

Yetad article by Yoceved Engel (appeared in 3/04)

We sat there in Yerushalayim, Shoshana, Rebbetzin Stern and I; three women from three different parts of the world. Shoshana was convalescing from major surgery and Rebbetzin Stern and I had both come to visit, happy to see her on the road to recovery. Shoshana introduced me to her friend Rebbetzin Stern who she knew from their seminary days – that part of the time capsule which seems devoid of the complexities of life as we know it.

In passing, Rebbetzin Stern in her charming French accent mentions that she too has also battled sickness, but makes light of it and *baruch Hashem* has put it behind her. In spite of being widowed at a young age and left to bring up and marry off her children alone, she has embraced the opportunities that had come her way and she leads a full and active life.

Shoshana talks more about the *hasgacha pratis* (*the individual attention from G-d*) that *boruch Hashem* (*Thank G-d*) has led her to this stage of recovery in the comfortable convalescent suite that we are sitting in. When her doctor in England had examined the results of tests she had undergone prior to her planned visit to Eretz Yisrael he urged her not to cancel her trip but rather to seek expert medical care in Eretz Yisrael. Through the auspices of the wonderful *askanim* involved in medical referrals she was able to seek a second opinion and as soon as her diagnosis was confirmed she was scheduled for surgery.

Throughout our conversation Shoshana continued to stress how the *Ribbonon shel Olam* (G-d) has been good to her. She paused in reflection and her face lit up as she said, “Do you know as they wheeled me into surgery last week, over one hundred women were davening for me in my shul in Manchester? I know that it is the power of everyone’s tefillos that saved me. In the week since the surgery I heard how a close friend of mine organized this Yom Tefillah to coincide with the time of my operation.” She smiles and says confidently, “I know that usually I would be the one to organize such an event as I have done in the past for others and it is heartwarming to know that others thought to do the same for me.” She wryly emphasizes that she must have done some good to be spared!!

We talked about the *zechus* (*merit*) of being in Eretz Yisrael and how she had utilized the time before her diagnosis was confirmed, davening at *mekomos hakedoshim* and getting *brachos* from *gedolim* and *mekubalim* which carried her through. She felt that the *kedusha* of Eretz Yisrael lifted her spirits and recommends this environment for all those seeking *refuos* and *yeshuos*. I somehow remarked that over the past year or so I had become enlightened – I had thought that most visitors to Eretz Yisrael came for vacation and to visit popular tourist attractions, but have since discovered that for a large proportion of *בית ישראל-אחינו* *acheinu bnei Yisrael* (*our brothers the house of Yisroel*), from *Chutz L’Aretz* (*from outside of Eretz Yisroel*), young and old alike, the focal point of the trip is to experience hands on the *kedusha* (*the holiness*) that permeates in *Artzeiu Hakedosha* (*our holy land*) and on arrival they head directly to *mekomos hakedshim* (*holy sites*) and then make the rounds, often waiting hours to gain entrance to the humble quarters of leading *Rabbanim* and *Mekubalim* (*Rabbis who are expert Kabbala*) around the country to receive a *bracha* (*blessing*).

In passing, I mentioned that a friend of mine had spent part of the summer here with her daughter, simultaneously enjoying the beauty of Eretz Yisrael while availing themselves of the brachos (*blessings*) and segulos as well as going to Nishmas at the Kosel (*the Western Wall*). Shoshana sits upright in her chair and asks me how old the girl is and follows with some more questions which I answer. She then says, “Could it be that you are talking about Miriam Devorah bas Mirel?” and I answer in the affirmative. At this point Rebbetzin Strauss listens keenly.

Shoshana looks at me and says, “Have I got a story for you! You know me, when I get something into my head I carry I through leaving no stone unturned.” Then she continues her story.

“About five years after coming back to England from an overseas trip where I had attended a Tehillim group I had wanted to institute the idea in England. To my surprise there seemed to be some underlying opposition to the institution of the project in certain cities and I was determined to get to the bottom of it. I swung into action and called my children in America who provided me with the name and number of the organizers.

I called Shaindy Kappel and she gave me the basic structure requirements and told me that if I was interested in forming groups she would be happy to supply me with the kits of 24 Tehillim booklets free of charge. She then refereed me to her rav, Rav Dovid Weinberger of the Five Towns who I spoke to at length.

Armed with all the background information I took the campaign to various Rabbanim in England and after lengthy discussions was given the go ahead.

Not only do I have a thriving Tehillim Group in my home (which is continuing in my absence) but I have set up Tehillim Groups both in Manchester and throughout England. Each time I establish a new group my mind wanders to my initial conversation with Mrs. Kappel and the overriding requirement of the Tehillim Group-the me’shebarach for Miriam Devorah bas Mirel at the top of the list of names.”

At this point Rebbetzin Stern’s face lights up. Several years ago she moved from France to Har Nof. She chuckles as she admits to participating in four different Tehillim groups each week on a regular basis, “My children think I am obsessed with Tehillim but I feel and know that their effect is powerful I wouldn’t give it up. I have been davening for Miriam Devorah bas Mirel four times a week for four years and until we sat here today I had no idea who she was. To me she is the byword of Tehillim Groups. Now I will daven for her even more. The Rebbetzin then listed the four locations she visits each week and my interest was further piqued when I heard that one group was held in the home of a friend of mine. I made a mental note to ask her about its origin next time we met which I did.

Yehudis confirmed that she has been hosting a Tehillim Group for over four years. I was curious to find out why she started it. Yehudis told me that there was a girl in her building suffering from anorexia nervosa. This condition is often perceived as a minor disorder but having lived in close proximity to this family Yehudis had seen untold suffering and how the teenager’s condition was literally tearing her family apart. The neighbors got together and started the Tehillim Group for the well-being of the girl and her family. Yehudis also emphasized the stipulation that the first name of the Tehillim list would be Miriam Devorah bas Mirel who the group in Har Nof still davens for. Yehudis said that although the family with the anorexic teenager has since moved away and is still being tormented by her ailment they still continue with the Tehillim Group on

a weekly basis and for over four years have davened for Miriam Devorah bas Mirel with no idea who their tefillos were helping!!

As I left the suite that cold and wintry night I was warmed by the spirit of **כל ישראל ערובין זה לזה** (*all Jews are connected, one to the other*)-here we were three women from different ends of the world connected and energized by our tefillos for one outstanding individual in Monsey who has valiantly soldiered through countless ups and downs and touched the hearts of countless women and girls the world over.

I spoke to Shaindy Kappel who shared with me the history of the Tehillim Groups. She recalls how helpless she felt when we heard about Miriam Devorah's situation. She wanted to help her friend who was juggling raising a family on her own with trips to doctors etc. with Miriam Devorah. The one and a half-hour ride that separated them made it impractical for Shaindy, herself a wife and mother to be at her friend's side. She discussed her feeling of inadequacy with her husband they consulted with a rav in the Five Towns-Rav Dovid Weinberger. He outlined the concept of making a me shebarach amongst a צבור-group and thus ANEINU its sister organization CHEMED-Chasdei Miriam Devorah were born.

Shaindy started on a small scale organizing the saying of Sefer Tehillim in group settings and distributed free of charge kits with 24 booklets of Tehillim Mechulak with a stipulation that the group daven for Miriam Devorah bas Mirel.

ANEINU has since flourished from a fledgling group to a dynamic Tehillim organization that has distributed over 5000 sets of Tehillim worldwide. Women from America, Eretz Yisrael, England, Australia, South Africa, Russian and Uruguay (and other countries) come together in their homes, shuls, and school, before and after shiurim, in crisis and on a daily ongoing basis united in tefillah and the thread that links them together is Miriam Devorah bas Mirel!!

As I contemplated the far reaching effects of these group tefillos I was reminded of a story that I heard recently told by Tzipporah Heller. A couple of years ago a woman in New York was driving home and a tremendous traffic jam on the FDR Drive brought her to a complete standstill. Not having any alternative, she resigned herself to a long delay and consequently took out her trusty Tehillim which she began to say. Meanwhile a couple of miles ahead of her, emergency crews had extracted a woman from the scene of an accident and raced the woman who was hovering between life and death to the closest Trauma Unit. The woman felt herself sliding from this world and a vision of the stalled driver into the traffic jam that had been caused as a result of her accident saying Tehillim was displayed in front of her. She watched the judgment of the *Bais Din shel Ma'ala* - בית דין של מעלה- (*the court in heaven*)-play out and saw the connection between the Tehillim and the decision to grant her life. In her subconscious state she memorized the license plate of the car and when she woke up she asked her family to track down the owner of the car through the Department of Motor Vehicles. She called up the woman driver and confirmed that indeed she had been stuck in traffic on the FDR on that particular day. The injured woman then told her that she wanted to thank her for saving her life. "I was the person injured in the accident that caused the traffic jam and I owe my life to you – I saw the effect that your perakim of Tehillim had in the - שערי שמים- *Sha'arei Shamayim (the gates of heaven)* and I was granted life and saved!!"

כל ישראל ערובין זה לזה -*Kol Yisroel Areivim Zeh Lazeh*-(all Jews are connected one to the other) we never know to what incredible extent the power of our tefillos can achieve!!

So when I visited Miriam Devorah bas Mirel in Monsey last week, I was able to tell them that in their zchus waves of tefillah are reverberating throughout **ארבע כנפות הארץ** -*arba kanfos ha'aretz*(the 4 corners of the world) penetrating directly to the **שערי שמים** -*Sha'arei Shamayim* (the gates of heaven) and in the zchus of all our tefillos for Miriam Devorah bas Mirel may she be granted a **רפואה שלמה בתוך שערי חולי ישראל** *a refuah sheleimah besoch she'ear cholei Yisrael!!*