

WINNIE GOURARIE

A LEGEND IN HER OWN TIME

PART II

Part I of Winnie Gourarie's memoir was published in the Nissan 2018 *N'shei Chabad Newsletter*. If you missed it, you can still read it on nsheichabadnewsletter.com/archives.

STRANGEST WEDDING

After my engagement to Shalom Ber Gourarie, we were separated for almost a year as he waited for a visa to travel to South Africa. When he finally got his visa, my parents pulled off a wedding for a thousand people in three weeks. We were married on Yud Beis Tammuz – June 22, 1956. The *chuppah* was in the Chief Rabbi's garden. There were many gate crashers because nobody had seen a *frum* wedding before. The Rabbi's garden never recovered! At the reception there was separate seating and many people thought I had lost my mind. It was a culture shock for the Jewish community in South Africa.

The morning after we were married I made my husband an omelette. He looked at it for a long time and asked me if I would have "*faribel*" (if I would be offended) if he didn't eat it. I literally didn't know how to make a proper cup of tea! But I learned on the job.

The first Rosh Hashanah after we were married we

davened at Adas Yeshurun—the German-Jewish shul. My father felt that the shul where he was the Rabbi would be a bit of a culture shock for my husband, with the *chazzan* and the choir and all the pomp and ceremony, so he sent us to Adas Yeshurun.

The people there were very proud of their little Beis Medrash, so before Yom Tov they took us on a tour to show us how cleverly their shul was built with every little detail in mind. There was a special place at every seat for a *lulav* and an *esrog*, and from every seat a much lower seat could be pulled out from the bottom to sit on for Tishah B'Av.

I remember my husband being horrified. "We throw away our *kinus* after Tishah B'Av," he said "because we await Moshiach any day and we will no longer have Tishah B'Av, and here they build in a permanent structure to last for years." We had a good laugh.

They certainly had different *minhagim* but they

Baking challah with my daughter Chana in Johannesburg's Chabad House kitchen for the brochure for the beautiful "Jewish Women's Week" organized by Rochel Goldman (1984).



were genuinely *frum* and a beautiful community. Many of their congregants became our very best friends.

SHLICHUS IN CAPE TOWN

My husband's visa stipulated that he had to be a Rabbi and a teacher for seven years. At first we lived in Johannesburg, where he learned *shechitah* and got *kabbalah* from a wonderful *shochet* in Johannesburg. He then got a position as the Rabbi of the Chabad shul in Cape Town. So started our 15 years of *shlichus* in Cape Town.

Our *shlichus* in Cape Town was not easy at the beginning. I was only 22, I didn't have any friends in Cape Town and I missed my parents and my sister terribly. To make a phone call from Cape Town to Johannesburg one had to be connected through the operator and sometimes it took almost a day for the call to go through. When my parents called us, everyone in the house would scream, "Come quickly! Come quickly! Johannesburg is on the line!"

There were no *chalav Yisroel* milk products, so we had to travel to a farm to obtain milk. It was an exciting trip for our first child, little Yossi, to watch the milking. The milk was not pasteurized, so I could let part of it sour and I learned to make the most delicious farmer cheese. Our meat came by train from Johannesburg. The *mikvah* at the time did not meet our standards, so in summer I used the sea and in winter we travelled to spring baths 80 miles away.

Slowly we got used to life by the sea. Cape Town is beautiful. We made friends and we started to make a difference in the community. In addition to being the Rabbi of a shul, my husband was also a *shochet* for chickens. I started teaching, first at the Weizman Primary School and then at Ellerslie Girls High School

where I taught Religious Instruction. I slowly learned to cook and we started to entertain. Our home was open to many *meshulachim* and anyone else who needed a place to stay or to eat. We had beautiful Purim *seudos* and *farbrengens* in our home and we gained many overseas friends.

FRUITS OF A GEMARA CLASS

Every Sunday afternoon my husband had a *Gemara* class for teenage boys. Several of the boys from this group keep Torah and *mitzvos* to this day. One boy, Neville (Nachman) Levy, was very keen to go to yeshiva. His parents were non-observant but very cooperative. Together we put him on a boat to England and sent him to Gateshead Yeshiva. He remained there for four and a half years and was then sent with a few of his friends to London to help strengthen a new yeshiva that had just been started there. In London he met Lubavitcher *bachurim* and found his own way to 770. He married Rochel Roness from Montreal and after a few years they moved to Johannesburg. They raised a beautiful family, many of whom are successful *shluchim* in Australia and America.

The boys in my husband's *Gemara shiur* often came to our home. On Shavuot night when they were learning all night, they would tiptoe very quietly to the kitchen to eat cheesecake so as not to disturb me, but I enjoyed hearing them. One of these boys was Derrick Le Roith. He was the cutest boy and very brilliant. My husband called him Dovidl. Through my husband's *shiurim* he developed a great love for Yiddishkeit and I believe he encouraged his parents to *kasher* their home. They did not, however, allow him to build a *sukkah*. I remember how upset he was that he didn't have a *sukkah*. I

think my husband tried to convince his parents to build one, but he wasn't successful.

Derrick really wanted to go to yeshiva but his parents said that he should first go to university and then make up his mind. After a while the family emigrated to Eretz Yisroel and we lost touch.

Last year, after approximately 55 years, my son Rabbi Michoel Gourarie, who is a *shliach* in Sydney, Australia, got a phone call from Rabbi Tzvi Yaacov Zwiebel, co-director of the Chabad Librescu Jewish Student Centre at Virginia Tech University, asking him if he knew of a Rabbi Shalom Ber Gourarie who lived in Cape Town years ago, and if he is related to him. My son told him yes, that was his father. Rabbi Zwiebel told my son:

"At the university in Virginia there is a professor by the name of Tanya Le Roith, a divorcee with two sons. She is becoming interested in Yiddishkeit and comes to the Chabad Center periodically. Her father, Dr. Derrick Le Roith, a world-renowned endocrinologist, commutes between Eretz Yisroel and Virginia. Last year he and his wife Irit joined their daughter and her family at the communal Pesach *seder* at the Chabad Centre in Virginia. During the evening, Dr. Le Roith was asked to tell his story. He said he was born in Cape Town, South Africa. His parents were not observant, but when he was a teenager he became interested in Yiddishkeit. He had many questions about keeping Torah and *mitzvos* that bothered him. He asked several Rabbis to answer his questions and always got the same answers: 'Because this is what G-d wants!'

"One day a brilliant young mathematician by the name of Aubrey Wolfson, who attended Rabbi Shalom Ber Gourarie's *Gemara* classes, I



1) Wedding of our son Avremi to Dinie Lipskier. 2) Wedding of our oldest son Yossi a"h to Chayala Rubashkin. 3) Wedding of our son Michoel to Dina Zwiebel. 4) My children and grandchildren gather for my 80th birthday party on 9 Kislev, 2014. 5) My grandchildren holding up a cookie replica of my gold bracelet that has a disc for each grandchild, with their name on one side and their date of birth on the other. Each grandchild is holding up the one with his/her name on it. (Their cookie reproduction was a masterpiece!) 6) Wedding of our daughter Chana to Levi Labkowski.

encouraged Derrick to join him at the class. The *shiurim* were an eye opener. Rabbi Gourarie answered all his questions and he slowly became Torah-observant. He still puts on *tefillin* every day. With the help of Rabbi Zwiebel, he organized a bar mitzvah for his grandson who also now puts on *tefillin* every day."

FROM CAPE TOWN TO JOHANNESBURG

My husband, after seven years in the Rabbinate, realized that he was not cut out to be a community Rabbi. He could not take orders from *balabatim* and committees, especially when it came to matters of *halachah* and his high standards of *frumkeit*. For example, in Cape Town Shabbos ends

very late in summer, so they wanted my husband to make Shabbos end earlier so that people would have time to go to the movies! At the *shechitah* they complained that everything was going too slowly. They wanted my husband to give his stamp to the non-Jewish employee so that he could stamp the chickens after they were *shechted*. My husband refused. He said that if he *shechted* a chicken, he would stamp it himself so that there could be no mix-up. And so it went.

Finally, my husband had enough, and left the shul and the *shechitah* in one day. He wanted to go into business and initially thought he would open a bookshop. My mother, who was a true *chassidishe* woman, had what she called a *knipele* (loosely translated as

a "knot"). When my father would give her housekeeping money she would always take off a certain amount and save it for a rainy day. This way she accumulated quite a large sum of money. When my husband lost both jobs in one day and was undecided what to do for *parnassah*, she took out her *knipele* and gave him a ticket to travel to the Rebbe to ask his advice. The Rebbe was not happy with the idea of a bookshop, but when our relative Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chitrik offered to teach my husband about pearls and help him start a pearl business in South Africa, the Rebbe gave his *haskamah* and *brachah*. And so S.B.G. Agencies was born in Cape Town.

We also started a shul in our house and the Rebbe himself gave it a name:



Top photo: My husband receiving *kos shel brachah* from the Rebbe, 23 Tishrei, 5747. Bottom photo: My husband with the students of his Gemara shiur. Dr. Derrick Leroith is the young blond boy with glasses, front row, second from right.



Nusach Ha-Ari Congregation. The shul became quite popular, and for Tishrei we even had to rent a hall. We had *minyanim* twice a day and for Shabbosim and Yamim Tovim we prepared beautiful *kiddushim*.

My husband worked very hard at his thriving business and traveled extensively throughout South Africa and overseas. Our children were growing up and we could no longer keep them in public schools. We reluctantly decided to relocate to Johannesburg. I must admit I was rather upset. I had grown to love Cape Town and now had many friends there. It took me a while to get used to Johannesburg again.

But there was certainly an advantage; we were very happy to be with my family and part of a *frum* community. It was a pleasure to be invited out for a meal and to be able to eat!

Our three boys studied at the Johannesburg *cheder* and later attended Yeshivas Toras Emes there, and I ran the ladies' committee.

Through our Yossi's influence, his friends Rabbi Dovid Masinter and Rabbi Dovid Hazdan attended Toras Emes as well. Today they are two of the most prominent *shluchim* in South Africa. Rabbi Dovid Masinter is head of the main Chabad House in Johannesburg and is the mastermind behind "Miracle Drive"—an amazing fundraising network. He inherited his fundraising talents from his mother, who brought in the most expensive and beautiful prizes for the Toras Emes fetes (what Americans would call a Chinese auction). Rabbi Hazdan is rabbi of The Great Park Shul and was the keynote speaker at last year's Kinus Hashluchim. Since this yeshiva was very Litvish, these boys and about five or six others used to come to our house every Shabbos afternoon to learn *Tanya* with my husband.

The *frum* community in Johannesburg in the 1970's and 1980's was united. It didn't matter whether one was Litvish, Yekkish or Chabad. Our children all went to the same *cheder* and the same yeshiva, and we were all friends. When two Rabbis from Adas Yeshurun decided that they wanted to bring ten couples from overseas to start a *kollel* in Johannesburg, Rabbi Koppel Bacher, one of the most prominent Lubavitcher *chassidim* in Johannesburg, gave them the use of his parents' home for ten years and they named the *kollel* after his father, Reb Shaul Bacher. To this day the *kollel* in Johannesburg is called Kollel Yad Shaul. When the *kollel* moved, that house became the premises for the Lubavitch Girls' High School. It was situated around the corner from

where we lived and the girls used to come for swimming lessons in our pool.

There was a *chassidische* shul in Johannesburg and the Rabbi was Rabbi Alter Hillelitz. My father had great respect for him because he said that he was a great *talmid chacham* and a *chossid* of the Friediker Rebbe and of the Rebbe. The shul consisted mainly of elderly people. There were those who felt that the shul needed young blood, so Rabbi Koppel Bacher asked the Rebbe to send a *shliach* to Johannesburg. According to Rabbi Bacher, the Rebbe said to him, "Why do you need a *shliach*? You have yourself and Sholom Ber Gourarie." But Rabbi Bacher insisted and Rabbi Mendel and Mrs. Mashi Lipskar were sent to South Africa.

We were all very excited that finally we were getting young, energetic *shluchim* for Johannesburg. They had a very honorable welcome. My father and mother, my sister and brother-in-law, my husband and I, Rabbi Bacher and several other people were all at the airport. When we watched the baggage going around the carousel my sister, Batya Kurtstag, excitedly said, "Winnie, look, there's her *sheitel* box!"

N'SHEI CHABAD WORK

I became very involved in N'shei Chabad. I started off by giving cookery demonstrations at our home for the ladies of our community. I charged for these demonstrations and the funds went to N'shei Chabad. I very much wanted to be involved with *mitvza neshek* and even managed to persuade Rabbi Shabsi Katz from Pretoria, who had influence in the South African

government at the time, to obtain a permit for us to import candlesticks from America, as they couldn't be made here.

My *shlichus* didn't stop there. I did numerous cookery demonstrations and many, many challah bakes. Every year I would go to the Primary School a week before Rosh Hashanah and teach the graduating class how to bake challah with all the special shapes for Tishrei that my mother learned in Dokshytz.

My mother would bake round challos for Rosh Hashanah as a symbol of completeness. May the year be "round," that is, with nothing missing in it! Challah in the shape of a hand was for the first *seudah* on Erev Yom Kippur to represent our hands open in *tefillos* to Hashem, beseeching Him for a good year. Challos in the shape of a ladder were for the *seudas hamafsekes* before Yom Kippur and for Motzoei Yom Kippur to signify our trust that our *tefillos* have successfully gone up to Hashem

Our younger daughter, our *laatlammetjie* (Afrikaans for late lamb) Chana, was born in Johannesburg. In that place at that time, it was very unusual to have a baby at 40. My son Yossi was already at yeshiva in Kfar Chabad and when he called me to say mazel tov (no one had a private phone, it had to go through the nurses' station), the nurse walked into the room completely bewildered and said, "Mrs Gourarie, there is a man on the phone and he says he is your son!" She couldn't believe I had a son of 17 and yet I was having a baby at nearly 40.

I recommend this to all women of 40 plus. Chana rejuvenated us completely. My husband behaved like a doting grandmother and loved to show off the baby to anyone who wanted to look and I found myself making friends with young mothers.

When Rabbi Nachman Bernhard started the Menorah Primary School, which later became the Torah Academy, my daughter Chana was in pre-school. That very first year they decided to do a small production based on the children's book, *Goldie's Toys Rebel*. As I had a little experience in putting together *cheder* plays I offered to help. I ended up producing the play which we called "Sharing and Caring." Mashi Lipskar wrote very nice lyrics and the production was a roaring success. Quite a few people in the audience enrolled their children in the new school after that night. One of those children was our own Rabbi Ari Shishler, now one of our most successful teachers, educators and lecturers.

From that time I started doing productions every few years at the Primary School and the Girls' High School. Before we had a Girls' High School, the girls from our community attended Beis Yaakov and I helped with their plays as well.

After Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka was *niftar*, Mashi Lipskar and I started a Women's Learning Program called Machon Chai in her memory. It was very successful and on the Rebbetzin's first *yahrtzeit* we had a lavish dinner to launch the program. Women came every Monday night to Chabad House to learn and they browsed in the library during the tea break (what you Americans might call recess). My husband was very supportive all these years. We even had a Ladies' Production one year during the Jewelry Fair and I was not available to help him. He really didn't mind.

FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO CROWN HEIGHTS

Esti, our first daughter, was born on the fifth of Tishrei in Cape Town. We sent her to a public school in



Top photo: Special challah shapes (hands and ladder), the same as my mother used to make in Dokshytz. Bottom photo: Gefilte fish cooked from scratch, at a traditional Friday night dinner demonstration for Jewish Life magazine. (Photo Credit: Jewish Life Magazine)

Cape Town and when we moved to Johannesburg she attended Yeshiva College. She was there for a short while but she really wanted to go to a Lubavitch school. She herself wrote to the Rebbe to ask his opinion about which school she should attend and for a *brachah* that her move should be successful. The Rebbe answered that she should go to either New York or Eretz Yisroel. As the Rebbe put New York first, we decided to send her to Bais Rivkah in New York. Esti was not yet 15 years old and when I think of it today I can't believe that I left her alone ten thousand miles away from home when it was so difficult even to make a phone call. We spoke only Erev Pesach and Erev Rosh Hashanah and we only brought her home once a year for the summer. Travel was not easy in those days; it took a very long time and it was very expensive.

When we came to New York it was Elul and when I asked the secretaries



Right: At one of the productions of Torah Academy Girls School. I am thanking all the wonderful people who contributed to the success of the production. Above, front row: My husband and me with Chana. Back row: Yossy, Avremi, Michoel and Esti.



at 770 for a *yechidus* with the Rebbe they told me that there is no *yechidus* in Elul. I am South African and I keep to the rules so I accepted the fact that there was no *yechidus*. However, when we went to visit our uncle, Rabbi Zalman Gourarie, he asked me if I had yet had *yechidus* with the Rebbe. I answered that I was told that there is no *yechidus* in Elul. He told me that I should write to the Rebbe and say that I have not been to the Rebbe for 19 years and I brought my daughter of 14 to Bais Rivkah, so could the Rebbe please allow us to come in only for a *brachah*? I did so but I did not receive an answer.

The day before I was due to leave for South Africa we had a family wedding and I went to Freeda Kugel for a facial. I had cream on my face when I got a frantic phone call from Mrs. Tema Gourarie. "Winnie, they're looking for you everywhere from the Rebbe's office. Come quickly!" I immediately washed my face and ran to 770 where I met Esti. We arrived

just before *minchah*. Rabbi Groner told us to wait in the foyer and when the Rebbe comes out for *minchah* he will give us a *brachah*. The Rebbe came out, walked right past us and didn't say a word. We were then told to wait until the Rebbe comes back from *minchah* but then the Rebbe did the same thing, walked right past us. But when he reached the door of his office he turned and beckoned to us with his finger and we had the most beautiful *yechidus*. The Rebbe gave me printed material to take back to my husband, my father, Rabbi Nachman Bernhard and Rabbi Koppel Bacher. This was such a beautiful send-off for me. I feel the excitement even today.

Many people were wondering why I managed to get a *yechidus* in the middle of Elul. Some said it was because I was Rabbi Yirmiyahu Aloy's daughter, others said it was because I was Rabbi Shalom Ber Gourarie's wife. My friend Esther Goldman, who was a very smart woman, said it was because I brought a 14-year-old daughter to

Bais Rivkah from so far away and the Rebbe wanted to give me *chizuk*. I think she was right!

When it came to *shidduchim* for Esti, we realized we needed help and guidance, so we asked the Rebbe if we should contact *shadchanim*, whether we should send her to Eretz Yisroel, or perhaps bring her home to South Africa. The Rebbe answered that we should not go to any *shadchanim*, only "*kroivim un yedidim*," family and friends, and she should stay where she was (New York).

Baruch Hashem her friend Shterna Zirkind knew of a young man from Canada where Shterna's brother was a *shliach*. His name was Shimon Fogel.

We knew very little about this *shidduch* but it was soon Tishrei and I had never been to the Rebbe for Tishrei. I asked my husband if we could go and he readily agreed. We took my father with us and off we went to New York. We arrived the day before Erev Rosh Hashanah and the following morning my father and my

husband went to the Rebbe to hand in their *pahn*. I remained at The Crown Palace – then the “five star” hotel in Crown Heights. My father received special treatment by the Rebbe and didn’t have to stand in line so he came back to the hotel very quickly. He was very excited. He took a small bottle of whiskey which he got on the plane out of his pocket and said a loud *mazel tov*. I didn’t understand what he was talking about. I thought maybe someone was getting married that day or maybe someone had just had a baby, but my father said that when he handed in his *pahn* to the Rebbe, the Rebbe had said, “*Shanah tovah u’mesukah un mazel tov oiften shidduch.*” My father was hard of hearing at that time, so I didn’t take it very seriously because there was no *shidduch*. Esti was just dating this young man from Canada. Nothing more.

But when my husband, who insisted on standing in line, came back three hours later with the same story, we realized that that was what the Rebbe had said. We understood that this was the Rebbe’s way of reassuring us that the *shidduch* would happen, but we did not tell Esti the story as we did not want her to make up her mind based on what the Rebbe had said. My husband, who was usually very serious on Rosh Hashanah and spoke very little, was very happy during the Rosh Hashanah meals. Our children could not understand why their father was so jolly.

Eventually, on the 4th of Tishrei, Esti and Shimon wrote in to the Rebbe and received a beautiful *brachah* and *haskamah* for their *shidduch*. And then we told them what the Rebbe had said earlier. A few days later on Erev Yom Kippur, my husband and my father went up to the Rebbe for

lekach and the Rebbe said to both of them individually: “*Mazel tov noch ah mohl far dem shidduch!*”

OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE REBBE AND REBBETZIN

My father was privileged to have *yechidus* many times with the Frieddiker Rebbe and the Rebbe. Many of these encounters have been documented and many letters can be found in the *Igros Kodesh*. I have a video of my father at Dollars when he came to the Rebbe after a trip to Eretz Yisroel. He told the Rebbe that



Speaking at the annual dinner of the Machon Chai Learning Programme.

he had just come from Eretz Yisroel and he brings the Rebbe a *grus* (greeting) from *Anash* in Eretz Yisroel and especially from Kfar Chabad. The Rebbe thanked him warmly and said, “But now you are going back to South Africa. My father-in-law appointed you as a *balebos* [authority] in South Africa, *darft ir praven balebatishkeit* [so you should assert your authority].” I don’t think my father ever did that!

My husband’s brother, Rabbi Noson Gourarie, went to learn in

770 from Eretz Yisroel a year before my husband. The Frieddiker Rebbe did not give permission for both of them to come together. He said that it would be too difficult for their mother to part with both sons at the same time. By the time my husband came to 770 it was already too late to see the Frieddiker Rebbe. It was during the year after the *histalkus* of the Frieddiker Rebbe, the community was small and the Rebbe took personal care of the *bachurim* who came to learn in 770. The Rebbe once saw my husband in the corridor and he told him that he looked pale, so he should go to camp. Everyone knew that my husband was not exactly a camper, but he listened and sat all day in the sun at camp with his *Gemara!*

Once when my father-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Gourarie of Tel Aviv, was in America the Rebbe met him in the foyer of 770. Just then my husband was giving a *shiur* in the *zal* and the Rebbe heard him. He said to my father-in-law, “*Er kocht zich in lernen*” (he is passionate about his learning).

At that time the *bachurim* all went in to the Rebbe on the day of their birthday to receive a *brachah*. When my husband went in, the Rebbe told him to say a *maamar* on his birthday.

My husband had many *yechidusen* with the Rebbe as a *bachur*. We also merited to go in together for *yechidus* a few times. I don’t remember all of them. My husband did most of the talking but one *yechidus* stands out clearly in my mind. At the end of that *yechidus* the Rebbe gave us a *brachah* that we should have *nachas* from all our children and take them all to the *chuppah*. Many years later, in his late 50s, my husband suddenly fainted in the shower. I called our family physician, Dr. Rodney Unterslak, immediately. He came within minutes and on the way

The Frierdiker Rebbe did not give permission for both of them to come together. He said that it would be too difficult for their mother to part with both sons at the same time.

he called the Rebbe's office and an ambulance (there was no Hatzola in those days). My husband was rushed to the hospital and the doctors said his condition was serious. My parents were devastated and everyone was very worried. I was the only one who was not worried at all. I was certain that he would fully recover because our two youngest children, Avremi and

Chana, were not yet married, and the Rebbe had blessed us that we should take all our children to the *chuppah*! After extensive tests it turned out to be a middle ear infection and he was back at work within a few days.

My husband had a custom that he would go to the Rebbe every year for Simchas Torah. One year at the end of Yom Tov the Rebbe handed out

bottles of *mashkeh* to all the *shluchim*. Rabbi Groner told my husband to also go up and receive a bottle of *mashkeh* but my husband refused. He said that he was not an official *shliach* so he's not going up. After the Rebbe finished handing out the bottles of *mashkeh* he turned to Rabbi Groner and asked, "Where is Shalom Ber Gourarie?" My husband then went up and got a bottle of *mashkeh*. The Rebbe told him that when he gets home he should *farbreng* in Cape Town and two other places. He carried out the Rebbe's directive and flew to Cape Town and also went to Pretoria and Springs.

When my husband would go on a business trip in South Africa he would usually go on Monday and return home on Thursday. One time he had an important appointment at the office early on Thursday morning, so he came back on Wednesday night. His custom was that after he would go to shul to *daven* in the morning he

WINNIE'S WISDOM

I think the young generation of today is great. They're intelligent, hardworking and willing to learn. Unfortunately, they are overexposed to media which, of course, is very addictive and not conducive to a *chassidische* lifestyle. In addition, today the yeshivos and seminaries are run like a business. The fees are exorbitant and if one lives in South Africa or Australia the added expense of airline tickets during the year for Pesach, Tishrei, etc., make it almost impossible to afford even in a medium-sized family, let alone a large family. Many parents today are opting to keep their children at home and send them to university or courses so that they can eventually work and earn. This puts the young people at a great disadvantage when it comes to having a proper social life and is a huge problem for *frum* families. Perhaps we

can go back to the way it used to be when yeshivas would fundraise most of the money they needed to operate instead of expecting parents to.

There are a large number of delightful *frum* couples in our community, including some *baalei teshuvah*, who try hard but have little direction. Actual Torah learning is not emphasized enough in our community. People go to a few *shiurim* a week—*shiurim* with catchy titles on all sorts of subjects—but people do not have a commitment to learn Torah from the text. Children need to see their father passionate about Torah study. When parents make sure to learn Torah every day, then the whole atmosphere of the home is changed.

I have very old-fashioned views about marriage. The basis of a truly beautiful Jewish marriage is love and respect for one another. Although I had many interests, my first priority

was my husband. I wanted him to be happy, and he felt the same about me. Today it's a completely different world. Very few couples can manage on one income and it seems both partners have to work. But everything depends on attitude. I once heard a newly married girl say, "I must be crazy to make breakfast for my husband—he can make his own breakfast!" This does not sit well with me. There is nothing wrong with a husband making his own breakfast and even making breakfast for his wife if he has time. But the attitude of each partner being out for himself or herself is a death sentence for a marriage.

My husband was very careful about *tznius*, not only in dress but also about the avoidance of public displays of affection for one's wife. The last three words of the Torah are "*le-einei kol Yisroel*," in front of the eyes of all of Israel. My husband used to say, "*le-einei*

would come home, learn *Chitas*, have breakfast and then go to the office. However, on this particular Thursday morning he was in a hurry, so after *davening* he went straight to the office, taking his *Chitas* from the car into the office with him to learn after his appointment. On his way home that evening he forgot to put the *Chitas* back in the car. Outside our house he was attacked by robbers. He had a large amount of cash on him; they took that. He was screaming when he came to the door.

I was petrified and didn't want to leave the house. Our son Michoel had just gotten married and lived in Crown Heights. I called and asked him to please ask the Rebbe what I should do. The Rebbe asked, "Were the *sefarim* and a *pushke* in the car?" The Rebbe also told Michoel to tell my husband to publicize this *mitvza*.

We all think that having *sefarim* (*Chumash, tehillim and Tanya*) and

a *tzedakah* box in the car is a good thing. We don't realize that they are really a protection! From that time on we tried to influence our customers and friends to be meticulous with this *mitvza* and of course every representative in our business had *sefarim* and a *tzedakah* box in their car.

My husband and I, together with my father and our children, were very lucky to have had the opportunity on many occasions to be in the Rebbe's house and visit the Rebbetzin. It was due to my husband's uncle, Rabbi Zalman Gourarie, who encouraged me to call the Rebbetzin, introduce myself and ask if we can come to visit. I was very nervous the first time we went and I think my husband was too. We rang the bell and the Rebbetzin herself came to the door and with her beautiful smile asked us in, took our coats and made us feel at ease. She led us into the dining room where the table was set as if for royalty—beautiful

dishes, crystal glasses, cakes, fruit, chocolates, ice cream for the children and a large pot of tea. She poured tea for my husband and me and put three spoons of sugar in my husband's tea. He never took sugar in his tea but he drank it all up. The children were offered cakes and ice cream and they all enjoyed some of the delicacies except for our daughter Esti. Esti decided that she was on a diet. To everything that was offered to her by the Rebbetzin she politely said, "No, thank you." I thought my husband was going to faint. However, the Rebbetzin understood young people well. She turned to Esti and said, "Esti, have a strawberry. It has no calories!"

The Rebbetzin spoke to my husband in Yiddish and was very interested to hear about his family whom she knew from Europe. She spoke to me in English and was surprisingly up to date on all the politics in South Africa.

When my son Yossi got engaged

kol Yisroel" is "*sof kol haTorah*." This play on words indicated that when things that are meant to be private are displayed in front of everyone's eyes, it is the end of Torah, *chas v'shalom*. Many people noticed the love and respect we had for each other. But *tznius* was always scrupulously observed.

Tznius is a *mitzvah*. The same way that we try to put up the most beautiful *mezuzos* on our doors and we spend money on the most beautiful *esrog*, we should try to dress and also dress our daughters in beautiful *tzniusdike* clothes so that they can look and feel like the princesses they are.

I have definite views about *shidduchim*. I think that pictures, resumes and conditions should be abolished. I believe that these are causing a great *shidduch* crisis. Some people look wonderful on a photograph and others are not so photogenic. Writing up a perfect resume listing all

of one's "qualifications" for marriage sets up unrealistic expectations. Who can be so perfect as to satisfy all the demands on a resume? Setting conditions for what a spouse must be like, even before the couple have met, is a total waste of time. Even if a match seems perfect on paper, they might not like each other. If a *shidduch* sounds suitable and one has made a few inquiries to make sure that there are no serious health problems and that the prospective partner has good *middos*, the couple should meet. If they like each other, let them work out all the demands and conditions for themselves. The problem is that a lot of these *shidduchim* don't even get to the boy or girl. They don't pass the scrutiny of the parents.

Unfortunately, I have had my fair share of losses and grief in my life. There are many helpful letters of the Rebbe that address this. I have found

it to be a great comfort when we truly believe that Hashem runs the world and He has a plan. There isn't a minute in my day that I don't think about my husband and my beautiful son Yossi *a"h*. I miss them both so much. It is the way of the world for children to lose a parent; for parents to lose a child is unnatural! What helps me cope is focusing on all the beautiful memories and looking at all the beautiful pictures. I keep *davening* for the revelation of Moshiach and I truly believe that his coming is imminent. Who else can sort out this big mess in the world? I keep very busy and active and I have many friends who helped me come back to myself, but I don't mope and cry to everyone. There is a saying: Laugh and the whole world laughs with you but cry and you cry alone. I greatly believe in a positive attitude and I keep on smiling. •

to Chayala Rubashkin, we took them to meet the Rebbetzin. At that time Chayala's father was in partnership with the Liebermans and they produced a brand of tuna called "Lieberman and Rubashkin." The Rebbetzin told Chayala that she eats that tuna and it is "delicious." Chayala couldn't wait to call her father and tell him. The Rebbetzin just knew what to say to everyone. When our youngest daughter Chana was little we were in Crown Heights and only visited the Rebbetzin the day before we left. The Rebbetzin asked me if I still had a lot to do before we left. I answered that I didn't have much to do but I just wanted to buy some chocolates for Chana because at that time we couldn't get good kosher chocolates in Johannesburg. The Rebbetzin stood up and brought a specific box of chocolates for Chana and then the Rebbetzin showed Chana how one wraps a box of chocolates in America. I still have the box.

When Esti was about 19 we visited and the Rebbetzin really took a liking to Esti. When the telephone rang she asked Esti to answer and take a message and before we left she said to Esti, "Pop around." I was quite upset that Esti was too shy and didn't have the courage to do that. The Rebbetzin would never have said that if she didn't mean it. The Rebbetzin loved young people and she would have been happy to see her. But when Esti got engaged she did take her *chassan* to meet the Rebbetzin and we later heard from Uncle Zalman who spoke to the Rebbetzin every day that she was very impressed.

I learned a few Russian customs by visiting the Rebbetzin. In South Africa when you are served tea you wait for the hostess to start drinking the tea before you drink. Apparently in Russia the host waits for the visitor

to start. Until this clicked in my mind, we all drank cold tea! In South Africa when one receives a gift one opens it immediately but that is not the custom in Russia. I once brought the Rebbetzin a gift, an embroidered container for rolls, and I wanted to show her how it works so I asked her permission to open it and show her. After I finished showing her she said, "How French."

In 1987, when a group of young *shluchim* came to South Africa, the Rebbetzin sent me four boxes of chocolates with them—two *milchig* and two *pareve*. They kept these boxes in their hand luggage and delivered them on their way from the airport. That night I called the Rebbetzin to say thank you. She was very animated and we spoke for quite a while. She was happy that the chocolates got to me so quickly and she said, "You can eat the milchig ones—they're *chalav Yisroel*," as if I would think that the

Rebbetzin would send me anything else! At the end of the conversation she said to me, "Why didn't you come for Tishrei? It was so *freilach* here." I answered that it was not possible for us to have come that year but we would *im yirtzeh Hashem* come next Tishrei and it would be even more *freilach*. She just laughed. She knew she wouldn't be there.

That year on Chof Beis Shvat I got a call from the secretary at our office. "Mrs. Gourarie, is there something wrong with Mr. Gourarie? This morning he got a call from overseas and he was very sad. Two hours later he got another call from overseas and he was very happy. What's going on?" What was going on was that we were blessed with the very first Chaya Mushka, born to our children Michoel and Dina two hours after the Rebbetzin was *niftar*. She was named in the Rebbe's house the very next morning. ❀



"Working with Winnie Gourarie on this feature was an honor and a pleasure for all of us on staff. We thank her sincerely for the *zchus*, and for her impressive patience and cooperation with our endless questions and requests." - Rische Deitsch (R) of the N'shei Chabad Newsletter.