

דרשה צמר
ופשתים



What Do
You See?

Ayelet
MAG

Ayelet Tour

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Dear Readers,

First off, a correction to make. A good friend of mine brought to my attention that in the last Journey to Me, I (Sara Kayla) wrote “one of my best friend’s vort.” However, ‘twas just a typo; I do not, in fact, have a junior kallah among my acquaintances. I meant to write, “at one of my best friend’s **SISTER’S** vort.” Shows the importance of a single word, right? I wish I could glide gracefully from this typo discussion into the theme talk, cleverly tying them together and leaving you unaware of any change. Alas, it’s not really coming to mind. So let’s talk about theme! As you can see, nicely emblazoned on our lovely cover, are the phrases “What Do You See?” and “דרשה צמר ופשתים” (“She seeks out wool and flax”). So, what does this mean? How does it connect? Which hero are we focusing on?

Questions, questions. This issue we’re focusing on Rachel, as in wife of Rabbi Akiva. Putting aside the fact that she threw away a life of wealth for a life among the poorest of the poor, let’s talk about something that happened earlier.

We all know the story of the rock and the water, boring a hole into

the stone through its steady persistence. What a lesson can be learned from that! Lessons like it’s never too late, lessons about persistence, determination, and hard work. The sight of the rock inspired Rabbi Akiva to learn. But the rock wasn’t the only catalyst; what about Rachel?

Where most people saw a shepherd, she saw a potential gadol hador. She saw more than who he was at the moment, she saw who he could be. Are you figuring out why the theme is what it is yet? When we look at people, it’s easy to see their faults, the way they’re dressed. When we look at our lives, it’s easy to see the pain, the things that stick out. We have a choice what to see. What to notice. It’s a hard thing to implement, but important. Because think of the tragedy that could have occurred if Rachel had just walked right by the man who would become Rabbi Akiva.

“She seeks out wool and flax.” She sought out the good. Rachel saw Rabbi Akiva. What do you see? 🌟

*Sara Kayla and
Batsheva Miriam*



Kitchen Krazies

Hello my lovelies! Today we are going mexican! But dessert style!

Hope you enjoy!

Both recipes adapted from tasty.com

Churro cheese cake!

Ingredients (for 10 servings)

1 cup water

3 tablespoons butter

1 pinch salt

1 cup flour

3 eggs

8 oz cream cheese, 2 packs, softened

1 can sweetened condensed milk

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1 packet unflavored gelatin,
dissolved in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 ml)

cold water

1 cup whipped cream

sugar, to taste

cinnamon, to taste

Preparation

1. In a saucepan combine water, butter and salt, bring to boil. Add the flour and mix well
2. Cook for a few minutes while stirring and remove from heat.
3. Add the eggs one by one, beating well between each addition.
4. Transfer the dough to a bag with a nozzle and pipe a large spiral on the base of a springform pan.
5. Freeze the base until it is firm.



6. Preheat a large pot of oil to 350°F (175°C). Make sure the pot is wide enough for the entire churro base to fit!
7. Fry the churro base until it is golden brown on both sides.
8. Transfer it to a plate and sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon to taste. Place the churro base in the springform pan and reserve.
9. For the filling, in a bowl, beat the cream cheese, condensed milk, vanilla and hydrated gelatin until smooth. Then fold in the whipped cream.
10. Pour the mixture on the churro base and refrigerate for 4 hours or until it is firm. Sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon to taste.
11. Enjoy

Tres Leches Double Layer Cake (for 8 servings)

Ingredients

- 
- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour | nonstick cooking spray, for greasing |
| 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract | 1/2 cup evaporated milk |
| 1 tablespoon baking powder | 1/2 cup coconut milk |
| 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt | 14 oz condensed milk, 1 can |
| 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon | 2 cups heavy whipping cream |
| 6 large eggs | 1/4 cup powdered sugar |
| 1 1/4 cups granulated sugar | assorted berry, for serving, optional |
| 1/4 cup whole milk | |
| 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract | |
| 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract | |

Directions

1. Whisk the flour, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon together in a medium bowl.
2. In a separate large bowl, beat the eggs and sugar together with an electric mixer until light, fluffy, and nearly doubled in size, 6-8 minutes.

3. Using a spatula, gently fold in the flour mixture until just combined (some streaks of flour are okay).
4. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C).
5. Combine the milk and vanilla extract in a liquid measuring cup or small bowl, then gently fold into the batter, mixing just to blend.
6. Spray 2 9-inch (23 cm) round cake pans with nonstick cooking spray. Divide the batter between the pans.
7. Bake until the cakes are golden brown around the edges and spring back slightly when pressed in the center, about 20-25 minutes.
8. While the cakes are baking, combine the evaporated milk, coconut milk and condensed milk in a liquid measuring cup or small bowl and whisk to blend.
9. Once the cakes are done, immediately remove the cakes from the pans and invert them onto a wire rack or baking sheet. Cool for 2 minutes. Then, poke the cakes all over with a fork.
10. Return the cakes to the pans. Drizzle the condensed milk mixture over the cakes, letting it soak in. Let sit for 15 minutes.
11. In a medium bowl, whip the heavy cream and powdered sugar with an electric hand mixer until stiff peaks form.
12. Carefully transfer one of the cakes to a cake stand.
13. Spread a layer of the whipped cream over the cake. Place the other cake on top and spread with the remaining whipped cream.
14. Decorate with berries, if desired.
15. Slice and serve.
16. Enjoy! 🍷



A Bug's Eye View

Kara leans against the playground water fountain and watches as the small ant scuttles across the pavement, its prized breadcrumb held high above its head. She tilts her head slightly and follows the insect with her eyes as it dashes past her sandaled feet stretched out in front of her. Around her, the rest of her class continues to run around and climb on the playground.

Kara remembers earlier that year when her class had had "Insect Day," in which they spent the whole school day learning about different kinds of insects. (Kara still has the butterfly wings she wore that day in her closet at home.) She remembers how her teacher had explained how ants live together in big families called "colonies" in a house called an "ant hill" made of dirt. Her teacher had said that the colony consisted of worker ants, who took care of the queen of the ants. All of the workers ventured out of the ant hill to find little bits of food to bring back to the colony, and together, those itty bits of food combined to make enough nourishment for the entire colony and the queen, who could then give birth to more ants and make more members for the colony. The teacher had also mentioned how ants were super strong. She said that ants have to be able to carry really big bits of food far distances in order to feed the colony, and so they were able to carry things as heavy for them as cars are for humans.

Kara eyes the breadcrumb the ant is holding and wonders how many cars it weighs.

She continues watching as the ant rushes past her, and reaches the steady stream of water leaking from the bottom of the water fountain. Abruptly the ant changes direction, running alongside the stream, trying to find a way across. When it doesn't find a break in the stream that way, it quickly changes directions again, trying to find a break in the opposite direction.

Kara imagines the queen ant at home, surrounded by all the little baby ants hungry for food. She wonders how many other worker ants are out in the world trying to find a way across a stream of water like this one in order to get food to their colony.

Outstretching her index finger, Kara blocks the stream's flow. The ant quickly runs across, and Kara watches it as it rushes away and disappears into the grass; its prized breadcrumb still held safely high above its head. 🐜



Star-Bright Spotlight

An interview with a well-known fiction author - welcome Miriam Schonzeit to the pages of Ayelet Mag!

How would you describe what you do in one sentence?

I write stories and articles for various Jewish publications.

How and when did you know that you wanted to be a writer?

I always loved writing! I started writing stories when I was six years old, and I never really stopped.

What were the practical steps you took to achieve your goal?

When I came home from spending a year in Israel for seminary, I wrote a poem about saying good-bye to the kosel before leaving Eretz Yisroel. I really thought it was a masterpiece! Then I sent the poem in to two or three frum magazines to be considered for publication, and nobody was interested. Eventually, I did get the poem published, but the experience helped me realize that there's not a huge market for poetry in the world of weekly and monthly publications. I realized that most frum publications have short stories, and that there was likely a market for more stories. I wrote three short stories for kids, and submitted them to the Yated Ne'emán newspaper. They accepted those stories – and the rest is history!

What was the first thing you wrote that got published?

Hm, one of those first three stories for the Yated. It may have been 'The Sweetest Song', which is the cover story for my first book, but I'm not one hundred percent positive which it was.

How has your relationship with Hashem changed through your work?

When someone is busy with a creative pursuit – like art or music or writing – it becomes infinitely clear that all our kochoš come from Hashem. Sometimes we have great ideas, and everything goes smoothly, and at other times it's a struggle to string two sentences together. It all comes from Hashem!

How did you grow up and how did that affect your work?

My parents and teachers always encouraged my writing.

Do you enjoy reading over things you've written in the past?

Sometimes I do, but I'd much rather read things by other authors, that I haven't already read!

Do you feel that as a writer you have a different perspective on the everyday world?

Yes. I look for ideas everywhere I go. Now that I've stopped writing a weekly story, I feel like I've become somewhat less attuned to the miracles and wonders of day to day life.

As a writer, how does perspective play into your stories?

I usually write in the third person. Sometimes I do write in the first person.

Did you have a role model when you were trying to make your dreams work?

There were many people I've looked up to over the years, but no one who particularly influenced my dreams of becoming a writer – except maybe the many, many authors whose overdue books I've loved.



What do you love about your job? What do you not love?

I love it that I have the chance to express my ideas in writing. I both love and hate deadlines – I love having an external motivation to get the job done, but I hate the pressure sometimes.

Was there ever a low point in your life when you felt uninspired or dejected? How did you motivate yourself to keep going?

Yes, absolutely. Focusing on my goals motivates me to continue.

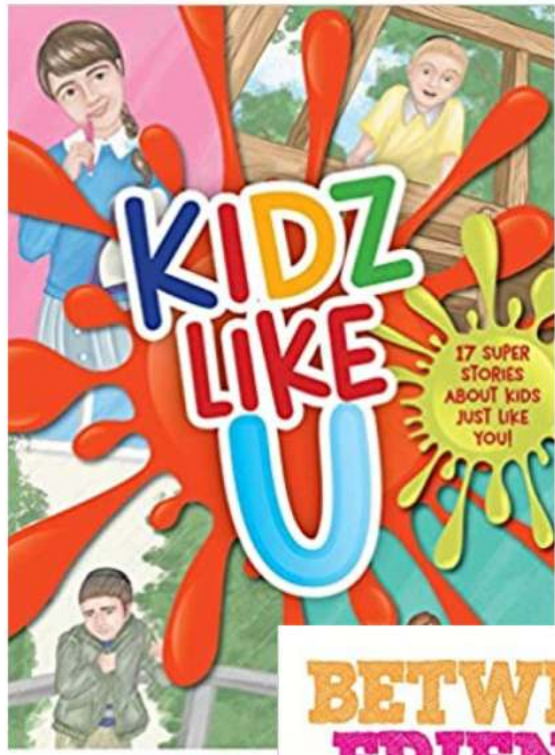
What kind of things do you write? Why?

I'm written short stories, travel articles, science articles, feature articles, and poetry.

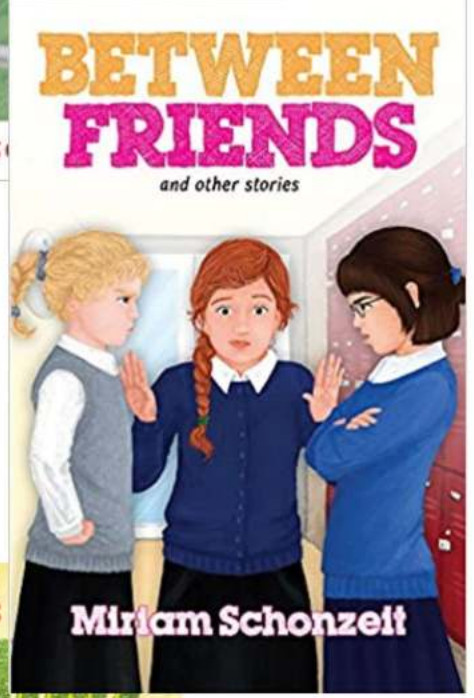
What advice do you have for Jewish girls with a dream?

Follow it! Do your research so you learn the best way to pursue your dream, then go ahead and do it! ⚡

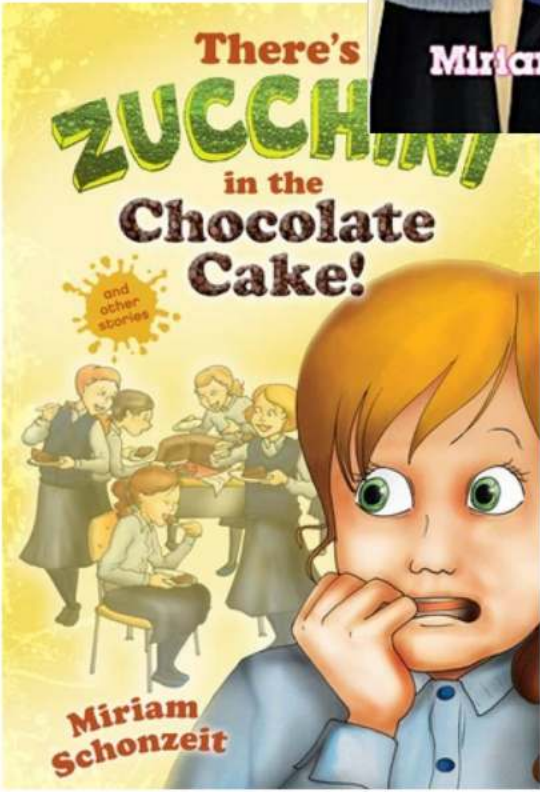
-Batsheva Miriam, Sara Kayla, and Miriam



MIRIAM S



Miriam Schonzeit



Miriam Schonzeit



WE ARE A M.I.R.A.C.L.E.

Am
A nation in the desert
We started out as slaves
Made it to the motherland,
And then came the Crusades
Am
It's been so many years
Em
Crying so many tears
F C
Don't you know, don't you really know?
Am
We are pushed to the ground
Em
Through our faith we are found
F
Standing strong
Am
The Spanish inquisition
Wanted us to bow
But our backs aint gonna bend
Never then, and never now
Am
It's been so many years
Em
Crying so many tears

F C
Don't you know, don't you really know?
Am
We are pushed to the ground
Em
Through our faith we are found
F
Standing strong
C G F
We are a miracle 2x
Am Em
We were chosen with love
F C
And embraced from above
Am G F
We are a miracle
Am
Extermination was the plan
When the devil was a man
But the few who carried on
Live for millions who are gone
Am
It's been so many years
Em
Crying so many tears
F
Don't you know, don't you really know? 9



Am

We are pushed to the ground

Em

Through our faith we are found

F

Standing strong

C G F

We are a miracle 2x

Am Em

We were chosen with love

F C

And embraced from above

Am G F

We are a miracle

C

Every day we fight a battle

Em

On the news we are the stars

Am F

As history repeats itself

G

And makes us who we are

C

Hate is all around us

Em Am G F

But we'll be here to sing this song...

C G F

We are a miracle 2x

Am Em

We were chosen with love

F C

And embraced from above

Am G F

We are a miracle

C G F

We are a miracle 2x

Am Em

Through it all we remain

F C

Who can explain?

Am G F

We are a miracle

Am G F

We are a miracle

**THE HISTORY OF OUR
PEOPLE IS TRULY A
MIRACLE - IN OUR
SURVIVAL, YOU CAN SEE
HASHEM'S HAND. A
MIRACLE. ●**

**WORDS AND MUSIC
BY YAAKOV SHWEKEY**





Great Minds

don't

Think Alike

What do you see? Everyone has a unique perspective. We challenged four girls to write something starting with the words: "It was only an optical illusion."

We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we did!

Diamond Worth

“It was only an optical illusion,” Mom had kept repeating to herself. I’d sat there, shrinking in my chair, waiting to see if horrid humiliation could ever be over.

I ached weariness, feeling worse than the garbage truck I’d passed by that morning, with the sanitation department hoarding the unwanted and wretched goods into the arms of eager hands, the dark island— never to be heard from civilization again. I felt the old tiredness of being slurped clean of any emotions and mental capacity I ever once had. All I’d wanted was a bed to shed the sobs that stood dangerously at the edge of my throat, with the blubbing lamentations that needed a home.

Mrs. Scheiner sat primly, mutely waiting for silence, then continued her accusations. “I know Rivka is a good girl, and that’s precisely why I’m concerned. If I heard about someone else hanging out with such characters, I would have understood, maybe in their circumstances. But you?” She’d shaken her head. “Never in my entire life would I believed you could have come to such a level.”

Never in my entire life...Have come to such a level... such a level... Her words spun around me, mocking me, challenging me, with frost crusted, hated letters. No!!! I had wanted to scream. It’s not like that! I’d never do anything like that. See me more than that despicable, downright exaggerated lie. See the years of work, my effort, my... worth.

When I had found out that a close friend was on a slippery slope of heading somewhere mortally devastating for the frightened child inside of her, with the suffocation of haziness and the mass of magnitude on her bony shoulders, I took some of

the pyramids of her pain. I sat with her for so long, on the peeling park bench while the moon shone and the tears crystallized. Even with the putrid smells of the wisps of smoke exhaled from her blackened lips, I stayed by her. From the scene of the star student sitting beside someone smelling like her odious actions, the depiction did not show well on me. But it was an optical illusion of the true story that lay under the smoke and appearances.

The world is called hidden. Some people can uncover the layers more than others. Even after the well-meaning and “concerned” individual admitted to the Hanhala that she’d made it up, that she only saw me with her, and had just assumed the rest. When they found out I was merely helping a hurting friend, they asked me about it, they wanted details, and I said her trust in me was more important to me than telling the truth.

But even when they apologized and expressed due admiration towards me, the condolences that flew towards my heart missed. It fell in seconds towards the ground. I didn’t feel anything. My heart was numb ice. I spent heavy years of my life prodding at the frost, hoping it would melt. And it did. When I sit on the other side of the desk now, I don’t see girls. I see diamonds. In my eyes, diamonds can do no wrong. Diamonds with dirt just need time and tender care. Underneath the layers of scratches is the diamond. Brilliant, beautiful, perfect. When it happened to me, it was an optical illusion. They saw only the words said about me, never seeking the diamond woven. But I won’t let the optical illusion blind me. Ever. ●

~Chaya’le Movsikov



Live Backstage

It was an only optical illusion. It had to be. It didn't make any sense. Maybe there was some sort of mistake? The main part was mine since first grade. Still, the stark words "Hinda Mueller - Shulamis Norman!" continued to stare defiantly back at me. It had to be an optical illusion. Either that, or I was dreaming. But this was more of a horrific nightmare.

In my school, everyone knew that the starring parts of production went to eleventh-graders, and practically ever since I was old enough to say the word production I had my eyes set on that role. It wasn't unlikely; I was very talented, and acting and singing were right up my alley - I'd gotten into drama in eighth, ninth, and tenth grade. Each time I attended or took part in the play, I would gaze at the main character with admiration and awe, and with every passing year the excitement mounted significantly. I'd performed my tryout perfectly, with the exact amount of dramatics - not too little but not exaggerated. It also helped that one of the production heads was Etty Goldwasser - my neighbor, and being that we were only one year apart, also my good friend. I had full certainty that this year, I would be that lucky girl to fill the coveted role of main actress.

And now, when the signs were finally posted on the front bulletin, the image I'd so painstakingly woven together shattered before my eyes. I stood there numbly, not fully absorbing what I had just read, still clinging to the hope that it was, indeed, merely an optical illusion. It wasn't until my closest friend, Dena Horowitz, appeared at my side with a sympathetic hand on my shoulder, not quite meeting my eye, that it fully registered. I didn't get the main part. My childhood dream was stolen.

"Hey," she said softly, "look at it this way - you didn't get a bad part at all; you're Hinda's brother, Berel." I hadn't even noticed; I was, so caught up in my misery. But what did it matter? My whole life I'd dreamed of being the main actress, and I didn't get it. I was not to be consoled by a few measly lines that would take me less than a week to memorize, and fortunately, Dena understood and fell silent. I took a deep breath and turned to her apologetically. "Sorry for not asking. Did you get into dance?"

Dena's hazel eyes sparkled, and she couldn't contain the excitement in her voice. "Yeah, they even chose me as head for the forest dance! Can you believe it?" I bit my lip and forced myself to give her a quick hug. "I'm so happy for you," I whispered over the lump in my throat, and then quickly turned around so she couldn't see the tears sparkling in my eyes. "I'm going to class", I murmured with a pointed look at my watch. Dena silently followed.

The next few weeks were painful ones, I'm not gonna lie. I mean, which girl could be excited for a production when it symbolized the dashing of all her hopes and dreams? Maybe it seems unimportant, but trust me, for a high-school girl who lives for production and literally counts the days on my calendar, it was truly shattering. But I decided to give the part I got my all, because, you know, I need to keep up my sterling reputation as I thought it - maybe next year I'd be head of production. But boy, did it hurt. I burned with resentment at Etty and Rivka, the production heads; at Mrs. Gelb, the director; and, most of all, at Shulamis Norman, who flounced around like everything in life was perfect - which I guess, for her, it was.

Shulamis and I were never close, she had started coming to our school only in tenth grade and was in 11C, but we used to be sort of friendly. From that awful day I gave her the cold shoulder. I was never outright mean, but the girl who stole my childhood vision and I were not friends. On the outside, I appeared to accept my part gracefully and play my role as the true actress I was. But deep down I longed for something to cause Shulamis' role to fall on me, even though I knew it was wrong. I hoped lamely for, maybe, a happy occasion? A sibling or cousin's wedding, maybe, exactly on the night of production... but I knew my desperate hopes were in vain, and I'd have to accept it.

Well, time flew, and production loomed ahead a mere three weeks away. I was excited, honestly, as usual at the thought of being on stage with a live audience, but I had never fully gotten over Shulamis getting the main part. Dena was in her element, directing a bunch of girls in a gorgeously choreographed dance; she was very talented. Etty Goldwasser, my neighbor and close friend in whom I'd usually confide in, who just happened to be production head, was always so busy - whether running errands for this and that, combined with seminary interviews and bais yaakov convention that she attended and the hassle of everyday life, so I didn't get the chance to speak to her about it at all. Frankly, what's done is done and I didn't even want to discuss it with her. I had other friends but I felt too guilty, and maybe self-righteous, to verbalize such morbid thoughts. So it stayed inside, 'bottled up' as they say, but burning a deep whole in my heart. It was more than envy, it was jealousy. It was nauseating.

One evening, I was on my way to practice with a few other girls when Etty got a phone call. From the one sided conversation I could tell something had gone terribly wrong and someone was not going to make it to production... "WHAT? Is she

okay? Is she... no. NO.. Tell me you're joking. What in the world are we gonna do? Who's gonna take her place?! This is not a minor part -" I held my breath, eyes squeezed tight, as if I knew exactly what was about to leave her mouth. "-this is Shulamis!" I could see the tears in her eyes, the labor of weeks crashing down... then I saw her cast a doubtful look at me, and it finally hit me, like a ton of bricks. Whatever happened to her, Shulamis was no longer able to play the main part, and someone had to take her place. And that someone would likely be... I blanched, reeling in shock. I knew I was supposed to be happy, but for some reason, I wasn't. Was this truly what I wanted? Was it?

Etty closed her little kosher-phone with a deep sigh. "Everything okay?" I asked, careful not to reveal the tremor in my voice. Etty scowled. "Not really. Shulamis was in an accident and broke her leg. There's no way she can come on stage in her state. I mean, what, she'll be running away from Nazis on crutches? Do a solo dance? I guess we'll have to find a replacement..." She cast a discreet sidelong glance at me. "Also, aside from us not having our main actress, I feel terrible for her. I mean, for this to happen to any girl is heartbreaking; I know being the main part was her childhood dream." I bit back a furious retort and forced myself to feel a little pity for her. "It's not like we were doing a favor by giving her the main part; she is very talented. But we have lots of talented actresses," here she gave me a meaningful look, "and I guess her situation pushed her to the top of our list..." Wait a minute. What situation? "You know, she really hasn't been having an easy time; my cousin who is very close with her aunt was telling me. A lot of the work in the

house has been falling on her and she desperately needs an outlet. I mean, it's hard for anyone to, lo aleinu, lose their mother in ninth grade, but I guess it took an extra hard toll on her with her seven younger siblings, being the oldest at home, and all the household tasks landing on her even with girls helping out a couple times a week. We've been having more girls go do chessed there so Shulamis could get out, and everything was working out so well." She sighed. "It's a really tough situation, and you could literally see her glowing when she got the main part. Oy, it's really nebach. I hope she'll be okay." She fell silent, and looked at me expectantly, as if it was my cue to comment. Oh.. "Yeah, that's really sad." I choked, knowing it was the absolute wrong thing to say, but not faulting myself for it.

Shulamis didn't have a mother? She was a yesomah? WHAT?! Questions of when, how, where flooded my mind, but I was speechless. She was responsible for the household? And - oh, what pain she must be in! This was the only outlet for her? She was having a hard time? WHY, why didn't I know about any of this? How could I have been so selfish? Tears flooded my eyes. What was I to do now? No doubt I was next in line for the main part. My part wasn't so difficult to replace, I could memorize lines really fast, and I was a great actress and would play the role beautifully. I knew that it was only a matter of time before Etty would ask me, or Rivka or Mrs. Gelb when we arrived. But how could I accept? It was my fault this had happened. I had caused Shulamis to break her leg. It was me and my nasty jealousy. There was no way I could play her part. I could hear the voice of reason piping up in my head - "this is your chance!

You've wanted this part since kindergarten, and here it's being handed to you on a silver platter! It's too late to change the past, they need someone to play Hinda Mueller, it's even a chessed..."

But deep down, I knew I could never take it. I couldn't let myself be the star of production when it was the cause of suffering for Shulamis. So in production that year, I played Berel, to everyone's surprise, rejecting the offer to act as Hinda Mueller. Rivka, the production head, took the main part instead. And you know what? As an offshoot of the whole matzav - my jealousy, guilt, and ultimately my sacrifice - Shulamis and I became really good friends. I discovered in her a compassionate confidant, a remarkable sense of humor, and, of course, a fellow actress. And when production rolled around the next year, no one was surprised when Shulamis and I were chosen by Mrs. Gelb to be drama heads. I realized I'd discovered a lifelong treasure. But above all, I gained the appreciation and ability to value things as far beyond what they appear to be, far beyond how we perceive them at first glance, and that's the most important thing. 🌟

~S.W

Hiding in Plain Sight

It was only an optical illusion, Elana, two-year-old child genius mused silently to herself as she watched the people around her-ahem, the very adult people around her-become rendered completely dumbstruck at the PowerPoint presentation before them. Who knew such a simple slight of the eye and mind could cause such...She looked to the two teen girls on her right,

"Do you see it? Do you see the duck?"

"No! I only see a rabbit!"

"The ears of the rabbit are the duck's beak!"

"Uch, I don't see it!"

"That's because you're not looking at it right. Here, stand where I'm standing."

"How will that help?"

"It's called seeing life from a different perspective. Duh."

"Oh! Oh! I see it! I see it!!"

Elana sighed, how dull, she thought, then grasped her mother's hand and tugged, demanding her attention. "Mommy. Chips." She whined. Her mother looked down, and Elana held up her arms in a silent request to be held. Swinging Elana up onto her hip with one hand, and grabbing the baby carriage with the other, her mother told her, "Of course you're hungry, it's past lunchtime. Come Lan, let's get you home."

Success! Elana thought, relieved, as she and her grumbling siblings left the Science Center. How much longer she could have lasted in that place before giving away her rather precarious secret, there was no telling.

The frustrating tickling in the back of her brain, screaming to release her opinions, thoughts, and all-around completely brilliant, and worldly knowledge onto the ignorant people she was

forced to deal with every day of her life, was enough to drive her mad.

But alas, such luxuries must be denied to some. And for good reason too. She cringed inwardly, remembering the unfortunate incident involving a watermelon, atomic theory, and a particularly uneducated individual during summer camp. A nasty situation that was. It was a close call, but, in the end, Elana had managed to clear up the site with her reputation still very much intact.

She was a normal two-year-old and nobody had any reason to doubt that.

Thoroughly exhausted, the family settled at the table for lunch, and Elana gratefully accepted the plate of scrambled eggs that were placed on her tray before her.

"I even know more than you do!"

four-year-old Shaindy haughtily bragged to Isaac, who, to his credit, was pleasantly minding his own business and only eating the chocolate bits in his pudding.

He looked up. "Nuh-uh,"

"Yes huh! My Morah even said. Cuz I'm older."

Isaac sputtered a moment not sure what to say, then finally fired back with another eloquent, "Nuh-uh!"

"I know big words! Like the pudding your eating is unhealthyful!" She leaned back and folded her arms, giving him, an "I rest my case" face.

Isaac looked confused, "What's that?"

"Means the food is gonna be mean to your body!" Shaindy said maliciously. Elana eyed the pancakes on Shaindy's plate.

Isaac's chin wobbled, "Nuh-uh." He said weakly. Finally, she could handle it no longer, her nerves were already fraying at the edges. So, before properly considering the consequences, Elana spoke, "I believe the word you may be looking for is 'insalubrious'."

The family's activities suddenly came to a grinding halt. All six pairs of eyes turned to stare at her, their mouths open in shock. Her siblings stopped chewing their food and her mother stood by the stove, her eyes blinking rapidly, a forgotten dishtowel dangling from her hand. The only sound to be heard was the dishwasher, meekly finishing its cycle. Across from her, Isaac's spoon slipped through his hand and fell against his bowl of pudding with a muted plop.

Oh no. Elana smacked her palm to her forehead. She'd done it again.

(Pirkei Avos 3:13 - Rabbi Akiva says: A safeguarding fence around wisdom is silence.) 🌟

~ Rena Langsner

Shards

It was only an optical illusion, all these years. Everything I thought of her, all my trust in her, melts away as the façade that she cunningly held up since forever heartbreakingly crumbles – to reveal that it was just a phantasm there all along. You know, like those black and white pictures that bored people post on their WhatsApp statuses, the kind that make you think the boxes are swirling down into a black cavity in the middle – destination unknown – but really when you trace along the perplexing ring with your finger, the little squares are just going in circles and heading nowhere really fast and making you insanely dizzy and you just end up with this colossal headache and morbid stars in your eyes and you crawl in bed and want to just cry and cry and cry for the rest of your life? Well, not really – but that's what's happening to me now, because I finally got a chance to trace my finger over the swirl that I thought was my relationship with Nechy. The bond that was really a deception all this time while I idiotically considered it to be real. Now, when I close my eyes, all I can see is a spiraling vortex; a potpourri of geometrical splinters spanning a vast grayscale in my mind and convoluting into the depths of the yawning black hole in middle. I plummet into the slippery bleak abyss, and echoing off the walls are the incessant, haunting shrieks of "Betrayal! Betrayal! She's a traitor..." round and round in circles, but really going nowhere fast.

It happened this morning, when I woke up abnormally early, 6:18 am to be exact. I was never a morning person, so I always make sure my day never starts before it actually has to. I always wondered what Nechy did every day from before the crack of dawn, especially after being up 'till so late like I watch her do each night. But when



But when I got my answer abruptly this morning, hearing the mellifluous strains and crescendos of the kitchen conversation, I needed to suppress the granule of bitterness that bled into my heart. It's not my sister's fault, really, that the two of them share this beautiful, loving relationship – while my mother and I are like a couple of firebombs abrading against each other, any stray spark from the friction erupting in savage fireworks. Which is why it's so paradoxical that Nechy and I are such close sisters, I mean before her abominable betrayal just minutes ago. *Betrayal! Betrayal!* We share an extraordinary fraternal bond, the kind that cynics don't believe really exist aside from in novels; the envy of all those girls with only six brothers; the dream of all parents. Well, until now. *Betrayal! Betrayal!* My thoughts prance in circles... *Circles... Going nowhere fast... Optical illusion...Betrayal...* like a hyperactive toddler. I bury my tear-streaked face deeper in my soggy pillow, trying to drown out the roars in my woolly, woebegone mind.

I'd developed a convenient nightly penchant of chewing Nechy's ear off about the ups and downs and zigzags of my day. Like, hey, why not? Some people rave about journaling; some people, I don't know, talk to their teddy bears to get things off their chest. I never needed that – I had a sympathetic, supportive, endorsing listening ear. Well, now I know *precisely* why not. *Betrayal! Betrayal!* I let out a low, sorrowful moan. Now that she has lost my trust, the possibilities are endless. Is she surreptitiously leaking out to Shalva everything I poured out to her? I recounted our whole melodramatic fight, how I told her she was being so immature and she accused me of all those terrible things. I speculated with Nechy about whether writing her an apology letter would just brand me a pushover, or if lowering my pride was really the

best way. And how the 10 th graders kicked us out of the court by afternoon recess, and how I hope I won't be snobby and high-and-mighty towards the freshies next year. And I asked her what to tell Yochie, who's going through such a hard time with her brother. How her family's keeping it a secret but she still confides in me, but I don't know how to respond, and quite frankly, I'm very uncomfortable with the whole thing. And about the little girl I tutor that asks me all these thorny questions – about trusting Hashem and whether she's actually a stupidhead or it's just the way bullies perceive her – too intensely for her age, and I need her to stop already so I can teach her some math. And how I *wiiish* I could try out for the play with enough confidence to make it into the elite dance group; could she maybe, as a senior, speak to Zeesy and Esther Malka and put in a good word for me? And I confided that I think they should have a better system for choosing – the whole thing is just, in my occasionally humble opinion, about who has better connections and choosing favorites. A gasp rises in my throat. I also vented to her about Ma!

Who knows how much she's really spilling?! And the worst part is that she would encourage and guide, and offer such wise – (*Mommy's...?*) – advice! I looked up to her so much, but now I know it was all a farce. *Betrayal! Betrayal! She's nothing but a traitor!*

I really wasn't planning to listen to their heart-to-heart, honest. I know that she talks to Ma a lot, and that I'm just jealous because I can't be the "perfect daughter" like her, but I also know that we're different, and it's okay. *Oh, I never knew just how different – at least I'm ethical and would never betray anyone's trust like that! Nothing but a traitor...* But when I heard my name amidst the muffled dialogue, my sensitive ears perked up.

“...Yeah, I agree,” my sister had admitted to whatever unknown comment had prompted it. “But last night, Gittel kept me awake with her rant again. Not that I mind it, really. It’s sort of nice to have a sisterly bond like we have. She’s still in middle of the whole drama with Shalva. It’s sad, they used to be best friends.” Her voice rose a notch. “But sometimes she wants my advice, and I’m just at a loss. I told her to write Shalva an apology letter, but short and to the point – she shouldn’t let herself be taken advantage of. Do you agree?” I pictured Nechy’s trusting eyes looking up at Ma during the pause, but she responded in a voice too hushed for my ears.

My sister continued, but my hot, wounded tears had already begun gushing, and the fuming maelstrom; the medley of twirling voices reverberating – *Betrayal! Betrayal!* – had started their harrowing tirade. I persisted in listening to her ongoing diatribe over the commotion now cramming up all the extra space in my head. *All these years... Optical illusion...*

“...younger. And then there’s that classmate that unburdens herself to Gittel, and she doesn’t really know how to deal with her. But honestly, I’m not the therapist she makes me out to be, and that situation is really getting out of control. Remember I told you? She had this brother that’s tearing the whole family apart...?” My mother had replied soothingly, and I’m sure it was sage advice, but I was deaf to it all. They’re still talking down there in the kitchen – it’s only 6:36 – and have since meandered off to different topics, but all I can feel is the monstrous shame and humiliation at everything I now know she thinks of me, and the ear-splitting fury of her sickening betrayal... *Betrayal! The whole thing was just an optical illusion! She is just a traitor!* Well, at least now I know the truth about my sister. I know what a

fraud she truly is, and now I’ll never trust in her moronic illusion again.

Of course, I’m giving her the cold shoulder now. I can barely look at her in the eye – she’d just get slain by the cannonballs that would fire. Today’s problems feel all jammed up inside, which I’m quite not used to, but now I know better. Maybe I should take up teddy-bear-talking or something.

The loss of such a connection is agonizing, but she’s completely guilty. I wonder if she even notices that I haven’t spoken to her in a week... Betrayal! She walks into our room. When she looks at me, I only see exasperation – if there’s any smidgen of compassion I’m sure it’s accidental. Traitor! She’s a –

Gittel.” Her voice slices through the echoes. I can’t even see her face; it’s clouded over with my wrath – the spiraling circles going nowhere really fast. “I know you’re mad.” I hear her speaking, in a hazy sort of way, like my ears are prewired to reject anything she’ll say. Then I remember to be utterly outraged by her gross understatement. But I will keep my silence. A traitor of her magnitude does not even deserve one speck of my voice. *Just a traitor... Betrayal!* “You can ignore me if you want.” Like I need her permission! The audacity of it all! “But I need to tell you something important. I think I know what happened. You heard my conversation with Ma, didn’t you?” I give the slightest, most imperceptible movement of my head that can be interpreted as a nod. “Well, I know you’re hurt by what I said, and if you’re ever thinking clearly I hope you can understand that sometimes I’m just venting, and you can’t come to extreme conclusions about my ‘true’ feelings towards you from just overhearing a snippet.” Her words are blurring together with my stormy rage, and mingling with my unstoppable tears pelting the bedsheets. “But I know that’s

not what you want to hear, and that's not what I'm here to tell you. All I want to do is point out something very important: the same way you confide in me, I also need to share my feelings with someone. Even if you don't really get along with that someone, she loves you very much. Everyone needs to talk, and I'm no exception." She bites her lip. "I'm really not doing anything different than when you unburden to me about Shalva or Yochie or whoever. It's not called betraying your friends when you speak to someone older and wiser – it's called getting things off your chest and receiving advice on how to respond, which is actually healthy for a relationship. I just do it with my mother, not my sister." She stops short, blinks back her tears, the door clicks gently behind her, and suddenly the whole obscure mirage clears. I'll never admit it, but she's right. And then there's nothing left to say, or think, or cry, even if I could. Because I see that the whole vortex of Nechy's betrayal, the huge fortress of anger and resentment and hurt and lost trust, was all just the fallacy of what I perceived it to be. And the tower crumbles down, the façade is lifted, and I see how the circles of the counterfeit betrayal just go nowhere really so fast. And at last I see the true optical illusion. ●

~Mushka P.

About the Prompt

"Great minds *don't* think alike--that's what makes them great." My father is fond of saying that, and he's right. In our first year of Ayelet Mag we did this article as well, and enjoyed it so much we wanted to make it a yearly thing. Unfortunately, it didn't happen for last year, pretty sure we completely forgot about it...but anyway, this year we've done it and we hope you found them interesting!

We wanted our theme of sight and the prompt to connect, which is how we came up with the prompt of "it was only an optical illusion." People look at optical illusions and see different things, very much like in real life and various situations. We see things through a filter of our own experiences, our pain and our insights.

The writers, as well, looked at this prompt and "saw" different things. All four stories start the same, and then go off in very different directions. Each girl took the prompt and wrote something funny, clever, or thought-provoking...or all three, in some cases!

Besides for being fascinating in their differences or occasional similarities, they were also so much fun to read, and a big thank you goes to them for being so creative and talented, as well as putting up with all my edit suggestions!

Great minds *don't* think alike--and here's the proof! ●

~Sara Kayla Singer





Journey To Me

Each hero. Each theme. Join the Ayelet Mag co-editors on our journey to bring the themes of each issue into our daily lives with this exclusive, this-year-only column. The destination? Ourselves.



Goal: Take something hard or frustrating about every day for a week and put a positive spin on it

Sara Kayla:

Day One

Was really tired first half of day, but it made me feel more like regular school, in a way, so actually kind of nice.

Day Two

Why is it that I suddenly can't think of things that frustrate me?

I felt stressed out about some stuff today, and because of that I had a better *mincha*. So that worked out!

Day Three

Unfortunately, didn't get to publish Ayelet Mag today. That was *very* disappointing. As for the positive spin, I guess this is one of those times where we just surrender to Hashem's will, and realize that for whatever reason it wasn't meant to be today. (Or is it technically my fault? Like, as a result of *bechirah*? That stuff can be confusing.)

Even though it seems like, what's the difference between one day and the next? Why wasn't today right? It's one of those times where we try to accept that even something like this, that feels so insignificant--why does it matter what day exactly?--it is significant, and important, and the best thing for us. (Readers are welcome to come up with hypotheses on why one day wouldn't have been right, by the way;)

Day Four

Frustrations? Who's frustrated? AYELET MAG CAME OUT TODAY!!

Actually though, I'd had this whole plan where I was going to take a nice relaxing shower towards early evening, and then just chill

and read, but you know what, other things happened. I don't know why. I feel like this happens every time I make a plan. And I mean, I get it, you know, "Man plans and G-d laughs," but don't some plans work out sometimes?? So why does it feel like mine never work out....oh well, I suppose they must sometimes and I just don't pay attention when they do.

Anyway, that whole shower-plan didn't happen, instead I did what I usually do, shower right before bed, due to distractions and other plans. That was a little frustrating.

However, let's weigh the scales. On the one hand, I didn't get to have the same relaxing shower I wanted. On the other hand, it was partly my own fault, and I also posted Ayelet Mag, wrote the blog post, spent some nice one-on-one time with my father, and wrote an email I'd been meaning to send. And it's not like I didn't get to shower at all, so...maybe it was worth it?

Day Five

Why does it seem as I suddenly don't have frustrations? But nevermind--I am determined not to struggle with *this* Journey to Me as much as the last one.

Not so much in my day that was frustrating that I could give a positive spin on exactly--there was a point where I really wanted to just snap at one of my siblings but I DIDN'T. Sooo I guess I could say, my hard/frustrating thing was an argument with my brother, and my positive spin is that I learned an evasive tactic, which is leaving the room for a minute and desperately praying to Hashem to give you self-restraint. More seriously though, I did feel good about being able to hold it in, so that was something good I got out of it.

Day Six

I really really *really* wanted to read a certain



book. I had only just started it and it seemed really good, and I was very intrigued.

But I decided to check it out before reading further. And unfortunately, none of the parent reading reviews were on my side.

But I wanted to read it.

But at the same time, I couldn't. Could I? I seriously wrestled with the urge, on the one hand desperately wanting, on the other feeling like if the reviews were right, I--and this is going to sound cheesy, but it's what I thought--I couldn't do this to my soul.

What helped seal my choice was that as I'd been struggling about it and then I decided to leave it for the moment and move on, and just about then, I got an email. It was from someone I'd emailed recently about this very sort of thing--being careful about media and certain types of books. It felt comforting, almost like a sign, especially because I hadn't expected an answer so soon. (I'd written the email on Thursday, and the person I sent it to is a mother with children, bli ayin hara, so getting a response on motzei shabbos was very much appreciated.)

So that was something hard, I'm not sure if all this counts as a positive spin, exactly?? But anyway, yeah. The point is, I have an ulterior motive in writing this here, which is that after writing a whole thing about it, I can't just go back and read it, can I?

#Tactics

Day Seven

Onions, my friends. Onions and eggs.

More specifically, *chopping* onions and eggs. I was making dinner (quarantine thing--each of

my siblings and I have a night to make dinner) and onions and eggs were in the recipe.

Alas, I abhor cutting onions; either I'm more sensitive than most, or it hurts so much because I take longer to cut them (I don't remember how I'm supposed to cut them if I want them diced, so I usually invent new methods every time. So far, none of them have really worked) but either way I take a long time to cut them AND IT HURTS. Sometimes I feel like I can't even keep cutting, my eyes hurt so bad.

And then eggs. Hmm. Didn't used to be a problem, and I didn't think it would be. But it was--I can get paranoid over checking and double-checking and *making sure* there aren't bloodspots, and this was one of those times. It felt like the lights weren't bright enough to check (looking back, I think it was dark outside, which probably didn't help) and I felt trapped.

It's time for the positive spin now. Um...

At a certain point while cutting the onions, I kind of just said to Hashem, *okay, I'm reaching out to You, I'm going to try to focus on something else and we're going to do this together.*

And we did. It was hard, but not unbearable.

You can feel Hashem's presence in the simplest of moments 🌟



Batsheva Miriam:

Well, this isn't the week I was planning on writing about. I really did have plans for what I would discuss – graduation, a super hectic end-of-senior-year schedule – but Hashem decided I wouldn't write my article until July, and this past week has been crazy full of ups and downs.

Tuesday: My sister and I were doing something together, and one of my friends called. She told me it was urgent, and I was kinda annoyed about having my chill time interrupted, but she'd just resolved something major in her life, and it made me really happy to be told. Honestly, it made my week.

Wednesday: Ok in all honesty, I really don't remember anything about Wednesday. I mean, I do, but nothing particularly bad-turned-good.

Thursday: Shiva Asar B'Tammuz = hot and humid and fasting. Of course I felt miserable and headachy, but because everyone had planned to do nothing because of fasting, I got to see a friend I hadn't seen for two weeks, and I was able to sit and learn a with a different friend for a long time.

Friday: I hadn't gone biking for two weeks (vacation, okay?) and after my early morning ride, I limped around all day. Nothing good has come of this yet, but biking is good for you, right? So eventually I'll know this is good. Maybe after I can feel my legs again...

Shabbos: The weather forecast predicted rain, so I didn't make any plans to see friends. But Baruch Hashem the weather was gorgeous! Sunny and warm, but not humid. So I got to sit outside all day and catch up on my reading, which is definitely a positive!

Sunday: Despite it being July, we still had to deliver yearbooks to teachers. And that job fell to me. So I drove to many, MANY more teachers' houses than I would have liked, got lost a few times, and awkwardly rang a lot of unanswered doorbells. But one of my favorite teachers (shout out to Mrs. Greenspan) did answer the door, and I got to see her for the first time since before Purim, which was a very enjoyable few minutes.

Monday: My principal gives a weekly class for my grade, and we had to cancel for this week. Which is very, very unfortunate, because I look forward to those classes. But – I started shopping for seminary on Monday, and exactly when the class would have been, I was downstairs clicking through Amazon links – I needed that time to finish up, and I wouldn't have had that time!

Tuesday: Nothing bad here, but Mrs. Berkowitz, our beloved hashkafic mentor, gave a class about The Three Weeks – and one of the main topics she discussed was the ability to look for the positive or the negative in something, and that depending on how you look at it, that's how the situation will turn out. This blew my mind – mainly because I knew that as soon as her class finished, I was going home to write THIS ARTICLE. About perspective. About looking at things for the positive. Whoa. 🌟





STARDUST

BY SHIRA MOSKOWITZ



THE NEXT DAY IN

school, I sit down in my seat. Chassi isn't here this morning, so no one notices, let alone greets me. It's fine though. I'm used to it.

After quickly reviewing Chumash from the night before, I rip a piece of paper from my notebook and scribble down a few more notes.

A new tune has just entered my brain and I won't - can't - forget it.

I've always been musical. My mother says that I was born singing, which doesn't make any sense, but okay (my mother further explained this matter when I was eleven, saying that I was crying musically somehow, which still doesn't make any sense, but whatever).

I was only six when my parents noticed my flair for violin. My cousin, Daniella, who plays violin, had begun to teach me a few notes and I immediately caught on.

My parents caught me playing "Twinkle, Twinkle" and after begging them for a violin of my own, they acquiesced and gave me a trial run.

I bonded instantly with my violin, however weird that sounds, but there's no other way to put it, and, I don't know, developed the talent of composing songs. It's annoying at times, because though I try to resist the pull of music, somehow, I can't. It drives me crazy.

Why can't I just be a normal girl? I'm sure no one else's head is ever invaded by an army of music notes, clamoring to be put down on paper.

"Avigayil! Avigayil!"

I jolt out of my reverie and stare guiltily up at Mrs. Lieberman.

"What does Rashi say on the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*?"

I uncomfortably note that my Chumash is still closed. I can feel the eyes of

the whole class on me as I hurriedly open my Chumash and flip around for a few minutes, trying to find the place.

Mrs. Lieberman is standing there the whole time, frowning. "We are in *perek yud daled, pasuk vav*," she says tightly.

Cheeks burning, I flip to the correct page. Different music notes are still flitting about in my mind, forming and blending to create new sounds.

Without me even realizing it, I'm scribbling more notes down on my notebook page, my hand subconsciously forming G sharps and B flats.

When that particular rush finishes, I hurriedly slam my notebook shut and slide it away under my desk and look up.

Mrs. Lieberman is still looking at me, waiting. I slump, feeling my cheeks

NONE NOTICE A GIRL, SITTING ON A SWING BY HERSELF, HALFHEARTEDLY KICKING THE SAND AS SHE ATTEMPTS TO MAKE THE SWING GO HIGHER

burn.

"See me after class," she tells me, and then turns to Sari Feingold, who answers correctly of course. I grit my teeth. I don't mind the rest of the girls really, except...her. Sari just gets on my nerves.

She is just so...perfect. She has well-off parents, good looks, brains and most importantly, lots and lots of friends. I am not jealous per se, I just don't like Sari. Argh. Why does she have to have everything?

For the first time, my heart lurches. I wish someone would like me for who I am. I wish someone would want to be friends with me. Why can't I have friends? Am I always destined to be alone? A social outcast? Someone who is never allowed to play tag with the class, someone is banned from all games...

I wince as a memory envelops me...

The bell rings and Morah Leah dismisses the first graders

for recess. "You can go play outside today," she says. "The rain stopped!"

"Yay!" cheer the girls as they race out. One lone girl follows, trailing slowly behind. Malka, a popular girl, immediately starts a game of tag, which most of the class joins.

None notice a girl, sitting on a swing by herself, halfheartedly kicking the sand as she attempts to make the swing go higher. She watches the girls running and shrieking with glee, unrestrained longing in her eyes...

Suddenly, the swing she's sitting on jerks and sways. She turns to find Malka and two other girls standing behind her.

"Get off the swing!" Malka demands. "We want it!"

"But I got here first!" she protests feebly.

"Get off!" To prove her point, Malka gives the swing's chains a vicious jerk. The rest of the first graders gather around Malka and the girl, not wanting to miss the show.

Malka and her two friends

start jerking the swing more and more violently until the girl can't hold on any longer. She crashes to the ground, and her brand new uniform that Mommy had just washed is stained with grass and mud. Her hands throb, and she notices blood. She starts to cry.

"Oh look," sneers Malka, "the baby's crying." She starts up the all-too-familiar chant, "Icky Avigayil! Icky Avigayil!" while the other students echo the mantra...

The girl stumbles to her feet. Why did they hate her? Why couldn't someone want to be her friend? She flees the playground, tears blinding her vision...

I shake myself out of the trancelike state I'm in, forcing that terrible memory away. I won't remember those days. I won't. But despite my best efforts to drive the recollection from my mind, it obstinately refuses to budge.

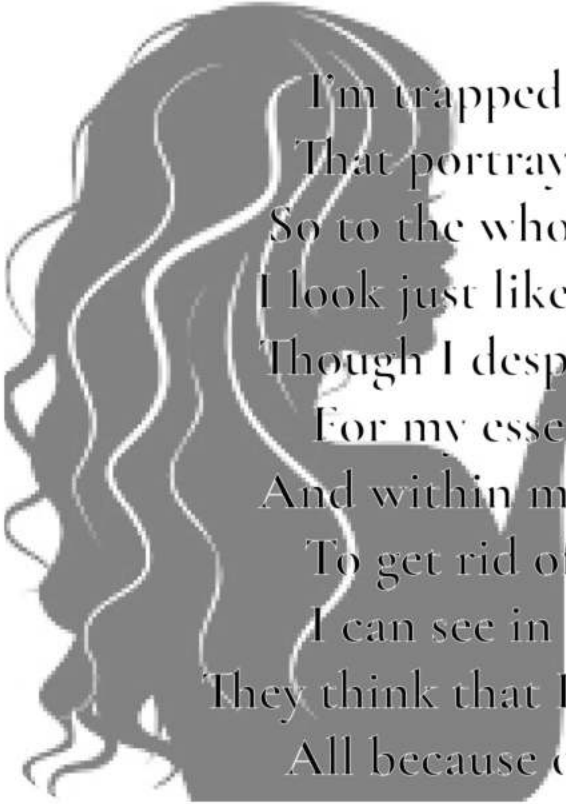
TO BE CONTINUED...






A pretty face is
nothing if you have
an ugly heart

Disguise That I Despise



I'm trapped in a disguise
That portrays all I despise
So to the whole world's eyes
I look just like what I despise
Though I despise my disguise
For my essence it denies
And within me my soul cries
To get rid of the disguise
I can see in people's eyes
They think that I'm what I despise
All because of the disguise
But I cannot sever the ties
I'm bound to my disguise
That portrays what I despise
So while I'm trapped in my disguise
You can hear my heavy sighs
And my plaintive pleading cries
To all those boring eyes
Who think I am what I despise
All because of the disguise
And I'll choke out through my cries
To please open up their eyes
Peer through my disguise
See that I'm not what I despise
Unravel all the lies
Listen to my cries
Probe into my disguise
This disguise that I despise



By Mushka P.



TINTED LENSES

You perceive the world
Through your own life's lenses
Breadth of your history determines
The pattern of your brushstrokes

All that penetrates your mind
Immerses as malleable putty
Conforming to the doorway of your view
Shaped firmly in a frame of your past
And all that enters
Must crystalize to its form
It molds
Manipulates

Your feet stuck in the mud
Vision clouded by an intransigent perspective
Nothing gets past
Your angle, your outlook
Rooted stiff, unyielding
Into the arid wasteland of your head

Unfurl your horizons
Open your mind
Open your heart
Open your eyes

By Mushka P.



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