

FROM THE EDITOR

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For the past few months, the community has been davening for Leah bat Toby and then, after a name was added, Chaya Leah bat Toby. What most people probably didn't realise is that Chaya Leah bat Toby was our very own friend and colleague, Linda Superfain (nee Koz), a"h. A devoted mother, daughter, sister, and friend, who took ill suddenly and recently passed away. Linda leaves behind her beloved husband, Wayne, and their two boys, Steve and Josh; her mother and father, Neville and Thelma (married almost 50 years!); a sister, Natalie; and friends and family beyond count.

Linda served as the Operations Director for *Jewish Life* from the very first issue – over 10 years ago – and worked for the publisher, Martyn Samuels, for close to another 10 years in other publishing endeavours. She was the glue that held this magazine together, quietly coordinating everything behind the scenes, never asking for credit or to be in the spotlight, a consummate professional working month-after-month under tremendous pressure and tight deadlines. In fact, I don't think any of us truly appreciated or even had a clue as to how much Linda actually did until we were left to divide up among us her many responsibilities, all of which entailed an incredible level of attention to detail, while we hoped and waited for her recovery.

I can honestly say that I enjoyed my every interaction with Linda; she was just the sweetest, kindest, most easy-going, thoughtful, gentle human being I think I've ever met. She saw the magazine as a powerful vehicle to educate and influence people and she often shared story ideas that had a very personal connection, championing causes for the wider community that she had previously championed privately for her own children.

Linda passed away in the early hours of Friday, 19 Iyar/4 May. Josh's bar mitzvah was scheduled to take place later that same night, on Shabbos, Parshas Emor. A bar mitzvah is meant to mark the threshold between childhood and adulthood, and, although it confers upon a young man a new status halachically – including new privileges and responsibilities, it ordinarily doesn't make much of a difference practically speaking to a boy's life. There are, however, certain life events that can force a child to grow up too fast, stripping him of his youthful innocence and thrusting him into adulthood.

In a superhuman display of strength and courage, the Superfains went forward with the bar mitzvah plans and Josh, who has the most beautiful and powerful voice, magnificently leined the Maftir and Haftarah, along with singing Anim Zemirot at the end of the davening. The position of Rabbi is often one not to be envied, but even more so in such a situation. What words of comfort and consolation can one possibly offer up to a bar mitzvah boy who only the day before lost his beloved mother? Rabbi Anthony Gerson of Pine Street Shul masterfully handled it, speaking to Josh, who stood alone, front and centre in the shul, and telling him the following story:

There was once a boy who loved to play football. You wouldn't know anything about that, he said, teasing Josh. Week in and week out, this boy's father would come and sit in the stands during each of his games. Then, one week, the boy played like he had never played before. He played the most incredible game of soccer that he had ever played – offense, defence, passing, scoring. The coach looked up into the stands to see the reaction on the face of the boy's father, only to find that he was not there that day! Of all the games to miss! The coach ran over to the boy and said, "Where is your father? It's too bad he couldn't see you play like you've played today?" The boy answered, "My father died. We buried him. But Coach, you must not have realised it, my father never saw me play; he was blind. This is the first game that he's ever 'seen' me play!"

Rabbi Gerson explained to Josh that his mother, Linda, who had been comatose for several weeks, had chosen to pass precisely when she did just so that she would not miss his bar mitzvah, so that she could be there for it and watch him. "She's right there," Rabbi Gerson said, pointing up to the section in the ezras nashim where Linda would sit, "and she's watching everything, just like she always will be from here on out."

I speak for everyone at *JL*, past and present, when I say that we are simply heartbroken – devastated and bereft. We hoped. We prayed. But, Hashem had His own plan, beyond our limited understanding. Baruch Dayan HaEmes (Blessed is the True Judge).

We wish Linda's family long life. May Hashem comfort all of them among the mourners of Tzion and Yerushalayim.

ROBERT SUSSMAN,
EDITOR



ON THE COVER: A BOY AND GIRL PRETEND TO CONDUCT CHEMISTRY EXPERIMENTS. CURIOSITY AND HOME EXPERIMENTATION USING A CHEMISTRY SET ONCE SERVED AS INSPIRATION FOR GENERATIONS OF SCIENTISTS AND INVENTORS, UNTIL THE RISKS INVOLVED FROM THE VARIOUS CHEMICALS AND TOOLS SUPPLIED WITH THOSE SETS BECAME WELL-KNOWN AND SAFETY TOOK PRIORITY. HOW DO WE BALANCE KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE, WHILE ENCOURAGING THEIR CURIOSITY AND ABILITY TO THINK?

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