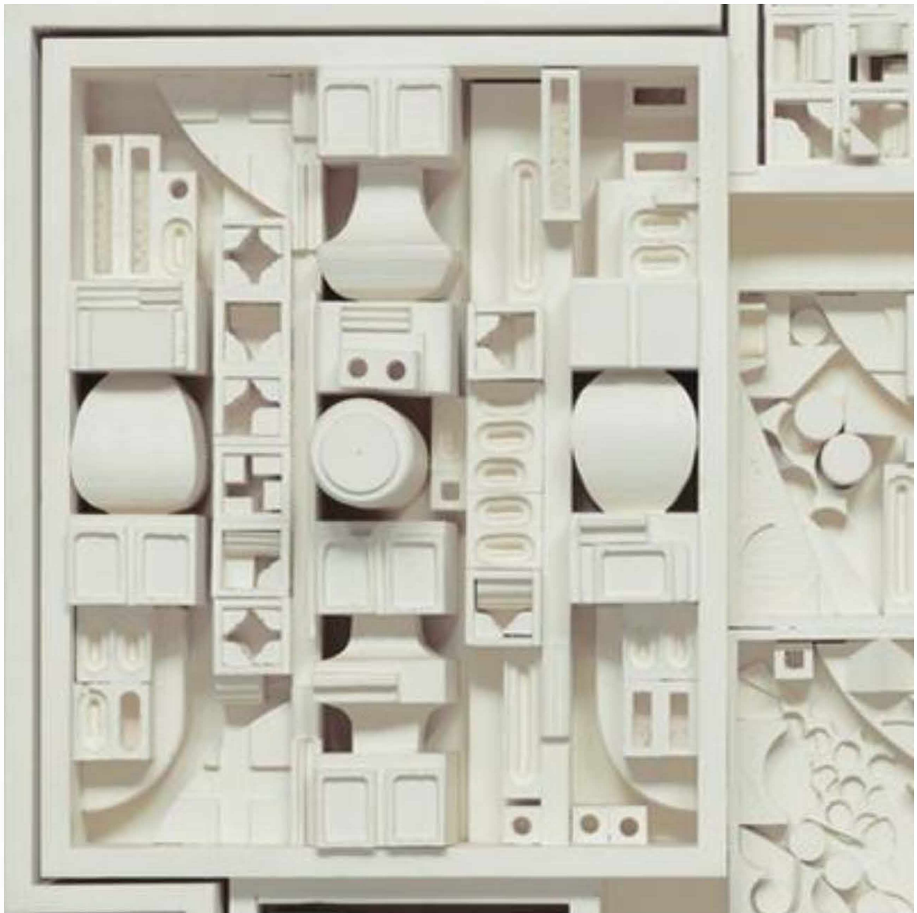


Putting Together the Pieces:



The Autobiography of Dr. Shlomo Newfield

Praise for *Putting Together the Pieces*

Charming, engagingly contemplative... Dr. Newfield creates an evocative picture of life in a hasidic enclave. While the lifestyle is insular, it is surprisingly in touch with the outside world. —*Dr. Abraham*

A wonderful book, beautifully written with graceful care. There isn't a false note and the story moves along engagingly from the author's early childhood to his mature perspective as a father, grandfather, and physician. —*Prof. Isaac*

This superb book tells the poignant and unforgettable account of a gifted Ivy League college student who alters the trajectory of his life to bring him closer to G-d. Along the way he acquires a warm, loving family and a respected position in the Crown Heights community. —*Mrs. Yacova*

Dr. Newfield's smart and perceptive narrative is full of surprises, contradictions, strange ironies, and injustices. His self-deprecating style makes this account easy to read and enjoyable. —*Rabbi Moses*

A human and appealing story enhanced by fascinating illustrations, flashes of humor, a useful glossary of hasidic terms, and even favorite recipes! —*Mr. Aaron*

Filled with drama, memorable characters, and genuine suspense, it's a terrific introduction to the hasidic world as seen by the journey of a neophyte who came to visit and then stayed on for the duration... until the advent of Moshiach, as they might say in Brooklyn. —*Ms. Josepha*

By weaving together the intersecting stories of family, community, and tradition this book succeeds in fleshing out Dr. Newfield's character and interests. —*Dean David*



Dr. Shlomo Newfield 2014

Putting Together the Pieces:
The Autobiography of Dr. Shlomo Newfield



Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York

2022

This book,

the product of over 20 years of research,

is dedicated to my dear wife, Basha Rayzl

and our beloved children and grand-children.



The Autobiography of Dr. Shlomo Newfield

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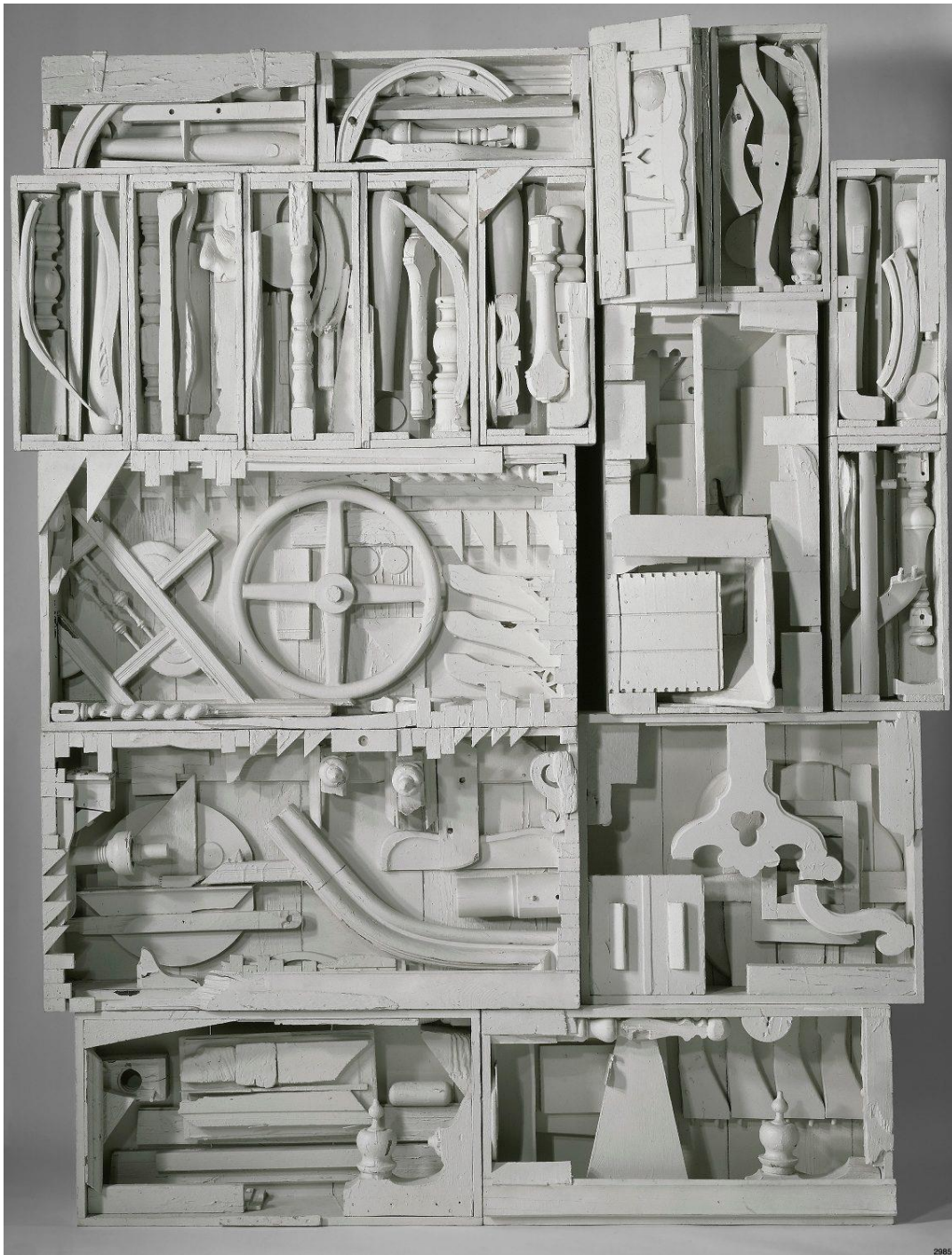
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This sculpture, by Louise Nevelson, captures the theme of “putting together the pieces,” here demonstrated with scraps of wood. In my composition, I have compiled memories and anecdotes covering more than half a century in order to assemble a picture of my life story.



Here are the Newfields in front of our house on East 27th Street in Flatbush, Brooklyn. We are all dressed for the Bar Mitzvah of my brother, David. I am standing in the front row on the left.

Piece # One: The Early Years

“A Draft of a Draft”

Introduction

Recently, the New York Times printed a letter to the Metropolitan Diary recalling the experiences of a dog sitter: I occasionally pet sit for people who are fortunate enough to be able to get out of the city in the summer. Once, when I was walking a dog that belonged to one of my older clients, two young girls came up to me.

“Can we pat your doggy?” one of them said.

“Sure,” I said, and then turned to the woman they were with.

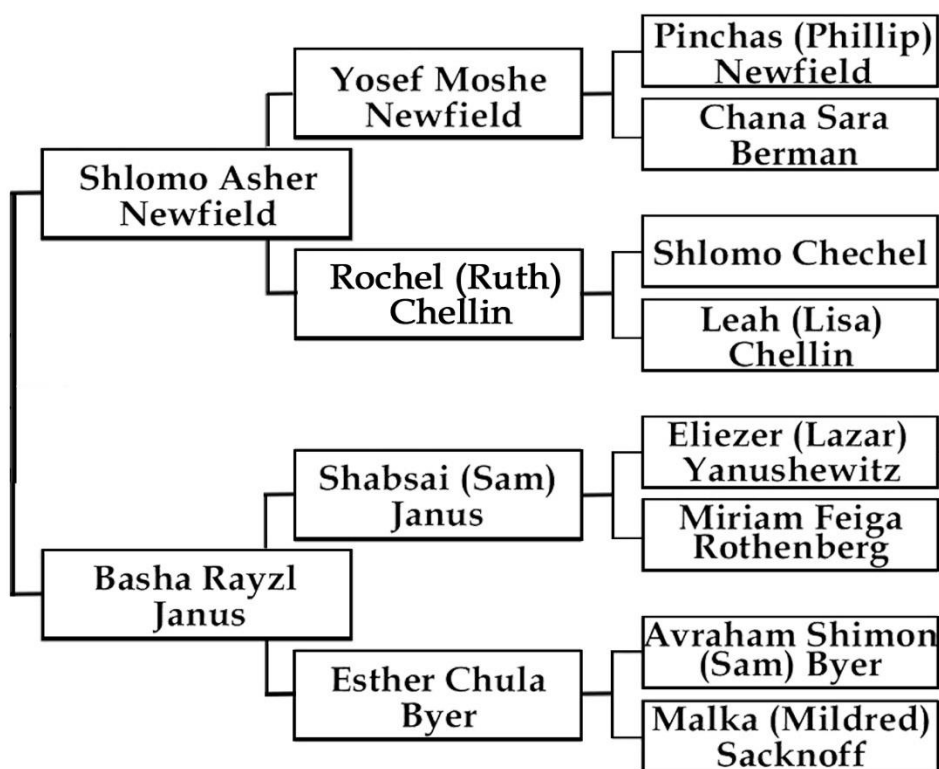
“Sorry,” I said. “He smells a bit. He’s not my dog.”

“That’s OK,” She said. “They’re not my kids!”

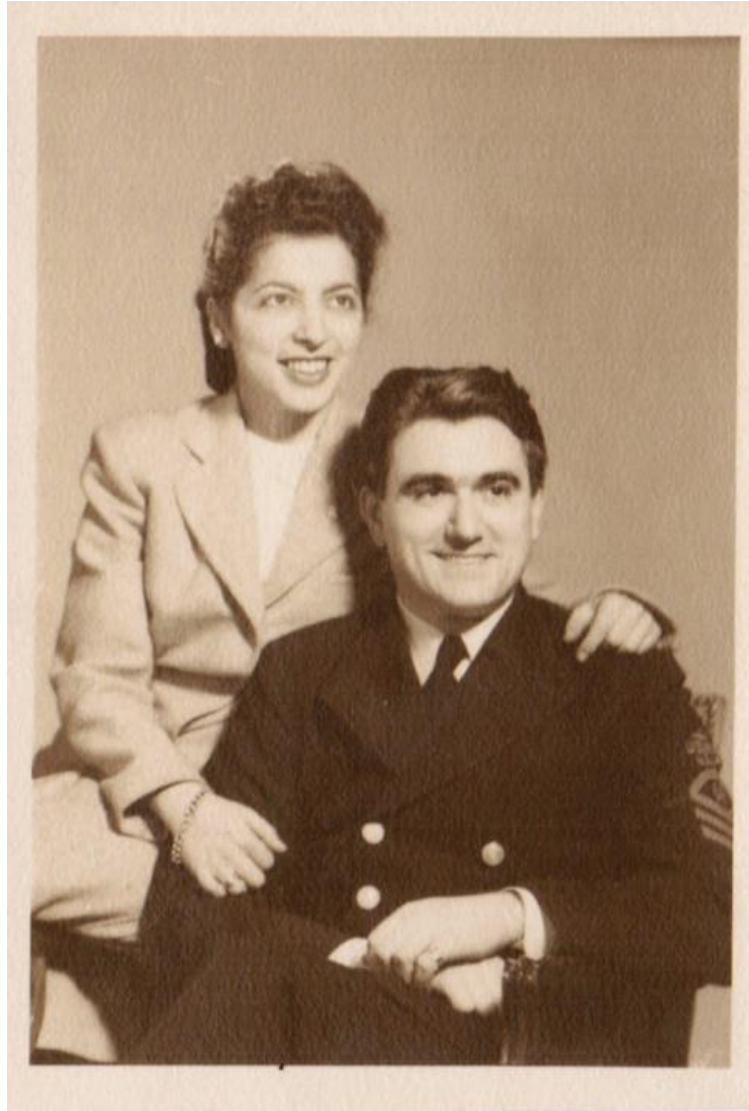
But you, my dear children and grand-children *are* mine, so I must pay special attention to your desire for an accurate and detailed family history. Since I am a senior citizen, I feel now is the time to record fond memories of my early years, highlights of my personal journey and the accomplishments of my career. Piece # One of this book describes our family background and my experiences up until my *bar mitzvah*. Piece # Two narrates the story of my adult years and marriage; and Piece # Three is a treasure trove of anecdotes, documents, and *divrei Torah*. The book is rounded out with a comprehensive user-friendly hasidic glossary which conveniently translates and explains many Hebrew, Yiddish, and Aramaic terms. I hope you will enjoy exploring these pages of our family history and will discover in them many interesting and entertaining stories.

It only took me twenty-plus years to put this book together. You are all invited to read the next volume in the year 2040!

Newfield Family Tree



When Mommy and I got married in 1977, we joined the Newfield and Janus families.



My mother, Ruth Chellin married my father, Joseph Newfield, during World War II. In this wedding portrait my father is wearing his uniform.

Meet the Family

My Bar Mitzvah ceremony and reception were on Shabbos. Consequently, I don't have any photographs of it. Many years later, I found in Bubby Ruth's house photographs of my brother, David's, Bar Mitzvah which took place three years prior to mine. We don't know who took these pictures—a relative? or a neighbor? —and gave them to my parents. The general schedule of events and guest list of both Bar Mitzvahs were similar: Shabbos davening at the Madison Jewish Center a few blocks away on Nostrand Avenue, followed by a catered reception in our house at 1639 East 27th Street. Also, the handsome preteen (yours truly) appears in several photos, especially when the cake was served.

My father, Grandpa Joe, came from a religious family. His father, Pinchas, emigrated from Stolpce, Poland, which is now known as Steibt, Belarus. He moved to Glasgow, Scotland, where he met his wife, Chana Sara Berman, originally from Ponevezh, Lithuania. They had four children in Scotland and moved again to Malden, Massachusetts, where my father was born in 1914. Still not ready to settle down, they moved again to the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn where they lived above a pharmacy at 102 Sumner Avenue (now Marcus Garvey Boulevard). My father attended public school and learned to read *lashon hakodesh* and to *daven* with a *melamed* who came to his house. As a kohen, my father went up on the *bimah* to *duchen* (perform the priestly blessing) with his father in their local shul.

After graduating from (the old) Boys High School, he attended City College in Manhattan. He aspired to become a doctor but would have faced great difficulty gaining admission to medical school due to the anti-Semitic quotas prevalent at the time. As it happened, his father passed away and Grandpa Joe had to go to work to help support the family. The following anecdote is a good illustration of the anti-Jewish bias and discrimination at that time. The pre-med students at City College formed an association called the Chemistry Club. There was a non-Jewish professor who served as the faculty advisor. Heavily influenced by anti-Semitism, the professor had the gall to tell the students (at that time mostly Jewish), “You boys don't have the bedside manner to become doctors!” And to think that these were top students, including Jonas Salk and others who would go on to win the Nobel Prize in medicine.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Newfield
request the honor of your presence
at the Bar Mitzvah
of their son
Stanley Austin

Saturday morning, September twelfth
nineteen hundred and sixty-four
at nine o'clock

Madison Jewish Center
2989 Nostrand Avenue
Brooklyn, New York

Reception following services
at 1639 East 27th Street
Brooklyn, New York

My Bar Mitzvah was on *Shabbos Shuva*. I was lucky. It has the shortest *haftorah* of the whole year!

As an aside, Bubby Ruth's cousin, Hyman Schildkraut, was barred from attending an American school because he was Jewish. Coming from a more well-to-do family, he could afford to travel to Scotland to study medicine. He went on to a long and successful career as an internist in Manhattan.

My father worked at a series of jobs during the Depression such as an ambulance driver and a bookkeeper in a pocketbook factory (at \$5 per week). Since jobs were hard to come by, he had to do whatever he was ordered to do, even if it was lowly or demeaning. For example, after working all day as a bookkeeper, Grandpa Joe had to sweep the factory floor after everyone else had gone home. He also tried to become a New York City public school teacher, but failed the speech test. (He actually spoke very well but was denied to job because he was Jewish and the speech test was just an excuse to avoid hiring Jews.) He later studied to be an accountant and started his own Certified Public Accountant practice. Among his first clients was the original Pottery Barn on 10th Avenue in Manhattan. In order to get new clients, my father would call start-up businesses on the telephone and offer his services as an accountant. Due to his intelligence and natural charm, if he was able to get his foot in the door, that is, if the business owner agreed to meet my father in person, my father usually got the account. When I think about my father, Joseph, I'm reminded of Yosef ha-Tzaddik of the *Chumash*. My father was honest, easy-going, and handsome. Everyone who met him immediately became his friend and admirer.

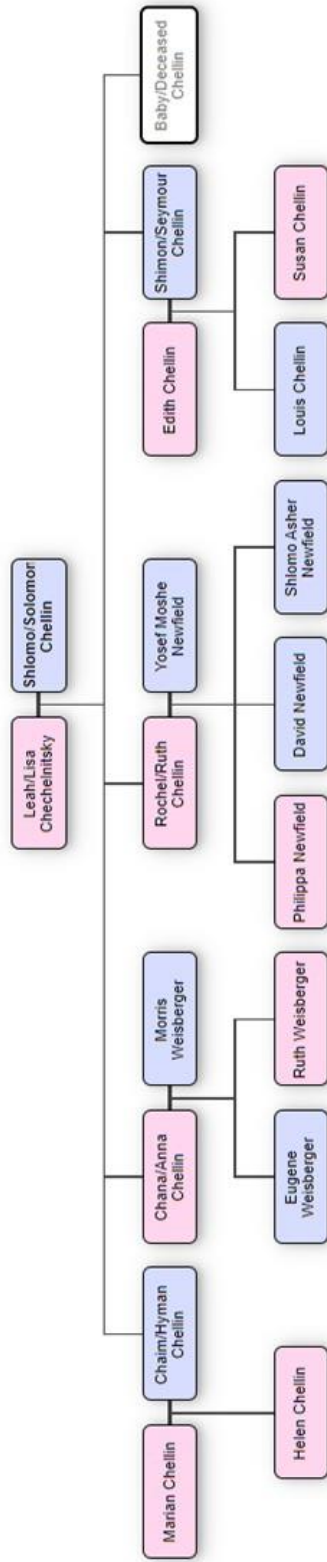
My mother, Bubby Ruth, was born on the Lower East Side of Manhattan (in a neighborhood that has since become fashionable and is now known as the East Village). Her parents were immigrants from the Ukraine. I am named for her father, Solomon Chechel. I was told that he went to a radical political meeting in Europe. While he was there, he got word that it was not safe to return to Ukraine, which was then part of Russia, because the czarist government was extremely hostile to socialists. He made his way to New York where he married a distant cousin, Leah Chechelnitzky, also from the Ukraine and had five children: Hyman, Ann, Ruth, Seymour, and a baby who died in infancy. They lived in an apartment at 108 East 4th Street. Many, many years later, I visited the street with Bubby Ruth. She pointed to each window of her tenement building and recalled the family which had lived there while she was growing up. I was duly impressed by her memories but I still had one nagging question on my mind. I asked her, "How

come there is no bronze plaque on the front of the building saying Dr. Stanley Newfield's mother was born here!"

Eventually, Solomon got a job with the New York City Department of Sanitation, handling complaints from the public. However, he spent most of his working hours organizing and promoting the Hebrew Benevolent Association of the Sanitation Department which was a social club, self-help group, and burial society for the Jewish sanitation workers. Among its activities, the association put on a "Purim Ball" every year in Manhattan. This was a fundraiser for his organization for which the sanitation workers, overwhelmingly non-Jewish, sold tickets door-to-door on commission. There was musical entertainment at the ball as well as an acrobatic show of which my grandfather was especially fond. When my mother arrived at the ball one year during World War II, she was surprised to see a large sign outside proclaiming, "Servicemen Admitted Free!" Bubby Ruth asked her father how he could let in more people since the sanitation workers had already sold many more tickets than the hall could accommodate. He answered, "My dear child, this way when the hall is mobbed, we will have an excuse. We can say the overcrowding is due to the servicemen. It is our patriotic duty to admit them!"

Among Bubby Ruth's neighbors in the tenement house was the Ticker family, including young Rubie, who grew up to become the famous cantor and opera singer, known to the world as Richard Tucker. My grandmother, Leah, often heard little Rubie sing with my Aunt Anne. As young children, they would stand together in the courtyard and sing Yiddish songs. Then neighbors would reward them by throwing pennies down from their windows. Bubby Leah was impressed by Rubie's rich singing voice. She encouraged his mother to have a local cantor give him voice lessons. Rubie got the voice lessons and the rest, as they say, is history.

Bubby Ruth Newfield's Family



My Mother, Bubby Ruth

Bubby Ruth was born in 1916 and was educated in public schools including Hunter College High School and Hunter College of the City University of New York. She studied many subjects including Latin and German but her favorite was mathematics. She was fortunate to get a steady job with New York City during the Depression by placing high up on a civil service exam. She became a clerk with the Department of Purchase. Her department ordered everything needed for the New York City government from food for the zoo animals to furniture for the courthouses. Once, in the 1930's, during the Depression, she refused to order grapes for the zoo because they were too expensive. Soon, she got a phone call from the zookeeper, saying that he must receive his order of grapes—or his monkeys would become constipated! Under these circumstances, Bubby Ruth had no choice but to place the order. The monkeys got their grapes.

Bubby Ruth met Grandpa Joe while on vacation at Lake George in upstate New York. Grandpa Joe was immediately attracted to her and they decided to get married. The Jewish ceremony was held in my grandparent's house in Borough Park. They were married by Rabbi Dr. Israel Schorr, a well-known and beloved rosh in Borough Park.

Bubby Ruth helped support her parents during the Depression on her princely salary of \$12 per week. Later, after her marriage during World War II, she enrolled in education courses and became a junior high school math teacher. Many years later, by chance, she had my brother, David, in her class. A funny incident took place when my brother wanted to ask a question. He raised his hand and called out, "Mommy!" instead of "Mrs. Newfield." As you can imagine, his classmates had a good laugh at his expense. I heard this story many times.

Bubby Ruth taught math for many years, even after she retired from the public school system. She later became a teacher for child actors and actresses who were filming movies in New York City. She met them at the movie set and taught them during their breaks. Her most famous student was Brooke Shields, then a beautiful, young girl. With Bubby Ruth as her teacher, no wonder she was accepted at Princeton University!

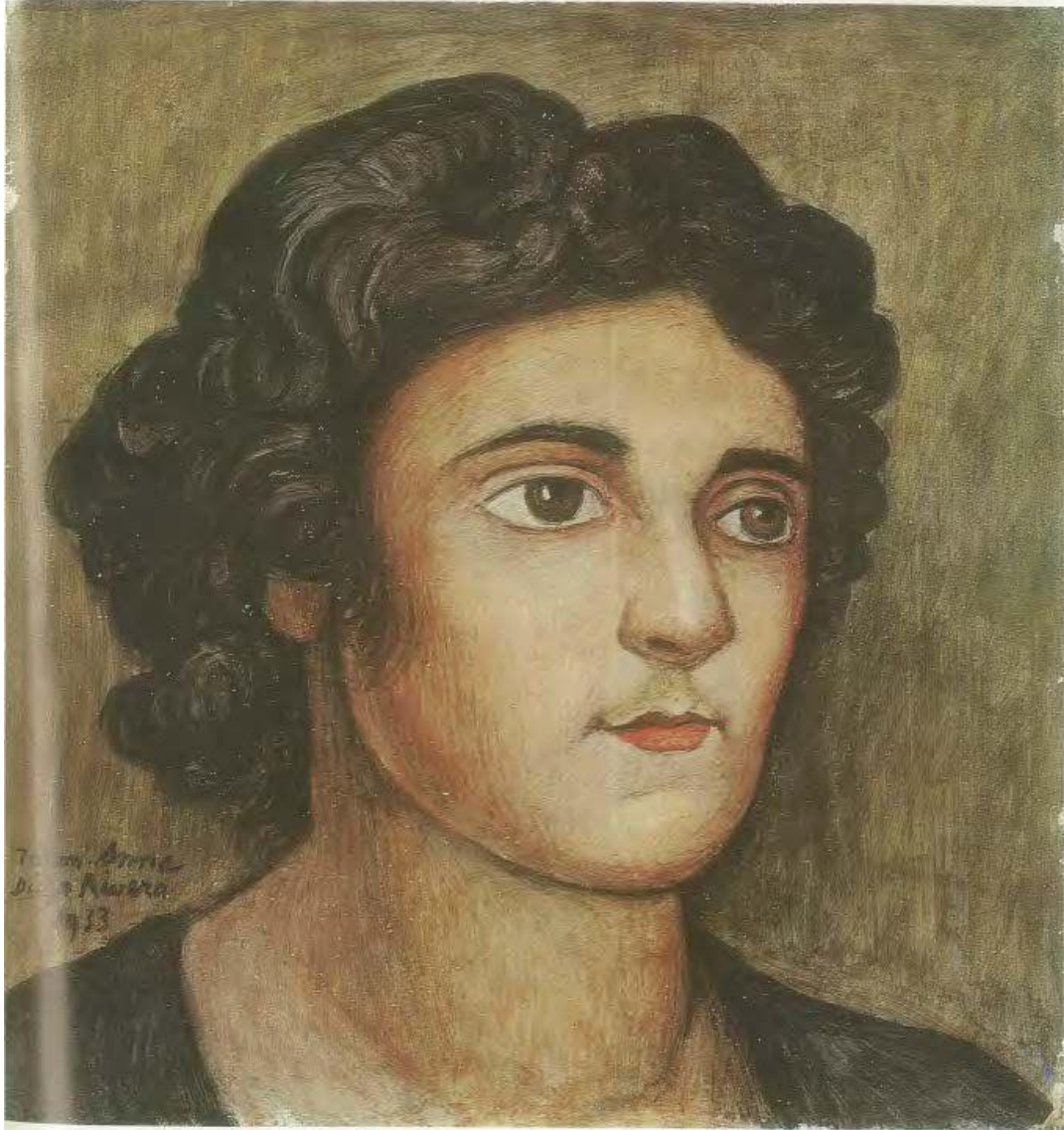
Now, back to the Bar Mitzvah album. In the first photo you see my parents and the three Newfield children: Philippa (the oldest), David (holding the *tallis* bag), and myself standing in front of our house. We all loved the house and felt privileged to live there. My parents would not

have bought such an upscale house had it not been for an unusual circumstance. We had been living in a two-bedroom apartment at 3765 18th Avenue on the edge of Borough Park which we shared with our cat, Matzahball. Unexpectedly, my Aunt Ann and her husband, Morris Weisberger, had to move on short notice to California for his work as the leader of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific. The Weisbergers then sold, at cost, their spacious house in Flatbush to my parents.

This summer marks six years since my mother, Ruth Newfield, passed away at the age of 98 ½. A native New Yorker, she was a junior high school teacher for over 30 years. After her retirement, she continued working for another three decades as a tutor, secretary, clerk, receptionist, and theatre usher. My mother enjoyed taking the subway every day from Brooklyn to her work in Manhattan and treated it as an extension of her living room. One morning, while standing on a crowded subway car, she overheard a group of teenage girls talking amongst themselves. The girls were using slang and typical ungrammatical expressions. Ever the teacher, my mother turned to them and asked, "Don't you girls want people to think of you as educated?" This led to a lively discussion of proper English usage. The girls also mentioned that they were headed to Manhattan for a day of shopping.

Scene II. My mother was on the subway later that evening on the way home from work. Who does she meet but the same group of girls now laden with shopping bags stuffed with purchases? Now not just acquaintances, but old friends, they eagerly showed my mother their new clothes and retold their shopping exploits.

So, who said life in the Big City is cold and impersonal?



In 1933, Aunt Ann had her portrait painted by the famous Mexican artist, Diego Rivera. They both shared a tremendous sympathy for the plight of the common people during the Depression.



In this rare snapshot, I am sitting on Uncle Morris' lap. He always had a fascinating story about his world travels.

Uncle Morris Weisberger

As a young man, Morris had made a very unusual choice of occupation for a Jewish man. He ran away to sea as a sailor in the Merchant Marine. It was a well-kept secret that Uncle Morris was born in Czechoslovakia and was brought to this country as an infant when his family immigrated to the United States. Morris lost his mother an early age and his father was unable to take care of the young children at home. Morris was placed in a Jewish orphanage in his hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. As he grew up, his father kept in close contact with him. But Morris was restless and not interested in schoolwork. He later joked that they had to burn down the schoolhouse to get him out of fifth grade! (Of course, the schoolhouse never actually burned down, but he somehow managed to move on.) He was trained at the orphanage to be a linotype operator, that is a typist who composed pages for a newspaper on a giant machine. Morris, however, detested the thought of being “chained” to a machine. Therefore, he struck out on his own and became a sailor.

He rose quickly as a union leader. Ironically, Morris, despite his lack of formal education, later became a frequent consultant on labor issues to governors and presidents. Nevertheless, he was always down to earth, blunt, strong, and retained the manners and gruff speech of a sailor. Although his union newspaper often published photographs of him on official business, you’ll never see him wearing a necktie in any of them. I remember he usually visited our house holding a smoky cigar and kept my parents captivated with stories about his travels and union activities. My mother always served him seltzer. During my childhood, he was the only one I knew who drank seltzer.

As you can imagine, it was not easy for anyone to say *no* to Morris when he was determined to do something. He was most proud of his contribution to the war effort during World War II. As a union leader, he had the responsibility to recruit and train sailors for the merchant marine “Liberty Ships” that were being built in tremendous numbers to carry war supplies to Europe and the Pacific. Since most young men were drafted into the military, it was very hard to find qualified sailors to make up the crews. You may recall that during World War II, two hundred thousand Japanese-Americans were interned in isolated camps in the western United States because they were falsely deemed security risks. Morris drove from camp to camp and secured the release of his Japanese-American union members from the camps so they could serve aboard the ships. It

took guts and self-assurance to free the Japanese-American sailors out of these camps. I'll bet that the camp officials didn't want to take a chance on saying no to Morris. If this mission hadn't required his personal intervention, Morris could've saved the trouble of driving from state to state and just sent a taxi.

Bubby Ruth's older sister, Ann, shared Morris' commitment to helping working people. They married and had two children, Eugene *a''h* and Ruthie. Aunt Philippa is about the same age as cousin Ruthie and they became good friends. Since they both live in S. Francisco, they remain close to each other.

When Harry Lundeberg, the president of the sailors' union, unexpectedly died, Morris was chosen to replace him. The Weisbergers had to move to San Francisco, California where the union headquarters was located. They sold to my parents their house in Flatbush, which they had only recently moved into. Due to this series of events, we in turn moved into their fully detached Spanish Colonial style house with a terraced front yard, a sunny backyard, and a garage full of boxes and tools. The house faced the athletic field of James Madison High School, which later became my alma mater.



"I can't wait to see the look on people's faces when I tell them their meagre side salads were grown right here in Brooklyn!"

I have done all my gardening in Brooklyn. I sometimes wonder what the many nurseries must think when they ship my blueberries, Juneberries, currants, jostaberries, raspberries, etc to my city address!

Garden Memories

As a six-year-old, I immediately took an interest in gardening and managed to maintain some semblance of horticultural order on our property, pretty much on my own. As the years went by, I planted flowers and vegetables utilizing the five-cent seed packets from the Brooklyn Botanic Garden which we ordered in school. I collected piles of leaves to transform into humus and mulch. I was content to spend all of my spare time puttering around in the garden and the garage, which served as my home base and personal club house. It also housed some surprising residents. Once, a colony of bees came to live in a rolled-up piece of carpet. Another time, a wasp nest was found hanging from the ceiling.

I remember the surprise I had when one day I went into the garage to get my gardening equipment and found that a stray cat had given birth to a litter of adorable kittens! She made a cozy shelter in a cardboard box filled with old textbooks from the Cornell College of Agriculture once used by Bubby Ruth's brother, Uncle Seymour Chellin. They were on the topic of animal husbandry, namely, how to raise animals on a farm. This was a fitting location for the cats to start *their* family. The cats were able to go in and out of the garage through the window which was missing a pane of glass.

Growing up in a city apartment, the Newfield children were fascinated by Uncle Seymour's suburban house at 37 Sullivan Way in East Brunswick, New Jersey. It was a modern split-level with three bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room, den, and basement. In addition, there was an attached garage, patio, and quarter-acre property. To us, it was a mansion.

Whenever we visited, Uncle Seymour would tell us a fantastical story about his cat. His name was Caesar. The story begins on a cold winter day when Uncle Seymour went into his garage and discovered the cat was frozen stiff. He had been accidentally locked in the unheated garage overnight. Uncle Seymour was frantic. How could he save the cat? Then he had an idea. He took a drop of gasoline from the red can and put it on the cat's tongue. All of a sudden, the cat woke up! And took off running. He ran through the kitchen, then up to the bedrooms, then back down to the living room, through the dining room, across the den, down to the basement, out the back door, over the patio, and three times around the outside of the house. Finally, he came to a sudden stop in front of the refrigerator in the kitchen. All the children stood around staring in amazement. They

cried out, “What happened? Why did he stop!? Is he OK?” Uncle Seymour had the answer, “He ran out of gas!”

Our block in Flatbush had only ten houses on it and there never seemed to be any children my age living in them. Because of this, I was compelled to entertain myself. It hardly occurred to me to venture to another block (another world?) to play with someone else. Besides, with so much going on in my personal space, this little nerd was never bored.

Thinking back, I’ve always been fascinated by growing things. My first “gardening” recollection took place when I was three years old. Somehow, inadvertently, inexplicably and unexpectedly, I stuck an apple pit deep into my ear. I couldn’t get it out. Neither could my mother. Off we went to Dr. Bergstein, our family physician on Dahill Road, who had delivered me not so long before. In those days, general practitioners performed many procedures, including obstetrics. He filled an enormous silver syringe with water and firmly squirted it in my ear. Soon, the pit was flushed out into a small basin. I was greatly relieved, especially, when he proceeded to draw a diagram of the ear with the seed lodged in the canal. In the picture, the seed started to grow, and grow, and grow, and developed into a large tree, rooted in my ear. I learned my lesson. From then on, all my planting would be in the garden—a safer, more conventional location.



I love growing flowers and vegetables. Then I take pictures to capture the memory.

In first grade at P.S. 197, my teacher, Miss Ford (or was it Mrs. Becker in second grade?) taught us how to grow carrot tops in empty tuna cans lined up on the windowsill. We simply cut off the top inch of the carrot and put it in water. Soon, the fern-like leaves sprouted. It was great!

The only problem was, I was jealous, green with envy, you might say. My classmates' carrots seemed a little taller, a little nicer than mine. Every time I looked around the classroom I was reminded of my inferiority. I couldn't concentrate on my lessons. Finally, I came up with a devious plan. I would *poison* their plants, while my carrot would grow and be admired. I looked around the classroom for something bad tasting or toxic. Then I found it.

During recess, when no one was around, I poured a few drops of dish detergent into each of the other children's tins. I was sure that would do it. What could be more harmful? The days passed. I eagerly awaited the demise of *their* carrot tops. But something very strange happened. Instead of curling up and turning yellow and brown, they kept growing fuller and greener and bushier than ever. My plan was a total failure! Most likely, the phosphates contained in the detergents of those pre-environmental days were actually acting as fertilizer.

Now that my plan had failed, I was more desperate than ever to prove myself as a gardener. I decided to grow carrot tops at home, lots of them. I saved more tuna cans. I asked my mother to buy carrots. I cut off the tops and naturally, I ate the carrots. What else would I do with them? I couldn't let them go to waste.

Days passed. Rows of carrot tops bathing in their water-filled tins were neatly arranged on all the windowsills. The kitchen, the dinette, the dining room, and the living room sills were all lined with carrot tops. I asked my mother to buy more carrots. I cut off more carrot tops. I ate more carrots. Bags of them.

Then it happened. Not only did I have carrots on my mind, but also, I began to transform into a carrot, almost. My skin was beginning to turn ORANGE. I got scared. I lifted up my shirt and showed my mother. She didn't know what to think. She called our neighbor, Mrs. Tepfer, a registered nurse. She explained to us that the carotene from all those carrots was absorbed into my skin and resulted in my orange complexion. I would live!

When spring arrived, I kept busy in the backyard and front garden experimenting with the gardening tools, seeds and fertilizers I found in the garage. I had read so much about the usefulness of compost that I wanted to try making it myself. However, there wasn't much fresh organic matter available in the city. Then, one day as I watched the workmen cutting the grass of the high school football field across the street, I had a brainstorm. I walked onto the field and asked the driver if he could deliver the truckload of clippings to my house. "No problem." He backed up the truck into our driveway and dumped a mountain of moist, green grass. It looked great! I couldn't wait for it to turn into crumbly, black compost. It took hours to move the grass to a spot in front of the house under the living room windows. I couldn't wait for the temperature of the pile to rise as the process of decomposition gives off heat. I could monitor it with my mother's candy thermometer, couldn't I?

As the days went by, an unforeseen problem arose. And that was not the only thing that arose. My father, sitting in his favorite chair by the front window asked, "*What is that smell?*" I didn't realize that a compost pile should be composed of layers of dry leaves, straw, and other organic material alternating with soil, and not just fresh green grass clippings. But by now my compost pile had turned into a giant glob of steaming yellowish-white slime. I had no choice but to move it as far as possible to a spot in the backyard next to the garage. It took months for the smell to disappear and I never did get the "black gold" I was expecting. As the years passed, the decaying residue dissipated into the ground— and by then the football field across the street was covered over with artificial turf.

After the compost fiasco, I was open to new ideas. I read about hydroponics and decided to try growing tomato plants in water without any soil at all. I set up containers under lights in a desk-top "greenhouse." This became a science fair exhibit with the title, "Space-Age Gardening."



Gardening is the most popular hobby in America. In extreme cases, it can become an obsession.

Bubby Ruth Remembers

My mother wrote her memories of my gardening hobby for a magazine but her essay was never published. I am presenting it here, for the first time, for your enjoyment:



My first awareness of Shlomo's unusual interest in gardening started when we moved into our own home in Flatbush. He was six years old. Suddenly, he became busy, busy in the back yard with the gardening tools which came with the house, and with seeds and fertilizers. He started planting, watering, and hopefully, growing. Gradually, books on plants and planting began to appear in his room. He spent endless bits of spare time in the backyard and front garden, gauging which areas received the maximum sunshine and judging which were the best places to plant his precious seeds.

This attracted the attention of other children on the street and also our neighbors. The children mostly watched and sometimes helped. Our neighbors offered suggestions for better results. One neighbor, Mr. Boris Tepfer, brought him a soil testing kit and explained its importance. This neighbor knew that Shlomo was so consumed by gardening that he would attempt to plant any seeds he could get his hands on. One day, Shlomo and I were on our way to the bakery. As we passed Mr. Tepfer, Shlomo asked him, "Do you need any bread from the bakery?" The neighbor quickly answered, "Yes, a rye bread with seeds, but don't plant the seeds!"

In the fall, Shlomo sprinkled bags of grass seeds across the front lawn. While he was doing his homework, he would suddenly jump up, run outside to check the lawn, and satisfied that all was well, return to his assignment. Without paying too much attention, I smiled to myself, thinking he wanted to see if the seeds were growing. A few minutes later, he jumped up again, opened the front door, and he saw a flock of birds feasting on the lawn. He started shouting like a nut, "Shoo! Shoo! Shoo!" I turned to him with the question, "Really, Shlomo, how many seeds can a bird eat?" In a flash he replied, "It's not the seeds, Mommy! They're eating my worms! THEY ARE EATING MY WORMS!" As a consolation prize, our neighbor, Mr. Tepfer, offered Shlomo, permission to dig up from his garden all the worms he could hold in his two hands. Shortly thereafter, Shlomo

came running into the kitchen, holding up his two fists full of wriggling worms. “Mommy, look! Mr. Tepfer said I could have them!”

It was not long thereafter that Shlomo asked if we could subscribe to “Organic Gardening and Farming.” Not only did he learn valuable facts about the art of good gardening, but the magazine also opened the world of pen pals. He had a wide correspondence with boys in different parts of the country. They wrote about their families, their schools, their friends, and most importantly, they exchanged seeds. One boy sent him seeds for string beans that grew a yard long. And sure enough, they were a yard long!

When Shlomo was about eleven years old, he saw a large truck being loaded with grass clippings from the athletic field of James Madison High School across the street. After some negotiations with the driver, Shlomo directed him to dump the truckload of clippings in our driveway. Then Shlomo hired two kids on the block to shovel the clippings into garbage cans and dump them onto his compost pile in front of the house. Talking very fast since he was late for Hebrew School, he told Daddy what he had done. “And when they are finished, please pay them fifty cents each.” Daddy, not wanting to be a party to exploitation of cheap labor, answered, “You made the contract. You pay them!”

Shlomo continued his gardening at Marine Park Junior High School under the direction of the science teacher. He tried hydroponics and grew tomatoes in water. “Why water?” I asked. “Because,” he answered, “when the astronauts travel in space they will need to grow food, and soil is too heavy to carry.” When a single yellow flower grew into a tiny red tomato, we were ready to hand out cigars! We told everyone about this feat: our neighbors, friends, colleagues and whoever else would listen. Shlomo also did experiments on oat seedlings in his science class with auxins, the substance that regulates and controls plant growth.

Shlomo’s enthusiasm spilled over into our family. Everyone helped with ideas, suggestions, and moral support. By this time, we had a peach tree, strawberries, carrots, tomatoes, string beans, roses, silver dollars, lilacs, irises, and more. Our garden continued thriving with the occasional help of his brother, David, until our children left for their respective colleges and medical schools.

We still love our garden. We have a variety of flowers, vegetables, and blueberries, which Shlomo, now a physician, finds time to plant in our garden. Needless to say, he now has his own beautiful garden, which he maintains with the help of his nine children. His gardening hobby now also includes photographing nature's colorful and bountiful flowers and trees.

He has introduced gardening to his neighbors on Crown Street in Crown Heights. The children on the block admire his lawnmower, the only one in the neighborhood. He made them an offer: If they will remove the broken bottles and rusty cans from the little patches of soil in front of their houses, he would plant flowering bushes and bulbs, and show them how to maintain the garden. On one of my visits, Shlomo took me on a tour of his street. We stopped in front of each house, greeted whoever lived there and then Shlomo proudly identified each plant he had set into the soil.

* * *

Here is one of my favorite poems. I keep it in mind when I am outside planting in the garden.

Plant a Garden of Success

Plant 5 rows of peas:

Patience

Perseverance

Preparation

Planning

Positivity

Include 3 rows of squash:

Squash negativity

Squash sorrow

Squash deprivation

Add 5 rows of lettuce:

Let us be positive

Let us take responsibility

Let us be in control

Let us reward our accomplishments

Let us be empowered

No garden is complete without turnips:

Turn up with a positive attitude

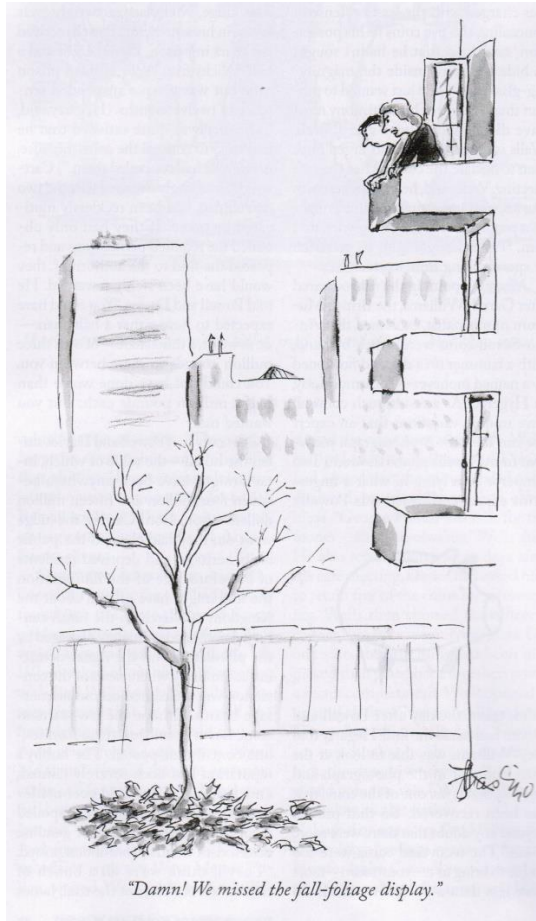
Turn up with a smile

Turn up with new ideas

Turn up with real determination

Turn up with success

May your garden flourish!



As this cartoon illustrates, natural beauty is often short lived. The fall-foliage display lasts only a few days or a week at most. A more extreme example is the striking Mexican shell flower, *Tigridia*, shown above. It took me a year to grow it and the flower only lasts one day! Therefore, I try to preserve the image and colors in photographs.



Here I am, the cute, cute, cute boy on the right. I am sitting with my sister, Philippa, and brother, David. A few years later, I started collecting stamps and never stopped.



I started collecting stamps long before “Forever” stamps were invented. Also, we had to lick the stamps in order to stick them onto envelopes. Besides being more convenient, self-adhesive stamps eliminate the *kashrus* question.

Stamp Collecting—An Educational Hobby

Gardening activities slowed down in the winter, so I often turned to my stamp collection for diversion. I had a world album into which I placed large numbers of stamps, mostly already used. I learned about many faraway islands, countries, and colonies. It gradually became clear to me which were English, French, or German. There were kings, queens, princes, and princesses, whose portraits appeared on stamps from all over the world. No territory was too isolated, or obscure, to take its place in my album. Flipping through the pages was almost like taking a fanciful voyage in time and place. No country was too distant or difficult to spell to merit a page, from Abyssinia to Zanzibar with many stops in between. I learned the alphabet from the ABC islands, Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao. I knew the difference between Bermuda, Barbados, and Bahamas long before my friends did. But I still had no idea who, if anyone, was getting back together at Reunion (an island I had learned about from my stamps). And the famous and celebrated Anna, who was so enchanted with Siam and put it on the map—do you think they put *her* picture on a stamp? No! Only stern-faced egotistical kings dressed in military uniforms and those workaholic elephants toting logs!

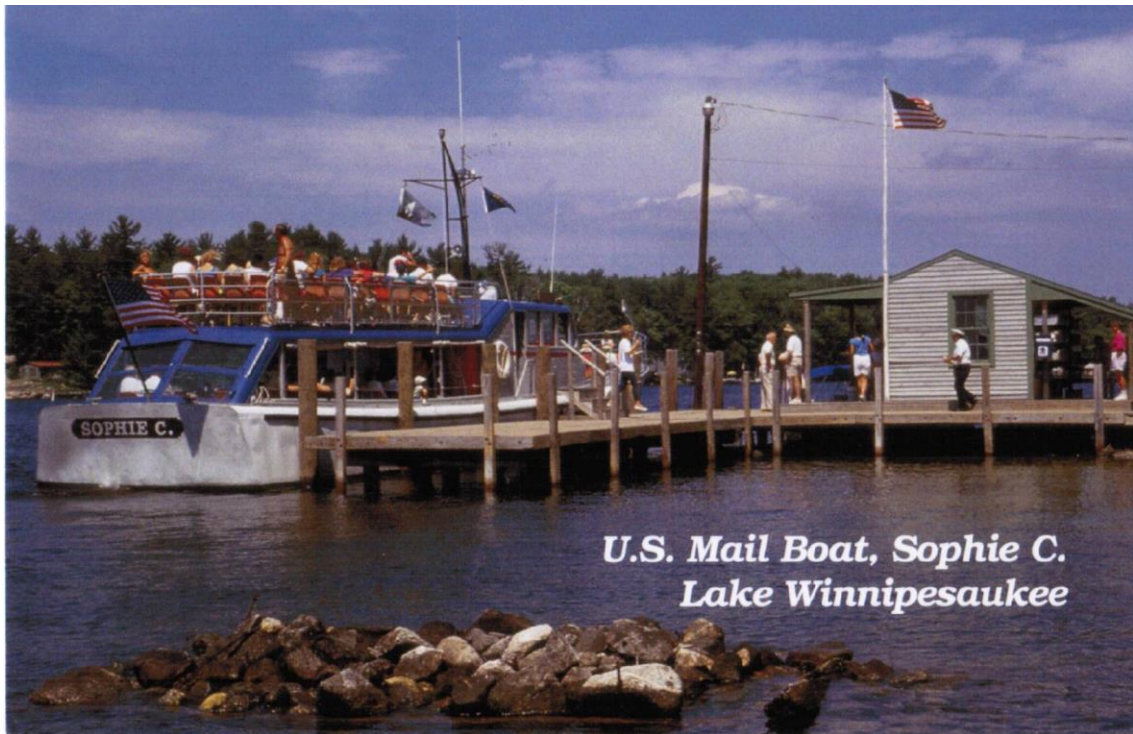
I especially enjoyed collecting first day covers. Simply put, a first day cover is an envelope specially cancelled at a designated post office on the first day that a new stamp goes on sale. The location of the post office is connected to the theme of the stamp. When I was little, obtaining these first day covers took considerable preparation in advance. First, I would read about the upcoming issues and their location of sale in the weekly stamp column of the New York Times. Then I would go to a stamp store and buy a crisp, pure white, high quality envelope decorated with an artistic “cachet” illustrating the theme of the stamp. Next, I would write my name and return address neatly on the envelope, enclose five cents for the new stamp, and mail it to the Postmaster of the designated city. When the day arrived to release the new issue, the post office would affix the stamp, the envelope would receive its special cancellation, and it would be mailed back to me. Simple! Now I had an instant collectible souvenir.

I saved all the stamps that came to us on letters in the mail. When word got out that I collected stamps, family friends also forwarded used stamps to me. I would soak them in water and separate the stamps from the paper envelope. Then I would lay the stamps out to dry. New additions were then added to my album. The “doubles” were saved for future trading with fellow

enthusiasts. I still have them, many thousands of them, more than fifty years later, ready to swap when the time arrives.



I was thrilled when the Post Office re-issued the famous 1918 "Inverted Jenny." It is now a cherished item in my stamp collection.



*U.S. Mail Boat, Sophie C.
Lake Winnepesaukee*

During my three summers at Camp Alvord in New Hampshire, I always looked forward to letters from home. This modern photo illustrates the post office that received our mail from the mail boat.

Off to Camp!

Bubby Ruth appreciated that I enjoyed observing nature and doing things outdoors. Somehow, she discovered Camp Alvord, a nature-oriented summer camp for children in New Hampshire. To this day, I have no idea how she found out about it. Perhaps, a friend or fellow teacher advised her to look into it. The camp was located at an unbelievably scenic location on Bear Island in Lake Winnepesaukee, two miles from shore. My first glimpse of camp was in a one-page folded black-and-white brochure, which in no way prepared me for the adventures to come. My parents signed my brother and me up for the entire six-week session and, when school was over, off we went!

David and I traveled by ourselves via overnight train to Boston, Massachusetts. At the tender age of eight, I was scared to be away from home for the first time without my parents. I can't know for sure how Bubby Ruth felt, but unlike parents nowadays, she was confident that we would be safe travelling alone due to the essential goodness of ordinary people. At any rate, she introduced us to the train conductor and kissed us goodbye. The itinerary was actually somewhat complicated, especially for an inexperienced traveler. We arrived at the South Station in Boston, Massachusetts at 6 AM just as the sun began to rise. David and I ate a French toast breakfast in the train station and then took a taxi to the North Station. There we successfully boarded another train to New Hampshire, all the while lugging our camp trunks along with us. When we got off in Laconia the camp driver had no trouble spotting us. Without so much as a hello, he tossed our trunks into the open back of his truck and drove us silently to Shep Brown's Boat Place in Meredith, New Hampshire. Now we were almost there. We transferred to the camp motorboat and took off to the island. The scenery was incredible. Miles of blue water surrounded by dense forests and fog covered mountains looming in the distance. This definitely wasn't Brooklyn!

We soon discovered that Alvord was a camp unlike any other camp. Yes, other camps may be located in beautiful country-like surroundings, but it would be hard to beat the scenery of Lake Winnepesaukee. The camp itself was located in a wildlife sanctuary. Also, other camps may have had a nature-oriented program. But not to the extent of Alvord. Try to picture a camp in the woods, with no paved paths, no ball courts, no cars, or even bicycles. Try to imagine a camp with a rustic can-do spirit. We were in a totally new atmosphere from lineup in the morning on the dock

accompanied by a military fanfare and a blast from a miniature cannon to square-dancing, folk singing, and campfires at night.

There were four bunks: Junior Boys, Senior Boys, Junior Girls, and Senior Girls, each with about a dozen campers. A typical day would include swimming instruction and free swimming in the very cool waters of the lake twice a day, arts n' crafts such as leather work or ceramics, and outdoor tree or fern or moss (!) identification. If the wind picked up, we would drop what we were doing and seize the opportunity to row out to the sailboat anchored offshore and speed off across the lake. Sometimes, a storm was approaching and we had to pay close attention to the weather to make sure we got safely back to camp ahead of the rain and lightning.

Campfires were held at the small, sandy beach about a quarter of a mile from the camp buildings. A unique feature of this beach were the tiny, semi-precious garnets mixed in the sand. The largest ones were about the size of a grain of barley. Our counselor showed us how to "pan" for the garnets by swishing the sand in a large metal bowl full of water. They weren't diamonds but it was exciting to see the deep reddish color start to appear in the bottom of the pan after working at it for a while.

Most of what we learned about the natural history of the area came from Ralph, the nature counselor. Unlike the rest of the staff who were non-Jewish and native to New Hampshire, Ralph was a Jewish city boy who somehow landed, or shall I say, crash landed, in Camp Alvord. Ralph was an abundant source of nature information. He always seemed to have some fascinating trick to teach us young campers. In his spare time, Ralph collected butterflies with a net. Then, he gently placed them in a glass "killing jar" with cyanide-laced clay stuck in the bottom of the jar. This emitted a lethal gas which soon overcame the butterfly. Naturally, I was very concerned about getting too close to the dangerous cyanide. And what if the glass should accidentally break...? After a few minutes, he removed the lifeless butterfly and spread the wings on a piece of wood. He placed glass slides over the wings to press them flat. When the butterflies were dry, he put pins in them and transferred them to cigar boxes for display accompanied by a tiny label neatly recording the date and location of collection.

Another trick Ralph had was setting up his camera outdoors at night with a string that acted as a trip-wire. When an unsuspecting deer or raccoon passed by, it would pull the string and set

off the flash and take a selfie. Ralph had a small collection of these animal portraits. Of course, they were black-and-white and only snapshot size. I was worried that Ralph's expensive camera might get ruined by the rain or other hazards, but Ralph confidently informed me that the camera was insured. I was duly impressed since as an eight-year-old, I was not aware that you could get insurance for a camera.

When it came to overnight hiking trips, Ralph really knew how to pack. It was essential to bring along the minimum of gear because we had to carry everything on our backs up to the top of one or more of the famous White Mountains in New Hampshire. Ralph ingeniously broke his toothbrush in half to save on extra weight. After all, you only needed the brush end!

The most exciting—and the most feared—activities at camp were the mountain climbing trips. After a week or two of getting into shape by hiking around the island and swimming, it was time to prepare for the trip. The first hike each season was to the summit of Mt. Chocorua. On clear days the distant peak was faintly visible from camp. The White Mountains got their name from the misty clouds that hover on the mountaintops. Consequently, there weren't so many clear days high up in the mountains. The camp had a storeroom filled with backpacks, ponchos, tents, and the infamous mummy bags. At first, I was quite concerned, even worried, about these bags. I wondered what connection there was between these bags and the ancient Egyptian mummies (which were also an intense interest of mine). It turned out that the bags were an army surplus type of sleeping bag featuring a khaki-colored itchy woolen sack shaped wider at the shoulders and narrower at the foot. This was covered by a canvas sheath for added protection. When the camper lay snugly inside, the mummy bag covered his whole body, from head to toe, with only an opening for the face.

Camp trips were scheduled rain or shine, which usually meant rain. Then the trail up the mountain turned into a slippery, muddy, rock-filled obstacle course. On my first trip, I really didn't know if I would make it, but there was no turning back. The trail went up and up, eventually passing the tree line. After that, there were only rocks and more rocks. Just below the summit of Mt. Chocorua is a wooden cabin. The roof was held down by heavy chains, anchored into the ground, to prevent a sudden storm from blowing it off.

When we reached the cabin, the visibility was close to zero due to the fog. Totally exhausted, and aching in every limb, we rolled out our mummy bags on the wooden floor and surprise, quickly fell asleep. When I woke up the next morning, I had two more surprises. First, the clouds had disappeared. There was a spectacular view in all directions. The clear rays of the morning sun illuminated a magnificent landscape of rocky peaks and dense forests extending in all directions to the horizon. I raced up the remaining path to the summit which was a massive rock. I felt like I was on top of the world. The second surprise was seeing a six-year-old boy and his grand-father at the summit. They had climbed up the mountain just this very morning and covered the trail in about an hour—the same route that took us a whole day! It must be that they made such good time because they weren't carrying any backpacks...or toothbrushes.

The next trip was a lot easier. We canoed on the Saco River in Maine and spent several nights sleeping outdoors, under the stars, on the banks of the river. It was a lot easier rowing our stuff than carrying it on our shoulders. But it wasn't so easy paddling all day. Fortunately, the water current helped move us along. As usual, Ralph shared some techniques to help us prepare for the outdoor life. He showed us how to dip the tips of our wooden matches in melted candle wax before the trip so that they would stay dry and could still be lit in case of rain or an overturned canoe.

By the end of the summer, we were ready to climb Mt. Washington and the Presidential Range. Mt. Washington is the tallest mountain in New Hampshire and a very difficult ascent over miles and miles of rough boulders. It also is known for the worst weather all year-round, with high winds, rain, fog, and even snow in August. It was no comfort that the trail, passing through Tuckerman's Ravine, was punctuated by many markers bearing the inscription R.I.P. But our campers all made it up and back without any serious mishaps. We returned to camp weary, cheerfully carrying our backpacks plus the many tall tales of our adventures.



Camp Alvord was my first experience in a sleep-away summer camp. The campers and counselors entertained themselves by singing camp songs at meals, in the evening, at camp fires, and basically all of the time. Some of these songs were permanently imprinted in my brain and I still sing them basically all the time until this day. I have recorded the lyrics to one of these songs in this chapter.

More Camp Alvord Memories

As a young boy away from home for the first time, I noticed many things, large and small, at camp that I had never encountered before. Some were unique to Alvord and I rarely, if ever, saw them again. Starting with the kitchen and food service:

- Orange juice or pineapple juice was served in small glasses lined up at the front table for breakfast and rationed one to a person. They poured the juice from large cans since there was little room in the refrigerator or freezer to store drinks. At home, we drank juice whenever we wanted. But in camp, it was treated as a luxury.
- At meals, pitchers of “bug juice” were placed on the tables, containing a reddish mixture, watery and sweet, similar to Kool-Aid. I wondered why it was called “bug juice,” but I was afraid to ask.
- Chicken was a delicacy ordered by the cook in little glass jars and served as tiny morsels in a creamy sauce. Unlike city chicken, camp chicken never came with skin or bones.
- Pots and pans were hung from the ceiling of the camp kitchen. My mother didn’t have such large pots and kept hers in a cabinet.
- After meals, the dishwasher boy filled the deep kitchen sink with burning hot water. First, he washed the glassware which came out sparkling clean. (There were no disposable cups or dishes at Alvord!) Then, he washed the silverware, the dishes, and finally the pots. I admired his systematic dedication to his work.
- Outside the dining hall was a mechanical horn mounted on the railing of the porch. When you turned the crank, it sounded something like the Shabbos alarm in Crown Heights. We were warned to return to camp immediately if we heard the horn which was to be used only in emergencies. This simple device was needed to call in the campers because cell phones were decades away. I was relieved but slightly disappointed that during my three summers at Alvord it was never put to use.
- At one end of the dining room was a player piano, a rarely seen mechanical marvel. There were about 30 long paper rolls which could be inserted into the piano. These had tiny holes

punched in them that activated the piano keys when you pumped the foot pedals. Then, voila, like a phantom robot, the piano keys played automatically. You'll have to check this out in a YouTube demonstration to appreciate this. The song lyrics were printed on the paper roll and everyone sang along. This was a nightly activity featuring old favorites of the previous generations, such as "My Blue Heaven" and "The Little Cobbler."

The cabins in camp were furnished with bunk beds, a new experience for me. I had to choose between the privacy on top or the convenience on bottom. I chose the upper bunk despite the dizzying height. I also wanted to avoid the disturbing sensation of the upper bed sagging down and almost touching my nose.

The counselors used to tell scary stories at bedtime. Remember, in those days, there were no smartphones or iPods... and not even a Game Boy or Pac-Man. We listened to the stories until we fell asleep. The counselors also liked to tease us with famous or infamous hoaxes, such as the snipe hunt. The snipe is a rarely seen, semi-legendary bird which sometimes appears in the early evening, about the time the mosquitos come out. The plan was as follows: The campers were instructed to bring their pillow cases and walk in a line through the tall grass while the counselors approached from the other side of the field banging pots. The goal was to startle the snipes and catch them in the pillow cases. I doubt if we ever actually went on a snipe hunt, but we made elaborate plans to do it.

From time to time, the campers took revenge on their counselor. A favorite prank was to "short sheet" his bed. This was accomplished by carefully remaking the bed with the lower part of the top sheet folded upward towards the head of the bed. The blanket was then replaced on top, covering and concealing the trick. When the unsuspecting counselor would try to lie down after a long and tiring day, he would get trapped, stuck halfway into the bed. This practical joke was meant to cause great consternation on the part of the counselor and would've set off enormous hilarity on the part of the supposedly sleeping campers. I doubt it ever worked as planned, but it was endlessly discussed and plotted by the campers.

Among the innovations I encountered in the outdoor realm was the use of a compass, that handy instrument that always pointed north. We were told this would help a camper lost in the woods guide himself back to civilization. As usual, Ralph had a practical tip. If you didn't have a

compass with you, you could look at the growth of moss and lichens on the tree trunks. These were usually found on the shady northern side of the trees.

We also consulted detailed topographical maps on hikes. These had concentric rings or circles indicating changes in elevation. When the map showed the path crossing line after line close together, we knew we were in for some rough going! I remember hiking in the freezing cold, in a rainstorm, from peak to peak in the mountains. The weather was miserable and I wasn't feeling much better. Somehow, the map named this place "Mt. Pleasant." I wondered who they thought they were fooling.

When it came to wildlife, I was excited to see deer and raccoons come into camp. There was also an occasional harmless garter snake. We were warned to keep our eyes out for poisonous rattlesnakes. I still do, out of habit, even in Brooklyn. Fortunately, there were no skunks in camp. I encountered them later, in the various Jewish camps I attended in the Catskills and the Poconos.

I observed with interest the habits of my counselor, a junior college student from New Hampshire. For one thing, he wore a crew-cut hairstyle during the summer for comfort and convenience. But he told us he grew his hair long in the winter for warmth.

Uneasy about being so far from home, I tried to keep my eyes open and my mouth shut. I didn't want to let on that I felt like a displaced person. But once I got "caught," so to speak, to the amusement of the staff. One night, after supper, they served ice cream for dessert. The campers lined up and Mrs. Fry, the wife of the camp director, handed out ice cream cones. When it came my turn, she asked me, "Do you want Jimmy's?" As it happened, I didn't understand the question. So I answered, "No, I want mine." It turned out that they called sprinkles, "Jimmies." How was I to know? The staff thought my ignorance was hilarious and repeated the story over and over.

One last thing about camp. There was no Amazon in those days. And there was no canteen in camp. All nosh had to be sent from home by mail. The problem was Bubby Ruth thought inserting a stick of chewing gum into her letters would suffice. I, on the other hand, was underwhelmed by her generosity. But at least I didn't have to share my goodies with the other campers!

As I mentioned, the camp considered the American Indians, now better known as Native Americans, as role models in conserving nature and instituting an early form of participatory

democracy. This meant camp meetings were called “pow-wows” and everyone was encouraged to endorse the sentiments of the speaker with exclamations of “How-How!” Alvord campers protected the environment as best we could, even to the extent of carrying out our garbage, such as empty tin cans, back down the mountains on our hikes. This is not to say that our predecessors, the early farmers on Bear Island, did the same. Besides leaving handsome stone fences crisscrossing the fields on the island (now incongruously standing in middle of the re-grown forest), they also left scattered garbage dumps, probably dating from the 1800’s. These were a gold mine of treasures for me. From time to time, I would quietly sneak away from camp to check out the remains. I found old glass bottles and jars which preserved some of the local brands and history. As a budding archaeologist, I collected the best ones and brought them home for further analysis and enjoyment. (I’ll let you in on a secret... Some of these bottles are still occupying prime real estate in my basement!)

Camp Alvord had a charming custom of making a party at the end of the summer at which gifts were exchanged among the campers and staff. Several weeks beforehand, a secret lottery was held and each person randomly picked the name of the recipient for his or her gift. Then, we each worked on it without disclosing for whom it was intended. This was kept secret until the party. I saw the assistant camp director, George Ratcliff, working on a wood carving day after day. He started with a solid block of wood, about the size of a *pushka*, and slowly whittled away at it with his pen knife. As time went on, a toy emerged with a thin wood frame and a wooden ball inside that could slide up and down but was too big to fall out. It was sort of like a puzzle. How did the ball get in there in the first place? I, of course, wanted it so much. Amazingly, I was the lucky recipient and got to take it home! What good fortune!

My camp trunk was considerably heavier on the way home. Besides the wooden knick-knack, the leather cigarette case I made for Bubby Ruth, the ceramic creamer with the Chinese red glaze, the antique bottle collection, there were the rocks and minerals I collected on field trips. Just briefly, our bunk visited a mountaintop abandoned mine. For a change, we reached the top of this mountain by truck. We explored the mine with Ralph, of course. This time he was equipped with—of all things—a Geiger counter to identify radioactive minerals. I was sure we would discover the raw material for the next atom bomb. We each carried a small pick axe to chip away at the mountain to search for beryllium crystals, known to be beautiful and valuable. In the end, we didn’t

find any. But I brought back a quarter-ton of lovely rocks of all shapes, colors, and sizes. As you can imagine, it's a good thing we didn't need to weigh our luggage!

It was always bittersweet when we had our farewell campfire the last night in camp. With great emotion we sang:

I love the flowers.

I love the daffodils.

I love the mountains.

I love the rolling hills.

I love the fireside, when all the lights are low,

Boom dee ah dah... Boom dee ah dah... Boom dee ah dah... Boom!

The camp director roasted steaks in the charcoal. Since the camp had an Indian theme, he claimed the steaks were genuine buffalo meat. Then, the director gave his yearly speech that we will never have this same group of campers and staff assembled together again. Everyone felt sad that camp was over and soon we would return home and begin the predictable hum-drum school year.

Hebrew School Afternoons

When I was nine years old, I had to take some time off from gardening and curating my various collections to attend Hebrew School. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons from 3:30-5:00 PM I joined my classmates at Madison Jewish Center. I enjoyed the classes very much and picked up the basics of Hebrew language, tefilla, Chumash, and Jewish history. When my class learned that Hashem promised *Avraham Avinu* that his descendants will become a “*goy gadol*” the class was in an uproar. “*A goy!! A goy!! Can you believe it?*” My classmates may not have known so much about Yiddishkeit but they knew the difference between a Jew and a goy.

The principal, Mr. Irving Ophir, took a special interest in me and chose me to recite the Kiddush at the model seder on Passover. Besides the weekday classes, we also conducted “Junior Congregation” on Shabbos in the little shul while wearing small silk *talleisim* with blue stripes on the edge and the Hebrew *brocha* embroidered on the collar. I still remember some of those melodies for *Lecha Dodi*, *Shochein Ad*, and *Shmone Esrai*. Over the years, they have come in handy when I served as chazzan at my *shtiebel* in Crown Heights. These familiar, but not Chassidic, melodies have been known to illicit a chuckle of recognition by some of the other congregants.

When I was twelve years old, I went to the well-known Jewish summer camp called Ramah. There in the Berkshires, I had my first opportunity to experience a Jewish atmosphere 24/7. I learned how to *bentch* and a few notes of *trup*. I carved a shofar from an animal horn. While some of the other campers were busy catching poison ivy in the woods, I was “*yoshev b’ohel*” trying to figure out Rashi script.

My birthday, the 21st of Av, comes during the summer. Therefore, my bar mitzvah was postponed a few weeks to be the first of the season, right after the summer, on Shabbos Shuva so that my friends could attend. It didn’t make sense to schedule all this hoopla when people were out of town. I read the *haftorah*, “*Shuva Yisroel*,” which, fortunately, is very short. My family sat in the front row of the big shul which looked to me like an airport terminal, architecturally. Let me describe the shul and its features. It is a large, modern looking rectangular box with a minimum of ornamentation. There’s an accordion-style wall at the rear, which was folded up at the sides of the

hall for the High Holidays, thereby enlarging the sanctuary into the space of the catering hall for extra seating.

The large crowd attending on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur were seated on rows of folding chairs set up behind the permanent wooden pews. However, even that was not enough space on these special days. The overflow was seated in a second service next door in the old Hebrew School building in a large meeting room on the second floor. These seats were more reasonably priced. That's where my father bought his seat for the holidays and sat with his friends. At one point during each service, the rabbi, regally draped in his robe and *tallis*, would swoop in to the overflow service accompanied by his entourage and give a redux of his sermon.

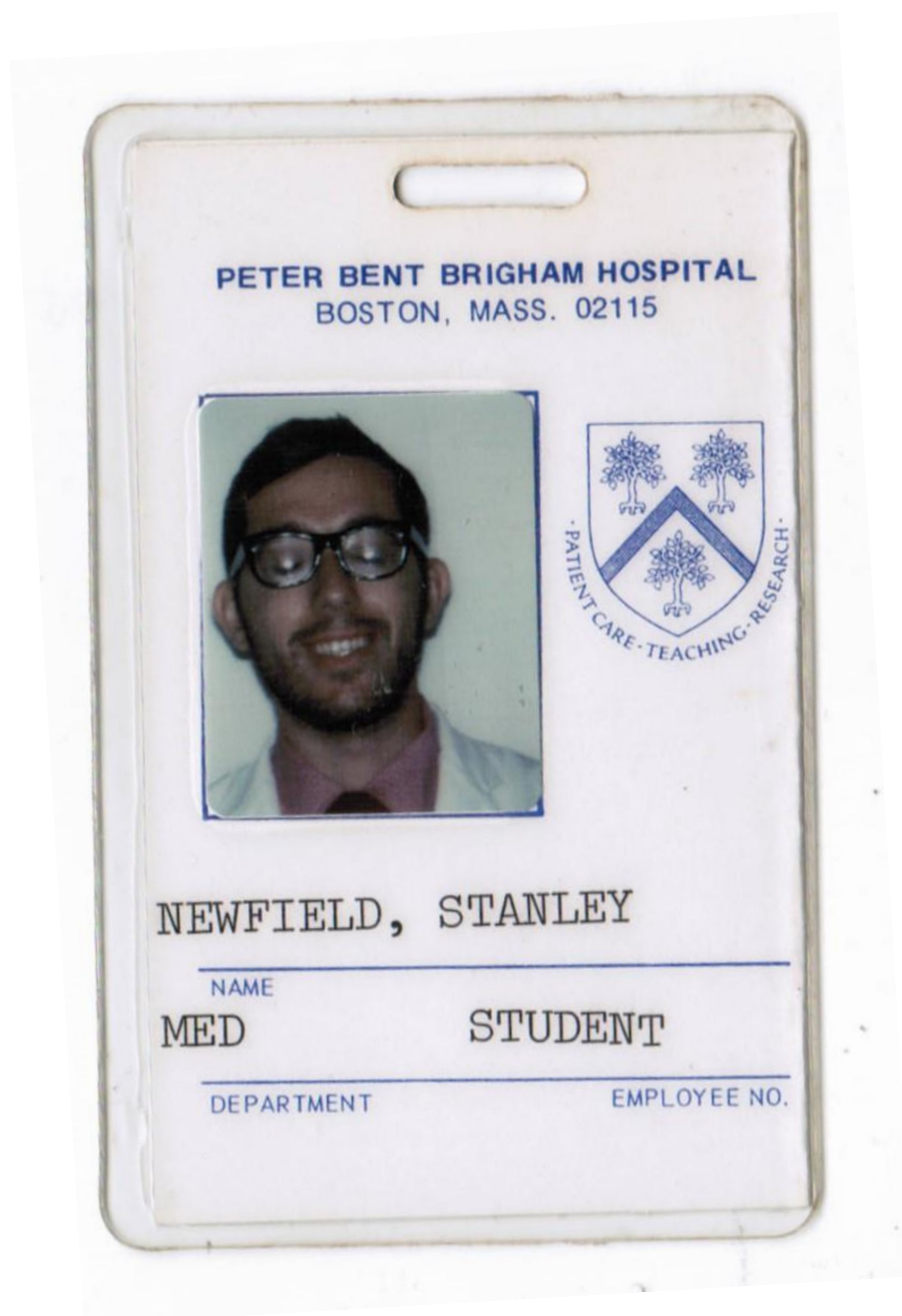
Following the Shabbos service on the day of my bar mitzvah, my family and guests walked to our house for the reception. The caterer served the traditional gefilte fish, horseradish, and pickles followed by chicken with string beans. The highlight was the birthday cake. I didn't receive many presents, not even a fountain pen. My Hebrew School gave me a book on *Pirkei Avos* and a *tallis* clip. I was happy to be joined by my friends and classmates from public school and Hebrew School.

Since I enjoyed my classes at Madison Jewish Center, I continued attending after my bar mitzvah. Classes were held two evenings a week at the Hebrew High School. I also spent two summers at Jewish sleep-away camps, Ramah in the Berkshires (located in Wingdale, New York) and Camp Massad Gimmel (located in Effort, Pennsylvania). I loved the Jewish classes and activities and I quickly became comfortable in the religious environment. Some of the highlights of camp were learning the *bentching* after meals and the rudiments of *layning* (chanting) the Torah with the *trup* (traditional cantillation).

My Hebrew education prepared me for exposure to the orthodox students and rabbis I met while studying at Columbia College. I stayed in the dorm there and came home each week for Shabbos. By then, my father and I had switched to davening at the Kingsway Jewish Center. I enjoyed the services as well as the palatial sanctuary but I really didn't know any of the families there. This changed, again, five years later after Mommy and I were married and settled in Crown Heights. There I davened in *shtiebelach* popular with *baalei teshuva* such as the "Gelernter Shul" (Anshei Rubishov) and the Besht Center.



Grandpa Joe Newfield was handsome and athletic as a young man.



My parents never pressured me to go into medicine. However, they were more than pleased to have their three children become doctors.

My Parents Shaped My Character

As I look over these photos of the bar mitzvah, I remember many of the people who played important roles in my childhood experiences. Sadly, the adults are all gone by now, although some of them were with us until quite recently. Bubby Ruth was *niftar* in 2015 at the age of 98, and Belle Resnicoff was *niftar* in 2013 at the remarkable age of 109! Bubby Ruth was the pillar of strength that held our family together after my father's illness. After undergoing brain surgery, radiation treatments, and starting daily medication, he could no longer work as an accountant. For twenty years, he mostly stayed home except for a weekly excursion to show his face at his job with Uncle Morris's union affiliate in Brooklyn. He also attended shul regularly on Shabbos and made Kiddush every Friday night. I remember giving him papers now and then to photocopy at his office. This was a big deal at the time, because it was exciting to see the clean clear copies he brought home. Remember, this was many decades before we had a copy machine at home, and even the library only had a "photostat" machine that made small, reverse copies with a black background and white writing.

If you look at the photos of Grandpa Joe, you will notice he only had hair on one side of his head. This was due to the radiation treatments which caused permanent hair loss. As a matter of fact, this is the only way I remember him looking, since his illness and treatment began when I was age three or four. We were all quite accustomed to his appearance. However, we often joked that he was entitled to a fifty percent discount on his haircuts!

Grandpa Joe liked to read historical novels such as "The Source," by James Michener, and the series of Hornblower naval warfare adventures by C. S. Forester. Once, by mistake, I took out a novel for him from the library by an author with a similar name (E. M. Forster) and he couldn't understand why there was such a divergence from the usual sea adventures! He also liked to watch television shows, especially Westerns such as "Bonanza." However, once the children came home from school, he didn't get to choose which programs to watch. But he was too good natured to complain. Since television was a new invention in the 1950's, I was the first child in my family to grow up watching it. In contrast, years and years later, my children grew up in a home without a television. Many relatives felt sorry for our deprived children and repeatedly offered to give us a television set. However, Mommy and I declined their generous offers to preserve the hasidish

atmosphere in our home. Heaven help us today with the arrival of computers, tablets, and smart phones!

This led to a funny incident. Years ago, when the children were little, I would exchange seeds by mail with garden hobbyists around the country. One of them sent a doctored photograph along with his seeds as a little joke. It showed him walking behind a horse, plowing a field. In the picture, he was supposedly watching a television perched on the back of the horse. This was a fanciful and amusing combination of old and new technology. I'm not sure how he came up with this picture in the days before Photoshop. The point is, when I asked Yossi, age five or six, "What is the man in the picture looking at?" he thought about it, and guessed, "A microwave?" Yossi, the little chosid, didn't even know what a television looked like.

Bubby Ruth, after my father's illness, took her increased responsibilities in stride. She was always cheerful and upbeat, no matter how difficult the family situation became. Bubby Ruth was an excellent cook but tended to make the same dishes over and over again. She usually made chicken for supper, sometimes meatballs and spaghetti, and occasionally halibut. Her specialty was stuffed cabbage which her mother taught her how to make in the traditional Russian style. While some people softened the cabbage leaves by freezing them, Bubby Ruth had no extra room in her small freezer, even if it had occurred to her to try this. She simply cut the leaves one by one off the stalk and steamed them in a large pot.

She also made delicious cooked pears, skin and all, using the rock-hard green and gritty pears from our neighbor's tree. We usually had to wait for the pears to drop on their own because the tree was very high. This caused considerable bruising to the pears which necessitated careful dissection of the brown parts. I remember one occasion when the neighbor's grown son climbed the tree, picked the pears, and pitched them to the neighborhood boys who stood around in a circle wearing their baseball gloves. Those pears were beauties. After they were cooked, Bubby Ruth would fill six or seven large coffee jars and store them in the refrigerator. This was a treat we all enjoyed (Grandpa Joe most of all) for several months during the winter. My father also liked coconut custard pie, tapioca pudding, and Jell-O prepared with canned fruit for dessert. As a matter of fact, Bubby Ruth made Jell-O so often that when I was little, I thought "Jell-O" meant dessert.

When my father got sick, he was unable to fast on Yom Kippur. Bubby Ruth knew fasting meant a lot to him and she decided to fast for him instead. It says something about human nature that Bubby Ruth undertook this and that she and Grandpa Joe found this meaningful. Bubby Ruth continued fasting on Yom Kippur for the rest of her life long after my father passed away.

Bubby Ruth was very economical when she shopped. She never quite got over the trauma of the Great Depression. Even decades later, when she was well-off, she felt the need to save money on her grocery shopping. For example, she specialized in buying cans whose labels were missing. Remember, in those days, we only had one small freezer, so we didn't have room for many frozen vegetables. Therefore, we depended a lot on canned food. Each supermarket had a shopping cart parked in the back filled with cans without labels. These cans were sold at a discounted price because no one knew for sure what was in them. Bubby Ruth had a knack for figuring out what was inside. She used the size, shape, weight, and price to determine the cans' contents. Then she shook and swirled the cans to make sure they didn't contain a solid chunk of pet food, her worst-case scenario. She did everything short of a CAT scan to rule out dog food. She also collected her share of banged-up and dented cans, likewise priced at a discount. After that, she then moved onto the produce department. There she chose the best of the worst fruits and vegetables from the reduced-price section. You are surely familiar with the famous poem by Emma Lazarus:

The New Colossus

*"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

In this version which I wrote in honor of Bubby Ruth, it went something like this:

The Newfield Cost-Consciousness

"Give me your smashed, your crushed, and more,

Your muddled bargains given nearly free.

The wretched produce of your teeming store.

Send these, the battered, blackened ones to me,

I lift my paring knife to slice around the core!"

I must admit, I picked up some of these questionable shopping habits from Bubby Ruth. But after we were married, things had to change, and fast! It wasn't hard to give up the mystery cans since I had to be sure we only brought home foods with a reliable *hechsher* (kosher certification). But it took a little longer to pass up the bruised fruits and vegetables which could always be trimmed and cooked, if necessary.

Don't get me wrong. Bubby Ruth was penny-pinching when she shopped for herself, but she was extremely generous when it came to others. She exemplified the adage written in the *Sefer HaToldos* of the Previous Rebbe, Vol. 1, p. 8:

When the previous Rebbe was a child, he once asked his father the Rebbe Rashab, "Why did G-d create man with two eyes? Wouldn't one eye be enough, just like we have one mouth and one nose?" His father replied, "There are things that one must look at with the right eye, i.e., with love, and there are things that one must look at with the left eye, i.e., with distance. One must look at a *siddur* (prayer book) and another Jew with the right eye, and at a sweet candy and a toy one must look with the left eye.

She graciously spent large sums of money buying us a new car, paying the balance on our home mortgage as well as years and years of real estate taxes and water bills. She covered the college and graduate school tuition for her children and her friends' children. She co-signed her great-nephew's student loan. However, she did not believe in volunteering. Due to her pro-labor and unionist outlook, she felt all workers should be paid for their time and effort. She held paying jobs of many types from age thirteen to age ninety-two!

Bubby Ruth smoked cigarettes for many years. She placed ashtrays strategically around the house to collect the cigarette butts and ashes. This was long before anyone was concerned about second-hand smoke indoors. Even the danger of smoking in general was not widely accepted. For example, some cigarette ads showed supposed doctors recommending a certain brand of cigarettes because they were manufactured to be healthier. But the day the United States Surgeon General released his famous report linking cigarettes to cancer, Bubby Ruth quit smoking. She didn't even finish the pack! That was in 1964. Bubby Ruth realized her responsibilities as a parent and the breadwinner and wanted to do what was right for her family.

The one thing that really bothered Bubby Ruth was managing the small tenement house that she and her siblings inherited at 88 Second Avenue in Manhattan. It had twenty apartments, all with ridiculously low rents, which were limited by the infamous New York City rent control. This did not stop the tenants from complaining about everything, from broken appliances, to plumbing leaks, to peeling paint, etc. They called our house 24/7 at all hours of day and night. She bought the stoves and refrigerators for the apartments from a local appliance store in Manhattan called "Eis and Sons." However, during my childhood, whenever I heard her speak on the phone to the superintendant about ordering items from "Eis," I thought she was saying "Ice." I couldn't understand what was going on.

By the way, this reminds me of a story that took place a generation before. As a young girl, my mother wrote letters for her father, an immigrant fluent in Russian and Yiddish who could hardly speak English, let alone write it. Once he asked her to write a letter to a man named "Izzy" Cohen. But because of the way he pronounced the name, it sounded to her like, "Easy" Cohen. She asked her father (my namesake Solomon) what kind of name is "Easy"?! All he could answer was, "That's his name." So, she wrote "Easy" Cohen and sent the letter. Considering the likely English language skills of his correspondent, it probably didn't make much difference.

Eventually, in the 1970's, Bubby Ruth retired from teaching so she could spend more time taking care of Grandpa Joe. Also, with the approval of her siblings, she sold the tenement house in Manhattan which had become an unwelcome burden on her.

Our Religious Neighbors Drew Me Closer to Hashem

As unlikely as it may seem, Rabbi Boruch and Rebbetzin Dora Faivelson became my parents' closest and dearest friends. By *hashgacha pratis*, Divine Providence, they lived right next door to us when we lived in the apartment house on 18th Avenue. My parents immediately hit it off with them. Their honesty, warmth, and openness attracted my parents from the start. The Faivelson's shared their enthusiasm for preparing for Shabbos and Yom Tov and were especially welcoming to the three children in our family. Rabbi Boruch was from a rabbinical family. As a yeshiva student, he became interested in Hebrew language and literature and wanted to live a more modern lifestyle. Also, while his father had a long white beard, Rabbi Boruch was clean shaven. To set him on the right path, his father sent him to study at the famous Mir Yeshiva in Poland. This turned out to be a wise choice in terms of *ruchnius* (spirituality), but Rabbi Boruch had to be hastily summoned home by his father in 1938 on the eve of World War II.

Rebbetzin Dora was raised in Germany by parents from Eastern Europe. When Hitler, *yemach shemo*, came to power in 1933, her sister Toni immediately moved to Eretz Yisroel because she refused to live under the anti-Semitic regime. Dora's parents were fortunate to bring the rest of the family to the United States where she became a yeshiva elementary school teacher. When we first met the Faivelsons, they had been married for several years but still didn't have any children. Rebbetzin Dora often discussed the sadness this caused them with my mother, Bubby Ruth. Then, a strange thing happened.

One day, Rebbetzin Dora brought a pile of sewing to our apartment and she worked on it while she chatted with my mother. She told Bubby Ruth that all her clothes were getting tight on her and she had to let out the seams. Little did she know, her fervent wish to have a child was coming true! This episode was followed by the birth of the girls, Leah'le and then Chana'le.

As the Newfield children grew up, my family was invited to join the Faivelsons for the seder on the first night of Pesach each year. Rabbi Boruch was the first one to introduce me to *shmura matzah*. He reverently held up a little box containing a few precious matzos. Unlike the round hand-rolled ones we are accustomed to use at home today, these were square and machine-made. We learned from the ceremonies we participated in at the first seder how to conduct our

own seder at home on the second night. The Faivelson's *seder* menu never changed: homemade gefilte fish, chicken soup, pot roast and potatoes, follow by tea and stewed prunes.

In this day and age, it's hard to explain the excitement that the three young Newfield children generated amongst our neighbors. You have to remember that my siblings and I were born shortly after World War II and the Holocaust. Our neighbors looked upon us as the precious future of the Jewish people. At first, the Faivelsons did not have any children of their own. Our other neighbor, Mrs. Leshna, was an elderly widow. Our downstairs neighbors, Sol and Belle Resnicoff, were childless. As you can imagine, they all delighted in visiting and playing with the three of us children. Sol had his own signature song that he loved to perform at any occasion. He sang the traditional hymn, "*Adon Olam*," to the seductive tune of "Habenera" from the opera, *Carmen* by Georges Bizet. I have no idea who paired the text to this music but Sol was crazy about it. Of course, it was only many years later, when I got interested in opera, that I realized the humor of this combination.

CHILDRENS CHORUS PT			
Mon.	Jan. 21	Adriana	
~~Fri.~~	~~Jan. 25~~	~~Chenier~~	~~8PM~~
Sat.	Jan. 26	Meister.	7:15PM
Mon.	Jan. 28	Adriana	7PM
~~✓ Wed.~~	~~Jan. 30~~	~~TURANDOT~~	~~7:30PM~~
Thu.	Jan. 31	Cavalleria	7PM
Fri.	Feb. 1	Adriana	7PM
~~✓ Sat.~~	~~Feb. 2~~	~~Turandot~~	~~7:30PM~~
Tue.	Feb. 5	Adriana	7PM
Sat.	Feb. 9	Adriana	1PM
Wed.	Feb. 13	Adriana	7PM
~~✗ Sun.~~	~~Feb. 17~~	~~Turandot~~	~~7:30PM~~
~~✗ Fri.~~	~~Feb. 22~~	~~Turandot~~	~~7:30PM~~
Sat.	Feb. 23	Adriana	7PM
~~✗ Tue.~~	~~Feb. 26~~	~~Turandot~~	~~7:30PM~~
~~✗ Sat.~~	~~Mar. 2~~	~~Chenier~~	~~2PM~~
~~✗ Tue.~~	~~Mar. 5~~	~~Turandot~~	~~7:30PM~~
Sun.	Mar. 10	OTELLO	7:30PM
~~✗ Tue.~~	~~Mar. 12~~	~~Turandot~~	~~7:30PM~~
Wed.	Mar. 13	Otello	8PM
~~✗ Sat.~~	~~Mar. 16~~	~~BORIS~~	~~9PM~~
Mon.	Mar. 18	Otello	8PM
~~✗ Wed.~~	~~Mar. 20~~	~~Boris~~	~~9PM~~
Sat.	Mar. 23	Otello	2PM
~~✗ Mon.~~	~~Mar. 25~~	~~Boris~~	~~9PM~~
Thu.	Mar. 28	Adriana	7PM
~~✗ Fri.~~	~~Mar. 29~~	~~Boris~~	~~9PM~~
Sat.	Mar. 30	Otello	8PM
Mon.	Apr. 1	Cav.	7PM
Wed.	Apr. 3	Adriana	7PM
Thu.	Apr. 4	Otello	8PM
~~✗ Sat.~~	~~Apr. 6~~	~~Boris~~	~~3PM~~
(Over)			

Performance Schedule of the Metropolitan Opera Boys' Chorus

CLASS OF SERVICE This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.	WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT	SYMBOLS <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>DL = Day Letter</td></tr> <tr><td>NL = Night Letter</td></tr> <tr><td>LT = International Letter Telegram</td></tr> </table>	DL = Day Letter	NL = Night Letter	LT = International Letter Telegram
DL = Day Letter					
NL = Night Letter					
LT = International Letter Telegram					
The filing time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is LOCAL TIME at point of origin. Time of origin LOCAL TIME at point of destination					
1963 MAR 9 PM 7 12					
KH246 709P EST MAR 9 63 SYA703 SY SIA232 SIZ1 SIZ1 PD SI NEW YORK NY 9 NFT STANLEY NEWFIELD ~ 1639 EAST 27 ST BROOKLYN NY YOUR REHEARSAL OF BORIS GODUNOFF MON. MAR. 11 IS CANCELLED. THE REHEARSAL WILL BE HELD INSTEAD ON TUE. MAR. 12TH. YOU MUST REPORT AT THE 39 STREET ROOF STAGE AT 10:30 AM SHARP. FRIDAY MARCH 15TH YOU MUST REPORT AT 12:30 PM-SHARP STANLEY LEVINE STAGE MANAGEMENT 11 12 39 1030 15 1230.					

When the opera house had an urgent message for me, they sent a telegram via Western Union. Remember, this was many years before computers and cell phones were invented. Note the address on 39th Street (and Broadway). Of course, I had no inkling that a new opera house was being planned at Lincoln Center and that my beloved stomping ground would soon be demolished.

How I Joined the Metropolitan Opera Boys' Chorus

I would now like to present the following account of my early experience as a child opera singer which I wrote in honor of Bubby Ruth's 95th birthday for the tribute volume composed by her children and grandchildren.

Do you remember how you got me into the Metropolitan Opera Boys Chorus?

You encouraged me. You supported me. And you gave me the confidence, as a ten-year-old boy, to audition, practice, and ultimately walk on that famous stage in front of thousands of discerning and knowledgeable opera fans. (May I dare say in the footsteps of the immortal Enrico Caruso?)

Your own interest in classical music goes back to your elementary school education in Manhattan as a child of recent immigrants. Your teachers taught you little ditties set to famous musical compositions to help you learn and remember them. For example, "This is—the symphony—that Schubert wrote—but never finished!" and "Morning is dawning and Peer Gynt is yawning under a statue of Grieg!" You also always loved the pageantry and emotion of grand opera which you listened to on weekly live radio broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

Some of the details of how I got started, even I do not remember. You took me to the Brooklyn Museum week after week as a young child to tour the galleries. There, I joined a children's chorus at the museum led by a talented young music teacher named John Motley. We rehearsed once a week with him seated at a grand piano in the cavernous indoor courtyard of the museum. Our group occupied only the first one or two rows of wooden seats. I was perhaps eight or nine years old at the time. I was shy and had a teeny soprano voice. Mr. Motley would walk over and bend down his head to position his ear to my lips—just to see if I was even singing at all.

I remember a few of the strange and haunting lines we sang:

I heard a forest praying

The trees were cold and bare

What was the forest saying?

Let me repeat their prayer:

Trees make a playground for children

Trees hide the lover's lane

G-d made a tree, an innocent tree

Trees have not lived in vain!

During the summer our family often went swimming at Neponsit Beach in the Rockaways. There we ran into a friend of yours, Mrs. Marks, a music teacher. You had me sing for her, there on the beach. She said, "He has such a wonderful voice. He should sing in the Metropolitan Opera!"

That gave you the idea and you followed through on it. You called the opera house—the old Met—on Broadway and 39th Street and found out when the boys chorus audition would be held. You brought me there. I remember walking up the stairs to a large room called Studio Two. I waited for my turn to try out. Maestro Martin played a few bars on the piano and I did my best to sing a song. Needless to say, my performance was not nearly as impressive—actually not impressive at all—as many of the other boys. (At that time, there were no girls in the chorus, unlike today where it is a co-ed "children's" chorus.) At any rate, I was not chosen. The date of the first rehearsal was announced to be held a week later and everyone left for home.

I was terribly disappointed and upset. For days I walked around in a fog. Gloom. Depression. Rejection. Finally, you had an inspiration. We would go to the first rehearsal anyway! And so it was. We walked in. Maestro Martin was in a hurry to begin the rehearsal. You whispered a few words to him. He asked me to sing again. I chirped something—don't ask me what. He said "Fine. Sit down. Let's get started." And thus began my operatic career.

The maestro called out, "Everybody sing together!"

"Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah—Aah! ..."

"Again!"

For three seasons, when I was in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grade, I went by subway to the opera house, usually by myself, to rehearsals and performances. At that time, in 1959, the subway tokens cost 30 cents each way. I made a handsome profit since I got paid three dollars in cash for each performance. Sometimes, after a rehearsal, I splurged and bought a giant Red Delicious apple from

a street vendor for twenty-five cents. I appeared on stage with Richard Tucker, Franco Corelli, Renata Tebaldi, and other greats in operas such as *Tosca*, *La Boheme*, *Turandot*, *La Gioconda*, and *Macbeth*. I wouldn't have missed this opportunity for anything!

The boys chorus members were on stage mostly to be seen, and incidentally, to be heard. Once we put on our costumes and got a few dabs of yucky makeup we were instantly transformed from ordinary New York kids to Parisian street urchins, Italian choir boys, Chinese peasants, English pages, or sailor children from who knows where. When I first came on stage, I was startled by the bright lights which temporarily blinded me for a few seconds. But soon I adjusted and only had to squint a little. I tried to act "natural" and make it seem as if I was just part of the action going on around me.

From time to time the opera called for more performers such as groups of dancers and supernumeraries (silent actors needed for crowd scenes on stage). The chorus sang. The orchestra played. There was lots of movement, lots of action, and lots of coming and going on stage. This was all very impressive to a little kid who had never even been in a school play! Of course, I kept all this to myself and didn't mention anything to my schoolmates. I surely didn't want them to know I sang in public, wore paste makeup, and came on stage dressed in white tights. You can call this the secret life of Shlomo Newfield.

Bubby Ruth, whenever you could, you would watch the performance from the wings backstage. You were so proud of me—your little *tattleleh*—on Broadway! As time went on, I learned more parts and gained confidence. In my last year at the Met, I was chosen to be the understudy for the exquisitely melancholy soprano solo of the shepherd boy in Act III of *Tosca*. The piece became even more poignant when I learned, many years later, what the lyrics, in Italian, meant. I loved that part, but fortunately for everyone, my services (and my changing voice) were not called upon. But I was ready just in case, sort of. That same year, the Metropolitan Opera helped open the brand-new glittering Philharmonic Hall at Lincoln Center. For two evenings during the opening week we performed a difficult and complex composition for adult and children's chorus, soloists, and orchestra by the Spanish composer, Manuel de Falla. I was so happy that you and Daddy were able to attend, this time sitting comfortably in orchestra seats in the auditorium. And thank you Signor de Falla for including us children in this magnificent composition so we could share in this once-in-a-lifetime experience!

My favorite opera composer is Giacomo Puccinni. I love his sublimely beautiful melodies and the emotional drama he builds into his work. In addition, Puccinni appreciated where his child performers were coming from as well as *where they had to go* after they finished their parts, *namely home*. It was generous of him to write musical parts for children in many of his operas and considerate to place us in Act I of *Tosca*, Act II of *La Boheme*, and the beginning of *Turandot*. Unfortunately, he passed away before he finished writing *Turandot*. It probably was Franco Alfano, who later finished the opera, who decided it was necessary for the boys to appear *again* in the Act III grand finale. Perhaps he figured that after listening to three hours plus of grand opera and witnessing the thrilling spectacle on stage, the audience really needed to see our sweet little faces as well. So be it.

I can't blame Giuseppe Verde for keeping us out late on a school night. He didn't give us *any part at all* in his opera *Macbeth*. It must've been the genius artistic director who thought it would look swell to have a troupe of boys tiptoe across the back of the stage holding fake candles while Lady Macbeth sits up front fretting loudly about something or other.

The illusion of the scenery fascinated me. From the audience side, it looked like solid stone buildings and castles. But from backstage, it was the flimsiest canvas stretched over rickety wooden frames. Even my childhood *sukkah* was sturdier. When the curtain came down on a scene, the stage crew immediately broke the sets apart and carried the pieces right out the back door to the trucks parked outside on Seventh Avenue. The singers and the orchestra were directed by the all-important maestro. He set the pace for the music. When the opera called for singers backstage, they stood looking intently at an assistant maestro perched on a ladder, peeping through a tiny hole in the scenery to get the beat from the maestro in the pit. In addition, there was a prompter in a little box at the front of the stage calling out cues. The stage director paced anxiously in the wings, hoping all his instructions and preparations were being carried out.

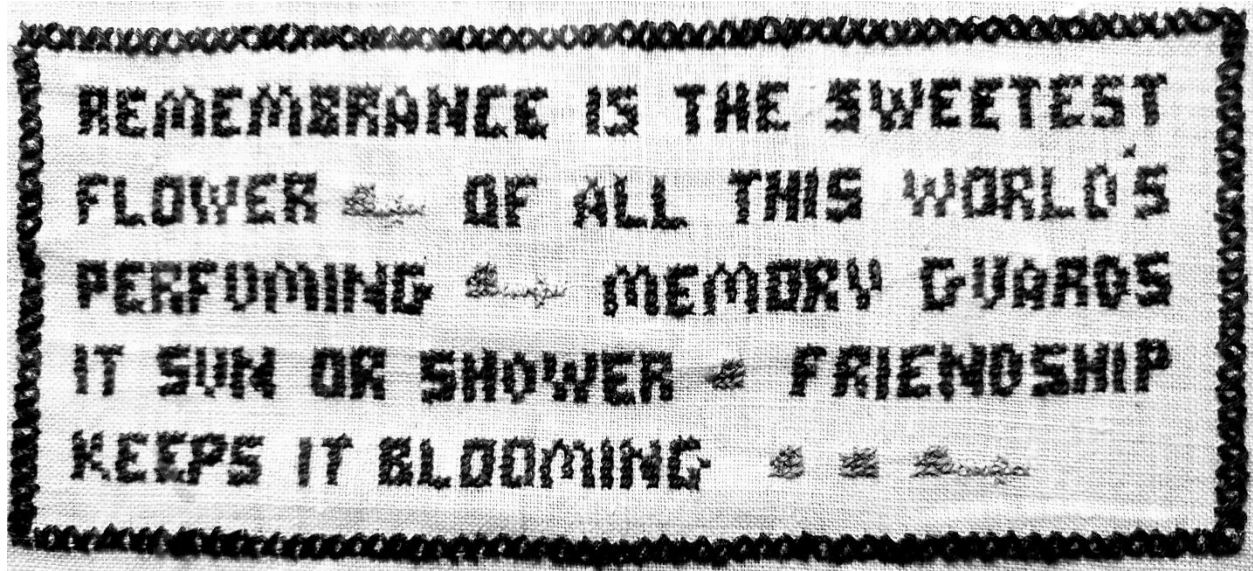
There also was a man, probably a retired singer, assigned to stand in the back staircase shouting out warnings to the soloists in their dressing rooms. He gave them five minutes notice, usually in Italian, before their entrance was due on stage. Obviously, there was no intercom in use in the old opera house. I heard him cry out, "Signore Corelli, cinque minuti!" ("Mr. Corelli, five minutes!") Even the audience, mostly hidden in the darkness of the auditorium, knew how to do its part. When the curtain went up, there was a hush, almost like a thousand people inhaling

together. Later, came the coughs and throat clearings, and finally the tumultuous applause. Sometimes this was punctuated with shouts of, “Bravo!” or “Brava!” Of course, at that time, we didn’t have to worry about cell phones going off! All in all, it was a magnificent, complex operation that usually moved along like clockwork.

I owe all this to you, Mommy. Like the young Elizabeth Taylor competing on her racehorse in the movie “National Velvet,” I had my chance to do something extraordinary as a child. After that, I was ready to hit the books, put my nose to the grind, and become the all-Ivy phenomenon that I am!



Here I am in costume for “La Boheme” along with my fellow chorus members. Our “clubhouse” was in a large practice room up four flights of stairs. Next to us was the studio of the Met photographer, Louis Melancon. We constantly snuck into his room and bothered him for discarded prints which covered every conceivable surface from floor to ceiling. The poor guy did not appreciate our company, but occasionally consented to take a picture of us, such as the one above.



This quotation poetically explains my motivation in writing this book. My memories are like sweet flowers that I would like to pass on to my family and friends. However, a printed book lasts much longer than a garden flower which quickly fades.

Piece # Two: I Grow Up!

Mastering the Art of School

I'm often asked by children and young people how long did I have to go to school to become a doctor. To answer this question, I have to go back to the beginning of my formal education in the nursery school run by Miss Mallay. To be honest, I don't recall many details of that year. The school was in a handsome Victorian mansion in Old Flatbush, possibly on Albemarle Road. There were about a dozen students, boys and girls, all four years old. One of the highlights of the year was a certain art project making colorful silhouettes of tree leaves by laying them on construction paper and then gently sprinkling them with a mist of paint. This was accomplished by dipping a real toothbrush into paint and rubbing it across a piece of window screen mounted on a small frame. When you lifted the leaf off the paper, the outline was left in paint. That was really neat! Furthermore, it combined my early interest in plants and nature with my nascent interest in fine art. My other memory of that year was the delightful naptime every day after lunch. The teacher distributed little cots and soon I was off to dreamland. I wish my current work made provision for a well-deserved afternoon nap.

The next year I attended kindergarten at P.S. 217 on Coney Island Avenue. That large red brick school building is still in use, although the student body has drastically changed since my days there. In the 1950's it was all white, as I recall, and a mix of Jewish, Irish, Italian and other nationalities. At the time, I didn't think much about the national or ethnic origins of my classmates. I was preoccupied with more important things such as free play and learning the alphabet. My most rewarding accomplishment was mastering the technique of skipping, that is, prancing around the room alternating a step and a hop. By the way, judging from the children playing nowadays outdoors in the schoolyard, the present enrollment appears to be overwhelmingly Pakistani and South Asian.

When I was six years old, our family moved to the Madison neighborhood and my brother David and I went to P.S. 197. My teachers, from first to sixth grade, including Miss Ford, Miss Boyle, and Miss Chivis were very strict. They believed that students must sit quietly in their seats all day long. And remember, these were the old-fashioned wooden desks that were screwed down

to the floor in rows. Each desk had a built-in inkwell with a brass lid. However, due to the passage of time and the invention of the ball-point pen, the inkwells were no longer used for writing. They did provide a convenient hiding place for a wad of chewing gum in an emergency. Some of the school activities included patriotic celebrations of national holidays. I spent many hours drawing faces on paper pumpkins for Halloween, coloring turkeys for the Pilgrim's feast on Thanksgiving, and cutting doilies and pasting them onto red paper to make Valentine's Day cards. Although I enjoyed the arts and crafts, I was unsure if celebrating these holidays was proper for a Jewish boy.

Little did I know, that I would spend the next six years in class with the same group of students, more or less. This became a real problem as the years went by due to the formation of various social cliques in the class. I seemed to be excluded from all of them. I became more lonesome and unhappy. I tried to relieve my boredom and isolation by looking into the set of encyclopedias found on a little bookcase next to my seat. However, my teacher did not allow this distraction, so the encyclopedias sat unopened and I sat and sat...silently plotting my escape.

Most students in my grade stayed on at P.S. 197 to finish the seventh and eighth grades. This would be an unusual arrangement today, but back then there were still some eighth-grade elementary schools. The students stayed in the same building for eight years and didn't switch to a middle school or junior high school. I, however, was accepted in an accelerated program for gifted students called the "SP," which stood for Special Progress. In this program, the three years of seventh, eighth, and ninth grade were compressed into two, in effect skipping the eighth grade. This program was only available in a junior high school, not in an eighth-grade school. As it happened, I lived at the edge of the school boundary, so I was the only student that year going from P.S. 197 to Marine Park Junior High School. When I started seventh grade in the new school, I only knew one other student (from my Hebrew School). Now my liberation was complete. Gone were my snobby classmates from elementary school! Gone were the insufferable teachers! A new world opened up for me.



I was relieved to discover that the students at Marine Park were friendly. The teachers were wonderful. I enjoyed my new relationships and the interesting subject matters in class. Even getting a chance to walk in the hall while changing classrooms between periods was enjoyable. As an extra treat, we had “shop class” every day, such as woodworking, sewing, and printing. I enjoyed wood-working—sawing and sanding pieces of soft wood to make a small curved bench, which in my imagination had an oriental look to it. Printing shop was even better. There we learned to make “linoleum cuts” and use them to print illustrations on greeting cards. I used an Incan depiction of a bird as my theme for one project and a clipper ship for another. I also wrote a short poem to print inside the card. “The ships are sailing from sea to sea, to carry this message to you from me.” My pictures were strictly two dimensional and simplistic. I was amazed that another student was able to recreate a realistic Van Gogh self-portrait in exquisite multi-colored Impressionist detail.

Jewish Comics Today

Growing up in the 1950's, I was aware that my schoolmates were reading and collecting comic books—Superman, Spiderman, Batman, etc. However, they were banned in my house because my mother, a school teacher, frowned on them. She was concerned that they used non-standard English, along with slang and corrupt grammar. Besides, she probably felt uncomfortable with the pervasive violence, even if justice prevailed in the end.

Since I passed through childhood without comics, it came as a surprise to me that today comics or “graphic novels” have become a popular fixture of children’s literature in the orthodox and hasidic world. It seems every school, every shul, and every home have a stack of illustrated books in the comic format. I noticed that young children, from toddler-age and up, are captivated leafing through these volumes whenever they have the opportunity.

Many of the books feature a retelling of the Chumash and highlights of Tanach such as the book of Esther. Other books illustrate hasidic stories and legends from Eastern Europe. Another genre deals with the Holocaust and the persecution of religious Jews under Communist rule behind the Iron Curtain. A recent volume called “Tsunami” gives a Jewish twist to the nuclear disaster which took place in Japan in 2011. It features a (fictional) religious Israeli scientist who rescues Japan from destruction and then goes on to blow up the nuclear weapons laboratory in Iran.

These comics were originally published in Eretz Yisroel in Hebrew and have been translated and republished for American readers. A good example is “A Chassidic Comic Collection” from Malchus Haketer Publishers in Israel written by the talented and prolific storyteller Levi Yitzchok Groner. The book contains 25 short and humorous stories told in comic book form. Each is based on a story told by the Lubavitcher Rebbe and contains a lesson on how we can better serve Hashem. These stories, passed on from one generation to another, are not solely presented for entertainment. In fact, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, the *Baal Hatanya* once said that stories told by a Rebbe are considered “*Torah SheB'ksav*,” a part of the written Torah.

In case the young reader fails to grasp the Torah lesson brought out by the story, the author concludes many episodes with an explanation (in tiny print) of the lesson to be learned. Whereas, a young child might skip this paragraph, it is still beneficial for him to read the story itself. In time, he will probably review it over and over again. Later, when a parent or teacher explains the lesson to be learned, there will be a spark of recognition as the child connects the lesson to the now familiar story.

The book “Lights from the North: A Story of Jewish Courage in Communist Russia” by D. Even Chen is published by Kosher Comics for Kids. It is a suspenseful tale of *mesirus nefesh* focusing on a young boy growing up in Russia and steadfastly observing the *mitzvos* of the Torah. The story follows our hero all the way to exile in frozen Siberia and eventually to *aliyah*

in Israel. The ingenious tactics he secretly uses to observe the mitzvos are well illustrated in the detailed drawings.

Shazak Multimedia, headquartered in Chicago, is an American producer of numerous comic-style volumes and videos. These include “Out of Egypt,” “Queen of Persia,” and “Miracle Lights.” The executive producer is Rabbi Moshe Moscovitz. In these books, the vivid colorful illustrations and catchy dialogue is supplemented by periodic “Insights” which enrich the learning experience. In this series, the “Insight” sections are written clearly and are intended to be read by the children themselves. At the conclusion of the text is an extensive multiple-choice quiz which is entertaining as well as educational.

In my opinion, the comic format presents a “win-win” opportunity for parents and children. The stories, whether based on our holy Torah or the extraordinary experiences of our brethren in modern times, convey Jewish history, values, and pride. As I have observed, children are captivated by the comic style and eagerly delve into the books. After all, this is *our* story. Let the comic book exclamations be used for a Jewish purpose! Let “Blah!” refer to the reaction of the Egyptians to the plague of blood. Let “Croak!” emanate from the frogs of Egypt. Let “Roar!” come from the wild animals and “Crash! Bang!” come from the hailstones.

Comics are an attractive and inviting media to tell the story of our people.

Zalman's Recollections from His Childhood

Since the Lubavitch Hasidic elementary school I attended in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn did not teach any secular subjects, including even the ABCs and basic English reading, I did not learn to read on my own until I was in my late teens. Nonetheless, my youth was full of books and stories which my parents read out loud to me. Before putting me to bed every night, my mother read to me and my siblings the stories of Winnie the Pooh, Curious George, and the Berenstain Bears, but she also read stories written by and for Orthodox Jews, with titles such as *Labels for Laibel*, *Gemarakup: Super Sleuth*, *A Children's Treasury of Chassidic Tales*, and my personal favorite at the time, *Shabbos Treats that Grew*, about a brother and sister who befriend a local needy family and learn the true meaning of Shabbos.

I enjoyed these stories, but the ones that made the deepest impression were the ones my father read out loud after Shabbos lunch. When I was in the second grade, he started reading in English translation the books from the Prophets section of the Bible, those of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. I remember the scene when the high priest Eli is informed that the ark of the covenant has been captured by their enemies and he falls backwards in shock and breaks his neck and dies. I remember David endlessly evading the wrath of King Saul who tries to kill him out of murderous jealousy. But mostly I remember the constant threat the ancient Israelites faced from the no-good Philistines who attacked them at every turn. Sitting on the couch next to my father and rubbing the back of his neck to keep him awake and reading, I cheered every time Samson smote the Philistines, including in his last heroic act after Delilah cut his hair and the Philistines gouged out his eyes and imprisoned him. Samson stood in the temple of Dagon and prayed to God for strength to pull the pillars supporting the entire structure and managed to topple it, killing three thousand of the enemy.

Once we finished the book of Kings, we shifted to a somewhat more recent saga of Jewish danger and deliverance, to that of the sixteenth century golem of Prague. My father read to me the cartoon golem stories written by Arnold Fine and illustrated by Howard S. Speilman, that were serialized in the children's section of the Jewish Press each week.

Even before my father read these stories to me, I knew (and believed with complete faith) the story of the golem's creation by the mystic Rabbi Judah Loew. I acquired my knowledge of the golem during recess at school when my friends and I would gather around a bulky tape recorder and listen repeatedly (incessantly?) to a dramatized narrative called *The Mysterious Golem of Prague* directed by Simcha Gottlieb and Chaim Clorfene. (Ironically, although he was not Orthodox, Leonard Nimoy was one of the voice actors on the otherwise Orthodox audiotape, but I wasn't told about him, and it would not have mattered anyway. I had no idea at the time who he or Spock were. At the risk of mixing the franchises, my Brooklyn was a galaxy far far away!)

The audiotape grippingly described how in order to shield his community from blood libels and other heinous plots, Rabbi Loew created a mutant protector. Using his walking stick, Rabbi Loew drew a life-size human form in soft clay, around which he and his followers made seven circuits while chanting a ten-word Kabbalistic formula. At the end of this ritual, a non-verbal mutant with superhuman strength emerged.

The golem cartoons my father read to me in the Jewish Press only reinforced the reality of the golem and his exploits. From what I can remember, the main villain was a wicked Catholic priest named Father Thaddeus who was consumed by a burning hatred against the Jews. Thaddeus was forever creeping along the cavernous labyrinth beneath his church meeting with his henchmen and devising schemes to ensnare the innocent Jews. And each week, just as calamity was about to envelop the Jews, the grunting and snorting golem would rush on the scene to prevent it.

Speilman's minimalist cartoons effectively conveyed the deviousness of Thaddeus and the brutal strength of the golem. Thaddeus was depicted sporting shoulder length hair and wild eyes. The golem was depicted as a head taller than everyone else, possessed of a chiseled face and bulging muscles. With a cascade of "Whack!" "Boom!" and "Thud!" the young reader was mesmerized by the golem's ability to always disrupt the evil plots and protect his Jewish charges.

In my pre-adolescent mind, the stories of the Philistines and those of Father Thaddeus merged with the messages I received in school about non-Jews. We were taught that Jews possess two souls, a divine and animal one, while non-Jews only possess an animal soul. The animal soul gave its possessor vitality to stay alive but not the ability to transcend base animalistic instincts.

As a child, the message I took away from the golem stories, which fit with many Hasidic tales I absorbed from my yeshiva days featuring evil eastern European noblemen who immiserated the lives of their Jewish subjects, was that it was necessary to fear the "goyim" among whom we lived. I accepted that there would always be wicked characters like Father Thaddeus who forever schemed to hurt the Jews, and that the Jews always need a protector, whether in the shape of Samson, the golem, or the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

As the Talmud (Shabbos 21b) notes, "*girsā diyankusa*," the knowledge we acquire at a young age, makes a deep impression on us. The power of ultra-Orthodox children's literature such as the golem cartoons in the Jewish Press, is precisely that it is absorbed at a tender age when we are so impressionable and before our critical thinking skills are fully developed.



The ghost of Ebbets Field still lingers in Crown Heights. Here we see it drawn in over a photograph of the current housing block that replaced it. I remember driving past Ebbets Field when I was a boy. My father, however, had the distinction of selling peanuts there to earn some pocket change.



I was a serious student in high school. Our group of “A+” students was very competitive. Besides getting me into an Ivy League college, my hard work earned me a spot on the Honor Roll plaque in the Madison High School lobby.

High School Days

The following three years at James Madison High School were filled with many challenging courses in all academic subjects. Madison had the distinct advantage of being directly across the street from our house. I could hear the school bells from my living room. Unfortunately, my signal to leave for school in the morning *was the late bell!*

My classmates included a large handful of really sharp outstanding students. We shared most of our classes and got to know each other very well. Due to the nature of the atmosphere among the students, there was a constant competition for grades. We really thought it made a difference if we got a 97, 98, or 99 in each subject. Since we were school “pros,” so to speak, we didn’t have many real challenges, academically. The school compensated by adding more classes and more homework. For instance, we were enrolled in English with Miss Deborah Tannenbaum, a school celebrity. She was a very demanding and experienced teacher, almost an institution in herself. Her class was more intensive than usual, essentially like a college course. She arranged to have two classes, about 60 students, squeeze into her room at one time and stay for a double period. We, in turn, gave up our lunch period for a year to free up the extra time. She let us eat our bag lunches in the first three or four minutes of each session, but we had to avoid any messy, smelly, crummy, or drippy foods. The school brought in benches to accommodate seating the extra students.

Another innovation, this time by Mr. George Kapp, the Chemistry Department Chairman, was convincing, or shall I say, conniving, our group to take six majors in our junior year instead of five. This enabled us to take chemistry and physics at the same time. The result was more pressure to assimilate a tremendous amount of new material that year. In fact, what I learned in my junior year was the basis of most of what I encountered in the years that followed, including college and medical school.

Mr. Kapp also pushed us to compete in the annual Westinghouse Science Talent Search (now sponsored by Intel). This entailed taking a challenging written test and submitting an original science project. The Madison entrants aced the test and our school tied the Bronx High School of Science, an honor school, in the number of semi-finalists. Our research projects, however, were

weak and didn't yield any finalists. Nevertheless, the school got a lot of positive publicity and my semi-final status was supposed to open up doors to new opportunities in the future.

As you can imagine, my honors classmates and I had little interest in sports. We weren't on any teams and didn't even attend school games. However, we were required to take physical education each term. I don't remember participating in any sports. We spent the period changing into our gold tee shirts, black gym shorts, and sneakers and then hanging around on the sidelines of the gym. That wasn't much exertion, but it was the extent of the exercise that I got. Swimming class was much better, but I only got it for one semester because I already knew how to swim from Camp Alvord.

I met my friend, Danny Myerson, at James Madison High School. His larger than life personality was like a force of nature, a human hurricane. He always had a big smile. He was always optimistic that things would turn out well. And he wore a *yarmulke*, the only one in the school. I was intrigued by his unique way of thinking and doing things. He paid no attention to what anyone thought about him, whether it was a fellow student, teacher, or principal. Once, he was called to the office to meet with Miss Horne, the assistant principal. She wanted to know why he wouldn't take anything handed to him by a female teacher. Danny explained that it was against his religion. This didn't go over very well with Miss Horne, but Danny insisted and there was nothing the school could do.

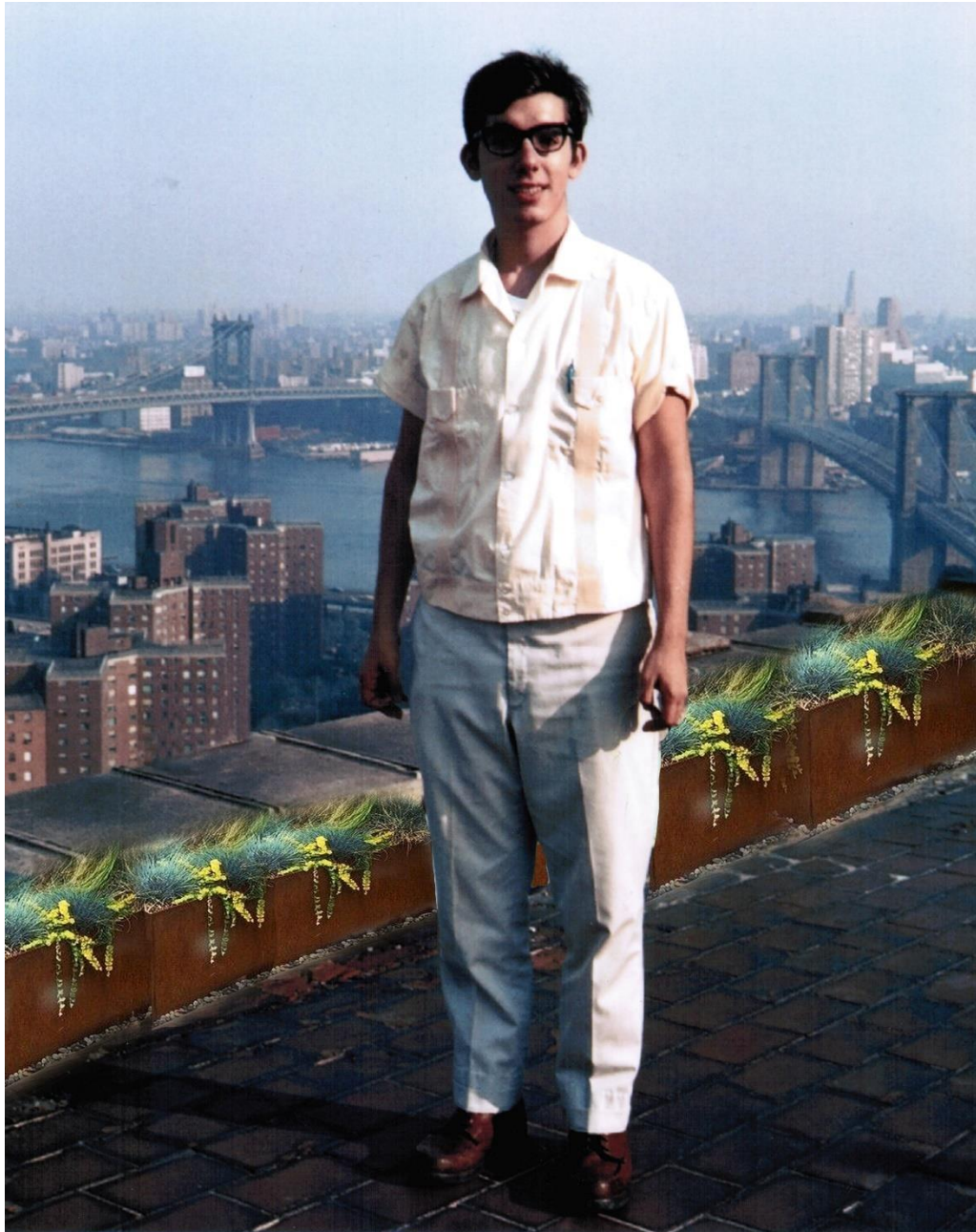
Danny took me to meet his rabbi, a little rebbe in Flatbush. I think his name was Rabbi Moscovitz. Not only had Danny become religious, a *baal teshuva*, but he became the *gabbai* of Rabbi Moscovitz's minyan which met in the rabbi's living room. Danny went early on Shabbos morning to stand outside and *shlep* in passing men to help make the minyan. After we *davened* that Shabbos, we stayed for lunch with the rabbi and his family. The rabbi was dressed in a satin *bekeshe* and had a full beard and long *payos*. I was surprised how friendly and open the rabbi was. He started to discuss baseball with me, but had to change the subject due to my complete ignorance and indifference. I returned with Danny to Rabbi Moscovitz on Purim for the megillah reading and on Pesach for services and lunch. That was the first time I saw hand-made round matzos. I thought it was a new invention.

I asked Danny where he learned so much about Yiddishkeit. Danny said he would show me. He took me to Hadar Hatorah Yeshiva in Crown Heights where I met some of the students and teachers. After this introduction, when I was in college and medical school, I returned several times a year during school breaks and vacations for a crash course/ total immersion in Lubavitch *hasidus*. I enjoyed joining the yeshiva when it spent the summer in the Catskills, first in Loch Sheldrake, then in Ferndale, then in Dairyland, and finally in Napanoch.

I guess I was somewhat spoiled by the warm reception I got the first time I walked into Hadar Hatorah. The boys were in the midst of a *hasidus shiur*, seated around a rebbe in folding chairs. All of a sudden, three or four boys jumped up and offered me a seat up front. Later, I learned that this was the Lubavitch way—to reach out and include other Jews, without judging them by their lifestyle or hairstyle.

I met some really great students there and I am fortunate to remain friends with them until today, over forty years later: Yehuda Ferris, Chaim Lapine, Michoel Brummel, and Kalman Rothman, to name a few. They were all serious about learning but still managed to crack a joke now and then. For example, over the years, the yeshiva ran short on funds and the *gashmius* went into a slump. Then Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht *a"h* took over responsibility. I asked Yehuda Ferris if he noticed any improvement. He said, “Of course. Before, we had the same supper every day—*kasha varnishkes*...somedays without the kasha and somedays without the *varnishkes*!”

The teachers were dedicated and inspiring. I had Rabbi Sholom Ber Veshedsky *a"h* for most of my classes. I hoped someday to move up to Rabbi Yaakov Goldberg’s *gemara shiur*. Believe it or not, I started attending his class this year (2020). It’s amazing that he is still teaching after so many years. It’s almost as if nothing has changed.



When I was in high school Bubby Ruth and Grandpa Joe took me on a “field trip” to the Municipal Building in Manhattan where she had worked for many years. This photo shows the view of the East River from the roof.



Bubby Ruth and Grandpa Joe were a loving couple. My father always wore a bowtie when he dressed for work or for *shul*.

On Duty at the Post Office

When I was a senior in high school, I decided to earn some extra money by working in the post office as a “Christmas Assistant.” I don’t recall how I heard about this opportunity and I didn’t know anyone else who was doing it. I applied for the job and had to go to the main post office at Cadman Plaza for processing. I was directed upstairs and proceeded through a maze of large drafty rooms. There was a long line of men, but no teenagers, as far as I could tell. At one point, I had to answer a few questions from a supervisor. Then he asked me to roll up my sleeves. I did, and he glanced at my arms. I imagined that he wanted to see if I had strong enough muscles to lift a heavy mail bag. It turns out that was *not* what he was looking for. Afterwards, I asked another man on the line about the inspection. “Track marks,” he said. I was not at all muscular but that did not seem to matter. No track marks. I wasn’t an IV drug abuser. I got the job.

I was assigned to Homecrest Station on Avenue U. I must have missed a few days of school and then worked during my school vacation. I had to start work very early; it was still dark out when I arrived. First, I hung around the station while the mail was prepared for delivery. I marveled at all the cages and pigeonholes, trying to figure out how the system worked. Everywhere, there was mail and more mail, an endless flood of letters, postcards, and packages all over the place. Sometimes, I joined a crew standing around a big table. They dumped a truckload of mail on the table and we picked up the letters one at a time and stacked them facing forward in trays. Again, the job was never finished. The mail kept coming.

At about ten or eleven AM, it was time to move on. They gave me a bag to carry on my shoulder and two tokens for the bus or subway, and I set out to make deliveries. Undaunted by rain or snow, I made my first deliveries in Gerritsen Beach, an isolated backwater I didn’t know existed before then. It is composed of tiny wooden bungalows crammed together on narrow streets. It didn’t look like New York, or even the United States. What’s worse, there were no street signs or house numbers *and every yard had a dog*. I had to ask for directions every few steps. “Where does so-and-so live?” “Do you know the X Family?” It took the rest of the day, but somehow, I managed to unload all those Christmas cards.

Each day was another adventure. Each day I was sent to a different neighborhood. From Bedford-Stuyvesant to Midwood to Red Hook, I made my rounds. I was born and raised in Brooklyn, but I saw neighborhoods that were completely foreign to me. Once, I was on my way

out of the post office carrying my bag which was topped off with a package about the size of a shoe box. A kindly postman intercepted me at the front door and grabbed the package. He said “You don’t need this.” He then threw the package high into the air like a football. It tumbled and spun over all the cages of mail and landed somewhere in the back of the post office. It’s probably still sitting there today. But this was not always the case. Once, a postman saw that I had a small package in my bag, and as I went out, he said, “This is medicine. Make sure you deliver it properly.”

Each neighborhood had its own charm. Red Hook is famous for brownstone houses. That means steps. Lots of them. I climbed up and down, up and down, all afternoon. I could’ve climbed the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building in that time. But the real eye-opener was “protecting” the regular postman when he delivered the welfare checks in Bedford-Stuyvesant on “check day.” In those days, before direct deposit and benefit cards, the city sent out paper checks once a month. On check day, no other mail was delivered in poor neighborhoods, only checks. My postman seemed perfectly capable of handling the situation but I was sent along, anyway.

It seems that all the recipients were waiting for his arrival. He never put a check into a mailbox. Every envelope was handed directly to the addressee, a landlord, or someone he knew he could trust. Sometimes, people would come up to the postman as he pushed his cart to ask for their checks. Since he was a good sport, he obliged by digging them out of his bag on the spot. But some people were unable to remember their address to help the postman find the right bundle. He tried giving them hints, but it didn’t always work. He told them, “Wait by your house and I will come around later.” At the end of the day, we again met up with some of these people as we made our rounds and they were pleased to have received their checks.

They also gave me a key to open the green boxes on the street corners so I could take out bags of mail to deliver. The problem arose when some scary man pulled up in a car and started speaking roughly to me, because he thought I was stealing the mail. “Hey kid! What are you doing? Where did you get that key?” The post office had issued me a button for identification that said “Christmas Assistant,” but it was not as impressive or noticeable as a uniform. Fortunately, I was not arrested and I was able to complete my route. I did have one regret. I wish I had time at the post office to read some of the postcards that came through, or even to admire the many stamps from all over the world. But there was never time for that. The mail always kept moving.



The summer after my junior year in high school, I took Advanced Placement Biology at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. I was impressed by the large and beautiful campus. The laboratory demonstrations were interesting and the weekend trips were a lot of fun. I was fascinated by the biology textbook by Professor William Keeton and read it from cover to cover, probably the last one to which I devoted so much attention. Doing the research for this composition I discovered that Professor Keeton, a beloved teacher, passed away at an early age. Cornell University named a new residence hall in his memory.

When I applied to college, for some reason I thought I should go to Harvard. I suppose it was pure snobbishness, because I didn't have any good reason to go away to school or to Harvard in particular. I had not even visited the Boston area or seen the Harvard campus. Perhaps somewhere inside me was a premonition that I was destined to meet Rabbi Dovid Wichnin in Boston. However, the time had not yet come. In any case, Harvard also didn't see why it was necessary for me to enroll there and I was turned down.

Fortunately, Columbia College said yes and I spent the next four years on campus. I majored in Biological Sciences, decided early-on that I would be pre-med, and had essentially my whole senior year to take electives. Altogether, I took seven art history classes and many Jewish studies courses in history, literature, and Zionism.

In my senior year in high school, I took several AP (advanced placement) classes. This was supposed to yield extra college credit and thereby accelerate my progress through college. Whatever I learned that year at Madison was fine (calculus, French, and social studies), but the plan backfired on me in a big way when I got to Columbia. I had a seriously mistaken idea of my competence in math and foreign language which led me to enroll in advanced courses in my freshman year. This caused a major humbling experience, much aggravation, and a few tears. I had enough trouble reading novels and poetry in English, let alone in French! And second year calculus (given in the engineering school, no less) might as well have been in French, too! It took a year for me to regain my composure, settle down, and start enjoying my courses.

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM
REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE

SSS Form 2
(Rev. 4-30-67)

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SELECTIVE SERVICE LAW

(FIRST NAME) STANLEY	(MIDDLE NAME) AUSTIN	(LAST NAME) NEWFIELD
SELECTIVE SERVICE NO. 50 41 51 550		
DATE OF BIRTH Aug. 23, 1951		PLACE OF BIRTH New York, N. Y.
COLOR EYES Brown	COLOR HAIR Brown	HEIGHT 5 FT. 11 IN.
		WEIGHT 165
Other obvious physical characteristics None		

WAS DULY REGISTERED ON THE 2 DAY OF Sept 19 69

Rose Gellert
(SIGNATURE OF LOCAL BOARD CLERK)

10

Stanley Newfield
REGISTRANT'S SIGNATURE

This is my "Draft Card," the infamous document burned by many young men in protest against the Vietnam War. I wasn't one of them but I still was afraid of being drafted.



In college, I cultivated a casual appearance. Remember, this was in the sixties and “hippies” were all the rage.

At Columbia

I graduated from high school while the Vietnam War was dragging on. I was very worried that I would be drafted into the military. All males were required to register with the Selective Service when they turned eighteen. Then they were assigned a lottery number from one to 365. Men with the lowest numbers would be called up first. My number was ten! Fortunately, as a college student, I received a deferment from the draft. This was very important to me because otherwise the alternative was being sent to combat in the Vietnam War. I continued to be deferred in medical school. After that, I became a commissioned officer in the U. S. Public Health Service. By then, the Vietnam War was over but it was still reassuring that this assignment also fulfilled my military service requirement, just in case the draft was reinstated.

I enrolled at Columbia in the fall of 1968, just after the bloody student demonstrations in the spring. But the campus was quiet and I was eager to begin my classes. I made a few close friends at Columbia. I was not buddies with Leon Weiseltier, although I met him. And Barak Obama did not arrive at Columbia until years later. I lost touch with my high school classmate from Israel, Oded Kolker, who also enrolled at Columbia. However, I was more than happy to befriend yeshiva graduates who were active in the Jewish Office. We did not have a “Hillel” or “Chabad on Campus” at that time. Rabbi Charles Sheer, a Yeshiva University graduate, arrived at the beginning of my sophomore year to run the Jewish Office (replacing a Reform rabbi with whom I was not involved).

Ironically, I didn’t meet my best friend, Paul Appelbaum, even though he was in my class at Columbia. Perhaps this was because he commuted from home in Brooklyn and didn’t stay for activities on campus. We actually met at Harvard Medical School, where we shared common interests such as obtaining kosher food and attending the Young Israel of Brookline, Massachusetts on Shabbos.

And now it is time for some name dropping. In my first year at Columbia, I had a fantastic teacher, Professor Santopietro, for an elective in modern architecture. This was my only encounter with him as I had never heard of or from him before or since. The course was an eye-opener for me. He made it exciting to study the modern masters who left their mark on buildings all over the

world, from small out-of-the-way towns like Columbus, Indiana to major cities including New York.

One of my passions in college was studying art history. I managed to squeeze in seven courses over the four years I spent at Columbia. One memorable course was in American Art which I took at Barnard. The instructor was an up-and-coming authority named Barbara Rose. Sadly, she recently passed away.

For freshman composition I had Professor Morris Dickstein. He went on to a long and distinguished career at the CUNY Graduate Center. I recently read his memoir which unfortunately was exceedingly long and exceedingly boring. I was expecting, or hoping, to find at least a mention of myself as one of his most memorable Columbia students...but sorry to say, there was nothing. Not even a footnote! Nada. Likewise, not a word about Stanley Lehr, who was also in the class and was a much more talented writer than myself. Stanley's older sister, Cynthia, became a radiologist. By coincidence, she later became the second wife of my father-in-law, Sam Janus.

So much for the junior faculty. For pre-med physics, I had Professor Leon Lederman, a Nobel prize winner and Columbia celebrity. However, even he couldn't make Einstein's Theory of Relativity understandable to me. Since I avoided literature courses like the plague—no time to read all those thick books—I spent four years at Columbia without ever seeing or meeting professors Lionel Trilling or Jacques Barzun.

For "Yiddish Literature in Translation," I had Professor Curt Leviant, a well-known translator of Yiddish books but a rather colorless teacher. Interestingly, a generation later, my son Yossi took a course with him at YIVO and renewed our relationship. Much more dynamic was Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg who lectured on the history of Zionism. I also got a glimpse of the prominent Jewish historian, Salo Baron, by that time quite elderly, at a Jewish studies conference.

Occasionally, prominent professors and politicians made their appearance on campus. I went to a packed lecture by the renowned French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss. I loved reading his book, *Triste Tropiques*, and looked forward to hearing him speak in person. However, the lecture was a big disappointment. The auditorium was boiling hot, I could barely hear a word he said and with his heavy French accent it was impossible to decipher his speech.

On another occasion, the long-time prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kwan Yew, came to speak on campus. There was a buzz among the students about his appearance due to student opposition to his authoritarian rule. I can't recall if I actually attended his talk, but I felt that Columbia was an important destination for politicians and dignitaries.

I usually went home for Shabbos, but from time to time I would stay on campus. I'm glad I did. One Friday night, word spread in *shul* that after Shabbos there will be a *melave malka* at a certain off-campus apartment and *Shlomo will be coming!* I went and joined about 20 students sitting on the floor munching *nosh* by candlelight. After a long while, the mystery guest arrived carrying his guitar. It was none other than Shlomo Carlebach, the renown Hasidic folksinger. I was excited to meet him in person for the first time. He entertained us with his repertoire of heart-felt, soulful songs and encouraged the crowd to join in. Starting as a barely audible wordless melody, like an angelic hum, the music built up in intensity until we all were singing "*Am Yisroel Chai*" together, as loud as we could. It was a fabulous evening.

The Columbia Jewish Office organized an annual lecture by a prominent Jewish personality which was always well attended by both students and faculty. Rabbi Meir Kahane *hy"d* was scheduled to be the next speaker. Since he was controversial and always in the news, I was very interested in hearing what he had to say. I wasn't disappointed. Rabbi Kahane's fiery speech laid out a clear plan to ensure the security of Eretz Yisroel. With supreme confidence, he declared, "The land belongs to the Jewish people. It is our inheritance since G-d gave it to our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." He adamantly insisted that every obstacle must be overcome without hesitation. The audience was inspired, as was I.

As a college student, I didn't have much use for textbooks because I relied on my class notes. Out of curiosity, I once visited the campus book store. I was impressed that you could buy used text books at a 50% discount and then sell them back to the book store after the course for 25%. But even that proved to be too costly since I didn't have time to open the books, even if I had purchased them. I continued relying on class notes all through college and medical school with only the occasional purchase of a few paperback handbooks.

As strange as it may seem, I did not plan my course of study at Columbia well, or at all, for that matter. I came to Columbia with credit for two or three advanced placement courses taken

in high school. I also had credit for the summer course in biology that I took at Cornell University. In order to get the maximum use of the fixed rate of Columbia tuition, I usually took nineteen credits each semester, since the extra course was included without additional charge. I made sure I took all my pre-med requirements.

At the end of my junior year, I decided to add up my credits. These totaled 117, just three points short of graduation! But what could I do? Applications for medical school had to be submitted a year in advance. I had no choice but to complete my senior year in Columbia, during which I took whatever electives appealed to me. By the time of graduation, I wound up taking a total of seven art history courses, a course on opera with the composer Jack Beeson, and several Jewish studies courses. It actually was a lot of fun.

I didn't need to work during my college years because my parents paid the expenses not covered by my New York State Regents Scholarship and my Columbia scholarship. Besides, the on-campus jobs paid very little and would have taken away time from studying and activities. One of my new activities was bird-watching. In my sophomore year, my roommate was Tom Love, a pure soul from the West Coast. His passion was bird-watching and he was determined to make the most of his Columbia years by seeking out birds of the East to add to his lifetime bird sighting checklist. He also kept a list of birds he spotted every day. I was happy to accompany Tom to the "Ramble" in Central Park and to the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Sanctuary to search the tree-tops and shoreline with binoculars for migratory and shore birds.

Sometimes, we didn't have to travel so far. One night, as we were chatting in our dorm room, Tom's ears suddenly perked up and he turned to the window. Sure enough, there in the moonlight was a "V" of Canada geese, flying overhead, honking softly.

We also took trips to the Pine Barrens Swamp in New Jersey and even drove all the way to Key West, Florida during our spring break. That was a story! First, we dropped off a classmate at his home in Columbia, South Carolina and slept over at his house. That was the first, and only, time I stayed in an African-American home. His mother was very kind to us and served us "grits" for breakfast. The house itself was small and simple, but comfortable.

The next day we arrived in downtown Miami. Tom's bird watching guidebook said to look for a lost South American bird that lived in a tree outside the library. So, at about 6 AM we began

walking around looking up in the trees with our binoculars. For some reason, this aroused the suspicion of the police who wanted to know what was going on. We simply explained about the exotic South American bird. We looked up at the treetop and there it was! Tom pointed it out to the policemen with well-deserved satisfaction. We proceeded to the Everglades for two days of intensive bird watching and then pushed on to Key West.

As we drove through the Florida Keys we came to an enormous swampy pond along the side of the road. Of course, we had to pull over to search the mud and reeds for migrating birds. We quickly hopped out of the car and set up two telescopes on tripods, not noticing the U.S. Air Force jets parked on the runway in the distance. Soon enough, a military jeep started making its way around the swamp and slowly came to a halt right next to us. Two MPs got out and asked, “Hey guys, watcha lookin’ at?” They didn’t buy our story about driving all the way from New York City to add the sighting of some rare migrating shorebirds to our lifetime bird list. We were promptly informed that this location is a “Restricted Area” for authorized Air Force personnel only. We were “off-limits” and ordered to “move on.” I guess it wasn’t worth taking a chance on being charged as communist nuclear spies. We didn’t have any extra time to spend in Key West so we said goodbye to the monument marking the southernmost point in the United States and turned around for the long drive home.

I began this discussion by saying I didn’t need to work in order to pay for college. But in 1970, an opportunity arose which was too good to pass up. It was time for the United States Census, mandated every ten years by the Constitution. Duty called and I volunteered, for pay. I worked as an enumerator, that is, a person who goes door-to-door locating people and filling out forms. To get the job, I first had to attend an orientation meeting in a loft in Manhattan. The recruiter explained that the first paycheck would arrive after six weeks. At that, half the applicants walked out. That surprised me, but not as much as his next statement. “We need enumerators and supervisors.” He proceeded to pick “You, you, and you” to be supervisors, selecting them at random from the same pool of workers. I was a little disappointed that I wasn’t chosen, since the supervisors got paid at a slightly higher hourly rate. But, as you will soon see, it was just as well.

When I reported for duty a few days later, I was given lots of forms with lots of blank spaces to fill out and a list of addresses to visit. My territory was a posh swath of the Upper East Side of Manhattan in the 60’s. I soon realized that most people were not home during the day.

Worse than that, many people did not want to answer questions or even open their doors. I'd say, "I'm from the United States Census. I'd like to ask you a few short questions." The answer would come back through the door, "Not interested!" And citing the law or the Constitution didn't help, either. This stand-off posed a problem because only completed forms would be paid. Whereas, the other enumerators complained to the office that they couldn't answer this or that question, I had other ideas. I had no need for exceptions or allowances, since my forms were always complete with every blank space filled in and every box checked. I was a veritable "Sherlock Holmes" pursuing every lead to ferret out the necessary information. When needed, I would return to the same address over and over hoping to catch the occupant at home. Sometimes, I had to get information from neighbors and the building superintendent. I did not allow any resident on my route, whether citizen or alien, to go uncounted. My outstanding meritorious service to the country earned me a letter of commendation from President Lyndon B. Johnson.

There were other rewards, as well. I met some really friendly and hospitable New Yorkers. Perhaps they were simply lonely and were glad to have someone to talk to. Some people invited me to join them for dinner or a beer. However, I could not linger at any one location because time was of the essence. I discovered that the two hours from 5:30 to 7:30 PM were "golden." People were home from work by then and they were less suspicious and fearful because there was still daylight. My patriotic duty and paycheck depended on using those two hours the most productively to reach as many people as I could. It turned out that by working as an enumerator, I made as much (or more) income in two hours as I would have made in a whole day as a census supervisor or at a different job.



My four years at Columbia provided many opportunities for intellectual stimulation and personal growth. One of the unanticipated benefits of Columbia was getting to meet other *frum* students my age.

My Foundation in Science

Immediately after graduation from high school, I had the good fortune to attend a special program sponsored by the National Science Foundation at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California. My sister Philippa brought this opportunity to my attention. She had spent two summers at NSF sponsored science programs a number of years before. At her suggestion, I wrote to the NSF in Washington, D.C. and asked them to send me the booklet listing the various programs. I waited and waited for it to arrive. Ironically, by the time it came the application deadline for some of the programs had already passed! Of course, in 1968 this was long before there were personal computers and the internet. It took additional time to send letters to each program I was considering and wait for their bulletin and application to arrive, again by “snail-mail.”

While each program was set up somewhat differently, each one offered an opportunity to assist in conducting basic science research. Some programs involved laboratory work and others called for outside fieldwork. I chose the latter since I missed the “great outdoors” which I had experienced at Camp Alvord. The program at Scripps was located smack in the middle of the most glorious natural surroundings imaginable. Magnificent sun-drenched cliffs lead down to the handsome campus buildings nestled on the Pacific shoreline. The weather is always clear and the temperature stays in the 70’s all year round. The students stayed in the dormitories of the University of California San Diego which were nearby.

I worked with a graduate student studying the ecology of the marine snail, *Ocenebra poulsoni*. My mentor collected the snails among the rocks in the shallow water at low-tide. He kept track of them by gluing tiny labels on their shells. Then he released them back into the tide-pools and followed their growth and distribution over time. He also kept some snails growing in salt-water tanks in his laboratory.

In addition to our individual projects the summer program offered a series of lectures on oceanography and marine biology. We took frequent bus trips to interesting and unusual locations such as Torrey Pines State Park, Joshua Tree National Park, Palm Springs, and Baja California. Our group of about 40 students came from many cities and states, but we all shared

an enthusiasm for exploring natural phenomena. Besides, we had a lot of fun hanging out with each other.

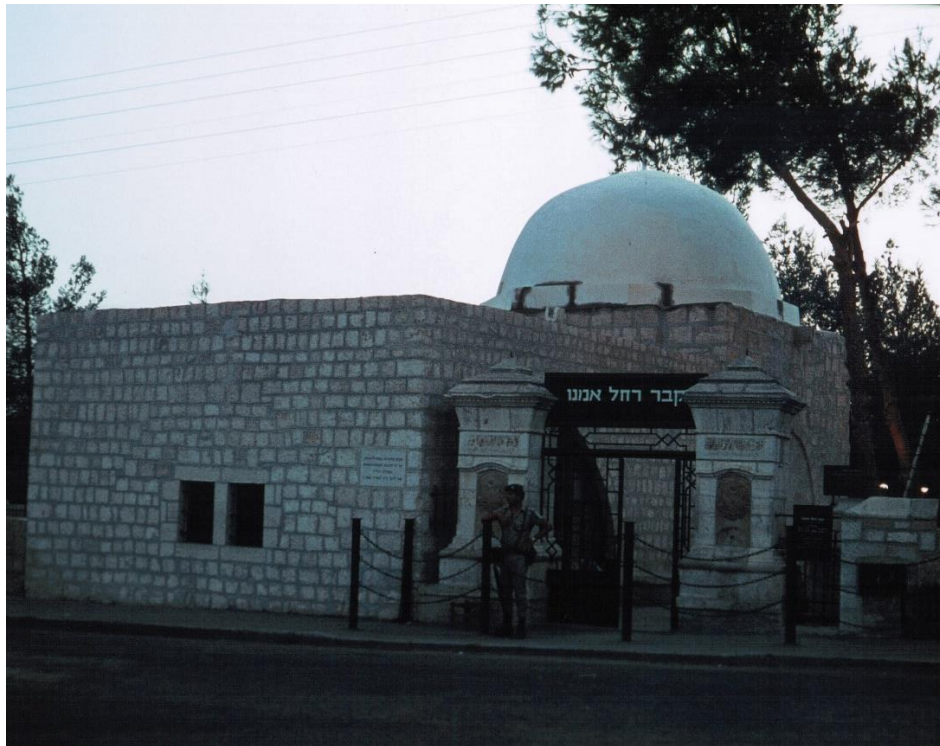
The next summer, I spent at the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory located in Solomons, Maryland. This little outpost consisted of a small cluster of low buildings on the shore of Chesapeake Bay. Again, the program attracted a lively bunch of college students. We didn't have many formal lectures, but we had many opportunities to get out on the bay hiking, swimming, and boating. For my project, I learned to prepare microscope slides of cells from local fish. I photographed their chromosomes during cell division.

The students also enjoyed playing volleyball, making barbeques, going to drive-in movies, and attending local events such as a Blue Angels air show. One memorable night, we drove to a nearby village called Scientists Cliffs and sat on the beach. In a remarkable display of nature, the hillside behind us was lit up with thousands upon thousands of fireflies blinking on-and-off. In front of us, under a starry sky, each breaking wavelet was lit up by bioluminescent algae that glowed in the water. We feasted our eyes on this spectacular light show, unique to this location.

A year later, I went to the University of Connecticut in Storrs. I was a little older and a little more experienced by then so I was able to work more on my own. My mentor was Professor Frederic Streams, an ecologist. In short, I studied the habitat of a group of water-bugs known as backswimmers. As you would imagine, they swim around in lakes and ponds on their backs. Scientifically, they are known as the genus *Notonecta*. It is an axiom of ecology that each species is adapted to its own unique habitat. Therefore, by carefully measuring the parameters of the various locations where the five species of backswimmers were found, I worked out the description of the preferred habitat of each species.

My project involved a lot of driving around the surrounding fields and farms to collect the bugs in nets and bring them back to the laboratory for identification. Fortunately, the school assigned a work-study student who drove me around since I still didn't have my license. Dr. Streams helped me write up my final report which was later published in the University of Connecticut Occasional Papers.

I was attracted to these summer activities because of my interest in biological research. I was especially fascinated by ecology and considered making it my career. But Philippa convinced me that medicine would be more practical and also offers opportunities for research, if I was so inclined. So I said goodbye to the lakes, mountains, and seashores in exotic locations and resumed my previous persona as a city-boy. Since then, I have limited my outdoor investigations to digging in the familiar confines of our backyard.



Rachel's Tomb is an important landmark in Israel. The top view is from an antique postcard from "Palestine" in my collection. I took the lower photo on my trip to Israel. At present, the familiar traditional tomb is hidden behind a security wall.

Taking on Shabbos in Jerusalem

When I returned to shul this afternoon for Shabbos *mincha*, I got to talking with a nine-year-old boy from a bilingual Israeli family. He was very eager to tell me that he made a deal with Carlos, the Mexican worker who cleans the shul. The janitor would teach him a few words in Spanish and in return the boy would teach him some Hebrew. When it came the boy's turn to teach, he instructed Carlos, "When I say '*Mah shlomcha?*' you answer '*Barooch Hashem!*' **in English!!**" The boy could hardly contain himself to finish the story before he burst out into laughter.

Seriously though, the connection between the Jewish people, the Hebrew language, and Eretz Yisroel and the wider world is very, very, strong, even if it is alluded to in jest. This little conversation, in the year 2020, brings to mind my travels in Israel, which took place long before this boy, and probably his father, were born.

My first trip to Israel was during the summer of 1968 when I traveled with my high school classmate, Oded Kolker, a native Israeli. We got off to an exciting start, flying to Israel on a crowded student charter. When the coast of Israel appeared in the distance, the passengers burst into lively Jewish and Israeli songs. They continued singing until we landed in the blazing sunshine. The airport runways were surrounded by rows of golden sunflowers, one of my favorite flowers. During the month we spent in Israel, we traveled back and forth across the country visiting his many relatives. We enjoyed their company, meals, and hospitality. Our arrival often came as a surprise to them since we usually appeared at their doorstep unannounced. Oded would quickly tell them in Hebrew that he was Zahava's son and then there would be flash of recognition on the part of his relatives. Since they hadn't seen him in perhaps ten years, he had grown up in the meantime. A typical reaction was, "*Gadalnu!*" "My how you've grown!"

We managed to take in many of the famous landmarks in Israel from the haunting caves at Rosh Hanikra in the north, to the ruins of Masada on the shores of the Dead Sea, to the starkly beautiful beach at Eilat. Oded didn't have any relatives in Eilat so we decided to sleep on the beach. We had an excellent view of the moon, rising and tracing its path across the sky. But the daytime heat was brutal, reaching 112 degrees.

Some of the funny things that happened to us had to do with food. For instance, when we visited his cousins in Tel Aviv, they were planning a vacation trip to a kibbutz. The parents told the two young children that life on the kibbutz was very different from life in the big city. The children were instructed to enjoy the beauty of nature, the outdoor activities, and the chance to meet new friends. They were told not complain about the hardships of temporarily sharing in the pioneering lifestyle. For example, they should not expect luxuries—such as ketchup. Several weeks later we revisited this family after their sojourn on the kibbutz. Guess what? They even had ketchup on the kibbutz!

I, myself, enjoyed typical Israeli foods such as falafel, ice cream pops, and grapefruit-flavored soda. One thing caught me by surprise. One of Oded's relatives put out a plate of pickled peppers. Unsuspecting, I bit into one and was shocked by the intense burning sensation coming from this tiny drab green object. Since then I've been super cautious to avoid hot peppers!

We decided to climb Masada at sunrise. This was before the tramway was built. We slept outside on the ground the night before. Or, at least we tried to sleep as we found the bare rock rather uncomfortable. I took off my shoes, lay down, and closed my eyes. Sometime during the night, someone, perhaps a backpacker less well out-fitted than myself, tried to walk off with my shoes. Fortunately, I was able to retrieve them. It would have been nearly impossible to walk up the snake trail (or anywhere else) without them.

After Masada, we caught a bus to Be'er Sheva where we had to change buses. We found a barber shop in the bus station and decided to get long overdue haircuts. Unfortunately, by the time we finished with the haircuts, we had missed our bus. Somehow, we made it to our next destination by a combination of bus rides and hitch-hiking. We arrived late and not as presentable as we had hoped. We didn't consider what had happened to our appearance as we trekked several days in the heat of the desert. Our only chance to freshen up had been a dip in a murky pool at Ein Gedi. When we got to his cousin's house on a moshav in the Negev, the *balabusta* took one look at the dust caked onto us from head to toe and ordered us to take showers before sitting down to dinner.

After a thorough cleansing and changing into fresh clothes, we enjoyed dinner in their small cottage and slept over. Oded and I pushed on the next morning because we had many towns and relatives to visit and travel by public transportation and hitch-hiking was rather slow.

The trip to Israel with my friend Oded was taken in the heat of summer. My second trip to Israel was in middle of the winter when I went with a group of college students, sponsored by the Jewish Agency for Israel. Rabbi Charles Sheer, the Jewish chaplain at Columbia University, invited me to join the group. We left from John F. Kennedy Airport. We were on the plane already when they discovered some mechanical problem. The plane returned to the terminal and then they told us that they needed a replacement part to come from Seattle. We would have to stay over in a hotel near the airport and leave the next day. Naturally, I was a little disappointed because we would lose one day from the ten-day trip. But they made it up to us as best they could by bringing in catered meals and a series of interesting speakers who told us about the development of the Jewish settlement of Israel and the tremendous volunteer effort that helped in founding the state of Israel.

On this trip, we were taken to more institutional-type locations such as old age homes, an air force base, and an army outpost in the Golan. Our tour leaders advised us to be inquisitive and speak to as many Israelis as we could and ask them about themselves, their families, their birthplace, etc. Naturally, since it was winter, the weather was cold, damp, and rainy much of the time which was so different from the parched heat on my first trip. We stayed in fancy hotels such as Shalom Tower in Tel Aviv and the Intercontinental Hotel on Har Hazasim in Jerusalem. I took many pictures, trying to capture the essence of the Israel experience. Then back to New York and the beginning of the spring semester at school.

My third trip to Israel had the most profound and lasting effect on me. During the summer after my junior year in college, I served as a volunteer at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. I was part of a group of approximately forty college students from the United States. Each of us was assigned a different location in the hospital. I had the privilege of working in Internal Medicine Clinic Number Three (*Pnimit Gimmel*) under the direction of Professor Eli Davis, a master clinician and researcher. He originally came from England and maintained the manner and dignity of his native country. Professor Davis was a pioneer in providing advanced medical care in Israel and had been working at the hospital since the creation of the state in 1948. Years ago, he served as the director of the Hadassah Medical Organization. His special interest is in observing the microcirculation under the microscope. This can be seen in the tiny capillaries surrounding the

nails. He published a book about this and demonstrated that many conditions such as diabetes can be diagnosed by changes in these tiny blood vessels.

Most importantly, Professor Davis taught me how to conduct myself as a doctor. He had a genuine concern for the patients and impressed upon me that it is the physician's responsibility to make each patient feel that his visit was worthwhile, no matter how far he traveled, how much it cost, or how long he had to wait. And the outpatients at Hadassah certainly did wait. Satisfying the patient's expectations was a challenge due to the system for delivery of care. Our clinic opened at 8 AM and quickly filled with 50 to 100 patients. There were no appointments. The patients sat quietly waiting until they were called in turn, some in the morning, and the rest after lunch. And yet, I did not hear any complaints. The patients, young and old, Jews and Arabs, were grateful to see Professor Davis or one of his devoted staff.

Professor Davis was not strictly orthodox and his observance was limited by some gaps in his knowledge of *halacha*. He kept a *yarmulke* in his desk drawer. Every day his nurse would bring him a cup of tea and he would put on the *yarmulke* and make a *brocha*. He once invited me for a Shabbos meal in his house. It was lovely. He even insisted on pouring water over the guests' hands for *hamotzi*. I did wonder why he used an oriental style brass pitcher with a long, narrow spout. I thought you had to wash from a cup. After he collected the water in a basin, he went outside and poured the water into the garden. Remember, Israel is in a desert and Professor Davis did not want to waste a drop of water.

On Friday afternoons, Professor Davis invited me to join him with his elderly but vigorous friends for a weekly hike through the hills surrounding Jerusalem. We would meet at the central bus station and take a bus to the middle of nowhere. Then we proceeded to trek up and down the dry, dusty hills for several hours. Professor Davis would point out historical landmarks such as the location of ancient city of Beitar and stop at tiny springs that came out of crevices in the rock. He also pointed out natural history items which I eagerly collected and brought back to New York. These included long, pointy, porcupine quills, ancient fossils of undersea creatures, and even baseball sized rocks that just might have been used as weapons by primitive men. Each trip would end at an abandoned vineyard or orchard and the group would miraculously take out shopping bags and fill them with free grapes, plums, or peaches.

It is interesting to note that now, over 50 years later, a team of Israeli scientists searched the countryside for “feral,” that is, wild, grapes. They sampled 800 varieties and selected six that were most promising, three reds and three whites. They plan to propagate them in hopes of rediscovering the ancient varieties grown in Eretz Yisroel thousands of years ago. This is not merely an historical hobby. It is likely that these grapes will grow well in the local climate and soil and therefore will be useful to the Israeli wine industry.

When we were ready to return home, a bus would appear on the road and we would all get on and ride back to the station. Professor Davis was also creative. He wrote two novels drawn from his experiences providing medical care in Israel. In addition, he and his wife wrote two illustrated books on Jewish art and traditional Jewish hats.

But as I said, this trip had a lasting influence on me. Not just because I learned how to draw blood samples from the unsuspecting patients who were told that I was an expert doctor from America. Of course, I was still in college and wouldn't start medical school for another year. And not just because I discovered *babaganoush* (eggplant spread) which was prepared in enormous quantities in the hospital's cafeteria. The big change that took place in my life was keeping Shabbos in Jerusalem. Our group of volunteers were housed in an old stone house on Rechov Ethiopia near Meah Shearim. The boys stayed downstairs and the girls stayed upstairs. In the evening, we sat outside on the *mirpeset* (porch) overlooking the courtyard with a view of old Jerusalem in the distance.

But don't think it was so easy to join the *frum* members of our group of volunteers. The girls were gracious and hospitable, but I was still too shy to get to know them. The boys, however, were another story. They were suspicious of me and acted as though I was trespassing on their territory. For example, on the first Friday night I invited myself to join the group—boys and girls—in the middle of the Shabbos meal in our house. When I saw them sit down to eat, everything looked so tempting: the *gefilte* fish, the roast chicken, and the potato *kugel*. I hadn't helped pay for or set up the meal. I would have done so but I didn't know they were planning it. That was my first mistake. So, I got some dirty looks from the boys—all *snags*, obviously. Whether they were a little jealous of me, or didn't want me eating their kugel, or whatever, they turned on me. The situation quickly went from bad to worse. When we started to *bentch*, I became the focus of a *halachic* argument which caused more embarrassment. One genius pounced on me and asked, “How can

you *bentch* if you didn't wash?" So, we started *bentching*. Then they wanted to know, "How do you even know how to *bentch*?" (Secret: I learned how to recite the *bentching* the summer I spent at Camp Ramah.) At that moment, I definitely felt like an outsider. After that experience, I was careful to contribute towards the Shabbos meals the following weeks. For the rest of the summer we continued to make communal Shabbos meals together. As time went on, I began to feel more comfortable with the other volunteers and I enjoyed the wonderful atmosphere and beautiful *zmiros*.

This incident brings to mind another doozy which occurred a year or two previously. When I was 16, I spent a month traveling alone through Europe. I wound up in Lucerne, Switzerland for Shabbos. I was sleeping in a crummy youth hostel and decided to try my luck Shabbos morning at the main synagogue in town. I kept to myself and didn't speak to anybody. When the service was over and the people started to leave, I was afraid that I had missed my chance for a Shabbos meal. Then I saw two or three American boys walk out with a *balabus*. I followed them. Down the block. Around the corner. The *balabus* didn't realize or didn't care that he had picked up a stray kitten. But the boys sure did. "Get lost! Where do you think you're going?" they snarled.

Soon we came to our destination. While climbing the three or four flights of stairs in the apartment building, I thought, "Just make it in the front door—and I'll be safe!" Luckily, I slipped in. By then, the boys stopped their protests and I ignored their stares. The Swiss couple, along with their young children, were friendly and gracious. Since *shul* had started at 8 am, it was over by 10. Now we sat down for coffee and *mezonos*, home baked. The wife cut enormous pieces, actually one quarter of a circular cake for each of us. When she offered me coffee, I said that I would rather have tea. Suddenly, she got a look of concern on her face. "Don't you feel well?" she asked. "I'm fine. I'm okay." I answered. Then she explained, "We only drink tea when someone is sick." After this snack she sent us out for a walk. "Come back in an hour for the *fleishig* (meat) lunch."

I also remember a funny incident that happened when I was in Jerusalem. I hadn't brought any soap or shampoo with me, so I used the coarse brown soap that was provided in our dormitory. I used it both to shower and to shampoo. Using it as soap wasn't really a problem. But as the summer went on, my hair became as stiff as the bristles on an industrial broom. Even touching my hair would cause a sharp pinch on my scalp. I was really wondering what was happening. I thought maybe there was a problem with the water. At any rate, towards the end of the summer, some of

the girls went home **and left their bottles of American shampoo behind!** I liberated one of them and guess what? A miracle! After one shower, I got my soft natural hair back.

Since my Hebrew was limited, I didn't catch much of the conversations of the Israelis around me. I did pay attention to the hourly news that was broadcast seemingly all over, including the city buses. Suddenly, a hush of silence would come over the passengers and very solemn words would be proclaimed over the loudspeaker. "*Hashaa shmona... v'ze hachadashot...*" After that, I was lost. Another bit of Hebrew that I picked up was when we visited the apartment of a pharmacologist at the hospital who came from England. He had a running dispute with his three-year-old daughter. He wanted her to speak English to him, not Hebrew. He would speak to her in English and she would answer in Hebrew. Finally, exasperated, he ordered her to answer him in English. She looked up at him with her big eyes and said, "*Aval, Abba, ani midaberet anglit kol ha-zman!*" She actually thought that she was speaking English all the time. It just happened to come out in Hebrew! Then, he made tuna fish for lunch. He opened the can and planned to mix it with chopped celery or hardboiled egg. This same *pitzaleh* saw what he was doing and called out, "*Abba, ani rotzah rak et habasar!*" In Israel, beef, and even chicken, were very expensive and served infrequently. For this little one, tuna was the closest thing to meat.

Also, on this trip I took an Egged bus tour of Sinai. At that time, Sinai was under Israeli control and open for tourists. We had an air-conditioned bus, running cold water, and an armed soldier aboard. We were warned to stay on the roads because of possible land mines hidden in the countryside. We drove through Sharm El Shaikh which was famous because of a popular Israeli song about it. But we continued on to our destination, Santa Katarina, the monastery at the foot of the supposed Mt. Sinai. There we ate supper on glass plates and slept for a few hours so that we could start our ascent up the mountain before dawn. We followed a long, narrow path cut into the stone with many well-worn steps. We arrived at the top at sunrise just in time to *daven Shacharis*. The view was magnificent with many jagged, orange peaks in a desolate landscape.

Back in the courtyard at Santa Katarina, the tour guide showed us a large thorn bush that was growing in a corner. This was identified as the burning bush of Moses. You get the idea. Although we do not follow the traditions of the Muslims and Christians, and we don't know the geographic location of Har Sinai, the scenery was still very impressive. We miss it all the more so, now that Israel has given it back to Egypt. As we drove back to Israel proper, we made a few stops.

Once we came to a tiny oasis with a few palm trees and visited a little shack in the middle of nowhere. Remarkably, the Bedouin man who lived there had some ripe melons tied up with string hanging from the ceiling. They looked so delicious. The Arab was hospitable to us—but we didn't get a taste of the melons.

When I think back about the many individuals that I met in Israel, I know that there were real, modern-day heroes among them. Every time I saw a teenage female soldier schlepping around an impossibly long rifle I was moved. At our clinic at Hadassah Hospital there was a senior nurse whose husband had been killed in a terrorist bombing of a Swiss-Air flight, yet she kept working day after day, seemingly without complaint. On our tour of the border in the Golan we met young soldiers who were stationed in a tiny fort, freezing in the winter and burning hot in the summer. Besides lacking any kind of air-conditioning or showers, there wasn't much opportunity for entertainment. But they didn't complain. Back in Jerusalem, a young man, fasting on *Tisha B'Av*, came to the *Kosel* to *daven*. He fainted in the hot sun. That is *mesiras nefesh*. Professor Davis was a role model for me for his devoted service, patiently providing medical care for many decades under difficult circumstances. Not only didn't he complain, but it wouldn't even occur to him that he had anything to complain about!

Yes, I was inspired by many of the extraordinary people I met in Israel. But there was one place, a *makom kodesh*, that comes to my mind first and foremost when I think about Israel. That is the *Kosel*, the Western Wall of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Perhaps you can hear the majestic stones speaking to you. I know I can hear them. This was the place that connected the Jewish people with G-d in a physical and spiritual way. And it still does. Generation after generation of Jews have made their way here, often at great personal sacrifice, to renew this bond. Each note (*kvittel*) stuffed in between the stones is a small thread that join together to make an everlasting connection to the Almighty. As the story goes, each prayer is only a local call from here.

When I came home from Israel, I decided to keep observing Shabbos. Just because I wasn't in Jerusalem anymore didn't mean that Shabbos was any less important and holy. I started going to Kingsway Jewish Center on Shabbos which was near Bubby Ruth's house in Brooklyn. Grandpa Joe would make Kiddush Friday night and we would then eat together.

I also decided to start *davening* and putting on *tefillin* every day. My target date for kick-off was *Rosh Chodesh Nisan* because at least you didn't have to say *Tachanun* in Nisan. But I needed *tefillin*. I had inherited an old pair from my father—or grandfather?—but certainly they were *posul* (invalid) by now. Later, this was confirmed when I had them opened by a *sofer* (scribe). The hand-written letters had faded from solid black to light purple.

To replace my father's *tefillin*, I went shopping one night after class at a Judaica store on the Upper West Side. It was one flight up and deserted except for the owner. The impression I got was a little creepy, to say the least. Everything was old and dusty, including the crumpled shopkeeper. I explained to him that I came to buy *tefillin*. "No problem," he said. He led me to a small glass display case with five or six small pairs of *tefillin* inside. Each had a price tag dangling on a string. He carefully took them out one at a time. "Eleven dollars." He shook his head. Then he picked up the next one. "Fourteen dollars." Again, he shook his head. This was repeated several more times until he came to a suitable pair. "Nineteen dollars!" This was the one for me. It had a shiny black finish and looked almost new. It couldn't have been worn more than a couple of times. Perhaps, it had been returned by an unmotivated bar mitzva boy, but at least it was from this generation and this continent.

Let me share with you an interesting *vort* I heard from a rabbi in Crown Heights. He began, "My father gave me *tefillin* in a velvet bag closed with a drawstring. I gave my son *tefillin* in a velvet bag with a zipper. The *tefillin* inside hasn't changed just as all the other *mitzvos* haven't changed. But the presentation has to be appropriate and up-to-date, customized to each generation." My new *tefillin* also came in a velvet bag with a zipper. This was the style at that time. Now, 50 years later, styles have changed again. Every bar mitzva boy in Crown Heights is given a *leather tefillin* bag, usually made in exotic materials and colors. But the *tefillin* inside and their spiritual significance haven't changed since the time of Moshe Rabbenu.

My visits to Israel did indeed leave a lasting impression on me. I tried to bring some of the spirit and inspiration from the Holy Land to America. As the Rebbe said, "*Mach da Eretz Yisroel...* Create the Land of Israel *here!*" B"H, we have our family, our home, our Shabbos table, and our tiny "*gan*," our little slice of *Gan Eden*, when you come to think of it. Mommy and I have *nachas* from our children and grandchildren and enjoy their company more than anything in the world.



The Rebbe used all his powers of persuasion to strengthen the Jewish presence in Crown Heights. The Chevra organization was formed to help provide housing for Lubavitchers. The Rebbe promised many *brochas* for everyone who contributed by joining the organization. I bought a share while I was in Boston unaware, of course, that after we got married we would buy our house on Crown Street through Chevra.

Reflections on Working in Medicine

Over forty years have passed since I met Professor Davis, but his advice has stayed with me. As a dermatologist, I try to make sure each visit seems worthwhile. There are many challenges, both old and new. Medical care has become more impersonal with patients selecting physicians based on insurance coverage and ZIP codes rather than quality and recommendations. As a doctor, I need a larger support staff, such as a secretary, office manager, geek squad, etc., As one of the few of my classmates engaged primarily with patient care (98% practice plus 2% storytelling) I hope to stay in practice for a long time. My devoted children have long shopping lists— from computers to minivans, from orthodontics to tuition, not to mention airline tickets around the world. Clearly, this does not auger well for my retirement. As long as the *Aibishter* gives me the strength, I plan to keep on working.

Sometimes I chuckle when I take a history from patients. They seem to have their wealth hidden in their “gold” bladder and “silver”-dene (Silvadene) cream. They find little value in their brush with poison “ivory.” Perhaps the many years of turmoil around the world has affected them. Consequently, I have begun to practice military dermatology. The patients have a lot of “commodores.” (I assume they meant comedones.) One patient wrote that he had a wart on his “naval” (you guessed it!) A lady reported that her son had chicken “pops.” A patient with a sprained ankle said she had to walk on “stitches” (crutches). Another patient was worried because of all the “Amtrak” (anthrax) getting around.

How I Got to Harvard

At the beginning of my senior year in college, I applied to five medical schools: Columbia Physicians & Surgeons, Cornell, Penn, Einstein, and Downstate. These were all desirable and competitive schools, but I assumed that with my grades, I would get accepted to at least one. I was able to compare my standing with other medical school applicants by my high score on the New York State Regents medical school scholarship exam. My name appeared in tiny print in a New York Times article listing top scorers, along with my classmate Paul Appelbaum. The Columbia College Dean assigned each pre-med student to an advisor. The advisor played a critical role in the application process because he wrote the all-important recommendation letter from the college based on the faculty references submitted for each student. The last sentence of the letter contained the key code word: very good, excellent, outstanding, etc. And it had to be “outstanding” if you planned to get into any school on your list. As luck would have it, I was assigned to a complete stranger, Professor John Maguire, *the Chairman of the Department of Slavic Languages!* Professor Maguire? Who was he? And what did he know about applying to medical school?

With a heavy heart, I kept my appointment to meet him. He looked over my record and asked me which schools I was applying to. Then he uttered the fateful words, “I would suggest you also apply to Yale and Harvard.” The meeting was over. What could I do? What choice did I have? I needed his support, even if applying to Yale and Harvard would be a waste of time and money. In due time, I traveled to New Haven for the Yale interview. I stayed at the home of a Lubavitcher the night before the interview and davened with the Lubavitch minyan early the next morning. The interview went smoothly, but the end result was predictable—I was rejected.

Now on to Harvard. It was my first time in Boston. I was very nervous. I had heard horror stories about the Harvard Medical School interview and was on the lookout for mean tricks meant to challenge and unnerve me. Perhaps the interviewer would ask me to write something on the blackboard and hand me a piece of fake “chalk.” However, it would really be a small cylindrical piece of wood painted white. It would squeak across the blackboard, but of course, it wouldn’t write! The interviewer would carefully note my reaction as a test of my ability to deal with unexpected difficulties. Or perhaps he would suggest I open the window to let in some fresh air. But the window would be screwed shut in a hidden way. As I said, I was ready for these challenges.

What actually happened was altogether different and the mirror image of my previous interview at Columbia P&S. At Columbia, the interviewing doctor opined, “Mr. Newfield, I see you were born and raised in New York. And went to college in New York. I think it’s time to move on, get away, broaden your horizons and go to medical school somewhere else.” *Hint: You were just rejected.* Now at Harvard, I couldn’t believe my ears... “You were born in New York. You went to college in New York. You are comfortable in New York. I think you should stay in New York for medical school!” I was crestfallen and *schlepped* back home disappointed. My suspicion was confirmed. Professor Maguire didn’t know a thing about applying to medical school!

In the spring, I was accepted by Cornell University Medical College. I sent in my deposit and looked forward to cashing in on my New York State Regents Scholarship. I bought a secondhand refrigerator on my last day at Columbia from a student moving out of the dorm so I could store my own kosher food the next year in the Cornell dormitory. The refrigerator was large enough for a family and kept the contents cold but it had other problems. Because the catch was broken, it did not stay closed by itself. There was a chain of rubber bands drawn across the front of the refrigerator and secured with a “key” from a sardine can stuck into the grille on the back. I called Bubby Ruth and told her that I had just bought a used refrigerator for five dollars. Without hesitation, she immediately advised me to get rid of it. She wondered how I would ever get it home from Columbia and then up to Cornell. So, I had to sell it right away, the same day. Fortunately, I got ten dollars for it, as is.

That summer I had a job as a “computer specialist” with the United States Department of Labor in an office 45 floors above Times Square in Manhattan. The job paid better than the usual summer employment obtained by most college students. I didn’t dare tell the supervisor that I was leaving to start medical school after the summer, lest I be considered unreliable and overqualified for the job. As it turned out, there was literally nothing for me to do except look out the window at the cruise ships slowly coming and going on the Hudson River. The computer, if there was one, was somewhere in Washington, DC. My only responsibility was to call in a few numbers to someone in headquarters on the last day of each month.

One day, I came home from work and Bubby Ruth handed me a letter. It was from Harvard. Pretty thick. I examined the envelope carefully, slowly turning it over and over and around and around. I wondered what... was... going... on. It turned out to be quite a surprise. I was accepted

from the waiting list, but accepted nevertheless. When I recovered from the shock, I began to make new plans for the next four years.

It wasn't so hard to forfeit my \$100 deposit at Cornell, but I was saddened to give up my New York State Regents Scholarship which could only be used in New York State. In September, I settled into the Harvard Medical School dormitory, Vanderbilt Hall. The lobby was fancy but the rooms upstairs were nothing to write home about. The shower and toilet were only a short walk down the hall. There was plenty of opportunity for exercise, not in the squash courts which I never used, but walking up to my room on the sixth floor since there was no elevator. You would think there would be a sweeping view of the neighborhood from my room, but the windows were small and so high up on the wall that all I could see were the passing clouds. The laundry room was conveniently located in the basement and was only 25 cents each load. Fortunately, Bubby Ruth sent me to Boston with 42 changes of clothing, so I could put on clean clothes every day and only had to do laundry every six weeks.

Getting kosher food was a project. Either I ate supper at the Simmons College Kosher Kitchen about four blocks away or I walked to the one kosher restaurant in Brookline, 45 minutes away by foot. Most of the time I made a one pot meal, starting with pasta, then adding canned vegetables and topping it off with sardines. After a year or two, I couldn't look at sardines again, so I got a small broiler and cooked chicken wings. That reminds me of my first shopping trip to the kosher butcher in Brookline when I was inexperienced as a kosher consumer. I saw a solid block of frozen chicken in the display case. I asked the butcher, "What's this?" He answered, "Ties." I still didn't understand, so I asked again. Same answer, "Ties." I gave up asking and bought it anyway. When I defrosted it—you guessed it—it was "thighs!"



This picture shows my happiness and relief at graduating from medical school.



Bubby Ruth and Grandpa Joe were so proud when I graduated from medical school. They travelled all the way to Boston for the ceremony. They brought Ethan and David with them.



VNIVERSITAS HARVARDIANA

CANTABRIGIAE IN REPUBLICA MASSACHVSETTENSIVM

PRAESES et Socii Collegii Harvardiani consentientibus
honorandis ac reverendis Inspectoribus in comitiis
sollemnibus

STANLEY AUSTIN NEWFIELD
ad gradum Medicinae Doctoris

admiserunt ei que dederunt et concesserunt omnia insignia
et iura quae ad hunc gradum spectant.

In cuius rei testimonium litteris Academiae sigillo munitis
die XVII Iunii anno Domini MDCCCCLXXVI Collegiique
Harvardiani CCCXXXX auctoritate rite commissae nomina
subscripserunt.

Deer Curtis Bok
PRAESES

Robert H. Christ
DECANVS ORDINIS MEDICINAE



After four years of hard work, they handed me this sheet of paper which I can't even read!

Rabbi Dovid Wichnin

The Second Yahrzeit of Rabbi Dovid Wichnin, a"h: Rosh Yeshiva of the Rabbinical College of America's Yeshiva Tiferes Bachurim in Morristown, New Jersey:

With the approach of the 27th of Tammuz, the *yahrzeit* of my *rebbe* (teacher), Rabbi Dovid Wichnin, my thoughts return to the time we met and how much I owe to him. Although Rabbi Wichnin and I were both previously residents of Brooklyn, we didn't meet until September, 1972 in Boston, Massachusetts. At that time, I was entering medical school and he was the principal of the local Lubavitch yeshiva, known as the New England Hebrew Academy. I had begun my transformation as a *baal tshuvah* during the previous years as a student at Columbia University. On my second day in Boston, I went to the Hillel House at Boston University for dinner. Rabbi Wichnin was the guest speaker on the subject of *teshuva*, in preparation for Rosh Hashanah. I was greatly impressed by his sincerity, clarity and directness. This was a rabbi who spoke my language. It seemed his every word was meant for me. I sat quietly and listened. As the saying goes, "Words from the heart enter the heart." I had no idea when we would meet again but as it turned out it was quite soon.

I purchased my ticket for the High Holidays at the local orthodox synagogue, the Young Israel of Brookline. However, another medical student who knew Rabbi Wichnin from Brooklyn urged me to go to Lubavitch instead. I protested, "But I already bought a ticket to the Young Israel!" My friend reassured me, "Don't worry. Your ticket will be good at the Lubavitch Yeshiva services as well!"

When I entered the *beis medrash* of the yeshiva I felt at home. Rabbi Wichnin was in top form—*davening*, *laining*, blowing shofar and delivering the *dvar Torah*. It was a moving experience and I decided to return again.

Several weeks later, after Shabbos *Musaf*, Rabbi Wichnin invited four or five college students from the *minyan* to his home for the *seudah*. He asked each of us about our background and current studies. We met his devoted wife, Mala, and enjoyed her delicious cooking and baking. But the clincher was Rabbi Wichnin's parting words, "Stanley, I want you to stay here every Shabbos!" I didn't quite get what he meant but it stayed in my mind all week. As Shabbos got closer, I decided to call Rabbi Wichnin to inquire if I could come for Shabbos. "Why are you

asking?” replied the rabbi. “I already invited you. Not just for this Shabbos, but for every week. Bring your things over before Shabbos and sleep here as our guest.” Still unsure of myself, I decided to take the offer—as a trial.

That Friday night, I was the only visitor at the *seudah*. I felt like an honored guest, but also a member of the family. And so it went from week to week, Shabbos and Yom Tov. I was the Wichnin's regular guest for two full years. In time, I began to wear my *yarmulke* to class. I grew my beard. I attended *shiurim*. I became more and more involved with Lubavitch, visiting Crown Heights, and attending Yeshiva Hadar Hatorah during my medical school breaks.

Rebbetzin Mala Wichnin was a wonderful hostess and example of a kind and educated wife who shared in her husband's mission of making the *Aibeshter* a “*dira b'tachtonim*,” a dwelling place in this world. She herself was not originally from a Lubavitch family, but became fully committed to Lubavitch after their marriage. The following anecdote tells a lot. One Shabbos, she was reading the Boston Jewish newspaper. There was a column of questions and answers on Judaism. It posed the question, “What is a Rebbe?” The answer was, “A rabbi who doesn't speak English.” Rebbetzin Wichnin was outraged! “How could they print such *narishkeit*? Such *shtus*!” (Such nonsense! Such silly stupidity!) I recently read a response from the Rebbe, himself, to this same question, reprinted in the newsletter, The Weekly Farbrengen. He offered a deep mystical explanation. “The Rebbe has a deep existential bond with each *chosid* because an element of the *chosid's neshoma* is contained in the Rebbe's *neshoma*. Thereby, the *chosid* develops a connection to the Rebbe. The Rebbe is like a generator who powers the *chosid's* lightbulb through the connecting wire that is the *neshoma*.”

Once, while I was a medical student, I tried to express my gratitude to Rabbi Wichnin with a small gift. But he returned it to me saying that the Talmud does not permit accepting presents. In this as in all other matters, his every action was *l'shem shamayim*. He always tried to help and encourage every *Yiddishe neshoma* he met. For example, on Rosh Hashanah, we walked to downtown Boston to blow the shofar for a patient in the hospital. I asked Rabbi Wichnin, “Did you see that boy wearing a *yarmulke* who just passed us?” But he had missed him and was upset. It actually hurt Rabbi Wichnin that he had lost an opportunity to say “*Gut Yom Tov!*” or “*Shalom Aleichem!*” to a fellow Jew.

Many, many people knew Rabbi Wichnin as a teacher, *rosh yeshiva*, *mashpia* and friend. For me, he was always the one person I could count on. He brought me a menorah when I was on duty at the hospital on Chanukah. He opened doors for me to hasidic homes in Boston and New York. He advised me on practical issues of being *frum* in medical school. He came to my wedding and recited a *brocha* under the *chupah*. He honored us by being *sandek* at our son's *bris*. He was always upbeat. Always positive. Always smiling.

Rabbi Wichnin would not want his *yahrzeit* to cause us pain or sadness. Perhaps, if I recount two small examples of his quick wit, it would lift our spirits at this time. One Friday night, he told me that he had the honor of introducing the Mayor of Boston at an event that week. I asked him, "So how do you introduce a Mayor?" He immediately shot back, "*Amud, Amud, Amud!* (Arise! Arise! Arise!)" quoting from the prayers recited on Simchas Torah.

The Wichnins' first son, Yisroel Noach, was born prematurely and had to stay in the hospital for several months. One *Motzai Shabbos*, Rabbi Wichnin took me along to visit the baby in the NICU. Although I was a medical student, I had not worked at that hospital and the nurses didn't know me. When we came to the nursery Rabbi Wichnin greeted all the nurses warmly. They looked at me and asked Rabbi Wichnin, "Who is this with you?" He quipped, "*Oh! He's my chaplain!*"

Surely, all who knew Rabbi Wichnin love and miss him. His life example remains with us as a constant encouragement and inspiration. May his memory be for a blessing.

Becoming Frum

On a more serious note, I was very nervous that becoming *frum* was going to be a big problem in medical school. The first two years consisted of classroom lectures and labs. Although we had a patient demonstration Saturday morning at 9 am, this still wasn't an insurmountable problem. I stayed with the Wichnins for Shabbos, *davened* with Rabbi Wichnin at the 7 am *hashkoma minyan* at the Young Israel of Brookline, and walked to the medical school, arriving just in time. Of course, I didn't take notes, but I really didn't need to for this activity. Then, I walked back to Brookline for a Shabbos lunch and a well-deserved nap.

During the summer after my first year in medical school, I went to Camp Shaloh in the Catskills. I grew a beard and wore a *yarmulke* 24/7 in camp. I worried about continuing when I went back to Harvard. What would the other students or the professors say? I asked Rabbi Sholom Ber Veshedsky *a"h* for advice about the beard. Without hesitation, he grabbed his beard with one hand and pretended to cut it using the fingers of the other hand as a scissor. He said, "Cutting your beard would cut you off from the *Aibeshter*." I was convinced. The beard stayed. Still, I had to face my classmates. In the end, nobody much cared. Or at least they didn't say a word to me about it. There was no discussion. No drama. No need for explanations. School continued as usual.

Since then, I never had any second thoughts about having a beard, even if it put some people off. For example, many years later, I needed to get passport photos. I went to a small camera store in Lynbrook, Long Island, near my office. I assume the owner and his assistant were Jewish. At any rate, they asked me to pose in front of a screen. I stood there a while smiling at the camera but the owner hesitated to snap the picture. Finally, I asked him what's the problem. Again, he hesitated, not wanting to offend me. Trying his best to be tactful, he whispered, "The beard." I said, "No problem." He offered me a little mirror and I proceeded to fluff up my beard as much as possible, figuring it must have looked crumpled or off-center. That's when I noticed the expression on the faces of the owner and his assistant. They looked somewhere between horrified, perplexed, and in shock. In my naiveté, I had misjudged their suggestion about the beard. They wanted me to roll it up, tuck it in, *find some way to hide it*, not exhibit it!

I should mention that I had one brush with genius while at Harvard. I saw a notice that they were looking for some help at night in the laboratory of Dr. Baruj Benacerraf, a Nobel prize winner.

I volunteered a few evenings to move some tissue cultures out of the incubator at a certain time. I never met Dr. Benacerraf in the laboratory but we did have him as a lecturer. Also, his daughter Beryl, was in our class. That was as close as I got to making a contribution to medical science.

On the other hand, I began a lasting friendship with Dr. Ira Weiss. I ran into Ira when he was a cardiac fellow at Harvard. He was extremely friendly and easy going. But it wasn't until he gave me a copy of his book, "Essentials of Heart Rhythm Analysis," that I realized he was a serious scientist. I was glad to attend Ira's wedding to Myra in Worcester, Massachusetts, when I was a student. As is well known, a few years later, Ira provided lifesaving service to the Rebbe after the Rebbe's heart attack. Ira stayed at the bedside of the Rebbe around the clock for six weeks, until the Rebbe was well enough to go home.

The third and fourth years of medical school consisted of various hospital rotations. I took medicine at the "BI," that is the Beth Israel hospital. It was convenient because it was close to my dormitory. I took surgery at the "MGH," Massachusetts General Hospital in downtown Boston. Some people joke that MGH stands for Man's Greatest Hospital. The workload was grueling. There were no lectures to attend. Somehow, you were supposed to work-up patients in the morning, afternoon, and night and then read up about their diagnoses in your spare time. I never had any spare time and never seemed to catch up with all the many demands. As a medical student, I faced many challenges and my share of ups-and-downs. Fortunately, the administration really meant it when they said that they expect each student to graduate.

Let me give you two anecdotes that convey in a small way the attitude and dedication of the professors. As a first-year student, I was assigned to a senior doctor to observe his practice once a week. I met with Dr. Grant Rodkey, a surgeon, and past president of the Massachusetts Medical Society. That afternoon, he demonstrated an office procedure, an excision of a sebaceous cyst on the back of a patient. I naively asked him if that procedure would be considered "minor surgery." The good doctor replied, "There is no such thing as minor surgery—*only minor surgeons!*" I was amazed to read an article about Dr. Rodkey in the New York Times several years ago. At 96, he was still coming to the hospital to teach the young doctors! He lived to 102.

I also recall my initial meeting with our instructor on the first day of our surgery rotation at MGH. Our little group of students waited in the hospital lobby for him to arrive. The doctor

walked briskly towards us and motioned that we should follow him to the staircase. He promptly began his discourse about surgery, the ward, and the patients. So up and up we followed. Second floor, third floor, and up and up and up. After seven or eight flights, I was getting a little dizzy and short of breath. But he kept walking and talking as he went. Eighth floor, ninth floor, tenth floor. When would this ever end? Finally, we arrived on the eleventh floor. By then, I think I must've looked as pale as the post-op patients on the ward!

Looking back, I conclude that the Harvard doctors were 110% devoted to medicine and their work. They were psyched and ready to utilize all their abilities, mental and physical, for their careers. Somehow, I didn't see myself fitting comfortably in that mold. There had to be a corner of medicine for a more laid-back, artsy person like myself. I was drawn to dermatology and felt I would be successful. That was my ticket. Please understand that there were 160 students in my class. I was the *only one* to go into dermatology. I thought to myself, "These guys are so smart. How come they don't realize that dermatology is the best specialty?" That was their problem. Mine was getting into a residency. Even at that time, getting accepted into dermatology was very difficult and competitive. By the way, it's something of a vote of confidence that in recent years dermatology has become one of the most popular specialties of Harvard graduates.

I would like to mention that I remember talking in my dorm room to a fellow student one year behind me. I reassured him that he should go for dermatology. I'm glad he took my advice...even if he probably doesn't remember it. Mark Lebwohl became world famous as a researcher, educator, and chairman of dermatology at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York.



This illustration of the Torah procession on Simchas Torah gives the spirit of our celebration here in Crown Heights. Mommy chose this auspicious moment to get her first look at me!

The Romance

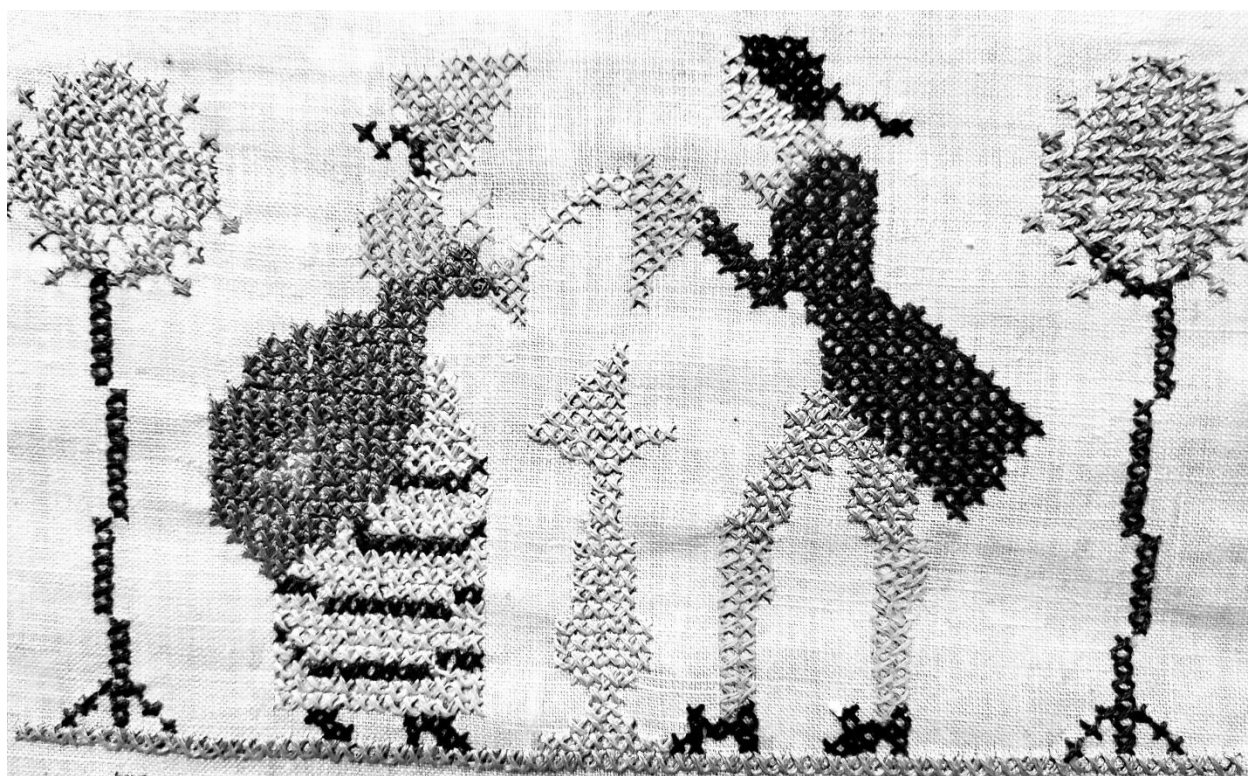
As an intern at Brookdale Hospital, I lived at home with my parents and spent *Shabbosim* in Crown Heights. Rabbi Wichnin introduced me to his good friend, Rabbi Abba Paltiel, and I had the *zchus* to be the regular Shabbos guest of the Paltiels. I slept on a small bed in the dining room, alongside the table. Since I was usually exhausted from my on-call at the hospital, and I also had the advantage of being an excellent sleeper, nothing, not lights, conversations, or footsteps kept me awake at night. I was an honored guest of the family and got to know the Rabbi, the Rebbetzin, and their boys very well. Their Shabbos routine wasn't a routine or a formality, but a beautiful living example of how a hasidish family should act.

Although I was preoccupied with the internship, I was eager to use the opportunity of living in New York to find a *shidduch*. Yes, there were some *frum* girls in Boston, and even some *shadchanim*, but nothing had worked out in the four years I lived there. Now, in the microcosm of Crown Street, things came together. There was a young couple, the Weisses, who lived on the same block as the Paltiels, who were active and successful *shadchanim*. They knew Mommy from the bungalow colony where she had worked as a counselor and felt that we would be a good match for all the usual reasons: background, personality, and commitment to Lubavitch.

As some of you may have heard many times, Mommy wanted to get a look at me before agreeing to a first date. The opportunity came on Simchas Torah when I was dancing with the men at the Gelernter Shul, a *baal teshuva shteibel* in a basement on that very same block. Mommy and the other ladies watched from the *veiber shul*. I, of course, had no clue that I was being observed and was wearily plodding along around the circle with my head resting on the shoulder of the person in front of me, three fourths asleep from my overnight duty at Brookdale Hospital the night before. Remember the saying "you only have one chance to make a first impression!" Even now, I cringe to imagine what Mommy must have thought of me. Nevertheless, being kindhearted, Mommy consented to a first date.

This meeting took place shortly afterward in the cavernous lobby of the Museum of Natural History in Manhattan. We arranged to recognize each other with certain *simanim*. After meeting Mommy several times, I was convinced that she was "someone special" as Mr. Weiss had put it. A few months later, with the strong encouragement of the Rebbe, we decided to get engaged.

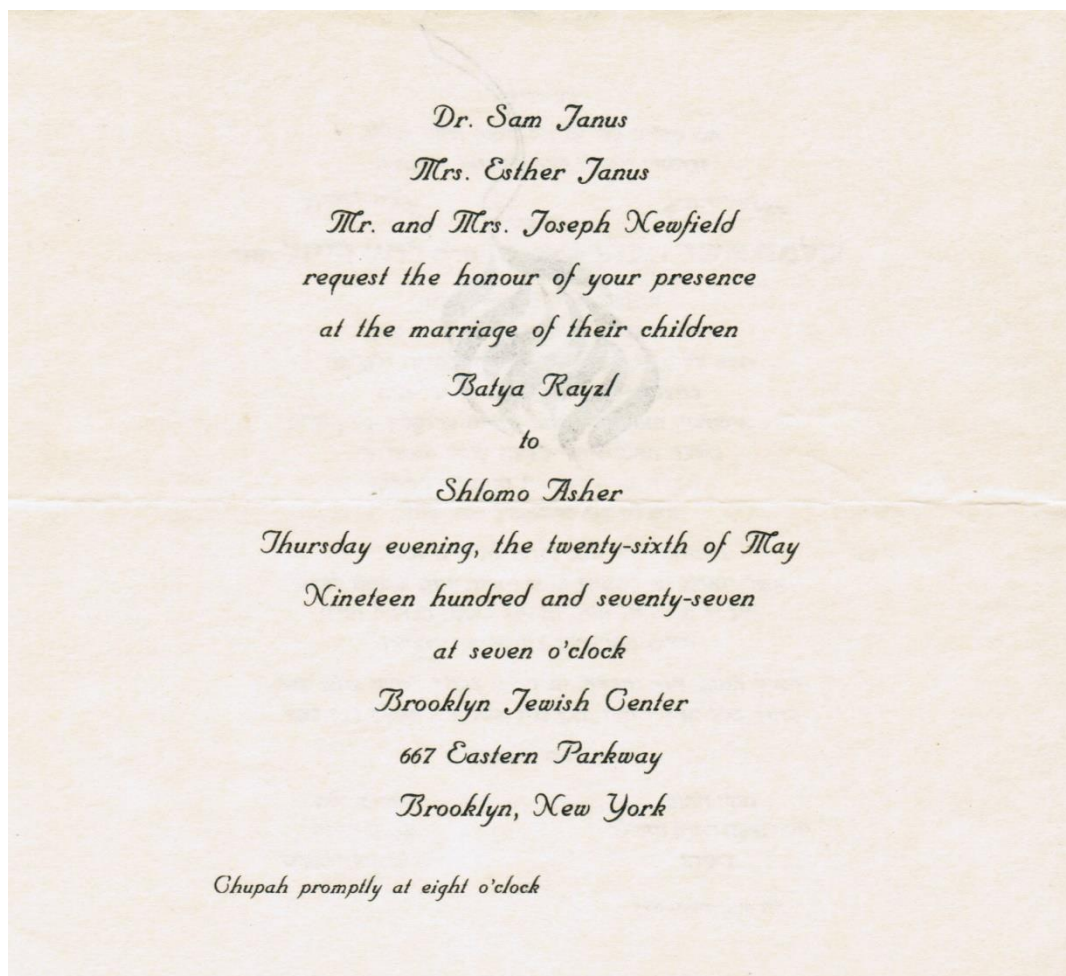
Mommy and I discussed how I could strengthen my connection to Lubavitch and *Yiddishkeit* in general, since I never really had the opportunity to learn in a yeshiva for more than a few weeks at a time. As a symbol of my commitment to Lubavitch, I ordered a *kapote* to wear at the *chasunah* and on Shabbos and Yom Tov afterwards. I bought a black hat. And I started keeping “*Cholov Yisroel*” and putting on *Rabbeinu Tam* tefillin. These last two practices are customary in Lubavitch, but are unknown in the Orthodox world I had been exposed to in college and medical school.



This charming embroidery is not a family heirloom, at least not as yet. It was sewn in 1929, most likely by a young girl. It came into the Newfield collection via eBay.



770 Eastern Parkway is the Lubavitch World Headquarters. The Rebbe's office is on the first floor to the left. Our chupah was on the walkway leading to the front door. The building has many architectural flourishes in the Gothic style. Many of the crucial events in this story took place in and around this building.



Our wedding invitation was simple and elegant. Likewise, our wedding celebration was traditional, arranged according to hasidic customs.



In this wedding photograph, Mommy and I are looking at the all-important *kesuba* or wedding contract.

ביה קממי בשבת קמלא ימים לחדש סיון
 שנת חמשת אלפים ושבע מאות ואלפים ושלש
 לבריאת עולם למנין שאנו מנין כאן מותא דיוקאין ואלא יאיק איך הבחור
 אלה משרה דא יוסף משה יעקב אומר לה להדא בתולתא דשא יעקב דא יוסף שדא יעקב
 הוי לי לאנתו כדת משה וישראל ואנא אפלא ואוקיר ואיזון ואפרנס יתיכי ליכי
 כהלכות גוברין יהודאין דפלאין ומוקריין וזניין ומפרנסין לנשיהון בקושטא
 ויהיבנא ליכי מהר בתוליכי כסף זוזי מאתן דזוזי ליכי מדאורייתא ומזוניכי
 וכסותיכי וספוקיכי ומיעל לותיכי כאורח כל ארעא וצביאת מרת דשא יעקב
 מ' בתולתא דא והות ליה לאנתו ודן נדוניא דהנעלת ליה מבי אדא
 בין בכסף בין בזהב ובין בתכשיטיין במאני רלבושא בשמושי דירה ובשמושי
 דערסא הכל קבל עליו הבחור אלה משרה יעקב אומר דא יוסף שדא יעקב
 אקוקים כסף צרוף וצבי הבחור אלה משרה יעקב אומר דא יוסף שדא יעקב
 מן דיליה עוד מאה זקוקים כסף צרוף אחרים כנגדן סך הכל מאתים זקוקים
 כסף צרוף וכך אמר הבחור אלה משרה יעקב אומר דא יוסף שדא יעקב
 כתובתא דא נדוניא דן ותוספתא דא קבלית עלי ועל ירתי בדנא
 להתפרע מכל שפר ארג נכסין וקנינין דאית לי תחות כל שמיא
 דקנאי ודעתיד אנא למקני נכסין דאית להון אחריות ודלית להון
 אחריות כלהון יהון אחראין וערבאין לפרוע מנהון שטר כתובתא דא
 נדוניא דן ותוספתא דא ואפילו מן גלימא דעל כתפאי בדי ובתר דא
 מן יומא דנן ולעלם ואחריות שטר כתובתא דא נדוניא דן ותוספתא
 דא קבל עליו הבחור אלה משרה יעקב אומר דא יוסף שדא יעקב
 כתובות ותוספתות דנהגין בבנת ישראל העשויין כתיקון חז"ל דלא
 כאסמכתא ודלא כנופסי דשטרי וק' נא מן הבחור אלה משרה יעקב
 יוסף משה יעקב אומר דא יוסף שדא יעקב בתולתא דא ככל
 מה דכתוב ומפורש לעיל במנא דכשר למקניא ביה הכל שדירוקים
 נאום יעקב יהודה אב דברג מכב דא יעקב
 נאום דוד ב"ר יעקב דא יעקב

Every Jewish bride receives a *kesuba* guaranteeing her rights in the marriage. It is signed by two witnesses who are not related to the bride, the groom, or each other.

The Vort, the Yechidus, the Aufruf, and the Chasunah

Our next milestone was our “vort” which is what would be called today a “*l’chaim*.” Mommy and I were *zoche* to be “adopted” by a young couple, Leibel and Chavi Altein, who lived in a spacious apartment at 706 Eastern Parkway. The Alteins kindly offered to host our vort. As I recall, the men sat at a long table in the living room and the women sat in the dining room. Since it was Rosh Chodesh Adar, I gave a speech, a *dvar Torah* in English, about increasing *simcha* (joy). The meal was expertly catered by Jerry Simon *a”h*.

As time went on, the Alteins became important people in Crown Heights, but they always looked out for ways to help us—from being role models of a hasidish family, to sharing holiday recipes, to helping with our wedding arrangements. Many years later, they invited us to move into their house for Pesach, since we were unable to make the many necessary holiday preparations in our home after our son Shimmy passed away. May Hashem bentch them with good health, nachas from their children, and all good things in *ruchnius* and *gashmius*.

When we met, Mommy was living in Crown Heights, sharing a small apartment on the ground floor of 726 Eastern Parkway with her friend Faigy Sirota (then Edelstein). Faigy was related to the owner Morah Chana Gorovitz. First Faigy got married to Zalman and moved out. Then, Mommy moved next door to an apartment in the rear of 730 Eastern Parkway in a house belonging to the Chitrik family. Her new roommate was Chanchy Hershkowitz (then Kramer). After we got married, we took over the apartment. Our wedding was the first wedding in Crown Heights after Shavuot in 1977. This was very exciting indeed! That year I counted *sefirah* with extra *kavanah* (concentration) since I was also counting the days to our wedding.

Shortly before the wedding, we had *yechidus* with the Rebbe. Even now, so many years later, the memory of that night brings back mixed emotions. On the one hand, it was a tremendous honor, but it didn’t go so smoothly. For one thing, I was scheduled to be on call at Brookdale Hospital that night. I told the senior resident that I had the *yechidus* and would need to leave for about an hour. It wound up taking almost all night and he was furious at having to take care of my patients as well as his own. Our appointment with the Rebbe was for 11 PM. When I arrived at 770, Mommy, Bubby Ruth, and Grandpa Joe were there waiting. However, Reb Shabtai, Mommy’s father, traveling from California, was late. The Rebbe’s secretary let Professor Herman

Branover go in ahead of us, while we were waiting for “Pops.” The professor must have had a lot to discuss with the Rebbe because he stayed in the office for two or three hours. We stayed waiting long into the night. Bubby Ruth was concerned about Grandpa Joe who wasn’t well. Reb Shabtai, who caused the delay, became very impatient. Finally, it was our turn to go in.

The *yechidus* itself was fairly short. The Rebbe offered the parents seats. Mommy and I stood, of course. The Rebbe then asked if everyone understood Yiddish. “*Nit der kinder,*” answered Bubby Ruth. The Rebbe smiled and responded, “The children will know.” We took this to mean that *our children* will learn Yiddish growing up, which they did. Then we handed the Rebbe our *kvitlach* (personal notes) and he gave us many *brochos* for our marriage and our new life together. The Rebbe spoke in English but it was hard to understand due to his accent and the fact that I was very tired and very nervous. I tried to write down a few notes afterwards on what the Rebbe had said, but I was in a rush to get back to the hospital. The main thing that stays in my mind was the Rebbe’s previous answer to our letter when we asked if we should continue dating. “*Nachon hashidduch v’tov. Azkir al hatzion.*” (Translation: The matrimonial match is good and correct. I will pray for you at the resting place of the Previous Rebbe.) Once we got that answer, we put all doubts aside and proceeded to make the many detailed and complex plans for our wedding.

Since the custom is for the *choson* and *kallah* to avoid seeing each other for the week before their wedding, Mommy didn’t attend the *aufruf*. I had the *zchus* to be called up to the Torah in 770 the Shabbos before our wedding. Naturally, I had the first *aliyah* since I am a kohen. My friends distributed little bags of nosh to the crowd and they graciously pelted me with them for good luck after I completed the *brochos*. Maybe I had too many *l’chaims*, but I don’t recall anything about the *choson* kiddush after the davening.

I do remember another honor given to *chosonim* at that time. It was customary to bring a bottle of *mashke* (Smirnoff Red Label Vodka) to the Rebbe’s office. At the *Shabbos Mevarchim* farbrengen before the wedding, I was *zoche* to go up to the Rebbe and hand him the bottle. The Rebbe then poured a *l’chaim* for me from that bottle and returned the bottle to me to share with *hasidim* attending the *farbrengen* and later with guests at the wedding. In this way, the Rebbe’s *brochos* were spread to the wedding and to the marriage. Even when the bottle was empty, I continued to cherish it as a keepsake. It is well known that the Rebbe did not want the *mashke* that

he gave out to be sold to a *goy* for Pesach. However, I didn't think it would be a problem to hold onto the empty bottle.

A *chasunah*, a Jewish wedding, is usually a once in a lifetime celebration. Everyone plans each detail to make it perfect. With the passage of time, it seems that our wedding *was* perfect, since I don't remember anything going wrong. Oholei Torah is a magnificent hall and holds so many happy memories for us—including the weddings of Miriam, Chana Sara, Esty and Rivky. Back then, the Oholei Torah hall was only the smaller original size. The women's section was just the narrow strip behind the row of columns. Really big weddings required spreading out on two floors. At those weddings, the women sat upstairs in the lunchroom and the men were downstairs in the main hall. Sometimes, it was reversed. Of course, this arrangement also required two bands, upstairs and downstairs, and also, extra photographers. Fortunately, all our guests were able to fit downstairs.

The wedding hall was painted red and the ceiling was gold. It may have been garish, but the color scheme had passed the test of time. No one thought twice about it. Our flowers, provided by the florist Gil Hirsch, were red, yellow, and white. Everything was very elegant and traditional. Our band leader was Rabbi Eli Lipskier *a"h*. You can't get more Lubavitch than that! Our photographer, David, of Aura Studios, did an excellent job, although the colors of the album have faded with time. Videos were not usually made in those days. Fortunately, one of the guests, Ernest Seewald, brought his 8mm home movie camera and took two rolls of highlights, a whole six minutes of silent views of people smiling, eating, and dancing.

Mommy's gown, covered in white lace, was magnificent and she looked great wearing it. I wore my new *kapote* (long hasidic frock coat) sewn by Mr. Hans on Rivington Street on the Lower East Side. That alone is a story in itself. It required several pilgrimages to his shop in Manhattan for measuring and fitting.

Our *chupah* (wedding ceremony under the bridal canopy) was outdoors on the walkway in front of 770, adjacent to the windows of the Rebbe's office. The space is not really big enough to hold the *chupah* and the guests, but it is traditional and people put up with having the women spill out on to the sidewalk and the men crowding together on the steps of 770. Fortunately, the weather cooperated—no rain, not too hot or too cold. Rabbi Zalman Shimon Dvorkin *a"h* was the *mesader*

kedushin and we had an all-star cast of dignitaries to recite the *brachos*: Rabbi Joseph Elias from the Breuer Seminary in Washington Heights, Rabbi Manis Friedman, Rabbi Leib Altein, Rabbi Moshe Feller, Rabbi Abba Paltiel, and Rabbi Yankel Goldberg, and Rabbi Sholom Ber Veshedsky *a"h*.

We clearly got off to a good start! Standing outside of 770, we constantly felt the Rebbe's presence. Besides, I was wearing the Rebbe's shirt, loaned to me for the occasion. I don't remember eating the wedding meal; I probably didn't have time. Finally, after the dessert, we had the *bentching* and *sheva brochos*. Our *bentchers* were very small and simple by today's standards. They had gold covers, but there were no English translations, *zemiros*, or songs included.

Looking closely at our wedding album, I noticed that the relatives held braided *havdalah* candles as they walked around seven times under the *chupah*. Whereas, nowadays they would hold glass lanterns, at our *chupah* the candles were wrapped in scraps of aluminum foil. Also, we sipped red wine under the *chupah*, not the more practical white wine used today.

Following the wedding, we celebrated a week of *sheva brochos*. I got off from work and enjoyed playing the role of royalty. When I went out, I always had a *shomer* with me. When I went to shul, the congregation skipped saying *Tachanun*. Our friends were very generous to make *sheva brochos* for us in their homes. The last *sheva brocha* was given by Chaya Leet who soon became Rebbetzin Chaya Teldon. I went back to work at Brookdale Hospital for my night of on-call duty directly from that *sheva brocha*, right after *bentching*.



One of Mommy's friends drew this beautiful monogram with our initials. We used it for our thank you notes after our wedding.

The Race to the Finish

Skipping ahead, I spent several frustrating years trying to get a dermatology residency. I thought, naively, that coming from Harvard, I could have my pick. Not so. Harvard knew me well and they didn't take me. A dozen other programs likewise turned me down. A big hint to the root of the dilemma came with my interview at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. I flew to Cleveland, stayed overnight at the home of a Hadar Torah alumnus, and went for the interview the next morning. Ten seconds after I walked into the office of the chairman, Dr. Beno Michel, with my untrimmed beard and black yarmulke, he said, "I'm Jewish myself and I can tell you're religious. We've never had anyone like you in our program. *And we're not going to start now!*" That was it. The interview was over. I was in shock. Whatever qualities Dr. Michel may have had (and I emphasize *may*) *Ahavas Yisroel* certainly wasn't one of them.

But "*der Aibeshter fiert dem velt*," G-d above runs the world. And *revach v'hatzala*, relief and salvation, came from another place. Here's what happened. By the middle of my internship year at Brookdale Hospital Medical Center, I was in a serious dilemma. Mommy and I were engaged to be married in May and I still didn't have a residency (or any other job, for that matter) come July. Then surprise, *v'nahapachu*, the situation suddenly flipped in an instant.

One winter day, the *tzaddik*, Dr. Paul Dermer *a"h*, came to Brookdale to give a lecture on dermatology for the house staff. I had met Paul a year or two before when I went to New York University Hospital for an interview. He was the chief resident at the time and gave me a tour of the department. I wasn't accepted into the NYU program, but he remembered me. After his lecture, I went over to him to say hello. He suggested we go to the cafeteria—it was kosher then—and get something to eat. As we chatted, I explained my situation: The internship year was almost over and I still had no residency lined up. Then, Paul made a suggestion, or should I say dropped a bombshell that changed the trajectory of my career.

He told me there was a job opening for July in the Dermatology Branch of the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. This would also serve as part of a dermatology residency. "Call the principal investigator, Dr. Jay H. Robbins, and ask him for the job. Dr. Robbins is a graduate of Harvard College and Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons. He is likely to be partial to someone who went to Columbia and Harvard." Reflection: As it says in *Hayom Yom*, a

person can spend 70 years on this earth just so he can do a favor for another Jew. This was an example in my own life.

I went right from the cafeteria to the payphone in the lobby—cell phones weren't invented until decades later—and called Dr. Robbins. In five minutes, I had the job! I didn't find out until much later that Dr. Robbins had 300 applications sitting in the department office to choose from. To my great good fortune, he never looked at any of them. I suspect he was waiting for someone all-Ivy to land in his lap. Which is exactly what happened. Some may call Dr. Robbin's selection process social networking, or some other snobbery, but clearly this was the *Aibishter's* plan. Once it was set in motion, everything fell into place.



I went to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein for a *psak* (rabbinical ruling) on the *kohen* issue. The details of my meeting are in the next section.

Doctor Kohen

As a kohen, I knew the dissections in medical school would be a problem. Somehow, I kept putting it out of my mind, thinking that I'd work it out later. I did take gross anatomy in medical school, but it was only a six-week course and the cadavers were already dissected, so the medical students only had to look at the various parts of the anatomy and not actually touch what was *tumadik* (ritually impure). I graduated, feeling a little guilty, but hopeful that my medical career would proceed smoothly.

Coming from Harvard Medical School I did not have a problem getting a *Shomer Shabbos* internship in internal medicine at Brookdale Hospital Medical Center in Brooklyn. As a matter of fact, I was probably the first Harvard graduate to even apply there. I planned to seek a dermatology residency the next year.

I was living at home in Flatbush with my parents and spent every Shabbos and Yom Tov as the guest of Rabbi and Mrs. Abba Paltiel in Crown Heights. Rabbi Wichnin introduced me to them so I felt like part of their family. Each Friday night I would sleep on a cot next to the dining room table. Three years later, when I was married and had a baby girl, I had the opportunity to buy a house in Crown Heights, I felt privileged to settle down on their block across the street from the Paltiel house.

In the spring of 1977, when I was an intern at Brookdale, I met a Lubavitcher, Reuven Berns, who worked in the lab. "Ruby" was very concerned about the kohen issue. Now that I was a *choson*, Ruby felt that it was urgent for me to get a *heter* to work as a doctor. I decided to write to the Lubavitcher Rebbe about the kohen dilemma and ask how to proceed. The Rebbe answered that this is a question for a *rov* (a respected rabbinic decisor).

First, Ruby sent me to see Rabbi Zalman Shimon Dworkin a"h, the Lubavitch Rov. Rabbi Dworkin listened to my story—a baal teshuva—now a hospital intern—going into dermatology—and said he couldn't help me. Not taking no for an answer, Ruby made me an appointment to see Rabbi Yitzchak Ushpal a"h, a senior Lubavitch rov in Borough Park. This time Ruby went with me and did most of the talking, in Yiddish. Again, Rabbi Ushpal said *he* couldn't help me. Finally, Ruby said we had no choice but to consult Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the world famous *posek*. However, it was impossible for us to get an appointment. Ruby would not be deterred and drove

me to Rabbi Feinstein's apartment on Grand Street on the Lower East Side on a Friday afternoon, uninvited.

Ruby rang the doorbell, and the Rebbetzin answered. This time, Ruby did all the talking, all in Yiddish. She reluctantly let us in and asked us to wait in the living room. While we waited, I looked around the room. The rabbi lived very simply, in a small apartment. The furniture was old-fashioned, but elegant. One thing that caught my eye was the telephone on the end-table. Whenever someone would call, a small light on the telephone would flash, but there was no ringing sound. If the rabbi noticed the light flashing, he might answer, but there was no sound to interrupt his learning.

Now, over 40 years later, certain interesting facts have come to my attention. A Lubavitcher historian, Rabbi Dovid Zaklikowski, wrote a short biography of Rabbi Ushpal in his book *Footprints*. In a fourteen-page essay he outlines the rabbi's life story and character from his birth in 1911 in Lithuania to his *p'tirah* on Adar 12, 5743 (Feb 25, 1983) in Brooklyn. The following passage is relevant to my situation. "Rabbi Ushpal studied a variety of topics in Jewish law... One question he addressed was whether a kohen... can enter a hospital where he may come into contact with a corpse." His research was documented in the scholarly journal *Hapardes*. Rabbi Ushpal visited many of the hospitals in the New York area and met with hospital directors who showed him everything he needed to see. Rabbi Ushpal's approach is summarized as follows. "When someone asks you a question, it means he or she needs some kind of assistance. Therefore, it is incumbent on the rabbi to respond to every person warmly and patiently" with total dedication and presence.

I recently reviewed this episode with Reuven Berns, now a physician assistant. He informed me of certain details that I had not been aware of or had forgotten. He told me that Rabbi Ushpal wrote a letter to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein about my situation so that the *posek hador* was already familiar with my story when we arrived. Also, after meeting with us the first time, Rabbi Feinstein said he had to think over his response so we had to return to him a second time for his *p'sak* (halachic ruling). Now, back to our story.

After a while the rabbi appeared wearing his robe. Again, Ruby told my story and emphasized that I was getting married very soon. Rabbi Feinstein was very gracious and took a genuine interest in my predicament. He asked many questions, again, all in Yiddish.

“Are you sure you are a kohen?”

“Yes. I *duchened* with my father a”h and he *duchened* many years ago with his father.” (Rabbi Feinstein noted that the three generations of kohanim make a *chazakah*, a strong presumption of fact.)

“Did you borrow money to pay for medical school?”

“Yes, a lot.”

“Are the patients in your hospital mostly Jewish or gentile?”

“Mostly gentile.”

“Where is the morgue located in the hospital?”

“I don’t know.”

“What exit do they use to remove deceased patients?”

“I’ll find out.”

In his decision, Rabbi Feinstein said that I should continue working as a doctor. He gave me several pointers such as you must leave the room if a patient is about to pass away and avoid using the hospital entrance near the morgue. Ruby and I thanked the rabbi profusely and again apologized for interrupting his Shabbos preparations.

We returned to Crown Heights just in time for Shabbos. I thanked Ruby for making this meeting possible. I never would have had the nerve to go by myself. Besides, I needed someone to speak in Yiddish for me. After Shabbos, I wrote again to the Rebbe notifying him of Rabbi Feinstein’s *p’sak*. The Rebbe answered through his secretary that I should continue pursuing my medical career in accordance with the decision of Rabbi Feinstein.

We Make Our Home in College Park, Maryland

My new job at the National Institutes of Health required us to move to Maryland. Mommy and I chose College Park because there was a small Chabad community anchored to the University of Maryland campus and its “*Chosid-in-Residence*,” Rabbi Silverstein. It turned out to be an excellent location, even though it required a 30 to 45 minute drive to work each day.

First, we had to move and set up our apartment in “College Park Towers.” This wasn’t so simple, due to the tight schedule. My internship at Brookdale Hospital ended at 8:00AM Friday, July 1, 1977. I was assigned to be on-call at the hospital Thursday night, the last night of the internship year. I also had to report to the NIH in Bethesda, Maryland by 5 PM Friday afternoon. And we still had to make Shabbos that night in our new apartment!

To make this all work out, Mommy and Bubby Esther drove to Maryland on Thursday and met the moving truck with all our stuff at the apartment. They had to supervise the unloading of the truck and placement of the furniture in the apartment and get ready for Shabbos at the same time. I was unable to help them because I couldn’t leave New York until Friday morning at which time I traveled by airplane to Washington, DC. Then I went directly to the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD to sign in at my new job. We all had a hectic complicated day and couldn’t begin to relax until Mommy and Bubby Esther lit the Shabbos candles shortly before sunset.

In College Park we met several lovely Chabad families, including the Silversteins, the Creegers, and the Rosenbloom siblings. We *davened* in a *Nusach Ari minyan* at the Hillel House. Wearing my *kapote* and black hat on Shabbos, I drew some stares as I walked to and from the Hillel House. Once, a car pulled up and a bunch of rowdy students shouted, “Abraham Lincoln!”

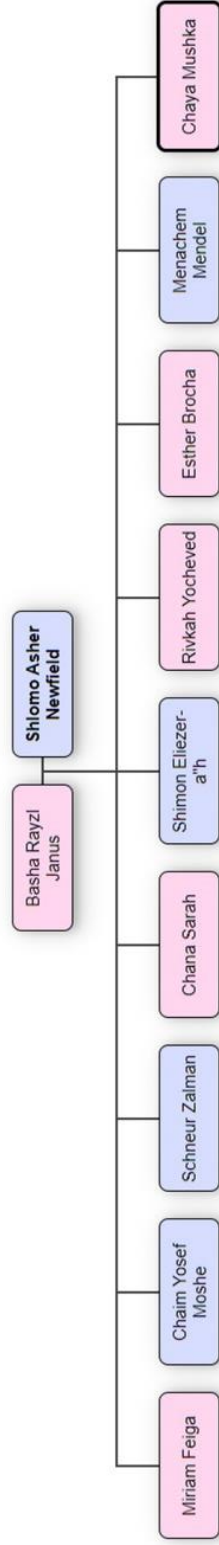
As Pesach approached, we ordered the special foods needed for the holiday. I went to the Hillel House to pick out our hand-made *shmura matzos* from the supply Rabbi Silverstein had stockpiled. I was careful to select only whole *matzos* from the many open boxes. Since I knew that broken *matzos* could not be used for the seder plate, I picked the sturdiest and thickest *matzos* I could find. My whole *matzos* turned out to be rock-hard and unbreakable. Unfortunately, they were also impossible to chew, as well! Forget about being able to swallow and digest them. The next year, when Pesach approached, I used this experience to select *matzos* that were both whole *and* thin.

Another tickler was the time our *shul* lent our only Torah to a not-so-*frum* group for an event. They returned the Torah to us before the next Shabbos. When it was time for the Torah reading, our *baal koreh* lifted off the Torah mantle. We were all quite surprised to find that our beloved Torah—was *upside-down!!* I wonder how the previous group had read it.

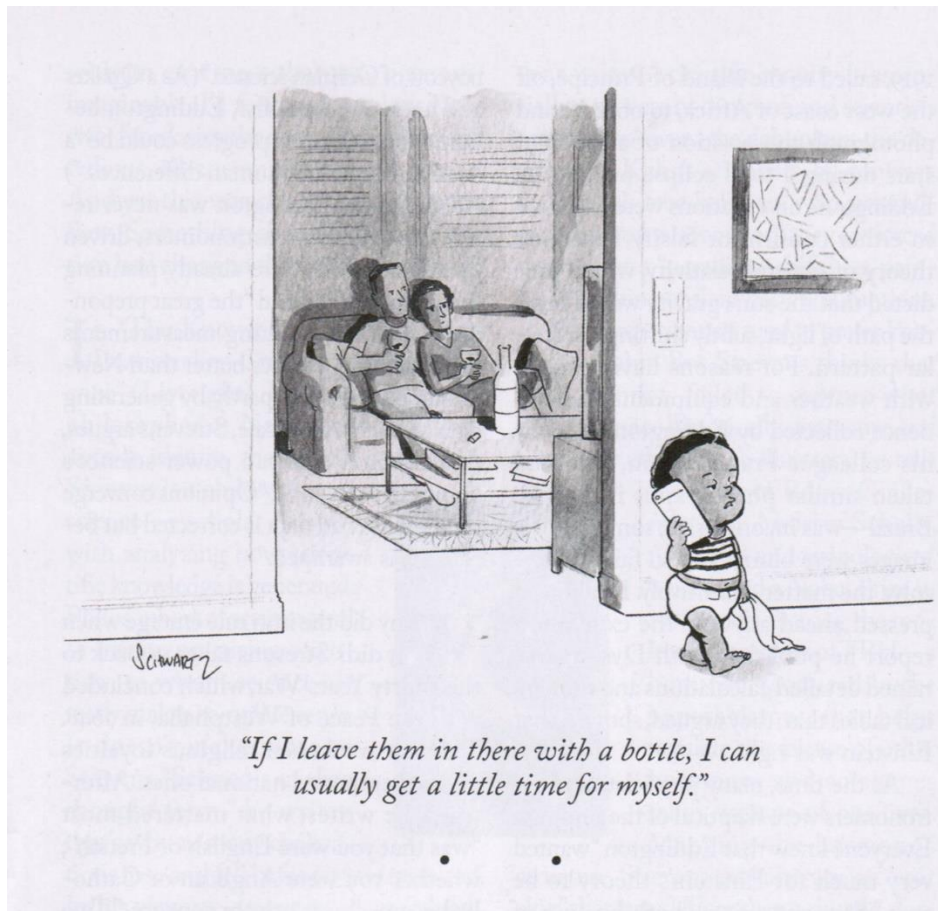


Our dream of starting a family began while we were living in Maryland. The next section will introduce you to our first child, Miriam.

The Newfield Children



There is an old Jewish expression, “A first-born girl is a good sign for future sons.” How true.



With the arrival of our first baby, Mommy and I had to adjust our lifestyle and schedule accordingly. This cartoon is an ironic riff on parenthood.

Miriam Joins the Family

The big event of our sojourn in Maryland was the birth of Miriam Feiga, our first child. She arrived on the 13th day of Nissan, about 36 hours before *licht bentching* for Shabbos and Pesach. This was not a particularly convenient time for us, but Miriam had her way. She was delivered at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland by Dr. Merriwether, a friendly and compassionate female obstetrician.

By the way, this reminds me of a cute story. When Mommy went to her prenatal visits at the hospital, she always wore her only wig, which we affectionately called the “Mop” due to its short simple style. When Miriam was three months old, we visited New York and used the occasion to purchase a longer more attractive *sheitel*. When Mommy went back for her next visit to Dr. Merriwether, the nurses were very excited to see her new look. They had never suspected that she was wearing a wig, so they all said, “I love your new haircut!”

Back to the delivery. Since that year’s *k’vius* was for a three-day Yom Tov, I left Mommy and Miriam at the hospital in Bethesda, and I returned to College Park so I could say *kaddish* with the *minyan* for my father, Grandpa Joe. The nurses at the naval hospital were very concerned that Mommy should have enough nourishing food to eat. It seems they weren’t so impressed by the “*matzah* and grape juice diet.” They kindly chipped in and went shopping for Mommy in the “Kosher for Passover” aisle of the local supermarket. They came back with a small collection of Passover foods such as boxes of *matzah-ball mix*, potato pancake powder, and glass jars of borscht. If only Mommy had our Pesach kitchen with her in her hospital room!

Also, we didn’t own a stitch of clothing for Miriam or a crib, a carriage, or a car seat. And now it was *yom tov* and no time to shop. Fortunately, another new mother on the ward, gave Mommy a stretchy for Miriam so she would have something to wear on the way home. The first day of *chol hamoed* was very busy. I picked up Mommy and Miriam from the hospital, we finished covering the entire kitchen with aluminum foil, and we went out to buy all the baby equipment we needed.

A little story about Baby Miriam. I didn’t get a chance to hold her until we were back in our own apartment. Miriam was lying on a bed and I went to pick her up. I held her in both hands and lifted her. WHOOSH! My arms shot quickly up in the air, as if propelled by an explosive

force. As a new father without experience with babies, I had anticipated that she would be much heavier, more like a giant bag of charcoal or a ton of bricks. But guess what? At seven pounds, she felt light as a feather!

As Miriam grew older and learned how to crawl, we had new adventures. Late one Friday afternoon, when Mommy was gathering our clothing from the laundry room down the hall from our apartment, little Miriam vanished from her side! Miriam wasn't in the hall. She wasn't back in the apartment. Mommy searched and searched all over. Could someone have kidnapped our precious baby? Holding back tears, Mommy ran down to the lobby, hoping to catch the evil kidnapper on the way out or at least sneak a glimpse of the get-away car's license plate number. But there was no trace of Miriam! Mommy ran back to the apartment. She planned to call the police to report a missing child. And it was already close to *licht bentching* time! Mommy wished that I would get home from work already. And how would we coordinate the police search of the neighborhood and greater metropolitan area over Shabbos?

But when Mommy returned to our apartment door, she heard a little voice whimpering in the distance. Where could Miriam be? Mommy searched up and down the hall for the source of the desperate cries. When she could not locate Miriam on our floor, it occurred to Mommy that Miriam might be on another floor. But which one? The mystery was resolved when Miriam's voice was carried through the air vent between the floors. This led Mommy to the floor above us. And there was Miriam! She was outside the door of the apartment directly above ours!

Miriam must have entered the open elevator all by herself and gotten out on the floor above. With her excellent nesting instinct, Miriam had crawled to the door of the apartment in the same position as ours. By the time I got home, all the excitement was history and we enjoyed a lovely Shabbos reunited together.

As you know, Mommy is a terrific cook and baker. She is always eager to try out new recipes and utilize new ingredients. When we were living in College Park, Maryland she decided to bake a cake topped with cherry pie filling. The batter looked delicious and Mommy eagerly placed it in the oven, hoping to have it ready for dessert after supper. The cake rose dramatically in the oven and overflowed the pan. This caused wisps of smoke to come out of the oven. Mommy saw this but didn't want to interrupt the baking process because then the cake would never be

ready. So, she let it continue baking. Then more smoke came out. And more smoke. Mommy hoped that the cake would be ready very soon. She glanced out the window and noticed fire trucks pulling up to our building. “That’s interesting,” she thought. Then she heard voices in the hall. One neighbor called out, “I know the people who live in that apartment! They have a little baby!” Then the firemen banged on the door. “Open up! Open up!” When Mommy opened the door, they came rushing in with all their axes and equipment. “Where’s the fire?” Mommy reluctantly admitted, “I was doing a little baking!”

When the smoke cleared and the firemen returned to their station, Mommy and Miriam were safe and sound but the cherry-filled cake was a casualty. And I had to scrub the oven. It turns out that the building smoke detectors are connected directly to the local fire department. That night we had Jell-O for dessert, instead.

After a year in our one-bedroom apartment, we moved, a block away to a two-bedroom apartment in the same complex. We lifted our wall-to-wall light green carpeting and had it reinstalled in our new apartment. (A year later, we moved it to our new house in Crown Heights, where it is still in use over 40 years later, although the color has since transformed into a more fashionable gray.)

Since our year as *choson* and *kallah* in Maryland, time has passed quickly. As time went by, Yossi, Zalman, Chana Sara, Shimmy, Rivky, Esty, Mendy and Chaya joined the family. As the Chumash relates about our father Jacob when he worked for seven years to earn his wife, Rachel, “it seemed to him only a few days.” But it did take *some time*, after all. More than a four-year-old girl would figure in her magical way of thinking. Let me explain... Last year, Esty met Yossi Blau and they decided to get married. In a phone call to his young daughter in Florida, he told her the good news about their plans and that they hoped their new family would be blessed with children. Little Hadassah was very happy to hear this. When Yossi called her the next day for their regular Zoom, the first thing she asked was, “*Did you get the baby yet?*”



The Rebbe took a special interest in every boy and girl. On this occasion, the Rebbe stood for many hours personally distributing a printed booklet of Torah thoughts to each individual. In this photo Miriam has her turn to approach the Rebbe while Rabbi Klein and Rabbi Groner assist.

נופילד - ברוקלין

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

Lubavitch

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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן

ליוכאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי

ברוקלין, נ.י.

בי"ה, כדי ניסן תשי"ב

ברוקלין, נ.י.

מרים פייגא תי

ברכה ושלוש!

במענה למכתבה, בו כותבת אשר הגיעה לגיל
שנים עשרה שנה, היא עונת בת מצוה,

הנה יהי רצון שחבל עליך עול מלכות שמים
ועול מצות בלבב שלם, והשם יתברך יצליחך בלימודך
ובהנהגה ותגדלי להיות ראוי' לשם בת חב"ד, מתאימה
לרצון נשיאינו הקדושים זצוקלה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע,

ותשפיע גם על החבירות תי' שלך בזה, בדבור
ועוד יותר - על ידי היותך דוגמא חי' של בת ישראל
המחונכת בדרכי החסידות.

וזה יביא לך אושר רוחני וגשמי.

ברכה

When Miriam turned twelve the Rebbe wrote her a letter congratulating her on her Bas Mitzvah.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of AdvantageCare

In 1979, after two years at the National Institutes of Health, it was time for me to move on and complete my dermatology residency. Since I was now a commissioned officer in the United States Public Health Service, all I needed was to put in for a transfer to a different location. This was smoothly accomplished and we were able to return to New York. I was able to complete my dermatology residency at the United States Public Health Service Hospital in Stapleton, Staten Island.

When President Ronald Reagan closed my hospital in 1981, in a short-sighted self-destructive feckless plan to save money, I was suddenly left without a job and health insurance. At the time, Mommy was expecting (Zalman) and was due in about a month. I searched for an immediate job opening and found one in Hempstead, Long Island, with “AdvantageCare Physicians,” a medical group affiliated with the insurer HIP (Health Insurance Plan). It was a *shlep*-and-a-half to travel there, but at least the drive was going in the opposite direction of traffic. This is known as a “reverse commute.” I figured I could manage for a year until I could find something closer.

This reminds me of a Crown Heights *balabus* named Yossi Brook. He had multiple careers starting with a pizza store, then as a kosher supervisor, and I’m sure many others. Then one day we needed a metal railing for our new porch. I called a fence company in the Crown Heights Directory and who should show up but our old friend, Yossi Brook. I asked him, “I didn’t know you were an iron man?” He answered, “*I didn’t know, myself!*”

At any rate, my work experience was quite the opposite of Mr. Brook’s. I didn’t change my career, or even my job, for many, many years. With the help of the Rebbe’s *brocha*, the AdvantageCare Physicians job lasted 35 years, three months and five days!

During my first year of working for AdvantageCare Physicians there were no meetings, neither with the Dermatology Department (that is, myself) and nor with anyone else. This was a very different atmosphere from working as a resident in the hospital. For the first time in my medical career, I was on my own. To bolster my confidence, I carried around a textbook on dermatological treatment, more or less as a security blanket. I kept it with me all the time until it

finally fell apart. As a new member of the medical group, I soon came to understand that the secret of success was to follow orders, avoid making suggestions, and never ask questions!

In time, the group demanded more and more from the doctors. For example, I started out working “full-time” which was defined as four days and one evening a week. After a while, this increased to five days and two evenings a week. The patient schedule also increased from four, to five, to six an hour. My lunch break shrank worse than a cotton tee-shirt in a hot dryer, from one hour, to half an hour, to nothing! Also, it was almost comical how my office played musical chairs bouncing around the building whenever a new administrator came up with his or her own new floor plan. As was my custom, I never complained. This was simply one of the costs of working in a group.

However, bigger changes were yet to come. After many decades of the physician shareholders owning and operating the group, HIP imposed an outside management team to make all the decisions. This was a financial disaster, as the group was forced into money-losing deals in real estate, information technology, and communications. The final blow came when HIP forced the group to dissolve and made the doctors, formerly partners, into employees. I continued working under this new regime for four years, until the group decided to dispense with specialists completely and my position was terminated.

So, although I had expected to remain with the group until I was ready to retire, instead I entered the “brave new world” of private practice, working for young and ambitious dermatologists in Brooklyn and Queens. After a year or two, these jobs also ended, when I was replaced by physician assistants. This development is hard to understand and accept. In this case, a patient has been referred to a specialist presumably because his primary care provider is unable to manage his condition. Now, the patient winds up in the care of a provider who isn’t even a physician! As for supervision, the MD officially in charge is off-premises and rarely, if ever, consulted.

I now work at three local hospitals, supervising young resident physicians in dermatology clinics. I find it stimulating and enjoyable to work with such knowledgeable and committed doctors. They are eager to learn the many clinical pearls I have gathered over the years.

Let me backtrack a little and explain why I stayed with the “group” for so many years. Simply put, the arrangement worked for me. I had a steady salary that increased gradually over time. I didn’t pay any overhead expenses. The group covered the office lease, staff salaries, supplies, advertising, medical license, continuing medical education, malpractice insurance, health insurance, and part of my retirement savings. I got a month vacation and I never had to work on Shabbos or Yom Tov. I wasn’t required to take my work home to do on my own time and I didn’t have any “on-call.” I recall the reaction I got from my teacher, Rabbi Avrohom Osdoba, when I was first hired by the group. I listed for him all the benefits provided by the job and Rabbi Osdoba asked, “And they *pay you*, also?”

Moreover, I was proud to represent traditional Yiddishkeit while in the workplace. With a full beard, a large black *yarmulke*, and dangling *tzitzis* fringes, I knew I was being observed everywhere I went. In addition, everything I said or did, was carefully judged. I always tried to be honest, respectful, and empathetic with patients. In my experience, it became clear to me that many patients made office visits for reasons other than the itch or rash on their skin. Some were lonely, some were anxious and some were probably just plain bored. Patients were reluctant to cancel their appointments even if their skin problem had resolved in the meantime. Likewise, patients even kept their appointments when they couldn’t remember what they were coming for. They all knew Dr. Newfield would welcome them warmly. As they say, “No problem *too big*. No problem *too small*!” Sometimes, when the office was very busy, I had to cut short the “*schmoozing*” and move things along. Even then, patients would comment after a visit, “Dr. Newfield, you’re the only doctor who takes the time to listen to me!”

While I’m on the topic of having a Jewish beard, let me tell you about one of my patients in Long Island, an elderly Jewish woman named Mrs. Goldin. Her eyes sparkled when she told me she loves seeing my beard. It reminded her of her late father-in-law who was a rabbi. She told me, “He was very religious!” As proof, she documented his religious qualifications with the surprising claim, “You know, Poppy wrote the *Shulchan Aruch*!” I thought to myself, “Yeah right, what else is new? Everyone knows that the *Shulchan Aruch* was written over 400 years ago by Rabbi Yosef Karo.” Then it dawned on me that she must be referring to the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, which was *translated into English* in New York by Rabbi Hyman Goldin, her beloved Poppy!

I'd like to conclude this section by sharing the experience of my dear colleague, Mark. He was raised in a traditional Jewish home, but strayed from the "path" and eventually married a non-religious woman. While working as a physician in our group, he was stirred to return to orthodox Jewish observance. However, there were a number of obstacles in his way. He wanted to go to *shul* with his sons on Shabbos, but he was scheduled to work in the center on Saturdays. He asked the administration to change his schedule to accommodate this. They refused. He protested, "But, Dr. Newfield gets off!" They replied, "How can you compare yourself with Dr. Newfield? He wears a *yarmulke*!" So, Mark started wearing a *yarmulke* at work and was finally able to go to shul with his sons on Shabbos.

However, I suspected his wife might not have been ready to accept his wearing a *yarmulke* at home. And I was right. I asked Mark if he wore it at home. Answer, "Not yet." So, Mark became the rarest of individuals who did the exact opposite of the familiar saying, "Be a Jew at home and a *mensh* in the street!"

With his earnest dedication and "*siata d'shmaya*," Heavenly assistance, Mark gradually won over his wife and they derive *nachas* from raising their four sons as Torah-true Jews. The story of Mark and his family is but one example of the Rebbe's foresight and influence. Having Lubavitchers live and work in outlying communities can make a lasting impression on many other Jews, even those who only observe from a distance.



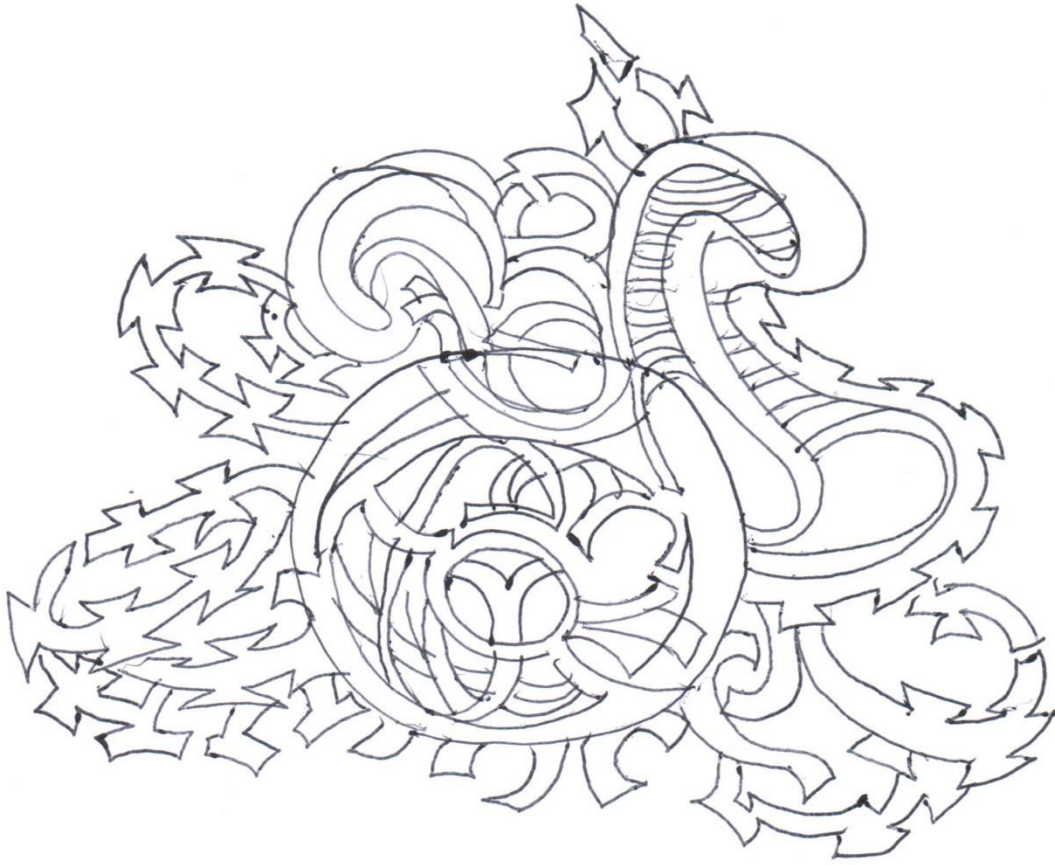
I'm no Jackson Pollak, but I'm a big fan of his "drip paintings." I am including a selection of my drawings for your enjoyment.

Illustrations

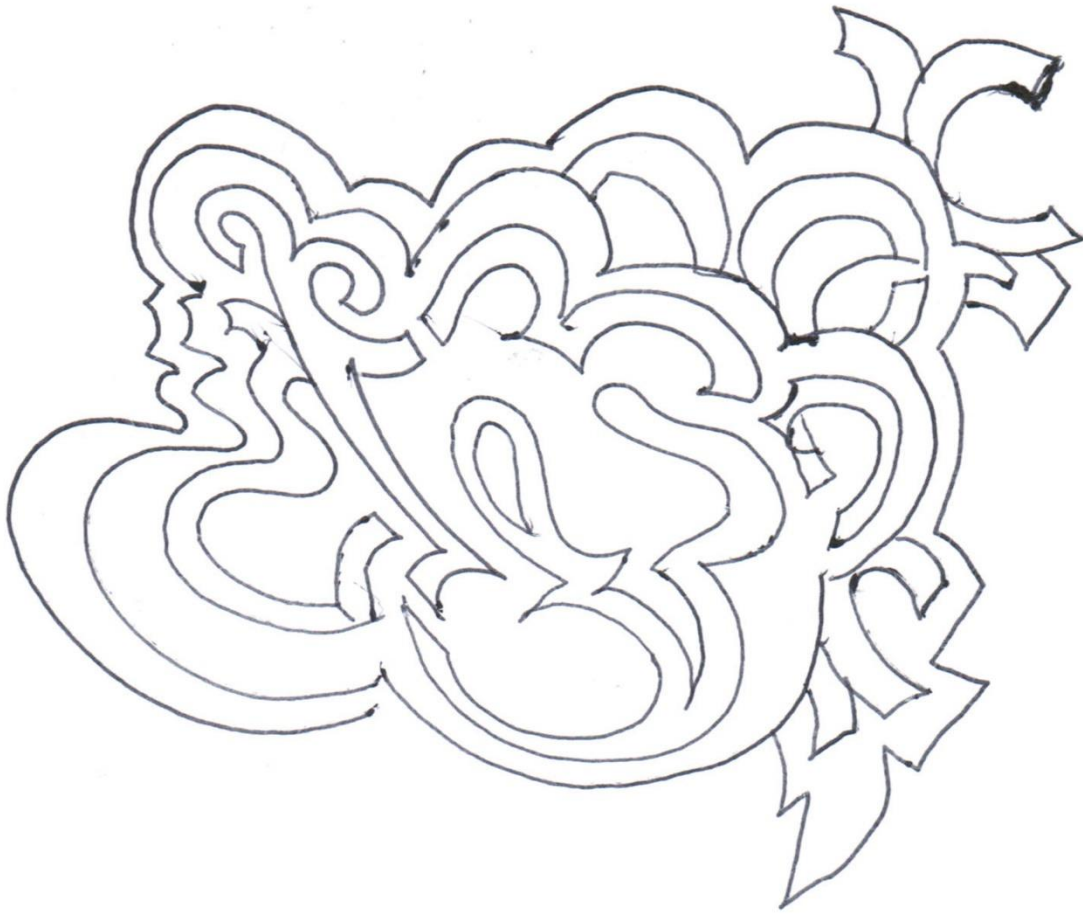
Mayan Fantasy



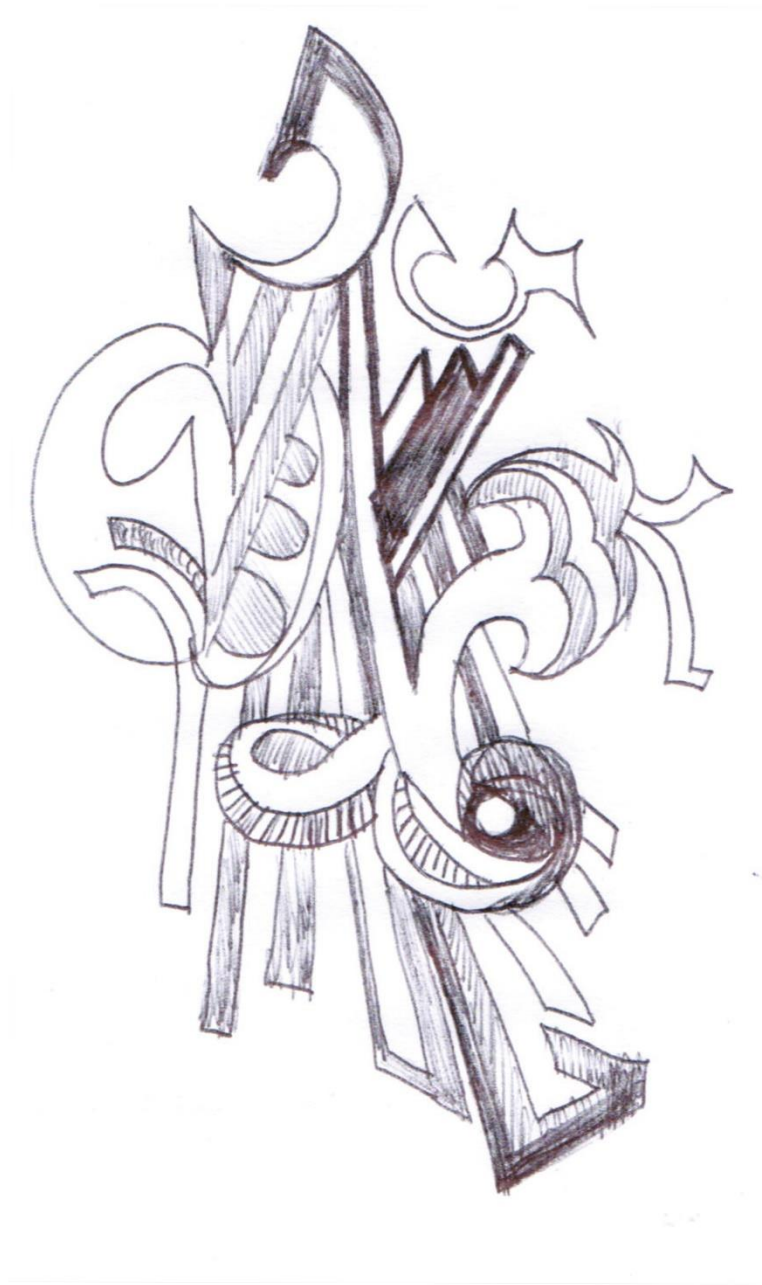
Dinner Secrets Revealed



The Cornucopia of Life



Nature in Harmony



Reaching to the Stars



I designed and constructed this “Mizrach” sign which was inspired by Jewish folk art. It is on display in the Gelernter Shul to indicate the proper direction of prayer, namely eastward towards Jerusalem.

My Firsts

The following is my recollection of "firsts." These may not seem altogether earth-shattering, but many incidents do stand out in my memory. I'm not talking about the first time I set foot on the moon, or the first time I set off an atom bomb, or the first time I did something else. These are all real or imagined milestones every boy experiences some time or another. Also, there were undoubtedly other firsts such as my first television experience or my first telephone conversation. These appliances were in our apartment since I was a baby. I grew up with them and accepted them like the sun, the moon, and the seasons.

What I'd like to explore are other firsts, neither big nor small, that left an impression on me forever. Take pistachio ice cream. Soft ice cream. We never had that at home. But when I was six, we discovered the Carvel store on Nostrand Avenue and Avenue P that made it in a fancy machine. What an outrageously exotic flavor—and color! How could a dry salty nut—in those days almost always sold dyed red—result in such a heavenly smooth sweet green confection? To me, it was magic. And I loved it.

Then there was the miracle of riding a bicycle. Somehow, when I was about seven, I learned how to balance on two wheels—no training wheels needed! What was more incredible was that I learned how to get on and off smoothly by coasting on my left foot and swinging my right foot over the seat. Now, I didn't need to prop myself against the tree or fence and push off, wobbling uncomfortably for the first few seconds. Here I was, the clumsiest kid on the block, afraid to play ball because it might smash my glasses—and wow—I could speed along on a grown-up bicycle. Forget skiing, sky diving, or parasailing—I was moving with the wind in my face and nothing to stop me.

Another first was swimming. When I was eight years old, I learned to swim at Camp Alvord where there were no bikes or balls, anyhow. We had magnificent Lake Winnepesaukee at our doorstep. Miles of clear cold water filled the horizon. And Camp Alvord gave us plenty of opportunity to get in and on the water. There was swimming instruction in the morning and free swim in the afternoon. We had lessons, badges, tests, buddies—all mapped out in a YMCA style program from "minnows" to "flying fish." It was great fun and nothing I couldn't handle. Who wanted to scrape your toes on the rocky lake bottom covered in slimy seaweed? That was yucky. Once you could swim, you could go for the deep water and climb onto the raft with the big kids.

Every once in a while, the counselor would blow his whistle and we had to call out our numbers in pairs with our buddies. No problem. The main thing was going where you wanted and doing what you wanted without anyone bossing you around. Why, I could even swim underwater like a fish!

Some firsts were memorable but not pleasant. My brother David and I went to Camp Alvord by train, an overnight shlep requiring not just a change of trains but also changing stations in Boston. Bubby Ruth decided to make it easy for us to return home quickly—by airplane! It sounded exciting. My first airplane travel. We boarded the DC-3 in New Hampshire and headed for New York. Oh yes, there were three or four stops on the way. We landed. We took off. Over and over. Each time the plane shook and I shook. The cute paper bags tucked into the seat pockets came out. By the time we landed, I was green and barely able to stand or talk.

When I was ten or eleven years old, I got my first job. I was hired to walk a neighbor's dog after school. I had to overcome my natural fear of dogs to complete the job. (It wasn't so many years since Mrs. Mason's Scottish Terrier had nipped me on my lip when I was three years old. The scar is still there.) But the thought of earning 25 cents just for walking around the block was tempting. I didn't enjoy walking the dog as much as I love gardening. In any case, the job didn't last long, but I had something to add to my resume.

My next first was the night I was so nervous I couldn't fall asleep. I was sixteen and graduating the next day from James Madison High School. As salutatorian, I was chosen to speak at the graduation in a huge movie theater on Flatbush Avenue. Then I had to rush to the airport to fly to San Diego, California for a National Science Foundation summer program at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. After the flight, I needed to claim my luggage and find the bus from the airport to the college in La Jolla. To make things worse, I was arriving a few days late due to graduation. All these things together made me very nervous. How would I get through the next 24 hours? The speech, the flight, the luggage, the bus, and meeting the other students! And I didn't even know at the time that there were wild rattlesnakes on campus! As you can imagine "sleep fled from my eyes." I don't know what I said in my speech. I hardly remember anything about the flight. At one point the pilot announced, "We are flying over the Grand Canyon." Big deal. I just needed to push on and reach my destination. Somehow, I made it to the campus and found our group. Nice kids. A lot like me.

Four years at Columbia College had its own challenges. Let me mention one small one. We had a sophisticated biology laboratory experiment growing cells in tissue culture. Then we screened them for mutations for a certain gene. I used these techniques years later at the National Institutes of Health where I did research in cell biology. But what I remember from Columbia was the first time I had to open a Ziploc bag. Each student was given a tiny vial of chemicals or enzymes enclosed in a one-inch bag. I had never seen a Ziploc bag before. At home, we had sandwich bags with flaps, but nothing like this. The bag was sealed and I had no idea how to open it. I was much too embarrassed to ask a fellow student. So, I turned it over and over and looked and looked. I had to get the vial out for the experiment. But how? Finally, I ripped the bag. I felt very badly, fearful that I had ruined some valuable item that I would need to use again. Live and learn.

The expression goes, “Learning never ends.” I graduated from college at twenty and medical school at twenty-four. I got my New York State medical license. But I still needed to study for one more license. You guessed it. A driver’s license. So back to school I went. This time I had to suspend my All-Ivy standard due to the circumstances. I could not find an Ivy League school that offered driving. I chose to enroll in the Flatbush Junction School of Driving, a one room establishment at the convergence of Flatbush and Nostrand Avenues. I was an eager student and studied the booklet conscientiously.

When it was time to take the road test, I scheduled it in Sheepshead Bay, alongside a large sewage treatment plant. Not many cars or pedestrians passed in that area. The test officer got in the car and checked my papers. “Drive to the corner. Turn right. Turn left. Park.” So far, so good. But to my surprise and dismay, the result was a “fail.” “Unsafe this. Unsafe that, etc.” I took the judgement in stride and continued practicing. I decided to try my luck the next time at a different location. “*M’shana makom, m’shana mazel.*” (Change your location, change your fortune.) Destination: Red Hook. Now at least I knew where it was from my post office experience.

After a few months, the test date finally came around. And guess who else came around? As we pulled up to the corner, Bubby Ruth and I saw—you guessed it—the same test officer! As he got into the car, I thought, “Should I say remember me? I believe we’ve met before. Do I know you from somewhere?” But better sense prevailed. I stayed quiet. More like numb. And I prevailed: I passed the driving test! So, add that to my list of firsts. Not achieved very early, but better late than never!



In 1977, shortly before I was married, I took this picture of the Rebbe in 770. Here he is distributing *kos shel bracha* after *havdala* following Passover. Rabbi Mentlich is refilling the Rebbe's silver cup with wine. The hasidim waited in line until late into the night for their turn. This was accompanied by joyous singing of Lubavitch melodies.

My Simchas Torah with the Rebbe

The Mishna Sukkah (5:1) states, “He who has not seen the *Simchat Bet Hashoevah* (the Water Drawing Ceremony) has never seen rejoicing in his life.” This refers to the celebration on the festival of Succos in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem in ancient times. Likewise, all the excitement and outpouring of joy throughout the month of Tishrei in Crown Heights culminated in the late-night *hakafos* (dances with the Torah) on Simchas Torah in 770. Thousands of hasidim from all over the world crammed into 770 hoping to catch even a momentary glimpse of the Rebbe dancing while holding his small Sefer Torah. The crush of bodies straining for a view was indescribable. The pressure made it difficult even to take a breath.

After we settled in Crown Heights in 1979, I myself, followed the customary holiday schedule. First, we *davened* and danced the *hakafos* with the young children in our local shul. Then we went home for *kiddush* and the holiday *seuda*. About one AM, we went to 770 hoping to get a good place. The problem was that ten other people also wanted to stand in that same spot. The central area of 770 was called “the washing machine” for good reason.

This scenario was repeated year after year without any serious mishaps except for three years that stand out in my memory. One year, I bravely pushed myself into the washing machine. I hoped to survive the massive waves of pushing and shoving until the *hakafos* would begin. The minutes passed but the pressure only got worse. We were pressed together so forcefully that it was impossible to turn, raise an arm, or look down at the floor. Suddenly, I felt an incredible pain in my foot! The crowd had pushed me right onto a large nail sticking out of a board laying on the floor, ripped from a broken bench. I had it. *Hakafos* or no *hakafos*, I had to get out. There was a limit to my *mesiros nefesh* (self-sacrifice) and now I had passed it. With my remaining strength, I pushed my way out of 770 and limped home. As time went on, the wound healed and only the memory remained painful.

Somehow, I didn’t learn from my mistakes. Simchas Torah came again, and I got caught up in the excitement, all over again. This time, I made it through all the Rebbe’s *hakafos* in one piece. Then I saw an opportunity to catch a parting look at the Rebbe before he went upstairs. Some *bocherim* had erected a stack of milk crates chained to a pillar in the center of the floor. Now that the *hakafos* were over, the *bocherim* abandoned their perch. I couldn’t resist climbing up to get an unobstructed view. Up I went *and down I came* as the milk crates collapsed under me! So much for all their chains and ingenuity. Miraculously, I escaped serious injury.

The next year, I devised a plan *to have my cake and eat it, too*. I found a way to see the Rebbe’s *hakafos* without putting myself in danger. Over the years, I had seen one or two hasidim watch the *hakafos* through a small periscope. It occurred to me that I could make a much longer periscope so that I could stand further back and still see the Rebbe. Tinkering in my basement workshop, I assembled my contraption using a four-foot wooden stick with mirrors attached at either end. It was simple, elegant, and incredibly functional. I set off to 770 with high hopes,

carefully cradling my periscope in my arms. I made it safely inside with my brain-child. I waited with eager anticipation for the *hakafos* to begin. Then came the climactic moment! The Rebbe came down from his platform and began the first dance. The thousands of hasidim sang deliriously. I looked through the periscope. I COULD SEE! As he joyously danced, every step of the Rebbe was sublime. His holy face shone with radiant light. All my planning, all my labors, had finally paid off.

A minute later, the hasid next to me motioned that he wanted to borrow my periscope. I was in a dilemma. Should I have *ahavas Yisroel* (love of a fellow Jew) and lend it to him, or should I hold onto it and keep looking myself. Then I thought, he probably traveled thousands of miles to get here from France or Israel. He may have spent years saving up for this trip. How could I deny him a chance of a lifetime to see the Rebbe dancing on Simchas Torah? I handed him the periscope. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw what happened next. The hasid didn't even look in the periscope. Instantly, he used *my* periscope to knock the hat off someone standing three rows in front of him blocking his view. To my horror, *that* hasid, now enraged, grabbed the periscope and smashed it! *Oy vey iz mir!* Thus ended the career of my first and last periscope.

Since Gimmel Tamuz, all Lubavitchers have had to make major adjustments in their *avodas Hashem* (service to G-d). In a thousand and one ways, each of us has searched for new channels to connect themselves with the Rebbe. The Rebbe left us a whole library of *seforim*, all of his *sichos*, *mamorim*, and letters. There are numerous videos of the Rebbe's public addresses, *farbrengens*, and personal encounters. The thousands of *shluchim* and the tens of thousands of children growing up on *shlichus* are spreading the Rebbe's message around the world. Every year, thousands of visitors flock to 770 for inspiration by spending time in the Rebbe's *daled amos* (customary space).

Perhaps, there isn't as much to *see* in 770 these days, but there is still plenty to *feel*.



Hachnosos orchim, hospitality to guests, is an ancient Jewish custom dating back to Abraham our Father. Mommy and I often invited guests for Shabbos and holiday meals and provided sleeping accommodations, if needed. Sometimes, things didn't always turn out quite as we anticipated, as you will see in the next section.

The French Guests

One yom tov, we hosted a French couple and their three children. They enjoyed their stay so much that, two weeks after the holiday was over, they still didn't make any preparations to leave. They indefinitely postponed their planned trip to California and apparently forgot about Paris, the beauty of the Louvre, and the Eiffel Tower as well. The wife insisted on cooking a traditional French dinner for our family to express their gratitude for our open-ended hospitality.

To make this dinner possible, first Basha had to take them shopping for all the many needed ingredients, at our expense of course. My wife searched from store to store to find just the right couscous, spices, etc. They also needed new specialized pots as well. The cooking itself tied up the kitchen for most of the day. Basha had to stand guard the whole time to make sure they didn't mix up the meat and dairy dishes or perform some other inadvertent violation of the kosher laws. They managed to use almost every pot, bowl, dish, and utensil in the kitchen, leaving Basha a major *tircha* to clean up afterwards. She also had to dispose of the shattered pieces of the large glass mixing bowl that accidentally slipped.

But wait. It gets worse. When the food was ready, I sat down at my usual seat at the head of the table. The guests brought out an elaborate couscous, steaming with meat and vegetables, and placed it on the table before me. Being good natured, I insisted that the French family join us at the table to share in the delicacy. Then came the kicker. The guests said, "*Non monsieur! It's all for you! We don't like couscous!*"

Basha put her foot down. The guests must return to France *immédiatement*. And so they did—about a month later.

In truth, it was rare for guests to behave like this family. We have had many wonderful opportunities to host lovely, considerate, and appreciative visitors. Since they come from all over the world, they are often surprised by our customs and habits, which may appear strange or unusual to them.

For example, two years ago a group of Jewish female college students from Russia visited my family. They were guests at our Shabbos meal. When I served the cholent (a hearty beef stew)

I put on a kitchen apron to protect my formal clothes. Later, at the end of the meal, I cleared the dishes from the table while my wife chatted with the ladies.

Noting my full beard and hasidic attire, the guests assumed I was a rabbi, and not a physician. As they prepared to leave, one young woman exclaimed, “I never saw a rabbi wear an apron! And I never saw a husband clear the table!”

Mommy and I may not be as famous or imposing as the Empire State Building or some other New York City landmark, but even a brief encounter with our family makes a lasting impression. As Americans, and even more so as hasidic Jews, we are constantly being observed and evaluated. Countless things, both small and large, that we are accustomed to, or take for granted, are eye-openers to our co-workers, guests, and acquaintances.

An Encounter at the Counter...or Call Me a Sucker for Suckers

Every fall in Crown Heights a grand event takes place, the International Congress of Chabad Rabbis. Over 5,600 rabbis convene from more than 100 countries, many of them bringing along their young sons for a special boys' program. I love having Crown Heights full of visitors and *chayus* (enthusiasm).

The boys are organized into "bunks" according to their native language, given colorful t-shirts to wear, and supervised by rabbinical students acting as counselors. I met up with one Hebrew speaking group of about 25 children in a grocery store on Kingston Avenue. Each boy was given a dollar bill and went searching for as much candy or *nosh* as he could buy with it. While waiting on the checkout line to pay for my sandwich, I met a nine-year-old boy standing ahead of me. He was the son of Rabbi Mordechai Abergel in Singapore. As it happens, we have had a long association with Rabbi Abergel since Zalman went on *shlichus* to Singapore in 2002. Zalman and two of his friends spent a year there assisting the rabbi with his educational and outreach work in the Jewish community. Although young Mendel was talking rapidly in Hebrew with his new friends, he spoke English easily with me.

Our conversation went something like this.

"What's your name?"

"Mendel."

"How long have you lived in Singapore?"

"All my life."

"Do you know that there are now direct flights from Singapore to Newark?"

"Yeah, I came on one."

"How's the weather in Singapore?"

"I dunno."

As we inched closer to the checkout, I realized the problem. Mendel had collected a small mountain of candy. Keep in mind, this was the first time he saw all these tempting goodies without being told, "No, we can't buy this. It's not kosher." Imagine his excitement exploring aisle after aisle where every item was kosher. This just might be worth a trip halfway around the world!

The checkout clerk said that the dollar would only cover one pack of gum. The boy would have to put everything else back on the shelf.

When I saw the expression on Mendel's face, I couldn't help handing the clerk my credit card and buying the whole pile for him. So, what did the youngster select on his first trip abroad?

- FINI Jelly Worms gummy candy
- HUBBA BUBBA bubblegum
- SHTIX milk chocolate bar with strawberry flavor cream filling
- MENTOS chewing gum in a blister pack
- BOOMB snack-spray in a mini hand grenade

When we got out of the store, Mendel was still clutching the dollar bill. He was very grateful for the *nosh* and offered me the dollar. But I had a better idea.

“Take it with you when you fly home tomorrow and put it in the *tzedukah pushka* in the Singapore Chabad House.”

“Kay.”

Please enter address or insurance changes on back and check this box ☐. Please detach along dotted line and return this portion with your payment.

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Until your insurance has paid, the PLEASE PAY THIS AMOUNT represents the balance we estimate you owe.
 Any balance unpaid by your insurance will be due from you... Thank you.

This is one of Shimmy's many hospital bills. Note the offer to accept VISA, American Express, and Master Card for payment of the balance due of \$809,269.71!

Shimmy's Garden

This chapter is dedicated to the memory of our son, Shimmy, who passed away from leukemia at the age of twelve. Nothing else in the world, certainly including gardening, mattered to me as much as Shimmy. But for a life-long gardener, it's no surprise that the story of the two—our son, and my garden—became intertwined.

Shimmy was born the fifth of our nine children. He always stood out because of his shining personality, sharp sense of humor, friendliness and good looks. He was fastidious in his dress and looked great in his stylish clothes. Shimmy spoke clearly and thought methodically. He always did very well in school and took careful neat notes. Mommy and I were extremely proud of him.

Shortly before Thanksgiving in 1996, he noticed a slight swelling in his neck. This was the first sign of the cancer. As time went on, he was treated with chemotherapy in four hospitals. He suffered terribly and lost a lot of weight. His beautiful almost blond hair fell out. He made many emergency trips to the hospital for fevers and chills.

Through it all, we had wonderful support and encouragement from our relatives, friends and neighbors. Volunteers cooked suppers every night for months on end and delivered them to the hospital and to our home. Shimmy was given loads of toys and gadgets ranging from remote-control cars, to walkie-talkies, to a laptop computer. Dozens of seminary students donated a vital stream of blood and platelets to supply a seemingly endless number of transfusions. The “Bikur Cholim” blood he received was regarded by the doctors as the safest virus-free source. Shimmy's classmates called and visited often. They always sent school notes and homework, although Shimmy was usually too weak to keep up with his class work. Shimmy's pediatric oncologist, Dr. Peter Steinherz, was our constant guiding light. We consulted him on every detail of Shimmy's treatment, diet, and activities.

By the time summer arrived, Shimmy was in remission. There was no sign of the leukemia in his blood or even in the bone marrow. He rapidly regained his weight and regrew his hair. For two weeks, Shimmy went to Camp Simcha, a special sleep-away camp for children with cancer, and thoroughly enjoyed himself. He described the camp trip to Manhattan with awe. “We had a police car in front of our bus and a police car following us.” The ambulance that followed them did not interest him. According to Shimmy, the police escort was necessary because the campers

had so much to do and so much to see in such a short time. Of course, they had to have the police accompany them to make sure no delay would interfere with their busy schedule.

So it was, during the rest of the summer of his remission. Shimmy seemed to be in overdrive, eager to make up for lost time and take up new interests. He insisted that we put up a basketball hoop alongside our house. He learned to perform magic tricks and entertain his friends with them. Shimmy went to Yankee Stadium to root for his favorite pitcher, David Cone.

Camp Simcha arranged for a special visit by David Cone. We arrived early at Yankee Stadium before the game began. David Cone met us in the stands. After a brief chat with Shimmy, the famous ballplayer took off his baseball cap and autographed it. Then he put it on Shimmy's head! Of course, Shimmy was thrilled.

We took a family vacation in the Laurentian Mountains in Canada, stopping at Lake George on the way. Like a wild bird escaped from his cage, he plunged into the full gamut of arcade games, miniature golf, and horseback riding, all the while enjoying the rustic scenery and fresh air.

In Canada, we visited the lovely lakeside village of Sainte-Agathe and made a picnic lunch in the park. Then we drove on to the ski resort known as Mont Tremblant and took the lift to the summit of the mountain. Shimmy loved hiking and exploring each new location we came to. Our photo album is filled with pictures taken wherever we went. I didn't do much gardening that summer so I could spend as much time as possible with Shimmy.

In September, we hesitantly enrolled Shimmy in school. We could only hope and pray that the dreadful nightmare was over and he would remain in good health. He eagerly resumed his schoolwork with renewed enthusiasm. Shimmy insisted on teaching me the complex aspects of the Talmud that he learned each day in class. To make sure I grasped the significant concepts, he even prepared written tests for me which he marked and graded.

Sadly, after a month of school the dreaded lump returned in his neck. Our worst fears had come true. Shimmy had to be readmitted to the hospital for more chemotherapy. This time it did not succeed in inducing a remission. He came home for a few weeks in November to rest. It was then one year since his initial diagnosis.

At that time, I decided to make over our front garden. We had planted a weeping cherry tree in the center of it about a dozen years previously. It filled and shaded the small square space. Privet hedges surrounded the perimeter. However, during the summer, I noticed that the leaves of the cherry tree were prematurely turning yellow and then brown.

The tree eventually died, and I asked my teenage son, Zalman, to cut it down. Now the small front garden was open to the sun and presented the opportunity for a flower bed. I removed the remaining grass and cut the border of hedges down to the ground. In the comfort of my armchair, I selected a number of mixtures and collections from a wholesale catalogue of Dutch flower bulbs. I ordered a generous variety of tulips, daffodils, irises, crocuses, hyacinths, scilla, lilies and allium. Since most of the bulbs were packaged in bags of fifty, the total quickly added up. In all, I had nearly five hundred bulbs to plant.

This turned out to be a fairly large project. As many gardeners have discovered, I found out that ordering the bulbs was a lot easier than planting them. I dug up one section of ground at a time, removed some of the tree roots and rocks, added humus and fertilizer and positioned the bulbs. After the soil was replaced, I tried to remember what was where as I went on to the adjacent section.

When Shimmy felt well enough, I bundled him up from head to toe and let him sit on the front porch and watch me plant. I hoped the cool clear air would do him some good. It took several weekends and I told Shimmy about the various bulbs as I went along. I encouraged him to look forward to the spring when the bulbs would grow and blossom.

By December, the doctors informed us that the only chance of beating the leukemia was with a bone marrow transplant. This is a difficult and risky procedure requiring massive chemotherapy, total body radiation, and then the infusion of bone marrow cells from a donor. We were deeply discouraged when the tests showed that Shimmy's tissue type did not match that of any of his eight siblings. This meant we had to seek an unrelated donor whose blood-forming cells were less likely to successfully replace Shimmy's own cells.

In early January, Shimmy underwent the transplant from an unrelated donor located by a computer search of the worldwide registry. Despite the laboratory indication that the donor cells were compatible, serious complications took place. Many new and powerful experimental

treatments were attempted to control the reaction, all unsuccessful. We lost our courageous Shimmy eight weeks later.

Shimmy didn't live to see a single one of "his" bulbs come up. But grow they did, right on schedule, and the garden that was planted in his honor bloomed in his memory. I intended to attach a sign with the inscription "Shimmy's Garden" to the slender tree stump remaining from the weeping cherry tree standing in the midst of the glorious profusion of flowers. I discussed it with Mommy. She couldn't go along with that plan because the wound was still too fresh, too painful. So the stump remains bare, now only a symbolic marker of our hopes for Shimmy.

Many years have passed since then. The garden has continued to provide a measure of diversion and solace for me as I tend it and add flowers for each season. Our grandchildren are my loyal assistants, always eager to lend a hand when I put on my gardening gloves and head outside.

There is no sign in the garden. No dedication. No plaque. But *I* know it's Shimmy's garden each time I look at it. And now, dear reader, whenever you pass this way, *so will you*.



In order to engage in a garden-related activity in the winter dormant season, I would gather interesting plants and weeds to preserve as a xerox.

How to Become a Lubavitch Shliach

Living in Crown Heights gave Mommy and me the opportunity to live a *frum* Jewish life according to the *Shulchan Aruch*. As a Lubavitch neighborhood, the weekly cycle of preparing for Shabbos and the yearly succession of holidays dominated our activities. We wanted our children to be proud of their Jewish heritage and customs. Our boys never had any need or desire to hide their *yarmulkes* and *tzitzis*. Our girls always dressed in *tzinus* (modest) outfits. All their friends and almost all our neighbors were Lubavitch. I sometimes imagined that when they were little, the children figured that the Lubavitchers were the only *white* people in the world, since we were surrounded and outnumbered by Caribbean blacks.

We sent our boys to Oholei Torah (Tents of Torah) Yeshiva, which is the only yeshiva in America to teach its students a pure Torah curriculum. After its hasidic founders spent decades fighting the KGB in Russia for the right to teach Yiddishkeit to Jewish children, they had no desire to accommodate America. Since its founding in 1956, the yeshiva students studied the Torah, Talmud, and Jewish Law all day, every day, including Sunday. Yiddish was the language of instruction for all classes. Mommy and I hoped that the education provided at Oholei Torah would build a strong Jewish foundation for our boys as they mature into adulthood.

The following is a recent recollection by our son, Zalman, in which he describes the shock he felt at age nine when he discovered that there were non-Lubavitch Jews—and right here in Crown Heights, no less!

“Growing up in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn as a member of the Lubavitch Hasidic community, I can still remember the Shabbos morning when I was nine years old and I saw for the first time women wearing *yarmulkes* and prayer shawls in a synagogue.

That morning, I snuck away from my father and followed my friend, Moshe, to a small room in the Brooklyn Jewish Center. We opened the door of the synagogue and sheepishly peeked into the small sanctuary. What I saw made me doubt my own eyes. There, sitting in the pews were fifteen Conservative Jews, elderly men and women all clad in *yarmulkes* and prayer shawls, greeting each other *with kisses*. As if that wasn’t enough, a woman was leading the services! It was as if we had penetrated some mysterious barrier—like Harry Potter’s arrival at Platform 9¾

at King's Cross Station for Hogwarts—and entered an alternate universe where up was down and down was up and none of the usual rules held true.”

When he was eighteen Zalman went on a Passover mission to Russia. This was not an isolated excursion, but an integral part of the Lubavitch rabbinical training. Like Boy Scouts collecting merit badges to prepare themselves for meeting future challenges in life, the Lubavitch rabbinical students engage in a long series of outreach missions. This begins as children going with their yeshiva class to entertain the elderly in nursing homes and senior centers on Chanukah and Purim. As time passes, the youngsters accompany older siblings and neighbors on “mitzvah tanks” into Manhattan in preparation for Jewish holidays. For Chanukah, they distribute menorahs and for Pesach they give out hand-made *shmura matzah*.

Once a boy reaches the age of bar mitzvah, he begins a weekly “route” on Friday afternoons to visit Jewish stores and offices in the five boroughs to distribute Torah literature and encourage non-observant Jewish men to put on tefillin. Teenage girls visit shopping malls and busy commercial areas to distribute Sabbath candles to Jewish women and girls. High school and seminary students volunteer as counselors in “Camp Gan Israel” day camps around the world. The counselors are role models for their non-religious campers and develop strong relationships with them. Their goal is to inspire the children to follow the path of Torah by engaging them in exciting activities and enjoyable Jewish customs. Through these experiences, Lubavitch teenagers become comfortable and confident “selling” Orthodox Judaism to non-observant Jews.

Lubavitch is unique in this respect. In contrast, other Orthodox Jewish groups would not see any value in putting tefillin on non-observant Jews, for example, or having a non-observant Jewish woman light a candle if she’s not keeping the Sabbath afterward. Besides this, other Orthodox Jews would most likely be embarrassed to approach strangers to discuss Jewish observance.

Growing up in the insular hasidic environment, these young men and women, now on their own, are at risk of becoming influenced by the outside secular culture. The Lubavitcher Rebbe was cognizant that his followers might be in danger of spiritual weakening from interacting with the secular world. To this end, he would frequently discuss in his public addresses the Biblical precedent for self-sacrifice in order to help another Jew.

The Rebbe explained that the ancient Jewish priests of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem were entrusted with the preparation of the ashes of a red heifer. In a supra-rational ceremony these ashes were used to purify Jews who had become ritually impure through contact with a dead body. There is a counter-intuitive irony in this mitzvah. The priests themselves became ritually impure as a result of preparing and handling the red heifer ashes. This is a classic example of self-sacrifice. That is, the priests temporarily gave up their state of purity in order to help a fellow Jew. So, too, the Rebbe compared the self-sacrifice of his emissaries and their families to the conduct of the ancient Jewish priests.

I understand the ritual defilement of the ancient Jewish priests in preparing the *parah adumah* by means of a common-sense analogy. Imagine a traveler gets stuck in a muddy ditch on the side of the road. If another person passing by reaches down to pull him out, it is inevitable that the rescuer will also get splattered with some of the mud. Just as he must endeavor to restore his purity by bathing and cleaning his clothes, the modern-day Lubavitcher chosid must continue to study *hasidus* and connect himself to the Rebbe in order to restore himself.

Another by-product of this outreach training, while unstated, is critically important. This series of exposures to the outside world, gradually increasing in length and intensity, help immunize the Lubavitch men and women against assimilation. This comes about due to two interrelated factors. One is the Jewish pride that the emissaries earn because of the reinforcement they receive from their hasidic community in recognition of their valuable outreach work. The second is a tolerance they build up by interacting with the non-observant secular culture. Learning to deal with the outside world prepares them to pursue their ultimate mission of establishing Chabad houses around the world, often in isolated and secular environments.



This photo shows the two Zalman's on *shlichus* in Beijing, China. For one summer they were left in charge of the world's most populous country! Zalman Mendelson went on to become the head *shliach* of Wyoming.



Mommy and I never bought a vacation house. We did enjoy renting bungalows in the Catskills many summers when the children were young. After that we took shorter vacations, usually over Pesach. The next chapter gives a detailed account of our visit to Cancun.

Our Mexico Adventure: January 2018

Flying back from Cancun, Mexico is a good time to recall some of our experiences on the trip. Rivky, Esty, Mendy, and Chaya planned an ambitious vacation, going from Sunday to Sunday. They begged Mommy and me to come along and eventually we decided, “Why not?” We have never gone on a vacation *l’shma* (just for the sake of relaxing) before; either it was for Pesach, a visit to Bubby Ruth in California or Florida, or to Pops in Virginia or Florida, or for camp visiting day in the Catskills, the Poconos, or Montreal. The closest thing we’ve done was spending long weekends in Long Island at Aunt Marta’s Village Latch Inn in Southampton or at Dr. Debbie Sarnoff’s beach house in Amagansett. But now that I only work part-time, taking off doesn’t cost me much in lost work opportunity. Also, I am not bound by strict time limits on vacation days from work. So, we signed on for Cancun, a tourist trap if there ever was one, but promising a warm and sunny beach, not a bad combination in the middle of January.

Airplane tickets on Sunday were expensive when booked at the last minute, so Rivky booked Mommy and me from Monday to Monday, non-stop from JFK Airport. The children were a little worried that we couldn’t handle travelling alone, but we were determined to prove our capability. We would not have Rivky, our packing engineer to cleverly hide the frozen foods, liquids, and a Shabbos lamp that might look like a pipe-bomb to the TSA inspectors; Esty, our Spanish interpreter to negotiate with taxi drivers and bell-hops; Mendy, our muscle man to shlep the 49.9 pound suitcases; or Chaya to pick out best-sellers at the airport bookstore. But we would manage!

In any case, I had experience traveling to Mexico. In 1965, I went for a month-long adventure with Bubby Ruth, given as a bar mitzvah present. At the time (and today as well) I was fascinated by archeology, especially of the Americas. I was eager to visit the pyramids built by the Aztecs and the Mayans. I still keep *up-to-date* on the *ancient* times by subscribing to *three* specialized archeology magazines. I don’t want to take a chance on missing the latest blockbuster discovery which might have been overlooked by the New York Times, Smithsonian Magazine or National Geographic.

Mommy and I carried the frozen food for the trip with us in our suitcases. We were in for a surprise when we arrived at the baggage claim area in Cancun. There was a young lady agent

waiting for us—with a dog! Cute, adorable, “Chico,” was not there to provide comfort and relaxation for tired travelers or to welcome them to Mexico with a friendly wag of his tail. No way, Jose! Chico picked out our suitcases by the delicious aroma of home-cooked kasha *varnishkes*, mashed potatoes, rice pilaf, chicken schnitzel, and ground BEEF hamburgers (with caramelized onions). We were not aware that it was not permitted to import beef into Mexico. This led to a thorough examination of all our bags and food packages. We had a major challenge trying to explain kasha in Spanish! Would we have done better with quinoa? After the guard confiscated the contraband—our supper—we continued on to our hotel.

Rivky planned this trip in two stages. First, we stayed in Playa Del Carmen, a beach town especially popular with European tourists. It has a Lubavitch *shliach* and four, count them, *four* kosher restaurants. That’s pretty incredible, considering how hard it must be to import *glatt kosher* meat and *Cholov Yisroel* cheese! What’s more, most American cities, even ones with tens of thousands, or more, Jews don’t have *any* kosher restaurants. S. Francisco, for example, has only one.

We decided to stay at a different hotel from the children, because theirs, the RIU Palace, was “all-inclusive,” which was more expensive. That means, the daily rate includes room, meals, entertainment, unlimited alcohol, and a private pool and beach. The RIU was located a 15-minute taxi ride from us in a gated community called Playacar. We were shocked to discover that the children, as guests at the RIU, could not bring visitors to their rooms, even for a look-see, let alone to have them walk around the resort property. So, Mommy and I purchased day passes for \$75 US dollars each, allowing us entry to all the hotel facilities until 6 PM. We were careful to leave on time so we would not have to pay for an evening pass! Of course, neither pass would allow us to squeeze into their rooms and stay overnight.

Although the front desk employees were thoroughly obnoxious, the children found the rest of the staff to be friendly and helpful. Esty made a “shopping list” in Spanish (with the help of Google Translate) for the kitchen employees who obliged by bringing the children bulging bags full of uncut fruits and vegetables each day. They gave us more than enough to supply all of us for the whole trip. There were oranges, grapefruits, limes, pomegranates, apples, grapes, kiwis, strawberries, passion fruit, bananas, cantaloupes, tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers...and even a whole watermelon!

The children did some cooking in their room. They made eggs (also supplied by the hotel) in a sandwich maker, brought from home in a suitcase. Then, they toasted slices of bread which we had also imported from home. When Mommy and I came to their hotel on Tuesday, the children prepared a lovely catered spread of cut-up vegetables and fruits for us. Then we enjoyed eggs and toast. After breakfast, we went to the beach which was as perfect a setting as could be imagined. There was a broad expanse of palm trees with a large number of lounge chairs spread out underneath. This faced a wide sandy beach and the calm turquoise ocean. The hotel waiters brought around trays of large cold drinks, all included, of course. There were pastel colored cocktails, soft drinks, and ice water. No wonder Columbus decided to come back three times!

Mommy and I would have been content to relax and enjoy the beach but Mendy was itching for something more adventurous. After considering parasailing, jet-skiing, kayaking, scuba diving, and snorkeling etc., he opted for a sailing lesson, one-on-one, for one hour. The boat was a small catamaran and the instructor taught Mendy how to sail it by himself. Although the instructor only spoke Spanish, Mendy caught on quickly. As a matter of fact, after the lesson Mendy took the girls out for a spin on his miniature yacht. After five minutes they were sea-sick as can be and begged to return to land. But having already passed the breaking waves at the shore, Mendy was not ready to turn around. He kept them out for 15 minutes more. Luckily, they managed to keep down their omelets.

One of the dramatic components of Mendy's sailing lesson was disaster preparation. The instructor intentionally tipped over the boat, tossing all aboard into the waves. Mendy learned how to pull the boat back up again. He claimed that wasn't so difficult. The hard part was pulling himself two feet out of the water to climb back on board. This exercise, repeated four times, was done in order to learn how to respond in case the boat accidentally capsized and left him stranded in the ocean by himself. It's a good thing Mendy is athletic and a certified lifeguard!

That was on Tuesday. On Wednesday, the children checked out of the RIU Palace and came to the Fiesta Inn where we were staying in "downtown" Playa Del Carmen. Danny located this hotel for us on the website Bookings.com and got us a terrific discount. We were more than satisfied with the hotel which turned out to be only a year old. The hotel was an avenue block long, but only five stories tall in order to conform with the building height restrictions in Playa Del Carmen. It had many high-tech features to conserve electricity and air conditioning. These were a

challenge on weekdays but imagine if we were staying there on Shabbos. Surprise! When you least expect it, the lights and air conditioning turn off because the sensors indicate the room appears to be unoccupied due to inactivity, even if in fact you were still there.

We found the staff at the front desk extremely friendly. They did everything possible to accommodate us and make our stay enjoyable. They really extended themselves by agreeing to hold our many suitcases and bags on the day we checked out until we were ready to leave. They also graciously allowed us to use the recreation facilities on the rooftop for the whole afternoon before we made the transition to Cancun. It was too early to travel to Cancun and check into our next hotel, and besides, the weather was beautiful right then and we didn't want to risk wasting that time traveling. The weather in Mexico was very volatile—one minute it can be sunny and five minutes later it can be pouring rain. (The weather was a challenge we had to deal with throughout the trip...and this was the “dry season.” Go figure!)

When we stepped out of the elevator on the top floor of the hotel, we were stunned by the glorious panoramic view of the surrounding rooftops, bathed in delicious sunlight. Big puffy clouds passed overhead from the seashore a few blocks away. The roof itself was beautifully landscaped with tropical plants and had two large swimming pools surrounded by many lounge chairs and beds, an exercise room, outdoor showers, and a restaurant. We enjoyed swimming and exercising in the pools. I taught the family some of the stretching techniques that I had learned from my instructor, a black belt in martial arts, in my class in Crown Heights. The children were surprised and impressed by my flexibility. I was surprised and impressed that Chaya had remembered how to do these exercises from *her* gymnastic classes fifteen years ago! Swimming in an infinity pool high up in the air on top of the world was a surreal experience. It seems that this was a popular idea because we could see five or six other pools on top of nearby hotels and condos.

Then, we showered and dressed and prepared our picnic lunch. The restaurant staff was a bit uncomfortable with our setting up shop on their tables (i.e. combining two tables together, spreading out tablecloths, rearranging the chairs, putting out a lavish variety of breads, spreads, fruits, vegetables, and snacks) so we had to tone down our operation, somewhat. After all, we had only bought three small water bottles from them! Following this delightful afternoon, the front desk staff called a 15-passenger van for us and off we rode to our final destination, Cancun.

Before leaving New York, I joked that we should rename Cancun “Can-Tuna” since we were prepared to get by on a suitcase full of tuna fish. However, as it turned out, we were able to arrange hot kosher meals every day and enjoy local fruits for dessert. Sunday night, the children heated chicken cutlets and rice (which they had brought from New York) on our hot plate. Monday night, we ordered meals (salmon and three kinds of chicken) catered by the *shliach* in Playa. Tuesday night, we ate out at the jam-packed Yummy’s Restaurant where we feasted on rib-eye steak, baby chicken, and salmon.

After settling into our hotel in Cancun on Wednesday night, we heated Mommy’s meatballs and pasta. (It seems the customs inspector at the airport got so hung up on the kasha that she overlooked the container of meatballs!) Thursday night we ate Cholov Yisroel pizza followed by fish and chips at Dag Dag Restaurant. More about that soon. Friday night, we ate the Shabbos meal at Rabbi Druk’s Chabad house. Shabbos lunch we had a buffet Kiddush with hot cholent. Sunday night, we ordered schnitzel and roast potatoes from the *shliach* and had it delivered to our hotel. Monday, Mommy and I ate tuna fish and pastrami sandwiches while we waited for our flight at the airport. We took advantage of our last chance to open one can of tuna in Cancun so that we could fulfill the prophecy of Can-Tuna!

Here’s the scoop on Dag Dag Restaurant. It is supposedly open from two to four in the afternoon and seven to eleven at night. But don’t count on holding them to any schedule. We tried calling for a reservation but got no answer. So, we stopped by at 2 PM to secure our reservation in person. Mommy knocked on the locked glass door and the proprietor, a Mr. Granit, appeared. But he couldn’t find the key to open the door, so Mommy yelled, “DO YOU SPEAK ENGLISH?” He nodded yes as he fumbled for the key. Finally, he opened the door, and guess what? He is a transplanted Englishman and speaks English like a pro. It was his appearance that was alarming. He looks like the Ancient Mariner—tall and painfully thin with a shock of unkempt white hair and a long stiff beard. He wore a worn-out undershirt partially covered by a kitchen apron heavily dusted with white flour. He apologized, “We live in a tropical jungle and I need to sift the flour for insects.” He wrote the reservation in his notebook for 7 PM.

Mommy called the restaurant at 7 PM to check on our reservation. Mrs. Granit answered and said they were running late. Could we come at 8? When we arrived, we were seated at an outdoor table. Mommy asked for a menu but was told it wasn’t necessary because they only had

four items available: pizza, fish and chips, Mexican fish, and cheese nachos. We ordered all of them. As the evening wore on, we had plenty of time to discuss our activities of the day and even play a word game.

An hour later, we were still waiting, and a message came out from the kitchen that they couldn't make the nachos after all, because they had no tortillas. At 9:30, we and the other guests were still waiting for the first bite of food to emerge from the kitchen. Finally, the pizza arrived. We gobbled it up and eagerly waited for the next dish. Then the fish and chips were served. Very delicious. By then Mr. Granit was getting a bit worn out. He shuffled out of the kitchen and said he needed to get something to drink to relax his nerves. Off he went into the night. A few minutes later, he returned with a bottle of whiskey and generously poured a shot for each customer. I usually don't drink but I decided a little sip wouldn't hurt. Then he sat himself down at our table, lit a cigarette, and proceeded to sing a song, most probably original. After that, he asked Mendy to massage his aching back. I hoped Mr. Granit was feeling more refreshed because he still had a lot of work to do. The problem—among others—was that he was the only chef and while he sat relaxing outside, there was no one to cook in the kitchen!

After the smoke, *l'chaim*, and schmooze, the *farbrengen* broke up and Mr. Granit finally reluctantly returned to work in the hot steamy kitchen. While he boasted about his recipes and how much he loved cooking, he did compare working in the kitchen to the heavy labor of the Jews in *Mitzrayim*. Another plate of fish and chips was served along with the announcement that he was too tired to cook the Mexican fish. So, two out of four dishes weren't bad; that would be batting 500 in the USA. But this was Mexico, so we had to expect some glitches. At 11 PM, after a memorable evening, we paid our bill, 250 US dollars, and wished the Granits and the other customers a good night.

Mommy and I did a little sightseeing while in Mexico. The main tourist street in Playa del Carmen is Fifth Avenue. To compare it to Fifth Avenue in New York City, would be absurd. Considering that Playa is a small town in the tropics, there is no comparison. Nevertheless, it is fair to make a few parallels. Fifth Avenue in Playa is a crowded pedestrian plaza, running for about a mile with shops, bars, restaurants, travel agencies, drug stores, and massage parlors, one after the other. Tired travelers can stop and sit with their feet dangling in an aquarium tank as many tiny fish administer a refreshing foot massage. We passed by the opportunity since they don't sterilize

the fish after each customer. There is a constant stream of tourists walking by without interruption, especially at night. At each corner, there are heavily armed police, or soldiers, sitting in jeeps. They wear helmets and flak jackets and carry long rifles. Mommy asked one of them if they were on the lookout for any specific alert. Not surprisingly, he answered, “No speak English!”

More about Playa...After our dinner at Yummy, we took some pictures outside a souvenir shop/ pharmacy/ liquor store. The girls modeled fancy Mexican sombreros. Then we went inside and bought a few small magnets and pens. I pointed out to Mendy the sign offering free samples of tequila. Mendy said it was not necessary since he can have as much as he wanted to drink back at his hotel. There is also a Frida Kahlo Museum on Fifth Avenue with reproductions of her paintings and biographical information. It might have been interesting, but we didn't have time to visit. Frida Kahlo is a popular figure in Mexico because she produced mysterious portraits which have captured the imagination of many. Her image is reproduced on countless t-shirts and even the 500-peso Mexican bank note, along with her husband on the other side of the bill, the famous muralist, Diego Rivera. This is the same Diego Rivera who painted Aunt Ann's portrait when he came to New York in the 1930's.

As we walked back to our hotel, we caught on that the avenues in Playa are numbered by five. That is, our hotel on Tenth Avenue, is only one short block from Fifth Avenue and is followed by Fifteenth Avenue, etc. In any case, the beach and the sun are the main attractions in Playa and Cancun. If you're looking for museums, you would do better on Fifth Avenue in New York City.

Mommy and I did some exploring in Cancun while the children took a boat ride to Isla Mujeres on Thursday. We set out by city bus to visit the archaeological park “del Rey” on the other side of town, past the long strip of hotels in Cancun. We were mildly embarrassed when we got on the bus because we had no idea how much to pay for the ride and didn't know how to ask. I sheepishly held out a fistful of Mexican coins and the driver picked out what was due as he sped rapidly down the main drag. Then he gave us receipts printed on tiny slips of tissue paper.

We anticipated spending an hour at the archeological park, walking around in the open air and exploring the Mayan ruins. After we paid our entrance fee and signed the guest book, Mommy glanced down the long pre-Columbian street and revised her estimate to 30 minutes. When we walked up to the first stone foundation, which looked more like a fire pit for burning chometz, she

figured 15 minutes would suffice. It would have been enough, except we needed time to use the bathroom and answer Miriam's phone call from New York.

Without any tour guide or historical information, the park visit fell flat, almost as flat as the ruins themselves. There were no pyramids, or even walls for that matter, just a long row of crumbling stone platforms along a soggy path. What they were built for and how the Mayans lived there, remained a mystery, especially to us. The only sign of life were the large scary looking iguanas sunning themselves on the rocks. It seems the local Mayans, camped out on the beach in Cancun, were the poor relatives of those city slickers who built the magnificent pyramids at Chichen Itza and Uxmal.

Our next adventure was on Sunday, after the children left for home. Mommy and I went to Mercado 28 in downtown Cancun, again traveling by city bus. This time the driver apparently missed our stop and let us off basically in middle of nowhere. He said we had to walk to the "next stop." This didn't make sense to me. Why couldn't we stay on and ride there? Then it dawned on me that he meant we had to walk *back* to the previous stop. Mommy and I had a chance to see how the local people live in their tiny cement houses surrounded by tall white walls and iron gates. Some houses had tropical plants and cacti growing outside. We also saw our first and only cat perched on a stoop.

After passing a few blocks via a narrow alley, we came to a shopping street lined with gift shops. We looked around at the toy spinning tops and aprons. Then we entered the market itself which is a maze of indoor gift shops and a large open-air restaurant. The shopkeepers were very excited to see us and eagerly invited us to look around at their stuff. We continued looking for a kitchen apron and finally someone told us how to say it in Spanish. One storekeeper offered to sew us an apron while we waited. He proudly showed off his sewing machine. But we decided to move on. Another shopkeeper told us he would bring us some aprons, "Not funny," (that is, rated G) to choose from. We waited a few minutes and then he returned with a stack of pretty aprons in various colors. We picked out one that had elements of Mayan architecture in the design.

Then we walked by a leather store. There was a strong aroma of leather, so we knew the items weren't synthetic. I had a brainstorm and asked if they had a belt my size. Sure enough, the salesman showed me a black belt made of "the finest Mexican leather." He proudly showed me

his belt which he had been wearing for three years. He assured me that it still looked great and was not plastic like the belts from China. We made the purchase and I have been wearing the belt every day since then, replacing my unfashionable suspenders.

One of the most beautiful Mexican crafts are the Talavera ceramics. We picked out several platters and serving dishes as well as a few small plates to give as presents. When we got home, we loved them so much with their cheerful colors and intricate patterns, that we could not bear to part with any of them! They now add a special touch to our Shabbos table.

By then Mommy was getting tired. I told her that Bubby Ruth loved looking around the markets in Mexico back in 1965 and had no problem standing on her feet all day. The major difference in our shopping trip was that Mommy and I actually bought things in the market!

Due to a sudden rainstorm, we returned to the hotel in a taxi. We found one across the street parked outside of Walmart. To our dismay, it turned out to be the most broken-down car we saw in Mexico. Furthermore, we weren't sure if the driver understood where we had to go. Some people called our hotel Fiesta Villas, but the sign outside said Fiesta Vacation Club. In addition, there was at least one more hotel on the strip that shared the name Fiesta, causing a potential problem. I figured I would spot our hotel as we drove by. In the end the driver brought us back without difficulty.

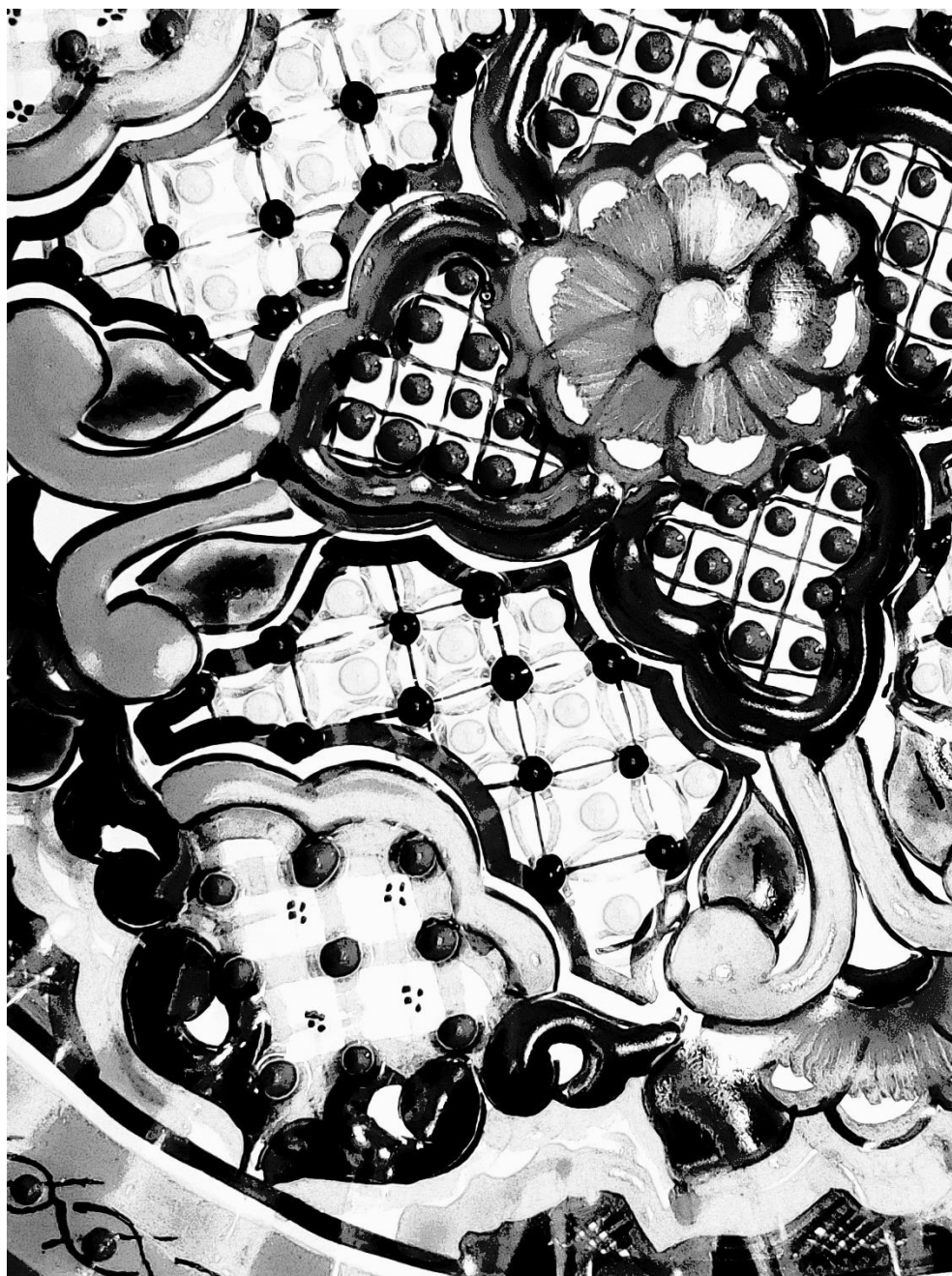
Rabbi Mendel Druk, originally from Detroit, is the director of Chabad in Cancun. His wife, Rochel, is the daughter of our Shabbos caterer, Dovid Malka *a"h*. The Chabad House is a busy place especially during Yeshiva Week, the time of our visit. When I came to the Chabad House on Thursday morning for *shachris*, I was surprised and impressed to see approximately 40 men and boys. Services and Shabbos meals are held in a large unfinished room on the second floor of the Plaza Caracol shopping center across the street from our hotel. Friday night, there were about 150 guests eating at long tables. The food was plentiful and delicious. There even was a choice of chicken, roast beef, or meat loaf, or all of the above. The Druks go out of their way to make everyone feel welcome. Rabbi Druk gives a short *drasha* after each *davening* and at the Shabbos meals. He speaks to each guest as if he's known him or her forever. He has a very good memory for names and faces. I was impressed that he remembered anecdotes about Zalman's summer in Camp Gan Yisroel Detroit over 25 years ago. He reminded me that Zalman couldn't write a letter

in any language so he recorded his messages on cassettes and mailed them home. Rabbi Druk also had warm memories from camp of Yossi being athletic and interested in learning.

At the Chabad House we met Yechiel Ament and his wife and daughter who were also vacationing in Cancun. We were fortunate that seats opened up for them right next to us at the table Friday night. We also talked to Mr. Lipszyc from Toronto who used to live on our block years ago. He is a good friend of our cousin, Warren Newfield. It turns out that Esty stayed with the Lipszyc family 12 years ago when she had an Achos Hatmim school convention in Toronto. The other guests were mostly Sephardim and modern orthodox. I also spoke to a *chosid* and his wife from New Square.

The guests at the Chabad came from various parts of the United States and Canada. I asked some of the visitors from Los Angeles and Miami why they needed to travel from one warm spot to another. Their answer was, "It's different." The group Friday night filled every seat in the whole room. Rabbi Druk said that the previous Shabbos there were 300 guests and he had to set up tables in the lobby of the shopping plaza. He anticipates having over 100 guests each Shabbos until after Pesach. On the wall of the Chabad House there is a large illustration of the future Chabad community center. Rabbi Druk has already purchased the land and has building plans drawn up. He is collecting the necessary funds to begin construction.

So, there you have it. We spent a week in a tropical paradise and escaped from the cold and snow in New York. I suppose we could have done it without Chabad, but it certainly made it easier, more pleasant, and more *heimish*. We enjoyed the daily minyan and the traditional Shabbos that we know and love. We are looking forward to our next visit!



The Mexican ceramics we brought home are beautiful reminders of the fun we had on our vacation.



As Pesach approached, the Newfields were very happy to find a Lubavitch program each year. We managed to go away for Pesach twelve years in a row. We never complained even if we had to come a day early to make sure our rooms were ready. Having someone else peel all the vegetables and cook for us made *yom tov* so much easier and enjoyable.

Pesach in the Poconos 2018

Now it's *Motzei Yomtov*, Pesach 2018. We are at Tomchei Temimim Poconos, in Canadensis, Pennsylvania. This is a small yeshiva year-round on a spacious forty-acre property. In years past, it was the Daniels Hotel. There is a four-story main building, mostly under renovation, and many surrounding bungalow-type buildings. I understand that there are seventeen yeshiva students in *Zal*, but three camps and a *yeshivos kayitz* are planned for the summer, totaling four hundred people! For Pesach, we had a few larger and smaller families. Besides us, there were the Niasoffs, Skolnicks, Rosenbergers (from Chicago), Sherrs, Zunzes, Delfiners (from Philadelphia), and the Perlows (from Monsey).

Rabbi Silman lives and works at the yeshiva year-round. The grounds have a large *beis medrash* with a very extensive library, mostly transferred from the Seagate, Brooklyn yeshiva when it closed down. Many of the books were donated in memory of Rabbi Fitzi Lipskier and Rabbi Dovid Wichnin. The *aron kodesh* is very special. It is in the shape of "770" and has a beautiful *poroches* which was donated by the Cadaner family. The organizer of the Pesach program is a nineteen-year-old bochur, Yossi Eliav, from Crown Heights. Not only is he recruiting the guests and arranging the kitchen and dining room, but he is also supervising very extensive renovations of the buildings on the property. Unfortunately, the town halted the work until the yeshiva obtains the necessary permits, so many of the rooms were not ready for Pesach. Due to this delay, our accommodations were switched from the main building to a bungalow a short walk away, down a dark dirt road. The kitchen supervisor is a Tunisian-French woman and the chef is, likewise, a young man from France.

Our cabin was pressed into service at the last minute. In fact, it was after the last minute. We spent *erev yom tov* cleaning the furniture and refrigerator, carrying in more chairs and dressers, mopping the floors and bathroom, and praying that the employees would get the lights, heating and plumbing in working order. Did I mention that we also carried in a couch? *Boruch Hashem*, by *licht bentching*, we were pretty comfortable.

Since we are in the mountains, the weather has been extremely cool, actually cold. On *Chol Hamoed* we were treated to a six-inch snowstorm, but the hotel was prepared with a snow blower

and then a snowplow came and cleared the parking lot. Remarkably, the snow melted by the next day. However, it snowed again, lightly, the day after.

The main feature of this program, as in all Pesach programs, was the food. The French chef was very creative in preparing tasty meals using only the very limited ingredients allowed. He followed the Lubavitch *minhagim* carefully. All the vegetables and fruits were peeled and washed, including the peppers and tomatoes. They did not serve lettuce again after the *sedarim*. There was always plenty of food, even enough for seconds. The organizers only stocked “Marvid” meats, so the chef had to make do using only the cuts that were available at the time. For example, there was no chop meat, so the chef minced a roast and used it to make layers in the shepherd’s pie. He also recooked the leftover steak, sliced it thin and fried it with onions. He was inventive, making a variety of foods including shoestring French fries, baked chicken breast stuffed with a hard-boiled egg, and many salads featuring eggplant, carrots, turnips, potatoes, peppers, onions, etc. The fruit platters were decorated with pomegranate seeds and sabra slices. Muriel decorated the tables with different colored tablecloths overlaid with thin gauzy sheets or banners. The chairs were covered with white slipcovers and tied with colorful ribbons.

We had two shows on *Chol Hamoed*, a magic show and a hypnotism demonstration. We enjoyed the magic and attended the other demonstration mostly to show appreciation and support to the organizers. Our *Chol Hamoed* trips were limited by several factors. First of all, Shacharis davening was late and leisurely. Then we wanted to wait for lunch, which was called for 1 PM. Even the day we ordered box lunches to take out, they also weren’t ready until close to 1 PM, since the kitchen had to first cook the chicken and potatoes. Also, the mountain weather discouraged taking trips since it was either raining or snowing and always cold.

Yom Tov began on a Friday night. This *kvius* gives the longest *Chol Hamoed*—three full days followed by Thursday, *erev yom tov*. It also has a spiritual plus. We started counting *sefira* on a Saturday night, which is precisely the “*mimacharas hashabos*” that is specified in the *Chumash*. This is then followed by counting seven full weeks, exactly, until Shavuus.

On Monday, Mommy and I and Chana Sara went to Walmart with Moshe and Shimmy Freundlich. We picked up tissues, paper towels, bananas, tomatoes, “lumpy-bumpy” mandarins and two houseplants, a yellow kalanchoe and an orange tuberose. On Tuesday, we all went bowling

from four to six PM. They only allowed the bumpers in a lane to be used by a child up to eight years old. That was a problem for me, since my bowling balls gravitated to the gutters. Somehow, I managed to get one strike anyhow.

Wednesday was our big trip. We started at a candle shop in Mountainhome and watched a young man carve a candle for us using the colors we chose. He then drilled a hole through the candle and inserted multiple wicks to make it into a Havdalah candle. Surprisingly, the *goyishe* candle-makers in that little town in the woods knew all about Havdalah candles.

Then we set out for East Stroudsburg and had a picnic lunch outdoors. It was sunny, but cold and very very windy. The food was delicious even though it was cold. After lunch, we visited the Pocono Snake Farm. Mendy bought a baby bottle so we could feed the goats over the fence. We skipped feeding the monkeys because their food pellets looked like chometz. Indoors, the snakes were the main attraction. They are colorful but don't do much. Of course, it's a lot safer to meet them behind glass than outdoors in nature.

That night, we went to the local laundromat to wash our clothes and towels. We came equipped with our folding table so we could play the "Scattergories" game. Since it took almost two hours to do the laundry, we were glad to have something to do besides watching the machines go around and around. We did attract some attention from the other patrons who neglected to prepare games and tables of their own.

Thursday was enjoyable even though we had to be back in time to prepare for yom tov. This time Mommy stayed back at the hotel and put aside our lunch of chicken and salad. The children returned to East Stroudsburg. I went to the Kissler Museum at East Stroudsburg University to see the natural history specimens and the planetarium. Mr. and Mrs. Kissler had the right idea. They were looking for a home for their collection of hunting trophies. They decided to endow their own museum. They found a location in the basement of a new science building at ESU. There is a young student curator who greets you at the entrance and collects your admission fee. I found the thirty-minute planetarium show an excellent opportunity to catch up on a few zzz's. Before I left, I had a chance to bring the curator up to date on my own collecting adventures finding fossils, Indian arrowheads, Occupied Japan porcelains, and Israeli medals on ebay. And of course, quilts, quilts, quilts! Now about that museum I was planning...

After their adventure at an escape room, the children picked me up and off we went to the Stroud Family Mansion in Stroudsburg, built in 1795. The tour guide took us through the four floors stuffed with antiques. Besides the furniture and paintings, there were kitchen utensils, embroideries, toys, military memorabilia, and old fashion doctor's equipment. It was all very interesting and gave us a better understanding of the history of the area.

When we returned to the yeshiva, it was sunny and warmer. Moshe finally had a chance to play outside on the wooden ladders, bridges, miniature houses, boats, swings, and see-saw. He had a blast! He got maximum attention from his parents, grandparents, uncle, and terrific *tantas*.

As before, we enjoyed delicious food on the end days along with the *shmurah matzah* and imported Italian wine. In the morning, we eventually rounded up a minyan and proceeded with Shachris, Hallel, *leining*, and *duchaning*. At the end of yom tov we had the "*Moshiach Seudah*" with *drashas* from Rabbi Silman and Rabbi Perlow and then a long *sedar niggunim*. After Shabbos, the cook opened the milchig kitchen and prepared a variety of dairy dishes including pizza, noodles-and-cheese, and burekas. Likewise, Sunday morning we had a delicious hot breakfast before heading home.

Fortunately, we were able to send three large bags and the card table back to Crown Heights in the camp van. It took us several more hours to pack up the rest of our things. Naturally, our two cars were the last ones to leave for home. I did not want to part with the Poconos experience completely, so I brought back a selection of Pennsylvania rocks and boulders to plant strategically in our garden as a physical reminder of all the fun we had on Pesach.



Besides bringing back postcards, postage stamps, refrigerator magnets, and photos, I often collected interesting and colorful rocks on various trips and vacations. Some of the smaller ones we later placed on Shimmy's *matzaivah* to keep him informed of our travels and include him in family activities.



This quaint handmade "Uncle Sam" quilt is a wonderful example of a traditional handcraft. This detail shows one of the delightful depictions of our national father figure.



This patriotic flag- inspired quilt was one of my many purchases on eBay. I decorated my four offices at AdvantageCare with artwork in various media.

My Second Romance

For many years I have been an enthusiastic collector. Our overstuffed closets and jam-packed basement are evidence of this. I call this my second romance, and yes, at times it puts a stress on the first. It all began in my early childhood with stamp collecting, about which I have already written. I still have those albums, shoe boxes, and glassine envelopes some 60 years later. As time went on, I added coins, and bottles, and rocks, etc. But the opportunity to add to my holdings increased exponentially when I was given a computer at work twenty-something years ago.

All I needed was the few minutes between patients and the eBay website to indulge my passion. Ebay was a magnet that pulled me day after day, morning and afternoon. Who could anticipate what treasures would pop up from somewhere across this vast country, and even abroad? In the old days, I would check what my neighbor, Chazkel Lewintow, put out for sanitation. Often, there was something useful that I scooped up and tucked away in my basement. Usually, these were random leftover building materials: a scrap of wood, some tiles, extra roof shingles, furniture or parts thereof, tool chests, or even a nail or screw. I suspect he or his son, Yisroel Dovid, looked over my trash and did the same. When *I* decided to part with something, *they* found a home for it in their basement. So it went on, year after year. Occasionally, the swap went full circle. For example, when I got a new roof, I didn't need Mr. Lewintow's old shingles anymore, so I put them out. He was more than happy to take them back!

As I said, this was only the beginning. Now, eBay opened up for me, literally, millions of basements in every state, city, town, and village. A cornucopia, a feast of great stuff was available with the click of a mouse. In addition, there was the excitement of bidding on an auction. Who could predict if any particular item would stay at 99 cents, or shoot up in price at the last minute? Getting a bargain made a new acquisition even more delicious. This reminds me of one of my patients, Hans von Buttgereit, a very elderly gentleman with a lifelong passion for stamp collecting. When I met him, I still hadn't tried my luck with eBay, and I couldn't understand why Hans bid on things that he didn't want or need. In fact, he did it just for the challenge—a little like going to Las Vegas. After his excitement with the auction passed, he sold me some of the stamps that he had won, even willing to take a small loss to unload them.

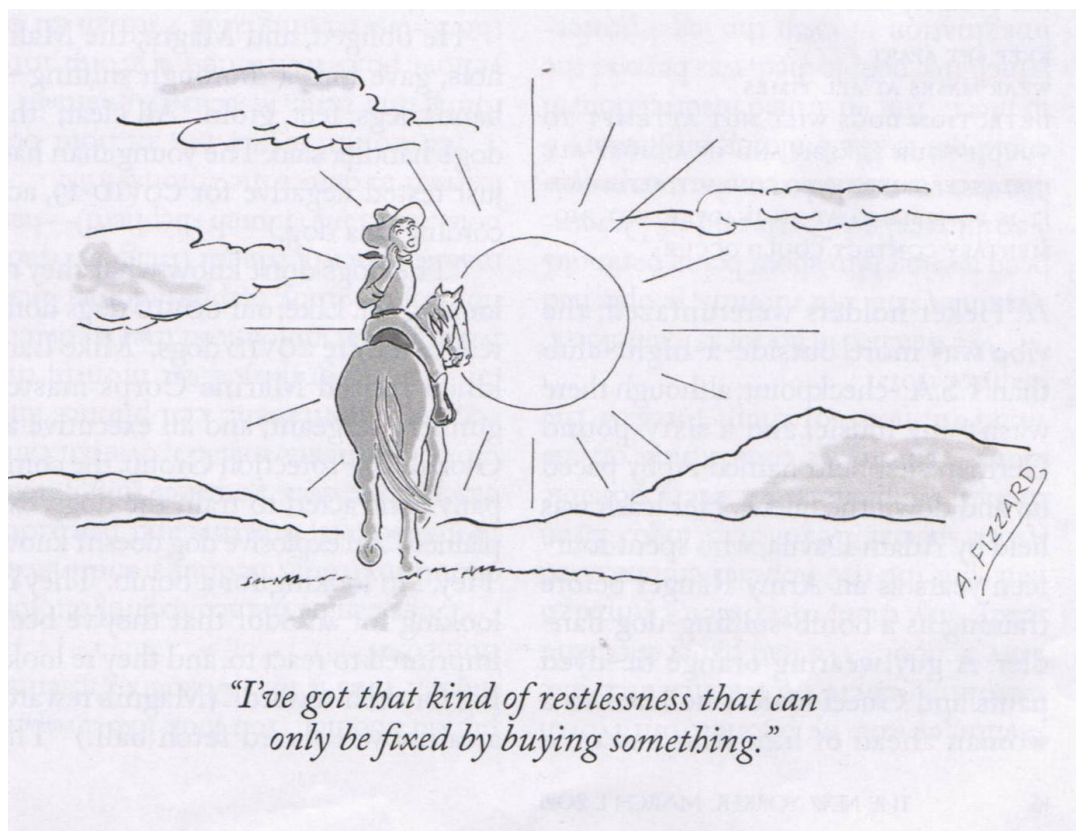
When I started bidding myself, I understood the attraction. Take art for example. At that time, I had four medical offices: Hempstead, Valley Stream, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Bay Ridge. Each had one to three rooms. All that wall space cried out for some art. And eBay had plenty, some three hundred thousand paintings of all descriptions, in all types of media. I set the bar high, filtering for only framed items. One day, I met my colleague, Dr. Eugene Arum, holding a thick auction catalog from an art gallery. I commented to Eugene, “Oh, I see, you like art?” He answered, “Yes, I collect oil paintings.” I confided to him that I also buy art, but from eBay, not from galleries. He was puzzled, “How could you buy something without seeing it in person?” I answered, “No problem. I never get upset if the art acquisition does not match up with my expectations, or even if it turns out to be a reproduction. I never return anything, either.” Eugene couldn’t believe what he heard, “What!” Then I filled him in on the secret of my method. I never spend more than \$15, framed.

In no time, I filled all my wall space and enjoyed arranging the pictures in eye-pleasing combinations. With no more room to hang additional pictures, I sensed that it was time to move on. My next passion was collecting handmade American crib or doll house quilts. They are an underappreciated art form, with an infinite variety of colors and patterns—and besides, you can cover your knees with one on a chilly night. Their small size makes it possible to stack them up in a few sturdy storage bins. Yet they are big enough to be vivid examples of many different styles. I am especially fond of bold geometric designs and bright primary colors.

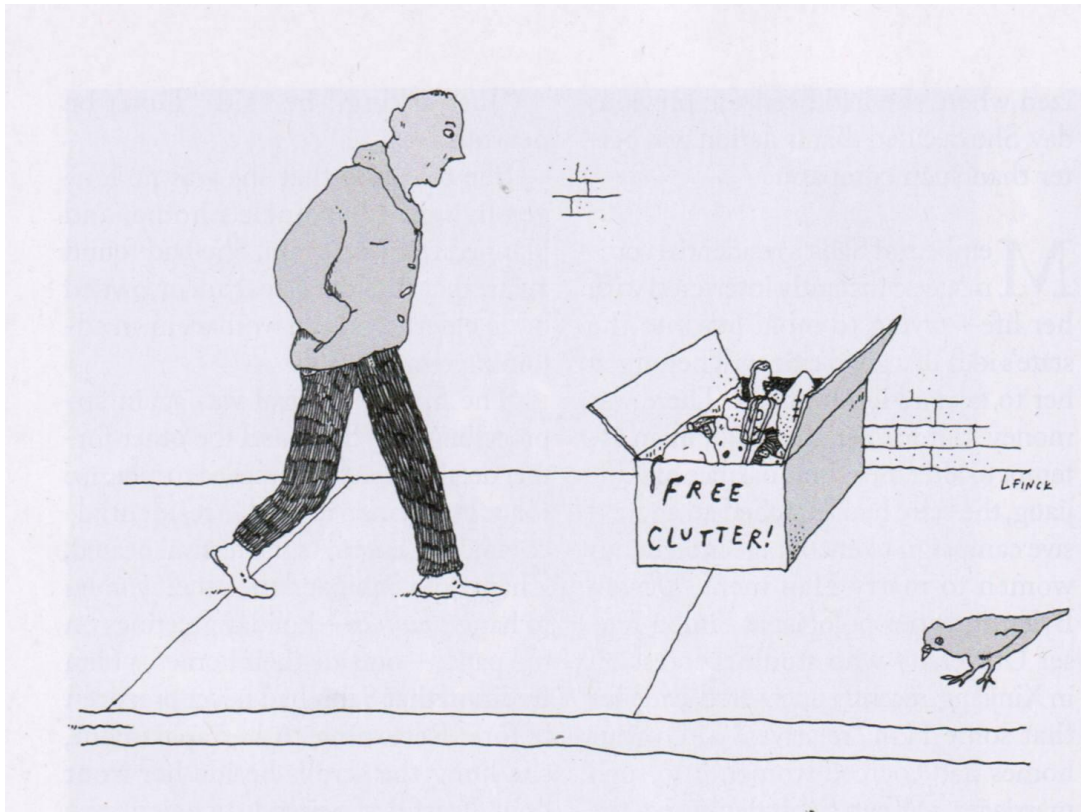
But even small quilts take up space, so after collecting over one hundred fabulous examples, I turned to something smaller. I fell in love with crocheted doilies, preferably offered in lots of 20-50 at a time. The detailed handwork was incredible, delicate, and altogether lovely. Since I seemed to be the last person in the country willing to buy them, they cost only pennies. I got circles, squares, rectangles, antimacassars, a menagerie of dogs, cats, and birds, and enough crocheted names to fill a kindergarten class.

I wasn’t done yet. For a few years, I usually bought something almost every day. I loved opening up the packages as they arrived in the mail, stuffed with goodies. I collected books (mostly biography, history, and art), collections of postcards (new and used), fossils, chunks of petrified wood, and cut-glass vases. Eventually, I turned to more petite items, settling on stamps, coins, tokens and medals. The secret of my success was to bid on things that no one else wanted! Before

I knew it, I received an email from eBay congratulating me on making 750 purchases! How many people can match that?



As my 35-year tenure at AdvantageCare Physicians ticked away, I did become somewhat restless sitting in the office day after day, seeing one patient after another. About 20 years ago, we became computerized and I discovered a convenient escape from the repetitious hum-drum of reality. It was called eBay and it was a powerful magnet for my spare time and spare change.



Eventually, Mommy put her foot down and insisted that I stop ordering things online until I find a way to organize and store my collections. I have been trying to donate items to art and historical museums without any notable success. The one exception were the hand-made antique bricks that I dropped off when I visited The City Reliquary Museum and Civic Organization which is housed in a storefront in Williamsburg in Brooklyn. I still do quite a bit of walking and cannot resist the generous offerings of the good people of Brooklyn who put out an incredible array of useful and not-so-useful items ranging from drawer-pulls to flower pots. The words, “TAKE FREE” reawaken a primal instinct in my psyche.



These days, Chaya and Mendy have taken over the job of keeping the online retailers in business, not to mention Mr. Lopez, our friendly UPS driver. He stops at our house almost every day to drop off new purchases and pick up returns.



Now that I have acquired impressive collections, my next challenge is finding place to store and display them. Do you think the Smithsonian Institution is ready to open a branch in our basement?

Jewish Comics Today

Growing up in the 1950's, I was aware that my schoolmates were reading and collecting comic books—Superman, Spiderman, Batman, etc. However, they were banned in my house because my mother, a school teacher, frowned on them. She was concerned that they used non-standard English, along with slang and corrupt grammar. Besides, she probably felt uncomfortable with the pervasive violence, even if justice prevailed in the end.

Since I passed through childhood without comics, it came as a surprise to me that today comics or “graphic novels” have become a popular fixture of children’s literature in the orthodox and hasidic world. It seems every school, every shul, and every home have a stack of illustrated books in the comic format. I noticed that young children, from toddler-age and up, are captivated leafing through these volumes whenever they have the opportunity.

Many of the books feature a retelling of the Chumash and highlights of Tanach such as the book of Esther. Other books illustrate hasidic stories and legends from Eastern Europe. Another genre deals with the Holocaust and the persecution of religious Jews under Communist rule behind the Iron Curtain. A recent volume called “Tsunami” gives a Jewish twist to the nuclear disaster which took place in Japan in 2011. It features a (fictional) religious Israeli scientist who rescues Japan from destruction and then goes on to blow up the nuclear weapons laboratory in Iran.

These comics were originally published in Eretz Yisroel in Hebrew and have been translated and republished for American readers. A good example is “A Chassidic Comic Collection” from Malchus Haketer Publishers in Israel written by the talented and prolific storyteller Levi Yitzchok Groner. The book contains 25 short and humorous stories told in comic book form. Each is based on a story told by the Lubavitcher Rebbe and contains a lesson on how we can better serve Hashem. These stories, passed on from one generation to another, are not solely presented for entertainment. In fact, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, the *Baal Hatanya* once said that stories told by a Rebbe are considered “*Torah SheB'ksav*,” a part of the written Torah.

In case the young reader fails to grasp the Torah lesson brought out by the story, the author concludes many episodes with an explanation (in tiny print) of the lesson to be learned. Whereas, a young child might skip this paragraph, it is still beneficial for him to read the story itself. In time, he will probably review it over and over again. Later, when a parent or teacher explains the lesson to be learned, there will be a spark of recognition as the child connects the lesson to the now familiar story.

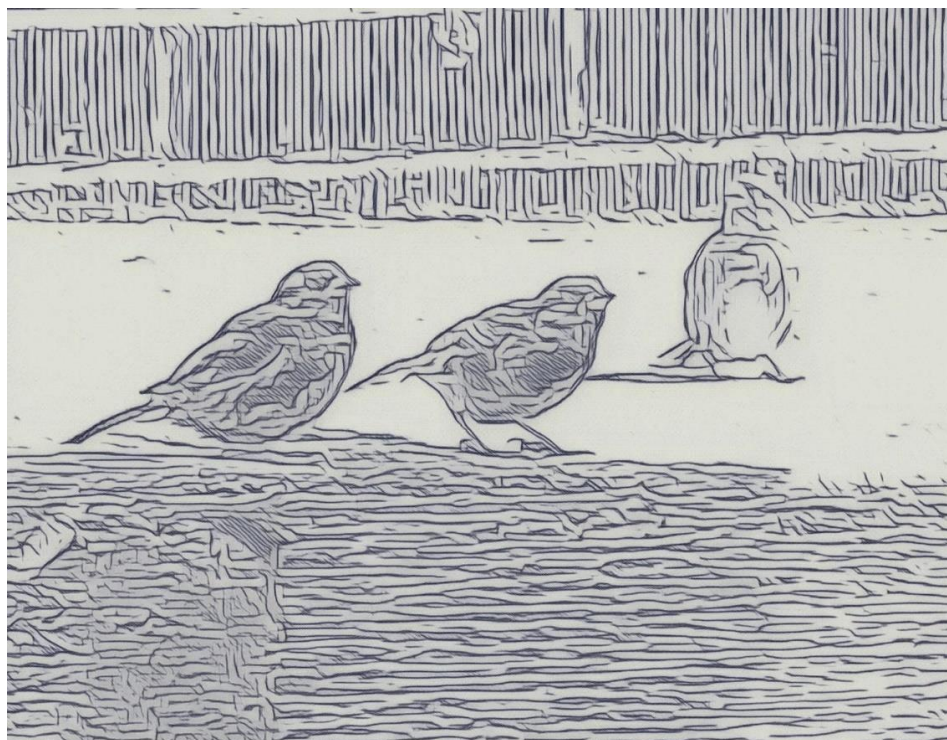
The book “Lights from the North: A Story of Jewish Courage in Communist Russia” by D. Even Chen is published by Kosher Comics for Kids. It is a suspenseful tale of *mesirus nefesh* focusing on a young boy growing up in Russia and steadfastly observing the *mitzvos* of the Torah. The story follows our hero all the way to exile in frozen Siberia and eventually to *aliyah*

in Israel. The ingenious tactics he secretly uses to observe the mitzvos are well illustrated in the detailed drawings.

Shazak Multimedia, headquartered in Chicago, is an American producer of numerous comic-style volumes and videos. These include “Out of Egypt,” “Queen of Persia,” and “Miracle Lights.” The executive producer is Rabbi Moshe Moscovitz. In these books, the vivid colorful illustrations and catchy dialogue is supplemented by periodic “Insights” which enrich the learning experience. In this series, the “Insight” sections are written clearly and are intended to be read by the children themselves. At the conclusion of the text is an extensive multiple-choice quiz which is entertaining as well as educational.

In my opinion, the comic format presents a “win-win” opportunity for parents and children. The stories, whether based on our holy Torah or the extraordinary experiences of our brethren in modern times, convey Jewish history, values, and pride. As I have observed, children are captivated by the comic style and eagerly delve into the books. After all, this is *our* story. Let the comic book exclamations be used for a Jewish purpose! Let “Blah!” refer to the reaction of the Egyptians to the plague of blood. Let “Croak!” emanate from the frogs of Egypt. Let “Roar!” come from the wild animals and “Crash! Bang!” come from the hailstones.

Comics are an attractive and inviting media to tell the story of our people.



Philosophical Musings and a Shout-Out to Dr. Myron Schwartz!

I took this photo of sparrows on Crown Street with my new Samsung Galaxy S10 smart phone. This gadget was a “present” from Chaya who felt it was time that I join the modern age—and order my Ubers by myself. Up until now I depended on my children to do it for me, even if they were in California! This phone has a clever feature which allows you to alter the style of a photo after it’s been taken and even change it into a line drawing. I hope to arrange my photos, both original and re-worked, into a photobook as my next project.

As you are aware, birds come and go, migrate and fly away as they wish. They are a *moshel* for the impermanence, the transitory nature of life. I hope this volume will be a more lasting record. You won’t find much about my accomplishments due to the modesty of the author. But you will get a picture of my personality and varied interests.

In 1951, a few months after I was born, the Rebbe opened the Simchas Torah *farbrengen* with the words, “I don’t want to say that our time is short, rather that our time is precious.” He continued this theme many times adding, “The value of one day is that of an entire lifetime!... The world says, ‘Time is money’ and I say, ‘Time is life!’”

Let’s look at it this way. Five years ago, I had a major operation by the talented and famous surgeon, Dr. Myron Schwartz. Since then, I often wonder—What does the future have in store for me?

On that long winter afternoon at Mt. Sinai Hospital, Dr. Schwartz proceeded to sample some of my favorites: a *shtickel kishke* and six bites of liver. Luckily, while the good doctor was poking and probing, he took out my *gall*, but he didn't locate *my sense of humor* or he just might have swiped that, as well!! (Just kidding, Dr. Schwartz. You're the greatest! Don't worry. You'll be receiving your autographed copy of this memoir shortly. I'll put a sticky note on this page for you.)

Now back to my dear children and grandchildren. You may not have time to read this book right away, or even all at once. But sometime, you may open it and appreciate it. Just in case, I'm sending a back-up copy to the *Library of Congress*!

Afterword

I have been racing—for over twenty years—to put this book together. Now that I am homebound, so to speak, by social distancing due to the coronavirus pandemic, it seems like a good time to wrap this up. Certainly, many of my readers are demanding the complete account since I have been sending out teasers via email.

It is in my nature to look at the bright side of things, to see the cup as half full, to be optimistic. I have made many commitments to myself, my family, my community, and to Hashem. I hope I have done a decent job in fulfilling them. I know I have tried and will continue to do so.

Today, in *shul*, I was speaking to my neighbor, Rabbi Yisroel Shemtov. I told him about this project, writing my history for future generations to learn from. He was very impressed and said he would also like to have an inspiring memoir to pass on to his many children and grandchildren. His face lit up when the solution came to him. “Make two copies. Keep one for yourself—and put my name on the other one!”

The time has passed quickly since I was born here in Brooklyn on August 23, 1951, that is 21 days in the Hebrew month of Av. You might agree that I have lived all around the (Jewish) world since I was born in Borough Park, raised in Flatbush, and reached maturity in Crown Heights! I have faced many challenges, frustrations, and tragedies, but I don’t dwell on them in this memoir. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe informed a group of convention delegates stranded years ago in Detroit due to a snow storm, *you are never stuck*. I’ve been told, when one door closes, another door opens. This is the way it has been for me.

In general, I’ve written only about the positive. If you look closely at the glossary, it includes “*yetzer tov*,” but not “*yetzer hara*.” The word “*mitzvos*” appears, but not “*aveiros*.” To quote my mentor, Dr. Eli Davis *a”h* of Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, “*Yesh maspik tze b’olam*.” “There is enough *tzar*—pain and suffering—in the world.” Why complain? Let’s see what we can do to make things better.

I make one exception to my one-sided outlook in this memoir. This is the touching chapter devoted to the memory of our son, Shimmy *a”h*, who cannot speak for himself. (The other *shvatim* will please write their own stories, preferably sooner rather than later.) A few days ago, I watched

a moving video of a young boy on *shlichus* who recently lost his father. I whole-heartedly agreed with him when he said, “We have questions, but we don’t have doubts!”

Yesterday, I was reminded by my dear cousin, Susie Horen, of a humorous incident that happened on my first day of kindergarten. (This is really going back awhile!) When my mother, Bubby Ruth, picked me up after school, she asked me, “What did you learn today?” I answered, “I learned to wait in line.” So true. We, the Jewish people, and the entire world, have been waiting far too long for the *geulah amiti*, the true redemption with the coming of *Moshiach*. May we soon be reunited with all our loved ones, with the Rebbe leading the way, speedily in our days. ***Next year in Jerusalem!***



This family photo was taken on October 20th, 2020 just prior to the wedding of Rivky to Mendel Blau. Although the day started out rainy, the weather cleared in the afternoon enabling us to take some beautiful outdoor portraits.

Piece # Three: *Pochim K'tanim*—The Small Stuff

Family History Interview with Zaidy Newfield (January 24, 2016)

My favorite joke to start off with: The Comedians Convention

This guy walks into a resort in the Catskills for the first time – one of those famous Borscht Belt places. A group of the old- time comics are swapping jokes at a reunion. One of them says, “Seventeen” and the other old-timers all roar with laughter. A little later, another one of them says, “Thirty-Two” and again, they all laugh and holler.

Well, the new guy can't figure out what's going on, so he asks one of the regulars next to him, “What're these old-timers doing?” The comedian says, “Well, they've been hanging around together so long everyone knows all the same jokes, so to save time they've given all the jokes numbers. All they need to do is call out the number.”

The new fellow says, “That's clever!”

Then another comedian stands up and calls out, “177!” This time the group laughs more than ever. They burst into loud guffaws. The newcomer asks his mentor what happened? The answer: This was a new joke that no one ever heard before!

Then the next comedian stands up and says in a loud voice, “Nineteen!”
Complete silence in the room.

Everybody just looks at him, but nobody laughs. Embarrassed, he sits down again. The new guy asks the local fellow, “What happened? Why didn't anyone laugh?” The local says, “*He didn't tell it right...*”

Let's hope I can tell it right in this interview!

Baila Friedman: What is your full name?

Zaidy: My name is Shlomo Asher Hakohen Newfield.

B: Who were you named after and is there anything special about your first or last name?

Z: I am named after my grandfather Solomon Chechel. He was my mother's father and he came from the Ukraine. He passed away shortly before I was born. My last name, Newfield, has been unchanged for over 100 years, since my father's family left Poland. It seems that when my family lived in Europe, they pronounced the name Niefeld (Nyfeld). When my grandfather moved to Glasgow, Scotland, it must have been Anglicized to Newfield.

B: Where were you born?

Z: I was born on August 23, 1951 at Doctor's Hospital in Borough Park, Brooklyn. This makes me a member of the post-World War II "baby boom" generation. The hospital closed many years ago and I believe the building is now a yeshiva for girls located on 14th Avenue and 50th Street. As you pass by on the street, you can still see several rooms with walls made of glass bricks. This allowed light to come in without dust or pollution.

B: How many children were in your family and what number child were you?

Z: I am the youngest of three children. My older sister, Aunt Philippa, lives in San Francisco, California, and my older brother, Uncle David, lives in Studio City, California. They are both active in their local Chabad Houses. In fact, my sister was president of her shul, Chevra Thilim, for many years.

B: Where did you live as a child? Describe the life and neighborhood there.

Z: When I was very young, we lived in an apartment at 3765 18th Avenue on the edge of Borough Park. I clearly remember the apartment and our neighbors Rabbi and Mrs. Boruch Faivelson and the elderly widow, Mrs. Leshna. These neighbors were very religious and included our family in their Shabbos and Yom Tov preparations.

I attended kindergarten at P.S. 217 around the corner. I also enjoyed stopping at the bakery on our block.

B: What was the apartment that you grew up in like? How many bedrooms and bathrooms did it have? What was your bedroom like?

Z: We had two bedrooms in our apartment, one for my parents and the other for the children. I remember my mother hanging clothing on the outdoor clothes line from the kitchen window. There

was only one bathroom. My favorite activity was playing records in the living room over and over again, such as “The Ballad of Davy Crockett” and “How Much is that Doggie in the Window?” As the music played, I would run around and around the room, singing along.

B: Describe the basic mode of transportation in the area you grew up in.

Z: My parents owned a car which we used to go on trips. We also visited relatives, the zoo, Prospect Park, and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. When I was a little older, say 10-12 years old, I travelled by subway, even by myself.

B: Tell me about your parents. Where were they born? What memories do you have of them? How did your family earn money?

Z: My father, Yosef Moshe Newfield, was born in Malden, Massachusetts in 1914. His family moved to the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn when he was a baby. When I was five or six years old, my father became seriously ill. After that, he was unable to continue his work as an accountant. My mother, Ruth Chellin Newfield, was born on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1916. As time went on, my mother took on the responsibility of supporting the family by working as a junior high school math teacher. She lived to the age of 98 ½ and had a long and profound influence on me and my siblings.

B: How did your family manage their money?

Z: I never had to worry about money. At least as a child, it was never a concern for me. That is a compliment to my mother who worked hard and spent money wisely. She ran our house efficiently and did not splurge on fancy clothes, furniture, or vacations. We never ate out in restaurants. We made full use of the many free cultural and recreational attractions in New York City. However, she was always generous with her children, relatives, and friends, spending many thousands of dollars on college tuition, new cars, mortgage payments, and tax bills.

B: Did you know your grandparents? Where were they born? What do you remember about them?

Z: I knew my mother’s mother, Liza Chellin (nee Chechelnitzsky), and my father’s mother, Chana Sara Newfield (nee Berman). Bubby Liza was born in the town of Pevamaisk, Ukraine and Bubby Chana Sara was born in Ponevezh, Lithuania. I hardly spoke to them because they were most

comfortable speaking in Yiddish, which I didn't understand. They both passed away when I was about 10 years old. They were very different personalities. Bubby Liza was interested in literature, music and Yiddish culture, while Bubby Chana Sara maintained a traditional observant Jewish home.

B: What can you tell me about your family further back than your grandparents?

Z: Bubby Liza's family owned a teahouse in the Ukraine. They took care of Jewish soldiers serving in the Czar's army who passed through their town. They also had gentile customers who warned them about impending *pogroms*. With the help of this advance warning, Bubby's family and their Jewish neighbors were able to hide in the forest until it was safe to return home. Each time they got back, they found that their houses were ransacked. All the furniture was overturned and the *goyim* slit open all the feather pillows and mattresses looking for valuables. Bubby Liza would not stand for this anymore and she courageously left for America by herself, when she was 17 years old, leaving her family and the Ukraine forever.

B: Is there anything else you can share with me about your family history?

Z: When I was starting 1st grade, my family moved out of their cramped apartment to a handsome house at 1639 East 27th Street, in the Midwood section of Brooklyn. This house had belonged to my Aunt Ann and Uncle Morris Weisberger. In an unusual choice of occupation for a Jewish man, Uncle Morris became a sailor in the merchant marine. He rose quickly in the ranks of the sailors' union. When he was chosen to become the president of the Sailors Union of the Pacific, he moved to its headquarters in California. The Weisbergers then sold their house to my parents. I loved growing up in that house because it had a garden in front and a big back yard. Even as a young boy, I was always in charge of the garden and loved planting flowers and vegetables.

B: What is the earliest memory you have of your childhood and how old were you at the time?

Z: My earliest memory goes back to age four or so. I went with my mother to the small tenement house that her family owned at 88 Second Avenue in Manhattan. As my mother spoke to the superintendent, I played with her little dog. Suddenly, the dog bit me on my lip. I was very frightened. The dog, a gray Scottish Terrier, was only playing and I was very small and stood at

about the same height as the dog. Since then I've had a small scar on my lip which reminds me of this unfortunate scary incident.



B: What were you like as a child? What did you like to eat? What did you do for fun? What were your favorite games, sports, books, or hobbies? What did you do for entertainment when you were our age?

Z: I was a bit of a loner in my younger years. I was happiest when puttering around by myself in the garden. I always had some project to work on. I subscribed to “Organic Gardening and Farming Magazine” and I picked up many gardening techniques, such as making compost from grass clippings and fallen leaves. If only we had a horse or cow to provide some rich fertilizer!

In elementary school, my brother and I walked home for lunch every day. At that time, not so many mothers worked, so it was common for most kids to go home for lunch. On the way we passed a store that sold delicious soft pretzels with coarse grains of salt on top. I loved buying a pretzel as a treat, especially because it came with deli mustard squeezed on top. The truth is my brother would buy it and break off a little piece for me. I was never interested in playing or watching sports. Once I learned how to read in first grade I always had a book open.

B: What do you remember about the time before you went to school?

Z: I remember baking *hamantaschen* with our neighbor, Mrs. Leshna. Everything went well until one day my mother left me with her for the afternoon. When my mother returned home, she was surprised to see that Mrs. Leshna had given me my first haircut! I guess she couldn't resist cutting off my baby curls and making me look like a proper boy. Needless to say, my mother was not happy about this.

B: What kind of elementary school did you go to? What was your favorite and least favorite subject? Were you a good student?

Z: I attended P.S. 197 from 1st—6th grade. I was an excellent student but sometimes I got into trouble with my teachers who were very strict. One incident arose from a small bookcase holding a set of encyclopedias which was next to my seat. From time to time I would quietly open one of the volumes during class and flip through it. This made my teacher angry because she felt I was not paying attention to her. I felt justified because I had already grasped the lesson and was looking for something interesting to do.

Beginning at age nine, I attended—along with most of my friends—Hebrew School at our local synagogue, the Madison Jewish Center on Nostrand Avenue. Classes were held Monday to Thursday from 3:30 to 5:00 in the afternoon, as well as Junior Congregation on Shabbos mornings.

B: What are some vivid memories of your elementary school years?

Z: At one point, my mother was a substitute teacher in my elementary school. As it happened, she was the teacher for my brother's class. Once, my brother David wanted to ask a question. He blurted out, "Mommy!" instead of "Mrs. Newfield." As you can imagine, his classmates had a good laugh and David was slightly humiliated. I heard this story many times.

We had a double garage filled with boxes, tools, bicycles, and bits and pieces of assorted junk. What a surprise it was when one day I went into the garage to get my gardening equipment and found that a cat had made a home in a cardboard box filled with books and papers. She had given birth to a litter of adorable kittens. The cats were able to go in and out of the garage through a window with a missing pane.

B: Did you have any heroes or role models when you were our age?

Z: In elementary school during the 1950's the teacher would ask us "Who is the President of the United States?" The answer was always the same, "Dwight David Eisenhower." It seemed to me that he had always been president, at least since George Washington, and always would be. This reminds me of the hasidic story of the pious elderly Lubavitcher who spent all his time immersed in studying the holy books and took no interest in current events. When he heard the news of the coronation of Czar Nicholas, he asked, "Why does he need *another* coronation?" The hasid

remembered the coronation of *Nicholas I* in 1826 and was completely unaware of his death in 1855. Likewise, he was oblivious to the advent of the two czars that followed after him. This coronation in 1896 caught the hasid by surprise. It was for a new czar, *Nicholas II*!

Now back to my childhood recollections of the presidency. The election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 hit me like a bolt of lightning. Everything seemed new and possible. His pledge to send a man to the moon in ten years caused unbelievable excitement.

B: How did you spend your summer holidays? Did your family take vacations? If so, where did you go and what were they like?

Z: Before my father got sick, we took road trips during the summer to the White Mountains in New Hampshire and Cape Cod, Massachusetts. We have a snapshot of us visiting an Indian village in New Hampshire when I was three or four years old. I am staring at the chief dressed in a feathered headdress. I have a very startled expression on my face.

B: What were your favorite summer activities?

Z: When I was eight years old, my brother and I started going to Camp Alvord, a nature-oriented sleep-away camp on a lake in New Hampshire. I loved nature walks, swimming, mountain climbing, and sailing. Spending six weeks in the great outdoors was a fantastic experience for a city boy and I still think about it often.

Bubby Ruth enjoyed a souvenir that we brought back from New Hampshire. For over 50 years, she had a magnet on her refrigerator inscribed with the words, “the Granite State.” The large slab of rock has a tag line, “Don’t take education for granite.”

B: Did most of your family live in the same community? Did your relatives get together on *yomim tovim*?

Z: We didn’t have any close relatives living nearby. Before Sukkos my brother and I would bicycle to Marine Park and cut tall reeds to use as *schach* for our *sukkah*. Since this was a very small and shaky *sukkah*, only my brother and I took our plates outside to eat in it. It felt a little bit like camping.

B: What did you want to be when you grew up?

Z: I really didn't have a career plan as a child. I was always interested in science. Since my brother and sister were already studying to be doctors, I decided to follow them. It seemed the natural thing to do and I was given a heavy antique microscope as a hand-me-down.

B: Which big world events do you remember from when you were an eighth grader?

Z: I never actually attended 8th grade. I was in the two-year S.P. Program which I think stood for Special Progress. My class skipped from 7th grade to 9th grade. The 8th grade material was divided between the two years of the program. When I was in the 7th grade President Kennedy was assassinated. I was devastated along with the rest of the country. The days leading up to the funeral were terrible. All I could think about was the tragedy. All regular TV programming was canceled. Patriotic and biographical shows on Kennedy were run 24 hours a day.

B: What inventions do you most remember?

Z: My family only had a black-and-white TV. Some of my friends had a newly invented **color** TV. I always wished we could have color also. It seemed so amazing! But my parents felt it was an unnecessary extravagance and the TV stayed black-and-white. Eventually, I went away to college and lost interest in watching TV altogether.

B: Describe a person or situation from your childhood that had a profound effect on the way you look at life.

Z: By *hashgacha protis*, Divine Providence, when I was very little, my family rented an apartment right next door to a lovely orthodox couple, Rabbi Boruch and Rebbetzin Dora Faivelson. The Faivelsons became my parents' closest and dearest friends even when both families moved to their own homes. My family was invited to join the Faivelsons every year for the *Pesach Seder*. I also spent many memorable Shabbosim with them.

At Columbia College, I was attracted to the campus rabbi, Charles Sheer, a graduate of Yeshiva University. I attended many of his classes in the Jewish Office and socialized frequently with the numerous yeshiva graduates at Columbia. This was the first time I spent time with orthodox people my age. Little by little, their attractive values and lifestyle began to rub off on me.

B: What is different about growing up today from when you were growing up, especially the behavior of children at home and in school?

Z: As a child, my world was centered on my house, my yard, and the few blocks extending to my elementary school. We didn't have cell phones. We didn't have computers or internet. We didn't make many phone calls. We really were not aware of what was going on in the lives of our relatives living in other cities or countries. Even world events seemed very distant and remote from our daily lives. Today things are quite the opposite. With a click of a mouse or a glance at a smart phone kids today are aware of everything happening around the world in real time.

B: What was your first job? What did you like or dislike about it?

Z: When I was 10 or 11 years old, I began working after school. I was hired to walk a neighbor's dog. I was still a little afraid of dogs after my dog incident (see above). But the thought of earning 25 cents just for walking around the block was tempting. When I returned after the first walk, the mother asked me, "Did the dog go?" I said, "I wasn't paying any attention." She said, "Don't you realize that's the whole point of walking the dog!?" In the end, the job didn't last long. I guess I was more interested in gardening than dogs.

B: What job did you do for most of your life? What did you like most about it?

Z: After medical school I specialized in dermatology, where I learned to treat diseases of the skin, hair, and nails. I like meeting people of all ages and having the opportunity to actually *see* what their problem is and to help them get better. Unlike other doctors who spend much of their time checking lab reports and x-rays, I can look at the patient and get most of the information I need.

B: Where, when, and how did you meet your spouse?

Z: I was introduced to your Bubby by the *shadchans*, Mr. and Mrs. Weiss. They had met Bubby when she was a counselor in a bungalow colony. I was their Shabbos guest when they lived in Boston and then when they moved to Crown Heights after the summer of 1976. They assured me that Bubby was **someone special**. Being cautious, Bubby wanted to get a look at me prior to our first date. She arranged to stand in the *veiber shul*, the women's section, of Congregation Anshei Rubashov on Simchas Torah and watched me dance during *hakafos*. I did not know I was being observed or I might have participated in the dancing with more enthusiasm. I did not meet Bubby

until our first date which was after Sukkos when we arranged to meet at the Museum of Natural History across from Central Park in Manhattan.

B: Where did you get married? What was the *chasuna* like?

Z: We got married six months after our initial meeting, at Oholei Torah Yeshiva, formerly the Brooklyn Jewish Center, on Eastern Parkway. The *chupah* was in front of 770 Eastern Parkway, outside the Rebbe's office. Our friends and relatives enjoyed dancing at our wedding and sharing in the excitement of our *simcha*.

B: How many children do you have?

Z: We have nine children, four boys and five girls. Your Uncle Shimmy tragically passed away from a terrible illness when he was 12 years old.

B: I would like you to think back to the day your first child was born. What was the experience like for you?

Z: Your Mommy, Miriam Feiga, was born at the National Naval Medical Center, in Bethesda, Maryland, on the day of *bedikas chometz*, the 13th of Nissan, in 1978. I was so excited to be a father! I worked very hard to gather kosher for Pesach food to bring to your Bubby in the hospital. Our friends from the Chabad House generously cooked for her. On *erev yom tov* I loaded the food, matzah, wine, and haggada into the car parked in front of our apartment building. Unfortunately, on my last trip back to the apartment to fetch the flowers, the car was towed away because it was parked in a fire lane. When I got back downstairs there was no car and no Pesach food for Bubby! Eventually, I recovered the car and sent the precious Pesach food in a taxi to the hospital. It arrived just in time for *yom tov*. There was no place for me to stay at the hospital for the three-day *yom tov*. Besides, I needed to stay in College Park to say *kaddish* for my father, Grandpa Joe.

B: What are some special memories of raising your children?

Z: When I look through our photo albums, I'm always impressed by the beautiful Purim costumes each child is wearing. Bubby spent a great deal of time and effort collecting the costumes and accessories and working out a corresponding theme.

B: What is something funny or embarrassing one of your children said at an early age that you'll never forget?

Z: In 1990 one of our boys, whose name starts with the letter Y, wrote a letter home from camp. He was having a great time. The activity he liked best was "snake." I was relieved that he got his "snake" (snack) at the canteen and not from under a rock!

B: How did you feel about raising your children? What were the best and hardest parts?

Z: The best part of raising the children was seeing them grow and mature. I'm very close with all of them and try to call or speak to each one almost every day. The hardest part was when they fought with each other in the back seat of the station wagon or during *Kiddush* Friday night.

B: How is my mother like me?

Z: Your mother, Miriam Feiga, has wonderful *middos*. In that regard you take after her. Also like you she is the oldest in the family and sets a positive example for the other children.

B: What is it like to be a grandparent?

Z: I get lots of *nachas* from my grandchildren. I enjoy talking to them, reading to them, and showing them how to plant in the garden. Although my capability is quite limited, they think I am a mechanical genius, as I am frequently called upon to repair the chairs, tables, and toys that break.

B: What do you remember about me when I was born?

Z: I was so excited to hear the news that I was now a Zaidy. You were so cute and precious. All of your "new" aunts and uncles loved holding you. We were so happy to have you and your parents stay with us for the first month after you were born.

B: Do you enjoy traveling? Where have you gone?

Z: Most of our trips for the past ten years coincided with Pesach getaways. We have been to the Poconos and Scranton, Pennsylvania; Tampa and Sanibel, Florida; Running Springs, Marina Del Rey, and Berkeley, California; and Lake George and Poughkeepsie, New York. During *chol hamoed* we went on interesting sightseeing trips in each area.

B: What trips did you take your children on during *Chol Hamoed*?

Z: We went on many outings to museums and parks. One trip that stands out in my memory was row-boating in the Hudson River. We scheduled a session with a boating club in Manhattan. We met the instructor in a large boathouse on a pier. He showed us how the club members build the row-boats themselves out of sheets of ¼ inch plywood. This was followed by many details regarding safe operation of the boat. At the end of this fifteen-minute speech he asked, “Have any of you had experience boating?” The instructor looked all around at each of us. For a long time, we were silent. Then, I remembered. I turned to the instructor and said, “*Yes sir, I have experience. I saw the video Titanic!*”

B: What would you say has been your greatest adventure so far?

Z: By far, the most adventurous thing I’ve done is become a *baal teshuva* and join the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. This required a complete transformation of my lifestyle and involved constant religious learning. It made me who I am today. When I first came to Hadar Hatorah Yeshiva I wondered how long I would be able to keep up my religious practices. *Boruch Hashem*, I have never had any doubts or regrets.

B: What interests and hobbies do you have now? What do you like to do for fun?

Z: I have many interests and hobbies. When I was a little boy, I started collecting stamps and putting them into albums. I learned the names of many large and small countries all around the world. I also enjoy collecting coins and fossils. In response to the Rebbe’s campaign for *bayis malei seforim*, our house is overflowing with thousands of Jewish books. For many years, I have been recording scenes and events in photographs of my family and garden.

B: What kind of things brings you the most pleasure now?

Z: I look forward to spending time with my family, children, and grandchildren. There is nothing I would rather do on a long Shabbos afternoon than visit with my grandchildren. I am so fortunate that most of them live nearby in the neighborhood.

B: What impact, if any, did World War II have on your life or your family?

Z: My family was safely living in the United States long before World War II broke out. However, we lost many relatives in the Holocaust. My father was stationed at Fort Trumbull in New London, Connecticut during the war. He was in uniform, but never served in combat.

B: What are you doing to help your community?

Z: Many visitors from all over the world come to Crown Heights each year to study in yeshiva, *daven* in 770, and to visit the Ohel. I have had the *zechus* to assist many of them when they happen to present with various skin problems. Often, they were referred by Rabbi Avroham Lider *a"h* of the Ahavas Chesed medical relief organization. Rabbi Lider was such a kind and caring person that I was always glad to take his requests, free of charge, of course.

Besides my medical work, I try to do what I can to make Crown Heights more livable and attractive. I take pride in Crown Heights and want to make it a showplace for visitors. When I walk on my block, I make an effort to pick up wrappers, empty bottles or advertising circulars and drop them in a nearby garbage can. I don't like messy. This led to two amusing incidents. Once, many years ago, our distant cousin, Ryan Newfield, from Johannesburg, South Africa, was studying at Yeshiva University in New York. He and a friend came to spend Shabbos with us. As we walked to *shul* on Friday afternoon, I bent over and picked up some litter. Ryan looked puzzled. Apparently, in South Africa, clean-up is done exclusively by the black workers. He asked, "Don't you have professionals to do this?" I happily replied, "I am a professional!"

The other story just happened a few months ago. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays the sanitation truck comes through our back alley at 7 am. I like to go out on weekdays and meet it to make sure the men take all our bags. I then use the opportunity to throw some extra loose items that they ignored into the truck. I wear bright blue nitrile gloves that I get from the office or order online. Then, one Shabbos morning, the truck came later, about 10 am. I met the sanitation crew when I was on my way to shul dressed in my *kapote*, *gartel*, black hat, etc. One of the sanitation workers saw me and asked, "Where are your gloves?" I answered, "I'm off today!" But he didn't give up. He extended his hands and offered, "Here, take my gloves!"

B: What is your happiest and proudest moment?

Z: My happiest and proudest moment was having *yechidus* with the Rebbe before our wedding, accompanied by our parents. The Rebbe gave us many blessings and encouraged us to build a home filled with the light of Torah and *hasidus*. The Rebbe also gave *brachos* to our parents and encouraged them to accept our religious lifestyle.

B: What would you have done differently in your life, if you had known then what you know now?

Z: As a rule, I don't like to look back and second guess what could have been. I trust that Hashem will guide me and our family in the best possible path.

B: What do you hope to accomplish next?

Z: As is well known, the Rebbe discouraged people from retiring early. I hope *Hashem* gives me the strength and good health to continue my work in medicine in the years to come.

B: If you could do anything you wanted to do, what would it be?

Z: I would like to use my medical training and experience to develop some new technique or special treatment that would advance the health of patients.

B: What do you think has stayed the same about you throughout your life? What do you think has changed?

Z: I try to stay calm and level-headed, even under stressful circumstances. You may think problems don't bother me. They do, but I try not to show it. This has been my *derech* for many years. On the other hand, some things have definitely changed such as my hair color and waist line. They show unmistakable signs of aging.

B: If you could go back to any age, what age would it be and why?

Z: I would like to go back to the age of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. As a *Kohen* it would be very special to serve Hashem with the *avodah* described in the Torah. I also like to imagine what it was like to do *Birchas Kohanim* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. In addition, I could use my experience in dermatology to diagnose *tzoraas* (translated as leprosy).

B: What advice did your parents or grandparents give you that you remember the best?

Z: My mother, Rochel (Ruth) Newfield, of blessed memory, always told me that anything worth accomplishing takes effort and dedication. My brother, sister, and I have taken her advice to heart and worked very, very hard to achieve our goals.

B: What is the best advice that you can offer me?

Z: The best advice I can give you is to listen to your parents, learn from your experiences, and give your family *nachas*.

B: Of all the things you learned from your parents, which do you feel was the most valuable?

Z: The most valuable thing I learned from my parents is the importance of education. I encouraged my children to pursue their own education by discussing their classes with them and editing their schoolwork late into the night. I was a “non-degree candidate” in many disciplines as I helped my children and son-in-law get through their college courses in special education, speech pathology, occupational therapy, and political science, etc. etc. I recently added a “virtual” PhD in sociology to my resume. Your father, R’ Asher, didn’t need my help with accounting, and that’s good, because I don’t know the first thing about it.

B: Now...for some advice for your great-grandchildren. What would you say to them in the areas of education, finances, and child rearing? Since future generations of your family will be reading this, what do you have to say to them?

Z: Bubby and I always tried to set a calm and peaceful atmosphere in our home. With nine children *k’’h* there were many opportunities for sibling rivalry. Also, I heard that it’s hard to be the middle child—and we had seven of them! The least we could do was to maintain a balance, an equality, between the sexes. When we had our first two children, we had one girl and one boy (Miriam and Yossi). When we had four children, we had two girls and two boys (You can have fun figuring out the rest by yourself!) When we had six children, we had three girls and three boys. When we had eight children, we had four girls and four boys. * So far, so good. Then came Chaya who broke the tie—and things have never been the same!

As you plan for the future, you must realize that we live in a rapidly changing world. Technology is changing at a rate unparalleled in human history. In such a tumultuous environment the only way to stay on course is to follow the Torah’s directives and the Rebbe’s teachings.

* In case you need more help, please refer to the “Birth Data” chart in the back of this book.

B: What is one thing you most want people to remember about you?

Z: I always try to be a good neighbor and help other people in need. If I see something needs to be done, I go ahead and do it without being asked. I call this “service.”

B: Can you compare the prices of some popular items from your teenage years to their price nowadays?

Item	Price in 1960's	Price in 2016
Postage Stamp	7 cents	49 cents
Candy Bar	25 cents	\$1.25
Subway Fare	30 cents	\$2.75
Soda Can	20 cents	\$1.25
Pay phone	10 cents	Not in use
Bread	75 cents	\$2.49

The worst joke I remember:

Mrs. Sapperstein invited her newly married great-niece, Rebecca, over to her house for an afternoon tea. Rebecca was impressed by the way her great-aunt preceded every request to her husband with endearing terms calling him, “Dear, Hubby, My Love, Darling, Sweetie Pie.” Amazingly, she had been married almost 70 years and it seemed they were still very much in love. Rebecca wanted to learn her secret.

While Mr. Sapperstein was off in the garden, Rebecca leaned over and said, “I think it's wonderful that, after all the years you've been married, you still call uncle those loving pet names. What's your secret?”

Mrs. Sapperstein hung her head and replied, *“Oh, I forgot his name about ten years ago!”*

And now a joke from Rabbi Shmulik Kuperman of the Besht Center: A student telephoned his rebbi at home at 11 o'clock at night. “Rebbe, could you please tell over the *drasha* you said in class today?”

Rebbe: “Oh! Was it so interesting and original that you want to hear it again?”

Student: *“No. I’m having trouble falling asleep!”*

Here’s one from my grandson, Mendel Friedman, age 11:

Question: Why are children always smiling? Answer: *Because they are always telling jokes.*

Question: Why are children always crying? Answer: *Because they don’t get them!*

My Reunion Report: From HMS to Success

Thanksgiving, 2005

Last week, a new patient came into my office, noticed my Harvard diploma, and asked, “How was it there at Harvard?” Naturally, it made me ponder and relive to a certain extent my four years at Harvard Medical School. Sometimes, a long time goes by (could it be days? months?) without my thinking about HMS. But this patient’s inquiry brought my experience at HMS back into my consciousness. (Incidentally, not many patients inquire about the Harvard diploma; I suppose they need to brush up on their Latin. One patient asked if it was written in Hebrew!)

First, let me bring you up to date on some aspects of my practice. I have been affiliated since 1981 with a 350+ physician multi-specialty group in Queens and Long Island, New York. There are half-a-dozen dermatologists each of whom sees patients in separate locations. My prime concern is maintaining the quality of care under the pressure of having to see the maximum number of patients each day. While my practice is not “concierge medicine,” I have tried to make myself more available to my patients by distributing over 1,000 business cards with my e-mail address. So far, only a handful of patients have responded via this medium.

Owing to competition and changes in the healthcare marketplace, the doctors in our group are working longer hours and adhering to tighter schedules. In spite of this, I have been able to maintain an easy-going demeanor. One wonders whether this is a good thing. It seems that my reluctance to complain about the staff may have resulted in my being assigned certain employees whose jobs are secure due to their union contract, but whose abilities are limited. I am now seeing over 130 patients a week with minimal assistance from the support staff. My main requirement is that they be friendly and helpful to the patients.

For example, one medical assistant handed me a telephone message from our own Centralized Laboratory. Only she had written “Central Iced Laboratory”. Cool. Another assistant filed my patient charts alphabetically. Or so I thought. On her day off, I couldn’t find “Quiceno.” When she returned, I told her about my difficulty. She replied, “Oh! I didn’t know which letter ‘Q’ came after, so I put them all at the end, after ‘Z!’” Ahem. Sometime later, a patient from Kew Gardens called for a prescription. I wrote it and transferred the call to the medical assistant for her

to address the envelope. She did: to “Q Gardens.” I guess my discourse on the letter ‘Q’ had an effect on her.

To improve communication among our physicians and to avoid medical-legal pitfalls, our group has recently formulated a policy requiring specialists to dictate their chart notes and referrals. Accordingly, I was issued a tiny digital dictation gadget. The recording is transmitted electronically to India, typed overnight, and printed in our office the next day. It’s pretty amazing, but there have been a few glitches. “Informed consent” became “formed consent.” “Moccasin-foot” distribution became “Markerson’s foot.” (I guess the Asian Indians are not familiar with the footwear of the American Indians.) A more volatile substitution occurred when I performed cryosurgery using the “liquid nitrogen” technique. By a stroke of keyboard alchemy, this transformed into the “liquid hydrogen” technique!

Sometimes I wonder what my patients are getting at when they describe their conditions. Such as the woman who called complaining of a rash “on both my faces.” (I asked her, or shall I say them, to come over right away.) Or the man who came in for reassurance during the anthrax scare because he was concerned about all the “Amtrak” going around. (I told him to see his travel agent.)

On the home front, things have been busy, as usual. With five children in college, I have a steady stream of reports and term papers to edit. Miriam is studying education. Yossi is a rabbi and historian. Zalman wants to be a psychologist. Chana Sara is majoring in speech therapy. Rivky is spending a year abroad in Israel. Then there’s Esty in high school, an honors student with a talent for calligraphy and crossword puzzles. Mendy is in the fifth grade. He is already proficient in baseball and chess and possesses a burning desire to learn how to whistle. And our youngest is Chaya. In the fourth grade, she is a budding poet, bookworm, and gymnast. We keep in touch with seven cell phones.

We have three grandchildren, the offspring of our oldest daughter, Miriam and her husband, Asher. The girls, Baila (age three) and Malka (age two), are delightful redheads. Shimon, the baby, is named for our son, of blessed memory. He eagerly follows his sisters around and tries to join the fun. When they are at school, he brushes up on Spanish with the nanny. He is now holding at English two words, Spanish two words, and thus is completely bilingual.

With all these tuitions and summer camp fees—plus requests for computers, cars, and airline tickets—I have not given any thought to retirement. I will continue at the office as long as G-d gives me the strength. Of course, I can always depend on saving the one-dollar checks from the market research companies and the honoraria from viewing online drug details. And I have a role model. My dear mother, who has been working since the age of 13, still takes the bus and subway to work every morning at her office in Manhattan—at age 89!

Several times a year, my wife, Basha, and I take pleasure in visiting the Hamptons or the Catskills with our children over long weekends. We usually stay within 100 miles of home. The change of scenery is appreciated, especially when we can enjoy the natural beauty of the shore and the mountains. While in the city, we have attended cultural events including “The Gates” art installation in Central Park, the special exhibits on Fifth Avenue’s Museum Mile, and the Broadway musical, “Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang.”

And then, for something completely different, I indulge my hobby: enjoying the rustic ambiance of my overgrown garden. With the cold weather upon us, I may look rather strange standing outside like a scarecrow while the weeds freeze, but I must plant my daffodils and lilies to prepare for the spring display.

Now back to my years at Harvard Medical School...I learned the basics of diagnosis and treatment, of course, but I also developed an attachment to the medical profession. Only a physician understands the challenge of treating patients with a combination of science, humanity, and humility.

As for my patient who started me on this train of thought in the first place, he answered his own question, “*Harvard is the best medical school in the country!*” I had to agree.

Reunion Memo from Stanley Newfield

May 2, 2011

To My Dear Fellow Classmates,

A few days ago, I received the 35th Reunion Report in all its crimson glory. As I read the responses, I began to regret that I had not sent in a response myself. Actually, I started writing one describing my dermatology practice in a very large multi-specialty group in Queens and Long Island. But the more I went into detail about the frustrations of dealing with administrators and the electronic medical record (not to mention the patients), I decided to spare you. Suffice it to say that I am engaged 100% in patient care although by the end of the day it feels more like 110%.

I think it will be more interesting to give you a glimpse of the future as it pertains to the Newfield family. I have, thank G-d, wonderful children and grandchildren who are accomplishing a lot in their personal and professional lives. My wife, Basha, and I are very proud of them all.

Miriam, our oldest, is married to an accountant and has a houseful of active and inquisitive children. She also works as a special education teacher. Yossi, a rabbi, is training at the NYU Medical Center to be a hospital chaplain. Zalman is married to a college professor and is pursuing a PhD in sociology at NYU. Chana Sara is working as a speech-language pathologist in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Rivky is in her second year of the occupational therapy program at Touro College in New York. Esty is teaching second grade at a Lubavitch girls yeshiva in our neighborhood, Crown Heights. Mendy is in 10th grade at a yeshiva in Postville, Iowa. Last but not least, Chaya is in 9th grade in our local yeshiva high school and is interested in drawing, painting, sewing, and crossword puzzles.

I hope to continue working as long as I have the ability and opportunity. I certainly feel that I get a lot more done on the days when I leave the house early for work. Since I have a long subway and commuter railroad trip each day, I have begun listening to “educational” CD’s known as the Great Courses produced by the Teaching Company. So far, I’ve listened to college level courses on history, Bible, the operas of Mozart, and the symphonies of Beethoven. I highly recommend them. I gained a familiarity and greater appreciation of music from the lectures. This was confirmed recently when I returned by airplane from a family vacation in California. As I

watched the movie “The King’s Speech,” I suddenly recognized part of the movie score. “That’s Beethoven!” I called out to my daughter. “And this is Mozart!” The credits confirmed the filmmaker’s good taste in music.

I am definitely looking forward to Obamacare in 2014 as this country certainly can afford its obligation to take care of the medical needs of its citizens. I hope its opponents don’t water it down any more before then.

Although I do not have any academic appointments, I enjoy teaching medical students and residents. When I see their eager, young faces it reminds me of our medical school class so many years ago. I am grateful for the opportunity to teach these students as a way of repaying the debt I owe our teachers. Many of the traditions of medical practice have gone by the wayside, but there still is a need for one-on-one mentoring.

I wish all of you excellent health and success—as well as a fantastic reunion. I don’t think I will be able to make it to Boston this year but I would like to stay in touch.

Sincerely,

Stanley Newfield

P.S. I am enclosing photos of my family from our recent vacation in Los Angeles, California.

You've Come a Long Way, Bubby Ruth!

In honor of your 95th birthday, your children and grandchildren compiled a short list of your milestones: social, geographic, educational, vocational, and technological. We have been inspired by you every step of the way. (1/11/11)

♪♪ You've come a long way, Bubby! ♪♪

from the Great Depression... to the Great Society

from pushcarts... to pushbuttons

from inkwells... to inkjets

from hopscotch... to Hopstop

from Yoohoo... to YouTube

from *lukshen*... to diction

from *gezuntheit*... to Fahrenheit

from apple pies... to Apple computers

from blackboards... to Blackberries

from counting digits... to digital cameras

from pickles... to pixels

from celery soda... to cell phones

from potato chips... to computer chips

from gas lamps... to gasohol

from the IRT... to the Ivy League

from herring... to Harvard

from sewing... to Social Security

from knitting... to nanny

from favorite book... to Facebook

from Tammany Hall... to Carnegie Hall

from tell-a-neighbor... to television
from the Lower East Side... to East 27th Street

To get where you got to today!

You've got your own *mishpacha* now, Bubby.

You've come a long, long way!

Toast at Bubby Ruth's 95th Birthday Party

December 19, 2010

Bubby Ruth, we want to wish you so many blessings as your birthday approaches. May you always continue to inspire us with your strength, your energy, and your enthusiasm. We are so glad we can join together with you at this celebration.

Your life is remarkable in many ways. You were born and grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. You have had a love affair with New York City since the time Woodrow Wilson was president until today. You love the streets, the subways, and the bustle of people coming and going. Even now, you would like to take the Access-A-Ride to work in your office in Manhattan. We miss you when you go to visit Philippa and David in California. It's no wonder that the members of their *shuls*, as well as the retirees at Yossi's senior residence in New Jersey, invite you to give a talk whenever you come. They always enjoy hearing about your experiences growing up as a child of immigrants and becoming a college educated professional.

Your parents, Solomon Chechel and Liza Chellin, were immigrants from the Ukraine who arrived in this country without money or the knowledge of English. But they were dedicated to establishing a Jewish family based on kindness and generosity. You attended public schools including the honor high school of Hunter College. Soon you were recognized as an outstanding student. You studied German, French, and Latin but your favorite subject was math. Despite the fact that you enjoyed attending a prestigious academic high school, you transferred to an evening commercial high school so you could take a job during the day to help support your family. While still a teenager, you earned a top score on a city-wide civil service exam. This qualified you for your job at the Department of Purchase of New York City. Your salary helped sustain your family during the Great Depression in the 1930's.

However, you were not content just to earn a living. In the evenings you attended Hunter College for nine years just for the sake of learning. It never occurred to you that what you studied would someday help you advance your career, but it did. After you were married and had children you became a math teacher and your 60 college credits beyond your BA degree earned you two increments in salary. You worked at Cunningham Junior High School in Brooklyn until you retired—for the first time.

But I am getting ahead of our story. As a young woman you were outgoing and adventurous. You loved to travel, including trips to Mexico and Cuba. Remember, this was before air travel made long trips simple and convenient, as long as you don't mind walking barefoot through security and getting a whole-body scan. You told me the story about driving in the 1940's through the American South on the way to Mexico. You and your friends stopped at a diner to get something to eat. While you were there, you struck up a conversation with some of the local people. You told them a little about yourself and your family. When you mentioned to them that you are Jewish, a large curious crowd gathered around your table. The *goyim* all wanted to see your horns! This was typical of the widespread ignorance and prejudice of the time.

On a trip to Lake George in upstate New York, you met Daddy—a slender handsome boy named Joey from Brooklyn and a City College student. Three years later, during World War II, you were married during your lunch hour in the Municipal Building across from City Hall. You raised three wonderful children, Philippa, David, and me. We each plan to make you birthday parties in our home cities of S. Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. You encouraged us to make the most of our education and we all wound up—as you know—doctors. We always tried to make you and Daddy proud of us and I hope we succeeded.

When Daddy became sick, Uncle Arthur helped continue the accountancy practice and kept it going for many years as a partner. But as time went on, you took over supporting the family. You maintained a calm and comfortable home for all of us. For the twenty years of Daddy's illness you were never sad or depressed but enjoyed each day to the fullest—as you do now.

When the Surgeon General issued his report linking cigarette smoking with cancer, you stopped smoking the same day. You didn't even finish the pack. It was more important for you to be there for your family than to smoke. It was hard to follow through, but you were determined and kept to your decision.

You stopped teaching to take care of Daddy when he needed the most attention. Later, you resumed working at a variety of jobs including receptionist for a psychiatrist, tour leader for groups of retired teachers going to Miami Beach for the winter, tutor for child actors (including Brooke Shields), theatre usher on Broadway, and secretary for the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. Although you did not have a religious upbringing you always helped out with the *minyan*

at work when called upon. My friends could not believe that you were traveling every day by subway to work in Manhattan and earning a salary until age 92!

You were a good companion to your relatives and friends including Uncle Seymour and Aunt Edith, Uncle Morris and Aunt Anne, cousins Anusia, Basia, and Vera, your fellow teacher Eva Vigman, and many others. Now you are devoted to your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

I want to make a special mention of your dear friends Rabbi Baruch and Rebbetzin Dora Faivelson, and their daughters, Leah'le and Chana'le. As unlikely as it may seem, they became your closest and dearest friends and confidants. You were their Shabbos guest every Friday night after they moved from Borough Park to your neighborhood in Flatbush. They invited us for the Passover Seder for many years and we loved it.

You have become comfortable as your three children have each become close to Lubavitcher rabbis. Philippa is the president of her *shul* and Phillip devotes himself to shopping for the *kiddushes* as well as entertaining Rabbi Zarchi's growing family. David is a regular at his Chabad House and attends Rabbi Baitelman's classes.

Basha and I, as you know, moved to Crown Heights to be close to the Rebbe. This year I am varying my routine and meeting new friends by attending services and classes in two new *shuls*.

This brings me back to what we all owe you. You have always been there for us. Your guidance always made a difference. You have always been generous with you time, interest, and gifts. Whether it was a new car or a check to pay off the mortgage, you always came through.

What we admire most about you is your positive outlook. You never look back and wonder what could have been. Thank G-d, you recovered from the car accident and then your broken hip. You race around with your walker to museums and lectures on a daily basis. You traveled with Philippa and Phillip to meetings of the Lewis and Clark Society. You devour the New York Times every day including the crossword puzzles. You balance your check book every month. You have been a student and a teacher all of your life.

Yesterday, we read the weekly Torah portion of *Va'Yechi*. The name of the portion is very significant. It means “and he lived.” This refers to our patriarch Jacob who presided over the reunification of his family in Egypt. Jacob overcame many adversities and worked hard to take care of his family, yet he still felt his *last years* were his *best years*. Like Jacob, you have always recognized the importance of being optimistic and living life to the fullest. We wish you good health and many years to enjoy it.

Let us raise our champagne glasses and join together with a hearty *L'chaim*!

Speech at Zalman's L'chaim

December 6, 2009

My Dear Zalman, Jenny, Family, and Friends,

It is a great pleasure to greet you today on this happy occasion. My wife, Basha Rayzl, and I have been looking forward to the engagement of Zalman and Jenny with great anticipation. We would like to welcome Jenny's parents, Marilyn and Ralph Labendz, from West Caldwell, New Jersey. We also would like to warmly greet her brothers, Jacob and Barry, her Uncle Joel and Aunt Maryanne from New City, New York, and her Uncle Phillip and Aunt Lois along with their daughters Barbara and Janet. Barbara is here with her husband John and baby Hannah.

Zalman's Uncle Jeffrey and Aunt Kathryn are joining us from Manhattan. Also his Aunt Marta and Uncle Martin White are here from Southampton, New York. Our cousin Leo Elkin is joining us from the Bronx. We would also like to greet Aunt Ethel Fisher and her children Michael and Susie.

We would also like to welcome our dear friends and neighbors who have known Zalman since he was born. Thank you Rabbi Abba and Mrs. Rechy Paltiel for joining us tonight. You have been so very generous and kind to us since I was a *bochur*. Looking around the room, I see many of our neighbors from Crown Street, too numerous to mention. Basha Rayzl and I deeply appreciate your friendship and good wishes.

Today is a very special day for more than one reason. We are here, of course, to wish Zalman and Jenny "Mazel Tov" on the occasion of their engagement. Today is also a hasidic holiday known as Yud Tes Kislev, the 19th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev. On this day over 200 years ago, Zalman's namesake, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, was released from prison in czarist Russia. This was not only a salvation for Rabbi Schneur Zalman but is also a redemption and elevation of the Jewish people for all generations.

Until the day of his release from prison, Rabbi Schneur Zalman worked quietly in his local area to teach the inner meaning of the Jewish religion. Sadly, he was falsely accused by his Jewish opponents and imprisoned by the czarist government on charges of treason. After his release, he began to spread hasidism with enormous enthusiasm through his many writings and disciples.

This past Shabbos, Zalman's brother, Yossi, attended a suburban New York synagogue. The rabbi gave a sermon based on the verse from the Torah reading that begins with Jacob's declaration to G-d, "I am unworthy of all the kindness and of all the faithfulness that you have done for your servant (Bereishis, 32:11)." Jacob relates that he set out alone from his parents' home with only his walking stick and is now returning to Eretz Yisroel with a large family. However, the rabbi made a slight inadvertent slip of the tongue. Instead of saying "*katonti mekol hachasudim*," he said, "*katonti mekol **ha-hasidim***." Literally, this means, "I am lower than all the *hasidim*!"

We can learn a lot from this verse. Of course, each and every one of us is forever indebted to the Almighty for our sustenance, our families, and our health. That is what Jacob, our forefather, had in mind in this verse. However, as a newcomer to Chabad I also feel humble, that is "*katonti mekol ha-hasidim*." I feel very fortunate to have joined the movement led by the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Basha and I have done our best to fulfill his mission of spreading the unique traditions of our Jewish people. We are deeply grateful that Zalman and Jenny have found each other and plan to create a new Jewish home.

Again, please enjoy yourselves at this *simcha*. We would like to thank all of you for joining us tonight and wish you a Happy Chanukah!

Zalman's Graduate School Admission Essay

Note to readers: I think this excerpt will help give you a picture of what it was like raising our children in a hasidish home in Crown Heights.

I believe that the unusual trajectory of my life has provided me with unique perspectives and strengths as well as unique challenges for a career as a sociologist. I grew up in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn in an ultra-orthodox Jewish enclave. In my all-boys religious school, Judaic studies were intensively studied and there were no secular studies, not even English or mathematics. I lived *forty-five minutes from Broadway* but never set foot in a theater or cinema. Also, my family did not watch television or listen to the radio at home. I learned Hebrew, Yiddish, and Aramaic, starting in grammar school. Thus, until the age of twenty, I devoted great effort to studying ancient texts and debating esoteric arguments, all in foreign languages. Involvement in the secular world was restricted in the community. On the other hand, this traditional religious education developed my capacity to reason and my ability to express ideas clearly.

Therefore, I did not begin to read and write English until I studied it at home with a private tutor. I was craving to explore so many new things. I was determined to obtain a secular education, even though it meant starting with the ABC's. When I was sixteen years old and attending a religious boarding school, my uncle sent me practice sheets from a second grade English workbook. I began these studies in secret in order to avoid detection by the other students and the school administration. With great effort and more workbooks, I gradually improved my English reading skills. I went on to read dozens, and later hundreds, of books. It was more difficult for me to learn mathematics on my own. I did not attempt to crack arithmetic until I was eighteen years old!

From the age of thirteen, I studied at a series of increasingly far-flung religious academies. I spent one year studying in Morristown, New Jersey, two years in Chicago, two years in Miami Beach, and the following year in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 2002, the Jewish Welfare Board of Singapore invited me and three other rabbinical students to work and study for one year in their small Jewish community. I also made shorter trips to Russia and China in order to assist the local Jewish communities. My extensive travels within the United States and abroad gave me an opportunity to observe a wide range of lifestyles. The excitement of observing similarities and

differences in various cultures and religions opened new vistas through which to understand the human experience outside of my narrow ghetto upbringing.

Evidently, this essay must have been convincing because Zalman was accepted into the PhD program in sociology at New York University with a scholarship.

Memories of Bubby Ruth

by Miriam Friedman

I have so many fond memories of my grandmother, Bubby Ruth. I remember how exciting it was to visit her house when I was a young girl. My siblings and I loved rolling down the “hill” in front of her terraced house. The grass was always soft and green and well-kept. We often used the hose to water the flowers in the planters in front of her house. Inside Bubby Ruth’s house, my favorite “toy” was the piano, covered with picture frames and photos. We loved to see our pictures prominently displayed. We would improvise playing on the piano very enthusiastically. In the kitchen, I loved to admire the extensive collection of pencils, erasers and sharpeners, enough for a small school. I also couldn’t get over how many books were in the house! Bubby Ruth’s love of reading and learning made a great impression on me.

Bubby Ruth would often tell us stories about her teaching experiences in the public-school system. She was a wonderful math teacher. Perhaps due to her example, I decided to become a teacher, too. When I enrolled in college after my second daughter was born, to get my special education degree, Bubby Ruth was very pleased and supportive. She even helped me complete an on-line course in psychology! I had to read a textbook and answer questions after each chapter. Bubby Ruth hand-wrote this assignment for me while she worked in Manhattan in an office. She was in her 80’s and still going to work by subway each day. She was so proud to tell everyone there that she was helping her granddaughter in college who was also teaching and had several young children at home. When I finally graduated, Bubby Ruth attended my graduation.

Another highlight that I remember is Bubby Ruth coming for Shabbos to join our family at our new house on Maple Street. Bubby Ruth would arrive in a white Access-a-Ride van on Friday afternoon. We would all look out the window at the awaited time to catch the first glimpse of the van and run out to bring her bags in. The kids knew that they had to be careful not to leave toys on the floor when Bubby Ruth visited. She always brought some treats for the kids. It might have been some fruit or juice cups she collected at her doctor visits. Before each of her visits, I would buy cottage cheese for her breakfast. We also saved the ends of the challah rolls just for her. I was happy to make an extra tray of chicken for Bubby Ruth to take home on Sunday to eat during the week.

Bubby Ruth always tried to be helpful and would ask if there was any sewing she could do. I remember her hemming Shimon's pants when he was in kindergarten because they were a bit too long. She always told the girls that "sunlight is the best light" and would sit on a chair in the kitchen near the large windows to work. Bubby Ruth loved reading books to our kids and speaking to them about their school experiences. She took pride in reviewing their spelling and math tests. She would always compliment them on doing a good job. Bubby Ruth also loved to play "Round and Round the Garden" on the palms of the younger children.

Bar Mitzvah Speech for Shimon Friedman

October 19, 2017

Welcome family and friends!

I am so glad to celebrate this wonderful *simcha* with all of you. I know many of you have traveled great distances in order to join with us. This is an especially exciting event since Shimon is our first grandson to be bar mitzvah. I feel overwhelmed with emotion when I remember all of Shimon's milestones. I remember his birth, the *shalom zachor* in our house, the *bris* at Rabbi Shain's shul, the *upshernish* in his apartment on Montgomery Street, and the *siddur party* with Shimon dressed in a royal cape and crown. He made a beautiful menorah for Chanukah which he lit with pride. He wore a handsome army officer costume on Purim. Shimon helped me plant cherry tomatoes in the backyard. Each time we visited he was so excited to share a *d'var Torah* with us. As you know, Shimon is named after our son, Shimon Eliezer *a"h*, who passed away shortly before the age of bar mitzvah. I'm sure Shimmy is having tremendous *nachas* as he looks down on this beautiful gathering.

This Shabbos, Shimon will *lain Parshas Noach*. He has worked for an entire year learning the *psukim* and the *trop*. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the deeper meaning of the *parsha*. Hashem says to Noach, "*Bo el hateyva*— Come into the ark." The Hebrew word "*teyva*" can have two meanings. The simple meaning is the ark, a wooden boat built to rescue and protect Noah, his family, and the animal and bird species. The second meaning is a "word." Metaphorically, our personal "arks," our "rescue vehicles," are the *words* of Torah study and prayer. Just as Noah and his family were protected by the ark from the flood that raged outside it, we can "enter" the words of Torah study and prayer in order to be protected from the "flood" of worldly concerns that threatens to drown us.

Our sages teach that it is particularly helpful to immerse ourselves in prayer first thing in the morning. When we look at the world again each morning, it can seem to exist on its own, as if independent of Hashem. The morning prayers help us recognize that the world cannot exist without a constant flow of life-force from Hashem. In addition, our *tefilllos* guide us to the ultimate purpose of creation. Our mission as *frum* Jews is to transform this physical world into a dwelling place for Hashem, a *dirah b'tachtonim*.

Shimon, by putting on your *tefillin* each morning, you are connecting yourself, in your mind and in your heart, to Hashem. This prepares you for a day devoted to bringing G-dliness into the world. In this way, your entire day will be full of holy experiences and safe from the “raging waters” of the world.

Shimon, you are fortunate to have the opportunity to *daven* and learn in the Lubavitch school whose graduates now spread Torah all around the world. This didn’t happen by chance. It took generations of soul searching and effort to bring you where you stand today. Your grandparents chose to become Lubavitcher hasidim because they felt that this was the most proper way to lead a Jewish life. Your parents have worked tirelessly to build a Jewish home that would nurture your talents and provide you with a strong *hasidishe* foundation. Bubby and I have *nachas* from your conscientious and neat homework assignments, the detailed *divrei Torah* you explain at the Shabbos table, the time you spend helping and caring for your younger brothers, and the many hours you spent preparing for this day. We bless you to grow to be a *chosid*, *yirai shamayim*, and *lamdan*. May you continue learning Torah and doing *mitzvos*—*m’chayil el chayil*—from strength to strength.

Shimon, we are very proud of you and love you very much!

Bar Mitzvah Speech for Moshe Friedman

September 26, 2019

Dearest Moshe,

Mazel tov! Mazel tov! on this auspicious occasion of your Bar Mitzvah.

This week is *parshas Netzavim*. In it, *Moshe Rabbenu* gives his third and final parting message to the Jewish people. It contains an unusual instruction.

Moshe tells the Yidden that Hashem gives us a choice. We can choose a blessing or a curse. We can choose life or death. He advises them to “choose life.” But did *Moshe Rabbeinu* really have to tell them that? Isn’t it obvious? Wouldn’t everyone choose life over death?

One way to understand this instruction teaches us something important about life and the choices we make. You see, sometimes we can make a wrong decision that affects our choices later in life. Our sages summed this up in the famous *mishna* in *Pirkei Avos*: “*Mitzvah goreres mitzvah, v’aveirah goreres aveirah.*” Doing one mitzvah will naturally lead to performing a second mitzvah, whereas sadly the opposite is also true.

The lesson is clear and particularly relevant for a *bocher* upon his Bar Mitzvah. Make the right decisions now, so that later in life you will be able to “choose life.” In other words, each mitzvah that you do now, will pave the way to a life of Torah and *mitzvos* in the future.

I remember my father, Yosef Moshe Hakohen a”h, sitting beside me proudly at my bar mitzvah over 50 years ago. Moshe, you are so fortunate to have your father *and* both your grandfathers proudly celebrating with you here today. This is very significant as *Boruch Hashem* you are celebrating your bar mitzvah as an integral part of three generations of Torah observers.

The Gemara in *Bava Metziah*, 85a, relates the following assurance pertaining to Torah scholars and their descendants.

Rabbi Parnakh says that Rabbi Yochanan explains: With regard to anyone who is a Torah scholar, and whose son is a Torah scholar, and whose grandson is a Torah scholar, the Torah will never again cease from his descendants, as it is stated by the *Navi Yeshaya*:

“And as for Me, this is My covenant...My spirit that is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your children’s children, says Hashem, from now and forever!” (Isaiah 59:21)

This concept is the basis of the *bracha Veharev Na*, which includes the words, “*Veniheyeh anachnu, vetzeetzaeinu, vetzeetzaei kol amcha beis Yisroel.*” We recite this *tefilla* every morning at the beginning of *davening*, asking Hashem to make the Torah sweet for us, our descendants, and the descendants of the House of Israel. This prayer is also cited by the Alter Rebbe in his *Shulchan Aruch*, section 47, regarding the *halachos* of the blessings for the Torah.

Moshe, *bli ayin harah*, your grandparents and your parents have set you on the right path of Torah and *mitzvos*. You live in a community of Torah-observant Jews who value and appreciate every opportunity to perform a *mitzvah*. As a kohen, I *bentch* you to continue proudly on the path of Torah and *mitzvos*. You did a wonderful job learning the *maamar* and your Torah portion. Continue learning with diligence and enthusiasm. Continue doing *mitzvos b’hidur*. Continue adding *simcha* wherever you may be. And most of all, continue being a *dugma chaya* for all those around you.

Moshe, it’s been an honor and a privilege to watch you grow into a fine young man. You make us very proud and give tremendous *nachas* to your family, the Rebbe, and Hashem. Once again, *mazel tov, mazel tov* to you and your parents!

To My Favorite Doctor

(This is an edited and condensed version of a letter from one of my dermatology patients.)

January 2019

An appreciation letter written in honor of Dr. Stanley Newfield, the Specialist of Dermatology, that went from Brooklyn to Harvard. Actions speak louder than words and achievements speak louder than actions. The volume of lives Dr. Stanley Newfield saved from remote social isolation because of skin conditions that could cause social isolation or self-consciousness is like the number of lives saved by a lifeguard during the lifespan of his career.

Dr. Stanley Newfield is a Social Life Guard and the work he does stopped me from drowning in sorrow and from living on a remote socially isolated island. I landed on my feet emotionally because I fell from a level of joy and lost balance. Dr. Stanley Newfield for me was the tree that broke the fall and provided some raked-up fall-fallen leaves that I could land on. There aren't a lot of trees in a concrete jungle and there is no concrete jungle quite like a place called Brooklyn, a place I'm from and a place Dr. Stanley traveled to Boston and attended Harvard University from. Dr. Stanley Newfield is the "Tarzan of the Brooklyn Concrete Jungle!"

The only thing more daunting than lions, tigers, and bears is losing leisure activities and studying entire textbooks. Dr. Stanley Newfield went from Brooklyn to Harvard—one of the best respected prestigious schools. There was no tour guide for him while trekking through the concrete jungle. There were no paved routes, just pavement. And just like walking on concrete, each step is gonna be tough if the person walking doesn't have a reasonable pace, a resilient callousness on the sole or heel of the foot. Dr. Stanley Newfield decided that one of his sole purposes is gonna be to heal people through dermatology. He did this by graduating from Harvard University that required a daunting journey, an unequaled quest from Brooklyn to Harvard. That's literally from Brooklyn to Boston.

That's the equivalent of a migration traveled by different kinds of life that leave where they live guided by attitude and latitude. So, my gratitude is for the personal migration he traveled over gravel and then graduated despite the conditions rain, hail, sleet, or snow—any type of degree. He went on to obtain a type of degree that teaches a person about the skin. That degree is a

dermatology degree and that's quite a feat. Obtaining a degree required thick skin and enabled a person to understand and resolve the levels of the human skin and the levels of severity of severe skin conditions. Obtaining a degree required resolve because skin conditions are resilient. Dr. Stanley Newfield had resolve so the problem could get re-solved.

The journey from Brooklyn to Harvard brought about and required a lieutenant-like discipline that let him accurately learn the discipline of dermatology with its system of rules, mechanisms, and designs. Consider this: When an engine is near empty, an engineer knows this could cause jeopardy or breakdowns. A person that could avoid breakdowns while traveling from Brooklyn to Boston or from Brooklyn to Harvard and could win a game of “Jeopardy” is an “Educational Gauntlet Engineer.” If ever Dr. Stanley Newfield stops or rests from his life-saving practice of dermatology because of the past migrations and the present migrations there is plenty of laurels that he could rest on and a lifetime supply of respect and gratitude. He will be thanked for all the migrations that required a lot of attitude and latitude and for the levels of education in every class attended. To complete his education Dr. Stanley Newfield had to leave and travel from the Brooklyn Concrete Jungle.

You can imagine that Dr. Stanley Newfield might have gotten stopped while driving for a routine traffic stop because all that traveling could bring about some tickets, good tickets and bad tickets. Dr. Stanley Newfield probably didn't rack up the bad ones and he is probably the only person I know—let me rephrase that—he is the only person I know that is a Harvard graduate. If he is stopped while driving for a routine traffic stop, when reading him his rights he gets told that he has the right to remain silent *unless he wants to share stories* about how he graduated from Harvard and tell people about how he went from Brooklyn to Harvard!

In other words, Dr. Stanley Newfield got legal individualized bragging rights that are read only to him. He could say that the reason he was driving fast is because he's traveling from Brooklyn to Harvard and he's late for class. Ain't nobody gonna give you no ticket because that's probably illegal writing a ticket for someone traveling from Brooklyn to Harvard. That's probably against the law. That's probably concretely against the law. They had to write a new law only for him: “The Traveling from Brooklyn to Harvard above the miles per hour Limit Tryna Avoid Arriving Late to School Law.” They read him his driving rights and his bragging rights. The teachers or professors acknowledge that they know that you got quite a journey. Traveling from

Brooklyn to Boston was just the beginning of the journey. There is a lot of work that is required while traveling from the first semester of school to graduation!

Dr. Stanley Newfield is a Good Character, a Hero instead of a Villain, because he saves lives and quality of lives because the majority of his life was spent getting skills from school so that he could be a dermatology specialist. I really appreciate and respect Dr. Stanley Newfield because he went to college at one of the best schools, Harvard University, despite adversity from traveling from one of the toughest lands and that's Brooklyn, New York. Infinite Thank You's, infinite appreciation, infinite respect, is what Dr. Stanley Newfield is worthy of. I am from Brooklyn, also, so I know that the journey from Brooklyn to Harvard was daunting. Brooklyn itself is daunting. Also, Harvard is daunting. Brooklyn and Harvard couldn't be any more different from each other. He adapted to and survived both and has a right to boast!

Modesty doesn't allow him to boast, so I'll boast for him:

“Hello! My name is Dr. Stanley Newfield. Meaning, I graduated from college and it wasn't just *any* college I graduated from, arguably the *best* college known to Man, while traveling from one of the toughest towns known to Man. I listened when the lectures were said. I was at the class when classes began. When no one else was talking about skin care, I spoke about it. I had the enthusiasm that began the Skin Care Regimen Renaissance. I knocked on the door of opportunity despite rain, hail, sleet, or snow. It's funny that education is like janitor keys because it lets me walk through previously locked doors. So now, what must I knock for? I can enter any place that I apply because I am qualified to work there. Rain, hail, sleet, or snow didn't stop me from getting to class because I already had elements fighting against me before I got there.

“Life is all about avoiding the ‘what ifs’ and the ‘ifs,’ ‘ands,’ or ‘maybes’ and it's good to say ‘maybe if I try that or this, this is what could happen.’ I could tell you about the school projects because I studied dermatology and science at class rather than the option of failure. Matter of fact, I could tell you about quizzes that had multiple answer choices or options and the realization that on those quizzes or questions *failure wasn't an option*. It was the same scenario in real life because while traveling from Brooklyn failure wasn't an option. I could tell you about scientific matter and that when I chose my choices in life, I never chose failure. Because when you don't *got no choice*, and you gotta have the right answers there is no luck involved.

“So, if it's wrong, I tried again. I could let you know about scientific matters and a lot of matter of facts or matter-related facts including the one about when you got no choice then a fear

of failure doesn't really matter. I don't know *fear well* and that's because I said to fear, '*farewell*' and that's why I *fares well* despite any and all challenges.

"I could let you know about the causes of tough skin because I'm a Dermatology Specialist and I could let you know about tough skin because *before* I attended school for dermatology, I already had it. I could let you know about subjects in school and the conditions, risks, and dangers Brooklyn people are subjected to. I could let you know about Brooklyn building hallways and Harvard hallways because *I walked through both*. I graduated from the School of Life and the School of Harvard and I'll just let that speak for me because I didn't have a choice then. That's why I have choices now. Modesty or bravery could speak for itself. A person that earned the right to brag is left alone. They are unquestioned and unquestionable and respected by all. That's why I don't gotta boast."

That was an impersonation of Dr. Stanley Newfield. If there is ever a movie about Dr. Stanley Newfield, the movie could be called "Truth or Dermatology Dare." A story about a Brooklyn man that got dared to try to attend the famous School of Harvard for dermatology while at a Brooklyn dice game and won the bet. It's created from a true story. If there was an audition for someone to be Dr. Stanley Newfield and I auditioned at the "Travel from Brooklyn to Harvard Truth or Dermatology Dare" movie (and yes, the title is different now) that's ok. Because I understand Dr. Stanley Newfield.

A human sheds his personality like a reptile. Is there an ID that a person has? What are his identifying features? What is it that brings a person uniqueness? DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, identifies each person. This could distinguish one person from the other. Even a *vegetable* could visit a dermatologist and get flaws removed. Yet vegetables are identified by their case or casing.

Deoxyribonucleic acid got a plan. That plan is to let there be a variety of casings that humans could let decorate themselves. Deoxyribonucleic acid is the infinite originalizing Decorator of Nature. It is the reason why there is variety in nature, either human or non-human. Can anyone dare say deoxyribonucleic acid is overrated? Who could judge? Who could criticize an artist that has the name deoxyribonucleic acid? The designer and decorator is nature's beauty, itself.

Whatever is designed gets no better until dermatology learned that *flaws could be removed*. Dermatologists prescribe advice or medicine because they first understand the flaws by attending awesome famous colleges like Harvard, the famous college that the famous Dr. Stanley Newfield

traveled from Brooklyn to Boston and got the level of education that lets him understand dermatology and then prescribe a solution or applicable advice that deoxyribonucleic acid and the immune system never rejects. Because nobody is perfect, studies of science and the healing properties of nature heal human flaws. Everyone got potential good health and potential good life. Education is essential when tryna optimize what is called the natural and social cure that cures the epidemic of lost perfection.

Truth and respect show a person's true colors and repairs relationships and reputations. *Dr. Stanley Newfield is a true friend.* That is the truth. An opinion isn't a lie. Rumors and stereotypes cause people to be false foes. Different colored leaves are different color races but they are all from the same family tree. This epiphany or amazing social natural truth gave my life a new beginning. This all began after Dr. Stanley Newfield left Brooklyn and started an education at Harvard and harvested the title and education of Specialist of Dermatology.

Sincerely,

Your Fresh Meadows Patient

Piece # Four: Reference Material

Birth Data

Grandparents

Name	Birthday	Year
Yosef Moshe Newfield (Grandpa Joe)	February 12	1914
Rochel Newfield (Bubby Ruth)	January 18	1916
Shabtai Janus (Sam/ “Pops”)	November 22	1930
Esther Chula Janus (Bubby Esther)	May 27	1934

The Newfield Family

Name	Birthday	Year
Shlomo Asher	21 Av	5711
Basha Rayzl	20 Iyar	5715
Miriam Feiga	13 Nissan	5738
Chaim Yosef Moshe	3 Sivan	5740
Schneur Zalman	27 Tevet	5742
Chana Sara	10 Kislev	5744
Shimon Eliezer	10 Cheshvan	5746
Rivkah Yocheved	1 Elul	5747
Esther Brocha	21 Tevet	5750
Menachem Mendel	23 Tammuz	5755
Chaya Mushka	17 Elul	5756

Yahrzeit Calendar

Name	Hebrew Date	Hebrew Year	English Date	English Year
Yosef Moshe Newfield	17 Shvat	5738	25 January	1978
Esther Chula Janus	21 Adar II	5749	28 March ?	1989
Shimon Eliezer Newfield	29 Shvat	5758	24 February	1998
Shabtai Janus	3 Adar I	5771	7 February	2011
Rochel Newfield	22 Tammuz	5774	20 July	2014

Tatty's Famous Cholent

Ingredients:

- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 packages *flanken* (beef ribs), cut into large pieces
- canola oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 teaspoons paprika
- 4 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon duck sauce
- ½ cup short grain brown rice
- ½ cup pearled barley
- 1 large sweet potato
- 3 medium white potatoes
- 1 large carrot

Directions:

- 1) Fry onions and garlic in canola oil, using an eight-quart heavy pot with a tight-fitting lid.
- 2) Add the *flanken* and brown on all sides.
- 3) Add the brown rice, barley, salt, garlic powder, paprika, ketchup, and duck sauce.
- 4) Cut the potatoes, sweet potatoes, and carrot into large pieces and place them on the bottom of the pot under the meat.
- 5) Fill with cold water until meat is covered
- 6) Simmer covered on a low flame overnight. Enjoy!

Note: One-half roll of frozen *pareve kishke* (stuffed derma) may be added.

Serves 8

*Cinnamon Apple Cupcakes***Ingredients:**

3 cups flour

1½ teaspoons baking soda

Pinch of salt

1½ teaspoons cinnamon

¾ cup sugar

¾ cup canola oil

½ cup unsweetened applesauce

4 eggs, beaten

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 cup coarsely chopped peeled apples (about 2 apples)

1 cup raisins or Zante currants

1 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Sprinkle of cinnamon sugar

Directions:

Combine sugar and oil in a large mixing bowl.

Beat in eggs and vanilla, then stir in chopped apples, raisins, pecans, and applesauce.

Sift in the dry ingredients (flour, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon).

Mix until well blended.

Prepare 28 cupcake holders, spray with “Pam”, and sprinkle the bottoms of the cupcake holders lightly with cinnamon sugar.

Divide the batter into the cupcake holders.

Bake at 325 degrees for 21-23 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out dry.

Glossary

Ahavas Yisroel: Love of a fellow Jew. The Tannaitic sage Rabbi Akiva (c. 50-135 CE) called the biblical commandment to “love thy fellow as thyself” the central tenet of the Torah, and hasidic masters explained that the souls of the Jewish nation in fact comprise one large body.

Aibishter: Yiddish for “the One Above,” G-d Almighty.

alef: The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

alov hashalom: May he rest in peace.

Amalek: The nation recorded in the Bible that tried to destroy the ancient Israelites. They are believed to be the source and model of all future anti-Semites.

Amud: The command “Arise!”

aron kodesh: The holy ark housing the Torah scroll in the synagogue.

Ashkenazi: Jews of Central and Eastern European descent. The term “Ashkenaz” is derived from the Hebrew word for Germany.

aufruf: The *chosen’s aliyah* to the Torah on the Shabbos before the wedding, followed by a small reception for his friends.

avodah and *avodas Hashem*: Service to G-d.

Avrohom Avinu: Abraham our father.

baal koreh: The expert reader who chants the Torah portion with the traditional cantillation.

baal teshuva: Literally “master of return,” the term is applied to people who have embraced Jewish observance as adults.

balabus/balabusta: The head of a Jewish household and his wife.

bar mitzvah: Confirmation for boys at age thirteen.

bedikas chometz: The traditional search to remove leavened items from the house on the night before Passover.

beis medrash: a Jewish study hall.

bekesheh: A long silk coat traditionally worn by hasidic men.

bentch: Say a blessing/give a blessing/recite the Grace After Meals.

bimah: The raised platform at the front or center of the synagogue.

Birkas Kohanim: The traditional priestly blessing unchanged from ancient times until today.

bocher: A yeshiva student or an unmarried young man. Pl. *bocherim*.

brocha: A blessing.

bris: Religious ceremony of circumcision.

bubby: Affectionate term for grandmother.

Chabad: A transliteration of the Hebrew acronym for *chochmah, binah, da'at*, meaning “wisdom, understanding, and knowledge,” describing core values of the Lubavitch community and often used as a synonym for Lubavitch. Chabad has become known for bolstering Jewish life across the globe.

challah: Braided egg bread served on the Sabbath and holidays.

chayos: Lively enthusiasm.

chazakah: Status established by three occurrences.

cheder: (lit. “room”). Originally, a one-room school where young Jewish boys were taught Hebrew and religious studies. Today it refers to Jewish primary schools.

chasunah: A Jewish wedding.

chinuch: Jewish education.

cholent: A meat, potato, and bean stew traditionally eaten on Saturday afternoon among Eastern European Jews.

Cholov Yisroel: Kosher dairy products produced under continuous Jewish supervision.

chometz: Leavened foods made of wheat, barley, oats, spelt, or rye. Jews are forbidden to consume, or even own, *chometz* on Passover.

Chumash: The Five Books of Moses, also known as the Pentateuch. These comprise the first five books of the Jewish Bible.

chupah: The bridal canopy at a Jewish wedding.

Crown Heights: A neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, that has served as the headquarters of the Lubavitch hasidic community since 1940.

daled amos: Lit. four cubits, the space occupied by a person.

daven: The act of praying.

dirah b'tachtonim: Literally “a dwelling place below,” the term is used to describe the purpose and effect of Jewish observance: creating a “home” for G-d in the physical world.

Divrei Torah: A Jewish religious teaching.

drasha: Rabbinical speech or sermon.

duchening: Priestly blessing recited in the synagogue on holidays.

dugma chaya: A living example.

erev: Evening, the eve of.

farbrengen: A Lubavitch term to describe a devotional communal gathering. A formal or informal event where hasidic teachings and stories are shared and niggunim sung. They are an integral part of Chabad hasidism and are intended to renew the hasid's fervor for divine service.

flanken: Beef ribs.

frum: A Yiddish word meaning "religious," "pious," or "Orthodox," depending on the context.

Gan Eden: The Garden of Eden.

gartel: A silk sash worn during prayer.

gashmius: The physical material realm.

Gemara: The Babylonian Talmud.

geulah amiti: The true final redemption.

get: The Jewish bill of divorce.

Gezundheit: G-d bless you! (Yiddish). Traditionally recited when you hear someone sneeze.

glatt kosher: Beef, veal, or lamb that is kosher beyond doubt. This is an additional stringency beyond standard kosher.

goy (singular; plural, *goyim*): Literally, someone of a different nation, a non-Jew.

hachnosos orchim: Hospitality to guests. The Mishna describes this as a praiseworthy custom.

haftorah: The portion of the Prophets recited each Shabbos in the synagogue after the Torah reading.

Haggadah: The traditional booklet recited at home during the Passover seder.

hakafos: The procession with the Torah scroll on Simchas Torah, accompanied by festive dancing.

halacha: Jewish law, as codified in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Hallel: Special psalms recited on holidays.

Hanukkah: The eight-day holiday, a key feature of which is lighting of menorahs, commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 165 B.C.E.

hamotzei: The blessing over bread or challah.

haredi: A Hebrew word that literally means “those who tremble” (referring to Isaiah 66:5, “those who tremble before G-d”); commonly used as a synonym for the strictly Orthodox.

Hashem: A Hebrew appellation for G-d (literally, “the Name”). To indicate its holiness, the divine name is not written in its entirety, even in translation.

hashkoma minyan: The quorum of men reciting Shacharis, the morning prayer service, at sunrise.

hasidic: A religious movement founded in the 18th century by Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov. It combines strict observance of Orthodox Jewish law (*halacha*) while also maintaining distinct beliefs and rituals, especially the reverence for a leader called a “rebbe” who is believed to possess great spiritual powers. The term derives from the Hebrew word *chesed* (kindness). Hasidim serve G-d with love and joy, recognizing the role of Divine Providence in every aspect of their lives.

Haskalah: The Jewish Enlightenment, a movement begun in late seventeenth-century Europe, that sought to modernize and rationalize Judaism while preserving its distinct characteristics.

hatzlocha: Success.

havdalah: The ceremony marking the close of the Sabbath and the beginning of the secular week.

haymishe: Homey, describing a warm and comfortable environment.

heter: Rabbinical dispensation.

Kabbala: Jewish mystical teachings whose basic text is the *Zohar*.

Kaddish: A prayer recited during the synagogue service. Mourners also recite Kaddish during the funeral of a relative and during prayer services for the next eleven months and on the *yahrtzeit*.

kavod: Honor or respect.

kapotah: A long black coat worn by married men on the Sabbath and Festivals.

kavonah: intense concentration in prayer or in performance of a mitzvah.

Kiddush: The prayer said before a Shabbos or holiday meal, usually over a cup of wine.

kishke: Yiddish for the intestine. In common parlance this also refers to a delicacy known as stuffed derma.

Kohen (pl. **Kohanim**): A descendant of Aaron, brother of Moses, who served as high priest in the Tabernacle. Kohanim were the priests in the Holy Temple and are still given honorary duties during the Torah reading, prayer services, and other occasions.

kollel: A yeshivah for married men to continue their Torah studies.

Kosel: The Western Wall, the much-venerated last remnant of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

kosher (noun, *kashrut* or *kashrus*): “Fit” or “acceptable.” Referring to the laws and practices pertaining to Jewish dietary restrictions.

kugel: A baked pudding often made with noodles or potatoes and traditionally eaten by Eastern European Jews on the Sabbath and holidays.

kvius: The day of the week on which a Jewish holiday occurs.

kvitel: A written request for a blessing handed to the Rebbe or read at the Ohel.

lamdan: A Jewish scholar.

lashon hakodesh: The Hebrew language.

l'chaim: A toast to life and health and blessings for material and spiritual abundance.

leining: Torah reading with the traditional melody.

licht bentching: Candle lighting ceremony performed eighteen minutes prior to sunset before the Sabbath and holidays.

l'shma: An act performed with pure motives.

l'shem shamayim: For the sake of Heaven.

Lubavitch: A hasidic sect founded in the late eighteenth century by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, which for over a century was based in the town of Lyubavichi, Russia. The headquarters of the movement has been based in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, since 1940. Lubavitch now has thousands of emissaries throughout the world endeavoring to strengthen world Jewry.

lukshin: Egg noodles (Yiddish).

ma'amar: Esoteric discourse at a farbrengen; the most in-depth mystical portion of the Rebbe's lecture. Plural: *ma'amarim*.

Ma'ariv: The evening prayer.

makom kodesh: Holy ground.

Mashiach: The Jewish Messiah who will usher in a new age when “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the L-rd, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:9)

mashke: Strong alcoholic beverage (e.g., whiskey or vodka).

mashpia: An influential spiritual advisor.

matzah: Unleavened, cracker-like bread eaten during Passover. It commemorates the Exodus from Egypt when the Jews fled in such haste that they did not have time to let their bread rise.

matzaivah: Gravestone or monument.

mayse: A Jewish story.

mazel tov: Literally “Good fortune,” a wish of congratulations on a happy occasion, such as a birth or marriage.

melamed: A teacher for Jewish boys.

melave malka: A festive Saturday night meal to escort the Sabbath Queen as she departs.

menorah: A candelabrum traditionally lit on the holiday of Hanukkah with one branch for each of the eight days plus a service candle.

mensch: A well-mannered and considerate man.

mesader kiddushin: The rabbi officiating at a wedding ceremony.

mesiras nefesh: self-sacrifice, usually for religious observance.

mezuzah: A parchment scroll affixed to the doorposts of Jewish homes containing portions of the Shema prayer. The scroll is usually held in a decorative case.

middos: Character traits.

mikvah: A ritual bath required for married women, but also used by men for spiritual purification.

Mincha: The afternoon prayer.

mi macharas haShabbos: The day following the Sabbath.

minhagim: Jewish customs.

minyan: The quorum of ten men required for Jewish prayer services.

misnagdim: Literally “the opposition.” The historical opponents of hasidism.

mitzvos: Jewish commandments. The word is also used for any good deed in general.

mitzvos b'hiddur: The most punctilious performance of a commandment.

Mohel: The highly trained individual who performs ritual circumcisions.

moshel: A story that illustrates a life lesson, a parable.

Motzei Yom Tov: The evening after the holiday.

nachas: Deep satisfaction, usually referring to pride in the achievements of children or grandchildren.

narishkeit: Childishness.

neshama: The soul.

niftar: Passed away.

niggun: A hasidic melody, often wordless and repeated several times, which is intended to express and stir the soul.

nosh: Treats such as chips, popcorn, pretzels, or candy.

Ohel: The resting place of the Lubavitcher Rebbe at the Old Montefiore Cemetery in Springfield Gardens, New York.

Oral Torah: Refers to the rabbinic tradition which was also given by G-d to Moses and from him to the Jewish people but was not written down in the Bible (the “written Torah”).

Orthodox: The branch of Judaism that adheres strictly to Jewish law.

Oy vey iz mir: Woe is me! (Yiddish phrase)

pachim ketanim: Literally, “little jugs.” The small stuff, as elucidated by Rashi.

parah adumah: The red heifer, used in a purification ceremony in the time of the Holy Temple.

pareve: Kosher foods such as grains and vegetables that do not contain either dairy or meat.

paroches: The embroidered covering of the holy ark housing the Torah scroll in the synagogue.

payos: Long side curls worn by many hasidic boys and men.

Pesach: The Passover holiday celebrated in the spring marking the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt.

posek: Rabbinical decisor.

psukim: Biblical verses.

p'tirah: Literally “departure,” indicating death.

Purim: A Jewish holiday with a carnivalesque atmosphere, including revelers dressed in costumes. The festival is rooted in the biblical story of Esther that describes how the ancient Persian Jews were saved from the plot of Haman, who wanted to destroy them.

pushkah: A charity box.

rebbe: A spiritual leader of a hasidic community, believed by his followers to possess supernatural powers. In the context of Lubavitch, “the Rebbe” refers to the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994).

rebbetzin: The honorary title for the wife of a rabbi.

refuah: Healing or cure.

revach: Hebrew: respite.

rosh yeshiva: The dean of a rabbinical college.

sandek: The most honored guest at a circumcision ceremony.

Satmar: A hasidic group founded by Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum in the early twentieth century in the city of Szatmárnémeti, Hungary (now Satu Mare, Romania). The group currently has members in South America, Europe, and Israel but is primarily based in Williamsburg (Brooklyn) and Kiryas Joel (in Monroe, New York).

schach: The branches used to cover the sukkah.

seder: Literally “order,” the ritual home service performed on the first two nights of Passover accompanied by a festive meal.

seder niggunim: A gathering to sing a traditional cycle of hasidic melodies.

sefer: Jewish religious book. Pl. *seforim*.

Sephardic: Referring to Jews of Spanish descent; often used as well to refer to Jews of Middle Eastern or North African descent.

sephira: The 49 days counted between Passover and Shavuot.

seuda: festive meal.

Shabbos (or Shabbat): The Jewish Sabbath, observed each week from sundown Friday to nightfall on Saturday commemorates G-d’s resting on the seventh day of Creation. It is celebrated with special prayers, the reading of the Torah portion, and festive meals. Weekday activities such as driving, writing, and cooking are prohibited.

Shacharis: The morning prayer.

shadchan: A matchmaker.

Shalom zachor: A Friday night celebration of the birth of a baby boy.

sheitel: A wig worn by Orthodox married women as a sign of modesty.

Sheva brochos: The seven wedding blessings recited under the *chupah* and at festive meals held during the following week.

shidduch: Matrimonial match.

shiva: The traditional Jewish seven-day period of mourning.

shliach (plural *shluchim*): Rabbinic emissary sent to awaken Jewish observance.

shmura matzah: Hand-rolled matzah made from flour, guarded from moisture until baked.

shtetl: Town.

shtickel: Yiddish for a small piece.

shtiebel: A small synagogue or house of prayer.

shul: A Yiddish word meaning synagogue.

Shulchan Aruch: The sixteenth-century Jewish law code of Rabbi Yosef Karo.

shvatim: The twelve tribes of Israel.

shtus: Silliness.

sicha: A public speech given by the Rebbe on Torah topics and current issues. Pl. *sichos*.

siddur: Prayer book.

simanim: Characteristic recognizable signs.

simcha: Joy.

Simchat Beit Hashoevah: The celebration in the Holy Temple marking the drawing of water used in the Succos ritual.

smicha: Rabbinic ordination.

sukkah: A temporary dwelling covered with branches for the holiday of Sukkos. During the holiday, all meals as well as many other activities are conducted in the *sukkah*.

Tachanun: A prayer for forgiveness recited on most weekdays.

Talmud: The compendium of Jewish oral law completed in the year 475 CE. It is composed of the Mishnah and the Gemara commentary.

tallis: Prayer shawl worn by married men.

tante: Aunt.

Tanya: The holy book known as the Bible of Hasidism by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi.

tatteleh: An affectionate term for a little Jewish boy (Yiddish). Lit. "little father."

tefillin: Black leather cases containing parchment scrolls inscribed with verses from the Torah.

Tefillin are worn by men and boys over bar mitzvah on the upper arm and the forehead during weekday morning prayers to focus the mind and heart in service to Hashem.

tircha: A tiresome chore.

Tisha b'Av: The ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Holy Temples in Jerusalem.

Torah: A parchment scroll containing the five books of Moses, hand-written by a scribe with a quill pen. It can also refer to Jewish religious texts in general.

trup: The traditional cantillation of the Torah.

tzadik: A holy and righteous person.

tzar: pain and suffering.

tzedakah: Charity.

tzitzis: Ritual fringes attached to a four-cornered garment worn by Orthodox boys and men.

tznius: The strict standard of modest dressing in the Orthodox Jewish community.

tzora 'as: Leprosy.

Upshernish: The ceremonial first haircut for a Jewish boy at age three.

varnishkes: Small bowtie noodles.

veiber shul: The women's section in a synagogue.

Williamsburg: A neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, that has served as a headquarters for the Satmar hasidic community since 1947.

yahrzeit: The anniversary of a relative's passing commemorated by lighting a candle and reciting Kaddish.

yarmulke: Skullcap or *kipah* worn by Jewish males as a reminder of G-d's presence above.

yechidus: A private audience with the Rebbe.

yeshiva: Rabbinical school for boys or men.

yeshivas kayitz: Summer session of yeshiva.

yetzer tov: Good inclination.

Yiddin: The Jewish people (Yiddish).

Yiddish: A language originally spoken by Jews in Central and Eastern Europe before the Holocaust that began as a dialect of German and incorporates words from Hebrew and other modern European languages. It is still spoken by most hasidim as well as a small number of secular Jews.

yirei shamayim: A G-d fearing Jew.

Yom Kippur: The Jewish Day of Atonement, when Jews traditionally fast.

Yosef Hatzadik: Joseph son of Jacob, whose story is recorded in the book of Genesis.

yom tov: A Jewish holiday.

yoshev b'ohel: Literally, a tent dweller, usually referring to a man who devotes himself to the diligent study of Torah.

Zal: Advanced Talmudic academy.

zayde: Affectionate term for grandfather.

zechus: Merit.

zemiros: Jewish hymns, traditionally sung during the Shabbos meal.

zoche: Worthy.

Zohar: The mystical Aramaic text authored by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (c.100-160 CE).



Rivky, Esty, Mendy, and Chaya were eager helpers in the kitchen. Here they are baking a delicious chocolate cake.



In high school, I got my first 35 mm camera, a Konica. I loved that camera and kept it with me on many excursions around New York. Here I came upon this group of school children having fun in a playground on Second Avenue in Manhattan.

About the Author

Please see pages 1-282, above *or* read my condensed biography, below!

My grandparents immigrated to the United States from Poland and Ukraine in the early 1900s. After they settled in Massachusetts and New York, my parents were born in America. As I grew up in Brooklyn, I developed a strong connection to Yiddishkeit by attending Talmud Torah after public school and Junior Congregation on Shabbos.

As a student at Columbia University, I met the campus rabbi, Rabbi Charles Sheer. I became actively involved with the Jewish Office and friends with many of the orthodox Jewish students. This led me to volunteer at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem for a summer. Living with a group of religious college students in Jerusalem made a deep impression on me and I decided to continue keeping Shabbos when I came home.

Rabbi Sheer sent me to Crown Heights for an “Encounter with Chabad.” I went to my first farbrengen in 1972 and used my school vacations and summers to learn with Rabbi Sholom Ber Veshedsky and Rabbi Yaakov Goldberg at Hadar HaTorah Yeshiva.

I was fortunate to attend Harvard Medical School, not just because of the educational opportunities, but because I was able to meet Rabbi Dovid Wichnin a”h, who lived in Boston at the time. He became a mentor for me and cemented my connection with Chabad. After graduation, I returned to New York for my internship. Rabbi Wichnin introduced me to his friend, Rabbi Abba Paltiel, and I spent every Shabbos as a guest in his house. As time went by, I attended weekly classes with Rabbi Tzvi Meir Steinmetz a”h and Rabbi Nisan Mangel.

By hashgacha pratis, an acquaintance from Boston made a shidduch for me with my bashert, Basha Rayzl Janus and we got married in Crown Heights soon after. I wanted to stay close to Rabbi Paltiel, so we settled in a house across the street from him and have remained here ever since, raising our children.

I became a dermatologist, working mostly in Long Island over the years. I tried to set an example for my patients and coworkers of a Shomer Shabbos doctor with a yarmulke, beard, tzitzis, and an approachable manner and an open house for guests.

Notes