



# “LET’S BUILD A TENT!”

GOLDIE GROSSBAUM

*I sit up straight in my seat and hold my breath. I don’t move a muscle as my blood pressure rises and my body fills with dread. And then I hear the words again, clear as can be and there’s no mistake. It is what I feared.*

“Let’s build a tent! Let’s get our blankets and pillows and make a tent!”

The announcement is followed by cheers and a chorus of enthusiastic yays as the six brothers run off to get their gear.

And my motherly instinct is aroused. I do not want a tent! I’ve had too many Shabbos tent building experiences in the past 18 years that I know what’s coming; this will end with many little people crying. It’s hard to predict who exactly, but I definitely know there will be tears.

But do I stop them just because I’ve been burnt by this seemingly exciting and innovative idea of building a tent with blankets?

The pictures lie.

Any picture you have ever seen of kids playing in magical pillow and blanket forts under tables or with chairs lined up was probably taken one split second before the big outburst. The big outburst of tears and hands and feet and more tears.

So I am facing the big question: stop the excitement or let them have the experience. And I’m sitting on the

couch so comfortably and I know it's about seven minutes before I'm summoned for the first misdemeanor.

But the joy in their voices... I hear it traveling down the steps, stopping for a moment here and there as they stop to catch their breath from the weight of the blankets and also from excitement.

I really, really don't want them to make a tent! Why bother when it will just bring so many tears?

At this point I also know that just about everything that involves multiple young children ends in tears.

Let them have their fun, I reprimand myself.

And so I wait. Count to 60. I already hear the first signs of disagreement and an uncooperative three-year-old who thinks it's more fun to enter the tent from the roof.

Oh it's hard to be a mother, to know when to get involved and when not to.

There's quiet as somehow it gets resolved without me! Back to teamwork.

I smile for a moment with pride, hearing the six brothers working together. They really are such good boys.

My moment of pride is gone, replaced by some words we don't use in our house.

Should I go now?

Wait for them to resolve it?

End this whole tent experience before it causes more damage?

It's back to working together.

And then someone is crying.

And then they're laughing together.

And then it's quiet as they all huddle inside the tent and someone tells a spooky story.

And then my three-year-old tries the roof again. And then another brother tries to see if the sides really are sturdy or if they can be removed with a tug.

And someone else wants to make an unauthorized window.

And then it's complete mayhem.

And there are lots of tears.

Forget tears. Now there's officially a war.

And my time on the couch is over.

As I go referee, my mind races. See, you were right. You should have never let them make a tent! It always ends with crying! How do they always forget that, why do they want to do it again when each time is a disaster?!

I calm the crowd and dry the tears and divide the blankets to be returned to their proper locations and everyone insists that *they* didn't take any blankets so they don't need to put them back. And I'm silently promising myself that I will make sure they never, ever make a tent again, for at least 10 years.

And then my husband joins us and as I am about to

tell him that this family is never, ever making a tent again, my five-year-old excitedly tells him about the cool tent they made.

And I'm staring, dumbfounded.

It takes everything not to interrupt and say, but you guys just fought and everyone cried!

Instead I listen and watch the joy on his face, and I slowly reevaluate the tent-making and shift my perspective.

Maybe fighting is just part of the process. Maybe it's a necessary part of how memories are made. Maybe we adults make a bigger deal out of it than we should. Maybe. ❄️



**GOLDIE** and her husband, Rabbi Yossi Grossbaum, direct Chabad of Folsom & El Dorado Hills in Northern California, with the able help of their 11 children ka"h.

Goldie is a Certified Life Coach as well as a mikvah.org Certified Kallah Teacher. In her spare time, Goldie blogs about being the mom of nine boys and two girls, ranging from baby to teens, and finding the humor

in the ups and downs of raising kids and life in general. Read more of Goldie's writings at [www.littleyellownotepad.com](http://www.littleyellownotepad.com).

ב"ה

**"...ימלט עמך כל הנמצא כתוב בספר"**

**"...YOUR PEOPLE SHALL BE DELIVERED, EVERY ONE WHO SHALL BE FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK."**

(Daniel, 12:1)

ספרי התורה של ילדי ישראל

**The merit of buying a letter in a Torah scroll is alluded to in the book of Daniel:**

"...There shall be a time of trouble such as there never was since there was a nation until that time. And that time your people shall be delivered, every one who shall be found written in the book." (Daniel, 12:1)

(Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz, 5742)

**Children's Sefer Torah**  
kidstora.org

**Sefer Torah Kholi**  
sefertora.org.il