

לשמור

עצת

"First issue without Batsheva! It's going to take some getting used to..."

A time to  
Keep

A  
time to

העצת

cast  
away

להשליך

What do you get when you have a runaway, a hippie, and a Mississippi native all going on a bus to Chicago? Read "Conversations" to find out

Ayelet  
MAG

# Ayelet Tour

**Letter from the Editors**— There’s so much in this quote from Koheles. {pg 2}

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**Conversations** – She doesn’t want to be noticed. But somehow she finds herself taking part in the discussion... {pg 4}

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# Dear Readers,

THIS IS THE FIRST ISSUE WITHOUT BATSHEVA MIRIAM. It's going to take some getting used to. On the bright side, though, I can stop writing things like "I (Sara Kayla)"...

This is the first issue of the new volume of Ayelet Mag, and as is our current habit, we have used a quote from the Koheles "A Time To"s as our theme. I'm particularly fond of the one we chose this time; I feel it's one that's not really talked about a lot yet also holds a very valuable lesson. As you saw on the cover, the theme is "A Time to Keep, and A Time to Cast Away," the Hebrew theme being the same just in Hebrew. (Unlike other times when our Hebrew and English themes are not just a phrase and its translation.) Anyway, I was excited; there's so much to explore here!

A Time to Keep - like our ancestors clinging stubbornly to our faith, the reason we are still here. A Time to Cast Away - a time to let go of our fear and try something new. In fact, speaking of new things, Leah from Kitchen Krazies is currently in seminary and so unable to keep writing the column. So for this year we have T. Rina writing as our Kitchen Krazies author, and this issue is her first Kitchen Krazies article! I'm sure you'll love it.

Building on the realm of new experiences is our short story Conversations, in which a girl on a bus to Chicago meets two

interesting people.

AND, another new thing! Songspot for this time is a Sara Kayla original! Yup, I'm super excited for y'all to hear it. Batsheva actually did the recording for a me a long time ago, practically pre-covid (as in, definitely pre-when-corona-came-drastically-to-w here-we-live but not necessarily pre-its-existence at all.) Also, when I say she did the recording, I mean she figured out the chords, made the soundtrack, and I recorded it at her house with her equipment. The voice singing is my own:) Anyway, then I promptly decided I was insecure about the recording and barely showed it to anyone. But we needed a Songspot for this issue, and I was starting to think about this recording again, so it's my turn to cast away my own doubts and insecurities and share this song, called Interwoven. I hope you guys enjoy it!

One more new thing - I'm sure you guys are wondering what's gonna happen to the "We Guys In Charge" thing. Don't worry, we got it covered - I'm officially We Guy In Charge (singular). Of course, there were options like Me Guy In Charge and I Guy In Charge to consider (okay fine, I didn't think of those 'till I was writing this in my head) but anyway, currently we're sticking with the ungrammatical byline. 'Til next time! 🌟

*Sara Kayla*

# Kitchen Krazies

## Black Magic Chocolate Cake

Hey guys! I have no idea how Leah normally introduces Kitchen Krazies cuz I'm not her, so here goes! I'm gonna share with you an amazing chocolate cake recipe that only failed me twice (long story short I got busy ;) ) BUT!! you absolutely must read what I'm gonna say because I said so. I'm not gonna bore you, so in short, there is a concept of the Koach HaDimyon, the power of imagination. Our thoughts affect the world around us. If we have good thoughts, it's more likely for good things to happen, and vice versa. So if when you bake something you are upset, angry, or listening to something inappropriate (think:certain music...), those emotions will go into and impact your dish. On the contrary, if you are happy or listening to Torah while you prepare food, those feelings will enter. So keep that in mind while you make this awesome cake!

### Black Magic Chocolate Cake (from Justapinch.com)

#### Ingredients

1 ¾ cups flour  
2 cups sugar  
¾ cups cocoa powder  
2 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp salt  
2 eggs  
1 cup strong black coffee, cooled  
1 cup buttermilk  
½ cup vegetable oil  
1 tsp vanilla extract

#### Directions

- 1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 2) Sift dry ingredients and whisk to combine.
- 3) Add in everything else, and beat on high for 2 minutes. The batter should be thin.
- 4) Pour batter into a greased and floured 9x13 pan or two 9 inch cake pans, lined with parchment paper.
- 5) Bake for 35-40 minutes for a 9x13, or 30-35 minutes for layer pans, or until a skewer inserted in the cake comes out clean.
- 6) Let cool, then top with your favorite frosting, and enjoy! ✨

~T. Rina

# Conversations

*Sonder* n. : the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own—populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness—an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you'll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk.

The girl steps onto the bus. Her deep set eyes flit around nervously for half a second before she hands her ticket to the bus driver. Perhaps she is anxious he will question her youthful appearance or lack of a chaperone, but he doesn't. Thankfully paying more attention to the MAD magazine in his hands than the girl standing in front of him, he hands her back her ticket without a word.

Gathering her ticket and backpack together, the girl, perhaps of the age of 15 though it is hard to tell, makes her way to the back of the bus. She sits down in a seat next to a window with her backpack on her lap as the bus slowly begins to fill up. It isn't long before the doors are swinging shut, and the announcement that the 7 o'clock bus to Chicago is pulling out of the station is made.

From her seat at the window, the girl watches the streets of her home rush by, and a part of her sighs with relief. With any luck, this will be the last she sees of it.

"Scuse me, Love."

A jolt goes through the girl as she realizes the voice is addressing her. She turns and sees a young man twisted around in the seat in front of her. His blond hair rests against his shoulders, and he wears a tie

dye t-shirt with a peace sign on it. The way he said the word "love" reminds her of the way it sounded in the Beatles record she received for her 13th birthday. She pictures it where she left it, resting in its bookcase back home. It didn't fit in the backpack.

"I don't suppose you have a spoon?" The man speaks again, reminding the girl where she is. "I need one for my pudding." He holds up one hand to reveal a pudding cup with its lid partially pulled back. "I always seem to remember to pack the pudding, but never something to eat it with."

"I'm sorry. I don't have one," says the girl.

"A pudding?"

"A spoon."

"Ah," the man looks back at his pudding, as if a bit unsure of what to do now.

"Oh, I can give you one, Dear."

The girl turns to see an elderly lady sitting across the aisle from her reach into a purse. With her long fingers, the woman pulls out a spoon and hands it to the man.

Subconsciously, the girl inches closer toward the window, suddenly aware of the juvenile impression her denim jacket with its patched on rock band logos give off.

"Ah, thank you," says the man. He dips the

spoon into his pudding, and then in his mouth. "I couldn't possibly imagine lasting a 8 hour bus ride without my pudding."

"I suppose so," the old woman says, her smile making the wrinkles on her face deepen. "My grandchildren can't seem to get enough of the stuff." She gives a small laugh, "We always got by without them in Mississippi when I was a girl, but I suppose times change."

The pudding man takes his spoon out of his mouth thoughtfully, "Mississippi, huh? Never been."

"Well, it wasn't heaven for sure, but it was home." And then, perhaps because of the expectant faces she got from both the girl and the man, or a deep and long unsatisfied need to tell her story, the old woman begins to weave for the two strangers the scene of her as a young Mississippian girl in the turn of the 20th century.

Clara Grace Heton was born the youngest of 6 children in the height of summer in 1893. She was born premature. With the lack of medical care available to the laborers of sharecropping farms, her parents were sure she wouldn't survive past infancy. But somehow, she did.

"From sunup to sun down, we would pick cotton in the field. The sun beat down on us, and the birds flew over our heads. I remember looking up at them and wondering what it would feel like to fly." Outside, the flat horizon of the midwest rushes past reaching out as far as the eye can see.

"When did you leave?" the pudding man asks. "Mississippi, I mean."

"I left when I was 18, after I met a traveling salesman named Thomas. We got married, and I moved with him to Chicago where we started a general store together." She gives a small smile and looks down at her life worn hands, "I'm sure you folks know the rest of the story. We had four children, somehow survived the Great Depression and the two World Wars in one piece, and now I live in a small Chicago apartment with my two cats and a houseplant. You know how life goes." She glances down at her watch and chuckles, "And you see, I just summed up 76 years for you in just under 5 minutes, but I suppose that's how it always ends up." She shifts her weight slightly in her seat. "Thomas died a few years back, so I come out here every once in a while to visit my oldest and convince him I'm alright living by myself." She glances out the window for a moment. "It's not so bad. I've accepted the quiet life."

The woman stops talking here, marking the end of her story. The girl remains silent, still not quite sure how she managed to get roped into this conversation. The pudding man scrapes the last of his pudding from the bottom of the cup, the sound of plastic scraping against plastic mixing with the hum of the bus's engine. Finally, the man drops the spoon in the cup, implying he has finished eating.

He stares down at the empty pudding cup absentmindedly. "I tried traveling all over the country," he says. "I ended up running out of money, and now the only place I'm traveling to is back to my parents' place."

cont next page

“Mississippi will always be there, when you’re ready,” the woman says.

“I suppose,” says the man. “But I’m not sure I will be.”

And like that, the invisible talking stick the three strangers had inadvertently created in the brief period between first meeting each other and now is passed from the old woman to the young man.

“After I graduated high school,” the man formerly known as the pudding man, but now without any pudding starts, “my

parents wanted me to go to college to study, I don’t know,” he makes a vague gesture with his hand, “accounting or something boring like that. I didn’t want to go, so I joined a bunch of friends in a Volkswagen, and we traveled around the country. I don’t remember where we went mostly, maybe Los Angeles?” he shrugs.

“Anyways, we ended up getting in a bit of a fight, which led the guy who owned the Volkswagen to ditch us all in a gas station somewhere. I ended up calling my parents after that. I can’t say they were all that surprised to hear from me. They probably expected something like this to happen.”

“So are you going to study accounting or something?” It was the first time the girl had spoken since she denied the man a spoon.

“I guess so,” he says, but doesn’t elaborate after that. The girl realizes that the Beatles accent he used when he first asked her for a spoon is now gone, but she can’t pinpoint exactly in the conversation when it left.

“I’m going to visit my grandparents. I’ve never met them before.” The girl is not sure what compelled her to say this. The

night before today, she had coached herself on saying the least possible in any situation during the entirety of this trip. Yet here she was, telling two complete strangers precisely where she was going. Of course, she gave the impression that her parents had given her permission to go, but you could never be too careful. The old woman smiled reassuringly, “I’m sure you’ll have a lovely time. As a grandmother, I can tell you they’re probably thrilled to have you.”

The girl nods her head, but she isn’t sure if that will be the case for her. The only thing her mother had told her about her grandparents was that they were ultra-orthodox Jews, whatever that meant. She wasn’t sure exactly how they would receive a young girl showing up on their doorstep claiming to be the daughter of the daughter they hadn’t spoken to in 20 years, and knowing nothing about their religion. Again, the girl is hyper aware of the patched on band logos of her denim jacket, and she wonders if it will somehow offend her grandparents religiously or something.

The girl turns to the old woman, perhaps for more reassurance, but the woman has taken out her reading glasses and a magazine. The hippie-soon-to-be-an-accountant-or-some thing in front of her has fallen asleep against the armrest of his chair.

The girl turns to the window and watches as the miles and miles of country corn rushes past, Chicago nearing ever closer. 🌐

- Yet\_Another\_Schwartz\_Kid

“Sonder” and its definition taken from *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows* at <https://www.dictionaryofobscuresorrows.com/post/23536922667/sonder>

# Star-Bright Spotlight

**Etka Gitel Schwartz has enthralled readers for years with her stories that take places in all kinds of settings, from 1904 North Dakota to a present-day wedding hall. In addition to her job at Binah, she has published five books. Welcome!**

**How would you describe what you do?** *My goal is to take people out of their heads for a bit, to be free of what confines them and explore something new in the safety of a fictional world before they return to themselves. The strongest theme I try to convey is nobody is in charge of your relationship with Hashem but you. It is a bond that will be the most important relationship in your life, one that will last even beyond it, but it's something only you can nurture and invite into your mind. No one can limit your access to G-d but you.*

**How did you grow up and how did that affect your work?** *My parents are very into encouraging talents. Both my father and mother are successful writers. My father wrote a complex sefer on Taharos in Hebrew, and my mother wrote the lyrics to many of the hit songs that are still popular today. My father in law, R' Dovid Schwartz, a"h, was a prolific author of Torah writings in both English and Hebrew). When I started writing, my mother was the one who trained me, helping clarify my ideas, edit and fine tune what I was trying to say. The questions my mother taught me to ask are things I now ask myself all the time. My mother-in-law loyally reads every single story and always tells me it's good, even if it isn't! My family has always been my biggest fans.*

**What were the practical steps you took to achieve your goal?** *When I write, I have to be immersed in what I'm writing about, and I have to feel passionate – emotionally, physically, metaphysically. I have to use all 5 senses. I have to smell the 1890's in my head before I'm able to write about it. I have to translate facts into imagining. It's not the big details that make a difference so much as the little ones - how they hung up their clothes (when were closets invented? Hangers?), how*

*lumpy their mattresses were, or the texture of the bread they ate. That means a ton of reading, a ton of organizing data, and a ton of thinking about why and how, going through the senses – trying to recreate a sensory experience in my head. (That's why I can't write about the Holocaust - it's so painful.) If I'm writing about the character having an emotional moment, I have to cry, because otherwise my readers won't cry. So, practical steps? Research, organizing by idea, thinking, imagining, and charting out.*

**When were you first published?** *When I was in ninth grade, the school newspaper was trying to drum up interest (and submissions) by running a writing contest. My friend and I both submitted articles - and won! We were on top of the world. (She [Zivia Reischer] is now a popular novelist and columnist for Mishpacha. I like to joke that there must have been something in the water at Bais Kaila - Miriam Schonzeit, acclaimed Yated fiction writer and novelist, is a BK alumnus and dear friend as well!) By the time I hit 11th or 12th grade, no one was interested in newspaper anymore. My English principal told me that if I became newspaper editor, I would be able to take off class whenever I wanted with my fellow editors. So we had humongous fat newspapers! I wrote most of the articles under a bunch of different pseudonyms... After I graduated, Hamodia had a casting call to see who wanted to write something for 9/11. I wrote a poem that got published. My grandfather a"h bought a million copies to hand out to anyone who would stand still long enough - I still have the leftovers! Then there was a short-lived newspaper that 2 friends of mine published and I was thrilled to be invited to submit (not for pay though!). I wrote some free stories for Hamodia about Tisha B'av, and when Binah (a subsidiary of Hamodia) started, they invited me to submit pieces...but I responded that I*



*didn't have the time (!!)* because I was so busy with my day job as a graphic designer. A year later I was exceedingly fortunate to have them reach out to me again and I happened to have a story that my friends' paper had rejected for being too "out there" that I gave to Binah....and they bought it! When I had my oldest daughter I switched to writing full time.

**In one of your books, you mentioned you started a publishing company called Chilazon. Can you tell us about that?** *When I wrote my own books, my mother told me you must own the rights to your work. My parents made sure I got a lawyer from the beginning; now that I own my own work, part of my parnassah is that I publish it. Most of the time, people bring manuscripts to the publisher, the publisher does whatever they want with the manuscript, and the author is lucky to get paid enough to buy a new sheitel. I'm fortunate that design and typesetting is an industry I'm familiar with from my previous job, allowing me to art direct my own books. I print my own books, then distribute with Israel Bookshop – there's no way I could distribute myself, I don't have a warehouse, or staff to deal with accounting, shipping, and payment – so Israel Bookshop takes care of that. I'm very grateful for the people I work with. It's a tremendous amount of work, but I have full artistic control.*

**What kind of things do you write? Why?** *I usually write historical fiction but I have a dream to write space opera. I love sci-fi because you can explore anything without any strings [attached].*

**Are you working on anything new right now? Any chance we can get a sneak peek?** *Right now I've just finished editing a reprint of Shortchanged, which should be hitting stores later this winter G-d willing. Next I'm hoping to work on a couple of short stories while pitching a new novel to Binah (I pitch them 5 different settings, they pick one, I send them a 2-page story, they tell me what they like/don't like and I keep going). I also might take a few months to work on a short book about my grandfather, R' Efraim Reich, a"h, and his insane war experiences, and of course I'm hoping to rework and edit*

*The Happiness Cipher this year too somehow (I don't think I've ever loved a book I've written as much as I loved that one!) as well as The Grey Lines, which is about the Civil War (hey, I love that one too.). I'm also supposed to be blogging about my books, and doing laundry, and making supper, and all the other stuff that's magically supposed to happen!*

**How has your relationship with Hashem changed through your work?** *First of all, on a very basic level, I'm very aware of where my paycheck comes from, because if Hashem doesn't give me ideas they ain't coming. I'm extremely grateful that the job I have forces me to constantly think about deeper questions like why I'm alive or why I'm doing what I'm doing as part of story/character development or historical research! Historically, I see it again and again - I can give you quotes from hundreds of years ago and from five days ago, of people saying we have to modernize to stay Jewish, in practically the same words – and then two generations later their children are intermarried and no longer Jewish. Unless we learn from history, we'll repeat it. Looking at history (and writing about it) forces you to face very uncomfortable questions about what you're giving over to your children and how you're living your life.*

**What do you love about your job? What do you not love?** *I love so many things about my job! I love how I'm paid to be in my own world in my head and to tell people stories and to dream (which is my favorite thing to do). I love how I'm paid to research history and to learn. I love when I'll juxtapose data and realize that I'm the first Orthodox person to look at these data together – super thrilling and a little scary, because I'm speaking for people who can no longer speak for themselves. Often I'll daven for the words to give respect to my ancestors and people I write about. However, it's not an easy job. There's a tremendous amount of stress - I can't just get paid for showing up to work, I always have to be ready to produce regardless of what's going on in my life or head! And then there are huge deadlines. But I love it - at least 50% of the*

time. (Don't ask about the other 50%.) It's also lovely to have people come over and say "we really enjoyed what you did." People also tell me they don't enjoy it but that's okay also. People feel free to explain what they don't like - but I've learned that meant they were passionate enough about what I wrote to reach out, which is the best compliment!

**Editing is necessary for a good novel, but sometimes painful. What do you do when you have something - a phrase, scene, etc - that you love, but just doesn't fit into the story?** If the edit really improves the work, it's time to eat humble pie and be grateful I have such good editors! If I feel the edit is not improving the work, then I'll ask the editors why they made the change they did - The underlying reason why they either deleted text or changed it - And then, once I understand why they did it, we can brainstorm together about how to fulfill their need using language I like. Overall I try my hardest to accept all edits, because then the few edits that I feel are incorrect, my editor will usually respect my point of view about it. However this is after over 10 years of working together! Over the years I have worked with other entities that edited my pieces to death and while trying to understand where they were coming from with the corrections I came to realize that we are on completely different wavelengths in terms of theming, writing etc., and eventually withdrew my contract with them because it wasn't worth the back and forth and stress.

But [if] I realize that the sentence really needs to go for the good of the greater narrative... I will usually hem and haw for a little bit, but if I feel a line is diluting the narrative, I'll cut it and save it on a different document called "unused" and either reinsert it into the narrative in a different place, or just have it saved. (Saving it on my computer somehow makes it easier to let go in the finished piece!)

**What advice do you have for Jewish girls with a dream?** I think the first thing to know is that sometimes talented girls find it feels like their artistic dreams are incompatible with Judaism and there's a tremendous

frustration. But I think it's important to know that whatever talent you have comes from Hashem, and thus will play a part in your cosmic destiny. Somewhere along the line, if you look for it, you will be able to bring nachas to Hashem and joy to yourself, and enhance His world with the tools He has given you. On the practical side of things, if you have a dream, think about the steps needed to get there. Plan it. Dreaming is only the first step!

**Did you ever face any opposition/criticism? How did you push past it and keep going?** The writer Karen Travis says criticism isn't aimed at your immortal soul - change or don't and move on. When I respond to criticism I have to respond not as myself but as my brand and appreciate that the critic is acknowledging my work in some way, which is really a compliment! People are allowed to think what they want. When you respond with respect and poise you feel very classy - and sometimes they even teach me valuable lessons too, and for free!

**What do you hope to achieve with your writing?** I want to help people see beyond themselves, to get in touch with themselves and their souls and never stop fighting to be a better person, a changing person... to encourage readers to define meaning and fulfillment and happiness in their lives. Really I write so people realize that we have something ineffably precious with our connection to Hashem and our lives as Jews, and we have to put our hearts and souls and awareness into it and really live it... in order to live it. When I write a story, I'm stealing away minutes of readers' lives. If you're reading my story, I have an ethical obligation to enrich that life some way in return!

Thank you for inviting me to this interview. It has been a real privilege! 🌟

*-Batsheva Miriam, Sara Kayla,  
and Etká Gitel*

My friend would sometimes give me random ideas for poem titles as prompts. One day one of them was *Interwoven*. The wheels in my head spun with a dreamy, poetic idea...and then Hashem gave me this idea instead, and the journey of writing my first song began. It went through lots of rewrites, and restructuring, and switching back and forth between a poem and a song, but at long last, here it is: *Interwoven*.

- Sara Kayla

Gm Eb Gm

Interwoven, inside her soul

Gm Eb Gm

Taking up room but she doesn't feel whole,

Bb

No she never feels whole

Gm Eb Gm

The years have passed, and now she's all grown up

Gm Eb Gm

And she's got a family, but she never feels enough

Gm Eb Gm

And words spoken long ago, they haunt her still

Gm Bb

Interwoven, words she can't shake, interwoven

Gm Eb Gm

Shadowing her every move, filling her with doubt

Gm Eb Gm

She cries because she just can't figure this out

Gm Eb Gm

Somedays she's alright, and then she can't get out of bed

Gm Bb

Interwoven, poised to choke, interwoven

# Interwoven

cont next page

Gm D Eb Bb  
(chorus) Interwoven, woven in, hidden underneath the skin

Gm D Eb D  
Interwoven, coiled tight, constantly drilled and now instilled...

Gm Eb Gm  
On her worst days she tells herself she'll be okay  
Gm Eb Gm  
Deep down she knows this will never really go away  
Gm Eb Gm  
Everything's blurred like rain-soaked glass  
Gm Bb  
Interwoven, oh it's hard to see, interwoven

chorus

D Gm Dm  
And she's stayed up nights crying because she knows  
Eb Bb

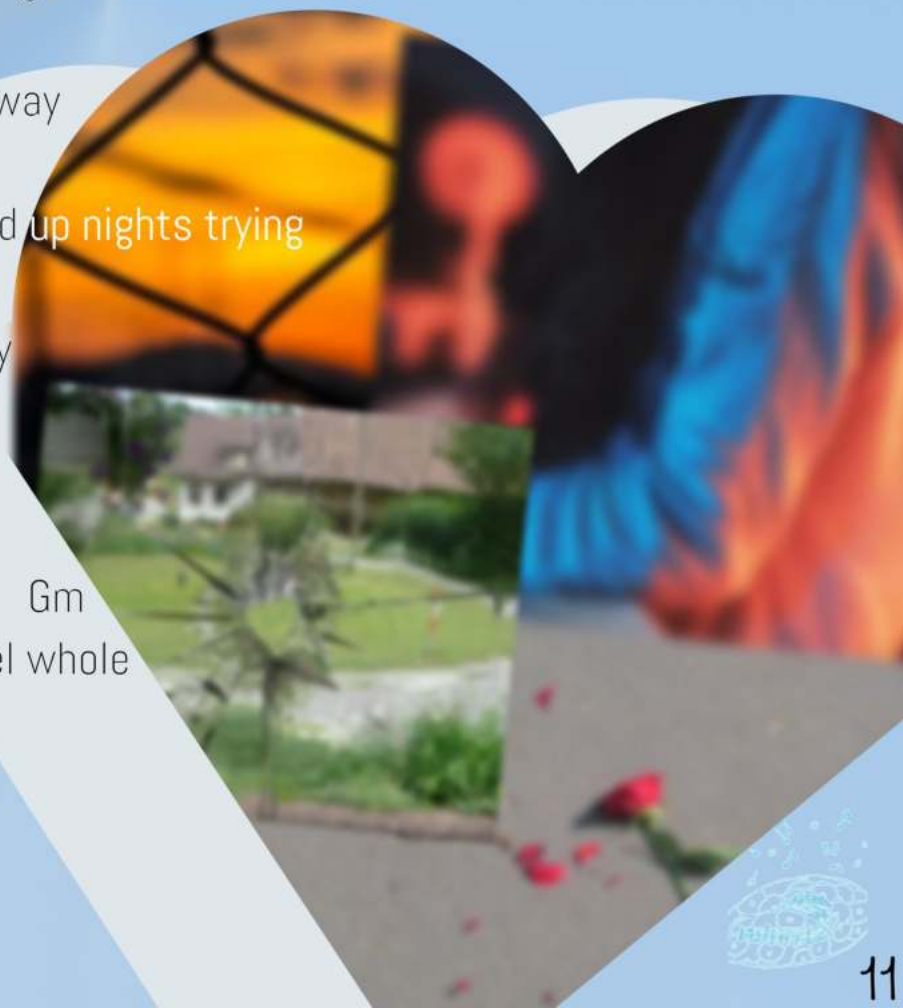
She can never wipe those words away

Gm  
And those who love her have stayed up nights trying

Eb Dm  
But they cannot take her pain away

Gm Eb Gm  
Interwoven, inside her soul  
Gm Eb Gm  
Taking up room but she doesn't feel whole

Eb Bb  
No, she never feels whole... 🎧





# STARDUST

BY SHIRA MOSKOWITZ



**THE NEXT MORNING,** after five straight minutes of a shrieking alarm, I throw open my covers and pad to the bathroom to wash *negel vasser* and brush my teeth. After pulling on my school sweater and slipping into my shoes, I go downstairs, throw two cereal bars into my briefcase and leave the house quietly.

I arrive at school and sit in my seat beside Chassi, who hasn't arrived yet. Other girls are clustered around Sari Feingold's desk, talking and laughing with

her.

I look away. Just then, the teacher enters and those around Sari's desk scamper off to their own.

"Good morning, *banos*," says Mrs. Lieberman, setting up her *Chumash* on top of her *shtender*.

We all open up our *sefarim* and as Mrs. Lieberman starts to teach, I stare absently at Chassi's empty desk, wondering where she is.

She can't be sick - I studied with her just last night, and she was fine! Maybe she has an emergency at

home...I let out a small sigh. I don't want to spend another lonely day like the last one...

There's a small rap on the door and Mrs. Lieberman exhales in obvious annoyance, as it had interrupted her in middle of a *pasuk*. She crosses the room and opens the door.

Chassi enters the room, her ponytail messy and windswept. My heart leaps and I smile in relief. She slips into her desk beside me and gives me a wide grin.

"Hi, Gayil!" she mouths to me and

## CHAPTER 6

Avigayil is in the kitchen talking to her family. Aviva mentions how happy she is that Avigayil finally learned social skills.

## "MY HEART LEAPS AND I SMILE IN RELIEF. SHE SLIPS INTO HER DESK BESIDE ME AND GIVES ME A WIDE GRIN"

takes out her *Chumash*. She signals that she wants to tell me something. After Mrs. Lieberman has explained the *Kli Yakar* for the third time, the bell rings and Chassi bounces up. As the other girls gather their things, exchanging idle banter, I accompany my friend to our lockers.

"Soo?"

"Well, I was late today because..." she pauses dramatically, "My baby brother made such a huge mess today that it could probably be in

the Guinness World Records!"

I laugh. "Yeah?"

Chassi rolls her eyes. "My mother was making cookies and he decided he wanted some dough. Of course my mother didn't let, so he threw a temper tantrum..." she trails off and starts to laugh.

"And?" I'm eager to hear what happened.

"He took the whole container of flour and threw it all over the floor. Wait! I'm not done yet! Then, he threw a few

eggs all over the floor and knocked over a whole pitcher of water...and of course, he just couldn't resist the challenge, so he rolled in the whole thing!"

I start laughing hard. "Omigosh, Chassi, *nebach!*"

"You should feel bad," says Chassi. "I had to clean up the whole mess!"

I do. But it is funny and I can't help giggling as I turn my attention back to my locker, where I grab my *Navi* for the next class. ✨

*to be continued...*

All the ART

• of **LIVING**

lies in a

fine mingling of

**LETTING GO**

and

**HOLDING ON**



- Henry Ellis



# GROWING PAINS

Each step wounds again  
With all I'm leaving behind  
A flake of my heart  
Dropped along each plod of gravel

Kicking pebbles  
Riling dust-clouds to blizzards of sand  
A journey I chose  
Yet encumbered with anguish  
Trudging this stranger's road  
Previous worlds fade behind

Walking away from it all  
Continuing  
To foreign lands  
Growing up  
Entombing memories along the way  
But still  
Shackled to the past

Ahead, the landscape blurs  
Melts into the skyline  
Boiling hailstones obscure my sight  
Flooding the dusty path  
And the future  
Just a painting, smudged

Why does a journey  
Mean leaving all behind  
'Till the heartache overflows  
And tomorrow's dream smears  
A farewell blurry, squinting through tears

If only I could travel,  
Flourish in foreign lands  
While still cleaving to the past  
And never letting go

Each step wounds anew  
For with each plod upon the gravel  
Another flake of my heart chips away  
Fluttering to the ground, remaining behind  
And as I kick pebbles  
It bleeds  
Mingling with my tears

With each step  
I'll bid farewell  
Let go of that flake of my heart  
Because it's a journey I chose  
And through a veil of blur  
As boiling hailstones dive before me  
I behold the clear landscape  
Take a pen, trace the skyline  
And embrace tomorrow's dream

By Mushka P.





# RELEASE

I thought it would be crashing and would throw me to the floor  
I thought it'd splinter me to fragments and I'd be shattered, battered, scattered  
I thought that when it'd come, I'd cry forever and some more  
I thought they'd be the last of my breaths cuz nothing else would matter

I faltered at each step and vowed I'd ne'er get on my feet  
I lamented my deficiencies, and doubts accelerated unease  
Clung onto the phantom hope, suppressing all chance of concrete  
Protected by a shield of fog, drowning in an ocean of insecurities

'Cuz the fears, they strangled me, I thought my end had come  
Their poisoned fumes throttled and claws of ice gripped my throat  
Thought I'd never be the same again, ambitions all gone numb  
Thought all sparks were squelched, I'd just be lucky to remain afloat

But now I let go of the throttling hold, step above  
the fear and it lifts

And discover that the strangling grip was my own icy fingers all along  
A strange, ethereal glow envelops my spirit, and suddenly everything shifts  
'Cuz this welling-up sense of foreign resilience whispers to me that I'm strong

I thought the truth would crush me, and I'd lie shattered, battered, scattered  
But I unclenched the grasp, looked my fears in the face, uncertainties side-stepped  
Embraced this novel strength, climbed atop the barrier — proceeding is what matters  
It's built my stamina and fortitude, but mostly taught me to accept

By Mushka P.



# CREDITS

## **We Guys In Charge (Editors In Chief)**

Batsheva Miriam Altose, Sara Kayla Singer

## **Hashkafic Mentor**

Mrs. Rochie Berkowitz

## **Authors**

Batsheva Miriam Altose, T. Rina, Mushka Pinson, Shira Moskowitz,  
Yet\_Another\_Schwartz\_Kid, Sara Kayla Singer,

## **Techno-Savvy Entities**

Batsheva Miriam Altose, Shira Moskowitz, Sara Kayla Singer

## **Cover Credits and Illustrations**

Basya G.

## **Logos**

Peninah Adler, Devorah Fertel

Some (but not all) photos from **Unsplash.com**

