

You Be The Judge

IZZY KALMAN

Izzy Kalman (L) in Lubavitcher Yeshiva around 1966, with Shmuel Loewenbein.



WHEN I look back at my decades with the N'shei Chabad Newsletter, one of the things I'm proudest of is getting **Izzy Kalman** into more Lubavitcher homes and schools. His method has impacted many children for the good, turning tears to smiles. I have seen it with my own eyes. Through role play, he teaches them how to de-escalate hostilities instead of escalating them, and since everyone has hostilities aimed at them during the course of daily life, this is a priceless skill for everyone throughout life. Instead of "zero tolerance," it's "empower the victim." And it can be taught without the need for thousands of dollars or hundreds of sessions. The good news is that Izzy Kalman is coming to the U.S. right after Tishrei, and can be booked now for speaking engagements or one-on-one. For more information, see his ad in this issue.
-Rishe Deitsch

I owe my foundation in Jewish knowledge to Chabad, since my Holocaust survivor parents sent me to Lubavitcher Yeshiva of the Bronx, led by Rabbi Mordechai Altein, where I attended 1958-1966. And so I hope my work in solving bullying problems and promoting *ahavas chinam* has the Rebbe's *brachah*.

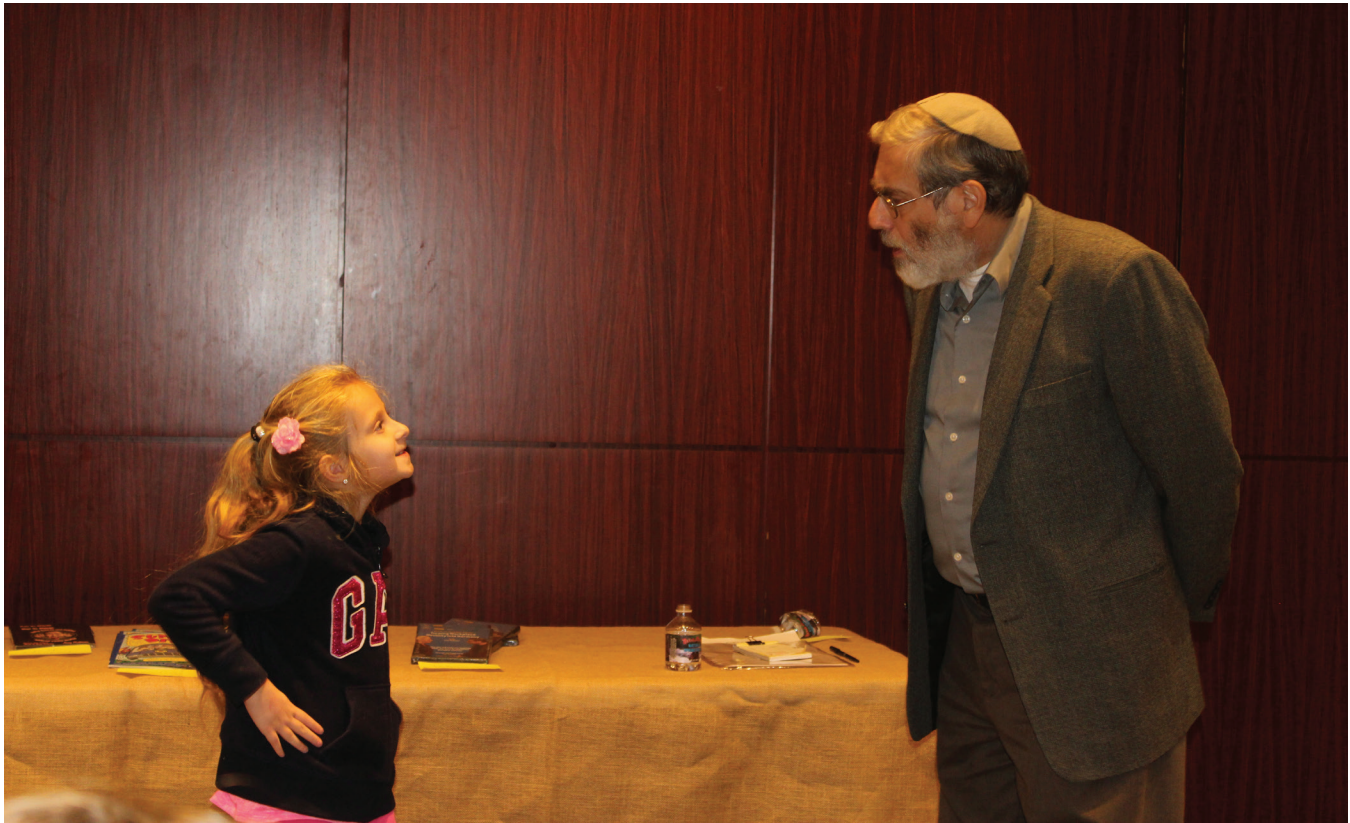
On my most recent (January 2017) trip to the U.S. (I live in Israel), I had the honor of presenting to schools and adult groups in Los Angeles and Thousand Oaks in California, in Boca Raton and Margate in Florida, in Monsey, New Jersey and, of course, in Brooklyn.

I also did anti-bullying trainings in a public school in Illinois, in a small town named Channahon. This made possible one of the highlights of my trip...

Meeting Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Posner after 50+ years

In the mid-1960s, Rabbi Leibel Posner and his family lived in my neighborhood of the Bronx and they often came to the shul in the Lubavitcher Yeshiva to *daven*. We loved playing with the Posner boys (Yosef Yitzchok was the oldest of them) because they were fun, adventurous and smart.

Then they moved away. Throughout my life, I often wondered what had become of YY. I was sure he was destined for greatness!



The Russian-Jewish community of Brighton Beach learning to combat bullying through role play with Izzy Kalman. This event was sponsored by Chabad of Brighton Beach (Feb. 2017).

A couple of years ago, I told Rische Deitsch that I would love to find out about an old childhood friend from Lubavitch, one Yosef Yitzchok Posner. She told me, “No problem—he is married to my sister Zeesy!” So I contacted him by email and we did a lot of catching up.

My job in Channahon was to end on Friday afternoon, and when I realized that it is only about an hour’s drive to Skokie, I informed Y.Y. and Zeesy that they were inviting my wife and me for Shabbos.

It is strange meeting someone you knew as a child, more than 50 years earlier. While I was expecting to be greeted by someone who looked the way I recall his father looking, it hit me that we are really now the ages that our *grandfathers* were! We spent some long, intense seconds inspecting each other, looking for the kids we used to know. (And I really hoped he would like me.)

Zeesy is a model hostess who spent hours talking with my wife, Miriam. The food was not only delicious but healthy as well, making Miriam really happy, as she won’t touch anything that

looks processed.

I wasn’t disappointed in how Y.Y. turned out. I found someone whose quiet modesty belies his brilliance, activism and learnedness. Together with Zeesy and their son Yochanan and his wife Yona, he turned a plain storefront into a Chabad Center with a sophisticated design that takes advantage of every square inch and is a pillar of the Jewish community. It houses a regular Chabad shul, a *minyan* for Israelis, and many Torah classes and holiday events, and Zeesy runs its flourishing preschool and camp.

I hope it won’t take another 50-plus years to meet again with the Posners. But then again, if that’s when it happens, it won’t be such a bad thing!

The problem of sibling rivalry

The problem I have been focusing on most intensively for the past 18 years has been bullying. I have made bullying prevention my professional mission because it became a matter of worldwide

urgency after the Columbine massacre of 1999 and it was obvious to me that the conventional approach that was being promoted by the psychological establishment could not possibly work. I wrote about this in detail in my article, “A Sane, Effective Torah Approach to Bullying,” in the Nissan 2015 issue of *N’shei Chabad Newsletter*, and in my second article, “My Whirlwind Chabad Trip,” Nissan 2016. [Both are now available on nsheichabadnewsletter.com/archives/2015 and 2016. Also see Izzy Kalman’s video at nsheichabadnewsletter.com/archives/video.]

Before that, I had been on a mission to eliminate sibling rivalry. I had taught hundred of parents how to deal with it by investing *less* time and energy. My work in sibling rivalry actually helped me in my work with bullying in schools because the problems are so similar.

Parents today are demanding that schools guarantee that their children can attend without any other children bothering them. Far more children are tormented by a sibling at home than by another student in school. How can parents expect a school to make hundreds of children always be nice to each other when they can’t get their own couple of children to do it?

When I ask parents how their children get along, many tell me, “Oh, they have the ‘normal’ sibling rivalry. They fight all the time.” Many adults think that bullying in school is a horrific problem but sibling rivalry is not so bad because it is “normal.”

But sibling rivalry is not necessarily more

benign than bullying in school. In recent months, I was approached on a few occasions by parents troubled by the constant fighting between their children. One mother was in tears from what she perceives as actual hatred among her children. Schoolmates are together for several years, but siblings are together (we hope) for a lifetime. A tragic but all-too-common phenomenon is adult siblings who have cut off ties with one another because they’ve felt like enemies since childhood. Personally, I would rather my children be picked on by schoolmates but get along with their siblings than the other way around.

Now, when I refer to sibling rivalry, I am not talking about siblings who occasionally get angry or fight. That is, indeed, an inevitable and even necessary part of childhood. Without it, children cannot develop social skills. I am referring specifically to siblings who drive their parents crazy with endless fighting and bitter resentment.

The harder parents try to get rid of it, the worse sibling rivalry tends to become. So parents get the impression that the constant fighting is not only normal but inevitable. If we look at all the families of our *avos* in the Torah, this impression gets validated. After Hashem expelled Adam and Chava from Gan Eden, the very next story is the murder of Hevel by Kayin. Then we have the rivalries between Yitzchok and Yishmael, Yaakov and Eisav, and Yosef and his brothers. It is easy to think that it is inevitable and even a healthy part of growing up.

I won’t judge our forefathers, but for the rest of us, ongoing animosity between siblings *isn’t* healthy, can hurt their personalities forever and can cause them to keep their families apart when they have their own children.

The good news is that sibling rivalry isn’t inevitable. In most families, it can be made better, possibly even dramatically better. My goal is to give you an understanding of what causes serious hostility between siblings and how to reduce it.

I don’t want to give you false hope. Some situations are difficult or complex and for them, what I will teach you here may not work. To get a sense of your chances for success, I am presenting a list of conditions. The more of them that apply to your family, the better.

1. None of the children involved have serious

At the Brighton Beach event.





Izzy Kalman with Rabbi Moshe D. Winner of Chabad of Brighton Beach.

1. They have no neurological or psychiatric conditions.
2. They behave well in other people's homes and in school.
3. They each get along well with their friends.
4. They don't *only* fight; they also enjoy playing with each other.
5. They are girls. (Girls are just better at getting along than boys.)
6. They get along well with each other when the parents are not around.

Condition 6 is actually the best predictor of a good outcome. If you find yourself wondering why they get along so well when you are not home but begin fighting as soon as you walk through the door, that should be a hint of what's really causing the problem. And if you follow the advice here, you should soon find them getting along in your presence, too.

(Disclaimer: Sometimes children fight and even hit each other, especially if they are boys. So please don't expect them never, ever to be mean to each other again, even if the advice here works. The situation can get a lot better, but don't expect 100%.)

The following is the main reason that siblings fight constantly: *you*

are trying to make them stop!

This may sound crazy. How can you be making them fight? You are so busy stopping them!

This is what goes on. You believe that your job as a parent is to make sure that your children are always nice to each other, and that doing so requires you to judge their disputes. We fear that if we don't personally judge and punish our children when they are mean, G-d forbid they will grow into *vilde chayas* or criminals.

But the Torah instructs us to *teach* our children right from wrong. It does not tell us to *judge* them. Judging is serious business and few people are qualified for it. As adults, we take people to court only when we fail to figure out how to resolve our dispute on our own. The job of the court is to determine the proper punishment, but it doesn't turn the two sides into friends. The disputes between our children are not necessarily less complex than the disputes between adults. But even though we are not qualified to judge, we get into the role as soon as they fight, investigating who started it and announcing a proper punishment.

It is necessary to realize that we, the parents, are the most important people in the world to each of our children. We are more important to them than anything they are fighting about. So when they are fighting over a toy or a book or an insult, and then we play judge, they are now concerned with getting us on their side, so *the stakes are now much higher*. They become prosecuting attorneys



At the Brighton Beach event.

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against each other trying to convince us they are right and their sibling is wrong.

Think of the stories in the Torah mentioned above. Why were our ancestors angry or hateful towards their siblings? It was because they believed the other was the favorite of either Hashem or their parents.

When we judge between our children, our verdict is proof in their minds that we favor the winner over the loser.

Do our two children hug each other and say, "Thank you, mommy/daddy! You are so wise! Why couldn't we think of that on our own?" No. They are still angry with each other. The one who has been found guilty is angry with us, too, and wants revenge against both us and their sibling, so the next fight is set into motion. Then we play judge again, thinking we are teaching them to stop fighting, not realizing we are *making* them fight. We think they are fighting over the toy, the book or the mean word. *They are really fighting over us.*

Furthermore, if you are like most parents, when you see your children fighting, you tell the older one, "You are older! You should know better! Be careful not to hurt your little brother/sister!" The

younger one discovers this is absolutely wonderful! They can provoke their older, stronger sibling into a fight, and they win because you take their side! So the younger is always creating fights so they can defeat the older one, and the older one creates fights in the hope of getting even.

There is another side effect of judging the disputes between our children. We prevent them from figuring out how to deal with each other directly. If they can get Mommy or Daddy to solve the problem for them, why should they bother doing it on their own? Therefore, we are impeding the social development of our children.

So what *should* you do, then?

If your children meet most or all of the conditions listed earlier, all you need to do is *refuse to play judge*. When they are fighting, do not go over to stop them. If they come to you for help, show compassion, but ask, "Did you tell your brother/sister? Go tell them you don't like what they did." If they say they did, say, "Did you tell them *nicely*?" Go talk to them again, but without being angry." You should make it clear to them that the problem is theirs, not yours, and that you trust that they can solve the problem on their own. It is fine to give them advice on how to handle the situation, but it is up to them to take your advice or not.

If they tell you their sibling called them a bad name, ask, "Do you believe it?" If they say no, say, "Good," and act unconcerned. If they say yes, they do believe it, explain that their sibling is insulting them for the purpose of upsetting them, and if they don't get upset, the sibling will stop.

If they tell you a sibling hit them, ask, "Are you hurt?" If they say no, say, "Good," and they will realize the hit was nothing to get upset about. If they say yes, ask if they need a kiss or first aid, and provide it if needed. But don't get angry at or punish the one who hit. The one who was hit should deal with the hitter, not you.

There are a few warnings and qualifications you should be aware of.

1. The fighting may get worse before it gets better. The children expect and want you to get in the middle. When they see you don't, they may fight harder to get you involved. Just keep telling them, "I'm sorry, but you have to talk to your

brother/sister.” Stay strong, and after a few days, you should see the fighting drop substantially.

2. You need to follow this advice all the time. If you sometimes fall into the role of judge, they will keep on fighting until you do. When they see you never play judge, they will stop trying to get you involved.

3. Even if you follow this advice all the time, the kids will still fight sometimes. It doesn't mean the advice doesn't work. It means they're human.

4. Don't let them injure each other. Stop their fight if it truly looks dangerous. But just tell them calmly that you love them and can't let them hurt each other. Then go back to your business.

5. If they are fighting at a time or place when it's inappropriate, such as the Shabbos table or at a restaurant, tell them that they need to go outside if they wish to fight, or that you'll have to leave the restaurant if they keep it up (and leave).

6. If the kids are making too much noise in the car, whether from fighting or playing, and the noise is getting on your nerves, you shouldn't have to tolerate it. The best thing to do is pull over to the side of the road when it's safe to do so and say, "I'm sorry, it's too noisy in the car. When it's quiet I'll continue."

After you do this a few times, the kids will learn that they need to be peaceful when you're driving or they won't get anywhere.

The explanation and suggestions here are bare-boned. If you wish to learn in greater depth what goes on when siblings fight and how to stop them,

look up my free online manual, "A Revolutionary Guide to Reducing Aggression Between Children." It is also useful for teachers in dealing with fighting among their students in school.

My upcoming book on bullying for the frum population

For the past year or so, I have been working in bits and spurts on a revised version of my book, *Bullies to Buddies: How to turn your enemies into friends*, which was written for a broad, secular audience. Over the years, I have received requests for a Torah-friendly version, with no references to foreign beliefs and no immodest pictures. I am hoping to get it done by the beginning of the school year, and plan to offer it for free as a download. I am not a serious Torah scholar, so if anyone is interested in reviewing it and providing me additional Torah sources for the advice it gives, I would appreciate it greatly!

The latest on my bullying reduction campaign

As you know already, I am not a fan of the anti-bullying movement. Though its goal seems consistent with Yiddishkeit—getting all children to be nice to each other—it is not consistent with Torah. In fact, it is not consistent with any major religion or serious school of psychology or philosophy. It is political correctness taken to an extreme. Rather than making schools safer, it has escalated hostilities by encouraging people to accuse others of being evil bullies. The problems between children turn into feuds between families when their parents get involved. And never before have so many parents been pulling their children out of Jewish schools for failing in the impossible mission of guaranteeing their children a bully-free school.

I've been fighting for 18 years, ever since the movement's rise to power as a result of the Columbine massacre in 1999, to reverse this counterproductive movement. Initially, I made excellent progress, and I thought that after a number of years, I could bring the world to its senses and get it to abandon its foolish crusade against bullies.

At the Brighton Beach event.



Now, after 18 years – yes, *chai* years – I have to face my failure. I didn't expect the anti-bullying industry to become so powerful. The witch-hunt against bullies has become mandated by law in every U.S. state and in most of the world, and once policies become enshrined by law, they become extremely difficult to reverse. I've also had painful disappointments from people who partnered with me, only to end up plagiarizing my work for their own personal benefit.

No one knows better than my wife how many sleepless nights I've spent obsessing about my failure and where I've gone wrong. But eighteen years is enough. Either something changes in my direction or I will end up destroying myself from within.

So I've recently done some serious soul-searching to understand why I failed and what I need to do to get back on the right path.

Finally, when walking to shul one Friday night, I had an epiphany. It occurred to me where I went wrong and what I need to do.

When I began my mission, it was a pure, selfless one. I was up till the late hours of the night learning how to create a website (when it wasn't as easy as today) to provide manuals for free. My free materials influenced thousands of people. I received letters from parents thanking me for saving their children from bullying-induced suicide. The mailing list of people supporting my efforts grew to almost twenty thousand.

After a few years, I left my salaried position as a NYC school psychologist to become independent so I could teach my approach more widely and produce more materials and programs. In other words, I had to make bullying prevention a business in order to make a living. From then on, the products and programs I created were made for sale. And I felt the need to protect my "intellectual property rights" so that others would not "steal" my knowledge and techniques.

However, I have never been much of a businessman. How could I compete with a multi-billion dollar anti-bullying industry? How could I stop unscrupulous people from plagiarizing my work and making money at my expense?

So that Shabbos eve it hit me that I needed to go back to my original mission—providing the needed materials for free. I don't have tons of money to give

to *tzedakah*, but I have something much better to offer. And if it is available for free, I can compete with the biggest of the anti-bullying companies—not in making money, but in helping society.

In the coming weeks and months I will be revamping my website to provide all of my materials for free as downloads.

I will still need to charge for my time providing live presentations and counseling, as I need to pay my bills and help my children. But once materials exist, their dissemination doesn't need much time on my part, and I want to get them to as many people as possible. I hope that my *N'shei* readers will like them and recommend them to others. And I hope that my efforts will be met with the approval of the Rebbe and helped with his Divine intervention.

The Chabad Israeli Center of Staten Island

This report wouldn't be complete without at least mentioning Rabbi Nachman and Rebbetzin Chaya Segal and their Chabad Israel Center of Staten Island which has been my second home in the U.S. for the past many years. We were able to spend three Shabbosim there on this last trip, enjoying our time with the Segal family and many of our old friends (we lived in Staten Island before moving to Israel three years ago).

The Segals realized several years ago that the neighborhood needs a quality *mikvah* for women. Though it is a remarkably difficult architectural feat to build a *mikvah* on their limited premises, they have been hard at work and are making great progress. However, because I never taught the Segals how to bully people into making donations, the *mikvah* project still needs a healthy infusion of *gelt*, so if any reader would like to contribute, please visit chabadisraelSI.com/mikvacampaign and I thank you. ❏

To book him on his next US tour (Oct.-Nov. 2017) or for further information, Izzy Kalman may be contacted at izzy@bullies-2buddies.com. To see him in action, watch his video at nsheichabadnewsletter.com/archives/video.