



every
soul
A WORLD

Everyone's Best Friend

In Tribute to Mrs. Hennie Mandelbaum

We *mechutanim*, friends, neighbors, bungalow colony mates, and acquaintances all feel embraced like family, the loss of an especially warm, vibrant personality such as Mrs. Hennie Mandelbaum is a huge vacuum.

Mrs. Hennie Mandelbaum grew up in Boro Park, daughter of Reb Yosef Baruch and Esther Glikman (formerly Rubin). Her father, son of the Sosnewiecen Rav, was a survivor of numerous concentration camps, while her mother spent the war years hidden in a monastery. The couple were direct descendants of Rebbishe dynasties, such as Belz, Lelov, Ropshitz, and Chantsheen, and they built a family in America along the traditions of their glorious legacy. Hennie attended the Sarah Schenirer school in Boro Park, then, in 1972, she spent a formative year at BJJ. The Glikman home was balebatish and while the concept of kollel was not in vogue at the time, Hennie was determined to marry a boy who was in learning, and she was happy to move to wherever her husband could learn best. Rabbi Mordechai Mandelbaum, a talmid of Torah Vodaath and Beth Medrash Govoha, the son of Rav Berish Mandelbaum (a talmid chacham best known as the Yeshiva University librarian), was the answer to her prayers. After their marriage, they moved to Lakewood. For 15 years, Rabbi Mandelbaum learned in Beth Medrash Govoha, as a close talmid of Rav Schneur Kotler. The Lakewood community was small, and centered around the yeshivah. Chalav Yisrael and poultry were brought in from Brooklyn. Mrs. Mandelbaum happily looked away from life's luxuries and took joy in fulfilling her dream.

Mrs. Mandelbaum taught in the Lakewood cheder where she was among the best-liked English teachers. She had a class of lively boys under full control, with a unique combination of warmth and feistiness, and when she wanted to leave teaching, they offered her a raise to stay on. Decades later, when she met her past students, they would excitedly greet her, and she remembered each one by name and reminisced about their antics and shared memories.

In a shivah letter, one student from that time remembered, "Mrs. Mandelbaum was walking out of the cheder building when someone broke the news to her that the Rosh Yeshivah Rav Shneur was *niftar*. She broke down. The depth of her feelings made a big impact."

During this time, her mother became unwell, and Mrs. Mandelbaum went back and forth to Brooklyn constantly to care for her parents and family, juggling the responsibility with her duties to her own small children.

After some years, Rabbi Mandelbaum became a *maggid shiur* at Mesivta of Lakewood, and set up the Otzar Sefarim for Beth Medrash Govoha. Hennie stood at her husband's side with dedication to his learning and his position. In fact, he credits her with inspiring his *talmidim* by providing a role model of Torah life for them to emulate. When he was invited to become *menahel* in Rabbi Shmuel Miller's yeshivah in 1990, she packed up their young family and moved back to Flatbush. Later, Rabbi Mandelbaum served as *menahel* of Vien, and then *maggid shiur* in Rabbi Paller's yeshivah and in Bobov. Mrs. Mandelbaum was ever-supportive, although the move involved uprooting herself again and resettling several children in Brooklyn yeshivos. In 2018, the family moved back to Lakewood.

Mrs. Mandelbaum shone as a Yiddishe mother. There are *ka"h* nine Mandelbaum children, all of whom differ in personality and walk diverse paths of *avodas Hashem*. She had a profound understanding of each child's needs, and incredible wisdom in how to not only "handle" them but *build* them, and at the same time build a beautiful relationship with each one. Her children blossomed under an authentic, unconditional love, and an appreciation of them as individuals.

When the children married, Mrs. Mandelbaum extended her definition of family to include each child-in-law and their family as well. It seemed natural that Mrs. Mandelbaum knew the names of each daughter-in-law's nieces and nephews, and enjoyed watching them grow up. They were embraced by her warmth. When she met her children's neighbors, she could list their kids by name, too, and *knip* their baby's cheeks, because she really cared about people.

She was the mother-in-law everyone dreams of; her children's spouses were above reproach. Mrs. Mandelbaum was never negative about a child-in-law. Instead, she was ever-admiring, repeatedly complimenting each child's spouse to them, "Your wife is the most amazing *balabusta*" or "Your husband is so good with the kids."

She went through life making friends. At the phone-in shivah, her daughters recorded a stream of women who identified themselves as Hennie's best friends.

One lady recalled a summer in the country when she

stayed inside, often lying endlessly in bed, feeling depressed. Mrs. Mandelbaum reached out and, without unwanted intrusion or offering advice, told her, "I can see your *tzaar*, I am here for you and I am davening for you."

Another friend lost her husband after a long illness. He had been a brilliant professional. Later in life, she was engaged to a *choshuve talmid chacham*. She was feeling somewhat intimidated by everyone's reactions, when Hennie Mandelbaum called. "I hope he is good enough for you," she said, warmly.

Mrs. Mandelbaum was full of energy and fun, youth, and *simchas hachaim*. She loved life and constantly attended *simchahs*. Later, when her children were all married or away in yeshivah, she began to work with special-needs children. It was not just a job. She saw the people and reached out to them. Naturally, she became a close friend of each child's mother. She would

take the children out, outside of her working hours. Once, she realized that "her" child's mother was working very hard, and became concerned that she would not have time to cook for Shavuos, so Mrs. Mandelbaum cooked Yom Tov food and sent it over.

Neighbors on her block knew that she was the one to call for a favor. She would make herself avail-

able to watch someone's child with laid-back, good humor. Never standing on her honor, she was *mevater* easily to all those around her, and quick to backtrack if someone felt wronged.

Many couples owe their shidduch to Hennie Mandelbaum's untiring efforts. If she knew of a single, she networked extensively on their behalf. With her array of friends and contacts, and convincing manner of speech, she was often successful. Actually, it wasn't a separate vocation. Making shidduchim was part of caring, an act of friendship to those around her.

To quote a friend, "Hennie was a wonderful listener who could make anyone feel comfortable and she had a special *chochmas hachaim* that she shared generously. She understood people, she embraced people, and she loved people — which made it so easy for anyone to become part of her wide circle of friends." 🕯

She went through life making friends. At the phone-in shivah, her daughters recorded a stream of women who identified themselves as Hennie's best friends.