

Joy- כשמה כך היתה. She brought so much laughter and simcha in our lives. To this day, I cannot think of her without giggling. She had this teasing way of getting you to do things with her that you thought you would never do. Like the time we were interviewing students together in Miami. We detoured through Epcott city with the condition on my part that we don't do height. The next thing I knew, I was on this awful roller coaster ride called space mountain with her laughing and me screaming that I would never forgive her, forgive her I did – and it's a good thing because she added so much to my life. She encouraged me to explore Poland-and it is because of her that I have taught hundreds of students about the richness of Jewish life in pre-war Poland and the constant need to remember and rebuild.

More than anything Joy was a good friend- she believed in and practiced עשה לך רב וקנה לך חבר. What was rare about Joy was that there were no age barriers or role barriers to her friendships. The fact that I signed her paychecks-which made me officially her boss-certainly didn't stop her from becoming my close friend. As a matter of fact-mostly I felt that I was working for her. And for good reason. She came to Midreshet as this young teacher straight from teaching at Beis Yaakov of Queens. The first time I met her was on her arrival in the Midreshet office wearing this flouncy flowery Beis Yaakov dress. She looked like a young adolescent and I didn't know how this was going to work out. Then I saw her teach. The students were enthralled-she reached out to each one of them in their own way. There were no time or role constraints in her relationships with these young women. Many of her students have written to us expressing the effect Joy had on their lives. One of our alumni, who today is living in Israel, wrote:

Occasionally you meet someone-and from that moment forward, your life is changed. A person who has such an impact on your life that nothing seems the same from that point on. Joy was that person for me. I realized how privileged we at Midreshet were to have Joy on our staff. She no longer worked for us-she worked with us and became a member of all our families.

Joy's devotion to Nechama Leibowitz was legendary. Wherever we traveled together, Joy always found time in her day to phone Nechama just to say hello and check how she was doing. Later, Joy remarked that on Nechama's מצבה was Only one word: מורה, and she hoped that whenever her time would come there would also be only one word on her מצבה, Talmidah. But Joy wrong. Like Nechama, she too is entitled to be called מורה. For just like our greatest women educators, Sara Schenerer and Nechama Leibowitz, Joy devoted herself entirely to Jewish education, and just like Sara and Nechama, she left this world childless. Perhaps these three woman, our modern day אמהות, were meant to be mothers and mentors to all Jewish women today, and not to be diverted by caring for their own children. Joy's Torah, values and emunah will live on through the hundreds of students who were privileged to call her מורה.

There were as many facets to our friendship as there were to Joy's complex personality. During Joy's last year we shared her excitement when she met Jerry. It was thrilling to see Joy so in love and marrying a man who loved her and respected her as she did him. As I taught her in preparation for her wedding we became again מורה ותלמידה. This time I thought I was the teacher-and for a short time I was. But soon she again became the מורה. She became a lesson in Emunah and positive thinking. She never once questioned ה' or why she should be chosen for so much suffering. She never gave up hope for a full recovery-she never gave in to discomfort and pain.

Joy had unbelievable Emunah in the power of Tefillah. She especially believed in the כח of the Tefillah of children. When I went to Poland last year, she asked me to daven at the kever of the Radziminer Rebbe-who was known to daven for women. But she was very specific. She asked me not to daven for a רפואה for her- but to daven for her to be able to have children. The last time my husband and I saw her, we took her and Jerry to תפילת נשמה in the middle of the night, at the Kotel. Joy and I stood there-holding on to each other-davening for her to have a רפואה שלמה. When we finished-she said: Now I know why I had to come to Israel. It was for this תפילה לחולים. I've asked myself many times in the last months-What happened to all these תפילות? Did they just get lost? Perhaps-all the תפילות that all of us here said eased her suffering and kept her spirits up until the very end.

The last time I spoke to Joy was the Sunday before she was Niftar. I phoned her from קבר רב אלימלך in Lejast, Poland so she could hear one hundred of us davening for her. She was crying on the phone, and she kept on saying how she wants to live. The last words I said to her were: Joy, get better. I don't want to live in a world without you.

And I don't-and we don't. Her Simcha-her laughter-her Emunah-her Chochma is with us all the time. I find myself still laughing with her and crying with her; but not hearing her voice and seeing her smile is harder than I ever thought it would be. She was like a shooting star-who came-impacted-and went back to heaven. Joy-

רבות בנות עשו חיל, ואת עליית על כלנה

Vicky Berglas  
תשס"ה Hakamat Matzeiva