

MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
SHAVUOS 5782 - 2022



Shabbat

Mrs. Tsivia Yanofsky
Menahelas, School Principal

Mrs. Estee
Friedman-Stefansky
Principal, General Studies

Faculty Advisor
Mrs. Sara Tendler

Proofreaders
Rebbetzin Peshi Neuburger
Mrs. Avigayil Finkelstein

Layout Advisor
Mrs. Dena Szpilzinger

Layout Design
Zahava Schwartz

Editors
Frieda Bamberger
Ayelet Hershkowitz
Michali Rosenberg
Elky Schwartz
Chavi Weiner

Front Cover Design
Tamar Eberstark

Back Cover Design
Zahava Schwartz

Background Design
Ellie Trapedo

From the desk of the Editors

Dear MHS,

The Ramban describes the days of Sefira as a long Chol Hamoed, spanning the gap from Pesach to Shavuot. What exactly is the nature of these days? Why is it considered a Chol Hamoed?

In order to explain this, we must first understand the nature and purpose of Chol Hamoed.

People often think that there are two types of days on the Jewish calendar. Holy ones, such as Shabbos and Yom Tov, and ordinary ones, like weekdays. In truth, all days are holy, just some are more holy than others. The Gemara comments on the Pasuk "Baruch Hashem yom yom," that every day we are supposed to express the blessings inherent in each particular day - on Shabbos, that of Shabbos; on Yom Tov, that of Yom Tov; and on weekdays, that of weekdays. Each day of life is latent with potential to achieve personal growth and scale spiritual heights; it is up to us to unlock and extract that potential.

Chol Hamoed can be viewed as a training ground for this concept. We have bookends of intense holiness - spiritually saturated days of Moed, and in between, a hybrid state of Chol - ordinary, and Moed - Festival. Chol Hamoed affords us the sense of Kedushas HaZman of the holiday, but at the same time, permission to engage in mundane activities. The Torah is challenging us to fine-tune our souls, to walk the fine line of engagement and disengagement, of holy and ordinary. We can then continue, once Yom Tov concludes, to serve Hashem, even in the ordinary days of life, with the recognition that we must always enfuse our lives with an aura of the Shechina.

Let us return to the Ramban. The days of Sefira are hardly ordinary. These are days that we climb step by step, rung by rung, from Yetzias Mitzrayim, till we are at the summit of Har Sinai. We are straddling the worlds of Freedom and Torah, and every day presents a new opportunity to combine these two existences.

This is what we, at MHS, have been trained to do by our amazing faculty, Rabbi, and teachers: To take the raw subjects of science, literature, history, and the arts, and enrich them with the holiness of the Torah, elevating what would otherwise be just ordinary into the sublime. We experience - each and every day - a magnificent Chol Hamoed. We hyphenate the Chol, the regular, with the Moed, the eternal, and it animates who we are and where we are heading.

Thanks to Mrs. Klugmann and Mrs. Tendler, the nights of Sefira are electrified and illuminated by their initiative, Sefira Celebrity. Highlighting a prominent personality each night, along with showcasing the talents of our students who share a beautifully prepared Dvar Torah, this is a prime example of taking Chol, an ordinary weekday night, and uplifting it to a special Moed for every girl.

Special thanks to Emma Cohen for her brilliant section in Moadim about Harav Hagaon Rav Chaim Kanievsky ZT"L, where she compiled snippets of what Rav Chaim meant to many MHS families.

We would like to wish the entire MHS Mishpacha a beautiful, meaningful, and joyous Shavuot.

Moadim Girls

Message from the Menacheles

The moral decline of the entire generation of Shoftim which preceded the story of Rus was a result of their unbridled narcissism.

איש הישר בעיניו יעשה [שופטים:יז]

This national character flaw poisoned even the greatest leaders of the Jewish people; it was the catalyst that led Elimelech and his family to leave Eretz Yisrael so that they would not be forced to support the needy during a famine. ושם האיש אלימלך. The term איש denotes a man of the upper class, one who can be counted on to contribute to the economic relief of his distressed people and country. Instead, this man was derelict in his duty to the community. While focused entirely on his own interests, he emigrated from Eretz Yisrael, fleeing from the beggars who besieged his home. What followed was that Elimelech's family, descendants of the royal lineage of shevet Yehudah, and designated as heirs to the throne, abdicated their malchus to a giyores who was found to be worthier than they were. This diadem would belong to her descendants for eternity. Why was the mantle of royalty removed from their undeserving shoulders and draped upon a noble Moabite princess? The answer to this also explains why Megillas Rus is read on Shavuot. For this megillah (Me-drash Lekach Tov on Rus) is entirely chessed, and Torah is all chessed, תורת חסד על לשונה. It is this very Torah, whose bedrock underpinning is kindness, that was given to us on Shavuot. Chessed is indeed our foundation stone; the future of the entire world, as well as that of Malchus Beis Dovid, rests on this potent force. Rus assumed responsibility for her ailing mother-in-law, both physically and emotionally, and went on to do the ultimate act of chessed with the elderly Boaz by marrying him. There is a grand sweep of chessed interspersed throughout the megillah. And it is this loving kindness that redeemed Klal Yisrael from the narcissism that threatened its very core. Ultimately, Rus bore Oved who grew up to become an extraordinarily righteous man. His grandson Dovid would become the legendary Sweet Singer of Israel, whose passionate Tehillim would inspire his nation for all time until the arrival of his long-awaited descendant – Mashiach Tzidkeinu.

It is most appropriate during this yom tov which emphasizes the power of chessed, to highlight the wide range of chessed activities of the students of Manhattan High School. Our students engage in various formalized chessed activities, as well as the countless spontaneous acts of chessed that punctuate their day, both at home and in school. Recently, we celebrated their acts of chessed at a gala banquet spearheaded by Miss Rina Brody. I found it most stirring to listen as the students shared their experiences of giving with great animation. It was evident to all of the observers that chessed is a vital part of their lives. This is the kind of school that I am proud to be a part of.

As this is the final edition of Moadim for the year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rebbetzin Peshi Neuburger, Mrs. Sara Tandler, and Mrs. Dena Spilzinger for their devoted efforts on behalf of this impressive publication. Theirs is a labor of love, characterized by many acts of chessed on their part, and in the spirit of megillas Rus, I declare, 'תהא משכורתכן שלמה מעם ה'.

For this particular moadim edition, a large part of the graphic design was completed by Zahava Schwartz, who invested many hours of her time.

Five outstanding students were the worthy editors of this year's Moadim; Frieda Bamberg-er, Ayelet Hershkowitz, Michali Rosenberg, Elky Schwartz and Chavi Weiner. With integrity and faithfulness, they churned out one stellar edition after another, and we are grateful to them for providing us with rich reading material in honor of the Yomim Tovim.

חג שמח

T. Yanofsky

The Double Torah Celebration

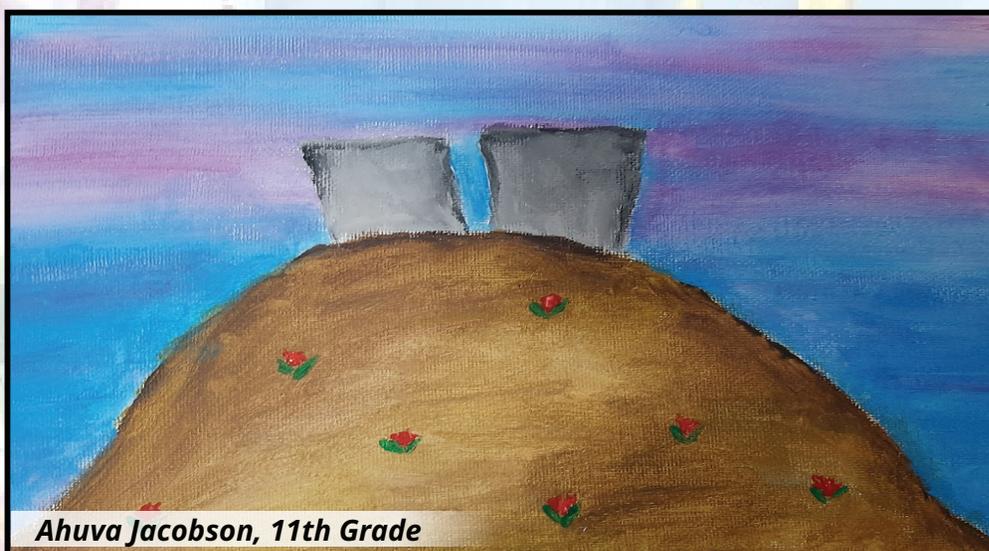
We all know that we celebrate Matan Torah on Shavuos, but don't we also celebrate the Torah on Simchas Torah? What is the point of celebrating both of these two yomim tovim?

The answer lies in the following mashal: There was a princess whose father issued a proclamation that any man in his entire kingdom would be able to marry his daughter but would not be allowed to meet her until the day of their wedding. As we can imagine, the entire kingdom believed there to be something wrong with the princess, and nobody wanted to marry her until one brave man decided that he trusted the king and chose to marry her. On the day of the wedding, he realized that she really was beautiful and had amazing middos. He tested all of her character traits and found himself to be pleasantly surprised that nothing was wrong with her. On the contrary, she was everything he could ever dream for. He was so excited that he decided to host a party to celebrate his good mazal.

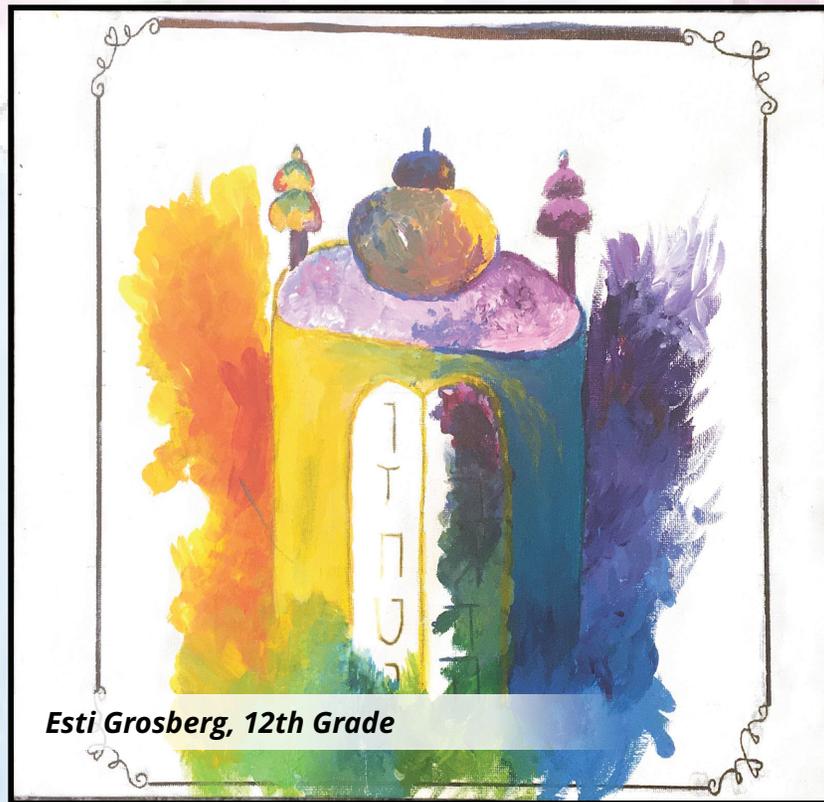
The mashal is clear. Bnei Yisroel are the chasan who blindly accepted the Torah, the princess, without question with the statement of "na'aseh v'nishma." Naturally, they expected the Torah to be a burden, with numerous restrictions and rules which would limit their freedom and physical pleasure. However, upon actually learning the Torah after kabalas haTorah, they discovered that the Torah really was amazing and didn't limit their freedom, but, rather, maximized it! Therefore, we celebrate Simchas Torah once we have completely finished reading the Torah.

Another difference between these two yomim tovim lies in what aspect of our connection to the Torah we are celebrating. On Simchas Torah, we dance around in circles with the Torah, which is covered and unopened. Wouldn't it seem to make more sense for us to celebrate the Torah by reading from it? However, we are celebrating the fact that even if the Torah has remained untouched by a Jew for a whole year, that Jew still has a special connection with the Torah. In contrast, on Shavuos, we celebrate Matan Torah and the beautiful halachos and hashkafos that guide our lives through every daily action and thought. Rabbi Volpo from Rishon L'Tzion illustrates this contrast with a mashal of two sisters who married husbands of extremely different wealth statuses. The wealthy wife once confided in her sister that she was jealous of her because although her own husband supported her lavishly, he didn't spend time with her as much as her sister's husband did. Similarly, although on Simchas Torah we lavishly dress our Torah with velvet mantles, ataros, breastplates, bells, gartels, and pointers, we need to also spend time with our Torah and engage in its many lessons and halachos. Therefore, Shavuos serves as our reminder that we need to study and learn the Torah.

☺ *Rikki Schreiber*



Ahuva Jacobson, 11th Grade



A Precious Gift

Shavuos is a time in which we celebrate our reception of the Torah from Hashem. However, why do we celebrate this on the anniversary of Matan Torah? The Torah was being studied for centuries before Matan Torah. We know that the Avos kept all the mitzvos, in addition to studying and teaching Torah. If so, what is the significance of Matan Torah?

The answer lies in the word giving—Matan Torah. On this special day, the Torah became our own. The Torah can be compared to a magnificent palace, lehavdil. Before Matan Torah, we were given access to its infinite rooms and its beautiful architecture. Then, after Matan Torah, ownership of the palace was handed to us. It became officially ours.

One example to illustrate this point is the story of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hurkinus (Bava Metzia 59b). When his ruling of a halacha was outvoted, a bas kol was heard questioning, “Why do you doubt the ruling of Rabbi Eliezer?” Rabbi Yehoshua, the main opposer, famously answered, “The Torah is not in Heaven!”—meaning, the Torah was given to us to interpret, so they were supposed to follow the majority opinion and not the heavenly voice. This story establishes that when the Torah was given to us, halacha was given over into our hands.

In Shir HaShirim, Shlomo HaMelech describes our relationship with Hashem as that of a bride and groom; Matan Torah is the wedding day. The Torah was the gift of Hashem, the metaphorical groom, to Bnei Yisrael, His “bride”. He handed over His most precious possession to His bride out of His great love for us, and this is what we are commemorating on Shavuos.

May we all be zoche to feel Hashem’s love for us on this special day and to continue feeling His love throughout the rest of our lives!

🕊️ *Yehudis Kundin*

Source: Rabbi Naftali Silberberg



Channie Malek, 12th Grade

Kedushas Yom Tov

Shavuos, unlike the other Yomim Tovim, has no unique mitzvos associated with it nowadays. However, during the times of the Beis Hamikdash, the day of Shavuos was special since we brought the קרבן שתי הלחם and more שעירים as part of the קרבן מוסף. In his sefer Kol Ram, Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that these two korbanos hint to important lessons related to Shavuos.

In the Gemara in Zevachim, we find that the extra שעירים are there to atone for tumah in the Beis Hamikdash. The Gemara further states that in truth, we should have brought a korban daily to atone for tumah in the Mikdash, if not for the fact that Hashem had pity on Bnei Yisroel for the financial burden such a requirement would create.

The words of the Gemara cannot be understood literally—how can it be that Bnei Yisroel were נטמא the Beis Hamikdash every day? Weren't they warned to be careful about tumah and taharah?

Rav Moshe Feinstein suggests that the Gemara is actually talking about the awareness of kedusha that needs to be present in order to accept the Torah. Without this kedusha, it is impossible to accept the Torah. We find that when a ger converts, he first has to accept the kedusha of the Torah, and only then can he accept the ol hamitzvos. Anyone who bears the ol haTorah, the “burden” of the Torah, has to know that he has to be conscious of the kedusha and tahara of it. If a person doesn't act accordingly, though, and he loses sight of the kedusha of the Torah, then he creates a void for himself. On Shavuos, we bring extra korbanos, which bring kedusha, so that we have more kedusha when we accept the Torah; that is the purpose of the extra שעירים.

According to this approach, we can also understand the difference between what is said in Mussaf of Shavuos and the other times we say Mussaf. On Shavuos, we say, “שעיר עזים אחד לכפר עליכם,” but the other times that we say Mussaf, we say, “שעיר עזים אחד חטאת לכפר עליכם.”

On every other Yom Tov, the שעיר is brought to be נכפר various חטאים. That is not the case on Shavuos; on Shavuos, the korban is brought to bring kapparah for the lack of kedusha that comes from moving away from the Torah.

In addition to the שעירים, we also bring the Korban Shte Halechem on Shavuos. This korban is different from all other korbanos because it is composed of chametz, which is more gashmiyusdik than matzah. This fact is connected to the statement in the Gemara in Pesachim (68b): “הכל מודים בעצרת דבעינן:” “נחמ לנו”—all acknowledge that on Shavuos, we are required also to partake in physical celebration (and not just spiritual). There is a discussion whether Yom Tov should be a day of כלו לה'—fully spiritual—or if Yom Tov should also involve the earthly joys of eating and drinking. For most Yomim Tovim, it's a machlokes, so we engage in both: chatzi l'Hashem and chatzi lachem. However, all agree that on Shavuos, there's a requirement of לנו; there is a mitzvah to celebrate by doing things that bring us physical enjoyment, and not have the Yom Tov be כלו לה', wholly spiritual.

The reason for this is that on the day of Matan Torah, we have to pay attention to the fact that the Torah controls every aspect of a person's life, not just matters of ruchniyus. Therefore, a person is commanded to partake in matters of gashmiyus, like eating and drinking, on Shavuos. We further embrace gashmiyus by bringing the Korban Shte HaLechem, a korban which contains chametz. This serves to remind us that even matters of gashmiyus have to be under the rule of Torah.

✿ *Adielle Rosenblum*

Mourning to Grow

The yom tov of Shavuos is preceded by the mitzvah of sefiras ha'omer. As the Torah writes in Parshas Emor (Vayikra 23:15): “וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הִבְיֵאתֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שִׁבְעַת שָׁבוּעוֹת תְּמִימוֹת תִּהְיֶינָה:” —we have a mitzvah to count seven weeks from the bringing of the korban omer in preparation for kabbalas haTorah.

The Tur (Orech Chaim siman 489) discusses different opinions about what to do if someone forgot to count one day. Rav Hai Gaon says that one can continue counting with a bracha, while the Ba'al Halachos Gedolos (the Bahag) rules that one no longer can. This machlokes highlights that there are two aspects to the mitzvah of counting sefirah: one, to count each day of the omer, and two, to count seven complete weeks. How can we understand the relationship between these two different aspects of the mitzvah?

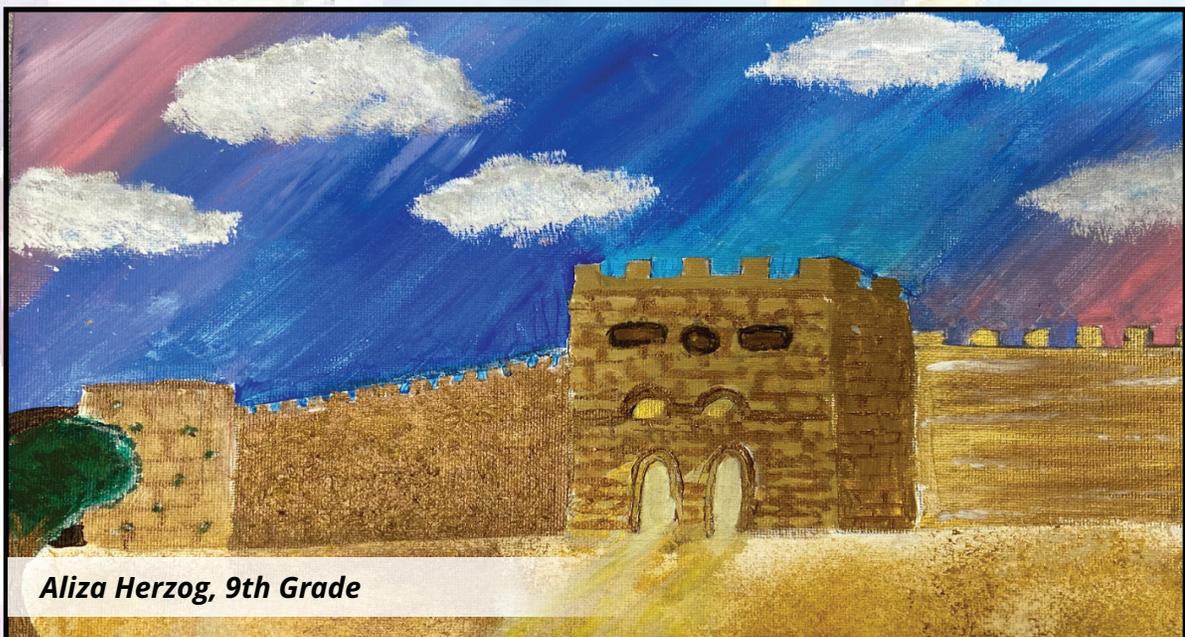
Another question: during sefirah, we also keep customs of mourning to remember the students of R' Akiva, who were niftar “שלא נהגו כבוד זה לזה,” because they did not show each other proper respect. How does this tragedy relate to counting in preparation for Matan Torah?

Reb Wolbe writes in Alei Shur (chelek aleph) that a crucial component for growth in avodas Hashem is to form a group of friends who share the same aspirations and help each other when they are feeling spiritually weak or demoralized. The Yalkut Lekach Tov develops this idea, noting that even though the shechinah usually rests on a group of ten people who learn Torah, if they dislike each other, the shechinah does not rest on them, and it is as if they are not even learning Torah! Thus, each individual member of the group has to look out for the welfare of everyone else in the group in order to maximize their own growth. The unfortunate absence of this communal sense of responsibility (fraternité) led to tragic deaths of Rabbi Akiva's students and is a cautionary tale to support each other as we prepare for kabbalas haTorah.

With this idea, perhaps we can understand why there is a mitzvah to count both individual days and complete weeks. We have to focus on the present day and make sure we have its individual details right, but we also have to see how it fits into the larger picture, to notice how each day builds on the days that come before it and leads towards the complete goal of properly reaching Matan Torah.

The mitzvah of sefirah and the yom tov of Shavuos provide us with an opportunity to pause, reflect, and appreciate that each one of our peers contributes to creating a community of ruchniyus that supports our collective emotional and spiritual growth. We truly count on each other.

🌸 *Zippora Harris*



Aliza Herzog, 9th Grade

Over Their Heads

In Shabbos 88a, the Gemara states that Hashem covered Bnei Yisroel with Har Sinai as if it were an overturned barrel and forced them to accept the Torah—kafah aleihem es hahar k'gigis.

Tosafos asks a famous question; how do you reconcile the coercive story of kafah aleihem es hahar k'gigis with the idea of naaseh v'nishma—Bnei Yisroel voluntarily and lovingly accepting the Torah without question. Tosafos answers that naaseh v'nishma was, indeed, intended as a valid commitment when it was given. However, Bnei Yisroel might have changed their minds upon seeing the tremendous fire that accompanied the giving of the Torah, which temporarily caused their neshamos to leave their bodies. Thus, Hashem wanted to seal their commitment at that time. Why did Hashem not wait to see if they would renege and then force them to make a new commitment as necessary? The Maharal suggests that Hashem wanted the commitment of naaseh v'nishma, which was made purely out of love, to be the base of the commitment that eternally bound them to the Torah. Therefore, He overturned Har Sinai onto Bnei Yisroel to ensure that the commitment of naaseh v'nishma would not be broken.

The Midrash Tanchuma provides another answer, arguing that naaseh v'nishma was our acceptance of Torah She-b'chtav (the Written Torah) but kafah aleihem es hahar k'gigis was for the Torah She-b'al Peh (the Oral Torah), as that is a harder thing to follow. Torah She-b'al Peh requires a deeper commitment that Bnei Yisroel were not ready for, and that is why it was forced upon them. The Ben Yehoyada¹ explains why the Gemara specifically compares the mountain to a barrel; a barrel functions as a container. The barrel is merely the chitzonut—the outer shell. It is what is inside the barrel that is the ikkar—the important part. Bnei Yisroel said they were ready to accept the Torah She-b'chtav, so Hashem held the mountain over them like a barrel, indicating that they were only seeing the outside and missing the big picture. Torah She-b'chtav is just the outer shell of the Torah; there is so much more inside, and you can't accept one without the other. It would be like taking a barrel without the wine.

🌸 Lizzie Boczko

¹ Cited by Rabbi Rosner in his Daf Yomi shiur





Sefiras Haomer

Adapted from the Seniors' divrei Torah from Sefira Celebrity



Emma Cohen:

”הוֹי זְהִיר בְּמִצְוָה קְלָה כְּבַחֲמוּרָה, שְׂאִין אֶתָּה יוֹדַע מִתֵּן שְׂכָרְךָ שֶׁל מִצְוֹת.” (אבות ב:א)

You should treat each and every mitzvah with equal importance because you don't know the value of a mitzvah. Rabbi Lapp, a rav who works in Camp Migdal, a camp for individuals with severe special needs, explained a deeper meaning to this idea from chazal. He said that he received a phone call from a camper's grandmother who was literally crying tears of joy as she explained that she was looking at pictures of her granddaughter from the camp website and was crying because she had never ever before seen her blind and severely autistic granddaughter smile before! So, Rabbi Lapp explained that this quote from Pirkei Avos means that you should treat every single mitzvah with equal importance because you never know the impact that your mitzvah can have.

Ayala Klugmann:

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנָּשִׂיא אוֹמֵר, יִפֶּה תִּלְמוּד תּוֹרָה עִם דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, שְׂיִגִיעַת שְׁנֵיהֶם מִשְׁכַּחַת עֵוֹן. וְכָל תּוֹרָה שְׂאִין עִמָּה מְלֹאכָה, סוֹפָה בְּטִלָּה וְגוֹרָרֶת עֵוֹן. (אבות ב:ב)

This Mishna stresses the importance of putting one's guard up toward Aveiros. If HaShem clearly tells us to make a game plan, then there is obviously a way for us to make sure we don't fall. Whether it's having a pre-made list on easing out a conversation steering towards Lashon Hara, or setting a schedule to keep yourself busy from spending excess time on our phones, we must always make sure that we have a clear strategy to remind us why we are here in this world and to keep us on track to fulfill our eternal purpose.

Tamar Cohen:

רַבִּי אוֹמֵר, אִיזוּהִי דֶּרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂיִבֵּר לוֹ הָאָדָם, כֹּל שֶׁהִיא תִּפְאָרֶת לְעוֹשֶׂיהָ וְתִפְאָרֶת לוֹ מִן הָאָדָם. (אבות ב:א)

What is the straight path that a person should choose for himself? Anything honorable for himself, and gives him credit in the eyes of others. Rabbeinu Yonah learns from this that our mitzvos must be done at the appropriate time, and never at the expense of others. "דבר בעתו מה טוב" nothing is better than an action done at the right time. We must make our mitzvos as beautiful as we possibly can, which brings honor to ourselves - תפארת לעושיה. But if we're doing it in a way that makes it difficult for others, then we're not fulfilling the rest of the Mishnah, ותפארת לו מין האדם, giving us credit in the eyes of others. We have to make sure to think of this and be considerate of others when taking upon ourselves extras, which can be so beautiful, but not if it hurts others in the process.

Adielle Rosenblum:

רְבִי שִׁמְעוֹן אָמַר, שְׁלֹשָׁה נֶאֱכְלוּ עַל שֵׁלַחן אֶחָד וְלֹא אָמְרוּ עָלָיו דְּבַר תּוֹרָה, כָּאֵלוּ אֶכְלוּ מִזִּבְחֵי מִתִּים. (אבות ג:ג)

As opposed to the Goyim, we are able to combine Ruchnius and Gashmius. But when we separate them we are doing acts and Avoda Zara like the Goyim. When a person connects his table (Gashmius) to Hashem through Divrei Torah (Ruchnius), it is as though he is eating from Hashem's table and bringing a Korban in the Bais Hamikdash, combining both Ruchnius and Gashmius. So, we first bring the Korban of barley (animal food) and then the Korban Shte Halechem, made out of wheat, (human food) because, on Shavuot, we became human beings that are able to be receptacles of Hashem's greatness so it's appropriate that the Korban Shte Halechem is made out of wheat, resembling our transformation through the Korbanos that we bring. Part of the purpose of Sefira is to elevate physical experiences to spiritual experiences, refining and elevating ourselves from the original state of "animals" to worthy human beings of being able to receive the Torah.

Mindy Weiss:

כָּל שֶׁחֲכָמָתוֹ מְרֻבָּה מִמַּעֲשָׂיו, לְמָה הוּא דוֹמֶה, לְאֵילָן שֶׁעֲנָנָיו מְרֻבִּין וְשָׂרְשָׁיו מְעַטִּין, וְהָרוּחַ בָּאָה וְעוֹקְרָתוֹ וְהוֹפְכָתוֹ עַל פְּנָיו. (אבות ג:י"ז)

Someone whose wisdom exceeds his deeds is like a tree whose branches are many but whose roots are few. While it will look beautiful with the many extensive branches, once the winds come, the tree will fall right on its face. With few roots, there is no strength to the tree. Vast wisdom that is not put into action is neither secure nor stable when wind takes the form of any nisayon and one is not able to practice what one preached. In contrast, if someone is less smart and doesn't know much, yet he is a doer, his tree may not be as exciting to look at, but his faith and knowledge isn't going anywhere, no matter which winds are sent his way. Knowledge is fleeting, but once you do an action, that cannot be taken away from you. We have one life, and it's short, so we must do as much as we can while we're still here. Ultimately, it is only our ma'asim tovim, our good actions, that come with us to the next world. Therefore, when we become inspired by something we learn or hear, we should act upon it; then it is no longer fleeting, but rather ours forever.



Zahava Schwartz, 12th Grade



Dina Widroff, 10th Grade

Esti Grosberg:

הַלּוֹמֵד מִחֲבֵרוֹ פָּרַק אֶחָד אוֹ הִלְכָה אַחַת אוֹ פְּסוּק אֶחָד אוֹ דְבוּר אֶחָד אוֹ אֶפְלוֹ אוֹת.
(אבות ו:ג)

If we learn anything Torah related from someone, we become indebted to them and must honor them. Therefore, how much more so do we owe to our teachers, who devote their time again and again to us and teach us new and inspiring perspectives on the Torah every single day. As we are about to conclude our last week of school, and especially, the Seniors and I who are about to graduate, we have to take a moment and really appreciate everything our teachers have done for us.

Adielle Rosenblum:

רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר, שְׁלֵשָׁה שְׂאֵכְלוּ עַל שֵׁלֶחַן אֶחָד וְלֹא אָמְרוּ עָלָיו דְּבַרִּי תוֹרָה, כָּאֵלוּ אֶכְלוּ מִזִּבְחֵי מִתִּים. (אבות ג:ג)

As opposed to the Goyim, we are able to combine Ruchnius and Gashmius. But when we separate them we are doing acts and Avoda Zara like the Goyim. When a person connects his table (Gashmius) to Hashem through Divrei Torah (Ruchnius), it is as though he is eating from Hashem's table and bringing a Korban in the Bais Hamikdash, combining both Ruchnius and Gashmius. So, we first bring the Korban of barley (animal food) and then the Korban Shtei Halechem, made out of wheat, (human food) because, on Shavuos, we became human beings that are able to be receptacles of Hashem's greatness so it's appropriate that the Korban Shtei Halechem is made out of wheat, resembling our transformation through the Korbanos that we bring. Part of the purpose of Sefira is to elevate physical experiences to spiritual experiences, refining and elevating ourselves from the original state of "animals" to worthy human beings of being able to receive the Torah.

Ayelet Reichman:

וְהוּוּ מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּשִׂמְחָה. (אבות ג:י"ב)

Why doesn't the Mishna say אָדָם, why say הָאָדָם? The Mishnah is teaching us to see the entirety of a person. There may be certain frustrating aspects about someone but try to see the whole picture, הָאָדָם, and welcome them בְּשִׂמְחָה. We all know the power of just one smile, one good morning, or one how are you.

Chaya Trapedo:

עֲקֹבֵיָא בֶן מַהֲלֵלָאֵל אוֹמֵר, הִסְתַּכַּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְבָרִים וְאִי אַתָּה בָּא לִיְדֵי עֵבֶרָה. דַּע מֵאִין בָּאת, וּלְאִן אַתָּה הוֹלֵךְ, וְלִפְנֵי מִי אַתָּה עֵתִיד לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֻשְׁבָּנוֹ. (אבות ג:א)

Why are we told "ליתן דין"—to give judgment—rather than receiving it? The Baal Shem Tov explains that after a person dies, he gives judgment on his own life. This is an example of how lofty a neshama is, because it has bechira, like Hashem. While our choices can lead to our downfall, they are also the source of our potential, allowing us to rise more than anything else that Hashem created. During Sefira, bechira gives us so much power to work on our middos so we can develop the types of choices that we make. We should use this time to better ourselves and our choices so we can unlock our full potential and bring the coming of Moshiach, bimhaira biyameinu, amen.



Ellie Trapedo, 10th Grade



Reggie Klein, 11th Grade

Shani Brody:

יְכַל שְׂרוּחַ הַבְּרִיּוֹת נוֹחָה הַיְמִנּוּ, רוּחַ הַמְּקוּם נוֹחָה הַיְמִנּוּ. (אבות ג:)

Instead of reading it as “everyone who is pleasing to people,” it should be read as “someone who is always pleasing to people.” A people-pleaser will put on a show and be nice to people for the sake of popularity, but when put to the test of time, his true colors will show. The person beloved by Hashem and humanity to whom the mishnah actually refers is one who lives by the Torah and has the mindset of v’ahavta l’rei’acha kamocho as his driving motivation. This is someone who will always be pleasing to Hashem, and his likeability to other people will withstand the test of time. One who really works on himself will always be beloved by Hashem, and by others.

Avigael Hammer:

הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֵל תְּהִי בְּזוֹ לְכָל אָדָם, וְאֵל תְּהִי מִפְּלִיג לְכָל דָּבָר, שְׂאִין לְךָ אָדָם שְׂאִין לוֹ שְׁעָה וְאִין לְךָ דָּבָר שְׂאִין לוֹ מְקוּם. (אבות ד:ג)

The word “שְׁעָה” can also mean “to turn.” According to this interpretation, when the mishnah says “שְׂאִין לְךָ” “שְׂאִין לְךָ אָדָם שְׂאִין לוֹ שְׁעָה” it means that there is no person that you can’t see or find something good about if you just turn your head and change your perspective. If only you use a lev tov to look at that person just a little differently, you will recognize all the amazing things she has to offer. The importance of a lev tov is actually hinted to by the number of days in Sefira; there are 49 days in Sefira, and the gematria for lev tov is 49. When we work on ourselves and use our lev tov during the seven weeks of Sefira, we can learn to shift our perspectives of others, so we will be ready for matan Torah and yimos haMashiach.

Nechama Schwartz:

אִיזְהוּ מְכַבֵּד, הַמְּכַבֵּד אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת. (אבות ד:א)

How does honoring Hashem lead to honoring other people, and, by extension, earning their respect? If one lives a life honoring Hashem, then they know that Hashem is good. Since everyone is created b’tzelem Elokim—in the image of Hashem—they must have inherent goodness to them. This leads us to honor people—not because of anything they did for us or because we like a surface trait of theirs (and, on the flipside, prevents us from not honoring someone because of a negative association we have with them)—but because our baseline perception of all people is good.

Bracha Lewittes:

אל תהי בז לכל אדם, ואל תהי מפליג לכל דבר, שאין לך אדם שאין לו שעה ואין לך דבר שאין לו מקום (אבות ד:ג)

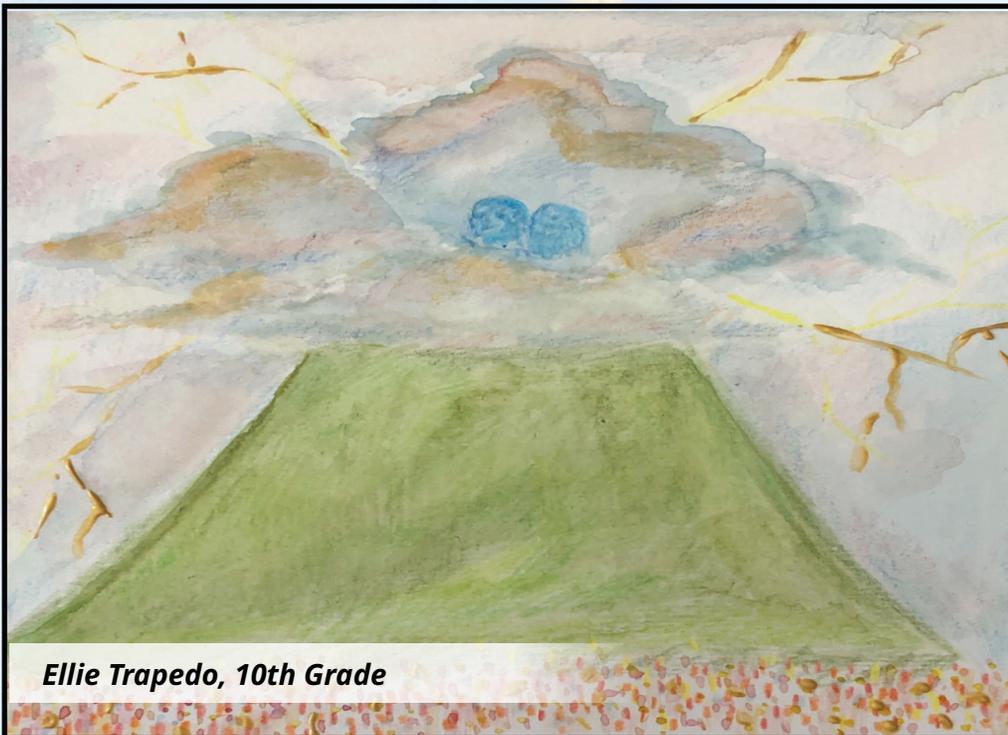
Do not despise any man, and do not discriminate against anything, for there is no man that has not his hour, and there is no thing that has not its place.

There is a famous saying, often attributed to R' Nachman of Breslov, that states, "the day that you were born was the day that Hashem decided the world cannot exist without you." If this is true about me, then it is also true about the girl sitting next to me on the bus or the girl sitting in front of me in class. Every person was created by Hashem, who is perfect. Therefore, we should never degrade or hurt other people who were created by Hashem as they have vital roles to play in this world just as I do myself.

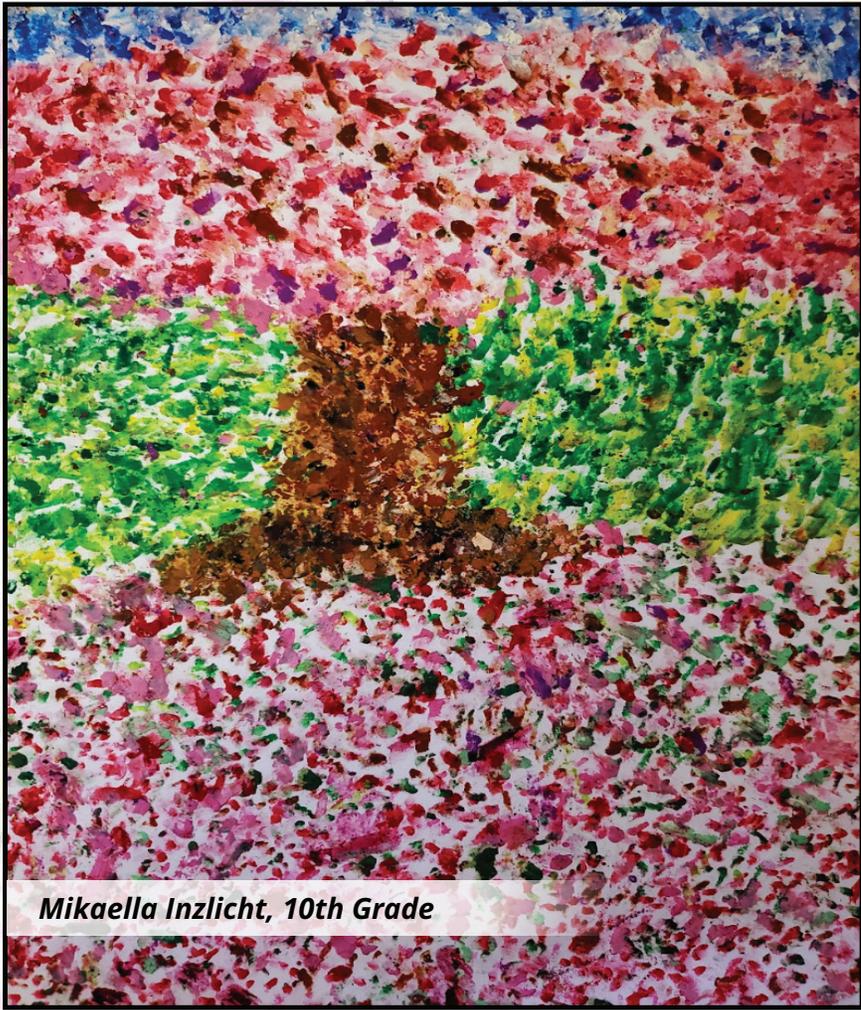
Shifra Giloni:

רבי שמעון אומר, שלשה כתרין הם, כתר תורה וכתר כהנה וכתר מלכות, וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן. (אבות ד:י"ג)

Lag b'omer was a bittersweet day. We were happy because the students of Rabbi Akiva stopped passing away, but we were sad because of the realization that the tragedy in Meron that killed 45 kadosh neshamos happened exactly a year ago. Every single kadosh neshama that we lost from the tragedy could teach us so much but for now I will focus on Dovi Steinmetz a"h from Montreal, Canada, as he was my mothers friend's son. Dovi Steinmetz is best described by the mishnah in Avos 4:13, which states, "שלשה כתרין הם, כתר תורה, כתר כהנה, וכתר מלכות, וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן"—there are three crowns one can earn, the crowns of Torah, kehunah, and malchus, but the crown of a good name rises above all others. Dovi Steinmetz was known for looking out for everyone around him, and he would do anything for anyone, even until the last moments of his life. In Meron, when all the men started falling due to the crowds, Dovi and his friend went into a pushup position so they wouldn't be suffocating the people under them. Someone who looks out for other people even in the last moments of his life earns the reputation of having a shem tov. May his neshama and the neshamos of the other 44 kedoshim have an aliyah.



Ellie Trapedo, 10th Grade



Mikaella Inzlicht, 10th Grade



Sarah Wassner, 9th Grade

Raquel Nissanov:

בַּעֲשָׂרָה מֵאֲמָרוֹת נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם. וּמָה תִּלְמוּד לומר, וְהֵלֵא בְּמֵאֲמָר אֶחָד יִכּוֹל לְהִבְרָאוֹת
אֶלֵא לְהַפְרֵעַ מִן הַרְשָׁעִים שֶׁמֵאַבְדִּין אֶת הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בַּעֲשָׂרָה מֵאֲמָרוֹת
וְלִתֵּן שָׂכָר טוֹב לְצַדִּיקִים שֶׁמְקַיְמִין אֶת הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בַּעֲשָׂרָה מֵאֲמָרוֹת. (אבות ה:א)

The Bartenura explains this with a simple mashal. If someone destroys something that was created in ten days, it is a more severe offense than destroying something that was created in one day. Similarly, Hashem created the world with ten utterances in order to punish the reshaim more severely for destroying the world. On the flipside, Hashem can now give tzadikim more schar for the good they do when they enhance Hashem's world with righteousness. There is a negative quality to this mishnah; the world was created with ten utterances in order to punish us more severely, but at the same time there is a positive, tov, quality to it; the world was created with ten utterances just so Hashem could reward us even more. Much in life has both positive and negative aspects. It's our job to utilize all things in this world for the good and to serve Hashem.

Rivka Hakimi:

בֵּן בֶּג בֶּג אוֹמֵר, הַפֶּךְ בָּהּ וְהַפֶּךְ בָּהּ, דְּכֹלֵא בָּהּ. וּבָהּ תִּחְזִי, וְסִיב וּבָלָה בָּהּ, וּמִנָּה לֹא תִזּוּעַ, שְׂאִין
לָךְ מִדָּה טוֹבָה הַיּוֹמָנָה. (אבות ה:כ"ב)

The mishnah is essentially saying that you can never outgrow Torah. It will always be applicable, and you will always have something to learn. Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch points out the connection between this mishnah and the mishnah before it. The previous mishnah speaks about the different stages of our lives corresponding to different milestones in our lives.

R' Hirsch explains that mishnah 22 comes to clarify a possible misinterpretation of the previous mishnah. This mishnah explains that every part of Torah must remain with us at every point of our life. One may think that a boy need only study Mishnah until he's fifteen and Gemara until he is eighteen, etc. However we must occupy ourselves with every part of the Torah our whole lives. The Torah is inexhaustible and precedes all other pursuits.

Rabbi Berel Wein adds to this explanation. He says that this is why we read the Torah again every year. Year in and year out, there is some new insight that can be gleaned from the Torah and can be related to our current life circumstances. The Torah is not an ancient history book; rather, it is applicable in every situation. Therefore, the Torah advances with us and has meaning at every stage of one's life. This is the beauty of Torah.

We must constantly be involved with Torah because it is relevant to our lives at all times.

רַב חַיִּים שֶׁל טוֹבָה.
רַב חַיִּים שֶׁל בְּרָכָה.
רַב חַיִּים שְׂיֵשׁ בּוֹ אֶהְבֵּת תּוֹרָה וְיִרְאַת שְׁמַיִם.

MHS Students Reflect on the Many Faces of
Harav Chaim Kanievsky זצ"ל

Written and compiled by: Emma Cohen



On Shavuot, we celebrate the most valuable gift that Klal Yisroel has ever received from HaKadosh Baruch Hu-- the Torah HaKedoshah. Every year, on the Yom Tov of Shavuot we have the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to adhering to the Torah and its mitzvos. The Torah is Klal Yisroel's lifeblood, it keeps us alive and strong. Everything that we need can be found in the Torah and when a need should arise, we have rabbonim and talmidei chachamim to turn to for guidance in any and every area of our lives. So much so, we are commanded to cleave to talmidei chachamim for guidance and to glean from their middos. Tragically, this Shavuot, Klal Yisroel will go to kab-balas haTorah without our beloved Sar HaTorah, HaGaon HaRav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l. Rav Chaim was the embodiment of Torah in every sense, he was the greatest masmid of our time who had kol haTorah kulah at his fingertips; he was our solid pillar that every Jew felt they could turn to.

About Rav Chaim:

Moshe Rabbeinu, the manhig of Klal Yisroel, lead us out of the tortures of shibbud Mitzrayim, through the dangerous midbar, and into Eretz Yisroel. On Shabbos, during shemoneh esrei, we say "ישמח משה במתנת חלקו כי עבד נאמן קראת לו"-- Moshe Rabbeinu rejoiced in his cheilek that Hashem gave him as being the leader of Klal Yisroel. Why is this included and worth mentioning? My grandfather zt"l once shared a beautiful answer to this question with me. Going out and being osek b'tzarchei tzibbur is really a tremendous sacrifice on one's part. He explained that in truth, people look after themselves-- finding room to selflessly give and care for others is gadlus. By Moshe Rabbeinu becoming the manhig of Klal Yisroel, he was giving up on what he really wanted for himself for the sake of others. When we daven shemoneh esrei on Shabbos, we remind ourselves of the greatness that comes from looking beyond oneself.



This selflessness was exemplified by Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l. His entire life was learning Torah and giving to others -- neither at the expense of the other.

Rav Chaim was the most revered gadol in our time, sought out by every type of Jew, for brachos and advice on anything and everything-- all day, every day-- and yet, he managed still to plumb the depths of Torah and make a siyum haTorah before Pesach every year. Rav Chaim sat in his modest apartment wearing his legendary cardigan, surrounded by his seforim, learning Torah while, one after another, people came to him for brochos, with questions about their own seforim, for advice on everything from illness to marriage and yet, he did not break from his learning. As the Mishna in Pirkei Avos states, "על" "שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת הַסְּדִים"-- Rav Chaim was a pillar of Torah, avodah, and gemilas chassadim in this world. It is brought down that "מיתת צדיקים מכפרת"-- the death of tzaddikim brings a kaparah for Klal Yisroel. The world has suffered a huge loss and with it, a gaping void to fill. What does the petirah of this holy tzaddik teach us? We need to grab onto and learn from Rav Chaim's middos. We have to step up to the plate and extend ourselves more in the realms of Torah, tefillah, and gemilas chassadim.

Despite the fact that he was a man of few words and resided in a remote corner of Bnei Brak, he was beloved by everyone. Across the globe, Rav Chaim managed to leave an indelible imprint on the lives and hearts of so many, including many members of our very own MHS family.

✿ Emma Cohen



Torah

If one got to spend even three minutes with Rav Chaim, it was a lot of time. He made himself available to help everyone, yet he was so beyond careful not to be mevatel his Torah. Nothing exemplifies Rav Chaim's attention to time more than his signature bracha, "buha". He said this to save precious seconds for learning, because he realized that if saying "bracha v'hatzlacha" takes two seconds and he sees around three hundred people per day, he would be giving up ten minutes of learning every day, and for Rav Chaim, so much could be achieved in that time. Rav Chaim's inimitable level of unwavering hasmada in learning and genius allowed him to soar to great heights in Torah. He wrote thick seforim on topics of Torah that are not even halacha l'maaseh, such as eglah arufah. This gadol derived such pleasure from learning Hashem's sweet Torah and he just wanted to share it with others.



Rav Chaim with Pearlle Goldstein's grandfather

"The morning prior to my grandfather's visit with Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l, he shared with my father that he feels as if he is forgetting all of his learning. Later on that day, when my grandfather went to visit with Rav Chaim, and told him that he is a full time learner, Rav Chaim told my grandfather to sit down next to him. Having never mentioned anything about my grandfather's conversation earlier in the day with my father, Rav Chaim proceeded to tell my grandfather that one who sits down to learn Torah cannot forget what they learned-- "ir kinesht fargessin". My grandfather was astounded that Rav Chaim gave him the exact answer that he was looking for that day."

🕊 Pearlle Golstein, 12th Grade



Teri Ehrenpreis's father giving Rav Chaim the sefer from Rav Dovid Feinstein zt"l

"When my family was preparing to go on a trip to Eretz Yisroel, my father asked his Rosh Yeshiva and rebbi, HaRav Dovid Feinstein zt"l, what he should do when he is in Eretz Yisroel. For example, should he spend extra time learning, or davening? Rav Dovid responded that the mitzvah that one should do when visiting Eretz Yisroel is to visit HaRav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l. Rav Dovid then gave my father a sefer to give to Rav Chaim. However, my father noticed that Rav Dovid did not inscribe the sefer, which is something that he usually did when giving a sefer as a gift, so my father asked Rav Dovid why he did not inscribe it. To this Rav Dovid answered, "Who am I to give a bracha to Rav Chaim?". When my father handed the sefer to Rav Chaim and informed him that it was a gift from Rav Dovid, Rav Chaim, who did not speak much, gave a very loud "Yasher koach". One of Rav Chaim's gabbaim asked Rav Chaim if he should put the sefer away, but Rav Chaim immediately opened it up and began to learn from it for some time while my father and brother were there."

🕊 Teri Ehrenpreis, 9th Grade

Everyone-- even other gedolei hador-- recognized Rav Chaim's stature. We were so lucky to have had and to still have tremendous gedolim in the world during our lifetimes. Will we take advantage of the extraordinary privilege that we have? Will we seek them out for hadracha and brachos?



Avodah



Rav Chaim was mispallel for the world. He davened for Klal Yisroel at large and he davened for individuals who came to him at a time of need. His tefillos soared straight up to the Kisei HaKavod. "צדיק גוֹרֵר" ו"הקדוש ברוך הוא מקיים". Whenever someone had a serious challenge, Rav Chaim was the address. A bracha from Rav Chaim yielded miraculous yeshuos that seemed impossible. A bracha given wholeheartedly, b'leiv shaleim, has a very special koach and because Rav Chaim had such a connection with yidden, his brachos were mikuyam.

"Three years ago, my grandfather, Rav Yankel Cohen zt"l, was diagnosed with a horrible end stage cancer and he was given a maximum of two months to live. While my grandfather was on his way to find out if he would qualify for an experimental treatment, my grandmother was on the phone trying to make a connection, trying to find someone who could meet with Rav Chaim in person. When the man finally reached Rav Chaim, Rav Chaim gave my grandfather a bracha for a refuah sheleima and he also added the name "Refael" to my grandfather's name. My grandfather lived an extra two years beyond the grim prognosis! That is the power of a bracha from this special tzaddik."

Emma Cohen, 12th Grade



Rav Yankel (right) learning with HaGaon HaRav Chaim Kanievsky shlita (left)– following which HaRav Chaim told my grandfather "I didn't know America could produce such a masmid like you"



My grandmother (right) paying a visit with Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky a"h while Rav Yankel visited with Chaim Kanievsky



Rav Chaim reading a letter that my grandmother- Rebbetzin Cohen- wrote to him regarding Rav Yankel's first yahrtzeit brought to him by my brother- Andrew (right) very Recently--January 2022



Naomi Bistrizky's father and brothers with Rav Chaim this December

"When my mother was ill, my father wanted to only make decisions involving das Torah. When my father was not sure whether to add a name to my mother's name or not, hoping to change her mazel, he asked Rav Chaim Kanievisky zt"l. Rav Chaim gave the hadracha to add the name "Ruchama" to my mother's name. Usually when someone is niftar the added name is removed, but my father was not sure what had to be done in this specific situation. My mother was nifteres late at night, and therefore, Rav Chaim was not available to answer the sheila at that time. My father decided to ask Rav Dovid Feinstein zt"l, who was also very involved with my mother's illness along the way, who said that for whatever reason the name must remain. Before the levaya, my father managed to get in touch with Rav Chaim who gave the same response. My father was shocked by this strange decision but did as he was told by das Torah. Two weeks later, on a motzei Shabbos, my father received a phone call from Rav Chaim's nephew. Rav Chaim's nephew explained to my father that the case regarding my mother's name was brought up at Rav Chaim's Shabbos table, and as a response to his family's question about why the name was kept, Rav Chaim answered that he himself is unsure, the words just came to his mouth! My family and I learned from this situation the importance of always following das Torah, no matter the circumstance."

🕊️ **Naomi Bistrizky, 10th Grade**

It is abundantly clear from this story that Rav Chaim had ruach haKodesh. He inexplicably knew what the right decision was in all situations. The Bistrizky family relied on das Torah and it gave them direction.

"My sister's name was changed from "Ilana" to "Ahuva" at twenty-two years of age by Rav Chaim Kanievisky zt"l. She wasn't scared about having an identity crisis-- she was so excited to be renamed by the gadol hador. Everytime that we call her "Ahuva" we are reaffirming our emunas chachamim and kavod haTorah."

🕊️ **Ayala Klugmann, 12th Grade**



Ayala Klugmann's nephew, brother, and grandfather with Rav Chaim



Ayala Klugmann's brother with Rav Chaim



Gemilas Chasadim



“לא המדרש הוא העיקר אלא המעשה”. What made Rav Chaim the Gadol Hador is the application of what he learned to his life. He lived and breathed Torah. He was Torah in its very embodiment. From the moment that Rav Chaim woke up in the morning, he knew that there were hundreds of people who were anxious to meet with him. Rav Chaim was more than incredibly generous with his time. He knew what people needed, oftentimes, more than they may have known themselves. He deeply and genuinely cared about everyone and their needs.



Rav Chaim with Rav Moshe Bamberger and his son

“Prior to his bar mitzvah, I brought my son to visit Rav Chaim zt”l, to receive his holy blessing. Rav Chaim generously gave us of his precious time, and was in good spirits. I mentioned to Rav Chaim that we are leviim. With smiling eyes, he looked at my son, and asked him if he has a good voice. He then continued to utter words that still fill me with emotion each time I recall them-- “May you merit to sing shirah with the leviim in the Beis HaMikdash...”. Never would I imagine that Rav Chaim would not lead us to greet Moshiach, but alas, it is so.”

🕊 Rav Moshe Bamberger,

Father of Frieda (10th Grade) and Golda Bamberger (11th Grade)



“Around twenty-two years ago, I was working on writing my first sefer, “The Laws of Tzedakah and Maaser”, and I had a number of questions that I was unable to resolve. I decided to write a letter to Rav Chaim with four of my question. Around two months later, I received an aerogram from Rav Chaim with three words written inside of it-- “כשתהיה בא” תיכנס”-- when you are in Eretz Yisroel come to my house. A few months later, I was zoche to be in Eretz Yisroel and I, of course, went to Rav Chaim. Once I showed Rav Chaim the letter, he smiled and said “Uh! This is my handwriting!”, as he motioned to his gabbai to pull over a chair. I sat down and Rav Chaim gave me close to twenty minutes of his time where he let me ask all of my questions and he spoke to me in learning. It made such an indelible impression on me.”

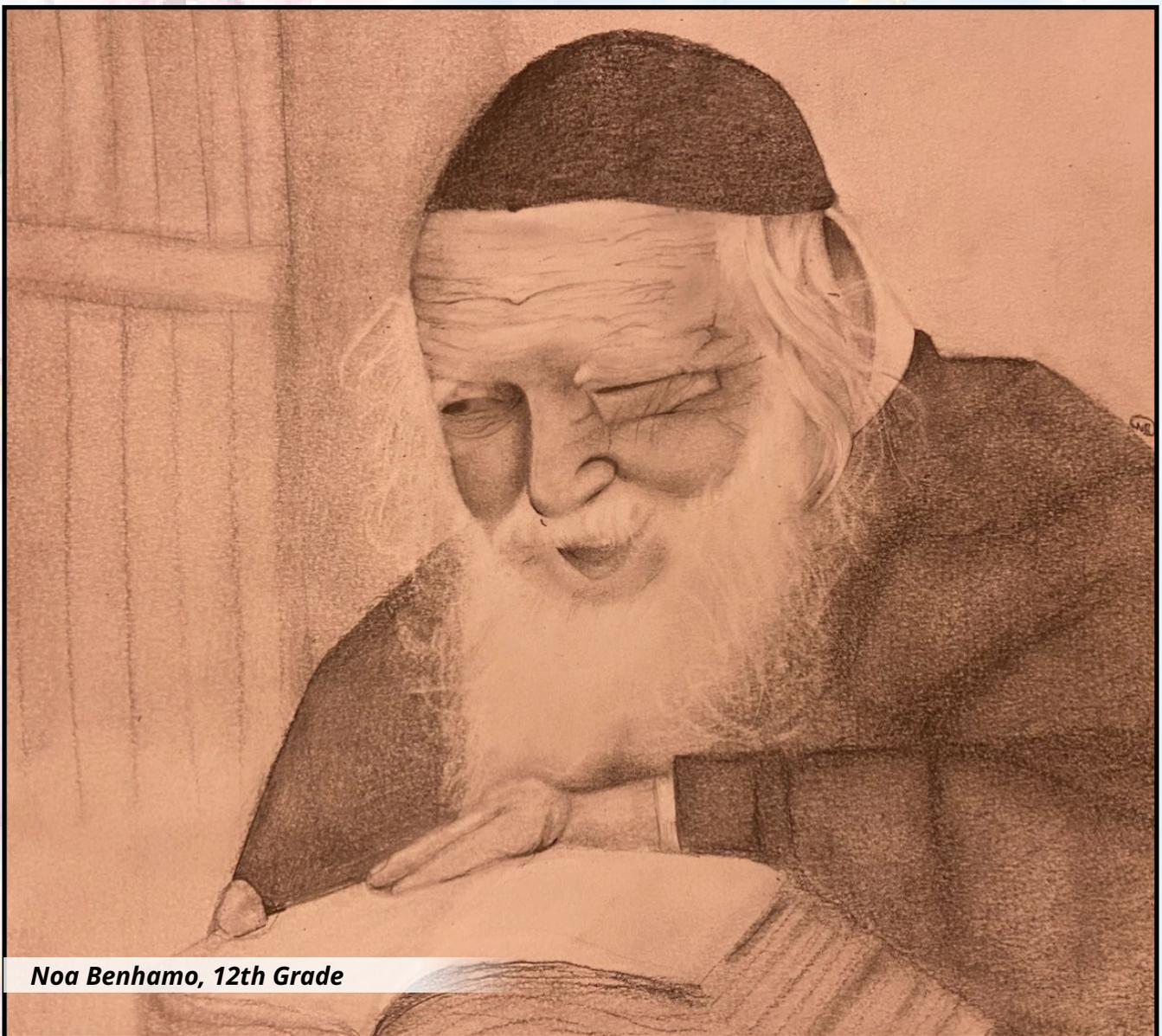
🕊 Rabbi Taub - 12th Grade Rebbi

Top: Rabbi Taub with Rav Chaim zt”l

Bottom: Rabbi Taub’s wife with Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky a”h



"מגיד שיציאת צדיק מן המקום עושה רושם, שבזמן שהצדיק בעיר הוא הודה הוא זיוה הוא הדרה, יצא משם פנה הודה פנה זיוה פנה הדרה" Rashi comments on Yaakov's departure from Be'er Sheva. When a tzaddik leaves his city, it leaves an imprint, because while the tzaddik was in the city, he was its beauty, its splendor, and its majesty. Upon his departure, it all left with him. When our gadol hador, the Sar HaTorah, HaGaon HaRav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l, left this temporal world and entered the Olam Haemes, we lost beauty, we lost splendor, we lost majesty. Rav Chaim's Torah will last forever and we will cherish it. The impact that Rav Chaim made on so many lives will remain too.



Noa Benhamo, 12th Grade



Lily Perl's grandfather with Rav Chaim recently



Shandy Kohn's father with Rav Chaim zt"l



Fayga Tziporah and Sara Pinczower's father and brothers with Rav Chaim



Bailey Schuckman's grandfather, father, and brothers with Rav Chaim

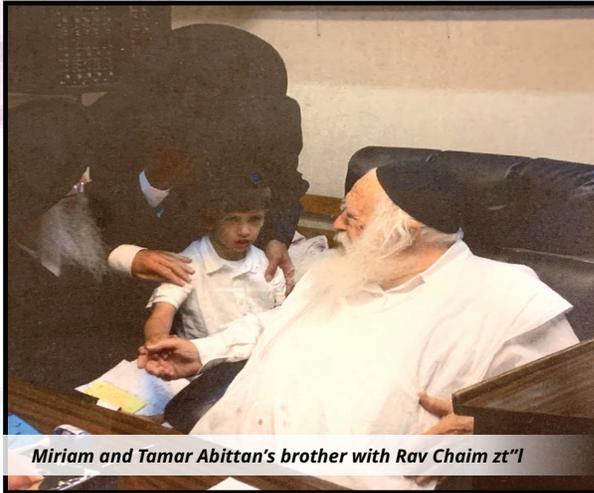


Rav Chaim with Adina Bistrizky's sister's Tehillim name



This picture taken in the 1930's near Tzfat portrays young Rav Chaim with my great grandfather Nochum Yoel and his father Rav Chaim Yaakov Halpern collecting the first esrog which was used to plant the esrogei Chazon Ish (Rav Chaim's Uncle) which is now a franchise of the elite esrogim used by many gedolim.

בית המדרש הגדול של רבי חיים ז"ל



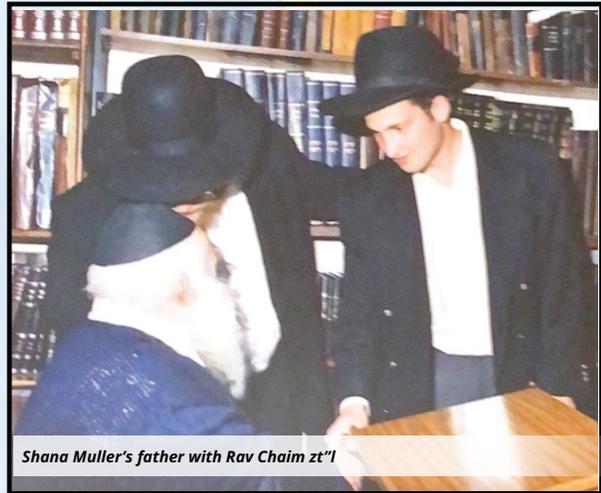
Miriam and Tamar Abittan's brother with Rav Chaim zt"l



Gitty Weinberg's father davening vasikin with Rav Chaim on Sukkos



Shana Muller's mother visiting with Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky a"h



Shana Muller's father with Rav Chaim zt"l



Rav Chaim writing in the Sefer Torah of Ahuva Singer's father



The Yanofsky brothers with Rav Chaim zt"l



Lela Rudman's brother with Rav Chaim zt"l



מרן ר"חיים קניבסקי שליט"א עם פיני לרנר נ"י

י"ח כסלו תשס"א

אנצ"ל 25 2010

Bracha Lewittes's uncle with Rav Chaim zt"l



Leah Borenstein's uncle and cousins with Rav Chaim zt"l



Lily Perl's cousin getting his hair cut for his upsherin by Rav Chaim zt"l this February



Rav Chaim with Renee Reichmann's little brother Chaim



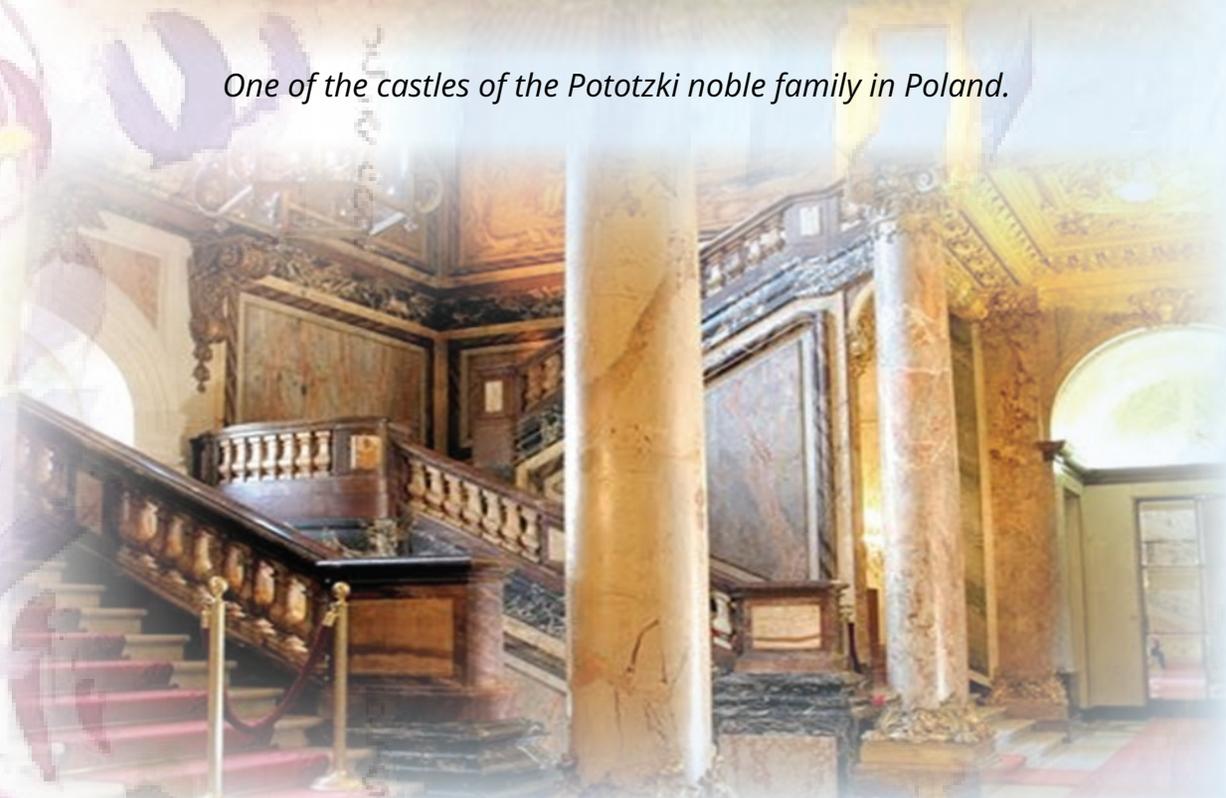
Rav Chaim with Rikki and Estee Blachorsky's father and brother

MOADIM MASTER PIECES

Glimpses of our Gedolim, Masters of our Mesorah



One of the castles of the Pototzki noble family in Poland.



Interior of one of the Pototzki family residences in Europe. Avraham ben Avraham realized that material wealth in this world is meaningless in comparison to the spiritual wealth that one receives in the World to Come for Torah and mitzvos.



Avraham ben Avraham



Avraham Ben Avraham, (1700-1749) is the quintessential Ger Tzedek, because he left all behind and accepted the Torah with the purest intentions.

His story:

Valentin Potocki was born into nobility. His father, an aristocratic landowner, was considered the wealthiest man in Poland. Potocki was restless, which prompted him to begin a spiritual journey. Ultimately he converted to Judaism, leaving his family's incredible wealth behind. He fled to Amsterdam to officially convert, since conversion was punishable by death. From Amsterdam, he traveled to Vilna and settled there. At this point, his parents were frantically searching for his whereabouts. Avraham was worried at the thought of being apprehended and consulted with the Vilna Gaon. He advised him to move to the smaller town of Ilya, where he was less likely to be discovered. In Ilya, Avraham ben Avraham sat and learned Torah for hours each day. There was a boy who would come to the shul and disturb the men who were learning. One day, Avraham rebuked this boy, and he ran to tell his father. Out of anger, his father betrayed Avraham to the Bishop of Vilna, and Avraham was identified and arrested. The court gave him a choice; return to Christianity, or be burnt at stake. Avraham ben Avraham refused to leave the life of Torah and was brought to the stake on Shavuot. As he was about to be burned, he sang a most stirring song, which has been sung for generations.

We are fortunate to have been born with the gift of Torah, let us renew our love for it at this special time of year.

🕯️ *Frieda Bamberger*

What's in a Name?
It's All in a Name!

Discovering insight into the lives of Naomi and Rus

*Adapted from the 10th Grade name projects
under the leadership of Mrs. Shaindy Eisenberg*



Rina Rosenberg, 12th Grade

Naomi

I was given the name Naomi/ נעמי- named after נעמי from מגילת רות. My parents did not have a specific reason for naming me this other than that they loved the name and wanted me follow in her iconic ways.

“... the name of his wife was נעמי because her actions were pleasant.” The word נעמה-(pleasant) is the root of the name נעמי . Naomi acted in ways that portrayed the essence of her name.

“... why are you calling me Naomi, when Hashem has dealt harshly with me (and not pleasantly)?” We learn that Naomi returned back to בית לחם and the people of the city were confused, as it says “הזאת נעמי?”. Rashi explains that they were shocked by the way her transformation, and assumed that because she left Eretz Yisroel she had become a completely different person. According to the Medrash, she was known to be a very pleasant, refined, and beautiful woman, just like her name נעמי, and their surprise seems to have been justified. “הזאת נעמי, שהיו בנות כל בית לחם משתמשות. זו היא נעמי שהיתה מגנה את הפז ביפיה”

They were completely shocked by the way she now looked, compared to the pleasant, refined person that they remembered. (רות פרק א, תרא)

When Naomi says that Hashem dealt harshly with her, it can be understood connected to this. Naomi did not have an easy life at all, which is quite apparent to us from the very beginning of the Megillah. The Megillah starts off by stating that נעמי lost her husband and was left with her two sons, who then got married and died as well.

“וַיָּמָת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ אִישׁ נַעֲמִי וַתִּשָּׂאָר הָיָא וְשְׁנֵי בָנָיָהּ וַיָּמָתוּ גַם־שְׁנֵיהֶם מִחֲלוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן וַתִּשָּׂאָר הָאִשָּׁה מִשְׁנֵי יְלָדֶיהָ וּמְאִישָׁהּ”

From here it could seem as if her life was already falling apart- and yet only more and more challenges arose. Obviously these challenges had a big impact on the way that she looked- because hardships tend to wear people out and grief sometimes allows a person to lose track of the importance of caring for oneself. We can now understand where her נעימות (pleasantness) has gone and why the people of Bais Lechem were so shocked to see her, because her hardships had transformed her pleasant spirit into bitterness.

However, this was not the end for Naomi. Although her life had hit quite a difficult patch, her emunah and נעימות never left her completely. As her devoted mother-in-law, Naomi played a large role in helping Rus become an עבד ה' and is therefore credited as the mother of a new son, who eventually bore Dovid Hamelech. Many meforshim comment on the fact that Naomi was cited as the birth mother, when in reality the mother was Rus. Ibn Ezra explains that it was as if she had a new son. “כמו ויהי לה” The Torah Temimah expands and explains that he was called her son because of his upbringing. Naomi was a very involved grandmother, sharing in the upbringing of this child, it was like she bore the child herself.

Through the zchuyos of Naomi, and her everlasting emunah and constant kindness, Dovid Hamelech was born. If not for the help and support and love of Naomi, Rus wouldn't have had the chance to convert and become the future mother of Dovid Hamelech. The essence of Naomi's name really shines through even in the darkness and she remains a person of pure נעימות.

☺ Naomi Bistrisky

Rus

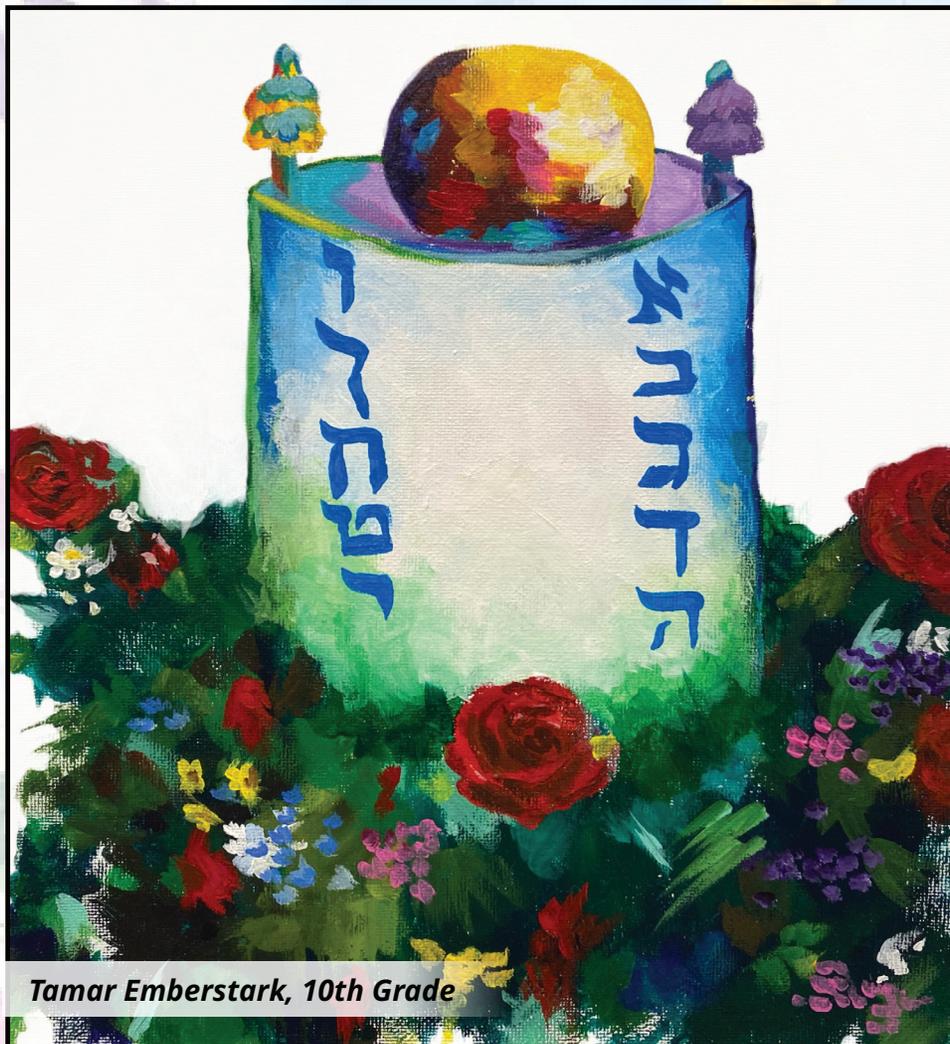
In (14b) בַּבַּיְתָא בְּתַרְיָא, the Gemara states the question of why did Rus have the name she did? The gemara answers that from the word "רוּת" comes the word רוּוה which means to praise. When we look back at the life of David, we're most blown away by the beautiful way in which he sang shira to Hashem, specifically through Tehillim. No matter what was going on in David's life, through pain and joy, he always praised Hashem. How appropriate is it that the grandmother of David Hamelech has the name "praise?"

The Zohar brings down the reason that Rus has her name. When switched around, the letters of the name רוּת spell תוּר which means "dove". Just like a dove is permitted to be sacrificed on a mizbe'ach, so too, Rus was allowed to enter Klal Yisroel, even though she was from the land of Moav. She was allowed to convert because she is a woman and only men from Moav have the prohibition of converting.

The Vilna Gaon adds a fascinating point. The gematria of Rus is 606, and that's how many mitzvos she was given when she converted. Before she converted, she was responsible for the שבע מצוות בני נח, so once she converted she was responsible for 606 more because $606+7=613$.

Names are hardly just a way of identifying someone; they are a glimpse into the essence and destiny of that person. This is not confined to Torah personalities such as Rus who were defined by their names, but rather the mission of every Jewish person, male or female, is captured in a name. Thank you, Mrs. Eisenberg, for teaching me in such a way, that when I leave our classroom, I take so much more than I came with - I take the knowledge, hashkafa and warmth with me.

🕊️ Golda Bamberger



Tamar Emberstark, 10th Grade



Rena Kutner, 11th Grade



A family wedding, Grandma is seated all the way on the left.

In Tribute to Grandma, a"h

Claire Lichter

הינדא בת יקותיאל פנח

As our family settles around the table, there is shuffling back and forth, the screeching of chairs on the dining room floor, and chatter, lots of it. In one chair the occupant is always the same. Grandma sits at the head of our table, like a queen surrounded by her court. The conversation

floats around her, but her attention is focused on her great-grandchildren. She pays special attention to the things they are eager to share with her, projects, songs, and smiles.

That is the picture that will forever be in my mind when I remember Grandma. When she spoke to us we felt as if we were the only people in the room, like only we mattered. She was attentive to each and every one of us, no accomplishment was too small, no problem too big. When we called on Fridays, she wanted to hear every little detail of our week, as if she herself needed to experience it. To us, Grandma was heavenly; she was the sun, moon, and stars, the axis around which our family revolved.

Grandma taught by example, and we learned countless lessons from her. She taught us how to really do hachnosas orchim. Grandma had a sweetness to her, and she was always looking to help anyone and everyone that came her way. Every person who walked through her door, grandchild or stranger, was greeted warmly with a smile and told to make himself at home. Including overnight accommodations if a place to stay was needed. Regardless of how well she knew him or not. Grandma also modeled for us unwavering emunah in Hashem; she truly believed that everything happened for a reason, and was therefore able to accept all that life dealt her calmly, with a smile. And of course, she taught us how to make the best almond coffee cake ever. Or tried to. It was one of her signature desserts, and no one can make it as well as she did.

But the biggest lesson of all was her love of Torah and the care she showed when performing each and every mitzvah. Grandma recited brachos every single morning before eating breakfast, even when it was difficult to get the words out. She lit shabbos candles every week even when her hands were trembling. It was truly a privilege to watch her perform these mitzvos; one could see the joy in her eyes.

And we continue to see that joy in the many treasured memories we have of her. Grandma will forever remain an integral part of our lives.

🕊️ *Elky Schwartz and Ruki Schwartz*



Rashi Bell, 10th Grade

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Mrs. Tsivia Yanofsky
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Mrs. Estee
Friedman-Stefansky
Principal, General Studies

Faculty Advisor
Mrs. Sara Tandler

Proofreader
Rebbetzin Peshi Neuburger
Mrs. Avigael Rosenszweig

Layout Advisor
Mrs. Dena Szpilzinger

Layout Design
Zahava Schwartz

Editors
Frieda Bamberger
Ayelet Hershkowitz
Michali Rosenberg
Elky Schwartz
Chavi Weiner

Front Cover Design
Tamar Eberstark

Back Cover Design
Zahava Schwartz

Background Design
Ellie Trapido

