

every
soul
A WORLD



My Special Sister

L'zecher nishmas ha'ishah ha'tehorah Rochel bas Harav
Chizkiyahu Yaakov z"l

My beloved sister Shelley Kurland *a"h* was a "special child." In those days (1948) they referred to her as "slow" or "mentally retarded." Anyone who had the *zechus* to know Shelley knew that she was indeed "special." She was a pure *ruach* who infused hundreds of people with *chizuk* and encouragement. She complimented everyone she met with "you look so beautiful or handsome" with her vibrant smile and obvious love for all others.

Shelley was special because at a time when parents often opted not to raise "special children" at home, my parents Rav Yaakov and Miriam Kurland never considered that option and Shelley was raised like every other member of our family. In a home that exuded Torah and *hachnasas orchim*, Shelley absorbed the *niemas ha-Torah* and a love for all people of all stripes. To my parents credit, they were always *b'simchah* about their *matzav*, with a tremendous *bitachon* went on to have three other children (Shelley was the oldest), and gave longevity to what otherwise was expected to be a shortened existence



Shelley and I as children

She was one of the first to dance with the kallah, at times before the immediate family, sharing in everyone's simchah even if it would never be her own.



(Shelley lived 72 years). But more than that they allowed her personality to develop and with great charm and an unusual memory, Shelley was *mechazeik* hundreds of her various constituencies in Baltimore where we grew up; in Hicksville, Long Island where my father served as a rav; in Far Rockaway, New York, and in particular to the Sh'or YOSHUV community where I have been *zocheh* to teach for the past 45 years; and in the Beis Ezra Women's Home on E.18th St. in Brooklyn that took such good care of her for the past 24 years.

She was the address for Shabbos visits and the ensuing games and fun that would follow for countless Bais Yaakov girls in Baltimore and T.A.G and B'nos Bais Yaakov girls in Far Rockaway. Then there were the many gracious people whose homes she would visit on a constant basis. Songs were sung including the famous "Shelley is a friend of mine" and hundreds of other Jewish songs that she had an expertise in from her hours and hours of listening to records and tapes (She knew every *tenuah* of Carlebach's *Mimkomcha*). She was *rosh hamedabrim* at every Shabbos seudah and simchah, always encouraging the yeshivah

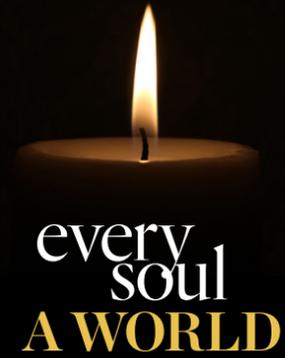
bochurim at our table to "learn more Torah and don't play so much checkers" (I imagine that was her natural way to deter the "sichas yeladim" that is so consuming. She said it all with great exuberance and excitement as it came from a pure neshamah and a *ruach tehorah*).

A close friend told me that it took nine attempts before she successfully got her driver's license and she was about to give up many times along the way. It was Shelley who gave her the encouragement to not give up and that she could do it that allowed her to ultimately persevere.

Shelley loved to go to shul and sing along with the chazan without reservation. She was one of the first to dance with the kallah, at times before the immediate family, sharing in everyone's simchah even if it would never be her own. It didn't matter to someone so purely selfless. She addressed everyone by their first name that rang out in her inimitable style with absolute love and devotion. Her simchas hachaim was contagious and her constant flow of brachos to others was "Rebbish" as if she was responding to the requests of a kvittel. Somehow she knew what people needed and never disappointed them.

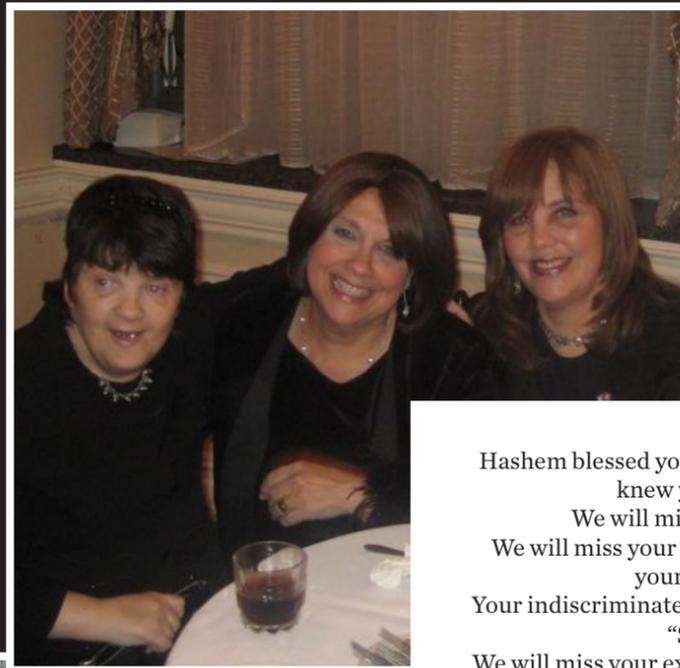
Our love for Shelley knew no bounds. She told me so often that I was her favorite brother (of course I'm her only brother). Shelley, I hope you knew that you were everyone's favorite sister and friend without exception. No words could ever express who you were and what you represented to so many. This is a meager attempt. You will always be my special sister, Shelley, special to me and exceptional to the world you created. I love you eternally.

Your Brother, Yehoshua Kurland 



To My Precious Sister Shelley Kurland, A"H

Your life in this world has tragically come to an end
But to all who loved you - family and friends
You will always be a beautiful legend
You were born at a time when resources were few
For special developmentally disabled children like you
But our parents who were so courageous
Were also kind, loving and tenacious
They raised you at home and nurtured your soul
With a love for life and people which made your limited capacities whole
At a time when children like you were hidden away
You were an integral part of our lives every single day
From you we learned the power of love and acceptance
You taught us patience, appreciation and tolerance
For you loved every one of Hashem's creations
No matter what gender, color or vocation
You found happiness in the simple things in life
Music, good food, friends, Shabbos, Yom Tov and you hated all strife
Your smile and exuberant voice enhanced every happy occasion
And you excelled in the power of persuasion
At every Simcha and Shabbos gathering you made a special "Shelley" speech
Reminding the men to keep learning Torah
Because you were so charming and sincere - it was ok for you to preach
So much laughter and joy you brought to everyone
Each of us was your "favorite" sister, brother, friend or person
Your homes in Baltimore, Hicksville and Far Rockaway
Became the favorite location for young boys and girls to visit and play
Every Shabbos afternoon you entertained your guests
With your enthusiastic smile, humor and zest
They were doing a big chesed and made you feel so valued and treasured
But it also gave them so much enjoyment and pleasure!
In 1996, Bais Ezra on East 18th Street became your new address
It was hard at first to be away from home, but there you made so much progress
And in your inimitable way you adjusted and became everyone's best friend
From the counselors to your housemates to the cook
They all fell in love with our Shelley Kurland!
Every morning you called us and many other people you knew
You had an uncanny memory for names and phone numbers
How could this be true?
For although you were mentally challenged in other ways



Hashem blessed you with a superb memory; all who
knew you were amazed!
We will miss you so much Shelley!
We will miss your voice, your Simchas Hachayim,
your laugh and smile
Your indiscriminate love of humanity, your signature
"Shelley" style
We will miss your excitement for all family occasions
From the moment you received your special
"inbitation"
We will miss you speeches, your reminders that your
birthday is approaching
That we should send you a card, some chocolate or a
CD
(sometimes we needed a little coaching)
We will miss you as an integral part of our existence
Your spirit and joie d'vivre and occasional stubborn
resistance
Now those who loved you will remember another day
When your Neshama left this world on Ches Nissan
Tuf Shin Peh
But we know that you are in a place surrounded by
eternal love and protection
Near your beloved parents and the Shechina's holy
perfection.

May your holy and pure Neshama be a Melitza
Yeshara for all who loved you
And may you escort Mashiach Tzidkainu to greet us -
B'mhaira B'yamaiu!

Your Sister Mindy

