

IN THE MERIT OF RIGHTEOUS WOMEN

by Rochel Miller written *Five-Town Jewish Newspaper-January 4, 2002*

From across five continents the requests for the little boxes span. Indeed, from Sao Paulo to Sydney, from Georgia to Glasgow – the ancient words of Dovid Hamelech are being recited in a diverse range of accents and inflections by women from virtually every walk of life.

That reciting *Tehillim* has been a time-honored tradition for Jewish woman is no surprise. For nearly 3,000 years, since Dovid *Hamelech* first bestowed his priceless legacy upon Klal Yisroel, the heartfelt words of *Sefer Tehillim* have provided solace and succor in our darkest hours. Through pain and suffering, through devastation and despair, the power of *Tehillim* has been a constant in our lives - our irrevocable bond to *Hashem*. No prognosis, however dire, seems quite as final when we tearfully beseech *Hashem* by saying *Tehillim*.

The heinous events of September 11th, along with the threat of bio-terrorism and the increasingly violent Intifada in Israel, are occurrences that until recently were viewed as unthinkable. Tragically, however, such disasters are occurring with alarming frequency, becoming a part of our daily existence. All too often, our lives are rent asunder by the growing number of personal crises within our own community. Young people taken from their families while still in the prime of their lives, the frightening number of young widows and orphans - tiny children as young as three years old being helped in say *Kaddish* - every one of us feels the pain and anguish of our fellow Jew.

The *Pele Yoetz* teaches that one who wishes to merit redemption from hardships, or who wishes to witness the wonders of *Hashem* should say *Sefer Tehillim* in its entirety during one sitting. In *Birchei Yosef*, the Chida offers this advice. “Gather together groups of people and divide *Sefer Tehillim* between them by chapters. Reciting it in this manner is as if each individual has said the entire book.”

Seven years ago, Rabbi Dovid Weinberger, Morah D’Asrah of Congregation Sharei Tefilah brought this concept to fruition, with the creation of ANEINU -the International Tehillim Organization for the Benefit of All Cholim. It was at that time that Rabbi Weinberger had been approached by Mrs. Shaindy Kappel, a Five Towns resident who was spurred to action by a set of tragic events that had befallen a close friend. “My friend had lost her 41 year old husband to cancer the year before, and now her five year old daughter had been diagnosed with a frightening, life-threatening illness. As soon as I heard this terrible news, I knew I had to do whatever I could. I happened to meet Rabbi Weinberger one day, and I told him about the little girl and how I wanted to do something in her *zechus*. It was Rabbi Weinberger who conceived of this project,” Shaindy explains. “He suggested organizing groups of women who would get together and divide *Sefer Tehillim*. Rabbi Weinberger told me that upon completion of an entire *Sefer Tehillim*, the women would be able to recite a *Mishaberach* for the *cholim* of their community. Since Aneinu’s inception, Rabbi Weinberger has been the impetus behind the organization, providing inspiration and *halachic* guidance.” Among the Rav’s innovations, in consultation with HaRAv Pinchas Scheinber, Shlita, has been the establishment of community-wide *cholim* lists in cities with numerous *Tehillim* groups. In a letter of *chizuk* to one of the *Tehillim* groups, Rabbi Weinberger stressed that women who participate in a *Tehillim* group are an integral part of a worldwide project that benefits the reciters of the *Tehillim* and their families directly, even as their *tefilos* are being dedicated on behalf of the *cholei Yisroel*.

“The spontaneous success of this project (without publicity),” Rabbi Weinberger wrote, “I

believe is due in full measure to the need to assist our brothers, *Bnei Yisroel*, from their awe-somely frightening situations affecting young and old alike. There will always be a “will” and now, *Boruch Hashem*, there is a “way” - something meaningful to alleviate the plight of so many of our friends, neighbors and acquaintances who find themselves in a difficult time.”

The uniqueness and power of the Aneinu Tehillim groups lies in the collective strengths of all the women gathered. Some are seasoned *Tehillim* “veterans” who say the *Tehillim* softly, while others painstakingly recite the ancient words. It all begins with the little white box - each a precious personal treasure. Each box contains 24 of the aforementioned blue booklets, and there is also a laminated white index card in the box. “There has been a dramatic change in my life and it is all because of a little white box,” writes one enthusiastic Aneinu member. “Thanks to this box I can now do a *mitzvah* more quickly where it used to take three hours. It takes three hours to finish the *Sefer Tehillim* when I say it alone. Now, if I can gather a group of other mothers, we can finish *Sefer Tehillim* in five to ten minutes. You can accomplish so much so quickly. It’s mind boggling. In ten minutes you can help people that you care for and cannot help in any other way. In ten minutes you can help people that you care for and cannot help in any other way. In ten minutes you can help someone who is childless and someone who is looking for a match. You can pray for them all in just ten minutes.”

The *Sefer Tehillim* is predivided into 24 booklets. Each woman takes a different booklet and says it silently, but in the presence of the other women. Because each woman recites her own *Tehillim* chapters within her own time frame, there is no pressure to maintain a regulated pace. Together, in an abbreviated amount of time, they complete the entire *Sefer*.

Consider the possibilities: “Every Friday night, after *Hadlakas Neiros*, our ‘Aneinu’ group of neighbors gets together in someone else’s home,” says Shani. “It’s something that I look forward to all throughout the week - such a positive, exhilarating experience. In these trying times, it’s so reassuring to open up the booklet and pour my heart out to *Hashem*. There are so many *cholim* within our own community and throughout all of *Klal Yisroel* who desperately need our *tefilos*. You can feel the *Shechina* permeating throughout the room as the *Tehillim* are being said. And what better example of teaching our children than seeing their mothers immersed in *tefilos* for the *tzibur*? It’s so constructive - it focuses you on what is important in life. There’s no time for idle chatter or gossip - we each have a mission to do our utmost for the *cholim*. Every minute is precious, so there’s no time to spare. In less than fifteen minutes, we’ve completed the entire *Sefer Tehillim*; in fact, we usually have enough time to complete it again before our husbands are home from *shul*. Most of us vacation in the same bungalow colony during the summer, so we are together all through the year. For our group, being part of Aneinu is an ongoing project, and it’s become a very important part of our lives.”

Toby heard about Aneinu Tehillim groups at a hotel last Pesach. “I was sitting in the lobby with my mother and sisters while the men were at a *shiur*, when two women invited us to join them. They told us about Aneinu, and asked if we’d like to be part of a group during our stay at the hotel. At the time, two of my husband’s relatives were *cholim*, but even if I wouldn’t have had any personal reason for saying *Tehillim*, I still would have joined without any hesitation. At the hotel, so many women joined our *Tehillim*, we were able to complete several *Sifrei Tehillim* each day. It’s been well over eight months since I first heard about Aneinu. Since then, I’ve introduced many of my relatives and friends to it. You can perform a great *mitzvah* in practically no time - four of us were able to complete an entire *Sefer* every morning while we wait for the school bus to arrive.”

Ahava, my 15 year old, had told me about Aneinu during Visiting Day at Camp Chedva last summer. Hershey Park, Dorney Park - no matter what the destination, Ahava and each of her

bunkmates, as well as girls from their co-bunks, made sure to say their respective *Tehillim* before embarking upon their journey. “It’s a great subject for an article,” Ahava had informed me, upon learning of my next assignment. “We accomplished so much at camp last summer. I wish that we had the *Tehillim* boxes in school, too. Imagine what we would be able to do for all of the cholim who need our tefilos.”

The Aneinu *Tehillim* sets are distributed free of charge to any person willing to commit to start a *Tehillim* group, on the condition that they are used in a group setting. Although the thousands of groups in private homes are the nucleus of Aneinu, there is a plethora of other innovative possibilities to utilizing the *Tehillim* sets; weddings, concerts, playgroups, doctor’s waiting rooms, on airplanes - the possibilities are endless. All that is needed is a group of Jewish women for the *Tehillim* books to be distributed, and the entire *Sefer* may be completed within minutes.

From its early days, when it began as a *Tehillim chabura* (Tehillim group) in Shaindy Kappel’s home, this noble organization has spawned thousands of groups worldwide. Aneinu *Tehillim* groups have swept across the American continent, throughout Western Europe, Israel and into South Africa, Australia and even Turkey. With its Five Town roots, it is not surprising that there are presently 19 Aneinu *Tehillim* groups within the Five Towns, and 18 groups within Far Rockaway, meeting at convenient times and locations.

Says Rabbi Weinberger, “In the past, people have been tragically overwhelmed by the enormity of *Tehillim* lists. Names were lost, and people often found themselves saying *Tehillim* for cholim whose medical conditions had become unknown. The concept of Aneinu is such that people would be saying Tehillim for people from the community, many of whom they know personally. The list of names is not voluminous. Another very important aspect of Aneinu is completing the entire *Sefer Tehillim* in a short period of time. It’s a powerful *zechus* for the *cholim*. And because there are often many *Tehillim* groups within a community, sharing the lists of *cholim*, the merits of each *choleh* increases.”

Even after all these years at the helm of Aneinu, Rabbi Weinberger never ceases to be amazed by the stories of people whose lives have been forever changed by the little white boxes. In one *shul*, three girls have become engaged and one person had a *refuah shelaimah* (complete health) since a *Tehillim chaburah* (Tehillim group) was started there. On many an occasion, he has seen Aneinu groups in action at airports. Now, more than ever, your *tefilos* (prayers) are urgently needed on behalf of the *cholim* of our community. Ten to fifteen minutes of your time is all that is required. You’ll find a *Tehillim* group within minutes from your home. Regardless of how hectic your schedule may be, your participation in this worthy endeavor is vital. It’s a beautiful way to welcome the *Shabbos.*, to herald the beginning of a *Gut voch(good week)*” and to inspire your children. Time is of the essence, so please don’t hesitate. For more information about joining a group in the Five Towns or Far Rockaway, please call Shaindy Kappel at 516-239-6083. In the merit of righteous women, may *Hashem* send a speedy redemption to all of *Klal Yisroel*.

Tizku l’mitzvos!