

In commemoration of the 50th yahrtzeit of

Sarah Schenierer: Seamstress of Cracow



-By- BRACHA RISHONA

PREFACE

Night falls... One by one, the twinkling stars appear in the skies... And then suddenly, the firmament is ablaze with a great, shining star, its special light, warmth and grace lighting the path for all who walk in its reflection. It paves the road... It shows the way... Sarah Schenierer ע"ה, a wondrous light to Klal Yisrael.

Fortunate are those who knew her personally... but for those of us who did not, it remains to learn of her heartfelt teachings and noble ways from those who were nourished by her. From her students, who are today pillars of Jewish education for girls...from available source materials, which chronicle her work, deeds, and accomplishments.

We can not claim to adequately describe Sarah Schenierer. Nor can we presume to appropriately interpret her ways and actions. She stands above us, a Tzadekes, a righteous woman of a previous generation.

We can, however, look, listen and learn. We can read, observe and emulate. We can be inspired to nobler deeds through the inspiration of her stories.

26 Adar, 5745, is a milestone. It marks the occasion of the 50th yahrtzeit of Sarah Schenierer, ע"ה. This book is a small tribute to this commemoration.

Exact historical data contained herein is a bonus, rather than a goal. Emphasis was placed on retelling of efforts, difficulties, and accomplishments, which can potentially inspire us to enhance our actions on behalf of Judaism.

On many occasions, commonly used Hebrew words are written in English, with the translation following.

Specified, full names are, of course, all true.

Do we fully utilize the freedom we enjoy today in the proper way? After reading of Sarah Schenierer's many hardships and difficulties, we will probably feel alot luckier to be able to pursue our Jewish education to the greatest extent possible.

And finally, let us be strengthened from the poignant tale of this courageous woman. Dare to dream — to reach — dare to try! Even as Basya in Egypt of old extended her hand to reach for the basket of Moshe Rabeinu ע"ה, **with no prospect of tangibility immediately in sight; so may we dare to reach, tiptoe and touch a shining star; reach for more and more personal accomplishments on the horizon of Yiddishkeit.**

May Hakadosh Baruch Hu bless the work of our hands, and bring success to all of our efforts, for the grandeur of
Torah and Judaism.

"ויהי נעם ה'.... עלינו...ומעשה ידינו כוננהו." (תהלים)

Kislev, 5745

"B.R."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and SOURCES

1. The "געזאמעלטע שריפטן", the gathered writings of Sarah Schenierer ע"ה, in the Yiddish language, includes a summary of basic events in the life of Sarah Schenierer written by herself. It also incorporates her articles on general events as well as on timely Jewish topics. These writings were selected and republished in 5715-1955, by the Beth Jacob Seminary of America. It served as a major guideline of events for the current book "Sarah Schenierer; Seamstress of Cracow".

Deep acknowledgement and profound thanks for the kind permission granted, is due to Rabbi and Rebetzen B. Kaplan, שיח"י, founders of the Beth Jacob Teacher's Seminary and High School of America.

2. "Sarah Schenierer; The Story of a Great Movement" is an eloquently written publication containing picturesque descriptions and details of Sarah Schenierer's educational ventures. It also contains a broad picture of the Bais Yaakov Seminary in Cracow.

Its author is the universally known pillar of the Bais Yaakov movement, Rebetzin Dr. Judith Grunfeld, שתח"י, of London, England.

Heartfelt thanks and acknowledgement for her most gracious permission in using this source material.

3. The four-volume set entitled "אם בישראל" is a masterful production in Hebrew that has graced library shelves for decades. The volumes include anecdotes retold by students and friends, articles by prominent people in praise of Sarah

Schenierer, as well as many of her own plays and stories. This giant undertaking was produced and published by "NETZACH PUBLISHING CO." in Tel Aviv, Eretz Yisrael.

"NETZACH" is well-known for its commitment to spreading Torah-true religious literature. The courtesy and generosity of "NETZACH PUBLISHING" in granting permission to use material from this source is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

SPECIAL "ישר כחן"

to:

(in alphabetical order)

- 4) Rebetzen Basya Bender שתחי
- 5) Rebetzen Minna Kalmanowitz שתחי
- 6) Rebetzen Chava Wachtfogel שתחי

Other Reference Sources

"העבר הישראלי"

מחבר - הרב מאיר שצרנסקי
מנהל הסמינר לגנונות ולמורות
בית יעקב בתל אביב.

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All who share in the sublime task of "Chinuch Habanos",
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1. LITTLE SARAH

A little girl with black hair and dark, piercing eyes walked quickly down the cobblestone streets of Cracow, Poland. She carried a schoolbag with books on her back. Hurriedly, she climbed the steps of a big building and entered the doors of her school, "Povachechne", the local elementary public school. Beside her desk sat her classmates; Monya, Maria and Branya. These were fair-haired, blue-eyed Polish Christian girls. Little Sarah took her seat and listened intently to the teacher's lesson.

Who is she, this bright, intelligent, studious girl with the soulful eyes? None other than the one, whom we now know as the mother of the Bais Yaakov movement of today. For little Sarah grew up to be the dynamic, brilliant architect of religious education for girls in all corners of the globe,— the renowned, respected and much admired Sarah Schenierer, עי"ה.

Sarah was born in the city of Cracow, Poland, in the month of Tamuz 5643, corresponding to the secular calendar year of 1883. Her father was Reb Betzalel HaCohen עי"ה, from Tirnau, a descendant of the famous "Shach", Rav Shabsi HaCohen זצ"ל. Her mother's family traced its lineage to the world renowned "Bach," זצ"ל.

Sarah thrilled to hear her father tell her stories about her paternal grandmother, Rebetzen Shaina Faiga, עי"ה. A great, pious and modest Tzadekes, Rebetzen Shaina Faiga was known for her charitable and kind deeds. She would brave the frostiest weather in order to carry steaming hot glasses of tea

to the young boys learning Torah in the local yeshiva.

Sarah's father led a warm, truly Jewish religious home. He and his wife imbued their children with a love for Hashem and the Torah. Her father was an ardent Belzer Chasid. In fact, he was as close as a family member to the holy Belzer Rebbe, Reb Yehoshua Rokeach, זצ"ל.

Sarah was forced, as mentioned previously, to attend the local Public School, as everyone did. Already at the tender age of six, though, her classmates would poke gentle fun at her and nickname her "Chasidke", meaning "Chasidiste", or the pious one. They were referring to her strong religious attitudes, to be sure. Always a diligent student, Sarah excelled in all of her studies. Year after year, she won first prize for being the very best student. After seven years of schooling, Sarah graduated elementary school with high honors.



2. ONEG SHABBOS

The aroma of freshly baked challos permeates the house. Fresh chickens roasted, and the house full of excited, hurried preparations in honor of the Shabbos Queen. As Sarah helps with the chores in the house, she eagerly looks forward to her very own special weekly Shabbos enjoyment. For her, there was no greater pleasure than delving into the beautiful Midrashim and Agodos, stories of the Talmud, as she read them from her beloved Tze'ena U're'ena. After the Shabbos day meal, she settled on her favorite couch, sefer in hand. She was now totally oblivious to anything and everything around her.

"Come in, please!" called her sister as the sound of loud knocking was heard at their door.

As Rachel, Chanie and Devora tumbled into the room, their gales of laughter and chatter filled the air. Happy sounds of youngsters singing and dancing resounded throughout the house. Then there were games, ordinary weekday games. Games without specific Jewish content or themes. And the girls chattered on, their mundane and meaningless words floating through the window, onto the Cracow streets below.

Presently, Sarah looked up from her reading. Looking intently at the girls at play, a thought disturbed her mind.

"Is that all there is to Shabbos for these girls? Why, it doesn't seem different than the games they play all week. Can they really feel happy this way?"

Devora noticed Sarah's intent gaze upon her.

"Come and join us! Can't you stop reading already?"

"Well, Devora, I can't believe that you're not getting bored of all these silly games. All the time!"

"Oh, you're just too religious, Sarah. That's your problem." Sarah sadly returned to her precious sefer, Nachlas Tzvi. Sad, not because she had been insulted. She was above that. But her heart nagged her with feelings of pity, for her sister and her friends, for all Jewish girls, who felt no meaning of Shabbos in their souls — no feeling of special Shabbos joy. There were no groups, no clubs, no meeting places for a traditional Jewish girl to belong to and attend, to enjoy, to feel, this special holy day...

3. SARAH THE SEAMSTRESS

Sarah's parents were constantly busy in their fabric store. Previously, this had been a decent source of support for the family. Lately, however, business was very slow, and their financial situation worsened. Money in the house was scarce. Sarah was a little older now, and began to realize the great pressure this was causing her parents. What could she do to help?

She thought of leaving home and working, but that thought bothered her. She preferred to remain within the security of her own warm Jewish home, and decided to work from there.

"A needle, and thread!" she exclaimed. With her characteristic diligence, she put her mind to learning the art of sewing. Never taking a professional course, she persisted and experimented until she mastered the techniques of dressmaking.

"Perel was absolutely thrilled!" said her sister one day. "That royal blue dress you sewed for her was simply stunning! Her parents said your work is quite professional!"

"Thank you," Sarah said modestly, as she thanked Hashem for her success. And Perel told Masha, and Masha told Chavie, and Chavie told Raizy and Gitty and ... soon the word was out.

"A suit for Yom Tov, please. I have **purchased the finest** ivory linen and I must have it in time for Pesach!"

"Sarah, please, this burgundy tafetta must be tailored in the latest fashion; exclusive! Puff the sleeves with plenty of foam underneath, and flare the skirt with this huge metal hoop. I



have a cousin's wedding in Warsaw in ten days, and I must look just fabulous!"

"Sarah, maybe it's my imagination, but I think the left side of this gabardine skirt is longer than the right side. Could you lift it up one-eighth of an inch, please? I am always meticulous in my dress, and I wouldn't dream of being seen this way in public!"

Sarah, the seamstress, sat patiently at her sewing machine, its low hum continuing on through the evening and into the hours of the night. Carefully, honestly, she put heart and soul into everything she did. And as the needle continued its path through the endless seams, Sarah thought about her customers. She pondered about their general attitudes and concerns. Such meticulous attention they paid to every minute detail of every twist of fabric and every inch of thread! And then there were the mothers, who kept thronging at her doorstep, with their little girls. They insisted on the ultimate, the very best in fashion and designer styles for their five and six year old little girls... And such innocent, wide-eyed little girls they were! Precious girls with precious neshomos deep inside. Their mothers clamored for elegant clothes, and were totally obsessed with this pursuit. But didn't the neshomos of these precious children need attention too? While their bodies were gracefully attired with the finest and best, their hearts were quite empty of feeling for our glorious Jewish heritage. Why couldn't they learn about Hashem, our beautiful world, and our wonderful Torah? Our glorious Avos and Imahos, the miracles of Mitzrayim, and so much, much more!

These thoughts tugged at Sarah's heart, once again stirring strong feelings of unrest and pity... if only... if only something could be done...

4. COLD WINDS BLOWING

Reb Yossel stood behind the counter of the general store on Main Street. The Friday afternoon rush was on, as customers hurried to and fro, gathering up the last minute items they needed for Shabbos. Large sacks of beans, rice and sugar stood side by side with huge barrels containing tantalizing salty herring and shmaltz herring. Sarah was carefully placing some pieces of herring into the wrapping paper for her family's Shalosh Seudos meal.

"Hi there, Sarah! My, it's been ages since I've seen you last!"

It was her cousin Luba, whom she had truthfully not seen in many weeks. Luba was closely related to her but Sarah did not have too much to do with her lately. She had the feeling that Luba was interested in different things than she was, with different ideas, opinions and connections.

"Hello, Luba. How are you feeling? How are your parents and family?"

"Oh, fine, just fine," bubbled Luba, as she fetched out a fistful of juicy herring and wrapped it in newspaper.

"How about joining me tonight, Sarah? There's a terrific get-together this evening — you know the group I belong to, "Rus"? All the girls are coming and it'll be just super! I'll pick you up after tonight's Shabbos meal."

Sarah carefully thought for a moment. The name "Rus" was familiar to her. She had heard of many Jewish girls getting together in "Rus" groups and listening to lectures as well. It probably couldn't be all that terrible... Packing up her

purchases, she nodded to Luba.

"All right, I'll see you at eight o'clock, then, B'ezras Hashem."

"Great!"

Friday night arrived. The Seudas Shabbos, the first Shabbos evening meal was over. Sarah said Birchas Hamazon and helped clear the table. Soon, she met Luba and the two girls were off...

Excited voices floated through the windows of the large building, where the "Rus" group had assembled for their Friday night meeting. Sarah and her cousin approached the building and stepped inside. Friendly greetings of Shabbat Shalom were heard. Sarah looked around her, scanning the large dimly lit room. There was a crowd of nice Jewish girls here, from fine Jewish families. Sarah hesitantly took a seat on a vacant chair, curious as to what would transpire. Suddenly a hush, as an older counselor entered the room. "Shabbat Shalom," she called out cheerfully to the crowd of assembled eager faces. Briskly, the counselor walked over to the side of the room... and switched on the large lamp...

Sarah sat in her place, frozen in shock! Sheer disbelief... which turned to revulsion... So this was it! Chilul Shabbos b'farhesia! Public, unabashed desecration of the holy Shabbos! Sarah sat still, refusing to believe what her eyes had just seen. While she had suspected that the "Rus" group might not be extremely religious, actually seeing them go this far astray was unimaginable! As Sarah sat still, glued to her seat in shock, she heard the counselor begin her lecture. Her heartbeat quickened and her head ached as she heard words of absolute kefirah, denial of things holy to a Torah-true Jew. A torrent of anti-Jewish ideas was coming from the mouth of the counselor!

Sarah looked about her in deep dismay, as she noted how all the assembled girls listened ever so attentively to the lecturer's

words. "Ribono Shel Olom!" she cried in her heart. "These are all fine good Jewish daughters, children of Avrohom Avinu ע"ה! Why, I even recognize some. There's Aidel, the daughter of Reb Tzvi, a devoted Chassidic Jew; and there sits Blima, whose father Reb Alter learns four hours nightly, after a long hard day's work! Their mothers are now probably reading the weekly portion in the Tze'ena U're'ena, while their fathers pore over their large Gemorras! How a heart is filled with pain to think of their parents' reaction, if they only knew where their daughters were at the present moment! What greater tragedy could they envision; their children drinking the poisonous philosophies of these troubled times, instead of the sweet, lifegiving waters of our holy heritage!"

And at that moment, the thought that had always nagged at Sarah's subconscious, crystallized into a realistic plan. These girls must have an environment of their own... a truly Jewish traditional, authentic setting. Being Jewish was more than having chicken soup on Friday night, more than speaking some words in Hebrew, that defiled the Holy Tongue. Downcast, Sarah left the auditorium. She slowly trodded the grassy path homeward, surrounded in the cool Friday night air by the whispers of the green leaves.

Yes, cold winds were blowing, blowing strongly at Am Yisroel, and threatening to break the branches off their strong, deeply rooted family trees.

Alien youth groups had opened schools where they spoke in the Yiddish language. They spoke in Yiddish, but the things they taught were all against the Torah. Other foreign groups had opened Tarbut schools, where they used the language of Hebrew. They taught in Hebrew, but again, their teachings taught the students to go against the Mitzvos. All these groups had invaded the cities of Poland with their clubs, schools, newspapers and politics; with their heretical thoughts and

teachings.

What is the language of Yiddish without true Yiddishe content? What is the HolyTongue-Loshon Hakodesh — when stripped of its holiness, of its Kedusha? Just a tongue, a loшон, a language like sixty-nine others, and worse! And more and more Jewish children and Jewish youth were being ensnared in its trap, out of ignorance, for lack of anything better...

Sarah was determined, as she stepped up to her front garden, a prayer in her heart...

5. FOOTSTEPS ONWARD

Do we ever stop and examine some of the Hashgacha Pratis, the special providence and personal guidance of Hashem, that is part of every minute of every day? Everything that occurs, even a scratch on a finger, is "Bashert", ordained from Above, Chazal tell us. Every footstep we take is planned, and purposeful.

The year was 5674-1914. On Tisha B'Av of that year, World War I broke out in all its ferocity. There was turmoil and upheaval in those uncertain and frightening times. The people in Cracow, as well as Jews in many other cities and countries, were forced to uproot themselves and their belongings, and wander to places where they thought they might be safer. Once again, the Jew put his sack over his shoulders and, stick in hand, wandered through Galus.... Sarah and her family headed towards Vienna, Austria. Little did Sarah know, that through special Hashgacha Pratis, her very own special Divine Providence, her footsteps to Vienna were bringing her that much closer towards the fulfillment of her dreams.....

"It's nearly two weeks now," Sarah's mother sighed deeply. The family was utterly exhausted and drained of strength. For thirteen days now, they had been literally walking and living in the open streets of Vienna. Thousands of people crowded the streets, refugees from many countries, near and far. All were looking for basic safety, a roof over their heads, and meager portions of food to eat. In the Jewish quarter of Vienna there were simply no apartments to be gotten. Sarah walked

on and on, continuing her search. She passed houses and trees, buildings and gardens, until finally reaching Amperdampher Strasse. On the porch of a neat little house was a gray-haired Viennese woman named Marta. She sat on a rocking chair, busily knitting.

"Do you perchance know of any available rooms for rent?" queried Sarah desperately.

And Baruch Hashem, she met with success. Marta agreed to rent two rooms to Sarah and her family.

A roof over their heads, at last! But, no sooner had they settled into their new apartment, when a new worry beset Sarah's mind. In their desperation to find living quarters, they had not realized how far they were now living from the Jewish quarter! The Jewish quarter was the main Jewish neighborhood where most of the Shuls and Yeshivos were located.

"Why, this must be at least one hour's walk to the Schiff-Schule! What will we do? I know of no Shul that is closer! Where will we daven?"

Her good landlady Marta had overheard Sarah's words. Looking up from her huge pot of soup, ladle in hand, she said:

"If you mean you're interested in a religious Synagogue, you might try the one on Shtumper Gasse. If I'm not mistaken, there is an Orthodox House of Prayer located there."

Another link in the chain of Hashgacha Pratis. First, Hashem led Sarah's footsteps to Vienna. Then, she was led to two little rooms, in a particular vicinity. And now, Hashem was leading her to a Shul, a very special Shul. For in this Shul, the idea of Bais Yaakov was born in Sarah's mind!

Friday afternoon. Preparations for the Shabbos were nearly done. Sarah hurried to finish one last errand before candle lighting time.

She went to the shelf where they kept the precious Seforim

that they had taken with them from Cracow. She reached for a Chumash as well as a Siddur, and with them securely in her arms, she rushed to bring them over to the Shul on Shtumper Gasse. She wanted to be sure to have them on Shabbos morning for Tefilas Shacharis.

When Sarah arrived at the Shul, Reb Velvel the Shamash, the devoted caretaker of the Shul, was already there. Broom in hand, he was gathering the last fluffs of dust from the corners, anxious to have the Shul a-sparkling in honor of Shabbos. Snowy white tablecloths covered the tables. The Seforim were reverently in place.

"Good day to you. You needn't have bothered to hurry and bring your Chumash and Siddur here," Reb Velvel said as Sarah entered. "We are well supplied here and have plenty of Seforim for all the women who come to pray."

A surge of joy raced through Sarah's heart as she heard these words. For these words meant that Yiddishkeit, Judaism, was alive and well in Vienna, in her little neighborhood. It meant that there was a vibrant group of traditional religious women in her surrounding area. Happily, she returned home quickly to kindle the Shabbos candles with joy.

On Shabbos morning, Sarah donned her black silk dress, as she customarily did. Always carefully well-groomed, she maintained her high standards of modesty in quiet simplicity. The frigid winter air blew a gust of wind on her face as she opened the door and entered the Shul on Shtumper Gasse.



6. WORDS OF FIRE

A hush descended over the congregants before the prayer of Musaf began. All eyes turned to the Rabbi the esteemed Rav Flesch, leader of the congregation. He stood draped in his Talis, facing the waiting assemblage.

"What is the meaning of this?" inquired Sarah of her neighbor. Puzzled, she wondered what procedure would follow next.

"Why, our Rabbi is preparing to deliver his customary speech. Today is Shabbos Chanukah, and the Rabbi will speak on the topic of the day."

Intrigued by this custom, unfamiliar to her from Cracow, Sarah sat eagerly awaiting the Rav's words.

The words flowed forth, fiery words from a fiery heart. Sarah listened, enthralled.....

"Chanukah.... festival of lights.... Dedication of our Holy Temple... What does it symbolize for us today? Why did the Jews of those days merit such miracles, such great victories over a powerful foe?

The answer, my dear brothers and sisters, lies in their spirit. The spirit of Kedusha, of holiness and purity, that ignited Matisyohu to action, that fired bravery into the hearts of Yehuda Hamacabee and his valiant brothers... They were sparked by a fierce love of Hashem and the Torah, a fierce loyalty and ardent zeal Staunch pride in being Jewish and upholding the Torah's concepts of a holy Jewish life, in direct opposition to the materialistic, hedonistic Greek culture.

The Greeks upheld the worship of the body as an end unto itself, as their main goal in life. They tried with all their might to coerce the Jewish nation to abandon their holy Mitzvos and the Torah's teachings, and to follow their ways.

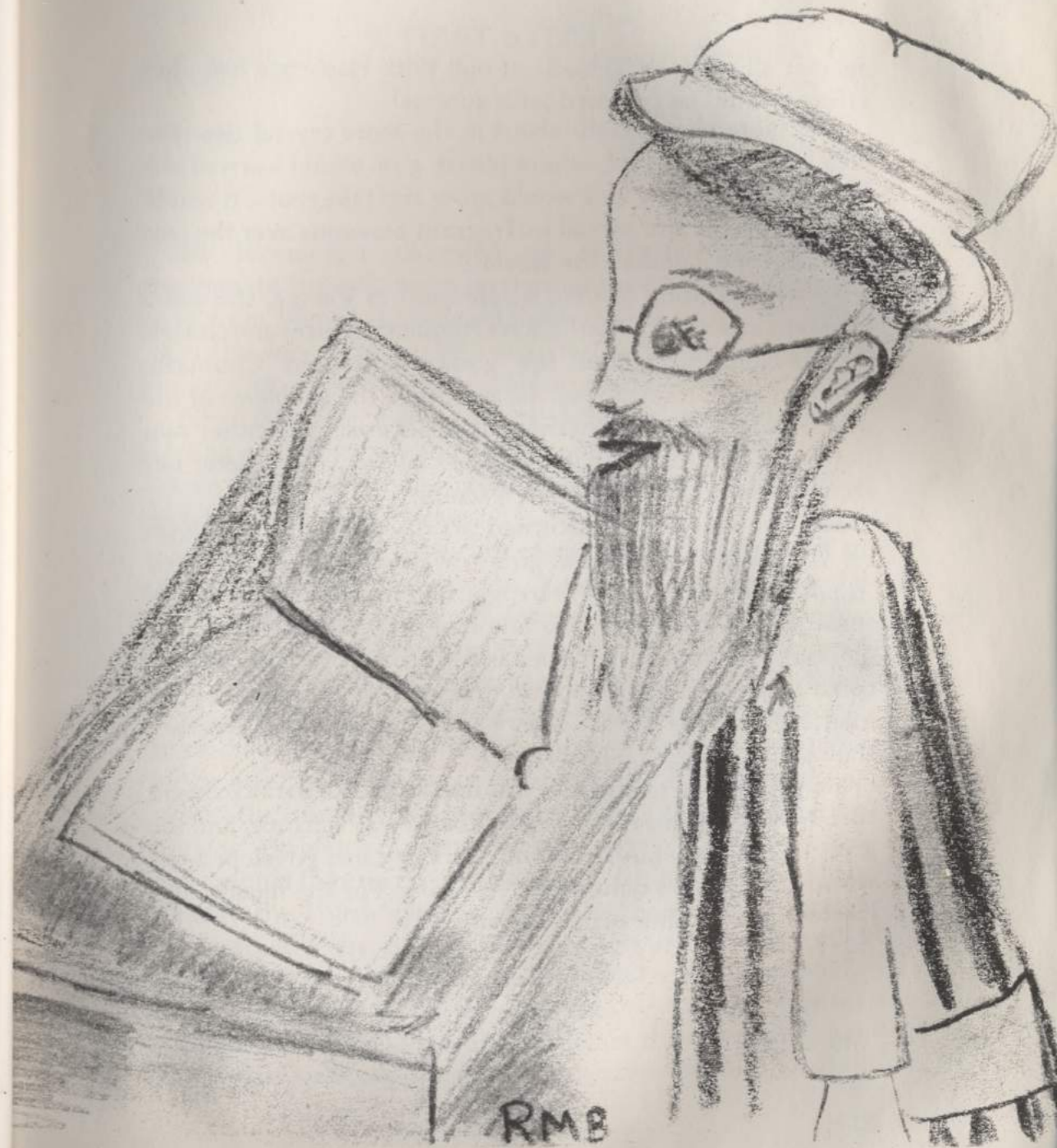
It was a war of the holiest magnitude, and the Mesiras Nefesh, the self-sacrifice of the Chashmonaim, merited for them their great victory!

The Jewish woman too, shared the idealism and self sacrifice in the Chanukah miracle. Yehudis, the noble, prestigious woman of valor, inspired by holiness, purest motives and highest goals, literally risked her life in a daring plan to rescue the Jews! She is a symbol for us all today, and for all generations to come. The Jewish woman must carry on the battle to preserve Judaism, against those who wish to destroy it. It is your holy task, dear sisters, to convey the Torah in all its glory to the next generation; in this way, the golden chain of Sinai remains intact forever, till we merit greeting our long-awaited Redeemer, may he come quickly in our days!"

Tears glistened in Sarah's eyes. Heart pounding, thoughts racing, the spirited words of the Rav instilled in her heart new fountains of spirit and energy, determination and zeal!

How she wished she could, with a sweep of the hand, bring all the women of Cracow to this little Shul at this very moment. If only they could hear the words that she had just heard, so that their spirits could be kindled as was hers!

The spirit of Yehudis surged within her, long after she had returned home and had eaten the Shabbos day meal. Yes! She would begin with the women of Cracow; she would gather them around and speak to their hearts. She would try to explain the dire necessity of a Torah-true educational system for the Jewish girl. Some would mock her, some would sneer, and others just wouldn't understand... But she would persist. She would persevere with Mesiras Nefesh, self-sacrifice



against all odds, as Yehudis of old! With Hashem's help, her efforts would be crowned with success!

The more she thought about it, the more crystal clear the idea became. A school, where Jewish girls would learn of our holy heritage... The idea would grow and take root... It would begin to bloom and spread its fragrant blossoms over the face of all Europe... and all the world...

For the duration of time Sarah spent in Vienna, she was a constant attendee of Rav Flesch's frequent lectures and classes. In his shul, throughout the week, he taught Chumash, Tehillim and Pirkay Avos, and discussed the problems of the day. Sarah avidly wrote down all of his lessons. Neither rain nor snow, nor the frequent ravages of war, could deter her from attending, listening and learning.

More and more, she discerned that the root of the problem — the apathy of Cracow girls towards Judaism, was their total ignorance. They were ignorant of who they were and from where they came. No one had ever told them of their glorious past, of Jewish heroes and heroines, of ancestors they could truly be proud of; and so, the girls of Poland were cold, indifferent to the Torah. They had no inkling of the treasure they were discarding. Ignorance!

And yet, for the moment, it was impossible for Sarah to begin turning her dreams into a reality. For it was wartime, and the grim horrors of starvation and suffering had enveloped the world. The Jewish nation was suffering. For the meanwhile, Hashem wanted her plans to wait.

7. FIRST STEPS

The locomotive chugged on through the ravaged countryside. It was summer, in the month of Av. Sarah rode on away from Vienna, homeward, back to Cracow.

On the very first day of her arrival in Cracow, she made contact with some religious older acquaintances.

"Why, certainly, Sarah. I'll be delighted to attend your meeting and I'll spread the word amongst my friends."

A lovely group of older religious women met at the hall of the Cracow Orphan Home.

"Certainly, Sarah," they all reassured her. "We're all in complete agreement with you. Your plans to educate the young Jewish girls are novel, far-sighted and praiseworthy. We wish you much hatzlacha, success, in all your endeavors."

But as Sarah returned home, her mind was not at ease. True, all the older, religious women agreed with her ideas and aspirations. But how would the young girls from all over the city be affected? They were her hope, the substance of her dreams, the future mothers of Israel. Why, the problem facing religious Yeshiva students in those days was truly acute; whom would they marry? All young Jewish girls of those days attended the Polish gymnasium (high school). What sort of homes would these girls build? What sort of education could they, as mothers, possibly transmit to the next generation?

How could she break through the icy barrier of these estranged hearts? If she could only whet their appetites, get them to but taste and sample the delicacies the Torah had to



offer them...

Undaunted, Sarah rushed to the printer.

"Reb Shimon, one hundred posters on a rush job, please. Here is the text."

The signs went up — the word was out.

On Shabbos afternoon, Sarah Schenierer sat facing forty young Cracow girls, all curious as to the intent of this meeting.

"My dear girls! A man owned a beautiful garden, with succulent fruits and rare blossoms. Would he ever dream of leaving it unguarded, unfenced? It would certainly be easy prey for robbers and wild animals. The wise owner erects a fence, to protect the treasures of his priceless garden.

This week's Pirkey Avos tells us: "ועשו סגל לתורה" — "And you shall make a fence for the Torah."

Our Torah is a priceless garden; its Mitzvos, the luscious fruit and rare blossoms. The Shabbos, for example, a priceless

fruit of this garden, carries many forbidden actions with it. In order to be sure we wouldn't tamper with these forbidden labors, our Chazal have established the concept of "Muktzah". One classification of "Muktzah" is that we are not permitted to move an object, for this might lead to actually doing a forbidden labor with it. So the concept of Muktzah is the fence that guards the wonderful fruit of the garden."

Nowadays, Sarah Schenierer's words would have been familiar and pleasant to our ears. A vivid parable, a pretty picture indelibly printed on our minds. But in those days of icy indifference, the thick layers covering the heart could not be penetrated so easily.

The girls shifted uneasily in their seats.

"I don't believe it," Rosa whispered to her neighbor, another young girl of fifteen. "Is this what she actually called us here for?? To tell us these old-fashioned ideas in this modern day



and age! Imagine! In the twentieth century!"
Minna glanced back at Rosa, a snickering smile on her curling lips. Silently, they stood up and left the hall.

The others followed suit and filed out quietly, one by one. Soon, Sarah sat facing an empty hall.

8. THE LETTER

To My Dear Brother Meshulam ״ג׳:

Now that the holy Yomim Noraim and the joyous holiday of Succos have passed, I find the time to sit down and pour out to you the troubles of my heart.

The travails of the past few months have been unbelievably difficult. As you know, over the Yomim Tovim, husbands and fathers left their homes, as usual, in mass pilgrimage, each to his respective Rebbe.

In joy they leave, eager to drink in the reviving waters of the Torah spirit that they get at the courtyard of the Rebbe. They stock up on Torah, Tefilah, Bitachon and Chizuk; the fervor of the Chassidic warmth, song and joy keeps their souls kindled and warm throughout the long winter ahead.

The older women attend the Shul, daven regularly, and shed tears, as in days of old. But I have seen the young girls, the new generation, staring in disbelief, in mockery. Our hallowed customs and traditions have little meaning for them. On the one hand, they do not understand. And on the other hand, the temptations of the modern world-fashion, culture and secular education-exert an unrelenting pressure on their tender souls, pulling them far, far away...

Our neighbor, Mrs. B., has a tragic story to tell. Unfortunately, it is only one of too many such tales. One sad morning two years ago, she found a note on her kitchen table. It was from her eldest daughter, Reczscu. In it, the girl excused herself for leaving the house... for good... She could no longer

stand the tightness of the Ghetto life. Her Gymnasium (Polish Public High School) education had borne bitter fruit; she was now off to "marry" a totally assimilated and irreligious fellow — without a Chupah, of course.

Mrs. B's three other daughters have not left-yet. But their eyes and their hearts are far, far away... They graze in foreign pastures...

And then, she has only her youngest, twelve year old Raizy, for comfort. Maybe her innocent pure eyes will not lose their holy luster. My daughter, do not go astray; do not wander to gather in alien fields...

"...בתי אל תלכי ללקט..." (רות)

My dear brother, Meshulam. This is what gives me no rest. And hard as it is, and insurmountable as the obstacles seem, I refuse to give up.

This past Erev Yom Kippur, my emotions overtook me. Pictures of scenes in our glorious past swarmed in my mind... When the Bais Hamikdash stood in all its glory... the beauty and majesty of the Kohen Godol performing the holy Avodah, the special Yom Kippur service... the ceremony of sending the goat to Azazel, in the far desert...and the indescribable joy that Klal Yisroel experienced when the red thread turned white, and they knew that Hashem had forgiven their sins.

But today — what have we left of all the splendor of the past? Today our Tefilah, prayer, and the service of the heart, are meant to replace the service of the Bais Hamikdash. But where are the hearts and the service of the girls of today? The girls who understand almost nothing of our precious Siddur...

As for myself, why should it bother me if people snicker and mock at my plans? And besides, why should my personal honor play a role in the matter at all? Even if I am shamed, sneered at,

and degraded, I know my aims are holy and true. And since this is so, I am sure that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will ultimately make my work successful...

As the Yom Kippur service drew to a close, the Chazan called out the words: "...קוה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ"

"Hope to Hashem, be strong and strengthen your heart..."

My Neshoma was infused with a strong sense of hope and faith. And as the Chazan proclaimed, "ה' לי ולא אירא" I truly felt that Hashem was with me. I am not afraid!

My dear Meshulam; I have seen the difficulties in dealing with the teenage girls in Cracow. They are so set in their ways, so accustomed to their old bad habits, that all my work is not producing the positive results that I wish to see...

And so now, my thoughts turn to the little sheep... the small, innocent youngsters, the little precious girls of our nation, that have not yet tasted the flavor of sin... they are soft and bendable, as a young tree's branches.

I write to you at this time, dear brother, for your advice and opinion on my current plans... I envision a school, a Jewish religious school, where little girls can begin learning Aleph-Bais, Brochos, and hear stories from our holy Torah... I will announce my plans throughout Cracow... throughout Poland... so that Jewry will awaken to their responsibility of educating their daughters, the next generation of young girls, as observant Jewesses.

And from learning to action... small girls beginning at an early age to learn of the Mitzvos, will grow into fine, observant young ladies, devoted Torah-true mothers, guarantors that the teachings of Sinai are transmitted intact to their children, forever...

I anxiously await your reply and wise counsel.

Yours,
Sarah

10. BREAKTHROUGH!

"Here it is — Number 10 Forest Road — Family Kohn."

Sarah checked the name off on her list. It was a list she had worked hard on compiling. She had recorded all the names of her customers and their young girls. It was for them that she had worked hard, sewing brand new dresses. Now, she had come to offer them clothing for their souls.

Her companion on this particular day was the well known Rebitzen Halberstam, granddaughter of the Sanzer Rebbe זצ"ל. Together, they ascended the steps and sounded the brass knocker.

Seated in the comfortable Kohn parlor, Sarah explained the purpose of their visit.

"And so, Frau Kohn, I offer to take complete responsibility for your darling daughter, Bayla. Entrust her into my hands. For the sake of Hashem and the Torah, and our responsibility for the Torah-true education of our daughters, I will not disappoint you!"

Her sincerity reached the heart of her listener. Sarah was already well known as a competent, warm, motherly and friendly person. She would surely make the perfect teacher — Frau Kohn could easily see that. And as far as Jewish religious education for girls was concerned, it sounded like an interesting and novel idea. Frau Kohn was certainly not against it, and decided to give it a try...

From house to house, from family to family, from customer to customer, Sarah wended her way.

To Frau Tabakovitz and Frau Gabiofska, to Frau Berelowich and Frau Greenberger, Sarah talked, explained, begged and pleaded.

"Lend me your Faigele for but a few hours every day. I'll return her to you a true Bas Yisroel — a pride to the Jewish nation!"

"Send your Goldy and little Devora'le to our new school. They'll grow up proud of being Jewish!"

Ignoring aching feet and battling fatigue, as usual, Sarah forged on. With Siyata D'Shmaya, help from Above, the sun had finally broken through the clouds...

Elated, Sarah held the list in her quivering hands. Twenty-five families had agreed to enroll their children in her school. They would form the nucleus of her fledgeling school.

With unbounded energy, the search for a suitable schoolroom was begun.

A little room, high upstairs, was finally selected.

Sarah Schenierer remarked that beginning with twenty-five students was very appropriate. It had the same numerical value as the word "כה" — 25. "כה תאמר לבית יעקב"

Hashem commanded Moshe Rabeinu: "So shall you speak to the House of Yaakov..." Rashi ז"ל explains: "These are the women." The Midrash Rabba comments: Moshe was commanded to first transmit the words of Hashem to the women of Israel. The women guide the children in the ways of the Torah. Through them, the holy Torah would be assured of continuity...

And so, following these guidelines, Sarah named her little school — "Bais Yaakov"...

11. SARAH'S SCHOOLROOM

A bright warm sun beamed down on the streets of Cracow. Malka'le and Mala, two excited little girls, donned crisp white Shabbos blouses, and dark blue skirts quite early in the morning. Yes! 'Twas truly indeed the very first day of Bais Yaakov in the whole wide world! Cheshvan תרע"ח — 1917-1918. Frau Heddlemanburg hurried down Old Main Road, her precious daughter Rivka'le tightly clutching her shopping bag. They shan't be late on the very first day!

Sarah Schenierer stood at the entrance of her little schoolroom. Its furnishings consisted of plenty of old benches.. and little else. They lacked standard schoolroom equipment, to be sure. They had no blackboard and no toys. They even lacked a table on which to eat.

Sarah wasn't bothered by these materialistic lacks. On the contrary; she felt that this was a place for spiritual accomplishments!

Radiantly, she embraced each and every precious child as they entered the classroom. A warm, pleasant atmosphere with love for every child.

Sweet sounds of Modeh Ani resounded throughout the room... Shining, smiling wide-eyed faces looked up at her, trustingly, eager to hear her every word.

"Nechama'le! Come up to Morah with the nice red apple your Mommy sent along with you! Tell me, do you know what Brocha to say before you take that first crunchy bite? Does anyone know what a Brocha means? Why we say it? Whom we



thank for all our food?"

Like thirsty little fish, twenty-five eager "Kinderlach" drank in every drop of Torah knowledge, masterfully brought down to their level. Age old Torah truths, ringing strong and true in every generation....

מורה: וואס ביסטו?
תלמידה: איך בין א אידיש קינד.
מורה: מיט וואס ביסטו א אידיש קינד?
תלמידה: איך בין א אידיש קינד ווייל איך האב די הייליגע תורה וואס דער הייליגער באשעפער האט אונז געגעבען.
מורה: וואס שטייט געשריבען אין דער הייליגער תורה?
תלמידה: אין דער הייליגער תורה שטייט געשריבען אז דער הייליגער באשעפער האט באשאפען די הימלען און די ערד.

Morah: What are you?

Talmidah: I am a Jewish child.

Morah: How are you a Jewish child?

Talmidah: I am a Jewish child because I have the holy Torah that was given to us by our Holy Creator.

Morah: What is written in the holy Torah?

Talmidah: In our holy Torah, it is written that Hashem created the heavens and the earth.

Day after day, the girls sang the tefilos in their melodious voices. They repeated the lessons and all the beautiful stories that they heard.

Sarah soon composed a report card. She listed all the areas that she considered vital to the Jewish education of her students.

STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Be sure to come punctually to classes. Do not be absent or miss lessons.
2. Act as befits a Jewish child; speak pleasantly, no arguing, no embarrassing, no wild behavior in the streets, beware of befriending children who can have negative influences on you.
3. Immediately upon awakening, say Modeh Ani and wash "Negel Vasser".
4. Before and after eating, be sure to recite the proper Brochos.
5. Wash hands and say "Al Netilas Yadayim" before eating bread. Also, say the "Shema" before going to sleep at night.
6. Absolutely no braiding or combing the hair on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

1. Please be sure that your child adheres faithfully to all of the above mentioned rules.
2. Any comments or complaints can be discussed at the Agudah office from 3:00-6:00 P.M.

* * * * *

Frau Hirsch came happily to school one morning accompanying her daughter. She had a little story to tell. "My six-year old Chane'le saw her brother Naftoli, 5, drinking water, but forgetting to say a proper Brocha. 'Ganov!', she called out. 'If you drink from the water that Hashem gives us, you **must** say a Brocha first!'

Frau Schenierer, were we surprised and happy to hear these words! It is obvious that Chane'le learned all this in your classroom," continued Frau Hirsch. "Needless to say, dear Frau Schenierer, we are all more than delighted!"

12. GROWING...

Kislev... Barely four weeks later, fifteen new students enrolled in the new Bais Yaakov school, bringing the total enrollment up to forty!

A Chassidic Jew approaches Sarah Schenierer with a question: "What are your aims and purposes in this new school?"

And Sarah replies: "My plans are not only to teach the girls to daven, to pray. In all probability, they would learn that without me, as well. My motive is to capture their souls, their very beings, with the excitement, enthusiasm, beauty and joy of being a Jew!"

The father was satisfied with this answer, and enrolled his daughter immediately. He became a major worker and supporter of the Bais Yaakov movement.

More and more parents enrolled their daughters... Sarah is forced to leave the first schoolroom and find quarters elsewhere... Eighty girls now attend Bais Yaakov. Sarah has engaged the assistance of a young girl, who had previously aided her with her sewing work.

Registration soared, as word spread, and the idea of Bais Yaakov caught on. Enrollment had reached a record 280 students...

Sarah is forced to think of a plan to divide up the school and provide each group with suitable teachers. But from where shall these teachers come? Certainly, teachers of other schools could not qualify — they would not meet Sarah's demanding

requirements in terms of Yiddishkeit, combined with love and dedication! What can she do?

Chanke and Esciu are two lovely young girls, barely thirteen years old. They seem to show leadership qualities, and are religious and friendly besides. Sarah decides to train them both with specific instructions and lessons. Before long, the two girls are teachers in the Bais Yaakov School.

And Bais Yaakov continues to grow...

Baila Gross was a young girl living in Poland. One day, an exciting event was advertised. It was a play, to be presented by the girls of the Bais Yaakov Elementary School of Cracow. The play was written and directed by Sarah Schenierer. Baila sat amongst the audience, thrilled to see a reenactment of the Chanukah story of Chana and her seven sons. The actresses had beautiful costumes, and the scenes were moving. The play touched her heart. The very next day, Baila's parents enrolled her in the Bais Yaakov school, as did many others...

But as Bais Yaakov's number of girls increased, so did its financial requirements. The burden was very great.

In תרע"ט-1919, an Agudah coalition was formed. Reb Motel Luksenberg, the dedicated father of a pupil, approached Sarah Schenierer with a plan to enlarge the schoolhouse. Together with Reb Meir Rappaport and Reb Moishe Deutscher they proposed to take upon themselves the financial responsibilities of the growing school. Sarah discussed the situation with the Bobover Rebbe, זצ"ל. He urged her to accept their plans.

One day, a visitor arrived at the school. A famous community activist, Reb Asher Spira זצ"ל, came to see for himself what Bais Yaakov looked like in action. He tested the girls on various subjects. He was well satisfied! The very best student received a special bonus — two Holland gulden!

Then he turned to Sarah Schenierer. Handing her the sum of ten gulden, he added: "Let these gulden be the basis of a new

Bais Yaakov building!"

Everyone smiled. But, he was a man of his word. By 1923, he had built a modest, one-story building with eight bright separate classrooms. The Bais Yaakov dream continued to unfold...

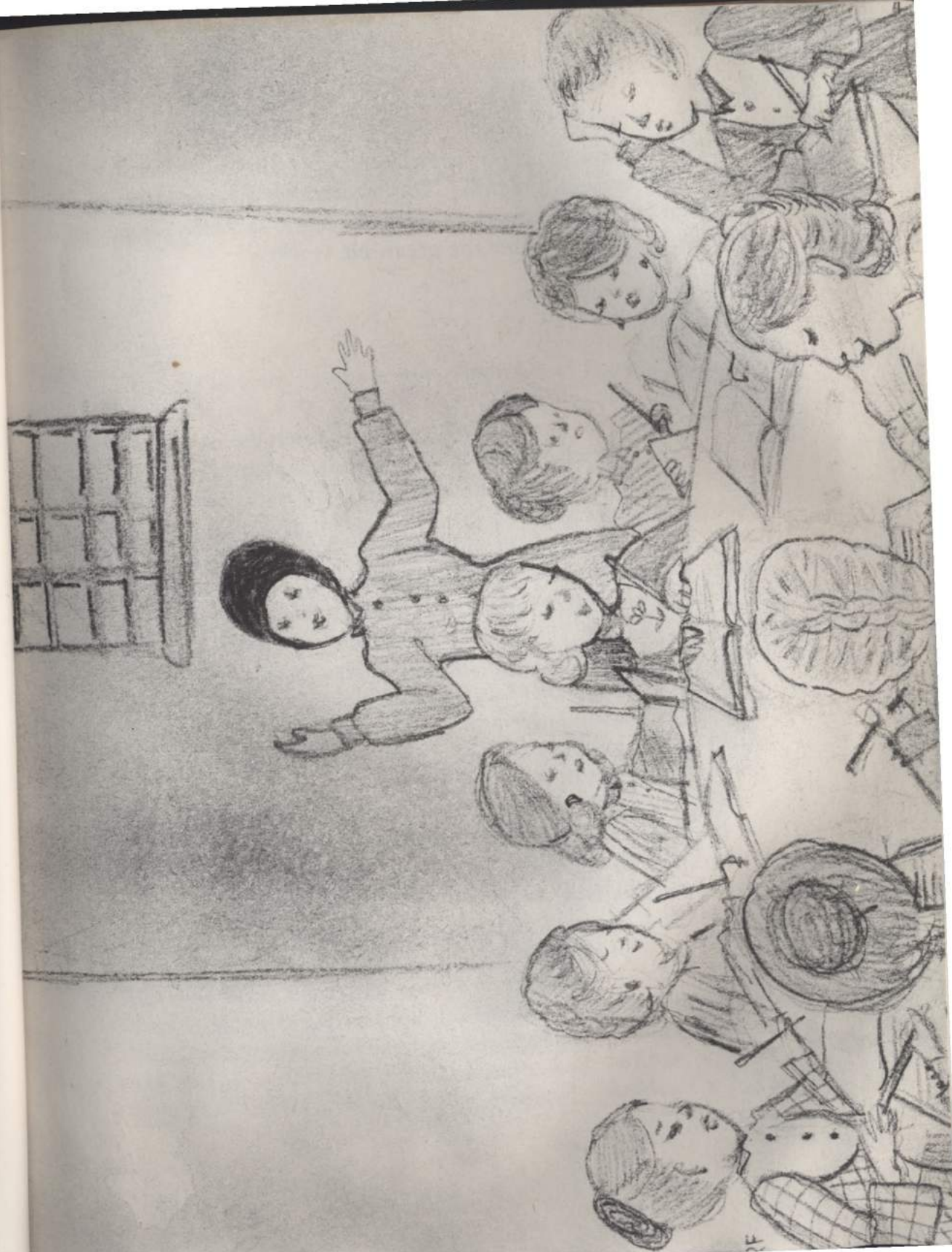
But, Bais Yaakov had already seen expansion. Two years earlier, new schools had already been established in the cities of Tirnau and Ostrowitz. But there was a problem: a lack of teachers. And as Bais Yaakov grew in Cracow, and expanded to other cities, this problem became more acute. Something had to be done!

The call for volunteers was on. About two dozen girls responded to Sarah's plea for teachers and agreed to attend her training sessions. And so, the first Teacher Training Program, a pioneer Seminary, was begun.

Tzivia and Ettel turned down a small street in the Ghetto, and made their way to the address of Katakczyna No. 1. They were on their way to Sarah Schenierer's small apartment, on the first floor of the building. Beyond the curtain partitioning off the kitchen, was a large room. This room was the center of activities. The girls sat crowded around the table with pens and notebooks. Those who did not fit around the table, leaned on their laps.

Sarah transmitted to them all that she had compiled. The lessons she had copied from lectures in Vienna. A teacher's guidebook that she herself had organized. The girls were busy... Copying, learning... Concrete lessons that they could transmit to their students.

Rav Meir Shapiro זצ"ל, the Lubliner Rav, visited a Bais Yaakov elementary school in session. He saw immediately the dire lack of teachers. He quickly dispatched several promising young girls to study under Sarah Schenierer's training program.



All these idealistic young girls lived and learned with Sarah Schenierer for some months. They shared her meager meals, and slept in crowded quarters, with much self-sacrifice. Soon, they were ready to enter the great, big world.

13. PIONEERS IN ACTION

"Chaya'le, aren't you nervous?" her friend Frumie wanted to know.

"Well, to tell you the truth..." said Chaya, "a little..."

Chaya hastily packed the rest of her necessities into a small leather bag. She adjusted her clothing and smoothed her hair. Everything was in order, she hoped. Today was the big day. Momentarily, she was to meet Frau Schenierer at the train station. She was to accompany Sarah Schenierer to a small town, in order to establish yet another Bais Yaakov school, with her, Chaya, as the teacher...

Heart pounding faster than usual, she bade Frumie a hasty farewell. Frumie wished her well and Chaya was off.

Sitting in the train, with Sarah Schenierer beside her, Chaya'le tried to memorize a speech. It was a speech that she was due to present to the townspeople of the forthcoming town. Being fifteen years of age, (almost), Chaya tried very hard to look and act as grownup and mature as possible. As the train chugged on, she memorized the lines of the speech, telling of the role of the Jewish woman, past and present.

Finally, they arrived in the town of B. Luggage in hand, Frau Schenierer and Chaya walked down the road to the center of the town, on their way to their temporary lodging rooms. Townspeople began to look, notice and murmur. The idea of Bais Yaakov was not overly popular in all cities and towns, as yet. Many people had confused and wrong notions of what Bais Yaakov was, and why it was initiated. Suddenly, Chaya



felt some rocks being hurled at her feet... Shocked and dismayed, she tugged at Frau Schenierer's sleeve, petrified. "Do not worry, my child. Let us not concern ourselves with two or three misguided individuals. They will yet learn, they will yet see... As for us, we shall not be deterred. On the contrary! We will take these rocks, and use them as our foundation stones; with them, we shall build a strong and tall Bais Yaakov building..."

Such was the attitude and outlook of Sarah Schenierer on all occasions. Throughout all her trials and tribulations, and there were many; despite all the confrontations with cynical, scornful people who could not, or would not, understand her goals, Sarah persevered on. For the sake of Hashem and the Torah, nothing was too difficult.

Onward she walked with Chaya at her side.

Very soon, the word was out. Posters went up in the small town. "A gast in shtetel!" (A guest in town.)

The very next day, the entire town was out to greet the two newcomers in the Town Hall. Some who came were doubtful, others were genuinely interested. Frau Schenierer accompanied Chaya, until she stood facing the entire assembled crowd of women.

At first, Chaya's voice quivered, but soon, she gained confidence and her words rang out loudly and clearly. The young girl held the audience spellbound. At the conclusion of her speech, she received a rousing applause!

Sarah Schenierer then personally appealed to the townspeople to establish a Bais Yaakov in their midst. By now, they wholeheartedly agreed. Chaya was eagerly accepted as the Head Morah.

Sarah Schenierer soon left the town of B. and Chaya behind. Soon she was to resume her travels to yet another village, with

the next promising Morah.

Zelda Ravitz was headed towards the city of Skierniewitz with Frau Schenierer at her side. They arrived in the city at 3:00 A.M. The night air was silent and still. Two religious girls were waiting for them at the train station. Together, they made their way in the darkness. The roads were soggy and muddy. Their feet sank in deeply as they walked. Courageously, they reached their lodgings.

The next day, at the assembled gathering, Sarah Schenierer stood begging and pleading to the listeners, with all her heart. Explaining the dire necessity of a Bais Yaakov school in those times, she roused the people to action.

But from somewhere in the crowd, disturbing voices were heard. Some rowdy, young girls had purposely interrupted Sarah's speech. They spoke up negatively, and were bent on interfering with the proposed Bais Yaakov plans. Sarah Schenierer answered them patiently and slowly. In quiet tones, she tried to calm them and quiet them down. The meeting turned out successfully. Zelda was due to stay on as the accepted Morah.

However, Sarah Schenierer was too keen-sighted to leave the city at that. As a devoted mother would, she felt in her heart that the rowdy girls boded no good in that town. She could not bear to think of leaving "her" Zelda exposed to their possible future trouble-making. So, she called the rowdy girls to her room. She spoke to them privately for many hours. She explained some more, into the wee hours of the morning. Finally, she had them persuaded! They were now on her side, on the Bais Yaakov "team". These young girls soon proved themselves to be devoted workers for the Bais Yaakov movement.

Confident now, Sarah Schenierer was able to return home, her mind at ease.

"הזורעים בדמעה...."

Sarah truly sowed, worked hard, with tears and sweat.

ברנה יקצורו" (תהלים)

They shall surely reap in joy.

14. THE NEW BAIS YAAKOV TEACHER'S SEMINARY OF CRACOW

Many foreign guests are traveling from all over the world to the city of Cracow. They will be arriving in honor of the Central Convention of the World Agudas Yisrael, which is to be held in Cracow. Many important and influential people visit Bais Yaakov and are all very enthused.

Dr. Shmuel (Leo) Deutschlander זצ"ל was one of the main Agudas Yisrael leaders in those days. He headed the Keren Hatorah Fund, which granted funds for Torah learning. Everyone enthusiastically agreed to accept Bais Yaakov under their wing, and grant them much needed funds. Dr. Deutschlander announced a special Bais Yaakov Conference to be held in Warsaw.

Silence reigned in the large hall at the Bais Yaakov Conference in Warsaw. Each prestigious speaker spoke at the dais, in great praise of the Bais Yaakov movement. Soon, Reb Asher Spir a stood up with his report:

"In 1920, only three years after the inception of Bais Yaakov in Sarah Schenierer's little schoolroom, enrollment had risen to 300 girls. One year later, four new Bais Yaakov Schools were established in the vicinity with 940 students. By 1924, the world was astonished with the establishment of fifty-four new schools throughout Poland, as well as in many neighboring countries.

B'ezras Hashem, we are all witnessing today a super phenominal growth of a major Torah institution, before our very eyes!"

Dr. Deutschlander was totally committed to Bais Yaakov and its Teacher Training Program. Two important resolutions of this conference were:

1) In obvious view of the urgent need of teacher training programs, two-month Summer Programs would be initiated. They would be comprehensive programs for the current Seminary students, as well as for the current teachers of all existing Bais Yaakov schools.

2) To establish a Bais Yaakov Seminary building in Cracow, which would also serve as the main Headquarters for the entire Bais Yaakov network.

* * * * *

As more and more schools continue to be established and more and more teachers are needed to teach in them, Bais Yaakov Teacher's Seminary becomes more and more crowded with girls, eager to learn to be teachers. But the Seminary has reached its physical limits, as their own quarters can not contain any more girls. The next step is soon to come, and very thrilling....

The music plays softly... A large platform is set up in the large open area on Stanislaw Street. A huge crowd has gathered for this inspiring and historical moment... It is a day to remember — ט"ז אלול תרפ"ז, 1927. It is the day of celebration of setting the foundation stone of the new forthcoming building of the Bais Yaakov Seminary of Cracow.

The event is graced with the presence of the Cracower Rav, as well as Rav Levin, Rav Pinchas Cohen, Moreinu Yaakov Rosenheim, Dr. Deutschlander, ז"ל, and others.

Esther Heitner, a close worker of Sarah Schenierer, had recorded the scene. Sarah, the "Baalas Simcha" herself, the pivotal figure of this event, did not push forward.... Instead, she stood modestly on the side, near the rest of the women and

her beloved Seminary students. And yes, as the music played softly to the melodic notes of a Chazan singing, Sarah softly cried... Her hot tears fell onto the foundation stones... She sent a heartfelt prayer to the Ribono Shel Olam, to crown their mutual efforts with success... She beseeched Hashem to protect the spirituality of her students, even amidst a modern, comfortable setting... She trembled even amidst her joy.

"וגילו ברעדה.... "

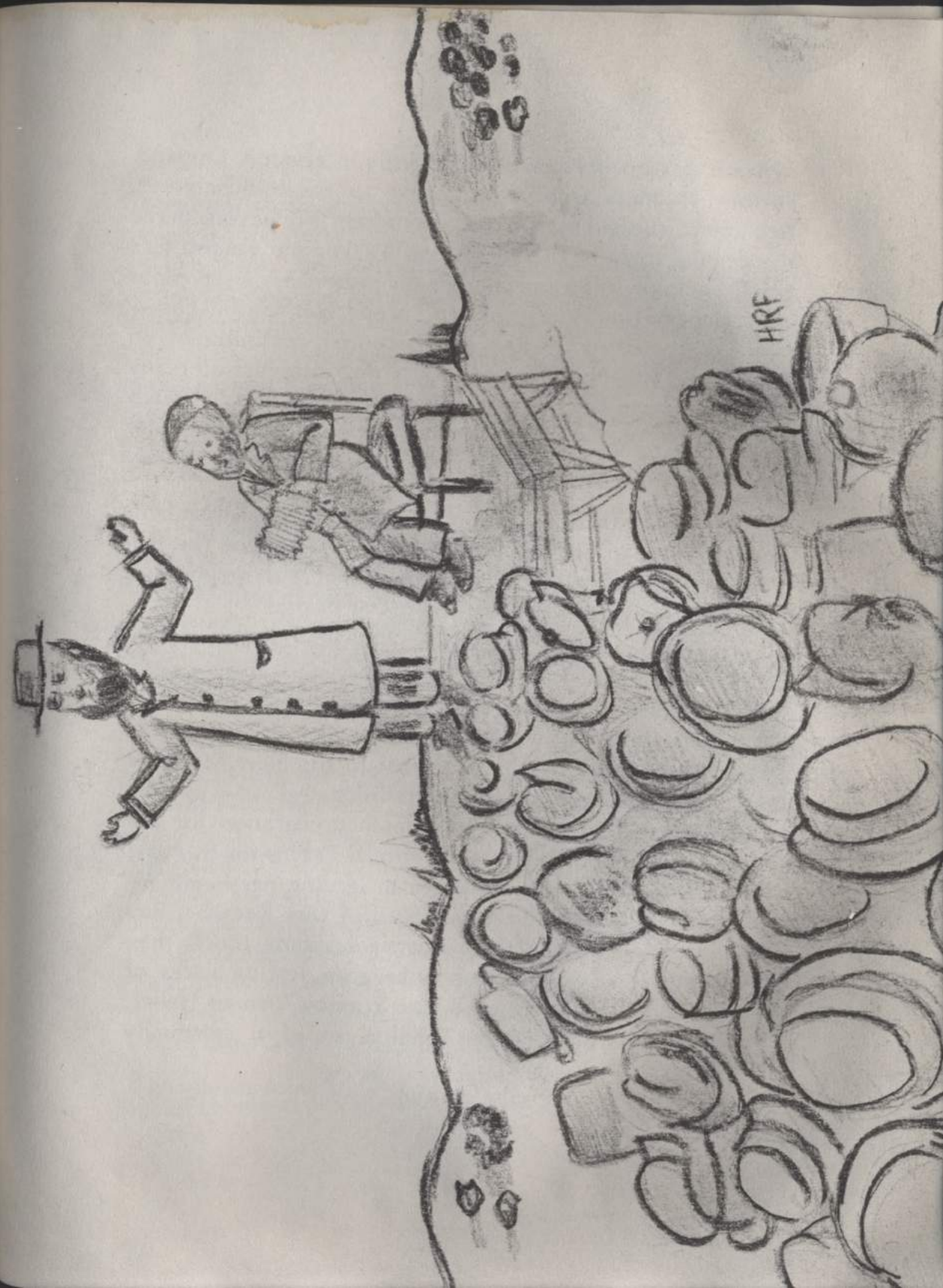
She prayed that the extra comforts in the brand new building would not harm the Mesiras Nefesh and pioneering spirit that prevailed at hard times.

By 1931, a portion of the building was completed, and 120 eager girls moved in. 10 Stanislawa Street. From all parts of Poland and Lithuania, they came to spend two years of living and learning with Sarah Schenierer. The new school had a large dining room, nicely furnished dormitories, and cheerful classrooms. A large, picturesque roof-garden overlooked the Vistula River. Evening programs in the Seminary included relaxing activities, while Shabbosim were spent in a worthwhile manner.

Remember the story of Sarah Schenierer's girlhood days — how the lack of proper Shabbos activities had bothered her so strongly?

Now, her sphere of interest spread to Shabbos, as well. She was a supporter of Bnos, the ever-popular Shabbos afternoon recreational groups for girls, in a Torah atmosphere. Basya (Bnos) was formed in the same pattern, for very young girls. Sarah's Seminary teachers and students were actively involved in leading these Bnos groups. Sarah Schenierer considered Bnos as absolutely vital to a well-rounded Jewish experience in those days.

Rebetzen Dr. Yehudis Rosenbaum-Grunfeld שתחי, is a



dynamic personality residing currently in London, England. Former students testify, that next to Sarah Schenierer, Rebetzen Grunfeld טובים וארוכים is to be considered the driving force of the entire Bais Yaakov movement! Her extensive knowledge and charismatic personality were major attractions to the teenage girls in Europe. Her worldly know-how, combined with her deeply-rooted commitment to spreading Yiddishkeit, served as a strong influence on many that would have been lost to Haskalah philosophies. Through her powers of persuasion, many were those who were introduced into contributing financially to the Bais Yaakov movement.

She traveled through various towns of Europe, organizing house-parties in elegant homes for the benefit of the Bais Yaakov schools, giving vivid descriptions of the pioneering work done in the poorer settlements of Poland.

Formerly from Frankfurt, Rebetzin Grunfeld שתחי was sent by Moreinu Yaakov Rosenheim זצ"ל to assist Sarah Schenierer with her holy work. She describes in detail some customs of Sarah Schenierer in the Seminary.

Erev Rosh Chodesh, the day prior to the New Moon, is known as Yom Kippur Katan. It is traditionally known as a day of repentance for the past month, in preparation for the upcoming new month. There are special Tefilos for this day. Sarah Schenierer was accustomed to leading her Seminary girls on this day to the famous Shul of the "Ramah", Rav Moshe Isserles, זצ"ל. After a hearty davening there, they would wend their way to the holy kevarim, resting places, of the "Ramah", the "Bach", and Rav Yomtov Lipman Heller, זצ"ל. The girls would recite Tehillim and feel spiritually uplifted.

Now, they were not only learning; they were also living a

vibrant Jewish life, dedicated to the past, present and future of the Jewish nation.

Then came the hot, stuffy summer months. Baggage containing clothing, linen, as well as kitchen appliances were hauled onto horses and buggies. Off rolled the carts to the refreshing, cool country air, as the Seminary moved to the mountains for the summer months. Training continued under the clear, blue skies, and amidst the grass and trees in the fresh open air. Guest lecturers visited frequently, and supplemented the summer curriculum. The teachers of all the outlying towns and villages — Chaya, Zelda and the others, were now able to join their friends and former teachers. Now, they were refreshed and rejuvenated spiritually and emotionally.

Dr. Deutschlander was the guiding force behind these professional summer sessions. His work added the precision, technique, and structure to the Bais Yaakov curriculum that Sarah Schenierer had begun.

Dr. Deutschlander's influence and impact on the Seminary was extensive. His Yiras Shamayim, benevolence and goodwill to all were remarkably outstanding. His famous Tehillim lessons bewitched his listeners, and left an impact they would long retain. He was justifiably called by many "the father of the Bais Yaakov movement".

Gittle Pass had recorded Sarah Schenierer's great love of the beauty of the surrounding nature. A few young girls begged Frau Schenierer one day to climb a nearby mountain with them. Acceding to their request, they ascended the mountain together, until they reached its peak. Reaching the crest, they looked down below at the breathtaking panoramic view...

"מה גדלו מעשיך ה'... (תהלים),

Sarah Schenierer whispered.

* * * * *

Throughout the winter months, Sarah faithfully continued her visits to her students — now — teachers in the towns in which she had left them.

What rejoicing when she arrived! Morah L. led her students to the train station to greet Sarah Schenierer upon one such arrival. Everyone pushed forward to have a glimpse of their beloved "mother".

After the warm welcomes and greetings, Morah L. told Frau Schenierer that she had ordered a wagon for both of them, to spare Sarah Schenierer the trouble of walking back to town. They both ascended the wagon — but the students were disturbed. Shaindy and Mindel, two of the "livelier" girls, quickly jumped onto the back of the cart. The rest of the girls just grunted in disappointment as they were now separated from Frau Schenierer. Seeing this behavior, Morah L. was mortified! She sternly called out to the two frivolous girls to immediately descend from the wagon!

But Sarah Schenierer gently spoke to Morah L., ever so quietly...

"These girls wish to come close. We can not push them away. Since we can not possibly bring them all up to us, we shall have to go down to them..."

Sarah Schenierer and Morah L., thereupon, alighted from the wagon. Sarah put her arms around the shoulders of the now-smiling students. Together, everyone walked back to town, content.



15. THE CHOFETZ CHAIM SPEAKS OUT

Shmerel the Pushcart Dealer leaned over his potato wagon one day.

"What do you say, friend Berel!", he called out to his friend, the water carrier. "I need your opinion on something important. Stop shlepping for a minute and lend me your ears."

"Nu — so what can I do for you today, Reb Shmerel?" Berel put down his pails with an air of importance.

"Herr zich ein. Listen to me. This new yeshiva they started — what's your opinion on it?"

"Which yeshiva?"

"You know — the yeshiva for maidlach (girls)."

"What?! What are you talking about? You're speaking in riddles. I don't get the joke."

"I'm serious, Reb Ber! Don't tell me you haven't heard! There's a yeshiva for maidlach, and they're teaching the girls to learn תנ"ך and other Jewish subjects.

Berel slapped his knees in disbelief and semi-amusement. But soon, his face took on a dark look.

"What! Teaching this to girls? This is unheard of! Since when is this allowed? Shmerel, put a stop to this immediately! Let's protest! Let's picket! Come on!"

Unfortunately, this little scene was not the only one of its kind. Throughout Poland, there were these and those who could not comprehend exactly what Bais Yaakov was doing. Then there were some who thought that Bais Yaakov's concept was not sanctioned by the Torah.

What did the Gedolim, our holy Sages, have to say about Bais Yaakov?

The revered Chofetz Chaim, Reb Yisroel Meir Kagan, זצ"ל, leader of world Jewry, issued the following letter.

A loose translation would be as follows:

To the Worthy Torah Lovers of the City of Fristick:

I have heard that G-d fearing, religious people have volunteered to establish schools called "Bais Yaakov" throughout the country, in which they teach Torah, fear of Heaven and good character training to the daughters of our nation. I say to these worthy workers — may Hashem repay their strength, and send success in the work of their hands, because this matter is vital and urgent in our days.

The anti-Torah tide is sweeping the country in all its force. The freethinkers of all denominations are ambushing and waiting to ensnare the innocent souls of our people at every turn. **Therefore, all persons that have the fear of Hashem in their hearts must know that it is a Mitzvah to send their daughters to study in these Bais Yaakov schools.**

All the doubts and uncertainties regarding the issue of teaching a daughter Torah do not apply to our times. This is not the appropriate place to elaborate on the matter; however, suffice it to say that unfortunately, our generation is not like the previous ones. Then, every Jewish home had a strong solid heritage, transmitted firmly from parents to children. They followed faithfully in the laws and traditions of the Torah. The sefer "Tze'enah U're'enah" was customarily read every Shabbos. Now, due to our many transgressions, such is not the case. Therefore, we must try with all our might and strength to increase these Bais Yaakov schools, and to rescue all that is in our power to rescue.

For the honor of our holy Torah and Judaism,
Yisroel Meir Hacoheh
תרצ"ג שבת

בס"ד

יום כ"ג לחדש שבט תרצ"ג
אל כבוד האלופים הנכבדים חובבי ומוקירי תורה החרדים לדבר ה' אשר בעיר
פריסטיק יצ"ו.

כאשר שמעתי שהתנדבו אנשים יראים וחרדים לדבר ה' ליסד בערים בית ספר
"בית יעקב" ללמוד בו תורה ויראת שמים מדות ודרך ארץ זו תורה לילדות
אחינו בני ישראל.

אמרתי לפעלם הטוב יישר ה' חילם ומעשה ידיהם יכונן כי ענין גדול ונחוץ
הוא בימינו אלה. אשר זרם הכפירה ר"ל שורר בכל תקפו והחפשים מכל המינים
אורבים וצדים לנפשות אחינו בני ישראל, וכל מי שנגעה יראת ה' בלבבו המצוה
ליתן את בתו ללמוד בבית ספר זה:

וכל החששות והפקוקים מאיסור ללמוד את בתו תורה אין שום בית מיחוש
לזה בימינו אלה. ואין כאן המקום לבאר באריכות. כי לא כדורות הראשונים
דורותינו אשר בדורות הקודמים ה"י לכל בית ישראל מסורת אבות ואמהות
לילך בדרך התורה והדת ולקרא בספר צאינה וראינה בכל שבת קודש. מה שאין
כן בעונותנו הרבים בדורותינו אלה. ועל כן בכל עוז רוחנו ונפשנו עלינו להשתדל
להרבות בתי ספר כאלו ולהציל כל מה שיש בידינו ואפשרותינו להציל.
הכותב למען כבוד התורה והדת,

ישראל מאיר הכהן

Unquestionably, Bais Yaakov was treading on solid, firm ground... Many, many more Gedolim spoke out in favor of the Bais Yaakov movement, some of which have already been mentioned previously.

Another sample:

The Gerer Rebbe, Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter זצ"ל, was a staunch and active supporter of Bais Yaakov. He issued a clarion call to tens of thousands of his Chassidim. They hearkened to his words and enrolled their daughters in the Bais Yaakov school system. Thus, hundreds more children were saved from assimilation.

Everyone who came into contact with Frau Schenierer could not fail to be impressed. Harav Yehudah Tavyomi, זצ"ל, a member of the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah of Agudas Yisrael, spoke at the gathering to commemorate her first yahrzeit.

"When Sarah Schenierer approached me in Warsaw, to discuss her grand plans for a network of Bais Yaakov schools throughout Poland, my impressions were vivid. Her extensive knowledge of Tanach, her interest in Jewish history, her mastery of vast amounts of Medrash and Agadah, were truly remarkable. And she was a self-taught woman! She was fluent in some European languages. But above all else, her piety and Yiras Shomayim — reverence and fear of Hashem, were paramount. Her deep love for Torah and Mitzvos, coupled with her total Mesiras Nefesh, were the most outstanding factors with which she created the Bais Yaakov movement.

Rav Yehuda Leib Orlean זצ"ל, the dynamite force of the Bais Yaakov movement, and the prime replacement of Sarah Schenierer in the Seminary after she was gone, wrote a moving appraisal of Sarah Schenierer. He compared her to an Aishes Chayil, and fitted the stanzas of "Aishes Chayil" to her deeds and accomplishments.

...She gathered spiritual merchandise — even from far — from far-off Vienna and Frankfurt, she took the hallowed teachings of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch זצ"ל, and brought them to Chassidic Poland. Maintaining a perfect balance, she offered her "Sechorah", merchandise, with the best flavors of two ends of the Jewish world.

16. PEN IN HAND...

The night is still. The clock ticks away...12:00 midnight...1:00 A.M....2:00 A.M. And Sarah Schenierer still sits at her desk, pen in hand, writing conscientiously...letters to her beloved students, from near and far... a mother writing to her children... Every accomplishment in the field of Torah Chinuch that they write of, however minute, is precious to her... She relishes each and every precious detail... And although her time is so severely taken up with her meetings, lectures, and travels, she finds the time, somehow, to jot down some words of encouragement... some Chizuk in Mitzvah observance, to those who write to her.

A student in her home begged Sarah late one night, "Stop! Rest!"

Sarah answered with a smile: "It is my pleasure. Let the pen and ink testify to the ease with which I write, and the gratification it affords me!"

Her writing was not limited to letters alone, by far... She was an avid and prolific author of a multitude of articles on Torah topics, for adults and children.

The popular "Bais Yaakov Journal" was her favorite. In it, she wrote of many topics; Shabbos and the Jewish Woman, Pesach, Sefirah, and all Yomim Tovim, and Jewish episodes throughout the year. She wrote thoughts on the Parshiyos Hashavua, and essays on Kashruth, Tznius, and Shalom, to mention but a few.

It was ten days before Pesach. Sarah Schenierer appeared at

the home of Reb Binyomin Zusman ז"ל, and knocked on the door. Reb Binyomin was the editor of the religious children's magazine, "Kinder-garten". What was the urgency at this time of year? Sarah Schenierer requested a copy of an article he had written some while ago.

"The story you wrote was so full of proper Jewish ideas and content, and so suitable for this season. I would love to arrange for all the little girls in Bais Yaakov to memorize its contents. Perhaps, you can locate this story amongst your papers?"

So indeed, Reb Binyomin found the story and handed it to Sarah Schenierer. He was full of admiration for someone who cared enough, and went to such great lengths to secure the proper literature for Jewish children.

Many articles of Sarah Schenierer's graced the pages of the "Kinder-garten" magazine. Addressing all Jewish children with motherly love, she wrote of Loving Hashem, Respect for Parents, Pride, Lying, Lashon Harah, Davening, and much more.

Sarah Schenierer took it upon herself to expand the distribution of the "Bais Yaakov Journal" as well as the "Kinder-garten" magazines. Wherever she went, on all her travels, she advertised for them.

In the town of P., Sarah gathered around her a group of local women. Upon learning that these Jewish magazines had almost no circulation, and were virtually unknown here, she struck up further conversation.

"Tell me, how much do you spend on cleaning help? On Shabbos expenses? I have a teacher who comes willingly to your home for but a small fee. This teacher is knowledgeable on a variety of subjects, and imparts knowledge generously to all."

"Sounds interesting! But she probably charges a fortune,



truthfully. Thirty zlotys a week, for sure!"

"No, forty zlotys!" said another.

"As it happens," smiled Sarah, "her price is a lot less than that, as I've mentioned. How does one zloty a week sound? And what's more, she comes with a helper who amuses the children, and teaches them Jewish songs and stories. At no extra charge! The Bais Yaakov Journal and the Kinder-garten magazines!" Everyone eagerly subscribed.

Estee, a young student, reached for a book. Her hand rested on a story written by Rabbi Dr. Lehman, ע"ה. Sarah Schenierer had the clear awareness of the necessity of having a steady supply of good, sound Jewish literature for Jewish youth. She had imported all of the Lehman books, as well as the writings of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch זצ"ל, and built up a library.

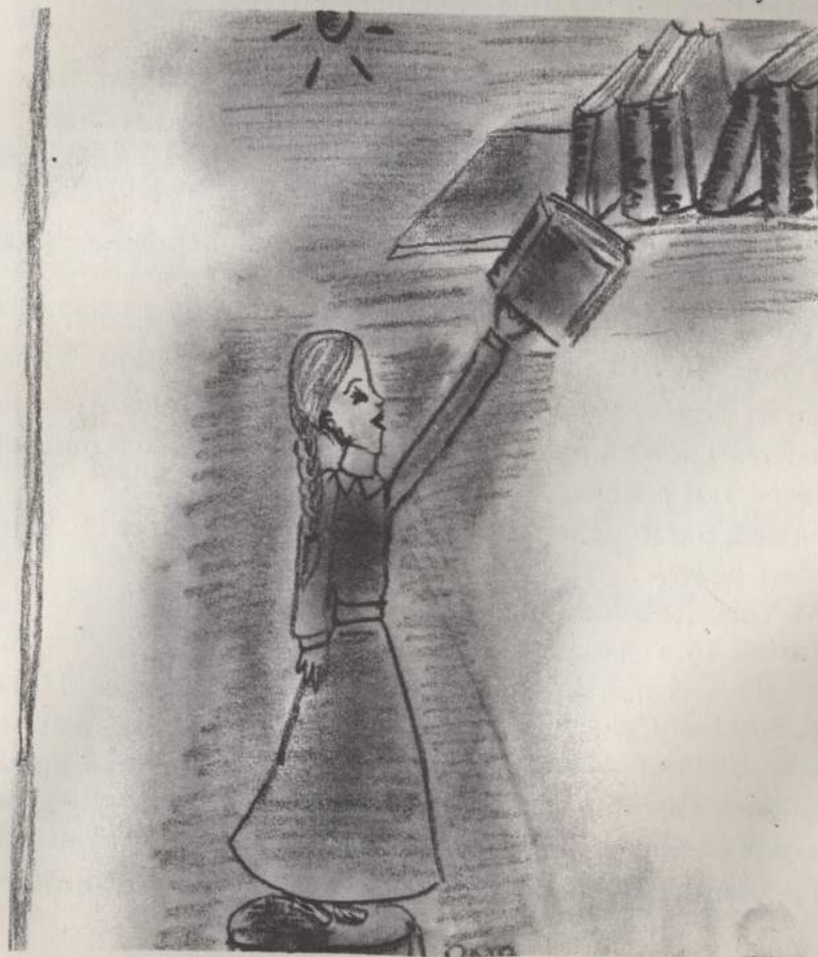
Sarah saw the dangers lurking behind secular, alien literature. In them, she recognized a strong threat to true Jewish education. At best, most authors were totally ignorant of our rich heritage; at worst, they were full of personal vices and were virulently anti-Semitic. What could one possibly gain from the fruit of these poisoned, perverted minds? Can even a slight trace of Yiras Shomayim, fear of Heaven, mistakenly seep through their writings? Never! Only their damaging outlooks come through, covered skillfully with a deceitful mask.

Sarah Schenierer was blessed with a crystal clear spiritual insight. She was true to her conscience. Here is one way she proved it.

Sarah spoke her native Polish fluently. She spoke a perfect German as well. She appreciated cleverly phrased sentences and the intricacies of word structure. But one day, she realized that the Yiddish language was a part and parcel of Yiddishkeit. And once she realized this, she strove to live up to this realization.

Although she was a gifted Polish speaker and writer, she trained herself with tremendous self-discipline, to use the Yiddish language exclusively. Rav Yehuda Leib Orlean זצ"ל pointed out, **that** she now spoke publicly in Yiddish. Audiences that would have liked a Polish presentation, now heard her speak in Yiddish. But Sarah cared not. She knew that ultimately, things done properly, in accordance with the true Torah spirit, would turn out right.

She begged and implored her students to speak in Yiddish, as well. She fought against all odds, with superhuman inner strength, to preserve a pure, unadulterated Jewish way of life.



17. PIOUS WAYS

The girls had formed a circle and were singing with all their energy. Sarah Schenierer joined them willingly. She was on a routine visit to a Bais Yaakov school in an outlying town.

After the girls breathlessly stopped to rest, Sarah turned to them with a question.

"Children! Which is the best midah, character trait, to have in order to be sure of a pure heart?" Rachel raised her hand: "A good heart". Shani said: "Derech Eretz-respect." Leiba said: "Yiras Shamayim — fear of Hashem."

Tamar, a young girl, shied away as Sarah Schenierer's gaze turned to her.

"What do you think, my child?" Sarah asked kindly.

Tamar blushed a beet-red and stammered, "I-I don't know."

Sarah caressed the child warmly. "You're right! A person who says 'I don't know' is modest. A modest person is more apt to learn and his heart is pure!"

Indeed, Sarah Schenierer herself was the epitome of a pure, modest heart.

As Yehudis Bauminger related, Sarah Schenierer was once lecturing to a class of Seminary students. She was reading from the German writings of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch זצ"ל. Suddenly, she paused. "I don't understand this," she said simply. She thereupon turned to a particular student who was even more fluent in German than she was. "Please! Maybe you can explain this to us!"

Yes, Sarah Schenierer was truly modest. And yet, she knew

how to speak up when she had to.

The scene was a teachers' meeting. All were sitting in a circle, discussing important issues. A suggestion was brought forward. Suddenly, a voice of protest was heard. "No, I will not allow it!" It was Sarah Schenierer.

Modesty, and strength of character. Each trait in its proper time and place.

Sarah Schenierer's winter coat was beginning to show signs of wear around the edges. The Bais Yaakov Seminary teachers begged her to treat herself to a new coat. But she didn't feel that she really needed one.

Then came the winning argument; "If you will wear a new coat, you will make a better impression upon those whom you will meet. In this way, you will be able to persuade many more people to join the realms of Bais Yaakov." Sarah bought the coat.

Zelda Ravitz reminisced about yet another aspect of Sarah Schenierer's pious ways, Tefilah. It was summer, and Sarah and the girls were staying in the summer camp at Yordanov. One Shabbos morning, the skies darkened with black clouds, thunder was heard, lightning flashed, and torrents of rain poured down over the countryside.

Suddenly, Sarah Schenierer appeared from her room in her Shabbos attire, bundled up with her coat.

"Where is Frau Schenierer going in this weather?" The girls asked incredulously.

"To Shul!" answered Sarah calmly. "To the nearby town Shul to daven." "In this downpour? We can't allow it!"

Sarah waited calmly for the uproar to quiet down. "Do you recall the Posuk in Tehillim, "נהלך ברגש"? Each letter of the word ברגש stands for something else.

ש - ש - שלג, snow. ג - גשם, rain. ר - רוח, wind. ב - ב - ברד, hail.



Now the Posuk can mean — “To the house of Hashem we will go, no matter what the weather!” Resolutely and happily, Sarah walked out the door, to Shul. Everyone smilingly followed.

Once, on a weekday afternoon, Sarah laid down to rest. She was completely fatigued and soon fell asleep. The time for Tefilas Mincha was fast approaching. Her students were in a quandary.

“Should we wake her?”

“How could we? Frau Schenierer didn’t sleep all night and must be utterly exhausted!”

“But think of how upset Frau Schenierer will be, when she wakes up too late to daven Mincha! Her misery will know no bounds!”

The girls’ tension mounted as the minutes ticked away... They could not make up their minds!

Suddenly, Sarah Schenierer opened her eyes, arose, and washed her hands. She then proceeded to daven Mincha.

The girls then learned the following lesson. When a Jew sleeps like a Jew, his sleep will not interfere with his Tefila. His heart which is devoted to Hashem will awaken him of itself, a self-made clock. If you sleep in order to have strength to do the Mitzvos, then that sleep itself awakens you to continue on!

Sarah Schenierer was a champion fighter for the cause of Tznius, modesty in dress of the Jewish woman. Immorality had reached a peak after World War I. Sarah Schenierer never tolerated the slightest breach of Tznius and insisted on the highest standards of devotion from her students.

18. A FRIEND IN TIMES OF NEED

Reb Binyomin Zusman עי"ה, an active Agudah member, had many recollections...

One fine day, he arrived at Sarah Schenierer's house with a small question to ask. It was two o'clock in the afternoon. Sarah had not yet eaten breakfast. The table was set: cereal, eggs, bread and a warm drink that her pupils had prepared for her. At the table sat two unfortunate women. Their eyes were red and they were crying bitterly. Sarah could not eat. She felt it was her duty to go with these women as requested, and assist them in any manner possible.

This was not an uncommon scene in Sarah's household. Sarah's house was the address everyone came to when they were in need. In need of money, in need of medical help, or just in need of two good listening ears. Sarah Schenierer was the treasurer of many varied Tzedokos as well. She worked untiringly for charity and chesed causes, constantly.

One day, two weeks before Pesach, Sarah appeared at Reb Binyomin Zusman's home with a request. Taking out the sum of fifty zlotys from her pocket, she pleaded with Reb Binyomin: "Please! Tomorrow morning at Tefilas Shacharis, you must find a quiet moment. Take these coins and slip them into the coat pocket of Getzel M. He is a young man who has fallen bitterly on hard times. You can slip the coins into the pocket as the coat hangs on the nail in the hallway."

The next morning, Reb Binyomin did as he was told. He reported back to Sarah: "After davening, we all started walking

home. From the corner of my eye, I glimpsed at Getzel. I saw him put on his coat, button it, and then put his hands into his pockets as he began walking. Suddenly, he stopped, looked downwards to his pockets, and his eyes lit up! His face was absolutely radiant, as he turned his eyes heavenwards, with thanks to Hashem."

Another time, Sarah was aggravated about a Bais Yaakov student, who showed signs of leaving Yiddishkeit and was falling under harmful influences. She trudged to Reb Binyomin whom she felt could exert a very positive influence upon her. He agreed to speak with her. After many sessions, Sarah was gratified to know that her efforts were rewarded. The girl returned and always remained true to Bais Yaakov ideals.

It was the night of Simchas Torah, after Hakafos. The hour was late. Sarah Schenierer found herself hurrying once more to Reb Binyomin's house on an urgent mission.

"Excuse the late hour, but I felt the issue could not wait. Do you recall the shidduch (matrimonial match) we discussed regarding my student, Morah Dinah S.? You had wanted her to meet the mother of the prospective choson on Simchas Torah day. I postponed the matter and told you to arrange it for the following day, immediately after Yom Tov. Well, tonight after Shul, I was informed that the mother of this young man was planning to meet another girl tomorrow on Simchas Torah... I, therefore, rushed here to beseech you; arrange the meeting with her and Dina S., immediately for early tomorrow! I will not be here for most of the day, as I must attend to a Seminary student, seriously ill in the hospital. So I am counting on you for this arrangement! I am willing to give you all my share of S'char, reward, for this Mitzvah."

Reb Binyomin agreed to try. Baruch Hashem, he succeeded,

and the couple became engaged!

Purim day was a busy one for Sarah Schenierer. In the afternoon she would round up a number of Seminary girls, retold Sarah Landau. These girls had to keep a secret well — they were given lists of very poor people and their addresses. With specific sums of money, they made the rounds... And while most people sat down to their elaborate Purim feasts, Sarah Schenierer herself visited family after family, lonely individuals, in poor shacks and wet cellars, with words of good cheer and financial help besides.

Once, her neighbor, Frau Maks, told her of a young married man who prayed regularly, but without a Talis (prayer shawl).

"Why," asked Sarah Schenierer, "if he is religious enough to pray regularly, does he not also don a Talis?"

"Well," said Frau Maks, "his old Talis is so worn out, that it is simply beyond repair..."

Sarah's golden heart melted once again. By the next morning, the young man had a brand new woolen Talis, with a silver ornament on it as well.

Sarah Schenierer's summer "vacations" were spent in the mountains with her Seminary program, as mentioned. What extra time she had was spent going from door to door. Many hours were spent on her aching feet, collecting Tzedakah.

A poor man once knocked on Sarah's door. He poured out his bitter heart. His daughter was soon to be married and he had not a coin with which to pay for the wedding expenses...

Sarah did not have any funds at the moment. But she could not send the poor man away without any hope. So she took a paper and wrote a pledge to be responsible for a few hundred zlotys...

The Jew left the house in good spirits. Sarah was left in a quandary. What was she to do?



Donning her coat, she made her way to the home of a well known charitable, wealthy man.

"I have a deal to arrange with you, Sir. I am willing to sell you the entire share of the Olam Habah (the world to come) resulting from one particular great Mitzvah of mine, in return for a few hundred zlotys..."

The wealthy man began to understand what Sarah meant. He pressed her for details. After he had heard the story, he agreed to accept responsibility for the entire pledge.

Some months later, Sarah chanced to meet the wealthy man. He hastened to assure her that the entire sum had already been paid. Happily, she took out her personal diary, and showed him what she had written on a certain page. She had carefully recorded the fact that he, the wealthy man, had duly earned full credit for that entire Mitzvah.

"Oh, no!", the man protested. "You signed the pledge! I only paid it!"

"If so," Sarah said smilingly, "Hashem will "only" pay you back a full measure of reward for your share in the Mitzvah!"

Fall was ending and the winter was fast approaching. Sarah had saved up money for the past few weeks for a pair of desperately needed winter shoes. Suddenly, an old man appeared at her doorstep. His daughter was sick — he had no money for doctors or medicines. Without hesitation, Sarah took her "shoes" money, and handed it to the overwhelmed man.

Her family was a little upset. They knew how very desperately she had needed those shoes...

"Let me explain," said Sarah calmly. "A rich man once lived who did many good things. But unfortunately, he was a miser. Tightfisted, he never gave Tzedakah to the poor. After he passed away, he appeared to his friend in a dream. His friend

was shocked to see him dressed up in magnificent clothing, but his feet were bare.

'What is the meaning of this?' he wondered.

'At the Heavenly Court, it was decided that I enter Gan Eden — but empty handed, and barefoot,' the man explained.

Sarah had indeed purchased for herself shoes — everlasting shoes.

Every night before retiring, Sarah made a Cheshbon Hanefesh, an accounting of the deeds she had done that day. One night, she sat at her desk at 2:00 A.M., restlessly. She could not go to sleep.

"What is bothering you?" begged Shifra, a close student of hers.

"How could I possibly sleep, if I did nothing good for anyone today?"

"Well," replied Shifra, "would Frau Schenierer be prepared to do a great big Chesed (kindness) for someone **now**?"

"Gladly!" Sarah exclaimed, jumping from her chair.

"All your students need this favor. All your devoted students. They wait anxiously for you tomorrow morning — for your usual, sparkling eyes and clear lessons. For their sake, rest your tired self!"

Sarah smiled and hugged the girl gratefully. Her mind now at ease, she recited the Shema and retired for the night.



19. SARAH SCHENIERER'S LEGACY

Sarah Schenierer began her classes with the following four Pesukim. They were her guiding lights throughout her life. She imparted them to her students at every opportunity.

"עבדו את ה' בשמחה..." (תהלים)

"Serve Hashem with joy..."

Constantly on her lips, this Pasuk represented her attitude to life. Even during her illness, she bravely mustered up all her Bitochon, trust in Hashem, and preserved her optimism and happy outlook.

"שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד..." (תהלים)

"In all my deeds, I place Hashem before me always."

The fear of Hashem is before my eyes during all my actions.
(רש"י)

"תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש..." (תהלים)

"The Torah of Hashem is complete; it restores the soul..."
The spiritual soul is as a captive in the materialistic body. The Torah comes to rescue and restore the soul from its materialistic temptations in its' captivity. (רד"ק)

"למנות ימינו כן הודע..." (תהלים)

"Teach us to count our days"

Sarah understood and treasured the value of every precious second. Never wasting a moment, she utilized every iota of her time to seek and search for new opportunities to perform Mitzvohs.

* * * * *

What was the essence of Sarah Schenierer's goals for Bais

Yaakov? She summed up her goals in a letter she wrote to an Eretz Yisroel publication that requested an article on the issue. In it, she wrote: ... "Let everyone know that the chief aspirations of Bais Yaakov schools are not to acquire phenomenal amounts of stored knowledge. Rather, it is to instill the spirit and enthusiasm for Torah and Mitzvah observance; to inculcate Midos Tovos, good moral and ethical behavior. To implant a powerful devotion and loyalty to Hashem, that will never depart from the innermost heart..."

* * * * *

To what did Sarah compare secular studies?

In her diary, Sarah jots down some thoughts on the matter with the aid of a parable.

A king once traveled in a desert, when he realized that his food supply had run out. As hunger began to overtake him, he begged his servant for help.

The servant left in quest of food. He soon returned with a loaf of bread, fit for a king... it was made of solid gold!

"What?" shrieked the starving monarch. "Is this what you bring me to allay my pangs of hunger?"

Secular studies may be compared to this golden loaf of bread. They might glitter and loom attractive — but they can not satisfy the hunger of the soul — the true, deep-down gnawing feeling of emptiness that everyone experiences when their spiritual level is not up to par.

The Creator who created us, is the One who knows and understands our hunger... Hashem gave us a Torah, to guide us, and sustain us throughout our lives.

* * * * *

Sarah Schenierer's pure soul ascended to Heaven on כ"ו אדר א', תרצ"ה. Although she never had children of her own, she was truly a mother in the fullest sense, to thousands of

loving and loyal students throughout the globe. To them, her loss was irreplaceable.

A short while earlier, she had sent a letter to the Bais Yaakov Seminary students, on the occasion of a Siyum. The original letter in Yiddish is both memorable and soul-stirring.

"... I write these lines with tears... I am sure that as you read these lines, your tears, too, will join together and plead before Hashem for help and salvation for all Jews...

...to you my dear children who are going out into the world to spread Torah and the light of Yiddishkeit to our sisters throughout the world, you will surely find help from Hashem in all your holy endeavors...

...Beware of two great dangers....arrogance, self-pride....but on the other hand, do not give in to despondency, feelings of no self-worth, Heaven forbid... Fear Hashem...go in all His ways..the fear of Hashem is in **your** hands... It is up to **you**...

You are embarking on the difficult journey of life... but you are prepared... You have the weapons in your hands.. Fear of Hashem — Love of Hashem — and Service of Hashem.

Do my dear children realize the awesome responsibility resting on their shoulders? The task of educating the future generations of Klal Yisroel... Will they have the power to withstand all the temptations which life will offer them?

My heart whispers a Tefilah, as always... "Ribono Shel Olam, help my loyal children in their holy work!"

In the Bais Hamikdash, the Holy Temple, the Kohanim had the obligation to protect the holiness of the Temple... Now with the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, every Jewish home is a miniature Bais Hamikdash. It is your jobs to protect the sanctity of the Jewish Homes... to build new Batei Mikdash...

Remember the inspired words of Rav Shamshon Raphael

Hirsch זצ"ל, that we learned together?

It is a very simple matter to become enthused and excited! But to maintain this enthusiasm for one's entire life — that is the core of the matter...

Let our strength never slacken, let us never tire, in our daily holy tasks...

I conclude with the Pesukim

"עבדו את ה' בשמחה..."

"שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד..."

"תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש..."

"למנות ימינו כן הודע..."

May Hakodosh Baruch Hu protect you all, from now until forever... May Hashem accept our Tefilos, and send us His righteous Mashiach, quickly, Amen.

Yours,

Sarah Schenierer

Cracow, Parshas Shmos תרצ"ה

20. THE GOLDEN THREAD

From the hallowed courtyards of Belz and Bobov, to the dynasty of Ger, from the libraries of Frankfurt's Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch to the revered desk of the holy Chofetz Chaim...

Sarah Schenierer's lofty ideals and work were blessed and praised...

And from the war-torn devastation of Poland and Europe, Bais Yaakov has been transplanted anew... Bais Yaakov lives on... Chava Landsberg ע"ה, a beacon of Torah light, transplanted the seeds of Bais Yaakov in the Holy Land..and Bais Yaakov took root in Eretz Yisroel...Rebetzen Dr. Yehudis Grunfeld שתח"י, has carried seeds of Bais Yaakov, which have blossomed and grown internationally...

Rabbi and Rebetzen Baruch Kaplan שיח"י, carried the seeds of Bais Yaakov to the U.S.A.... With their dynamic perseverance and mesiras nefesh, Bais Yaakov has burgeoned forth throughout the United States... beginning with their pioneer Beth Jacob Teacher's Seminary and High School in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn.

B'ezras Hashem, Bais Yaakov is a household word, and dots the map in all four corners of the globe...

Based on a comment of Rav Aharon Kotler זצ"ל, giant of our century: "Thanks to Rabbi and Rebetzen Kaplan's שיח"י, pioneering and indefatigable work for Torah education for girls in America, the Yeshivos in America, too, are assured of survival!"

And indeed, we can readily understand. For the Jewish woman today, with a proper Bais Yaakov training, is the backbone of her home...

A Gemorrah (יומא ס"ו) quotes Rabbi Eliezer as stating:

"אין חכמה לאשה אלא בפלך"

"The wisdom of a woman is only with the spindle."

וכן הוא אומר, "וכל אשה חכמת לב בידי טוו"

(שמות ויקהל ל"ה-כ"ו)

"And every woman who is wise of heart with her hands spun."

Beyond the פשט, let us examine the depths of one meaning contained herein.

Rav Yehuda Tavyomi זצ"ל, explains that we will see that these quotations express the highest praise of the Jewish woman!

The Jewish woman represents the embodiment of חכמת הלב — the wisdom of the heart. Woman was blessed with בינה יתירה — an extra measure of understanding, sensitivity, intuition, feeling.. It is she who was entrusted by Hashem with the most precious task of all — that of imbuing our pure children with love for Hashem and the Torah! It is she, who has been granted the sublime privilege of **spinning** — **spinning** the Divine concepts of Sinai into the fabric of the tender souls of all generations of the Jewish nation. She, the Jewish woman, has been found worthy, and charged with this unequalled task...

* * * * *

How can I follow in the footsteps of Sarah Schenierer?

What has her story taught me? What can I learn from her trials and difficulties? From her stubborn perseverance and persistence? From her ultimate successes, with the help of Hashem?

Is there anything today that closely parallels the type of situation that existed in Sarah Schenierer's days? Just because there are Bais Yaakov schools — is there nothing left for me to do — to accomplish — to initiate?

Are all our Jewish brethren all over the world taken care of? Do all the people who have left the Soviet Union, for example, have an opportunity to learn about the Torah and Mitzvos? Have they all experienced a true Shabbos in this new, free world? Are my Iranian brothers and sisters being cared for properly? For that matter, have all my American brothers and sisters experienced the taste of a genuine Shabbos experience?

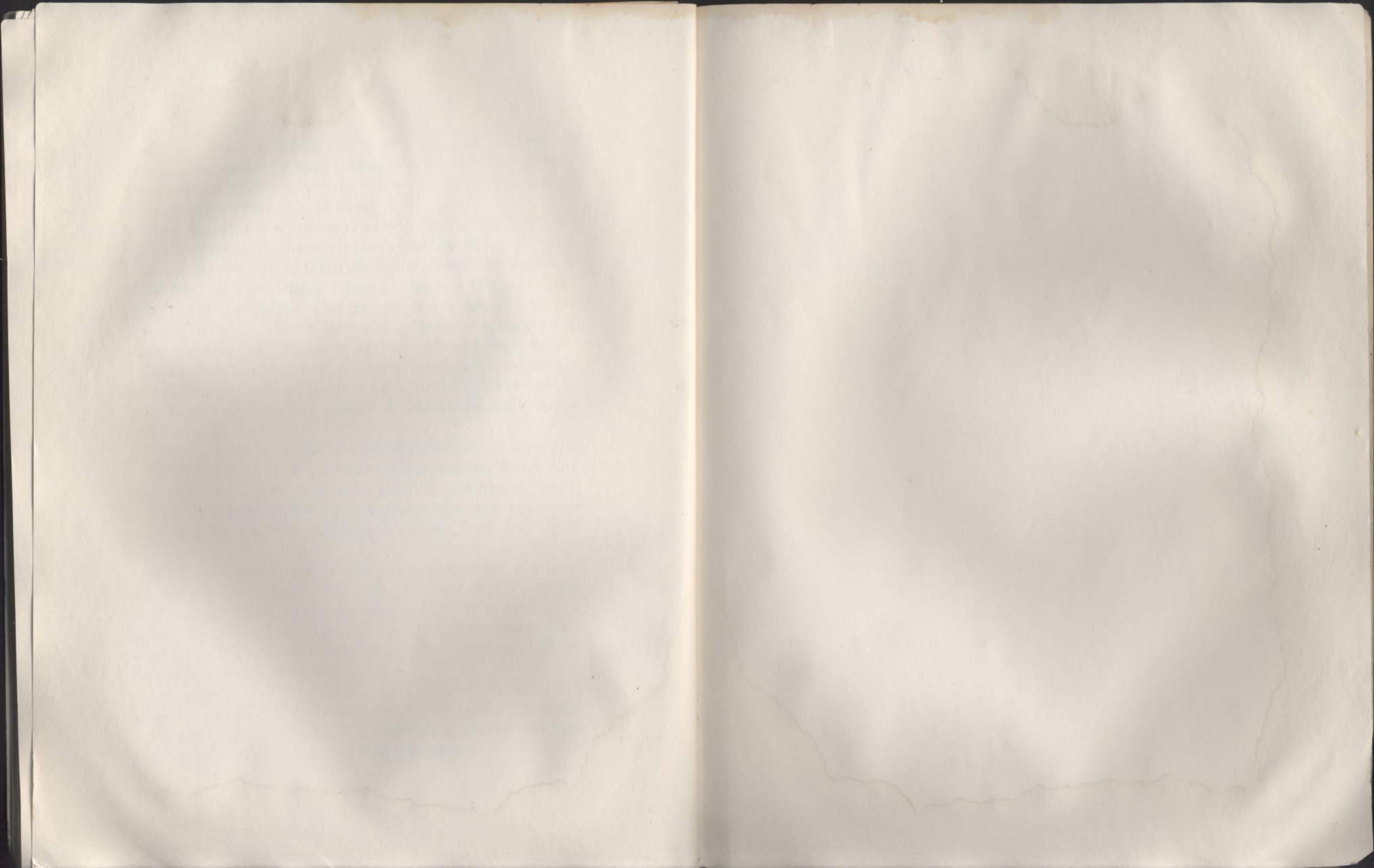
Do I get carried away with publicity, which is meant to draw my interest and help, and instead begin to feel that everything is O.K. — that there are enough organizations and enough help being given?

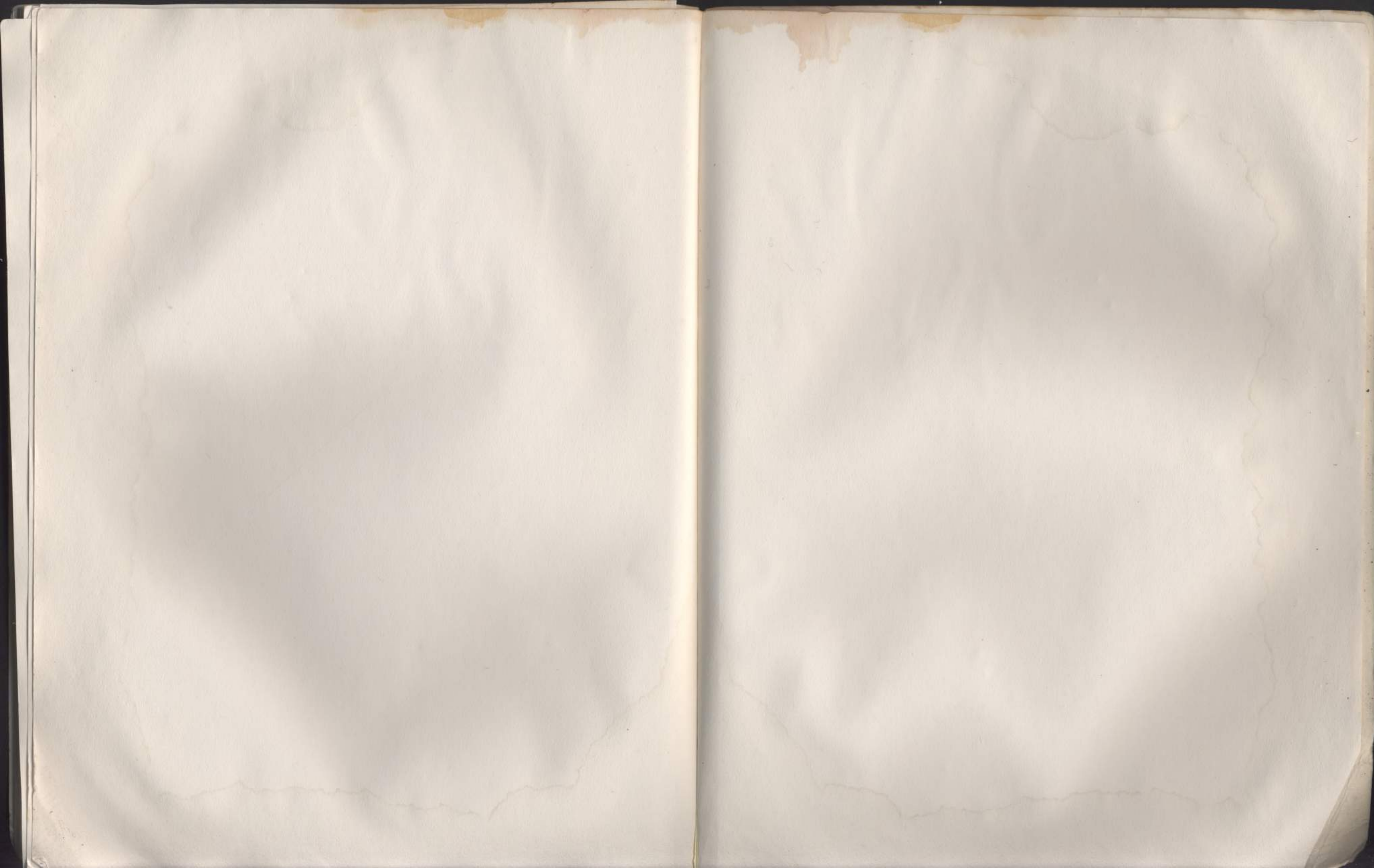
Such is definitely not the case. We all know that. There is still so much to do... to accomplish for Hashem and the Torah. And I can start, in my own small way... with my own friends... with my own home-made club... with my own talents that Hashem gave **me**... for together, we shall all succeed, with the help of Hashem.

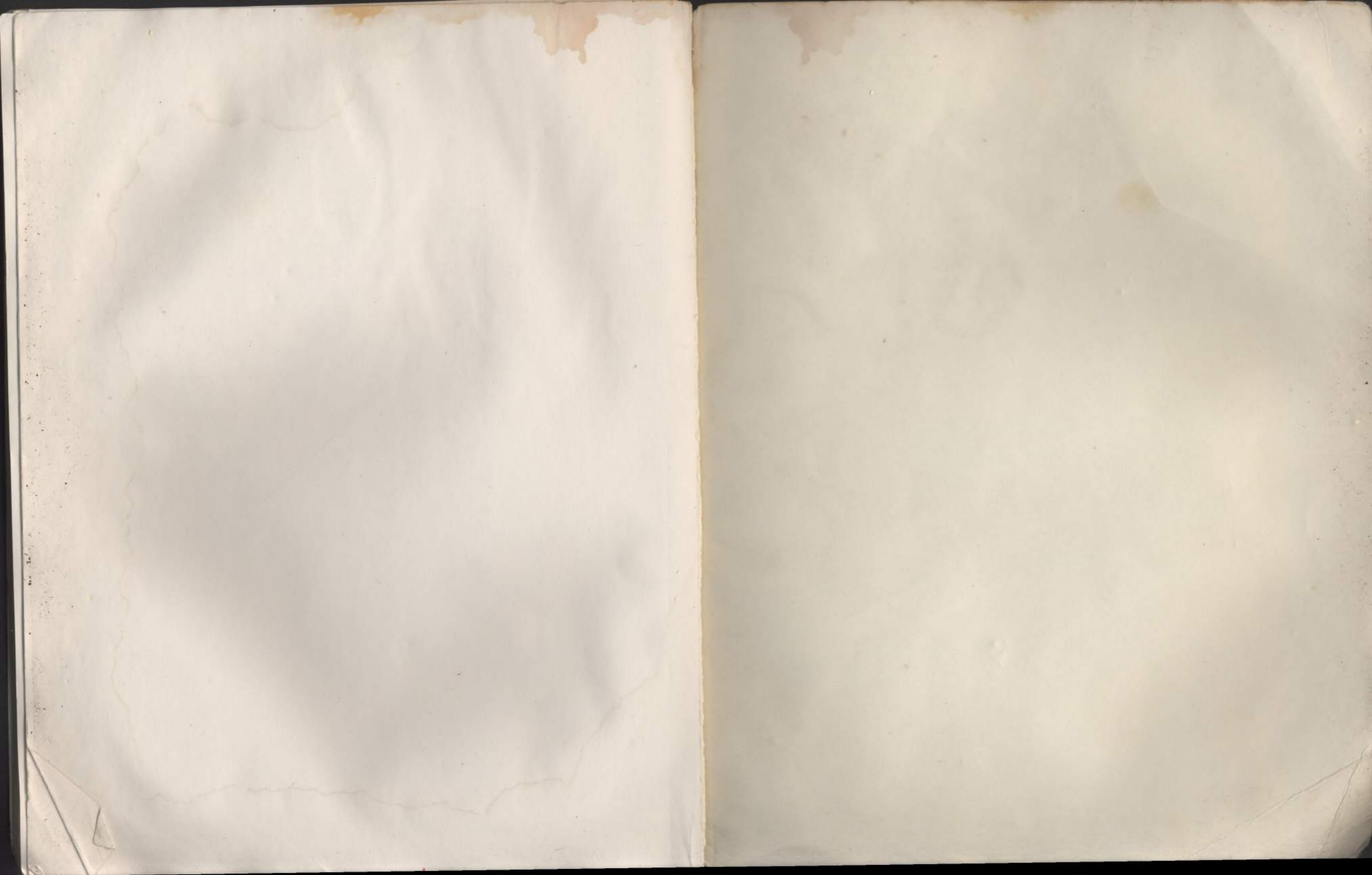
Sarah Schenierer sat at her sewing machine... a little seamstress in Cracow.. but she dreamed large, fruitful dreams... the thread of her sewing machine has turned into a golden thread, and it is held by every Jewish woman today... who spins this golden thread of love for Hashem into the hearts of the next generation...

Let us proudly hold our golden thread high, extending it to all Jews — all our brothers and sisters, throughout the world.

Let the inspiration of Sarah Schenierer guide our way, and help us be worthy of our ultimate redemption....







In commemoration of the 50th yahrtzeit of
Sarah Schenierer; Seamstress of Cracow

An alert and sensitive child, Sarah blossomed forth into a young seamstress, a dedicated idealist, a beloved schoolteacher, a dynamic and noble personality... pioneer founder of Jewish religious education for girls... architect of "Bais Yaakov"...

"BRACHA RISHONA"

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