

Days of Our Lives

Summer 5768 (2008)

a *Women for Life!* Publication

Issue 39

About *Women for Life!*



Women for Life! is an independent organisation which was formed to unite Sydney's Jewish women in programs of Jewish learning and to create forums for manifesting their talents. Newsletter circulation: 1850 women.

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EDITORIAL

The Jewish community of Sydney is large, but as communities go world-wide, it is quite a cosy little town. Most groups have connections with or at least know of each other. That's why, when a tragedy happens, it has a ripple effect that touches many more people than those at the heart of the crisis.

Recently, Zev Yoisef and Rochel Simons ז"ל were in a car crash which took both their lives. They were both in the prime of life. Their ten children, six of them not yet at marriageable age, and their nine grandchildren survive them. Both sets of parents and their sisters and brothers survive them. Zev and Rochel ז"ל were Sydney born and have families who for many years have been active in founding and involved in local synagogues (the Central and South Head Synagogues). They were teachers of Jewish Studies for decades at Yeshiva College and later at Kesser Torah College. Both ran Jewish camps and Shabbatons and were chaperones and counsellors over this period.

As a couple, they hosted Shabbos and Yom Tov guests week in and week out. Zev sold Jewish books in his spare time and had a network of regular customers. Rochel was the Sydney contact to organise that a group of 40 women should make challahs on Fridays on behalf of people needing merit. She also worked at the mikveh and encouraged women to observe this mitzvah. She meticulously attended our annual review of the laws of Family Purity each year.

They had friendships extending back to their school days as well as 30 years of students and campers. They leave behind their colleagues and peers in the Lubavitch community, among the acquaintances gained over 50 years of living in this town.

Their days were spent raising their children and doing acts

of goodness for others. They both touched many lives.

Having worked closely with them on various projects over the years, the sudden loss was shocking. I was numb and it was hard to take my mind off the reality of it.

What was, to me, most pronounced about them both was their simplicity in their desire to help others. They were so like-minded in their way of thoroughly helping anyone in their reach and surroundings. They understood each other so well because they had such a similar philosophy - a rare one in the world - that whoever needed help should be the target of their assistance.

Both of them were 'kabbalas-ole-niks', those who get right to work putting their energies towards getting a job done, without calculating whether it is fair or too hard. And they were always cheerful about pulling their weight. If they made a commitment, you knew they could be counted upon - and that they would not only help out in joy, but would even try to defuse any resentments about the work on the part of anyone else.

Rochel, ה"ו attended our *Women for Life!* Tehillim club most months. She would cheerfully join us and grab a few books, often staying until the end to help finish off. She would always beam with nachas when she announced another simcha - a new grandchild or an engagement. Before I could say 'Mazal Tov', she would offer to sponsor the next *Days of Our Lives* issue.

I remember Zev, ה"ז describing his beloved mashpiah (spiritual mentor) Reb Zalman Serabryanski, ה"ז. His eyes would glow. He described him as a "pnimi", explaining that this is a person who is working to always be here now - in every moment. And Zev aspired to be on such a level.

I guess he did a better job at being a pnimi than he thought, since HaShem gave Zev an early mark! (I can even hear Zev saying that line, with his characteristic laugh afterwards!)

The community will miss them both.

Because Rochel ה"ו was such an active and supportive member of *Women for Life!* we want to commemorate her memory with a project in her name. We welcome suggestions from the community.

Gavriella Aber, Editor

DEALING WITH TRAGEDY

By Rabbi Aron Moss

Rabbi Moss is a talented and prolific writer on the internet. He has allowed us to reprint this Question of the Week column (which was dedicated to Zev and Rochel Simons, ה"ז) as a clear illustration of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's advice about how to deal with tragedy.

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why is this world so unfair? Please don't tell me, "We can't understand G-d's ways." I am sick of hearing that. I want an explanation.

Answer:

Are you sure you want an explanation? Do you really want to know why the innocent suffer? I think not. You are far better off with the question than with an answer.

You are bothered by the fact that people suffer undeservedly. As you should be. Any person with an ounce of moral sensitivity is outraged by the injustices of our world. Abraham, the first Jew, asked G-d, "Should the Judge of the whole world not act fairly?" Moses asked, "Why have You treated this people badly?" And today we still ask, "Why G-d, why?"

But what if we found the answer? What if someone came along and gave us a satisfying explanation? What if the mystery were finally solved? What if we asked why, and actually got an answer?

If this ultimate question were answered, then we would be able to make peace with the suffering of innocents. And that is unthinkable. Worse than innocent people suffering is others watching their suffering unmoved. And that's exactly what would happen if we were to understand why innocents suffer. We would no longer be bothered by their cry, we would no longer feel their pain, because we would understand why it is happening.

Imagine you are in a hospital and you hear a woman screaming with pain. Outside her room, her family is standing around chatting, all smiling and happy. You scream at them, "What's wrong with you? Can't you hear how much pain she is in?" They answer, "This is the delivery ward. She is having a baby. Of course we are happy."

When you have an explanation, pain doesn't seem so bad anymore. We can tolerate suffering when we know why it is happening.

And so, if we could make sense of innocent people suffering, if we could rationalise tragedy, then we could live with it. We would be able to hear the cry of sweet children in pain and not be horrified. We would tolerate seeing broken hearts and shattered lives, for we would be able to neatly explain them away. Our question would be answered, and we could move on.

But as long as the pain of innocents remains a burning question, we are bothered by its existence. And as long as we can't explain pain, we must alleviate it. If innocent people suffering does not fit into our world view, we must eradicate it. Rather than justifying their pain, we need to get rid of it.

So keep asking the question, why do bad things happen to good people. But stop looking for answers. Start formulating a response. Take your righteous anger and turn it into a force for doing good. Redirect your frustration with injustice and unfairness and channel it into a drive

to fight injustice and unfairness. Let your outrage propel you into action. When you see innocent people suffering, help them. Combat the pain in the world with goodness. Alleviate suffering wherever you can.

We don't want answers, we don't want explanations, and we don't want closure. We want an end to suffering. And we dare not leave it up to G-d to alleviate suffering. He is waiting for us to do it. That's what we are here for.

BODY & SOUL: CHANUKAH TO PURIM

By Jodi Kofsky

A good friend confided in me. Many years ago, she, who was then far from her connection to Torah and mitzvos, found herself in a situation where she felt socially compelled to eat pork. Although she had been brought up with traditional South African Jewish values, which had ingrained in her that pig was a no-no, she one day found herself in a social situation that made her feel there was no comfortable way out.

As she reluctantly prepared to taste that first morsel, she was almost trembling, half-expecting thunderous quakes and flashing lightning from heaven to strike her down instantly. She was sure that the world as she knew it would be uprooted and overturned.

She took that first bite...and...nothing happened. Nothing at all. Everything continued just as before; people continued chattering and life went on as usual.

It was only years later, as she became more observant that she realised that her prediction at the time had been accurate - the whole world had been drastically overturned and everything had in fact changed when she took that bite. There was thunder and lightning and awful drama which deeply affected her; only she couldn't visually see it.

Because she couldn't see it, it was to her as though it hadn't happened. What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over. But in honest hindsight, she was able to admit that at that moment, a major inner foundation had been breached.

The challenges our souls face are just as real as those of the body, but they are much less tangible and not visible at all, and it is easy to ignore that anything happened.

We invest so much effort in not taking physical risks – for their reality is obvious. We buckle our seat belts. We buy insurance. We avoid dangerous activities. Yet, in the realm of spiritual risks – even big, life and death matters – we barely give them a second thought.

The Torah teaches us that our reason for living is the development and refinement of our soul. Yet, it is the

immediate reality of the physical world that motivates us. The body is, so to speak, 'in your face'. Its needs and realities are impossible to avoid. The soul, being invisible, needs conscious, pro-active attention, otherwise we may even forget it is there!

This body / soul dichotomy is apparent in the two Jewish festivals which were added into our yearly calendar during the time of exile - Chanukah and Purim. We celebrate them every year and relearn their spiritual lessons anew.

We are currently suffering the long, long Roman exile. The Romans inherited the Greek legacy. The Greeks were about the body. You will remember that the modern-day Olympic games, for example, originated with the Greeks. These sports were one of the means of showcasing and glorifying the strength and beauty of the physical form. The Greeks acknowledged, even appreciated the spirit, but only in relation to the soul's ability to service 'The Body'.

We have assimilated the Greek world view – body first, soul second. But the Jewish perspective is the exact opposite. The Torah teaches us to appreciate and care for the body, but only in relation to its value as a vehicle to serve the life of the soul.

This Greek perspective is portrayed in the challenge of Chanukah. At Chanukah, the threat was spiritual – the Greeks were happy to live and let live – as long as we didn't do mitzvos that did not make sense to them, as long as we didn't live to serve the One G-d.

Yet how did the Jews respond to this threat? To the spiritual threat of the Greeks, they responded physically, taking up arms.

At Purim, the threat to the Jews was physical; Haman planned to kill us all physically. Yet how did the Jews respond to this threat? To the physical threat of Haman, they responded spiritually, praying, fasting and returning to HaShem's ways.

What an anomaly to us, who are accustomed to responding in kind. What is going on here?

The answer is, pun intended, illuminating. Contrary to appearances and popular belief, G-d controls the world. Not a leaf falls from a tree without G-d's decree that it should do so.

So what is our contribution? What is our role? It lies in exercising our free choice: "Hakol b'yadei Shamayim chutz mi'yiras Shamayim." Everything is in the hands of heaven, except for our own fear of heaven. We are in control of and responsible for how we react to the challenges HaShem sends our way.

Now we can understand the way the Jews responded to these two challenges.

Haman's decree at Purim was physical. To change physical

reality, we turn to Hashem. He is the one who pulls those strings. So when threatened with physical annihilation, the appropriate response is turning to heaven in prayer. We use our spiritual powers to call upon HaShem, Who is in control.

What the Greeks were attacking however, was our ability to choose how we imbue our lives with meaning – our spiritual path. HaShem has put this choice in our hands. This is an area which we are expected to be responsible for ourselves. So, for that challenge, we went all the way. We did whatever we could, even against all the physical odds, even though it seemed ill-advised and unsafe. A group of weak, old men, few in number, picked up arms against the young, strong, multitudinous Greek army. How safe and sensible was that? But the risk was spiritual – so we were ready to risk our physical lives.

It is no coincidence that G-d decreed that the Jewish 'army' be few in number and weak. G-d could easily have mobilised a very large Jewish army, and made them strong. But he didn't: He deliberately created an 'against-all-odds' situation to teach us for generations that victory had nothing to do with our physical power and everything to do with our obligation to fight for spirituality despite our intellectual calculations.

Making calculations can trip us up when we are fighting spiritual battles. The Mesillas Yesharim points out, quoting Mishlei, that such "calculations" can really be a smokescreen for the motives of our body.

"People would say to the lazy person, 'Your teacher is in town – go and learn Torah from him!' And he would respond to them, 'I'm afraid of the lion on the road'. They would say to him, 'Your teacher is in the community!' and he would say, 'I'm afraid there might be a lion in the streets'. They would say to him, 'He's within your house!' and he would say to them, 'If I go to him I will find the door locked'. They would say to him, 'It's open!' When he no longer knew what to answer, he would say to them, 'It doesn't matter whether the door is unlocked or locked – I would like to sleep a little more.'"

Chanukah is therefore celebrated with oil and light - items of a spiritual nature since we overcame the spiritual challenge - even though we did it through physical means.

In the story of Purim, we celebrate in physical ways - we make a feast, we give tzedoka, we give out food baskets and we listen to the story twice. We dress up, drink to be merry and it is a time of laughter. These physical acts are in celebration of our physical victory - even though we accomplished it through spiritual means.

In our rich tradition, HaShem gives us hints and guidance for every challenge He sends our way. It is our daily task

to apply the lessons of His Torah and His festivals to our daily lives.

THE FAITH OF JEWS

By Shoshana Monk

Anyone wishing to see proof of the existence of Hashem, need only look at the Jewish people. We are a nation that by all estimates should have been destroyed long ago. We are small among the nations. However, even after years of persecution, banishment, burning, gassing, torturing and extermination, Am Yisroel is alive and well.

The Torah tells us about how Moshe Rabbeinu (our teacher) saw prophetic vision in the form of a burning bush. The verse tells us, "Behold! The bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not consumed." (Shemos 3:2) One explanation from the Midrash is that the bush symbolises the Jewish people. Although the nations may try to destroy us, we are not consumed, we will never be consumed. (Midrash Rabbah, Shemos (Margolis 2, 14). We are the eternal nation.

Mark Twain wrote about the immortality of the Jewish Nation in his short essay entitled: Concerning the Jews:

"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous, dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.

His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstruse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvellous fight in the world, in all the ages, and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused of it.

The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendour, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

The answer to Mr. Twain's question is simple: our survival comes from our connection to G-d's Torah. Even though Jews have strayed from Torah through intermarriage and assimilation, it is wondrous to see that the inner faith in Torah still burns within even the least affiliated Jew. The following true story describes one Jewish couple's recent discovery that the Torah knows best.

Andrew and Sharon were beaming as brightly as that morning's California sun. "We're getting married!" they announced. "Mazel Tov!" exclaimed Rabbi Chaim Mentz.

"Rabbi Mentz, will you officiate at our wedding on December 5th?"

"I'd be honoured to," he reassured them. As the Rabbi of the Chabad House of Bel Air, California, Rabbi Mentz was delighted that Andrew and Sharon had chosen an Orthodox wedding.

"You just have to meet the three basic requirements of a Jewish wedding. If either of you was married before, you must have a kosher "get" (divorce). Before the wedding you need to learn the rules of a Torah home. And the food at the wedding must be kosher."

"No problem! We can agree to those conditions," they said. The date was set for December 5, 2004 and wedding plans proceeded at a whirlwind pace. The hall was reserved, invitations chosen. Andrew and Sharon met with the caterer, the band and the florist. Everything was falling into place.

In the midst of the arrangements and lessons about marriage, Sharon confided in Rabbi Mentz privately. "You know, Rabbi, I did get married once before to a Jewish guy. Big mistake. The marriage lasted only six hours. But we went back to the courts for an immediate annulment."

Rabbi Mentz stared at her for a moment, shocked by the sudden revelation. Knots formed in his stomach as Sharon waited patiently for a response. He chose his words carefully. "Sharon, you may be surprised by what I'm going to tell you, but you need a get, a religious divorce, before you and Andrew can get married."

"But the courts annulled it immediately!" Sharon protested.

"According to Jewish law, six hours or six years – it doesn't matter; it's still considered married," said Rabbi Mentz.

"Rabbi Mentz, it was a mistake!" she wailed. The last thing Sharon wanted to do was to revisit the past, let alone contact the man she had once married.

"I really want to do your wedding," Rabbi Mentz said firmly, "but we have to take care of this first."

"What if I can't find my ex or he won't agree to give the get? Am I doomed forever?"

"Let's not jump to any conclusions. I will help you and we'll get through it. It's all in HaShem's hands. There are no accidents in His plans. It is all meant to be for good reason and our job is to do what the Torah expects us to," Rabbi Mentz reassured the tearful bride. "First we'll speak to the Jewish court in Los Angeles. They'll help us work through this dilemma."

While Sharon continued with her wedding plans, trying not to be distracted by her worries about the get, Rabbi Mentz consulted back and forth with the Los Angeles Beis Din. In a few weeks, the matter was resolved. Sharon's get was delivered to her. She was delighted – until she heard the Beis Din's final stipulation. "Now you must wait ninety-two days before you are free to marry the man of your choosing," the court declared.

Ninety-two days? Ninety-two days took them to the end of January! Andrew and Sharon frantically called Rabbi Mentz. "Are they crazy? Is this true? Does this mean that you won't do our wedding on December 5th?"

Rabbi Mentz tried to reason with the couple. But Andrew and Sharon were beyond logic. After all their careful preparations for the wedding, how could they change everything now? And what about all the bookings for their honeymoon right afterwards?

The bride and groom grappled with the test before them for a few days. Should they marry when they had planned to, but use a different Rabbi who would not be so strict with the letter of the law? Or should they dash all their plans and start again?

A much more reasonable couple called Rabbi Mentz back. "We want to do our wedding properly in G-d's eyes," Andrew and Sharon told him. "And if that means we have to reschedule everything for the end of January, so be it."

The wedding was rescheduled for January 23rd. Neither Andrew nor Sharon could fathom why G-d wanted to delay their wedding, but they were glad they had passed the test.

On December 26, 2004, shocking news hit the world press. Early that morning, an earthquake in the Indian Ocean triggered a massive tsunami that flooded Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South India, Thailand and other countries with waves up to 100 feet high. Nearly 300,000 people were killed.

When Andrew and Sharon heard this news their heads began to spin. They recognised G-d's Divine Providence in the test they had recently had to overcome. Had they married on December 5th, Andrew and Sharon would have been enjoying the last days of their three-week trip in the famous Kaafu Atoll Maldives on Lankanfushi Island. The hotel room Andrew and Sharon had reserved was completely swept away.

Providentially, Andrew and Sharon were not there when the tsunami hit. As Andrew announced at the Kiddush in honour of this turn of events, "It's the best advice the Rabbi ever gave us. Follow the rules of Hashem's Torah, and it will be a blessing for you in the end!"

Women for Life! Happenings

Visit our web site at www.womenforlife.com.au.

Tehillim

The upcoming dates of our monthly Tehillim gatherings to pray for fellow Jews are listed below. Please join us.

VENUE: Mizrachi Shule - front entrance, now

TIME: Sundays, 10 am – 11 am

DATES: 2008: Feb 2, Mar 2, Apr 6, May 4, Jun 1

In Melbourne, women gather monthly on the same dates at Ohel Devorah Shule from 10:30 am – 11:30 am (call Mrs Herszberg on 03-9525-8888).

Should you want people around the world to say Tehillim for a loved one during an operation, please submit your request onto the internet site, www.tehlimhotline.org.

Candle Lighting Brochure

If you know of a person or a group which would appreciate our candle lighting brochure, please contact us (02-9389-7714). We charge 20 cents per brochure until production and distribution costs are met. After that time we give them out for free to those who wish to distribute them to assist people in the great mitzvah of lighting Shabbos and Yom Tov candles. We thank all our generous sponsors who made the printing possible.

Vestos Charts for 5768

Our Rabbinically approved Vestos Charts for the Jewish year 5768 are available for \$10 (plus postage) and can be bought either at the mikveh facility in Bondi or at the offices of *Women for Life!* at 171 Old South Head Road, Bondi Junction, 02-9389-7714.

Financial Education

Years ago, we ran a well-received workshop on finance and women. We wish we could offer such a course more regularly, as it is of such concern for women in our era. Now, more than ever, women are or need to be in control of finances, and education is essential.

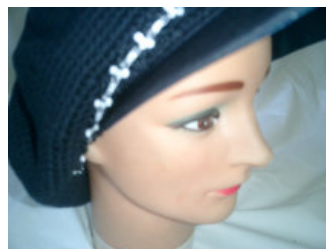
It is not in our immediate plans to offer such a course, but there is an excellent article online which is a starting point for self-education in this area. To explore this "Money Survival Guide for Women", type this link into your browser: www.citibank.com.au/global_docs/Final_Women_Survival_low_res.pdf. It has a few simple

budgeting ideas to get a handle on finance and includes references for further research. (No endorsement of the source is intended. I saw this guide and thought people might find it helpful. - Editor)

Tichels (Head Scarves) and a few Caps

A shipment of head wear for married women has arrived from America. The tichels (head scarves) come in a variety of colours and are well made and decorated with various sequins or other designs. The range includes denim ones for every day as well as much fancier ones for Shabbos wear.

They were hand transported, so the purchase does not include postage costs, making them very reasonably priced at \$20 each (which includes a small profit for our mikveh). There is a small number of berets and caps as well.



Please call 02-9389-7714 to make an appointment to see them and choose.

Kosher Entertainment for Women and Girls

Observant Jewish families work hard to instill the ethos of the Torah in every activity in which they participate. Given that Western society has different values which are reflected in the current books, movies, videos, DVDs etc, it is often difficult for observant families to find suitable entertainment.

With this concern in mind we bring to your attention a group of Orthodox women who create an annual show for women and girls. Talented females of all ages in Israel present these musicals with dancing, singing and acting. Not only does it fill this need for kosher entertainment for Jewish communities worldwide, but the sales of their

video productions support a very worthy cause - improving fertility for Jewish couples with infertility issues.

To date, the group, Friends Of Zir Chemed /Ramat Bet Shemeh has created five musical productions. Each year they play to packed English-speaking audiences in Jerusalem. The shows are based roughly on popular musicals, but the words, the themes and the final message have been creatively modified to reflect Jewish values. The titles so far are: 'The Gift of Music,' 'Oliver! with a Twist,' 'We've Got Annie,' 'Miri Pops In' and this year's production, 'The Wizard of Oz'. These can be bought online at <http://zirchemed.org/FOZC/productions.asp>.

Zir Chemed is the medical halachic fertility centre for which the funds are raised. Their web site offers a description of the centre and free access to doctors for medical information about fertility. Go to <http://zirchemed.org/index2.asp>.

The Friends Of Zir Chemed are doing very good work and are keen to expand their fund raising activities to Australia. They have groups worldwide. If you know someone who is interested in starting a group here for this important cause, please have them contact the group via the web site. Many women who have participated in fund raising efforts in the hope that they themselves will merit the blessing of having children, have had their dreams realised.

Furniture and Computer Donations

The former Mayor of Waverley, George Newhouse recently heard of *Women for Life!* and was impressed with the services we offer the community. He generously donated office equipment and a few computers so that we can work more effectively.

We appreciate his vote of confidence and his generosity. The items he gave us have already been put to good use.

A Forgotten, But Important Mitzvah

Within the 613 commandments, the Torah prohibits the wearing of a mixture of wool and linen in the same garment. This restriction (called "shatnez") applies

whether the material is woven together in the actual cloth or whether linen thread is used to sew together a wool garment (or vice versa) or linen is used as padding within a wool jacket. It can be quite complex.

What many people might not know is that Sydney and Melbourne currently have one of the highest rates of shatnez in the World!

With modern technology, testing for shatnez in garments has gone from an art to an exact science. Yaakov Joseph of the Melbourne Shatnez Centre recently came to Sydney to service the community here in checking for shatnez. Many people took the opportunity to check at the time. However, it is a mitzvah that applies not just when someone to check comes to town, but whenever a new garment containing linen or wool is bought. Therefore, it is a good idea to call Mr. Joseph on 03-9530-3169 to determine if the item needs checking.

THE REAL JEWISH PRINCESS

By Tamara Schwarz

As a culture, we are exposed to the idea of princesses all the time. When you stand at the supermarket checkout, every second kid's publication staring at you features a Disney princess. We tell children fairytales and every little girl wants to grow up to be the ultimate in perfection, a princess.

In most fairytales, the prince and princess don't even have their own names, they are generic. (There is 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'Snow White', but even these "names" are more descriptions than personal appellations).

What is a princess? Of course, she is beautiful. She usually has long hair. She has lots of beautiful things, and lives in a castle. She undergoes some exciting adventure and gets rescued and marries the prince, and they live happily ever after. Once the adventure is over, the story ends.

The princess is a girl. A girl is the stage before a woman, not an end in itself. But in the society in which we live, it is easy to believe that youth is the ultimate stage. Our culture



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berets and
other
headwear!

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venerates youthfulness. All the ads show you how to look more like a girl, or make you feel inadequate by contrast. Our society doesn't like responsibility (the domain of the adult), but values instant gratification. We are very big on consumerism, far more focused on having and acquiring, than we are on giving. In the western mind-set, it is insulting to call someone middle-aged. We value the qualities of the girl in this society, and the ultimate girlish ideal is the princess.

But the personality of this princess is passive. She needs rescue; she does not actively save herself. The "story" is her ultimate rescue by the prince, and being able to live 'happily ever after'.

This princess is not a Jewish archetype. She is not an active participant in her adventure, never matures, nor acquires wisdom, understanding or knowledge. She never develops from the girl into the woman.

In contrast, let's consider the Jewish understanding of the concept of female perfection. First, the stories found in the Jewish sources (the Torah and the Gemara, etc) centre around real people, not fanciful characters whose lives we never hear about after the happy ending.

Second, the action in our stories is based around a qualitatively different set of values, such as humility, kindness, wisdom, joy, the service of G-d, as opposed to the standard adventure/romance that still feeds our modern fairytales, the movies.

Third, the Jewish heroines are often not girls. The virtues and qualities that the Torah stories aims to highlight are more consistent with the woman and her wisdom and experience than with the girl, who is yet to fully bloom.

Fourth, the role of women is substantially different in our stories to those of society. Hers is not a passive role, as is frequently found in the fairytales, but strong and empowered. She makes hard choices. She lives up to high expectations. The strength of the ideal Jewish woman is different. It is not just her ability to endure hardship, but her ability to grow from it that is praised.

The Jewish woman is referred to as a 'bas melech', a 'daughter of the King'. While this technically refers to a princess, it does not have the fairytale-like connotations, but rather alludes to the nobility inherent in the Jewish woman. The dignity and regal quality of the Jewish woman is based on her being royal, a part of the household of the King.

When we realise that the King being referred to is HaShem Himself, we become aware that each woman (and each Jew) has tremendous significance. As it is written, 'for me the world was created'; each one of us is vital to the Divine Plan, so significant that the whole world was created for us. We are each the King's daughter.

Queen Esther is a perfect example of the treatment of this idea across the two cultures. In Western society, Esther is always pictured as a young, captivatingly beautiful virgin who is naive. The story is told about a "beauty contest" to become the next queen, for which she is captured. The assumption is that she adores the honour of winning the contest against all odds. Wouldn't every girl want to be the favourite wife of the most powerful king on the planet?

But the Jewish version of Esther is significantly more grounded in reality. Esther was 40 years old. She had a greenish tint to her skin. She was married, but hid this information. Her beauty was an inner beauty, strength and refinement of self. She was among the wisest of women. She loathed the thought of having to marry the king and only complied because she was so directed by Mordechai. Throughout the ordeal, she stayed loyal to her values with great devotion, secrecy and sacrifice.

Esther did not live happily ever after. She struggled with inner conflicts on a daily basis. She worked actively to create marital harmony for the sake of her people. She is a Jewish heroine because of the choices she made, not because of her circumstances.

The stark contrast between the societal ideal of female perfection and the Jewish ideal confronts us daily. It is easy to be confused about who we want to be. Our heritage says one thing, and Western culture tells us another. If that were all, it would be relatively simple to chose one ideal and reject the other. We would happily choose the grounded-ness of the 'joyful mother of children' over the archetypal, superficial princess. But confusion arises as the lines between the two ideals merge.

Both ideals have strength. Both have innocence. Both have nobility. Both have significance. Both have beauty.

These concepts can mix us up when we lose sight of the difference between girl and woman. Girl is physical beauty and naivete. Woman is inner beauty and maturity.

Across the spectrum of relationships, a true 'bas melech', daughter of the King, develops maturity in all areas. While she retains the dependence of the child to her father, the King, she acquires the loyalty of the sister, the wisdom of the wife, the devotion of the mother and the reliability of the grandmother. A bas melech is a real, royal princess.

THANK YOU HASHEM FOR A MIRACLE

By Hannah Menaker

This is a Life Saving Opportunity - spread the news!

There is a form of breast cancer which is found mainly in Jewish women. Funnily enough, it is even called in medical terms, 'Jewish Ashkenazi Fault.'

My mother passed away young from this condition and as a result I was tested and found to be a carrier. However, there was nothing I could do about it and I did not let it worry me.

Following the birth of my daughter seven years ago, a diagnosis made this condition a part of my life. For over four years, I went through aggressive treatments for recurring cancer. I was in and out of hospital. My life routines stopped. I could no longer work and everything was centred around my condition. My husband became father and mother to our child. Help was extended to us from many wonderful communal organisations: Chai Organisation, Jewish Care, Jewish Meals on Wheels and people who could get to us in the south where we lived at the time.

During this time, I was studying Yiddishkeit (Judaism) and gradually increased my observance. When it came time for schooling, we sent our daughter to Ohr Torah to get the religious education we had never had in Russia.

Thankfully, after almost five years of struggling with the illness, I went into remission for two years. It was a welcome relief. I began functioning again and put the illness behind me, even though the fear of its return hung over me.

In May 2007, I began to breathe labouriously. One day, I was unable to breathe at all. I was rushed to hospital to determine what might be wrong. My lungs were drained and I felt much better, but it was then discovered that the disease had returned with a vengeance. Lumps had grown in my lungs. The situation looked very grim.

My doctor, Professor Friedlander informed me there was no good news. It did not look promising. Every time I had difficulty breathing, my husband and daughter became stressful anew.

Prof Friedlander told me that there was only one hope which might help me: a new experimental drug. This medication was being trialled in England on mice with excellent results. Of all the doctors that HaShem gave me in the world, my doctor was personally in charge of the first human trial to commence to Sydney.

It was touch and go as I prayed daily that the trial would begin in time to help me. There were obstacles, government regulations, legal matters, insurance concerns and more. Meanwhile, my time was running out.

Many friends and even Jews I didn't know were praying on my behalf. The schools and shules were mentioning my name in prayer and they were saying Tehillim for me regularly. HaShem heard all the prayers and the answer was "life".

Miraculously, Prof Friedlander overcame all the paperwork and rushed doses of the medication to a chosen few. In early July, I was the first one in Australia to try this

drug. (It was not until I saw the urgency with which Prof Friedlander rushed the drug to me that I realised just how little time I had left).

Recently in Yeshiva shule, my husband and I shared in a kiddush to thank HaShem for the fact that at my last scan, the lumps that were once threatening to overtake my lungs have practically disappeared. I thank G-d that I am getting better all the time, kein eyn hora. I am active and grateful for every chance to wake up and say "Modeh Ani" in my own bed - not a hospital bed! I am so grateful for this second chance. I have no idea if this is a cure, but whether it is or not, I am grateful to HaShem for every extra day I have been given.

HaShem has sent help to people like me through this drug. Can you believe that the kind of cancer HaShem sent a treatment for is this Jewish one? If you are reading this and know someone Jewish who has been diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer, please call Prof Friedlander on 02-9382-2606. This drug may be able to help. It has shown marvellous results in a very short time on every patient who has tried it. It is definitely worth a call and could save lives.

Thank you to all the wonderful people who lobbied HaShem on my behalf with their prayers and Tehillim. I know that I wouldn't be here without them and I feel the effect of the blessings every day.

LETTERS WE WISH WE COULD WRITE

This new column is intended as a forum to give people constructive advice, something our current social norms don't always allow us to express in person. If you have an idea for next issue, please submit it to us. These below have been offered by several people.

Dear Men in Shul,
It would be so wonderful if you would take the same care in laundering your tallis (prayer shawl) as you do in other matters of importance to you. The grime looks years old. It is inspiring that your pray often enough to make it grimy, but the overall effect creates an unfavourable impression. Please consider washing it.

(Hint: to accomplish this well, put the tallis in a pillow case or a laundry sack. Use regular laundry soap; do NOT use bleach. It should be the only item washed in the machine. Then hang it to dry.)

Signed,
Observer from the women's section

Dear Religious Female Role Model of Mine,
You have inspired me tremendously in many ways. I have watched you and listened to your choice of words, your ways of handling conflict, the way

BUSY BODY COLUMN

The title of this column refers to two preoccupations of Jewish women:

we make it our business to find out how we can help others and we also keep our bodies busy with helping others.

SHATNEZ - Check your woollen or linen clothing for any forbidden wool-linen mixture. Call Yaakov Joseph 03-9530-3169 for enquiries.

FURNITURE GEMACH - Borrow furniture (tables, chairs and even centre pieces) for your next party. Refundable damage deposit necessary - otherwise a free service. Call Miri Gerendasi 9327-4645.

SIMCHA DECORATION GEMACH – Borrow what’s available or contribute to the stock – Call Di-Gittel Kuchar 9371-8972.

MOVING BOXES GEMACH - Borrow boxes to move with rather than rent or buy them. If you've moved recently, you can donate your boxes to the Gemach. Call Chayah Kaye on 9365-6613.

MONEY-LENDING GEMACH - Borrow modest funds interest free for limited intervals. Call Dovid Berkovits 0415-033-156.

YESHIVA WELFARE FUND – Interest free loans and financial assistance. Call Rabbi Yossi Feldman on 0411-722-229.

KOSHER MEALS FOR NEW MOTHERS / HOSPITALISED - Notify Bloomie Berkovits 9386-4247 or Nechama Tayar 9130-1392 about new births/a need for meal assistance for a family with a hospitalised member. If you volunteer to help, you can make a meal or buy kosher takeaway for the family. If your Shifra & Puah charity box is full, call Ilana Greengard 9387- 6071.

HOSPITAL VISITS - Call Rochel Blasenstein 9387-5049.

KOSHER IVF INFO – Call Rabbi Y Ulman 02-9365-2777

TORAH PARTNERS - Connect to a Torah-learning partner by phone. Call Aidel Bloom on 02-9386-1943 or better yet, contact her online at SHLUCHA770@YAHOO.COM.

LITERATURE FOR NEW MOTHERS – Call Aviva Itkin 9365-4936.

BEDIKA CLOTHS, VESTOS CHARTS & OTHER MIKVEH SUPPLIES - \$6/pack at the mikveh 9130-2509 or 171 Old South Head Rd, Bondi Junction 9389-7714. For Mikveh Tzedaka Boxes, please call Ruth Gestetner on 9387-4546.

TICHELS (HEAD SCARVES) / HATS - from \$20 each at 171 Old South Head Rd, Bondi Junction 9389-7714. Some profit goes to the mikveh.

CHESED ORGANISATION - Donations of furniture, clothing, baby car seats, etc. If in need or if you have things to donate, please call Devorah Markovits 9328-5454. (Please only donate clothing in respectable condition.)

BARGAINS FOR FURNITURE AS A COMMUNITY SERVICE – Office Emporium offers furniture from auctions at very affordable prices. Please call 9599-0779 or 0411-740-056 or go to the warehouse at 3 Henry Street, Arncliffe.

N'SHEI CHABAD OUTREACH WORK –To volunteer for Outreach Work call Daniella Hoffman 9389-5676. For candle lighting brochures, call Rochel Blasenstein 9387-5049.

POSITIVE SPEECH WATCH - Join this club to add merit to those in need, with your commitment to speak kindly. Call Liane Robinson 9130-4151.

GO KOSHER - Have questions answered. Call the Kashrut Authority office 9365-2933.

SIMCHA DRESSES – Beautiful dresses and bridal wear have been donated for use by brides and the wedding party. To borrow or donate, call Aidel Bloom on 9386-1943.w

TEHILLIM PRAYERS - Add names of people needing prayers to our list of people being prayed for. Monthly group, call Gavriella Aber 9389-7714.

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Printing: Village Print & Publishing, Alan Charak 9363-0353

Days of Our Lives c/o Women for Life! P O Box 77, Bondi NSW 2026, ph/fax 612-9389-7714, mob 0411-516-720, email contactus@womenforlife.com.au web address: www.womenforlife.com.au *Women for Life!* Coordinators: Gavriella Aber & Board of Directors. Circulation: 1850. Call 02-9389-7714 for advertisements, inserts, sponsorships or dedications which support these mailings and our learning programs. Subscriptions fee from Tishrey 5768 Oct 2007 to Oct 2008 = \$15
Check your subscription status on your mailing label. If it says: "PD'68", "BR'68" or "Pens" then your membership is up to date. If it has PD or BR with '67, '66, '65, '64, '63, '62, '61, '60 or a just a '0', then OPTIONAL membership is now due.

you raise your children and run your home and nurture the community. I have seen your skills in the kitchen and your gentle manner and patience, your thoughtfulness and devotion to goodness, your knowledge of the Torah and your willingness to share your wisdom.

I therefore can not fathom your choice of clothing. It does not go with the rest of you. The marvellous role model that you present of virtue and ethical life clashes with modern fashion - bared parts of the body, tight garments which reveal every curve, spiked heels, netted tights and slinky materials which lure the eye.

When I see the woman in you attempting to keep pace with fashion models in appearance, diet, fitness, revealed polished toenails, perfect tan and 'sexiness', it makes me very sad. I wish I could say to you, 'don't you realise what greatness your way of life contains'? Don't you realise that all the superficial goals of society around you are ultimately empty, while on the other hand, your goals are priceless treasures? I want to urge you not to even be tempted to compete - since your entry into the competition compromises your dignity.

Your system of belief and way of life is far superior to even the most lofty of their ideals. You win the race for true success hands down. So please don't try to impress the world on their terms. When you do, all you succeed in doing is to conceal your beautiful message of truth behind a facade. Please focus on your important message to the world - wear clothing which give strength to it rather than

undermine it.

*Signed,
Please Continue to Inspire Me*

Dear Perfume Wearer,
The Sage, Ezra enacted a law that perfume salesmen make the effort to make their wares available to the outer towns, affording every woman the opportunity to buy perfume. It is essential to marital harmony that a woman be able to fulfil her desire to make herself attractive and appealing to her husband.

However, my mother always warned me that too much perfume can overpower a room and an atmosphere. People can have aversions (even allergies) to some smells. If your smell puts people off, you could inadvertently cut ties without ever knowing why.

Once a woman came for a job for which she was perfectly qualified. The only reason she was not hired was that the boss could not tolerate the scent which she had brought into the room and which lingered there hours after she had gone. He did not want the smell in his life on a daily basis, yet could not express this to the candidate, being afraid to offend her. (PS in this age when men also wear strong scents, they, too can put off people sensitive to smells. And it can apply to body odour, not just artificial smells).

*Signed,
Not Everyone Enjoys Strong Scents*

Kathy & Yossi **Abush** in honour of the marriage of their daughter Pnina to Elchanon Komar

Trina & Yossi **Adelist** & Krainie & Rabbi Mendel **Shusterman**

in honour of the marriage of Aaron to Shterna

Shternie & Rabbi Shimi **Althaus** in honour of their anniversary
and the birthdays of Shimi, Shternie, Shmuel Betzalel and Levi Yitzchok

Haviva & Maurice **Elais** in honour of the marriage of Gina to Cliff Serrer

Shaina & Rabbi Yossi **Feldman** in honour of the birth of their daughter Rochel

Stera & Yossel **Gutnick** in honour of the marriage of Zahava to Reuven Pinson

Geraldine & Menashe **Harkham** in honour of the birth of their granddaughter Shani Cochava
and the engagement of their son Simon to Danit (Yasgur)

Raheli & Akiva **Kremnizer** of Akiva Mortgage Corporation
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Arlene **Normand** of www.arlenesway.com.au in honour of
the Bar Mitzvah of her son Darren Myerson

Robyn & Charles **Solomon** in honour of the Bar Mitzvah of their son Adam

Chanie & Rabbi Levi **Wolff** in honour of the birth of their son, Moshe Pinchus

Emma & Nathan **Zlatkis** in honour of the Bar Mitzvah of Evan (Chaim Yehudah)

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Tuna Strudel

Pastry Ingredients:

1 sheet of puff pastry

Filling:

7 oz tin of tuna

squeeze of lemon juice

1/2 onion grated

(optional) 2 oz of grated cheese

Slices of tomato

Basil

Mix filling well together. Place the sheet of pastry onto a greased baking tray. Place filling down the centre of the pastry. Cover with slices of tomato. Sprinkle liberally with basil. Cut the pastry into diagonal strips on either side of filling all the way down. Braid the strips over the filling alternatively. Paint with egg wash (1 egg beaten with a dash of water). Bake for half an hour at 180C until brown. Serve hot or cold with salad. Freezes well.

Lamb Rosettes

Ingredients:

12 lamb rosettes

flour

pepper and salt

800g tin chopped tomatoes

dash of soy sauce

(optional) 250g mushrooms sliced

oil for frying

dried mustard

large onion, chopped

dash of sugar

(optional) 2 tbsp Osem onion or mushroom soup powder

(optional) glass of red wine

Method:

Dip lamb rosettes in a mixture of flour, dried mustard, pepper and salt. In a pan which can also go into the oven, fry lamb in a bit of oil until brown on both sides and remove from pan. Add chopped large onion to pan (add more oil if required). Add mushrooms if desired. Saute until soft and golden.

Return lamb pieces to pan. Add tin of chopped tomatoes, a little sugar and a dash of soy sauce. Cover and cook for 90 minutes in oven on medium heat until soft. Add a glass of red wine and / or Osem soup powder if desired.

Fluffy Apple Pie

Pastry Ingredients:

900g self raising flour

4 eggs beaten with 2 tbsp cold water

450g margarine

300g sugar

Mix dry ingredients and margarine into bread crumbs and add eggs. Mix into a dough and put aside in fridge for 30 minutes or more. This amount of pastry will make three oblong 8" x 13" pies, using the dough as a base and to cover the top. Grease the tin and line with pastry. For each pie, use the following:

Filling:

1 800g tin of pie fruit apples

sprinkle liberally with sugar and cinnamon

2 handfuls of sultanas / raisins

Cover filling with pastry and paint with egg wash (1 egg beaten with a dash of water). Prick all over with a fork. Sprinkle with sugar. Bake at 180C for 40-45 minutes until browned. (This pie freezes well, but defrost in the oven for 45 minutes covered with tin foil to avoid any further browning).