

# anash

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 10 / YISRO 5784

## Women of Strength *From the Past to the Present*

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# We Need to Rethink Girls' Education

BY RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER



**Torah learning for women is dynamic, not static. Unlike men's Torah study, which is an inherent mitvza for its own sake, women's learning is a path to connection.**

**F**ormal education for girls is a relatively new phenomenon, and it was started for a specific purpose.

For thousands of years, girls grew up under their mothers, where they were mentored and introduced to Jewish womanhood and life. They lived and breathed a felt Jewish experience. Their education was not missing anything.

About a century ago, things began to change. A decline in housework due to the industrial revolution, as well as a widespread aspiration for intellectual study, led to a necessary shift in how young girls would be taught Yiddishkeit. Rather than learning by osmosis, they would now study Torah texts.

Many were hesitant to change the status quo and only reluctantly did they agree to the move. There was a sense of urgency: Either we engage the girls, or we risk losing them to outside lures – of which there are many. The results were hugely successful, and generations

of girls were engaged in academically rigorous Torah study that competed with, *lhavdil*, secular courses.

As we ponder the education of girls today, we ought to consider the goal of their study and apply it accordingly.

• • • •

Torah learning for women is dynamic, not static. Unlike men's Torah study, which is an inherent *mitvza* for its own sake, women's learning is a path to connection. Beyond halachic instruction – which they previously received at home – the more recent undertaking of Torah study by girls was intended so that they are touched by its holiness and are inspired to love Hashem.

At a Beis Rivkah dinner in 5704 (1944), the Rebbe – then known as the Frierdiker Rebbe's son-in-law and director of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch – delivered a talk on the priority and purpose of girls' education. After examining halachic sources on women's study, the Rebbe said this:

“However, if we consider the present circumstances, the above discussion

is irrelevant. Because, the education of Jewish girls today isn't for the sake of knowledge alone, but to assure that they live as *Yiddishe kinder*.

“Children today are raised in an environment submerged in worries of *parnassa* and the pursuit of ‘making a living,’ or when there is abundance, in the desire to ‘have a good time.’ They don't appreciate at all the superior distinction of being Jewish. From their perspective, Yiddishkeit is associated with restrictions, or even suffering...

“This is the function of the Bais Rivka and Bais Sarah schools, founded by my saintly father-in-law the [Frierdiker] Rebbe: To impress upon the hearts of the students that they are *b'nos Yisroel*, Yiddishe daughters, to explain this sanctity to them, the virtue and purity that it yields, and the responsibility that each one of them bears.”

In short: Girls' study is a means to an end – to imbue in them an appreciation and love for Yiddishkeit.

• • • •

With this attitude in mind, we can





*If you knew nothing of the conventional schooling system, would you come up with schooling as the most effective way to inspire girls to love Yiddishkeit?*



put aside preconceived notions and ask: What is it that will inspire a new generation of youth to devote their life to Hashem and His Torah? What will fire their souls and warm their hearts to be Yidden, Chassidim?

More specifically: Are today's girls enamored by wisdom, thirsty for information, stimulated by knowledge? Do our girls leave our school system with a passion for Hashem, His Torah and His people?

And lastly: If you knew nothing of the conventional schooling system, would you come up with schooling as the most effective way to inspire girls to love Yiddishkeit?

Indeed, some girls are naturally fascinated with academic learning, but the vast majority are not. Insisting that girls are able and capable of learning in-depth Torah, though true, is beside the point as the Rebbe said. The question we must ask ourselves is: Are we reaching their hearts and kindling their souls?

A high school girl can repeat a *dvar Torah* she learned, but rarely is she enchanted by it. A girl looking to deepen her connection might turn to that kind of learning – having been raised in a school environment that lauds academic study – but often it doesn't rouse her passion.

We can push, coax and offer prizes to try and make it work, but we are

**Insisting that girls are able and capable of learning in-depth Torah, though true, is beside the point as the Rebbe said. The question we must ask ourselves is: Are we reaching their hearts and kindling their souls?**

unnecessarily pushing a round peg into a square hole. The premise – that this is how girls must learn – is unfounded.



For better or for worse, times have changed, and we don't live in an academic culture. People aren't satisfied with learning and memorizing; they want to relate and experience. Torah – which is a "Living Torah" (Toras Chaim) and implies guidance (*hora'a*) – can and should be learned as a guide to life.

How many girls have spent years learning Torah texts but are unfamiliar with the Torah's values on life? Many don't even know that the Torah *has* what to say on social and emotional issues! Classroom conversations on such issues grounded in Torah values are not "a waste of learning time." These are the issues that are of most interest to them and most relevant for their life ahead!

Fixed on the goal of engaging women with whatever it takes, the Rebbe allowed and encouraged women who wanted to study Torah Sheba'al Peh texts (Mishna, Gemara). Today, we can use that same mindset to make Torah accessible and experienced – *beyond the text*.

It isn't a difficult task – once we overcome the fear of deviating from convention. With our goal in mind, we can find ways to make Torah and Yiddishkeit meaningful for our girls. Watch their response, and you will know if you are lighting up their *neshama*.

Our girls need a captivating Jewish experience that can compete with the lures of the outside world. Chassidus and the Rebbe's sichos in particular offers us the ideas with which to provide a meaningful Yiddishe life and raise a generation of young, passionate *chassidistehs*. ❧

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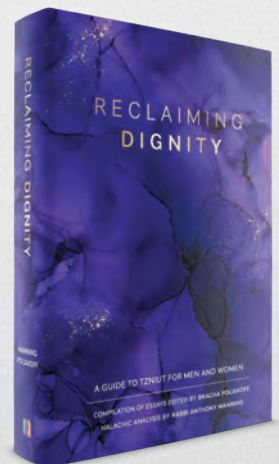
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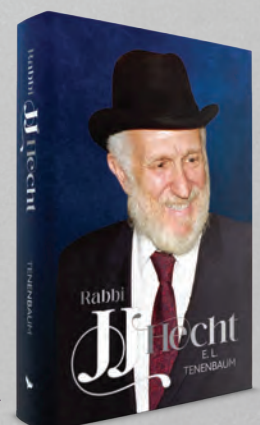
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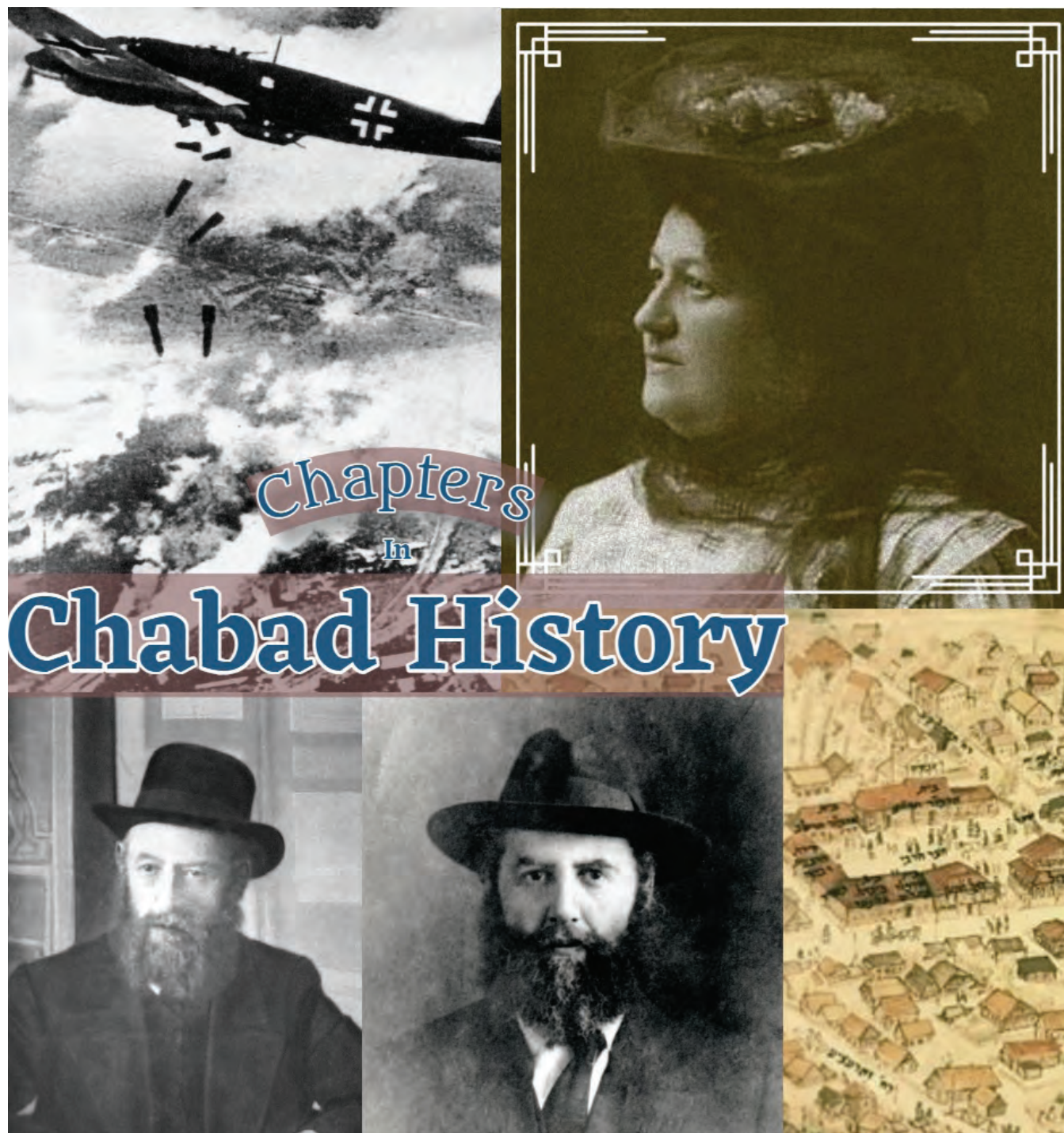
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Sincerely,

RABBI YITZCHOK RASKIN

# Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah: A Pillar In the Chaos of Golus





→  
The cemetery in Avrutch where  
Reb Yosef Yitzchak was buried



## UNTIL MARRIAGE

In 5625, a historical *shidduch* was made in the home of the Tzemach Tzedek. Reb Yosef Yitzchok, the Tzemach Tzedek's son, was visiting Lubavitch, and his daughter, Shterna Sarah, was wandering around her grandparent's home. When the Tzemach Tzedek noticed her together with her younger cousin Sholom Dovber, he announced, "Chosson and Kallah<sup>1</sup>."

Recognizing the significance of their father's words, Reb Yosef Yitzchok and his brother, the Rebbe Maharash, drafted the engagement agreement. Since they were just children, Shterna Sarah was five years old, and the Rebbe Rashab was just four, the wedding was scheduled for the summer of 5635. The wedding's location was to be in Yerushalayim.

Shterna Sarah's father, Reb Yosef Yitzchok, had moved to Ovrutch upon the request of his father-in-law Reb Yaakov Yisroel of Cherkas, a Rebbe of the Chernobyl dynasty. This decision was not simple as the Tzemach Tzedek opposed the proposition and strongly petitioned his son to remain in Lubavitch.

Ultimately, Reb Yosef Yitzchok heeded his father-in-law's request to become the Rebbe of the Cherkasser chassidim in Ovrutch and he led his court in the style of the Chernobyl Chassidus. He said short Torahs and was renowned as a miracle worker. Later, following Reb Yosef Yitzchok's son's passing, the Cherkasser Chassidim dispersed between the various Chernobyl factions.

Shortly after the *shidduch* was made, the Tzemach Tzedek was *nistalek*. Also, as 5635 neared and Moshiach had not yet arrived, a new wedding location had to be arranged. Debate ensued because each side wanted the wedding to be in their city of residence.

After much back and forth, Ovrutch was chosen as the wedding's location. Nevertheless, the Rebbe Maharash would not attend due to his poor health and inability to travel. Many colorful and dramatic events transpired in the events leading up to the wedding and the celebration itself, and perhaps we will dedicate a column to this event in the future.

## LUBAVITCH

Immediately after Sheva Brochos, the newly married couple moved to Lubavitch. It was not an easy transition for the young Shterna Sarah, and she grappled with feelings of loneliness and sadness being so far from family and the familiar conditions she was accustomed to.

She once told over that one of the shocks of moving was the height of the girls in Lubavitch. In Ovrutch, she had been of regular height, but now she felt insecure about her smaller-than-average height. Noticing this, the Rebbe Maharash comforted her

and told her not to fear because "The small trees produce the best fruits<sup>2</sup>."

Adding to her distress, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah tragically struggled with fertility issues. In a visit to Moscow many years later, she related her recollections of those years in conversation with Reb Zelke Paritz.

"After a few years of marriage passed, I had not yet given birth, and I became despondent. There had been something [fertility issue] before the Rebbe Rayatz was born (and that is why it is doubtful he is a *bechor*). Additionally, I was a young girl far away from home!

Once, during the Kiddush on Simchas Torah, they made a Mi Shebeirach for all the women, but they forgot about me. I was really hurt, even though they immediately realized their oversight and made a separate Mi Shebeirach for me- that was just a quick fix.

When all the men left to fabreng by Reb Shilem Reich's home, I went to my room. I reflected on my situation: my infertility, my loneliness, and being overlooked by the Mi Shebeirach. Collectively, this pressed my heart, and I broke out in tears and fell asleep<sup>3</sup>."

1. עטרת מלכה ע' 103, וכן כל הסיפורים שלא ציינו מקור להם נמצא בספר עטרת מלכה.  
2. לשמע און ע' פט  
3. שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 90

*Noticing this, the Rebbe Maharash comforted her and told her not to fear because "The small trees produce the best fruits."*

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In her dream, the Rebbetzin continued, a man appeared to her and promised her a child if she agreed to give eighteen rubles to Tzedkaka and not inform anyone of the dream. After she agreed, he returned with two additional men who approved the arrangement.

When Shterna Sarah woke up, she shared her dream with her husband, who relayed it to the Rebbe Maharash. He told them that the Alter Rebbe, Mittler Rebbe, and the Tzemach Tzedek were the men who had promised her a child. Immediately following Yom Tov, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah sold an expensive piece of clothing she owned and gathered the necessary eighteen rubles to donate to Tzedakah. Just short of nine months later, the Frierdiker Rebbe was born.

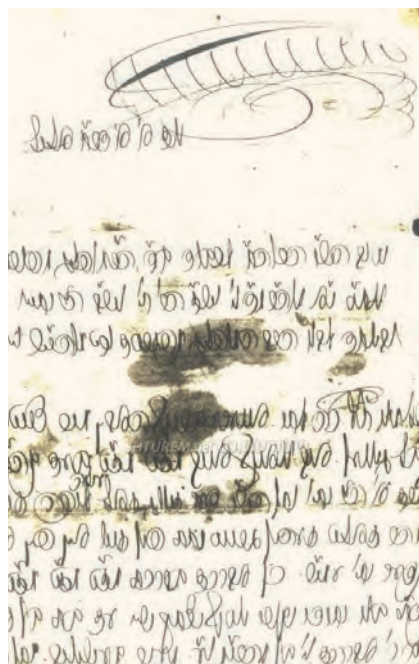
Another interesting aspect of Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah's time in the *chotzer* of Lubavitch was the role she played in copywriting Chassidus. When the Rebbe Maharash would take walks and leave his home, Chassidim would sneak in to copy from the Chassidus manuscripts he kept there. Shterna Sarah, who wrote quickly and had a beautiful script, was one of the leading scribes.

#### GENEROSITY

The Frierdiker Rebbe related numerous stories that highlight his mother's great sensitivity. Interestingly, many of the stories regarding his childhood tell of how the Rebbetzins's softness often conflicted with Rebbe Rashab's more severe parenting approach.

"Once, as a child, I fell asleep during a Simchas Beis Hashoeva farbrengen," the Frierdiker Rebbe said, "and my mother came to take me inside. My father refused and said to let me sleep. My mother challenged him 'Is this what it means "As a father has mercy on his child?"' A father, not a mother, is

*When the Rebbe Maharash would take walks and leave his home, Chassidim would sneak in to copy from the Chassidus manuscripts he kept there. Shterna Sarah, who wrote quickly and had a beautiful script, was one of the leading scribes.*



A handwritten letter from the rebbetzin Shterna Sarah to her cousins in Eretz Yisroel informing them of the chasunah.

said to be merciful!"

My father persisted and replied, 'This [keeping him in the Sukkah] is to be merciful.' 'But it is cold,' my mother responded, 'and he too will become cold.' 'Sitting amongst Chassidim will keep him warm,' my father concluded, 'and this warmth will last for generations!'

"On another occasion, my mother had given me breakfast, and when my father entered the room, he asked whether I had said *Modeh Ani*. In response to his question, I burst out crying. 'The young boy was hungry,' my mother answered, 'so I gave him milk and cake.' 'But did he make a brocho on the food before reciting *Modeh Ani*?' my father questioned. 'The child,' my mother replied, 'is trembling from fear!'

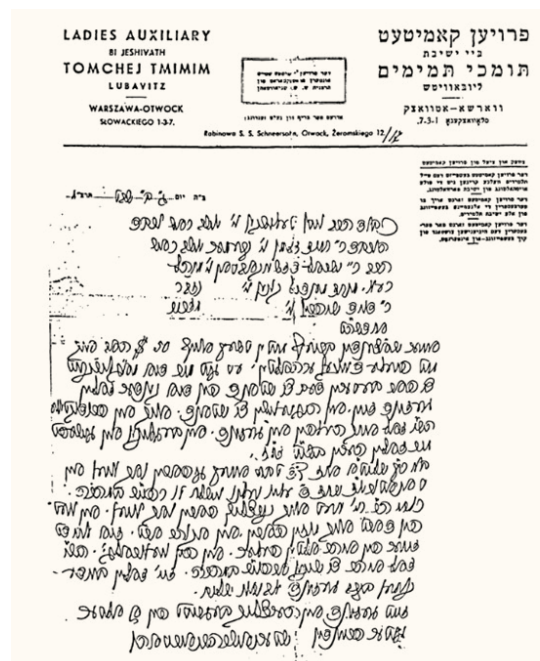
'When one eats before *Modeh Ani*, it is okay to be afraid,' my father responded. And without taking note of my tears, he took me to his office and questioned me, 'How could you possibly have eaten before *Modeh Ani* and without a *Brocho*?'

By a *farbrengen*, the Rebbe shared an account of Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah's immense generosity, "Sometimes, the financial situation in the home was so constrained that there was simply no money. If a beggar came and there was not even a single coin to offer, the Rebbetzin would take from the black loaf of bread meant for her own meal and happily give it to the needy individual<sup>4</sup>."

When the Rebbe Rashab opened Tomchei Tmimim, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah played a leading role in ensuring the bochurim's physical well-being. When the Yeshivah's finances were tight, and the need for funds to support the Yeshivah grew, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah formed a women's

4. שיחת ליל ב' דסוכות תש"ז.

5. התועודות "א בשבת תשכ"ד



*Annual Financial Report (left) and a letter appealing for donations (right).*

←

Many years later, when Reb Yisroel was on a trip to Poland (he had by then been sent to the US), he was invited by the Rebbetzin to eat at her home. He related, “During the meal, the Rebbetzin commented, ‘I’m not sure how you will like my food since American food is probably very different.’ I replied, ‘Rebbetzin, I remember your food from Lubavitch. I used to eat your soup!’ In turn, the Rebbetzin responded ‘I am not embarrassed to say that it was a very beneficial service!’”

In response to a doctor's diagnosis that he only had a few months to live, the Rebbe Rashab decided to travel to Eretz Yisroel and informed Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah of his plans. Demonstrating her determined resolve, she immediately countered this proposal and demanded, "But who will take care of Chassidim!?" The Rebbe Rashab responded that the Frierdiker Rebbe could be responsible. But her instinctive defense of the Chassidim embodies the values that Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah stood for.

Following the histalkus of the Rebbe Rashab, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah consistently remained in

6. זכרון לבני ישראל ע' טו  
7. זכרון לבני ישראל ע' רד



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the presence of her son, the Friediker Rebbe. She was influential in supporting his underground activities and was an active influence in the traveling 'chotzer.'

By Rosh Hashanah 5680, the Friediker Rebbe had not entirely accepted the Nesius and was hesitant to accept the role of Ba'al Tokeah. Realizing the needs of the Chassidim, Rebbetzin Sheterna Sarah requested that, for her sake, he blow the Shofar. The Friediker Rebbe relented and accepted the role, though he only blew the first Tekiah<sup>8</sup>.

In the Friediker Rebbe's account of his arrest, he writes about his mother's reaction: "She protested loudly and in a terrified voice 'Will you cruelly subject even the pure and those who toil for the good of others like my son? No!' she cried bitterly as she pleaded to the leading officer, 'Take me, do not disturb my only son who only seeks to assist others in their troubles. Oy, my husband, they are taking our son Yosef Yitzchok, your only son, who guards the mitzvos with self-sacrifice..." The Friediker Rebbe remarks that only her maternal outburst brought forth a spark of humanity in the callous GPU officers.

Another profoundly emotional account of her pain due to her son's suffering is told over by a chossid who came to visit the Rebbe's homes a few days following his arrest. "It was three hours past midnight, and I saw the Rebbe's mother standing by the Aron Kodesh. Her body was bent over, her head placed on the Aron, and she was crying bitterly. 'Master of the World, was it not for your Torah and your Avodah that my son has been imprisoned? Help me G-D of our Salvation and save him from the enemies.' I tried to console her and calm her spirits, but because of her great devastation, she could not hear my words."

Also later on, as the frightful German siege and bombardment of Warsaw reached its climax on Rosh Hashanah night, Rebbetzin Sheterna Sarah continued to exemplify the qualities of faithfulness and strength. She repeatedly requested to be brought to her son, where she was certain it would be safe. Amidst another intense round of heavy bombing, the Rebbetzin refused to leave the house she was in, to the dismay of others, since there was a sefer Torah in the house<sup>9</sup>.

### PASSING

Together with the Friediker Rebbe, Rebbetzin Sheterna Sarah arrived in America in 5700. Already then, her health was a concern; she had undergone a significant abdominal surgery in Warsaw, and her time in America was dotted with continued medical supervision.

On Sunday, the seventh of Shevat 5702, the Friediker Rebbe embarked on a trip to strengthen Yiddishkeit

8. רשימות דברים ח"ב ע' קלה

9. יומן דרב יוסף ווינבערג. חלק ממנה נדפס ב"א חסידישע דערהער" גל' 156



Reb Shlomo Aron Kazarnovsky

amongst the Jews of Chicago. On Shabbos, the thirteenth of Shevat, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah returned her soul to her Maker while he was still away.

Her *histalkus* took place as she reached the *tefillah* of Nishmas; her siddur was still in her hands. Later, the Friediker Rebbe related that years earlier, he described to his father the nature of Rebbetzin Rivkah's *histalkus*—since the Rebbe Rashab was also not present by his mother's passing— and that it occurred immediately after her davening. Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah was present and commented, “If only I could merit such a *petirah* too<sup>10</sup>.”

However, the Friediker Rebbe did not immediately return to New York. The Chassidim of Chicago petitioned that he remain to accept Yechidus that night. The Friediker Rebbe responded with a heartfelt and profound admission, “From the day my father was *nistalek*, my sense of ‘I’ was taken from me. I cannot do what I want and only what needs to be done. So I will heed the instructions of the Rabbonim.”

He ultimately remained in Chicago until Monday, the funeral being held only when he returned. During the intermediate days, the Rebbe and Reb Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky were tasked with acquiring a burial spot for the Rebbetzin. Chabad then owned a plot in the Staten Island cemetery. Still, because of its inaccessibility and the Friediker Rebbe's health, it was decided to buy a portion in the Montefiore cemetery.

Rabbi Kazarnovsky was intimately involved in many aspects of the *kevrurah* arrangements and took part in the Taharah process too. At the *levaya*, the Rebbe handed him an envelope to place in Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah's hand. The Friediker Rebbe subsequently said, “If you would know what was in the envelope, you'd have an entirely different *derech erez* for her.”

Ultimately, the Friediker Rebbe never traveled to his mother's *tziyon*, but he would send panim to be read there<sup>11</sup>. In the earlier years of the Rebbe's nesius, the Rebbe would stop by Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah's *tziyon*

when departing the Ohel<sup>12</sup>.

## POSTSCRIPT

In a remarkable sicha on Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah's *yahrtzeit*, the Rebbe connected her unyielding dedication to the Zohar's description of Sarah Imeinu that “Only she ‘descended [to Mitzrayim] and ascended’ [i.e. remained unaffected].” The Rebbe explained that all the Matriarchs would have succeeded in maintaining their holiness if presented with those challenges. But only Sarah, who experienced them practically, truly embodied this virtue.

“Similarly, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah,” the Rebbe continued, “who underwent many exiles, maintained her eminence and her spiritual wholeness. She, just like Sarah Imeinu, exemplified the virtue of having ‘descended [to Mitzrayim] and ascended [i.e. remained unaffected]’.”<sup>13</sup>

10. זכרון לבני ישראל ע' מד  
11. ספר השיחות - תש"י ע' 343  
12. התקשרות גליון 572  
13. תנ"ך מ"ח ע' 320





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# Nurturing New Mothers in Crown Heights



*A beautiful gift bag filled to the brim with neatly packaged containers of fresh salads, fruit shakes, stuffed sandwiches, pies, and pastries.*

**T**he distinct wail of a newborn pierces through her hazy fog of sleep. The young mother groggily reaches over to the infant beside her. She lifts him to soothe him, vaguely wondering what time it is. The numbers 3:20 glow up on the bedside clock. Is he hungry? she wonders. Didn't I just feed him an hour and a half ago? Maybe he needs to be changed. Exhaustedly, she goes through her mental checklist and tries to figure out how to soothe the tiny distraught human being beside her.

9:00 am. Her husband is at work and for the

last few hours she's been feeding, changing, and soothing, with barely a wink of sleep in between. Suddenly, she hears the doorbell ring. To her, the ring of the doorbell sounds like it is accompanied by the singing of angels and the drumbeats of a parade. Finally, salvation has arrived from Shifra U'Puah Crown Heights.

It has come in the shape of a beautiful gift bag filled to the brim with neatly packaged containers of fresh salads, fruit shakes, stuffed sandwiches, pies, and pastries. To her body, the breakfast is a boost of nutrition to refill her being that has been depleted by sustaining another life; to her tired mind, it's finally time



**ONE OF THE VOLUNTEERS WHO WAS THERE SINCE THE BEGINNING, RECALLED WHEN SHE HAD ONLY TWO MEALS TO DELIVER. THIS WEEK, WE DELIVERED OVER THIRTY MEALS!"**

to take a break and replenish her energy; and to her soul, it's a balm that heals and washes away the pressure and stress that has consumed her with the responsibility of caring for a newborn. To her, it is a salvation. It is support and warmth and comfort: someone sees her tired eyes, someone appreciates the sacrifice she is making, and someone cares.

Thirteen years ago on Yud Shvat, a group of Israeli women got together for the first Hebrew-speaking N'shei Chabad event in Crown Heights. In attendance, were Mrs. **Shlomit Slapochnik**, together with Mrs. **Shlomit Slapochnik**, Mrs. **Michla**

**Segal**, and Mrs. **Chani Farkash** who currently run the organization.

"At the farbrengen," Mrs. Slapochnik told Anash.org, "we brainstormed how to incorporate chessed into our new N'shei Chabad group. In Kfar Chabad, the Shifra U'Puah has always been a very active organization, one we were all very familiar with. We decided to start with cooking breakfast for women who had recently given birth."

The Shifra and Puah organization began in the middle of Yom Kippur 5737 (1977) when – reminiscent of the Alter Rebbe stopping his Yom Kippur *tefilos* to prepare hot



food for a woman who just gave birth – the Rebbe sent a message to Kfar Chabad’s mayor, R’ Shlomo Maidanchik, to arrange for all young women to have their needs taken care of.

Taking inspiration from the Rebbeim, the group of Crown Heights women chose to help newly postpartum mothers who did not have family around them to help, as their first initiative.

The first week the breakfast service began, the women found their first two community members who gave birth that week and delivered a nourishing luxurious home-cooked breakfast for two weeks.

“I was just speaking to one of the volunteers who was there since the beginning,” says Mrs. Slapochnik, “and she recalled when she had only two meals to deliver. This week, we delivered over thirty meals!”

As the organization grew, they extended their services to any new mother, not just those who didn’t have family. When the Rebbe spoke about creating Shifra U’Puah, the Rebbe wanted it to be there for all women who gave birth – and that was now becoming a reality.

When the number of women giving birth in Crown Heights exceeded the group’s workforce, they joined forces with the Junior N’shei organization, led by Mrs. **Malka Michla Perlow**, Mrs. **Chaya Roitblat**, and Mrs. **Miriam Goldshmidt**. Now, these two groups are organizing and preparing the hand-delivered breakfasts each morning. Delivering breakfast may seem like a small gesture, but for a mother recovering from birth and working overtime to feed and nurture a baby, the support is indescribable.

“Thank you so much!” wrote one woman after receiving Shifra U’Puah breakfasts, “I don’t know how to thank you and all the amazing women



**VOLUNTEERS  
SHARE HOW  
THEIR CHILDREN  
HELP WITH THE  
PREPARATIONS,  
ALLOWING THEM  
TO SEE THE VALUE  
OF CHESSED AND  
WANT TO JOIN WHEN  
THEY GROW UP.**

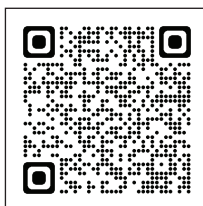
part of this unbelievable organization. I hesitated to sign up after my birth, and didn’t know if I would be adding pressure with fewer volunteers in the summer, but I felt I could use that help, nurture, and care. It truly made me feel like my simcha was being celebrated, that I wasn’t alone (especially after my mother’s passing a few months ago). Please pass on a huge thank you to all involved!”

Aside from the staple breakfast delivery service, Shifra U’Puah offers cleaning help to mothers who sign up for it, a Shabbos catered from A-Z, high school girls to help take care of the other small children at home. They also subsidize services like a doula, kimpeturin home, and a lactation consultant for those who need.

One critical area where they have helped tremendously is raising awareness and getting help for mothers suffering through postpartum depression. When a mother needs extra help and support, they will sensitively ensure that she gets the help and support she needs.

Volunteers share how their children help with the preparations, allowing them to see the value of chessed and want to join when they grow up. “It’s so special for my children to see that chessed is done for simchos too,” one volunteer shared. “They’ve seen me send meals for not such good occasions, and it’s heartwarming for them to feel the sense of communal family when we join in happy occasions.” 🌟

TO VOLUNTEER  
OR SUPPORT  
CROWN HEIGHTS  
SHIFRA U’PUAH,  
SCAN THE  
QR CODE:



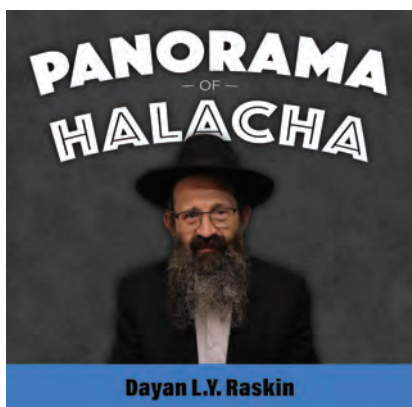


# Her First Stop Outside of Home

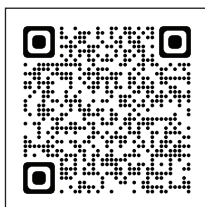


## QUESTION:

Is it our custom for a woman who has given birth to go to Shul as her first journey outside of her home to hear Kedusha or Borchu?



TO LISTEN TO  
RABBI RASKIN'S  
SHIUR, SCAN  
THE QR CODE:



## ANSWER:

In *Sha'arei Efrayim*, the classic *sefer* on *hilchos krias haTorah*, he writes that the husband of a woman who gave birth to a boy or a girl is a *chiyuv* for an *aliyah* on the first Shabbos that his wife comes to *shul*. Even if he received an *aliyah* on the Shabbos preceding the *bris* (or by naming the girl), he nevertheless has another *chiyuv* on the Shabbos when his wife comes.

This *minhag* is patterned after the Torah's instruction that some time after giving birth, a woman should bring a *korban* to the Beis Hamikdash. In previous generations, perhaps due to a more physically demanding workload, women rested at home for an extended period of time. Then, she would go to *shul*, which was reminiscent of going to the Beis Hamikdash. The husband would receive an *aliyah* and would normally pledge an amount for *tzedaka*, which was considered as if he and wife had brought a *korban*.

The collection *Shoroshei Minhag Ashkenaz* records that this is a German Jewish (*yekkische*) *minhag* that originated about a century ago. When a mother regained her strength, she would make her journey to "Beis Hashem" (a *shul*), and this journey was referred to as "*oivachen gein*"

(*vachen* is to give birth, and *oivachen* is to leave the status of having just given birth).

Some say that a woman's responding to *kedushah* or *barchu* is equivalent to her having recited *birchas hagomel*. The Alter Rebbe records in *Seder Birchas Hanehenin* that after birth, a woman should *bentch hagomel* in the *ezras nashim*. However, in practice it is not the *minhag* Chabad, nor of many communities.

[Once, after R' Berel Alenik's wife gave birth, she stood in *cheder sheini* in 770 and *bentched hagomel*. When R' Berel mentioned this to the Rebbe, the Rebbe asked in jest if the bochurim said *shehechiyanu*... (since it was not the common practice).]

If the *bris* is celebrated at home, and there was a *minyan* for *minchah* at the *bris*, and the mother responded to *kedushah*, does this count as a fulfillment this *minhag*?

Rabbi Yossel Chitrik had the rare *zechus* that the Rebbe was his *sandak* at his *bris* in 5712. His mother had answered *kedushah* at the *mincha minyan*, and they asked the Rebbe whether this was the same as having gone to *shul* to fulfill this *minhag*, the Rebbe responded in the affirmative. ㊦



↑

*When asked about the tremendous success and exponential growth of Bonei Olam, how they went from nothing to over 1,500 attendees at an event in barely five years, Mrs. Junik attributes it to nothing but constant brachos from the Rebbe.*

## Building Families with Support and Understanding

BY ANASH.ORG REPORTER

Walking into the hall of Oholei Torah for their annual Bonei Olam Chabad women's event, one wouldn't dream that the organization is a mere five years old. The room, packed with over 1,500 women, is a sight to behold. The women are there for their families, they are there for their friends, and they are there for the institution of women who for thousands of years have valiantly struggled towards the dream of motherhood: from Sarah Imeinu and Chana Hanevi'a to the hundreds of women in our community now.

Mrs. **Rochy Junik**, the founder of the Chabad branch of Bonei Olam, started it after her own experience with the organization and her realization that Crown Heights and Anash families worldwide desperately needed

specialized resources within the larger Bonei Olam organization.

The Bonei Olam organization is set up in a way that each community takes care of its own members. The money that Boro Park and Williamsburgh fundraise is used to help couples in their communities. For years, Lubavitchers in crisis had nowhere to turn for help with the astronomical costs of treatments and moral support. That is until Mrs. Rochy Junik and her husband Rabbi **Itchel** got involved.

When asked about the tremendous success and exponential growth of Bonei Olam, how they went from nothing to over 1,500 attendees at an event in barely five years, Mrs. Junik attributes it to nothing but constant *brachos* from the Rebbe.

"When we wanted to make our first event to



raise awareness for couples who are suffering in silence, and show them our support as a community, the staff at Bonei Olam told us to rent a small hall. They didn't expect much of a turnout and wanted to spare us the embarrassing look of an empty room," shares Mrs. Junik.

"My husband wrote to the Rebbe and when he opened a letter of the Igros Kodesh, the Rebbe wrote there to someone '...you tried and tried, and had no success, but know that Yagati Umatzasi – your efforts will pay off and be more successful than you ever imagined.'

"We wanted to rent a bigger hall after that but we didn't get the go-ahead, so we stayed with the JCM Hall which was our original plan. The hall has a capacity of 250 people. On the day of the event, we showed up and the hall was filled to the brim, with a line outside reaching around the dreidel and stretching all the way to Ess'N Bench!

"We were overwhelmed with gratitude for the Rebbe's *brachos*, and for the wonderful people of Crown Heights who came out in droves to show support to their family and friends who are dealing with infertility."

That event was the start of a powerful uprising trend. The next women's event was held in Oholei Torah and had 1,200 proud participants, and the most recent event this past summer had over 1,500 women!

One out of six couples deal with some level of infertility, so in a community like ours, almost every family has a sibling, a cousin, or an in-law who is struggling. Due to the personal and delicate nature of the matter, it is common that even friends and siblings closest to the struggling couple won't know about the deep pain they are experiencing.

These awareness events held by Bonei Olam Crown Heights create a

safe haven for family and friends to show up and show support without needing to know details or pry in uncomfortable places. It is a way for them to show they care and is a lifeline for those who are often in a dark and difficult situation.

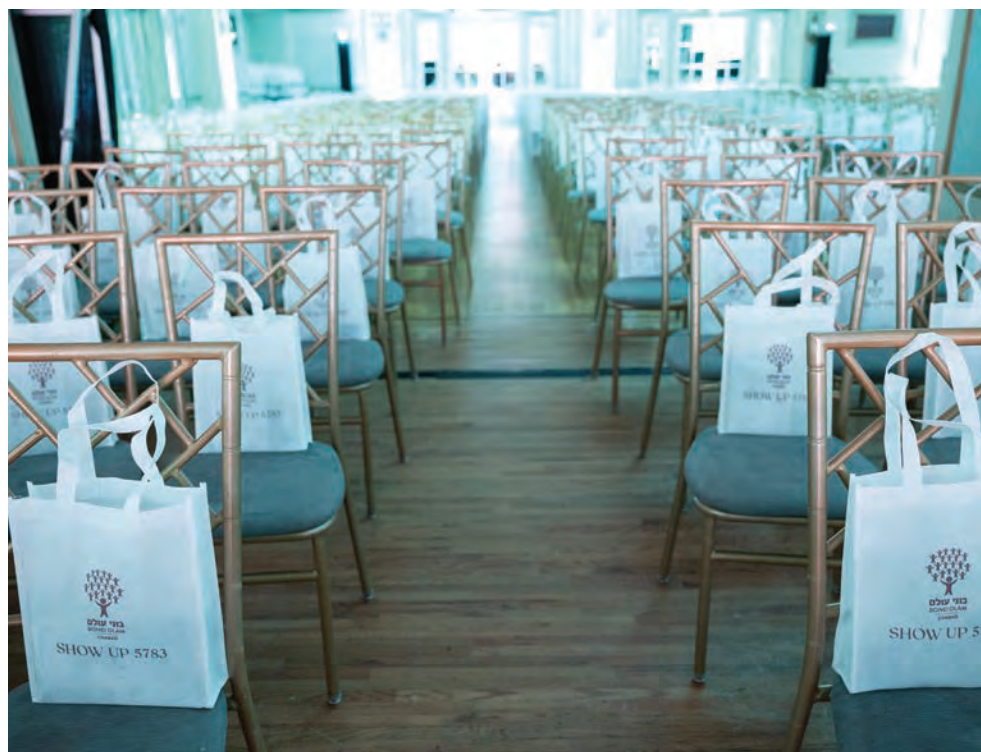
"My husband and I have been in and out of doctors, and dealing with the ups and downs of this painful journey for two and half years now," shared one Crown Heights woman who wishes to remain anonymous. "Whenever we are with family, it's there in the room with us. Shabbos tables full of children running around, Chanukah gelt for the grandchildren, the Ma Nishtana at the seder – it's everywhere.

"The joy of being together with family is always marred with the pain of not getting to experience the joy of parenting that is all around us and the pain of the treatment that we're attempting. The worst pain of all though is the profound loneliness. The feeling that we are going through this alone and that no one knows what it's like.

"I cannot explain to you how heartwarming and deeply moving it was when my mother and all my sisters went together to the Bonei Olam event that was held this summer in Crown Heights. I cried when I saw them there, and for the first time in many months it was not tears of sadness."

The world of fertility is vast and overwhelming, and Bonei Olam is a flotation device in an ocean of information and decisions. When a couple reaches out to Bonei Olam Chabad, they are paired with a counselor who is there to guide them and stay in touch with them for every step of the way. A lead counselor at Bonei Olam Chabad, Mrs. **Esther Kreiman** has contributed immensely since the Juniks recruited her, and

*That event was the start of a powerful uprising trend. The next women's event was held in Oholei Torah and had 1,200 proud participants, and the most recent event this past summer had over 1,500 women!*





**BONEI OLAM’S GOAL IS TO BRING EVERY COUPLE A MAZAL TOV QUICKLY AND JOYFULLY. WITH THE MOST UP-TO-DATE MEDICAL INFORMATION AND CONNECTIONS, COUPLES DON’T NEED TO WAIT A YEAR OR MORE ON A WAITING LIST TO MEET A SPECIALIST.**

she brought more Chabad counselors on board since, to help support the growing group of Lubavitchers who reach out for support.

Bonei Olam’s goal is to bring every couple a Mazal Tov quickly and joyfully. With the most up-to-date medical information and connections, couples don’t need to wait a year or more on a waiting list to meet a specialist.

For the Juniks, their key role in the Chabad branch involves fundraising for the couples. The medical world of fertility treatment is a lucrative industry since insurance doesn’t cover this “non-health cost.” Bonei Olam promises to support couples, so that “there should not be even one Jewish couple who cannot have a child due to financial difficulty.”

The cost of one round of treatment can be \$20,000 or more, as each appointment is costly. Young couples don’t start off their married life with such sums, and the high cost of living (especially New York rent) makes it absolutely unaffordable. If

one hundred couples come forward in one year for help with a round of treatments – that alone tops 2 million.

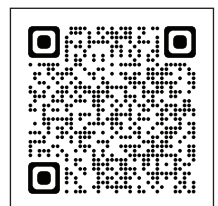
The fundraising that the Juniks do is a breath of life and hope for young couples who otherwise would not have the resources to afford such treatments, and definitely not pay for top experts that Bonei Olam connects them with so they can have the absolute best.

“Some of the families who donate ‘Give for Gratitude,’” says Mrs. Junik. “After they are treated and with the help of Hashem, have a healthy child, they give back in their immense gratitude and relief so that another family can experience the same joy that they were blessed with.”

Another beautiful channel of donations is from families who suspect a sibling may be struggling with fertility and want to help privately and sensitively. They call Bonei Olam directly and choose to donate to their sibling or friend – though they’re not told if that person is on the list for treatment, as Bonei Olam keeps everything confidential. If the sibling is indeed among those being helped, they will receive that donation. In this way, caring family members can discreetly help those close to them.

To date, Bonei Olam Chabad has helped bring over 100 precious new *neshamos* into the world. Bonei Olam means to build a world, and for a couple in need, Bonei Olam is building their world. <sup>1</sup>

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# Weekly Study *with* Rabbi Chaim Wolosow

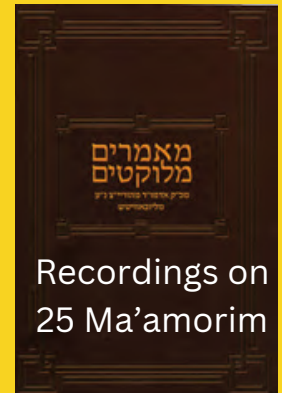
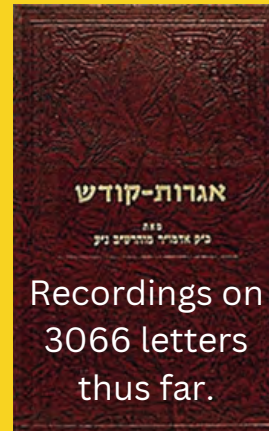
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# Lubavitch Opposition to New York Eruv is 120 Years Old



*The topic of eruv in New York City and the Lubavitch view has been much discussed in recent times. But a newly uncovered newspaper clipping shows that the issue was addressed by a student of the Tzemach Tzedek nearly 120 years ago.*

BY ANASH.ORG REPORTER

**T**he topic of *eruv* in New York City and the Lubavitch view has been much discussed in recent times. But the issue of carrying on Shabbos in New York and the position of Lubavitch rabbonim is quite old.

A newly uncovered newspaper clipping from nearly 120 years ago shows how Harav **Chaim Yakov Vidrevitz**, a *chossid* of the Tzemach Tzedek and Rebbe Maharash and a *rov* in New York, weighed in on the topic.

As a bochor, Harav Vidrevitz was an exceptional *ilui* and a *yoshev* by the **Tzemach Tzedek**. In 5636 (1876), after serving as *rov* in several Russian towns, he was sent by the **Rebbe Maharash** to be the Chassidishe *rov* of Moscow. He served there for 15 years, earning him the title, the “Moskver Rov.”







↑ A picture Harav Chaim Yakov Vidrevitz, taken around the time of this article.

During that time, Harav Vidrevitz was tasked by the Tzemach Tzedek's revered children to organize the *ksovim* and to print the *tshuvos* of the Tzemach Tzedek. He spent a period of two years toiling over the Tzemach Tzedek's writing and clarifying his words.

After upheavals in Russia and an attempt on the Czar's life, a large portion of Moscow's Jews were expelled, and in 5652 (1892), Harav Vidrevitz decided to head towards the American shores. There he was appointed as *rov* of the Lubavitcher-Nyeshiner *shul* on Henry Street on the East Side of New York.

In New York, he began to shine even more and he accomplished much in the realm of strengthening Yiddishkeit, specifically in the areas of *kashrus* and *mikvaos*. His wit and genius were well-known throughout the land.

During that time, Rabbi Yehoshua Seigel, known as the Sherpser Rov, created the first eruv in New York, covering the Jewish area of Manhattan. The eruv counted on existing riverbanks and train trestles, and it ignored the large population of Manhattan which, at the time, numbered around 2 million.

In a public letter, published in the Yiddish newspaper *Der Teglicher Herald* from July 21, 1905, Harav Vidrevitz responds to the "Chevra Shomrei Shabbos" about using an eruv in New York City. In his letter, he writes that carrying in the streets is a "*sofek issur d'oraisa*" and one who carries is considered a "*mechalel Shabbos b'farhesya*." 🕒

## Daily Jewish Herald דער טעגליכער העראלד

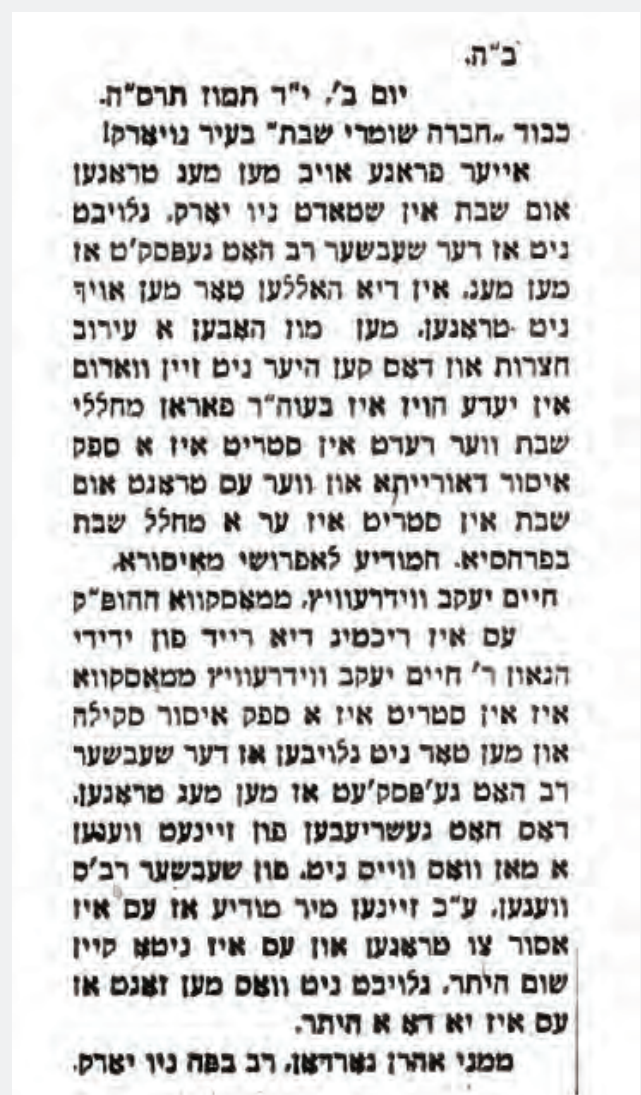
### THE LETTER

B"H Monday, 14 Tammuz 5665 (1905)

To the honorable Chevra Shomrei Shabbos of New York City:

You have asked whether one may carry on Shabbos in New York City. Don't believe [the report] that the Shebsher [Sherpser] Rav ruled that one may [do so]. In the hallways [of apartment buildings] one may not carry either; one would have to make an eruv chatzeros, and here that cannot be done because, due to our great sins, there are mechallelei Shabbos in every house. Needless to say, in the street it's a question of a Torah-level prohibition. Anyone who carries on Shabbos in the street is a public mechallel Shabbos. [Written by] the one who comes to inform [people] to keep them away from a prohibition,

Chaim Yaakov Viderevitz, from Moscow, residing here

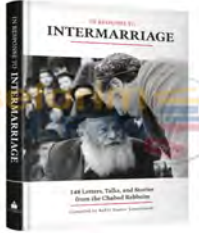


↑ Special thanks to Rabbi Shmuel Super for sharing this original clipping with us.

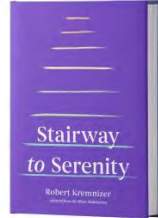
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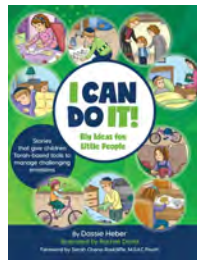


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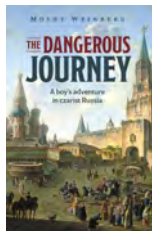


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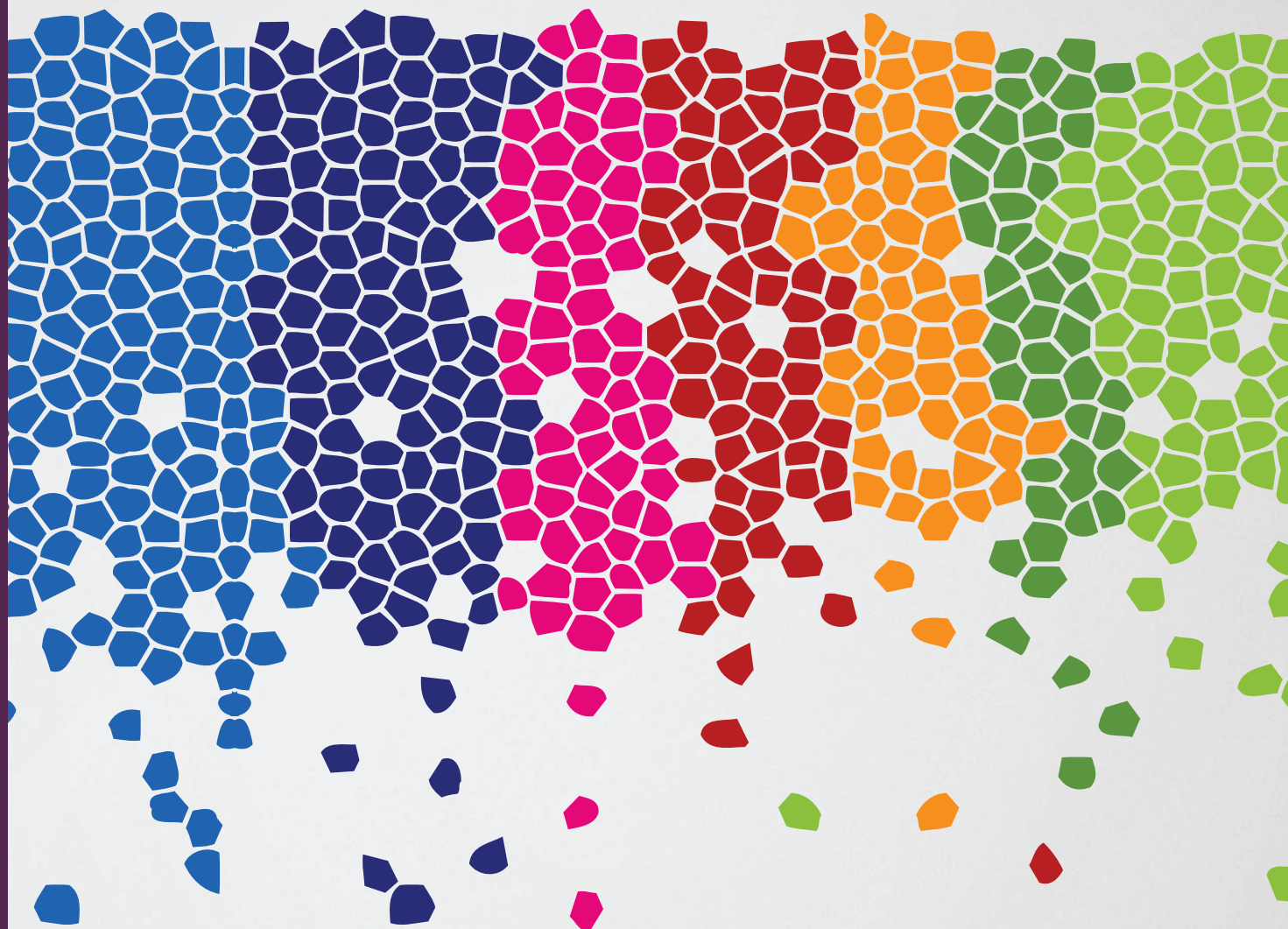


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