

*On Rebbetzin  
Chana,*



*&  
Raising  
a Chassidische  
Family*

# Escaping the Soviet Union



## MRS. SARA KATZMAN

*This article is based on two interviews with Mrs. Sara Katzman, one by Jewish Educational Media (JEM) in 2017 and one by the N'shei Chabad Newsletter in the summer of 2023.*

These girls were students in Bais Rivkah in Sèvres (suburb of Paris), France, after World War II. This photo was taken on the school grounds in 1950 (approximate year).

Back row (L-R): Golda Chanin (Schwei); Shaindel Shimanovitch (Fogelman); Chana Faiga Sasonkin (Friedman); Luba Trebnik (Shtukman); Doba Futerfas (Lieberov). Seated, front row (L-R): Riva Minkowitz (Teleshevsky); Nechama Serebryanski (Werdiger); Sara Chanin (Katzman).

## CHILDHOOD IN THE SOVIET UNION: 1935–1946

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hen I was a child in communist Russia, food was precious. After every Pesach meal my mother would shake the *tishtach* so all the crumbs settled in the middle and then she would gather the crumbs to make *kneidlach*. (We weren't as careful about *gebros* in those years.)

During World War II, my family left Leningrad due to the blockade, known as the Siege of Leningrad (1941-1944), which caused a terrible famine; people were dying on the streets. My parents, Reb Chaikel and Leah Chanin, heard that in Samarkand there were Yidden who had enough food to share with other Yidden. They managed to get out of Leningrad and onto the train to Samarkand, a ride of several days. At every stop, my parents jumped out to try to procure food for everyone. My sister Golda (whom we called Olya) and I were left on the train in the care of our aunt, Esther Rochel Minkowitz, and her children, our cousins Golda (Aronov) and Riva (Teleshevsky).

We had one book with us which we begged our aunt to read to us again and again. We enjoyed it! (Just one difference between us and today's children, as far as entertainment "needs" are concerned.)

One of the stops along the way to Samarkand was Tashkent. When my father saw the heaping sacks of rice at the marketplace in Tashkent, he was shocked by the abundance. He ran back to the train and announced, "We're staying here, because here there is food!"

We stayed in Tashkent for four years. My father got a job managing a factory and my mother wove sweaters. My sister and I had a *melamed* named Reb Hershel Lieberman. He taught us *Chumash*, *chassidische* stories and history, and how to read and write *Lashon Kodesh*. We also had a tutor who taught us the secular curriculum. Nobody had to tell us which one was more important. We knew.



The Chanin children. Golda (L) was born in Russia in 1937. Sara was born in Russia in 1935. Zalman (above) was born in Paris in 1948.





Mrs. Leah Chanin and her daughter Sara, in Paris, 1950.

## ESCAPE TO GERMANY: 1946

The Soviet Union, under communism, was a terribly dangerous place for *frum* Jews. In 1946, when I was 11, my family fled from the Soviet Union to Germany in search of a better life.

Germany was divided into four zones after the war. America, France, England, and Russia each controlled a quarter. The American government agreed to let Jewish refugees into their zone. The Joint, led by American Jews, was sending food and clothing. But how would we get there?

There are many countries between Russia and Germany, they all have borders, and none of them was interested in letting us through. So young Jews from the underground Bricha (which means “to flee”) organization helped us travel illegally. We crossed unguarded areas of the borders silently, without permission or papers, and somehow we survived. I can’t remember all the details

of the journey, but I do remember that it was a difficult trip. At times we walked for miles. Other times we went by truck or train.

(At one point my parents hid a diamond in my sister Golda’s shoe. Alas, the shoe got lost. A *bachur* who was part of the group found the shoe and returned it to them. Many decades later, in Bogota, Colombia, when Chana Rosenfeld married Zevi Kugel, my sister Golda, the grandmother of the bride, told the story of the lost diamond. At that point, the *zaide* of the *chassan*, Reb Sholom Ber Drizin, stood up and said, “I was that *bachur*.” Until that moment, we didn’t know who the *bachur* was. Now we knew— it was the new *mechutan*!)

Finally, after walking and walking, we reached Pocking, in the American zone of Germany.

We were brought to a place, a camp of some sort, with long barracks. The adults were trying to make a *seder* so that every family would get a room. At the end, they realized there was an oversight. One woman traveling alone did not have a room.

Unbeknownst to most, that woman was Rebbetzin Chana, then the *mechuteniste* of the (Friediker) Rebbe, later to become well known as the mother of the Rebbe. In Russia everything had to be kept a secret. Especially



Tena'im (engagement party) of Zelig Katzman and Sara Chanin in Crown Heights in 1955. The *kallah* is standing in the center. Mrs. Leah (Butman) Kahan is on the *kallah*'s left and Mrs. Riva (Minkowitz) Teleshevsky is on the *kallah*'s right.

because her husband was exiled for so long, and for such serious Yiddishkeit-related “crimes,” it was dangerous for her to advertise her identity. Just the fact that her name was Schneerson was in itself dangerous. This name was the equivalent of “criminal” in communist Russia. If you were a Schneerson or associated with one, you were already in trouble.

My aunt Mussie Nemoitin, my mother’s sister, was a widow, so she had been given a narrow room for herself. As soon as she saw that another woman did not have a room, she invited her to share her room. She only found out later that her new roommate was Rebbetzin Chana.

There was one army cot in their small room, so my aunt gave the cot to the Rebbetzin and slept on the floor in a makeshift sleeping bag she sewed out of two blankets. Such was the fancy furniture we had then. My aunt tried her best to make Rebbetzin Chana comfortable. In return, the Rebbetzin was kind to my aunt.

My aunt had received very little education in Russia. She could only read Hebrew a little bit and *davened* very

slowly. The Rebbetzin was highly educated and offered to teach my aunt. The Rebbetzin went out and bought a pad and pens and taught my aunt all the letters and even how to write the *Aleph Bais*.

When the first Shabbos in the barracks was approaching, the Rebbetzin asked my aunt, “How will we make Shabbos?” There was nowhere to go shopping. Nobody had pots or pans. My aunt told the Rebbetzin, “My sister Leah Chanin is a big *balabusta*. She has a larger room and a table with chairs, so we will go to my sister for Shabbos.” The Rebbetzin agreed.

My aunt came running over to tell my parents the news. My parents were thrilled and told us children that somebody very important was coming for Shabbos. We would have to behave accordingly. Of course, we did. Children in those days knew how to be respectful and obedient, how to not interrupt their elders, and how to sit quietly.

I still remember the moment on Friday night when the door to our room opened and in walked the Rebbetzin



Clockwise from left: Rabbi Zelig Katzman as a *bachur* in Brunoy; as a young man in Crown Heights; as a *zaide* in 770.



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with my aunt. They both looked *Shabbosdik*. They didn't have anything fancy to wear, and there was no such thing as a *sheitel* back then, but they somehow looked regal and *Shabbosdik*. The Rebbetzin had a beautiful smile, and she right away noticed two little girls, my sister Golda and me. She included us in the conversation and asked us questions. It was a beautiful Shabbos. All the Shabbosim that we spent with the Rebbetzin in Pocking (over the next few months, until she left for Paris) were memorable.

The Rebbetzin would sit with us at our table for a long time, always in a good mood, and she would share stories about her life, about her husband, about her father and her grandfathers (Reb Meir Shloime Yanovsky and Reb Avraham Dovid Lavut, known as the Shaar Hakolel), about *farbrengens* with *chassidim*. She would talk to my parents but include us children in the conversation, turning to us occasionally and explaining things.

I don't remember all the stories. But I do remember the song. One Shabbos, the Rebbetzin came and said she had heard a song that she liked—“*Sheli shelach, shelach shelach...*”—and she asked my younger sister Golda to sing it. My sister was shy and wouldn't sing it. So the Rebbetzin smiled and sang: “*Sheli shelach, shelach shelach...*”

## AN EXPENSIVE DOWRY: 1955

In 1948, when I was 12, we finally left Germany and settled in Paris, with the goal of eventually getting either to Eretz Yisroel or to Crown Heights where the Rebbe was. We stayed in France until, in 1955, at the age of 19, I went to Crown Heights by myself and shortly after got engaged to Zelig Katzman. He was a double orphan. I had parents, but they were across the ocean. Despite being on our own, both of us felt and knew that the Rebbe knew our situation, cared about us deeply, and was focused on our needs being filled as we prepared to get married.

Reb Itche Goldin was an *elterer chossid* entrusted by the Rebbe with finding *shidduchim* for orphans and helping them to get married. Our “dates” took place in his home. After my engagement, my father communicated with the Rebbe through Reb Itche Goldin. My father wanted to know if he should borrow money for one or both of

my parents to travel to New York for my wedding. (My father was usually a wealthy man who always found a way to provide for his family, support the yeshiva and help anyone in need. *Punkt* when I became a *kallah* he was struggling financially.)

The Rebbe told Reb Itche Goldin to tell my father not to borrow money for either parent to travel to the wedding, but to borrow money if necessary to pay a \$3,000 *nahden* (dowry) to my husband. In 1955, that was a fortune! You could buy a beautiful house for \$18,000. But the Rebbe once said, “*Meine bachurim gib Ich nisht avek umzist.*” (I do not give my *bachurim* away for free.)

The Rebbe had asked that there be no photographs taken during the *chuppah*. Most people did not listen to this, but my husband said he would listen. In response to this, Reb Itche went to the Rebbe to ask for permission to take pictures. He asked the Rebbe, “*Voo iz yoisher? Kumen oif chassunah lozt ir em nit. Nahden mont ir fun em. Lechol hapochos ah bild? Chotsh ah bissel nachas?*” (How is this fair? To come for the wedding, he’s not allowed. A dowry, he must pay. At least can he have a picture—a little *nachas*?)

To this the Rebbe replied, “*Aib nit bei Zelig’n bei vemen vell Ich ois-fieren?*” (If not with Zelig then with whom will I accomplish this?)

Poor Reb Itche Goldin! He had the job of breaking the news to my father. Of course, my father followed the Rebbe’s instructions. We didn’t take any pictures during our *chuppah*, which is why our picture is not in the book of pictures of the Rebbe being *mesader kiddushin*.

But where would my father get the \$3,000 for a dowry? He had helped so many people over the years, when he had been in the position to give—now, they came through for him.

A parlor meeting was held in the yeshiva of Brunoy, France, hosted by the leaders of the yeshiva: Reb Nissan Nemenov and Reb Yisroel Noach Belinitzky. Reb Zalman Levitin (Haditcher) also participated. At one point, Reb Zalman’s wife Etta Levitin (in her previous marriage, she was Gurary) knocked on the door and asked to speak. She said she had been saving up for years to marry off her (Gurary) son and daughter. But now she felt that she had to give the money to Chaikel Chanin; after all, he had paid for her and her family to escape Russia. She asked

the *chassidim* if they would guarantee repayment. They agreed to take responsibility for repayment of the loan.

Etta then wrote to the Rebbe asking if she should give her savings to my father. The Rebbe responded with a letter about her great *zchus* in *hachnasas kallah*.

We only found out about this story at my father’s *sheloshim*, when Etta’s son Rabbi Mottel Gurary came to visit and showed us the letter from the Rebbe. (My father repaid the loan to Etta Levitin.)

My husband and I got married on 24 Kislev 5716 (December 8, 1955), and we were blessed with eight beautiful children, *ka”h*, who always gave us and continue to give us *nachas*.

## REBBETZIN CHANA IN NEW YORK: 1947–1964

**R**ebbetzin Chana came to New York in 1947. In 1958, when my sister Golda got married, my parents came to New York from France for the wedding. Rebbetzin Chana didn’t attend weddings anymore, because it was too much for her, so she made an *oifnahmeh* (a reception) in her apartment on President Street for my parents, my brother Zalman who was not yet bar mitzvah, my sister and her *chassan* and his mother, and my husband and me.

At the reception, my father told the Rebbetzin that my brother sings nicely. “So let him sing,” the Rebbetzin responded. She asked him to sing a certain *niggun* and he sang it from beginning to end. The Rebbetzin gave my sister a look then, with a teasing smile that spoke more loudly than words, indicating: “You didn’t want to sing for me, but now your brother did.”

I had the *zchus* to visit the Rebbetzin often. The Rebbetzin was always welcoming and treated me like family. She made it pleasant and casual—not the kind of visit you had to be nervous about and prepare yourself for beforehand.

At the same time, I can’t compare my relationship with the Rebbetzin to any other relationship. She was *Eim Hamelech*, the mother of the king. Even the way she would give the children candy and tell them to “*mach a*



**CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP:**

Mrs. Sara Katzman brings to the Rebbe her granddaughter Chana Baumgarten, named after the Rebbetzin Chana, on Rebbetzin Chana's yahrzeit, Vov Tishrei 5750. *JEM Photo ID#232307*  
 Mrs. Leah Chanin and her daughter Mrs. Sara Katzman receiving dollars from the Rebbe on 19 Elul 5750. *JEM Photo ID#54137*  
 Mrs. Sara Katzman receiving a dollar from the Rebbe on 29 Sivan 5749. *JEM Photo ID#27703*



# I can't compare my relationship with the Rebbetzin to any other relationship. She was *Eim Hamelech*, the mother of the king.

*brachah*” was different; it was loving and warm and kind and memorable. You felt like you were in the presence of royalty. You were on your best behavior with her, and you tried to do whatever you could for her in any way possible.

We would talk about everything and anything going on in the present, but not about the difficulties of the past. She never brought up memories from our time in Pocking. She was here, at this time of her life, and she was very happy and proud of her son the Rebbe. She was proud of his *chassidim* too, and she considered all of us to be the Rebbe’s children, and therefore we were her grandchildren.

One afternoon, I was walking on Kingston Avenue with my children in the carriage. I met the Rebbetzin on the street. She stopped to talk with me about something (I can’t remember what). Then the Rebbetzin glanced across the street at the young couples walking by. The Rebbetzin looked at them with such love and so much warmth, and she told me proudly, “*Zei zainen gliklich, dem zun’s porelach!*” (They are happy, my son’s couples!)

Sometimes, when the Rebbetzin needed something, she would ask my cousin Riva Teleshevsky or me to get

it for her. As she got older, she needed more help. For example, if she needed warmer clothes for the winter (in those years you couldn’t get those in Crown Heights), we would go to Bloomingdale’s or other big stores in Manhattan.

After many years in Europe where the Rebbetzin hadn’t had any luxuries, in America she could finally afford nice things. If she wanted something, she could buy it easily. But she was still careful with money. She would specify to buy three and not four of something. She had a joint bank account with the Rebbe, so if we laid out money for her purchase she would write us a check and on the check were both her signature and the Rebbe’s signature. She told my cousin Riva, “Deposit the check. I know you. *Mach nisht kein kuntzen.*” (Don’t play any tricks.) So we deposited the checks.

One time, the Rebbetzin told me she needed a sleeveless sweater. Vests weren’t in style then; everything had sleeves. We went from store to store but we couldn’t find one. I told the Rebbetzin, “You know what? I will knit a vest for you.”

I went to the store and bought wool and we spent time

choosing the style and designing it from scratch. The Rebbetzin was a *melumedes* (an educated woman), and the mother of the Rebbe, but here we saw another side to her: she wanted her vest to be exactly the way she wanted it to be. It was important to her to choose the color, the quality of wool, and the type of buttons.

I made the vest as quickly as I could and the Rebbetzin was happy with it. She wanted to give me something in return. She somehow found out that I didn't have a camera, so she gave me a camera and said, "Now you will take pictures and send them to your parents." (My parents were still living in France.)

Every time I visited afterwards, the Rebbetzin would tell me how much she was enjoying the vest I made her. One day, the woman who lived with the Rebbetzin washed the vest in hot water and it shrank. I saw that the Rebbetzin was upset about it. I said, "Rebbetzin, it doesn't matter. I'll make you a new one, because now we know exactly what you like." She said, "Yes? You really mean it?" I said, "Sure." And I ran quickly to the store and bought wool in a slightly different color and made her another vest.

At that point, I had small children at home. In Crown Heights, in the 1950s and '60s, children stayed home until they were six or seven years old. I think back to how I managed to run out and buy the wool and knit the vest with a bunch of young children always with me and no childcare. I don't know how I did it.

On top of that, I was active in N'shei Chabad, as were Fruma Junik and my

cousin Riva. My children knew that if Fruma would call, it was going to be a long phone call! We all worked hard because we knew it was something the Rebbe felt strongly about. He wanted N'shei Chabad to exist and grow and succeed.

Rebbetzin Chana was interested in N'shei Chabad and often asked about it. She used to come to the conventions. One year, my sister Golda was chosen to speak, as a representative of Bnos Chabad. My sister spoke, while the Rebbetzin looked at her with such love and pride (see photo). And when she finished, the Rebbetzin told her, "You spoke very well. Did you write the speech yourself?" My sister said, "No, my brother-in-law [Zelig] helped me."

The last time I spoke with Rebbetzin Chana was on Erev Rosh Hashanah, 1964. She was 84 years old. Every Erev Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe would address the ladies in 770. We all went to hear the Rebbe. After I came home, I called the Rebbetzin to wish her a *gut yohr*. I told her I had just gone to hear the Rebbe speak and she said, "Yeh? He came out on time?" She liked to tease a little about the Rebbe's precise punctuality. Then she asked me, "What did he speak about?"

I had a policy to never *chazer* the Rebbe's *sichos*.



Mrs. Sara Katzman  
receiving a dollar  
from the Rebbe on 26  
Elul 5745.  
JEM photo ID#266468



Rebbeztin Chana looks on with a proud smile as Golda Chanin speaks at the 1956 N'shei Chabad convention. Golda was the Bnos Chabad representative.

Whenever the Rebbe spoke, people who didn't understand Yiddish would ask, "What did the Rebbe say?" And a lot of people would *chazer*. But I always refused. What if I made a mistake? How could I take such responsibility? But now the Rebbeztin was asking me, and I couldn't say no. So I said, "*Atem nitzavim hayom kulchem,*" the words that the Rebbe started the *sichah* with. I didn't *chazer* the whole *sichah*, but I gave over some of it.

She made me feel comfortable about sharing even if I might make a mistake. That was how the Rebbeztin was. Nowadays, we would say she empowered us.

Rebbeztin Chana passed away a few days later, on Shabbos, Vov Tishrei.

On Sunday, after her *levayah*, I went to the hospital in labor. I gave birth to my daughter late that night (so her birthday is Ches Tishrei). The Rebbe was sitting *shivah* in the Rebbeztin's apartment. On Monday morning, my husband went to the *shivah* house. Reb Dovid Raskin opened the door. My husband got an *aliyah* and he asked through Reb Dovid if he could name the baby girl after the Rebbe's mother at that very *minyán*. The Rebbe smiled and wished the baby "*arichas yamim v'shanim tovos.*" (Long life and good years.) And our daughter Chana received her name in the Rebbeztin Chana's apartment.

After the *shivah*, the Rebbe sent us a letter wishing us *mazel tov* and mentioning that her name was Chana, *shetelita* (not the usual *shetichye*). With all subsequent Chanas, the Rebbe wrote *shetelita*. He also sent \$63, the numerical equivalent of the name Chana, which he said was "my participation in her *chinuch*."

Several months later, on Chanukah, I went with my husband and our children to the Rebbe for *yechidus*. The Rebbe opened a drawer and gave a dollar to each child

for Chanukah *gelt*. To my twins the Rebbe gave 50¢ each. Then the Rebbe opened a second drawer and took out ten dollars and gave it to baby Chana.

Every year, around Chanukah, my husband and I would go into *yechidus* with all the children; first my husband would write all the names and birthdays in the *tzetel* he prepared for *yechidus*.

The following year, when the Rebbe read the *tzetel*, he turned to my husband and asked (indicating the baby), "When is her birthday?" My husband answered that it was as he wrote in the *tzetel*: Ches Tishrei. The Rebbe said, "Next time you should remember to write to me on the day of her birthday; *zi iz doch de ershte Chana un ess iz mir nogeia.*" [She is the first Chana, and it is important to me.]

## MY SISTER, MY BEST FRIEND

After my husband, my sister Golda was the closest person to me. We were so close that even our husbands became like brothers. My brother-in-law was Rabbi Aizik Schwei, Rav and *Rosh Yeshivah* in Montreal. My husband and my sister's husband would learn together from one *sefer*.

When Golda had her first baby, Rivkah, I was already a mother with two babies. (Our mother was still in France and was handicapped following a stroke.) She gave birth



The two sisters and their husbands, L-R: Rabbi Aizik Schwei, Mrs. Golda Schwei, Mrs. Sara Katzman, and Rabbi Zelig Katzman.



L - R: Mrs. Sara Katzman, Mrs. Golda Schwei, and their cousin Mrs. Riva Teleshevsky at a Kinus haShluchos banquet.



Mrs. Sara Katzman with Mrs. Riva Teleshevsky at a wedding.

on Pesach. As soon as Pesach was over, I packed my Pesach things into boxes and left them on the kitchen chairs, took my two babies Yaisef and Esther, and got on the bus to Montreal to help my sister. I had to go, I wanted to go, she expected me to go, and I knew I wouldn't let my sister down.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEN AND NOW

When I was raising my children, women had clear priorities. The family came first, and then came ME. Nowadays, women are receiving messages from the world that say the most important thing is ME. But I don't think that perspective is making them happier.

Another difference between then and now is that 50 and 60 years ago, women spoke to their husbands with more *eidelkeit*.

Also, then, *chassidische kinder* would do whatever their parents said. Why did I marry Zelig? My father said it was a good idea—of course, after consulting with the Rebbe. “*Der Tatte hot gezogt*” was enough for me. I went into dating prepared to make the leap, with a positive attitude, because I trusted my father.

When we needed to marry off our own children, we didn't make a million phone calls and request pictures. I am not a “*kricher*” (a nosybody)! I don't believe all the

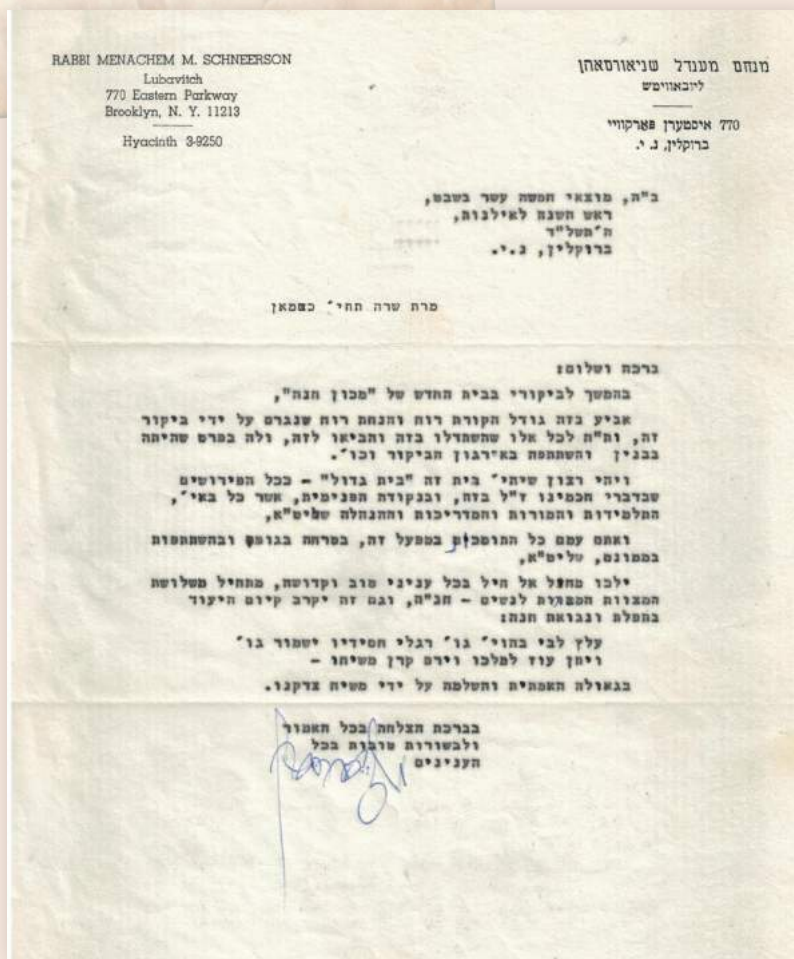
*krieching* makes for more happiness in the long run. When it comes to *shidduchim*, I believe in fewer phone calls and more *Tehillim*.

When our children were getting engaged, we would see the face of our new child-in-law for the first time when they came to the house to meet us after getting engaged (receiving *haskamah* and *brachah* from the Rebbe). Nowadays, parents must see pictures in advance of a first date. The young people are asking their friends (and themselves!) a million questions, and not asking their parents so much. Parents are no longer the main source of guidance. I don't see that this has led to more happiness or more success in marriage.

## PLANTS FROM THE REBBETZIN

When the Rebbetzin Chaya Musia passed away in 1988, the Rebbe told Sholom Ber Gansbourg that her plants should be given to people who would appreciate them. My sister-in-law, Nechama Chanan, received one, and gave me a branch. It grew





**MACHON CHANA** WAS FOUNDED IN 1972 by Mrs. Sara Labkowski, Mrs. Leah Klein, Mrs. Sara Katzman, Mrs. Riva Teleshevsky, and Mrs. Tema Gurary. It was the first of the 70 *mosdos* that the Rebbe received as a present for his 70th birthday.

The Rebbe was pleased and grateful to have this *mosad*, created to bring the light and warmth of Torah and Chassidus to searching Jewish women from secular backgrounds, named after his beloved mother.

In 1974, the well-known *chossid* and *baal tzedakah* Reb Avraham Parshan purchased a beautiful four-story

building on President Street for Machon Chana, and the Rebbe came to visit. Of course the founders and the students were notified in advance, and they were all there, ready to welcome the Rebbe, hoping to give him *nachas* (which they did).

The Rebbe walked all around the building, thanked the founders, and left some *seforim* there as a gift, for the students to use.

Afterward, each founder received a personal letter. Here is the one received by Mrs. Sara Katzman, which is one of her most precious possessions.



Mrs. Katzman with her children. Standing (L - R): Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Katzman, Crown Heights; Rabbi Moshe Katzman, Staten Island; Rabbi Mendel Katzman, Omaha, Nebraska; Rabbi Shmuel Katzman, the Hague, Holland. Seated (L - R): Mrs. Itty Shemtov, W. Bloomfield, MI; Mrs. Goldie Baumgarten, East Hampton, L.I.; Mrs. Sara Katzman, Crown Heights; Mrs. Esther Gourevitch, Brunoy, France; Mrs. Channie Weiss, Charlotte, NC.

beautifully. People ask me if I talk to my plants, sing to my plants, name my plants... I don't. I talk to people, not plants. I water my plants approximately once a week, more if they seem dry. I trim them. I clean them. And that's it! If people want to hear talking and singing, they can come to our Shabbos table.

## SNIPPETS OF ADVICE

To be a good *shvigger*, don't *krich* and don't be a *yenta*.

Being a *bobbeh* is worlds apart from being a *mammeh*. First of all, when you have your children, you are young and strong. When you have grandchildren, you are already getting older. Also, with your children, you are in control. With your grandchildren, you are simply not. As a mother, I could take eight young children anywhere and remain calm and in control. I would not dream of taking eight young grandchildren someplace by myself.

As far as being close with grandchildren, it's up to them. Some grandchildren are interested in a relationship; they want to be close. Others don't.

I don't believe in holding onto regrets or guilt about things I didn't do perfectly. That only leads to *moreh shchoreh*. I try not to dwell on the negative in any area of my life.

## GETTING PAST GRIEF

My dear husband Zelig passed away in 1998, at the age of 68. We were married for 43 years. It was not long enough.

After the *shivah* ended, my children had to go back to their homes and their work. One by one, over the next few days, they left. When the last one was leaving, I stood outside saying goodbye. Their car came, they left, and I went inside and started walking up the stairs. I began crying and cried so loud and so long that I had to stop walking. I sobbed my heart out that this was going to be my life now, coming home to an empty house.

And then, finally, I stopped. And I decided: NO MORE CRYING.

I will go back to my life and keep doing the good things I was doing before. I won't drown in my grief.

I continued opening my home for my dear out-of-town grandchildren. They lived with me, which made it possible for them to get schooling in the Crown Heights *mosdos*. They were always comfortable and welcome in my home, together with their friends and classmates, some of whom called me Bubby Katzman.

I went back to my work for Machon Chana, together with my cousin Riva Teleshevsky, *zol gezunt zein*.

Use your time, your strength, your health, your wealth, your talents, and your home to help others and do what's right and leave a positive impact in this world. ❧



Mrs. Sara Katzman being interviewed by JEM in 2017.