



Binah Interviews the N'shei Chabad Newsletter

What is the N'shei Chabad Newsletter, and when was it born?

The *N'shei*, as it is affectionately called, is a 100-page women's magazine, founded in 1976, that comes out five times per year. It is created and run by Lubavitcher women, though it gladly accepts submissions and welcomes readers from all Jewish communities.

Who subscribes to the N'shei, and why?

Lubavitchers in 38 countries receive it, but many non-Lubavitchers love it as well. "I can't get enough of the raw honesty in the *baal teshuvah* stories," says one Boro Park

consumer. "And when the *baalas teshuvah* grow and change, I find myself taking the journey with her and I grow and change too, at least a little bit."

"The stories of how the *Shluchim* [Chabad emissaries] live are mesmerizing," says a Lakewood loyalist.

"The *N'shei* doesn't shy away from difficult topics, and yet it addresses them with dignity and good taste," says a Cincinnati subscriber.

What kind of "difficult topics" are you referring to?

We've addressed the pros and cons of teaching

Chumash in Yiddish to English-speaking children," replies *N'shei* editor Chaya Shuchat. "We have discussed child abuse... immunizations ... home birth, birthing center, or hospital birth... whether it makes sense to stop someone on the street and say something, if she is dressed immodestly. We've interviewed Boro Park's star La Leche League leader Rivky Schwartz, whose controversial views about kimpatorn heims brought in dozens of angry or supportive letters to the editor."

Some have accused the *N'shei* of airing dirty laundry in public, but the editors feel that sweeping problems under the rug can only make them worse. (And they apologize for mixing metaphors.)

Are the Chabad Shluchos and baalei teshuvah the only ones whose stories are told in the magazine?

Far from it! We search for the unexpected, the unsung heroines among us. The *N'shei* interviewed the venerable Riva Pevzner, whose elderly mother and mother-in-law both lived with her and her family for 20 years, in a small apartment. We interviewed Elsa Macks, who is living with a diagnosis of terminal cancer – yet living with joy! We told the story of Sara Lejderman, who only found out she was Jewish at the age of 16. And of course the *N'shei* is most proud of the many survivors of Nazism and communism whose stories are now documented because of their interviews in the *N'shei Chabad Newsletter*.

What's in the upcoming Chanukah issue?

Our Chanukah issue contains an interview with Annie Lehmann of West Bloomfield, MI, who raised Jonah, her autistic son, to adulthood. "Jonah has managed to speak volumes, without saying a word," says Annie. Chaya Nesha Stoll tells the story of how she finally worked up the strength to leave her non-Jewish husband, after 25 years of marriage to a man she calls "one of the *chasidei umos ha'olam*." Hindi Kanarfogel gives us an inside look at what it's really like to have triplets. Patrick Salkovsky describes the shock of his life: the moment he found out, after his mother's death,

what she was doing with the rent she had charged him every month, for years.

What are people's favorite parts of the N'shei Chabad Newsletter?

"People look for the regular features; they're like old friends who write you a long, newsy letter five times a year," says Nechama Ozick, readers' forum editor. "They love Open House because it allows them to vent. Where else can you air your pet peeve and have several thousand people take it seriously, if only for a few minutes? I Was Touched is for those beautiful things that happen that you just can't keep to yourself. Esther Etiquette answers everything from what to do if your mother-in-law keeps coming in without knocking to the

question of who should clean up a mess in the alley between the houses. Rabbi Aron Moss answers questions that non-Torah-observant people might ask you, such as, "Is the hand-washing before meals some ancient form of hygiene?" and, "Isn't it better to focus on the present, rather than dreaming of some future utopia?"

How does one go about getting the N'shei?

It is sold in stores in Crown Heights, or by subscription. To subscribe, call Esther Sosover at 718.771.7648, or go to nsheichabadnewsletter.com.

Parting words?

"We are especially grateful to our volunteers, women like Dvora Lakein, who does feature

stories for us, and Esther Rochel Spielman, who has been taking care of subscriptions for over three decades," says Rische Deitsch, senior editor. "Bluma Schneider has been our mazel-tov lady, collecting the mazel tovs, for almost as long. And Raizel Mangel, Leah Klein and Chana Shloush make up our editorial advisory board – we couldn't manage without them. Volunteer photographers Devorah Goldstein and Chana Sara Newfield make our magazine interesting and beautiful. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, zy" a, is our inspiration. We all feel we work for him, that this magazine is a shlichus. When in doubt on any topic, we ask, 'What has the Rebbe said or written on this topic?' and we usually have our answer. It's powerful!"



Photo credit: Devorah Goldstein