

MAKING TIME for Torah

■ Batsheva Browd



*Rabbi Levy Yitzchak Browd (father),
redeeming Menachem Mendle from the kohen,
Issac haKohen Kogan.*

Things were very busy once we were home, planning the sholom zochor and bris and checking in with the mohel a few times. Boruch Hashem, the bris was on time. It was a Shabbos bris into which my mother put much effort and love, preparing everything herself, and the outcome reflected it. It was a truly memorable occasion.

There was no time to waste, and immediately after the bris we started preparing for the pidyon haben, which was to take place only three weeks later. My mother outdid herself for this event as well. She also took tons of

I was so excited when I was pregnant with our first child. I tried to be so careful with everything I saw, heard, read and ate. I remember his birth fondly as well. My son surprised us when he was born three weeks early on a Shabbos afternoon, Yud Tes Tamuz, 5766, at 4:04 p.m. But it was a beautiful birth and I felt great afterwards. He weighed 6.7 pounds at birth, a healthy and alert baby. My sister Chanie was an incredible help to me throughout. She came to the hospital with me, helped me through labor, and then stayed with me the rest of Shabbos to keep me company.

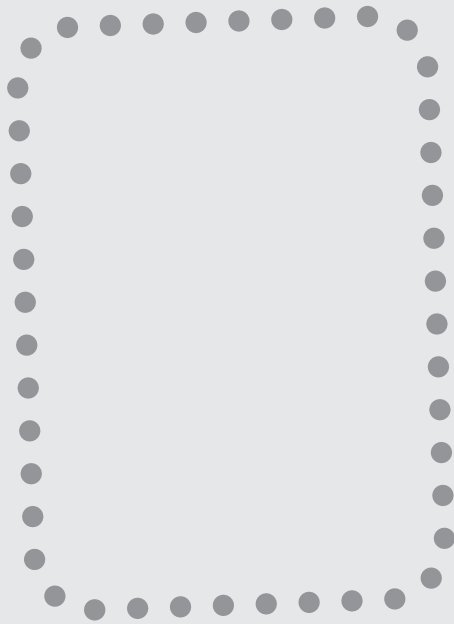
pictures, which I will forever treasure.

After all the excitement of the first month, things finally started to settle down. The stress of planning the next event was over. Life as a new mommy was demanding, but I was very happy.

Sadly, only a short week later, exactly a week after his pidyon haben, my son Menachem Mendle suddenly passed away. His passing came as a sudden, heart-wrenching jolt. In my mind I was imagining his opsherenish, bar mitzvah and his teenage years. I even braced myself for his teen rebellion.

Now none of this would ever be.

The week of shiva was a blur, with so many people coming to show their love and lend us their emotional support. It was odd being the mourner that other people came to comfort. Often a whole family sits shiva together, and they share their favorite memories of the times they had with the niftar. Our situation was different. We were a young couple, without many memories of our one-month-old son to share, and with our hopes for the future forever altered. We were no longer a father and mother. Or maybe we were, but what does it mean to be a parent with no child? My grief was compounded by



If we could
no longer take
care of him
physically,
we thought,
at least let us
take care of
him spiritually.

the physiological changes I was going through after childbirth.

However, I felt closer to Hashem than I had ever felt before. I was able to cope with the loss only by recognizing Hashem's total control of the world and the fact that I don't see the Big Picture. My husband and I tried to recognize the hashgochoh protis in Menachem Mendle's short life. He was a pure neshomoh, whose shlichus in this world had been accomplished quickly. These realizations were not easy in coming, but they were necessary before we could reach the stage of acceptance.

Our son passed away on Chof Zayin Menachem Av, which is the acronym for zoch, pure. Every milestone he reached was on a yoma depagra, a significant day on the Chassidishe calendar: Yud Tes Tamuz (the date of the Friediker Rebbe's bris) was his birthday, Chof Vov Tamuz (a day of nitzochon for the Baal Shem Tov) was his bris, and Chof Menachem Av (the Rebbe's father's yahrtzeit) was his pidyon haben. His life was full of mitzvos from the moment of his birth: negel vasser, Modeh Ani, Shema, the twelve psukim, his bris and pidyon haben.

As my husband and I sat shiva, the question was on our minds: What

could we establish to continue Menachem Mendle's life in some way? It's known that the neshomoh has deep nachas from mitzvos done in its merit in this world. If we could no longer take care of him physically, we thought, at least let us take care of him spiritually.

One of our visitors told us that it says in Sifsei Kohen al HaTorah that a bchor is particularly connected to the inyon of limud Torah. My husband and I looked at each other. What hashgochoh protis that he should say that! We had privately discussed the concept of starting an organization dedicated to the strengthening of Limud Torah. Now we knew that it was an inyon linked with Menachem's neshomoh.

Making a mitvza (campaign) out of Torah learning is something the Rebbe encouraged. One of the reasons he did so is because the study of Torah refines one's outlook on life to one of morality, respect, and truth.

And so Yagdil Torah was born. For Menachem Mendle it was a rebirth, the start of a different life. All births are difficult, and this was no exception. So much goes into arranging and organizing before you begin to see the fruits of your labor. We started a few months after Menachem's petiroh with shiurim in apartment buildings. Qualified



Menachem Mendle just before his pidyon haben, 20 Menachem

When a wife sends her husband out with an eager and joyful mien, it will give him peace of mind to concentrate fully on his studies.

kollel yungeleit gave (and still give) shiurim in different apartments each week. In the subsequent months, many types of shiurim in both Nigleh and Chassidus were arranged in homes and suls. B”H, since its inception, Yagdil Torah has organized hundreds of shiurim given by world-renowned speakers. We have also published the first and second edition of The Crown Heights Shiur Directory, started a Chavrusa Pairing System, and compiled educational and inspirational pamphlets, as well as many other programs. Every time Yagdil Torah is instrumental in someone’s learning, I know my son Menachem is having hano’oh from it.

My husband arranges most of the shiurim and programs and fundraises for all our peulos. I usually work behind the scenes. However, I feel that it’s imperative for women to be made aware that they are a central part of their husbands’ learning. They can influence whether their husbands learn a

lot or a little. When a woman encourages and enables her husband and sons to learn, she earns a reward too, and it’s greater than theirs!

The Rebbe taught that Rebbetzin Chana went out of her way, above and beyond her role as a wife, to make ink, so that Reb Levik’s Torah could be saved for posterity. So, too, we should have that level of dedication for Torah study, to the point of mesirus nefesh. (Taken from a Shabbos Farbrengen commemorating Rebbetzin Chana’s yahrtzeit in the year 5746)

The mesirus nefesh that is expected of us can take many forms. For one woman it may be that she is willing to forgo her husband’s help in the house for an evening or two a week so he may attend a shiur, or learn early in the morning in a bais medrash with a chavrusa. The Rebbe said that when a businessman stops what he is doing to keep his set time for learning Torah, he should be fully involved and absorbed in it, and not let his other responsibili-

Packed house shiurim organized by Yagdil Torah



ties divert his attention. When a wife sends her husband out with an eager and joyful mien, it will give him peace of mind to concentrate fully on his studies.

Another form of mesirus nefesh that the Rebbe suggested in a Sichoh on Purim 5717 is that women cut down their demand for luxuries, so men will be less pressured at work and will have more time to study Torah. “It is the woman’s responsibility to inform her husband that they are trivial and to strongly demand that he not forgo on matters of Torah and mitzvos for insignificant things.” In a similar vein: “As a result of our many sins, this disease has found its way into the houses of Anash. A husband is required to completely devote his entire being towards bringing in a livelihood, not for



bread to eat and clothing to wear, G-d forbid, but in order that one is able to show off to a neighbor. For this, the husbands are not afforded the ability of being able to study Torah!” The strong language used conveys the Rebbe’s view that Torah study is paramount and that it is up to us, noshim tzidkonios, to ease the burden on our husbands so they may increase their time for learning.

I truly hope that in the zechus of the Torah learning done in his merit, we will soon be reunited with our son Menachem with the coming of Moshiaich, may it happen right away.

Postscript: Boruch Hashem we have a beautiful baby boy, Shneur Zalman Aharon, who turned one year old this past summer. He gives us much nachas.



If you would like to donate to Yagdil Torah and help its good works to grow in zchus of Menachem Mendle, please send your tax deductible donation to 383 Kingston Avenue, Room 188, Brooklyn, N.Y., 11213.

Yagdil Torah would like to express our thanks to all our workers, volunteers, and donors.