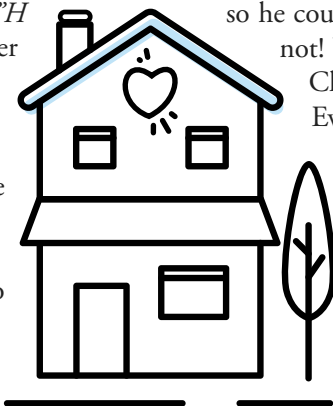
Ok, he was all done now and back to his business. I dared to try again: "Shaya, are you going to move into a new house? With Totty and Mommy and all your toys?" And guess what? He bobbed his head up and down and up and down as my heart danced along with his nods!

At that point, my husband heard what was going on and joined the "meeting." "Shaya! Right? You're not going to the new house on your own?"

He shook his head: "No!"

"Of course not! You are going together with Totty and Mommy!" To which he happily nodded: "Yes!"

Although it pains me deeply that he cannot speak, it's comforting to see how Hashem takes such good care of Shaya. He orchestrated the whole chain of events, putting Bubby on the phone just then, so she could overhear the conversation and save day, like only special Bubbys can!



A Grandmother's Musings

L. B.



From the time a child is born, it is the parent's job not only to care for and nurture the child, but also to teach him to become independent. When the child gets married, a parent reaches a new stage of letting go. Not letting go completely, of course; our children are our children! We love them and care for them no matter what age they are. There is always that dance—how much do we advise, how much do we take a step back and let them make their own decisions, how much do we help, how do we teach them to be independent? Oh, how we don't want to see them to fail!

When an adult child is faced with the challenge of a special needs baby, the conundrum becomes even more complicated. We thought that we had found the balance. We learned our boundaries. But now don't they need our help more?

Yes, but how much? And at what cost? Are we infringing upon their privacy, their

How much should we do for them? Can we be helping more financially? Can we be there more for homework help, supper, shopping? School supplies, clothing, food? House cleaning? What is our role? Should we get more technical training so that we can help more with actual care of the special child? What if we find that intimidating?

And then we feel overwhelmed. We did this already. We raised our children, dealt with homework, supper, baths, clothes and shoe shopping. Disciplining a grandchild is not the same as disciplining one's own child. Especially if the grandchild misses his mother who is at the hospital for hours a day or busy at home caring for the special sibling.

As much as we love our grandchildren, our first connection is to our children. It is extremely hard for parents to watch their children deal with so much. Although we have great *nachas* as we see them pass *nisyonos* with flying colors, we would prefer to see the *nisyonos* fall away.

So, what keeps us going? These thoughts nag at us, but

Hashem opens our eyes to the bright side, too. When we see our children rise to the *nisyonos* and accomplish things we never thought they could, when we see the tenderness and the love in the siblings of the special needs child, when we hear how articulately and how relentlessly our child advocates for her child, when we see the endless patience and love that our

child displays, when a doctor or therapist comments: "Your daughter is an amazing mother," our worries and insecurities melt away (at least temporarily), and we are filled with pride.

We must remind ourselves of that which we know. Hashem gives us only what we can handle and what we can do. Our children have their *nisyonos* and we have ours, too. Just as they find their way, with *siyata d'Shmaya* we will find ours, every step of the way.

It is extremely hard for parents to watch their children deal with so much.

independence, their personal lives? Are they too proud to take our help? How much is too much? On the other hand, are we extending ourselves enough? What is enough?



SPECIAL GRANDPARENTS

of SPECIAL CHILDREN:

Chayala Tawil

Interviews with:

*Mrs. Sora Berman, Grandmother from Baltimore, MD; Bubby to Avrohom Aharon
Mrs. Shifra Rubin, Grandmother from Brooklyn, NY; Bubby to Shaindy
Dr. Reuven Tawil, Grandfather from Southfield, MI; Zayde to Avrumi*

Can you introduce us to your special grandchild?

Bubby Berman: Avraham Aharon is a really delicious fourteen-year-old boy. He is the third of many delightful children. He is very social and affectionate. He absolutely loves people, and people love him too!

He also has hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy, and autism, in addition to being legally blind. He functions on a kindergarten/first grade level academically, though some of his social skills are more like that of a four year old.

Bubby Rubin: Shaindy is 11 years old. She is delayed in many areas and is non-verbal.

Zayde Tawil: Avrumi is a very special, delicious, yummy five year old boy who has Angelman syndrome. He is developmentally delayed and non-verbal (so far; *IY"H*, he will talk some day!). Avrumi has a very happy personality. He smiles a lot and he loves getting attention from me!

Can you share your initial reaction and feelings upon learning that your grandchild would have lifelong challenges? How do you feel today? How did you get from point A to point B?

Bubby Berman: When Avraham Aharon was born with hydrocephalus, we were told there might be delays, but no one knew to what extent, or whether the delays would be permanent. As he got older, he clearly lagged behind. His

physical challenges from the CP and blindness are obvious, but I am always surprised when I read his evaluations that show just how behind he is intellectually and behaviorally. I guess I simply accept him as he is, at his own pace. He had some out-of-control behaviors that were much more worrying to me, but he is now learning self-control. That's the most amazing thing to me. But he is always my Avrohom Aharon, not a sum of his "challenges."

I really admire my son-in-law and daughter. They put so much *kochos* into him, as well as every child in their family. Sometimes the siblings of the special needs children feel sidelined but, in this family, I think everyone knows that their parents feel that they are unique and special too. Of course, there are bumps in the road. The children are sometimes challenged that he takes a great deal of their parents' attention, and Mommy spends a lot of time on the phone about their brother, but his siblings are amazingly caring to him, and to other special needs children as well.

Bubby Rubin: When my granddaughter was born, we were just delighted. We had no idea there was anything wrong with her. After a few weeks of failing to thrive, she was taken for testing. Her MRI showed a bleed in her brain. I could not accept the verdict of the nurse in the PICU, who told me that she would have limitations. Shaindy was such a beautiful baby, and we continued to treat her with love and devotion.

As she got older, and failed to reach her milestones like sitting, getting up, and crawling, further testing revealed that she

would be delayed. The doctors, however, could not come up with a specific diagnosis. The situation prompted me to try to learn whatever I could to help her develop. I took courses in yoga for special children by Sonia Sumar, Brain Gym by John Bradel, and many other therapies. This was all new to me, as I had never before done anything pertaining to healing, exercise, or alternative medicine. But once I got into it, I felt this was my calling.

I worked with Shaindy as much as my schedule and her special school allowed. My love for this child made nothing too difficult to try or explore. I did not see much in the way of progress, and took this very personally. I was deeply saddened, not only for myself and the child, but also for her parents, my children. I learned this was not up to me. Results are only from Hashem, when He wills it to be so.

Zayde Tawil: It's always difficult to hear that a child or grandchild will be different. But Avrumi helped me build my *emunah*. I had to internalize that Hashem is in control, He runs the world, and He decided that it was to our benefit to have this child in our family. *Emunah* is what helped me accept it and get used to it. I also realize that Avrumi is blessed to be raised by the most incredible parents!

What are some of the specific challenges that come up in your role as a grandparent of a special needs child? How do you deal with them?

Bubby Berman: I worry about Avrohom Aharon. When he was younger, I worried a lot about his future. Would he be able to get a job? Get married? My children always told me: "Don't worry, Hashem has a plan for this child." I am still trying to internalize this.

Right now, he lives on the Ner Yisrael Yeshiva campus in Baltimore, where the Yeshiva families have known him since he was born. His neighbors have been and are so good, but I still worry that other children may not be so accepting and make fun of him. He is such a sweet, loving child, but he looks different and acts differently. I am concerned that others won't be able to relate to him nicely, and I don't want him to get hurt.

This year, 14 year old Avraham Aharon made a *siyum* on *Aleph Bais*. A large group of boys came to sing and dance for him. They grew up with him, and treat him beautifully, but I can't help worrying about life when he leaves this wonderful environment. I haven't yet reached my children's *madreiga* of trusting in Hashem's plan.

Bubby Rubin: Grandparents worry not only for the disabled child, but for the parents of the child as well. How are they

coping? How are the other siblings taking it? I've learned to keep my comments to myself (very difficult sometimes!), and just to offer the help that I am capable of giving. I buy the supplements that keep her healthy, and give advice only when asked.

Zayde Tawil: I can't say that I find it very challenging to be Avrumi's grandfather. The fact is, that we don't see him or his family often enough, because we live out of town. When they do come to visit, we have to "Avrumi-Proof" the house—although we've never been able to outsmart him completely, and our home has suffered its share of minor disasters! Because Avrumi is non-verbal, it is hard not to be able to communicate with him. It's hard to know what he understands, although I'm pretty sure that he is a lot smarter than we think!

What is your role in their life today? Do you have any tips as to how you build a relationship with a grandchild who is atypical?

Bubby Berman: Avrohom Aharon, as I mentioned, is very sociable. He has a great vocabulary with very repetitious content. Sometimes, he calls me multiple times a day to schmooze, and we have the same conversation over and over again for 15 minutes. I think that I am helping my daughter when I keep him entertained while she takes care of the other children, especially at bedtime. I also try to help out with babysitting, as it is challenging to find babysitters for a fourteen-year-old boy. As a bubby, I just enjoy him and love him as he is. He knows this and that is what builds our relationship. It's the same as with all our grandchildren.

Bubby Rubin: School and after-school programs take up much of Shaindy's time, but she still comes for short visits with her parents and other siblings. I stop everything I am doing and talk to her, even though she cannot converse. I show her my love and give her favorite treats to her. When buying clothing or gifts for the grandchildren, she is never left out. Shaindy is always made to feel welcome at our home, even when other children are around.

I am sure she feels and knows that I love her, even though she cannot speak. Every time I speak to her parents, I inquire about her and ask how she is doing in school, etc. I keep her picture hanging in full view, so I will think of her always. I daven for her every day, and for her parents as well.

Zayde Tawil: It's important to spend time doing things that the child enjoys. This helps build your relationship with him. I try to focus on Avrumi's skill set and his strong points, and work with them. Personally, I find it amazing that Avrumi, despite his delays, and despite our distance, recognizes me and is always so excited to connect with me, either in person or on

the phone. I love how he runs to me when we visit, laughing and so happy to see me!

Is there something you'd like other grandparents out there to know?

Bubby Berman: This is for the Baby Boomer generation: When we were growing up, we didn't see special needs people at all. I was sixteen when I first saw someone with Down Syndrome. We just never heard of or saw these precious children. Today it's a different world. Schools are adding classes to accommodate children with all kinds of special needs. There is hope that they can have happy, productive lives.

Just like we applaud the toddler who learns to walk, we are overwhelmed when the two-year-old special needs child walks. We may take it for granted when a first grader learns to read, but the feeling of joy when a 14-year-old learns is incredible. Our special children will hopefully meet their milestones at their own pace, and we must make sure to revel in every one.

Zayde Tawil: For the grandparent of a newly diagnosed child, I would say: Don't worry, because it's not as scary as it sounds. Diagnosis and medical terms sound overwhelming, but he is still your grandchild, and you will love him and come to accept him, and it will be ok. Realize that *you* are very special too, because you were chosen to be a grandparent of an almost-perfect *neshama*.

Is there something you wish could be said to the parents of special needs children?

Bubby Berman: I am totally in awe of my daughter and son-in-law, and all other parents, who do so much and give up so much to raise their special needs children. It's really a full-time job, and it's not an easy one! Parents change their lives around – sometimes giving up their jobs to be home with the child, or sometimes taking on a job in order to finance the additional expenses. You are heroes!

I think my daughter's and son-in-law's attitude was the most important part of the family and neighbors' attitude toward Avrohom Aharon. His parents love him and accept him, and everyone took their cue from them. Your positive attitude towards your child is what shows his grandparents and others that your child is really a treasure.

Bubby Rubin: I wish parents of special needs children would accept advice from their own parents more often. When a person is very preoccupied and does not have time to think clearly, it can be helpful to have older and more experienced parents get involved. We want only the best for our children and grandchildren, but sometimes the children have to become grandparents themselves to learn that!

Zayde Tawil: I see how important it is for the parents to give attention and time to the siblings of the special needs child. This ensures that the other children don't resent their sibling, and it keeps everyone happy. It's important to maintain a positive and loving attitude to all of the children, and then the siblings will love their special needs sibling, too.

Do you have any nice stories you can share?

Bubby Berman: We have seen so many amazing instances of *hashgacha*. As my daughter always tells me, Hashem has a plan for this child.

Avraham Aharon had wanted a bar mitzvah like his brothers: keyboard, microphone (very important), and dancing. But the family had Covid, and the Yeshiva campus was on lock-down. When Avraham Aharon went back to school, the preschool head asked if the family would mind if they made him a bar mitzvah celebration in school! Mind?! We were thrilled. Older boys played the keyboard, juggled, and a man from the office staff sang. There were refreshments, everyone danced, and Avraham Aharon was ecstatic! And me? I just cried.

He has really blossomed since attending *cheder*. Avraham Aharon wanted a *rebbe* like his brothers had. The first grade *rebbe* allowed Avraham Aharon into his class, and my grandson is thriving. He now *davens* (the only first grader with *tefillin*), is learning *parshah*, and how to *teitch Chumash* words! Despite his being legally blind, he is learning to read! In two languages! In two directions! He behaves with decorum and great *derech eretz*. His classmates love to help him. They have taught him so much—including one of the most important preschool skills: how to wrap a Fruit-by-the-Foot around your finger before you eat it!

When I think back to some of the harder *tekufos* in his life, it is just so amazing to see how far he has come.

Bubby Rubin: I feel very grateful to Shaindy, because she was the one that led me to my extensive knowledge in natural healing and therapies with special needs children. Hashem sent Shaindy to our family, and because of my deep caring and love for her, it prompted me to invest so much effort on her behalf. I have been able to help so many others because of her.

Zayde Tawil: I speak to my grandchildren every *erev Shabbos* and give them *brachos* over the phone. Avrumi can't talk, but he always gets a turn to hold the phone and listen to my *bracha*. He always gives a big smile (I am told), and laughs when he hears my voice. The other week, after I gave him his *bracha*, he went over to his brother and handed him the phone, understanding that it was the next child's turn. I have so much *nachas* from him, and hope to continue until 120!



How to be Fabulous Grandparents to a Child with Special Needs

You think you are the world's greatest "Zaidy" or "Grandma": you make the best chocolate chip cookies, you visit every Sunday afternoon, and you have a close relationship with every one of your delicious grandchildren. But when you find out that the new baby has special needs, you may wonder about your role as a grandparent in this unique situation.

Here are some suggestions on how you can continue to be the greatest grandparents:



1

Get an understanding of your grandchild's disability.

It pays to invest some time and effort to get some basic facts about the challenges and struggles your grandchild may be experiencing. Diagnoses usually sound scary and overwhelming. Knowing the facts can calm you and enable you to be there for your grandchild. It is also helpful for you to become educated in caring for your grandchild.



2

To be a great grandparent, you need to be a great parent, too.

Your grandchild is struggling with a disability, and your child could be struggling too. Parents of special needs children have many stresses and strains, both physical and emotional. Your child may need an open ear or a shoulder to cry on. Validate and encourage, rather than asking questions or blaming. Your children may desperately need respite time. Encourage them to take this time for themselves, and as a couple. If you are able to babysit for them, or to pay for a babysitter, so much the better.



3

Build a relationship

Building a relationship with your special needs grandchild may not be easy, but it will be so rewarding for everyone involved. As you get to know your grandchild, you will see what he enjoys and how he connects to others. Try to find something that you both enjoy, be it reading books, going on walks, swimming, or music.

This can be more challenging with grandchildren who don't live locally. In this case, frequent phone calls and letters are a great way to connect. You can also create a photo book that they can look at to remember you. Keep in touch as much as possible.



4

Love your grandchild

This may seem obvious, but it is sometimes a complaint heard from special needs parents. Grandparents, with good intentions, often assume the role of telling the parents how to change or correct the child. Special needs children are bombarded by parents, teachers, and therapists, all working to change something about them. Grandparents are able to embrace this child just as he is – take advantage of it! Your grandchild will surely bask in your unconditional love.

VALIDATION Corner



David Rose

♥ THE POWER OF A GRANDPARENT

As a parent whose child has had serious medical complications for over six years, I would like to share my thoughts, and give grandparents in similar circumstances some ideas as to how they can be helpful.

Grandparents – You are uniquely positioned to offer so much for a special needs grandchild. No matter where you are, the potential and power of grandparent's love cannot be overestimated. Kudos to all of you - you may not even realize how incredibly encouraging a role you play!

Grandparents find themselves on a tight rope. They love their child and grandchild and are pained by their situation. They really want to help, yet they mustn't push themselves too much into their children's lives; there has to be a balance.

Here are some ways you can help. First, try to ensure that your relationship and conversations with your child and grandchild are positive and upbeat. If your child says or does something with which you disagree or which upsets you—though you may get frustrated or become critical, do your best to hold it back!

Realize that your children are dealing with a very difficult, stressful situation with their special needs child. Questions like: "Why don't they call more often?" "Why do they barely come to us for Shabbos?" "Why don't they help more when they come?" are not helpful, so try not to let such things bother you.

What your children need most is love and encouragement, expressed in the proper way. Be there for them with a listening ear. Simply complimenting your child or grandchild can go far. Say something like: "I am so inspired by your strength in handling your challenge!" Even remarks like: "You are wearing such a nice dress today," or: "Your baby is so cute!"—though not directly connected to the actual 'special-needs-child situation,' comments such as these are strengthening and helpful.

Possibly the worst common mistake a grandparent can make is to create pressure on their child or push themselves uninvited into the personal decisions being made about the special needs

grandchild. Unless your children actively solicit your help or advice, keep your nose out of their business.

Grandparents usually want to 'do more,' and, indeed, there are some extremely helpful 'proactive' things grandparents can do while still respecting their children's space. First of all, don't forget that the power of grandparents' *tefillos* can storm the heavens! On a more mundane level, offering to help with the day-to-day responsibilities (which increase so much more with a special needs child in the house), can provide a great reprieve.

Financial support is usually appreciated, but if it is not an option for you, there are many less financially draining ways to step in: shopping, babysitting, taking the other kids to the park, making meals, buying clothing, etc., can all be extremely helpful.

Nowadays, with Amazon and the like, it is easy to order clothing or a cute gift and have it delivered straight to their door (or buy them a subscription to the beautiful, printed copies of *Neshamale* magazine!).

For our son, who is in a rehab center, my parents do something incredible, that barely costs them anything: they write letters addressed to our son, saying how much they love him, and then they thank

the nurses on our behalf. Such a letter (or a gift, or a cake) can make a big impression on the medical staff, and often results in better care of our precious patient.

Invite your children for Shabbos, allowing them leeway to choose a Shabbos that works best for them. For my wife and I, some of our greatest, most revitalizing times are spending quality time together on Shabbos with our parents and siblings, just sitting and schmoozing about anything, not revolving around our son's situation.

Grandparents, you deserve a lot of credit for what you do! There are so many grandparents out there who so selflessly give of themselves to be there for their children and grandchildren. Nothing in the world can replace the love provided by a grandparent, and for that, on behalf of all of your children, we say: "Thank You!" from the depths of our heart.

***No matter where you
are, the potential
and power of
grandparent's
love cannot be
overestimated.***

את פתח לו

Leah Tawil, SLP

You have it in you to help your child open his mouth, so to speak, and enable him to communicate. Here are some tips to incorporate even more communication into what you are already doing during your day. Try to establish predictable routines throughout your day which naturally present built-in communication opportunities.

Hello friends! We have learned a lot on our journey together through the daily routine, trying to enrich the speech and language of our little *neshamales*. You may have tried some of my ideas, and some you may not have tried. Some may have worked for you, and some not. I would like to revisit a number of the ideas we have talked about in past issues, showing how you can use them to create communication opportunities within familiar routines.

Meet the Tuki (parrot) family!

Mamma and Pappa Tuki are constantly trying to incorporate as much language as possible into the daily routines of their little Tukis – Tikki and Tokki. Sometimes, even Savta Tuki gets involved (as grandmothers tend to do!).

“Good morning, Tikki!” Mamma chirps. “It’s time to get dressed! She begins their **familiar** getting-dressed **tune**: “This is the way we put on your pants, put on your pants, put on your pants...” Tikki happily sticks his feet into his pants.

Mamma continues the song, as she put on Tikki’s shirt, **purposely making a mistake**: “... and this is the way we put on your socks, put on your—” Little Tikki lets out a little yelp!

“Oh!” tweets Mamma. “Not your socks, silly, your shirt!” Tikki happily sticks his head into his shirt. Tikki knew the routine, and enjoyed ‘catching’ Momma when she made a ‘mistake.’

Next, breakfast. “Tikki! Tokki! Yum, yum! – Look what Mommy has for you!” Mommy places a peanut butter sandwich in front of Tokki, and then **Observes, Waits, and Listens** expectantly (Remember **OWL?** That’s the method we use to elicit response, verbal or not).

Sure enough, Momma is rewarded with Tokki’s protest: “No! Cereal!” he squawks. “Sure, Tokki, you can have cereal!” Momma twitters proudly.

When they are finished with breakfast, Momma hurries to put on their coats. “Pappa is almost here to take you to school! Here, Tikki, let’s put on your coat.

Where’s Tikki’s hand?” Momma is trying to **engage** Tikki in this exchange. Tikki looks at his sleeve, then laughs hysterically when his hand pops

out. “Oh, there’s your hand!” Momma crows.

Come here Tokki, let’s put on your coat. Ok, one, two, three...” She waits for Tokki to **take his turn** in a familiar routine.

“Zip!” cries Tokki.

In the car, Pappa revs up the engine and pulls out of the driveway. Pappa knows that Tikki is used to the music being on while they drive to school. He leaves the music off, **waiting for** Tikki to “**request**” it. Tikki begins vocalizing, urgently expressing his needs. “Tikki – shall we turn on the music?” Tikki happily settles into his seat.

Pappa plays a **describing** game with Tokki: “Tokki, let’s see if we can find anything that’s tall. Oh! There’s a tall tree.” Tokki spots a tall pole, a tall building, a tall radio tower, and even a tall person.

Soon, they arrive at school. Pappa opens the door and **waits** expectantly for Tikki’s ‘**request**.’ Tikki starts to pull at his seatbelt, initiating (non-verbal) communication. “Oh, would you like me to unbuckle you?”

“Bye, Tikki and Tokki! Have a great day in school! I love you!” He gives them a peck, and off they go.

Disclaimer: The Tuki family are early birds who have lots of extra time in the morning!



Smart & Safe

FIRE SAFETY

Fraydel Dickstein

The Chanukah Menorah

Chanukah is a special time, and today I can truly say that I love Chanukah. I dream of donuts, latkes, and yes, lighting the *menorah*. There were years when this precious *mitzvah* and the dangers that came along with it would overwhelm me. I couldn't wait to extinguish the flames after the first half hour.



We have come a long way, and now it is a special treat that some nights we merit having our son Yehuda light his own menorah. The first year we tried letting Yehuda light the menorah, he seemed very displeased and walked away, refusing to take part. My husband had a hunch that Yehuda was insulted that we were holding his hand to guide his lighting. He saw that his younger siblings were allowed to do it independently and felt bad. We asked him if he wanted to do it himself and his face lit up! So now we let him hold a candle and light his very own menorah. My husband can barely restrain himself from trying to help him—of course he is right there to catch any mishaps. Yehuda is a very inconsistent guy, so we are happy when he lights his menorah, as some nights he is just not interested, for whatever reason.

Safety when Lighting the Menorah

Chanukah stirs up memories of masterminding how to do this *mitzvah* in the most beautiful way, despite the safety concerns this may present in our home.

I asked a few parents what they have done over the years. Many simply light their menorahs in a study or similar room that they can lock, which is safe and easy. Others do not have this option. Following are some great ideas that are tried and true:

Eli's father extended their windowsill with plexiglass and wooden frames to keep the menorahs safe. They have a large window ledge. Now that Eli got too tall for it, they light the menorah on the special high shelf where they light their Shabbos candles.

Shira's family lights their menorah by the window before she comes home, and then moves it to their candle-lighting shelf. On Shabbos, as per their Rav, they light on their Shabbos candle

shelf with a cheap tin menorah and use tea lights for Shabbos candles, in order to have room for everything.

Dovy's family lights by the window and then they blockade the area with two couches. His mother says that it's still very nerve-wracking; they watch him like a hawk or keep him in his high chair or playing upstairs until bedtime.

Here are some of my own ideas that have helped us retain the true light of this *mitzvah*. Right now, our dining room locks with a combination on each door, so it's a no-brainer, and we light proudly by our dining room windows. I will say that, over the years, Yehuda has enjoyed breaking the glass oil cups and playing with the oil. I don't have a solution for this, as my husband feels very strongly that we should light by the window.

When we had double doors without a lock, we pushed our couch against the doors. Yehuda was able to push the doors and couches with effort, but it served as a strong deterrent. We have also used a Kee-Blok door knob to secure the room.

Major A100 KEE-BLOK for Knobs (\$59.75 on Amazon)



This amazing product was already featured in this column (Issue #2: Smart and Safe around the house) but it is worth mentioning again. It is one of the most useful items that we have ever found.



It is always a good idea to have a fire extinguisher in the kitchen. In case of a fire, *chas v'shalom*, an extinguisher can really prevent the spread of fire and its accompanying dangers.

Kidde Fire Extinguisher – 2 lb. (\$16.97 in Home Depot)

Gates for Blocking off Rooms

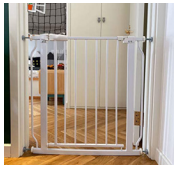
Another option that may work for some is a gate. There are multiple options for gates, ranging from simple to complex. Here are a few basic gates:



Position & Lock Baby Gate, Pressure-Mounted, Farmhouse Collection (\$18.07 on Amazon)

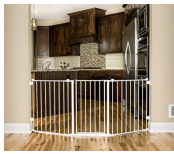
This is a super basic gate. It was the first gate I ever

purchased. It lasted until Yehuda took his mighty little foot and kicked it down.



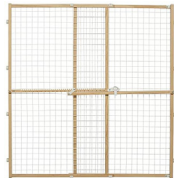
Balancefrom Easy Walk-Thru Safety Gate for Doorways and Stairways with Auto Close/Hold-Open Features (\$50.53 Amazon)

This gate is quite a bit stronger and usually leaves imprints on the walls.



Regalo 76 Inch Super Wide Configurable Baby Gate, 3-Panel (\$69.99 Amazon)

This gate has to be mounted into the wall with screws. It can be used in wider spaces. I used it on a kitchen archway.



MidWest Wire Mesh Pet Safety Gate (\$49.99 Amazon)

This was the final gate I used, before giving up on gates and going for doors with combination locks, or finding other solutions. It's an extra tall gate and, at almost four feet, is very hard to climb over. Mounting it to the wall is a huge challenge, as it doesn't officially mount.

Gates are wonderful as long as they last. They can be used for kitchens, bathrooms, to protect another child, to keep a child in their bedroom, etc. I used to put one in my hallway that leads to the bathroom, allowing Yehuda access to my room and his. We also had one in the kitchen for a while. I felt that, although Yehuda was able to climb it, it gave me a little extra time to catch him, thus enabling me to sit by our Shabbos table a bit longer. I have heard of many people who use it with older kids as a defining barrier, meaning that even though the child can surpass it, he knows that when the gate is closed to the kitchen, playroom, etc., that he is not supposed to go there.

Safety when Lighting Shabbos Candles

The topic of candles and *menorahs* brings me to my Shabbos candles. I have not used candle sticks in years for two reasons. In our first house, the candle sticks on top of the fridge stood too close to the ceiling, so it just didn't work. In the next house, where the ceilings were higher, I felt that the candle sticks were not sturdy enough and it wasn't so safe.



Tea lights feel like so much less of a safety hazard, as they are really hard to knock over. For years, I lit high up on top of my freezer or fridge. We always said that when we

would move into our own house, we would install a *leichter* shelf in our dining room.

There are many types of glass *leichter* shelves that I have seen in people's homes. There is a company called **Glass Tops Direct** (glasstopsdirect.com) that manufactures all sizes and shapes of glass shelves and sells them along with the installation hardware. Many families find these to be a great place to light their Shabbos candles.

There is another *leichter* shelf idea which is manufactured by a frum company. It hangs as a picture frame during the week, and



opens and sets up as a *leichter* tray on the wall during Shabbos. It is called **The Flip Down Tray**. It has not been available during the past year but I was told that it should be back in Judaica stores soon.

I was sure I would have my candlesticks fixed up, and be able to return this mitzvah to its proper glory. Little did I realize how tall Yehuda would get, and what an adept wall-surfer he would be! It is no longer an option for me to light on a wall shelf, so I now proudly light my Shabbos candles on my fireproof kitchen counter on a beautiful mirror.

I did buy some nice glass cup tealight holders. (\$1 in Closeout Connections. They have many pretty candlestick options with minimal height.) These look absolutely beautiful to me. They signify the steps we took from surviving to thriving. It illustrates for me the gentle beauty inherent in a home where we accept Hashem's will without questions or complaints.



Hadlakas Neiros is a very meaningful time for me. My mother, she should be well, *davened* by her candles for hours, and I can only imagine the untold good that came of it. This is a special mitzvah for me; a time to connect to Hashem and to *daven* for the *Siyata d'Shmaya* to raise the magnificent *neshamas* Hashem has given me, who are all special in their own way. It may seem to the naked eye that Yehuda has lessened the beauty of this mitzvah, which takes place on my kitchen island without the bells and whistles. The exact opposite is true, however. His *heilige neshama* has brought this incredible mitzvah to new heights, as Yehuda, himself, brings my level of connection to Hashem to new heights. I always look at other parents with special needs children and I am amazed at their ability to take on life's challenges. I have no choice but to conclude that it is these very children who make us great!

Wishing all of you great parents (even if you don't feel like it just now) a happy and safe Chanukah! May we merit to see the lighting of the menorah in the *Bais haMikdash*, with our special children in the front row, smiling and safe, speedily in our days!



SWEET SPICES

Introducing "Sweet Spices," our new column about seeing the hashgacha/providence in everyday encounters with our special children. The title is based on the following Torah medresh:

When Yosef's brothers sold him into slavery, the Torah mentions that the caravan in which he traveled down to Mitzrayim carried sweet-smelling spices, as opposed to the foul-smelling cargo usually transported on that route. Rashi points out that this brought comfort and encouragement to Yosef, who understood that Hashem prepared these sweet spices to accompany him on his journey, and to teach him an important lesson: Although it was painful that he had been sold into slavery and sent down to Mitzrayim, it was not random. It was orchestrated by Hashem, down to the very last detail, and Yosef knew that he would not suffer an iota more than was destined for him.

As we journey through life with our special children, we need to remember that Hashem is the One planning this journey, with all of the bumps and jolts we may encounter. Let's try to smell the sweet spices along the way, and be encouraged by the knowledge that nothing is random, and that we are on a journey to greatness!



A Hug from Above

Chaya Reena Kantor

Sunday, Sept. 19, 2021

It's two days till *Succos* and I still don't have a place for Avrumy to go. I'm not giving up, though. I know 1000% that it's the right thing to send him out for *Yom Tov*. For my sake, my husband Yaakov's sake, and even his own sake. It's the only way that we can all have the *simchas Yom Tov* that we need. I know people sometimes judge me, but I don't feel bad because it is just so clear to me that this is the right thing to do. The issue is that Chayala, who usually hosts him, recently flew off to *Eretz Yisroel* for seminary. So where is Avrumy going to go? I have no idea. I'll just keep *davening* and making phone calls, and I'm sure Hashem will send us a place for him.

Erev Succos, Monday, Sept. 20, 2021

Ok, we have a place for first days, and a different place for Shabbos *Chol HaMoed*. *Baruch Hashem!* I knew something would work out. Though I do wish it would be with the same family so he can feel more settled. But it is what it is. And neither of these girls can have him for second days. But we have time for that, right?

Chol Hamoed, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021

The first days of *Succos* were really beautiful! Nice weather, good food, and great company. It was so calm and peaceful to sit at the table with my husband and guests... and no Avrumy. We all love him like crazy, but honestly, having him there would have made the days (and nights) so impossible to enjoy *Yom Tov*. He came home on *Motzei Yom Tov* of first days looking happy, which made me feel really good, too! I told the girl how much we appreciated her hosting him, and she was so nice, telling me how much they

enjoyed Avrumy and all. Tomorrow he is going to Goldy for Shabbos. I'm still making calls about second days.

Chol Hamoed, Sunday, Sept. 26, 2021

This is the best that we can come up with for second days: Sara lives in Queens and would be delighted to have Avrumy for second days. She has lots of experience, and I do feel comfortable sending Avrumy there. The only problem is her location. Are we ready to drive one hour each way on *erev Yom Tov*, and again on *Isru Chag* to pick him up? It sounds crazy, but it might be the only way. I'm going to leave it up to Yaakov, as he would be the one doing the driving.

Motzei Yom Tov, Wednesday night, Sept. 29, 2021

Yaakov agreed to do the driving, so Avrumy went to Queens for second days. Sara just called to tell us about their adventures on *Simchas Torah*. She also told us that we shouldn't feel pressured to come get Avrumy early in the morning. It's a good thing she offered that, because I was feeling very pressured! *Yom Tov* ends late, Yaakov is busy taking down the Sukkah, and I am buried in laundry and dishes. We won't be getting to sleep until late and then we would have to drive to Queens and be back in time for Yaakov to be at work at 9 am! I feel like I have a hundred things to cram into a few hours, because once Avrumy walks through the door... I already put in the second load of laundry and washed two sinksful of dishes. The race is on!

Isru Chag, Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021

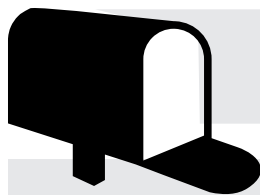
Today I felt like Hashem gave me a great big hug! You know, it's really not easy being Avrumy's mother, coordinating his care, taking him to

millions of appointments, watching him every minute of the day... I'm not complaining, I'm just explaining why I sometimes feel so weary, so overwhelmed, and I wonder if anyone appreciates what I do. Well, today I felt like Hashem winked at me.

I really wasn't sure how picking up Avrumy from Queens was realistically going to work out. At seven thirty am the phone rang and it was Sara. "My married brother was in Queens for *Yom Tov* and he's driving back to Brooklyn today. He says he'd be happy to drive Avrumy home." I couldn't believe it! This was really heaven-sent! She told me that they'd probably be leaving around noon, so I should expect him around 1 pm.

At 12:30, she called again to let me know that something came up and her brother was going to be leaving later than planned. "But don't worry, we are having a blast. Avrumy was playing in our yard and now I'm going to take him for pizza. I'm really enjoying him!" I thanked her, and thanked Hashem for another few hours in which I could continue to put the house back together from the *Succos* chaos. I even took advantage and ran out to do a few essential errands.

The hours kept passing by and I kept getting updates that the ride would be leaving later than planned. Finally, at eight pm, there was knock on the door. Avrumy walked in holding his overnight bag, a huge smile on his face! I gave him a humongous hug, truly happy to have him home. As Avrumy pulled away from me and started to jump around, I looked around at my cleaner-than-usual home. The laundry was done, the dishes were put away, the pantry was restocked. Yaakov hadn't needed to take off from work. I felt so at peace. And I knew that Hashem had orchestrated the ride, and whatever it was that had pushed it off so late, as a special gift to me.



INBOX

To the wonderful staff of *Neshamale Magazine*,

First of all, thank you once again for a beautiful publication. I really enjoyed the edition before Yom Tov, as well as all of the previous magazines. *Neshamale* is unique in offering so much *chizuk* and practical advice in one, focused publication. While most of the practical advice has not been new or very applicable to my family, it feels so good to know that there are others who struggle and brainstorm in the same fashion that we do, and that we all rejoice at our own unique milestones. Though every child is unique, we are able to appreciate the journey that we are all on together.

When I noticed the upcoming theme about Grandparents and their involvement, I wondered if aunts and uncles (unmarried) would fall into that group as well. I am an aunt to two very special *neshamalech*, who were born when I was still in elementary school, and I would love to hear from others in a similar role.

Thank you and much continued *hatzlacha*,
Shira

I would like to thank Miri Lieber for sharing her story titled "Coming Home" in the "My View" section of Volume 8. As a parent of a special needs child, I have been through a similar experience, wanting so much to see our son recognize how deeply we love him. Reading about your experience gave me *chizuk* and encouragement. Also, reading about the importance of taking that break and going away was an incredible lesson. Thank you!

Shmuel T Adler

Hi, I want to share with you how much I loved reading the new *Neshamale Magazine*. I was surprised to get the full color printed magazine just one day after my friend got it in her email! And it was so tempting to read, the articles are really amazing. I was able to connect, and gain inspiration and ideas from EVERY SINGLE ARTICLE.

I loved the article "On the Lighter Side"; it's well written and gave me a bittersweet laugh. I gained much inspiration from the stories, the "Validation Corner," "In Session," and all the rest. Thanks for being *m'zake es ha'rabim*.
Z.B.

Thanks so much for a beautiful magazine - I really enjoy it and can use the inspiration and the feeling of connection that it brings - even to other people that I don't even know! I only wish the magazine came out more often!

In reference to bedroom safety, one bed that I don't think you covered is "The Safety Sleeper" by Abrams Nation. It is an enclosed bed/tent that has literally changed our lives. It is also portable, so you can take with you when going away.

A Reader

What a thought-provoking question! The first thing that popped into my head is that I wish someone would've have told me about the wide range of emotions that each family member involved with raising such a child would experience. One day, I am totally managing and feel like "I can do this"; another day: "If I speak to another therapist, I will scream!" One day, I think my daughter is the greatest gift; another day, she is an unconquerable *nisayon*. The same with my kids: One day, they think she is the cutest, and the next: "Can she stay out (ie: away from them) later?"

Now in hindsight, I wish I would have known about the good friends I would make, the unusual *hashgacha pratis* I would see, the unbelievable *chessed* of *Klal Yisroel* I would experience, and the deep relationship I would develop with Hashem. I can honestly say that, with time, this experience taught me so much, and changed me for the better in all areas of my life. I wish you much *hatzlacha* with this difficult, but rewarding, journey.
-M.G.

Don't waste your energy trying to hide your child from others or covering up for his differences. Though it may be uncomfortable and a new world for you, push yourself to be open about your child, and to connect with other mothers in the same situation. The more often you verbalize the new terms, issues, etc., the more you can get used to your situation and channel your energy towards helping your delicious baby. And when your other children see how comfortable and matter of fact you are with the new reality (even if you are not all the way there yet), that will help them, too.
-Y.Z.

I am only a few years ahead of you so I do not have 20/20 vision yet, but there is already so much that we have learned. One important idea is that there will be harder and easier "chapters" (like with many things in life). Sometimes when we go through a more challenging time, it feels like everything is just getting harder and harder and we wonder how will we ever manage in a few years, etc. But realize that it's not getting progressively harder, it's just like waves that ebb and flow. Especially when your child reaches a new stage or even a milestone, it can take time to readjust and get back to the previous level of equilibrium, but it does happen.
-C.T.



Tips From The Experts *hey! that's us!*

I recently gave birth to a little prince with Down Syndrome. A friend forwarded Neshamale Magazine to me, which the entire family really enjoyed. I would like to ask your readers the following question: Being that we are just starting out, we would love to hear from experienced parents: What is something that you know now, that you wish you had known at the beginning?

If only I knew what a great nation we were part of, and the tremendous outpouring of help, *chizuk*, and love we would receive. That knowledge would have made it all so much easier. But at that stage, not only didn't I know, I didn't even want to take the offered help.
-F.D.

There are two thing I wish I had known. First, that I had to call early intervention myself—we had been told by the hospital that they would contact us. The other thing I wish I had known is that the nerve endings on the faces of kids with Down syndrome are less sensitive than normal. They can have their whole face smeared with ketchup and not know!
-A.H.

I wish I had known that they become cuter over the years, and add a lot of delicious spice to life!
- R.E.

I know now that getting help for your child and letting go is so crucial in being able to manage. We as mothers are not the only ones who can care for our child, and there are so many responsible people out there who are willing and able to help us. It is our job to invite those people into our lives and let them join us on our journey. In the beginning, it's girls, *chessed* or respite girls, that can help out either in the house, or take the child out. I shep such *nachas* watching my 6 year-old child going onto the *Haktanim* van every evening (a program under *Hamaspike*), and there are many other 2-3 year old Down syndrome tiny cutie pies sitting in the van as well. I am so proud of those mothers for letting go and giving themselves a much needed break!
- Yehudis Wolpin

Question for the next issue:

We'd love to know how other families handle simchas, family events, etc. Do you take the special child along, and if so, how do you manage them? Are there other good ideas for childcare arrangements?

- submitted by the F. Family

Please send us your answers to: neshamalemagazine@gmail.com or text your answers to: 848-299-2908

If I would have known...

N. Lipson

I read the question asking about what they wish they would have known, and it reminds me of something I wrote when my son turned three.

If I would have known...

That the new baby is a baby,
not a diagnosis
That I would love him,
Like any other child
...I would have cried one less tear.

If I would have known...

That time is the very best therapy,
So complete and healing
...I would have cried one less tear.

If I would have known...

That when I think of my son,
I would forget that he has Down's,
That life would become normal again,
And that the new normal is perfectly fine
...I would have cried one less tear.

If I would have known...

That dealing with all his medical
complications
Is an incredible journey
Of growth and self-discovery,
And that I would meet
The most exceptional people along the way,
...I would have cried one less tear.

The truth is, I was told all this.

Mothers across the spectrum echoed these
sentiments.

Yet I was swallowed
by a heavy cloud of shock and fog
So dark and deep.

But as time moved on
...and the fog lifted
... It clicked.

And suddenly—

It wasn't as bad anymore
I wasn't as sad anymore
He is my child, just like any other child
And life is beautiful once again.

No one in the world can teach us this lesson.

The only way to learn it—

Is to go through it.
To trudge through the heavy mud
and thick swamps,
To put one foot in front of the other
And navigate the rocky terrain on your own,
To emerge on the other side
And see the brightest light and the
glorious beauty.

And finally, one day, to look back
And wistfully whisper:

If I would have known...
...I would have cried one less tear.

Illuminations

Three Special Stories

Three poignant stories will reveal a glimpse of Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky's greatness.

The first story happened 20 years ago. Yitzzy, a young European boy, was giving his mother a real run for her money. He was often wild and completely out of control. Yitzzy was deaf; he was unable to hear or speak. Frustrated with his inability to communicate, Yitzzy resorted to fighting, kicking, and out-of-control behavior. His mother had tried everything. At her wits' end, she traveled to Bnei Brak to seek a *bracha* and guidance from Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky.

Rebbetzin Kanievsky listened to the cries of the young mother as she poured out her heartache and frustration. After empathizing with her, she gave her the advice that she so often gave to others. So many found solace, comfort and wisdom in her suggestion: to recite *Nishmas* every day.

She quoted from the *tefillah*: “*Ha'mei'iyach ilnim – Who makes the mute speak.*” Then she said: “*Vos zet zein azoi shlecht oib her vet oisvaksen tzu zein ah talmid chacham azoi vi meine shver, der Steipler Gaon?*” – “What would be so bad if he would become a great Torah scholar like my father-in-law, the Steipler Gaon?” (Ed. Note: The Steipler Gaon was deaf in one ear, due to a severe beating he endured in Siberia for refusing to work on Shabbos.)

The brokenhearted mother's eyes lit up; there was hope! From that day onward, she began to recite *Nishmas* every day. Today, Yitzzy is a young *talmid chacham* with a brilliant future. And 18 years later, his mother continues to say *Nishmas* every single day!

The second story involves Eli, a baby born with numerous physical, mental and emotional challenges; he was unable to even open his eyes. Eli's mother was told to visit Rebbetzin Kanievsky. Somewhat skeptical, she came to the Rebbetzin's home. Once again, the Rebbetzin turned to *Nishmas*. “*Al kein eivarim she'pilagta banu, ve'ruach u'neshama she'nafachta be'apeinu... ve'yakdeshu ve'yamlichu es shimcha Malkeinu*” – “Therefore, the organs that You set within us, and the spirit and

soul that You breathed into our nostrils... they will sanctify and declare the sovereignty of Your Name, our King.” She explained that not everyone is able to praise Hashem through their *lashon* (tongue). Some praise Hashem via their *aivarim* (limbs). Every movement of their joints is testament to Hashem's greatness!

These words struck a chord with Eli's mother and she, too, began to recite *Nishmas* daily. Amazingly, one day, Eli opened his eyes. In the past few years, he has made incredible strides in his development. Though still severely handicapped, Eli's mother knows that every tiny movement is an expression of praise for Hashem!

And yes, she too, still says *Nishmas* every day.

A few years ago, through the kindness of a group of seminary girls, Chayala, a young woman with a severe case of cerebral palsy, was brought to *Eretz Yisroel*. During this inspirational journey, she met many great people from whom she gained immense *chizuk*. But her greatest moment of reassurance came from her visit to Lederman's *shul*.

Unable to climb the steps to the Kanievsky home, Chayala went to *daven Mincha* at the *shul* where the Rebbetzin *davened* three times daily. The girls who were instrumental in bringing Chayala to *Eretz Yisroel* accompanied her to the Lederman *shul*.

After *Mincha*, Chayala met with Rebbetzin Kanievsky. The Rebbetzin was greatly moved by her upbeat nature and jovial spirit. Although she could barely hold on to her *kvittel*, Chayala insisted on handing it to the Rebbetzin by herself. Chayala spoke of her challenges, but expressed the feeling that her purpose in life was to live with *simcha* and to convey that joy to others.

In awe of Chayala's resilience and inner strength, Rebbetzin Kanievsky showered her with *brachos*. Soon, it was time for Chayala to leave. But the Rebbetzin, in her great wisdom and sensitivity, felt there was one thing more to be done.

“Chayala, you can't go just yet. I can't let you go until *you* give me a *bracha*!”

Such was the Rebbetzin's ability to elevate and bring hope and joy to even the most broken of hearts.

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GLOSSARY OF HEBREW TERMS APPEARING IN NESHAMALE MAGAZINE

Note: All words are in Ashkenasic (Eastern European) pronunciation. (Y) indicates term is Yiddish (A) indicates Aramaic

Alef-Bais – Hebrew alphabet	Hashgacha, Hashgacha Pratis – Divine Providence	Sefer Torah – Torah Scroll
Bais haMikdash – the Holy Temple	Hatzlacha – Success	Shabbaton – Sabbath weekend retreat
Binah Yiseira – Extra power of insight	Heilige – Holy (Y)	Shep Nachas – Get pleasure, pride, and joy (Y)
Bitachon – Trust (in G-d)	IY”H, Im Yirtza HaShem – G-d Willing	Sheva Yi’pol Tzadik V’kam – Though a Tzadik may fall seven times, he gets up
Bracha/brachos – Blessing/s	Kallah – Bride	Shli’chim, Shluchim – Agents, messengers
Bubby – Grandmother (Y)	Kapitel – Chapter (of Psalms)	Shtriemel, Shtreimlach – Large fur hat/s worn by Chassidic men on Shabbos and holidays (Y)
Cheder – Jewish elementary school (Y)	Kapparah – Forgiveness	Shul – Synagogue (Y)
Chesed – Acts of kindness	Klal Yisroel – The Jewish People	Siddur/Siddurim – Jewish prayer book/(pl)
Chinuch – Jewish education	Kochos, Koach – Strength	Simcha – Joy; joyous occasion
Chizuk – Strength, encouragement	Kohanim – Priestly Jewish tribe	Siyata d’Shmaya – Help from Heaven (A)
Chol haMoed – Intermediate days of Jewish holidays of Pesach and Succos	Kollel – Institute of Talmudic learning for men	Siyum – Ceremony on completing a section of Torah study
Chumash/Chumashim – the Five Books of Moses/(pl)	Kvittel – Small note requesting blessing (Y)	Tafkid – Purpose, task
Darchei HaShem – The Way of G-d, ie: living according to the Torah	Leichter – Candlestick (Y)	Tallis / Tallaisim – Prayer shawl/s
Daven/davening – Pray, prayer (Y)	Madreiga – Level	Talmid Chacham – Torah scholar
Derech Eretz – proper behavior, manners	Malachim – Angels	Tefillah / Tefillos – Prayer/s
Dreidle – Chanukah top, spun in a holiday game (Y)	Medrash – Explicatory stories and parables	Tefillin – Ritual objects used by Jewish males during morning prayer
Eibishter – God (lit: The One Above) (Y)	Menorah – Branched candelabrum	Tehilim – Psalms
Einikel – Grandchild (Y)	Me’zake es haRabim – to Bring merit to others	Teitch – Translate (Y)
Eemunah – Faith	Mi k’Amcha Yisroel! – “Who is like you, Israel?” (Jews are so awesome!)	Tekufa / Tekufos – Time period/s
Eretz Yisrael – the Land of Israel	Mincha – Afternoon prayer service	Totty, Tatty – Daddy (Y)
Gabbai/Gabbaim – Sexton	Morah – Teacher	Tzidkus – Righteousness
Geulah Shelayma – the Final Redemption	Motzei Shabbos – Saturday night (post-Shabbos)	Upsherin – 3 yr old boy’s first haircut ceremony (Y)
Hadlakas Neiros – Candle lighting (for Shabbos and Holidays)	Nisayon/nisyonos – Test/s	Yetzer haRa – the Evil inclination
HaKadosh Boruch Hu – The Holy One, Blessed Be He (G-d)	Olam Malei – the Whole world	Yomim Tovim – Jewish holidays
Hakafos – Circle dancing with Torahs on holiday of Simchas Torah	Parasha – Weekly Torah section	Zayde, Zaidy – Grandfather (Y)
Halacha/Halachos – Jewish Law/(pl)	Pasuk – Verse (of Torah)	Zechus – Merit (noun)
	Rebbe – 1) Elementary grade Torah teacher; 2) Jewish spiritual guide	Zos Chanukah – 8th (last) day of Chanukah
	Refuah Shelaymah – Speedy recovery	
	Sefarim – Books	

In the incoming Pesach issue we plan to print a section on the topic of **"Feeding our Special Children"**. We are looking for your input to help cover this theme from all angles. Please submit your articles, stories, poems, thoughts, concerns and advice that may be of interest. Your anonymity will be protected if requested.

We always welcome, Wow! Stories and Sweet Spices (hashgacha) stories, as well as any questions you may have for a Rav, a doctor, or a social worker.

Deadline for submissions: **January 20**

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“ We light candles in testament
that faith makes
miracles possible ”

Rabbi Nachum Braverman