



## Hamodia Magazine

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## HEARING: THEIR SILENT WORLD

(Part #1)

By Rochel Issacson

Frady Steinhouse's modest home seems indistinguishable from most others, except for the many lights. Some lights flash while others flicker, and still others give off a steady, bright beam; all are strategically placed in every room. The lights are different signals designed to alert Frady to the various sounds that others take for granted but which she cannot hear, such as doorbell chimes, telephone rings, smoke alarms - or even her baby's cries.

Frady is profoundly deaf and has been since birth. Furthermore, she is proud of it. Despite the fact that Frady seems at first glance like a typical woman in her forties, her deafness is apparent when she communicates with others, for her eyes focus fixedly on their mouths as she reads their lips, her hearing aid discreetly concealed by her stylish *sheitel*.

Frady is a bona fide member of a deaf faction that strongly believes in "deaf culture." "I prefer the word 'deaf' to 'hearing-impaired' because 'deaf' is a term that represents our culture, that we as deaf individuals share common values, norms and behavior," says Frady, adding that the term "hearing-impaired" is an affront to the deaf because it implies that "we are impaired from the hearing community."

Although Frady lip-reads adeptly, she prefers to communicate through sign language, considered the favored mode of communication for those of the deaf culture, for she is wearied by the intense concentration necessary for lip-reading. Her hands dance in flowing motions as she signs to her deaf spouse, Shimon; the language appears baffling, yet strangely graceful, to her hearing visitors.

Faivish opines that sign language interpreters should be offered in schools, hospitals, and other places so that the deaf are not shortchanged. "The deaf can do anything that anyone in the hearing world can do," she says.

As a child, Frady suffered from social isolation, sidelined in the silent world she inhabits. She started off in public school, eventually switching to the now-defunct Hebrew Institute for the Deaf, which promoted oral speech. The bright teen later attended a prominent girls' yeshivah high school as its first deaf student and she even attended some Hebrew classes, despite the strenuous efforts it entailed.

Her devoted mother, who was always Frady's chief advocate, did not believe in sign language, for she feared it would decrease her daughter's oral dexterity and affect her speaking and lip-reading abilities. "My family and friends were not aware of how much I had lost by being left out of their conversations," Frady poignantly recalls. Her older sister, Mimi, however, remembers hearing Frady's wrenching sobs, evoked by her enforced segregation from her peers. Frady consequently felt more at ease with friends who were likewise deaf or hard of hearing.

Today, Frady Steinhouse is a poised woman who has graduated college and for some time ran her own millinery business, in which she created and designed hats. She even plays the piano proficiently by following musical notes on the page. She credits the sign language interpreters at her college for empowering her complete her education and for finally making her feel that she was a vital member of her classes. She has since primarily used American Sign Language as a means of communicating with others.

Ever since Frady and Shimon married, they have both signed and practiced oral speech. After giving birth to her children - all of whom can hear perfectly - Frady taught them to fingerspell and instructed them in the basics of sign language so that she could communicate with them. To ensure that she knew when her babies cried, light signals and vibrations on her bed were set off by a microphone located under the crib. She has lovingly and efficiently raised her young brood, tackling routine activities such as carpooling her school-age children and their friends as would any other devoted mother.

Despite her multifaceted gifts, Frady grappled with keen frustration when she attended her children's graduations. "I couldn't feel the *nachas* I should have felt," she says, because

## SIGN LANGUAGE

ASL is only one of many different types of sign language. There are over 100 variations, including Hebrew sign language; some countries even have different dialects. Although attempts were made to invent an international sign language called Gestuno, it was not successful. ASL is in widespread use in the U.S. and Canada.

ASL was formulated in the early nineteenth century when Thomas Gallaudet was watching some children in his garden and noticed that one of them did not join in the fun because she was deaf. After speaking to the child's father, a surgeon, about setting up a school for the deaf, he sailed to Paris and visited the school of the French deaf-mute Laurent Clerk, who taught French sign language in the Institute of Deaf-Mutes. He persuaded Clerk to accompany him back to America, and they teamed up to establish the American Asylum for the Deaf in Hartford in 1817, where they taught sign language.

The establishment of the school soon led to the opening of other schools for the deaf, and the evolution of the early French Sign System, amalgamated from indigenous sign languages of the regional deaf, into the powerful hybrid sign language of ASL. Thomas's nephew, Edward Gallaudet, broke new ground in 1864 when he became president of Gallaudet University, the first college for the deaf.

Times have since changed, and the burgeoning technology which currently serves the deaf has been instrumental in helping Frady Steinhouse and other deaf people maintain their independence. One such innovation is the "Telephone Relay Service" Center. This involves the use of a TTY, or a telephone typewriter, with which one can place or receive a call by typing through to a relay operator, who then relays the words to the hearing party at the other end and types their replies back.

sign language interpreters were not afforded to her at those special occasions. She still feels like a social outcast at times, such as when she is left out of dinner conversations. She has tapped people to inquire about what was being discussed, and many times she either didn't receive a response or was informed dismissively that "it wasn't necessary for her to know."

Nevertheless, she is upbeat about her deafness, noting, "I am proud of who I am. Anyone can have a disability, but it is up to them whether it becomes a handicap or not."

Others with critical hearing loss do not uniformly concur with Frady Steinhouse's view of deaf culture and signing. In fact, of the 70 million deaf people around the world - 27 million of whom live in the U.S. - only two million consider themselves members of the deaf community. There is a charged controversy among those broadsided by deafness, with countering views as to the methods the deaf should employ to capitalize on their ability to function in society.

Deaf proponents of sign language are staunchly pitted against fervent advocates of oralism. Oralists are those who prefer the term "hearing-impaired" and who integrate into mainstream society by reading lips and availing themselves of any medical or technological breakthroughs that can augment their hearing ability.

Pundits claim that sign language may have proven advantageous for an older generation but is now outmoded due to recent revolutionary developments to assist the deaf. Perri Hecht, director of the Brooklyn-based Perri Hecht Speech and Auditory Services, agrees. Although her clientele encompasses all ages, her avowed objective is to enable deaf children to function successfully in mainstream society.

"Years ago, if a child was deaf, you could give him hearing aids and try your hardest to integrate him in society," says Hecht. "Today, with the latest medical and technological advances such as cochlear implants, and by engaging the child in auditory-verbal therapies at an early stage, it is feasible for a hearing-impaired child to do or be anything."

Cochlear implants are devices that are surgically implanted to stimulate the nerve elements of the inner ear to receive sound, and are activated by a processor worn

## CAUSES OF DEAFNESS

Leading causes of deafness are diverse. Certain families may be predisposed to deafness due to a recessive gene. Children born into these families may ultimately be diagnosed as congenital). Other causes include either bacterial or viral illness such as CMV (cytomegalovirus), meningitis, or severe infections; deafness can also result if the mother had measles while expecting. Similarly, ototoxic drugs can cause deafness.

People may become deafened as a result of illness, injury, old age, or constant exposure to loud music. There are different degrees of hearing impairment, ranging from mild to profound.



*A TTY, or teletypewriter, used by the deaf to communicate by telephone. It works very simply with just a keyboard and screen. The telephone receiver is placed on it, and it sounds different tones for each key - a sort of primitive instant-messaging system.*

outside the ear. With this device, even the profoundly deaf - especially if they receive the implant as young children - can be enabled to hear and to participate in all social activities. However, the processor must be temporarily deactivated at night or during swim activities.

Perri Hecht finds it rewarding to treat children who are congenitally, and therefore prelingually, deaf "because you can witness their, development as normal children and watch them acquire language." Parents are an integral part of the therapy, for they must facilitate language by talking to their child constantly and changing their intonation - for example, making a point of exclaiming, "Hi!" when they enter a room.

Parental involvement is central to a child's ability to master language skills, for children born with deafness, or who become hearing impaired at a very early age, have no frame of reference for acquiring speech. These hearing-disabled children often cannot speak, or speak unintelligibly in a guttural "deaf" manner.

Equally important, hearing aids have become smaller and more sophisticated, and they are placed more inconspicuously inside the ear or ear canal. They are now able to filter out background noises that were previously amplified, as well as peripheral noises that distorted conversations.

Rabbi Aharon Davidson\* (*\*Name has been changed.*) is an oralist whose hearing aids and lip-reading abilities are mainstays in his life. He lost his hearing as a result of a series of acute infections at age three and began wearing hearing aids at that time.

As a professional *ben Torah*, he has achieved much in his life despite his severe hearing impairment. A former congregational Rav, a clinical social worker and now a case manager who works with traumatized 9/11 victims, Rabbi Davidson is married and the father of two hearing children.

His adroitness in lip-reading stood him in good stead as a young child, and he was mainstreamed in eminent yeshivos, where he excelled.

His parents passionately encouraged him "to reach for the stars." Although doctors recommended that he enroll in public school, his father insisted he attend yeshivah. "I have



*(Top) An open cell phone showing a full keyboard that is used to type text messages, to enable the deaf to keep in touch.*

*(Bottom) The cell phone closed.*

always been mainstreamed and never considered myself part of the 'deaf culture.' I consider myself a hearing-impaired member of the, hearing world," Rabbi Davidson declares.

In his earlier years, his pressing concerns had more to do with facing off against bullies in his class rather than contending with his hearing impairment. But to surmount any roadblocks, his *rebbeim* were helpful in ensuring that he could read their lips. Succeeding years in high school and *beis medrash* showcased his stellar academic record, so that his success in learning overshadowed any disquieting issues related to his hearing impairment.

"There was one *rebbe* who had an issue with my reading his lips, as it unnerved him. Unfortunately, he didn't handle the situation in a sensitive manner, and it was one of several reasons that I left that yeshivah," he recalls.

Although Rabbi Davidson developed oral abilities early on, he observes that lip-reading can become difficult if an individual who converses with him has a thick mustache, and he usually suggests that the person put his words in writing. He marvels at the way email, beepers, fax machines and TTY devices have made communication for the hearing-impaired so much easier.

*Shidduchim* proved to be laden with pitfalls despite his reputation as an outstanding yeshivah student. What especially irked him was that his name was not championed as a marital prospect as were those of other select yeshivah students. "We don't understand why Hashem has given us this burden; it must be part of His divine plan," Rabbi Davidson reflects.

He enjoys notable success in his life and feels that his innate empathy, a characteristic that has likely been heightened by his hearing loss, draws others to him.

Few people are able to maintain objectivity within the opposing camps that have polarized the deaf. One such individual, Rabbi Eliezer Lederfiend, is the national director of Our Way, a division of the Jewish Council of Disabilities under the auspices of the Orthodox Union. Our Way provides a marriage registry designed to foil deaf intermarriage, as well as printing publications for and about the deaf. 'The organization uses sign language in providing outreach activities, such as Shabbatonim and trips.

A hearing son who signed to his deaf parents, Rabbi Lederfiend has two profoundly deaf daughters. Paradoxically, both daughters have

cochlear implants. Rabbi Lederfiend's older daughter was first diagnosed as deaf after his wife realized that her fourteen-month-old child could not hear the clatter of pots or the din in the room, as others did. After Rabbi Lederfiend's initial shock over self to teach his daughter how to sign. His wife strongly disagreed, hoping to mainstream her daughter in yeshivah schools. Fortunately, their insurance covered the essential therapies. Their daughter's hearing aids were conspicuously cumbersome, yet she did well in school.

When his younger daughter was born, a therapist immediately diagnosed her as deaf. The Lederfiends began probing the benefits of cochlear implants, for, as Rabbi Lederfiend points out, "technology has changed everything." Although at first wary of the prospect of a surgically invasive procedure, he was won over by a doctor whose own child had received a cochlear implant, even though it subsequently failed. Still, the doctor argued, "It didn't work for me, but it may work for other people."

Rabbi Lederfiend capitulated and had his younger daughter implanted at an early age. It worked so well that they encouraged their older daughter, who - was by then twelve years old, to undergo an implant too. Despite his partiality to signing, Rabbi Lederfiend concludes, "*Baruch Hashem*, both children have benefited from the cochlear implants."

*Next week, a look at the day-to-day lives of those with hearing loss, some common halachic questions, and a yeshivah that caters exclusively to the deaf.*

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## HEARING: THEIR SILENT WORLD

(Part #2)

By Rochel Issacson

The close-knit community of Toronto, Ontario, is home to multitudes of *frum* Jewish families. Yet a compellingly unique yeshivah is also housed within these pristine streets, adding its inimitable flavor to the environs. It is Yeshivah Nefesh Dovid - the international yeshivah for the deaf - which caters exclusively to high school age boys the world over who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The students reside in a modern dormitory on the campus of the mainstream Yeshivah Gedolah Zichron Shmaiahu and often mix with their hearing counterparts in activities. Yet they remain a contained unit of deaf *bachurim*, serving as an inspiration to the public and garnering warm communal backing.

Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Kakon, the deaf Rosh Yeshivah of Nefesh Dovid, founded the yeshivah jointly with Dr. Hart Bressler, who is also deaf, in September 2001. Together, they have galvanized their mission to give deaf and hard-of-hearing boys an equal opportunity to attend a yeshivah where they can learn Torah with greater appreciation. Says Rabbi Kakon, "The *shiurim* are presented in a unique way so as to maximize interaction between the deaf *rebbeim* and *talmidim*, as well as among the *talmidim* themselves."

Born deaf, Rabbi Kakon uses sign language as his primary method of speaking, but he lipreads fluently and has strong communication skills. Likewise, Yeshivah Nefesh Dovid embraces a cross-section of diverse modes of interaction among those who sign, those who lipread, and those who have cochlear implants.

An imposing figure, Rabbi Kakon stands in front of his attentive students, and signs a challenging *Gemara shuir*. His hands fly elegantly in sign language, making the Torah lecture a visible, animate presentation for the enraptured *bachurim*. The room is darkened and hushed as Rabbi Kakon points to an enlarged pedagogic aid, which is spotlighted to display a magnified page of the *Gemara*. His finger zeros in on specific words or concepts as he signs, and sometimes speaks, to his captivated *talmidim*.

Rabbi Kakon feels that signing Torah brings abstract concepts alive, and there is the added benefit of "eyes being able to flit back and forth between the *sefer* and the *rebbe* or *chavrusa*, instead of being trained on the person's face the entire time for fear of missing a word, and thereby possibly losing the entire crux of the conversation."

Visual aids such as handouts and highlighted words are therefore essential, and the yeshivah has lots of *sefarim* and books at its disposal. Some boys prefer learning from traditional *sefarim*, while others make use of the Artscroll *Gemaras*, employing them as a springboard for their own learning abilities.

The students' hands cut through the air as they sign while learning Torah together, their eyes alive with excitement. Says one boy, "I used to go to a regular yeshivah, with twenty-five students in my class, and I frequently could not understand what *the rebbe* was saying. Here the classes are smaller, and the communication is much easier."

The boys come to this yeshivah from public schools — even Catholic schools - or mainstream yeshivos that have been unable to meet their needs.

"Three years ago, I was a different kid," a student muses. "I didn't know how to learn Torah or *Gemara*. I didn't even know how to interact with the Jewish community and was afraid to try."

"To watch people learning *bechavrusa* in sign language is to watch *kedushah* come alive," marvels Rabbi Kakon. "The learning becomes an *avodas Hashem*." Moreover, the boys can communicate easily as a group; the use of sign language ensures that conversations are visible to all, creating a natural camaraderie among the students.

Why should parents send their deaf son to a yeshivah geared toward the deaf even if he may be doing well in a mainstream yeshivah? Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Kakon professes that his own deafness, and that of his staff members, is fundamental to the students feeling that they are part of a group. A deaf boy in a mainstream yeshivah will always feel that his hearing impairment makes him dissimilar to others. "Here we are all on equal footing," stresses the Rosh Yeshivah.

The yeshivah offers a well-rounded curriculum, with cutting-edge standards of academic excellence. It also provides vital services for the deaf - sign language interpreters and therapists for speech pathology and audiology. The boys hail from all corners of the globe: the U.S., England, Israel, France, and even Yemen. The number of yeshivah



Harav Chaim Tzvi Kakon, Rosh Yeshivah, explains a *Gemara* at Yeshivas Nefesh Dovid.



David Attia-Partouche of Paris, France, Sruli Hirsch of Eretz Yisrael and Yehoshua Medjuck of Toronto are taught by Yosef Toledano from Eretz Yisrael, a talmid of Harav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Rosh Hayeshivah of Yeshivas Ateres Yisrael, who serves as a role model for the boys.



Joshua Ari Soudakoff from Los Angeles learning *bechavrusa* with a talmid from the Yeshiva Gedolah of Toronto, where Yeshivas Nefesh Dovid is located.

students tends to vary annually but typically averages about seven to fifteen *bachurim*, ages fourteen to nineteen. The students may be *chassidish*, Litvish or Sephardic, yet they are unified by their common disability.

The students at Yeshivah Nefesh Dovid are bolstered with emotional, social and academic skills. Indeed, many *talmidim* find the yeshivah a crucial steppingstone to later integration into mainstream yeshivos.

Dr. Bressler, co-founder of the yeshivah, comments on the students' success, "When a student graduates from this yeshivah, his deafness itself has not been changed. But his deafness has changed *him*."

Rabbi Shuchatowitz cites a specific *mitzvah* in the Torah, "*Lo sekallel cheresh*," (2) one must not curse the deaf, which is the Torah's directive to the hearing not to take unfair advantage of those who cannot hear, and to uphold their dignity and self-respect. "The Torah clearly teaches us to be sensitive to the hearing-impaired," he says.

Toward that end, Rabbi Moshe Yaroslavitz, executive director of Haazinu Charitable Foundation, is an ardent proponent of mainstreaming hearing-impaired children into the yeshivah school system, which is Haazinu's key objective. He incorporates the latest in technological and medical advances, which yield optimum results for the hearing-impaired.

As the parent of a daughter who was born without any hearing at all - a rare occurrence - yet who was successfully integrated into a regular Bais Yaakov, he mobilized Haazinu in 1989 as a bastion of support for others who endure the rigorous trials stemming from hearing impairment.

"I realized that any child who has a hearing impairment can and should be mainstreamed," he says, pointing to his daughter's triumph as an accepted member of society.

Rabbi Yaroslavitz and his wife had no one to turn to when they received the sobering news that their daughter was completely deaf. But despite well-meaning professionals who advised them to communicate with her in sign language, they firmly resolved to do whatever it took to integrate her into a regular school setting. Her success sparked Rabbi Yaroslavitz's determination to launch Haazinu. It also underlined his deep-seated conviction that parents should channel their full energies toward helping their hearing-impaired children.

## HALACHIC RAMIFICATIONS

The hearing-impaired share common ground with one of the greatest *Gedolim* of our times, the Steipler Gaon. The Steipler was said to have had a significant hearing impairment, but he did not wear a hearing aid. People usually spoke to him loudly, or else they would pen their questions to him and he would respond verbally.

There are many halachic issues that may affect those with hearing disabilities. Rabbi Mordechai Shuchatowitz, Rav of Agudath Israel of Greenspring, Baltimore, captures the relevant halachos in his booklet "*The Toras Hacheresh* Guidebook: A Practical Guide to the Use of Electronic Hearing Devices on Shabbos and Yom Tov," which is published by Our Way.

As a parent of hearing-impaired children, Rabbi Shuchatowitz is available to shed light on issues that are germane to the hearing-impaired by giving shiurim, disseminating halachic articles, and fielding phone calls from those who wish to confer with him about mitzvos pertaining to the deaf. Here he answers some common questions:

**Q:** Can one wear hearing aids or a cochlear implant outdoors on Shabbos?

**A:** Yes, it is permissible, as long as these devices are functioning. In fact, it is not even considered muktzeh.

**Q:** Can a deaf person answer amen to a brachah that he hears through these devices? Can he receive an aliyah to the Torah or be counted among the ten men required for a minyan?

**A:** There is no question about it. Whether he signs, reads lips, or just follows the crowd, he is allowed to respond to all of the appropriate tefillos, including Kaddish, Kedushah and Barchu. (1)

**Q:** Is a hearing-impaired person obligated to hear the *Megillah* on Purim, *Kiddush* on Shabbos, shofar-blowing on Rosh Hashanah?

**A:** There is a difference of opinion among *poskim* whether hearing through the medium of a device, including a cochlear implant, can be considered listening to the original voice. For those who are capable of listening without hearing aids, it is recommended that they remove them in order to be *yotzei* all opinions. For many deaf people for whom this isn't possible, they may listen to *Kiddush*, *Havdalah*, etc., through their hearing devices, and rely upon the opinion that this does suffice to fulfill these mitzvos. But it is always advisable to ask one's own *posek*.

At age seventeen, Rabbi Yaroslawitz's daughter underwent a cochlear implant and acquired seventy-five percent of her hearing. For the first time in her life, she could actually perceive sound. "I can guarantee that if a parent becomes an unlicensed speech therapist by the time the child is five years old, the child's success will be assured," Rabbi Yaroslawitz says.

As the only organization bent on achieving these aims, Haazinu steps in to assist parents of hearing-impaired children with personalized support, medical referrals, direction, and even financial aid. Whether it takes hearing aids, a cochlear implant or extensive therapy to help these children assimilate into society, Haazinu follows up to secure its goal.

Since its inception, Haazinu's benevolent arm has lent a hand to over four hundred children worldwide. But Haazinu ministers only to children; as Rabbi Yaroslawitz explains, "Our total focus is to mainstream hearing-impaired children throughout their school years."

Yocheved Fried is a teenage girl who underwent a cochlear implant at age ten. "I am very open about my hearing impairment, and it enables me to help people understand what it means to be impaired, and to accept me as one of their own," she says.

Yocheved has been mainstreamed in a regular Bais Yaakov setting. She wears hearing aids as her parents have raised her to be an auditory child. "I am able to listen and hear," she says. "But I do lip-read when people are talking, as it helps me to understand them better."

Looking back, Yocheved doesn't remember being able to hear the birds sing or the leaves rustle with her hearing aids as she does now with her cochlear implant. She consistently comments on how good it feels to "be able to hear all of the different sounds that had previously been so low or nonexistent, and now have become so loud."

Yocheved is grateful that she has never felt different or singled out from among her classmates. "They all treat me as one of the group, as I can speak, hear, and have fun just like they can." Yocheved had received speech and auditory therapy for years, and claims that it was all worth it.

Yocheved has learned to speak clearly and can make heads and tails of a noisy situation, as can anyone with full hearing abilities. She can take notes in class, talk on the phone, and even

## MEDICAL ADVANCES

Medical and scientific advances are on the upswing for the hearing-impaired. Statistics show that one out of every thousand babies born in the U.S. and Canada is deaf.

Dr. J. Thomas Roland Jr., director of otology/neurotology of the NYU School of Medicine and co-director of the NYU Cochlear Implant Program, maps out the following state-of-the-art advances that have been developed on behalf of the deaf:

To date, over 70,000 cochlear implants have been performed since the procedure's inception in 1984, and the process continues to improve. The surgical procedure is now faster, safer, and involves smaller incisions. Whereas before it was common to implant only one ear, bilateral implants are now on the rise. The implants boost the ability to pinpoint sound source locations, improve understanding of speech against background noise, and provide a better overall auditory experience. Bilateral implants are being performed principally on young children under the age of one year, as early diagnosis and intervention can make a critical difference.

Over fifty percent of hearing impairment can be traced to a genetic root. Researchers are now gaining a greater understanding of the genetic causes of hearing disability and have isolated Connexin-26, one of the more common gene defects which precipitate hearing loss. The Connexin-26 genetic blood test is now available to screen carriers of generelated deafness, or to determine if an existing hearing impairment is genetically based.

There is also significant progress in haircell regeneration and stem-cell research, giving hope that doctors may be able to repair the damaged hair cells on the cochlear nerve, enhancing hearing or restoring it altogether.

participate in conference calls with her friends. "I can do it all!" she exclaims.

Yocheved's winning personality comes to the fore in her extracurricular activities. Whether as a Bnos leader or as a counselor at camp, Yocheved becomes an asset wherever she goes.

"People never treat me as different at all," she says. "As a matter of fact, many of them don't even realize that I'm hearing-impaired!"

She has made many a close friend as a result of her hearing impairment. A friend of hers has initiated a group for girls with different levels of hearing loss, and they frequently spend Shabbos together and have "lots of discussions and panels." What's more, Yocheved writes a newsletter for hearing-impaired girls which provides encouragement for her readers to further their skills.

Ironically, she is sanguine about her ability to shut out the world when she needs to. If her household is noisy, "I can shut off my implant and not get a headache," she smiles. If she's sitting in class taking a test and can't focus because of her classmates' questions, she just turns off the processor, and it's no longer a problem.

Yocheved describes an episode that crystallized the vulnerability of hearing impairment and at the same time demonstrated the success of her cochlear implant. She was asked to babysit for her neighbor's child, which she had frequently done, only this time she had forgotten to

bring along spare batteries for her implant. To her dismay, her primary batteries failed before the evening was over, and she was unable to call her mother about it because she couldn't hear over the phone. When the child's father returned, Yocheved was embarrassed to inform him of her discomfiting plight. He spent a few minutes speaking to her, but she had no idea what he said; she couldn't lip-read as his beard and moustache veiled his lips.

When she finally returned home, she told her parents what had happened. Her mother called the neighbor the following morning to inform him candidly that Yocheved's batteries had died. He naively asked, "What kind of batteries?" and was nonplussed to hear that Yocheved had a cochlear implant. Despite the fact that she had babysat often in his home, he had never noticed that she had any hearing impairment.

Yocheved is grateful that her parents preempted her decision and decided early on to have her implanted. She realizes that had they waited until she was older so that she could decide for herself, the benefits of the implant might not have been as dramatic.

She thus urges parents of hearing-impaired children to take proactive measures to ensure their child's hearing and speech, as her parents have done for her. "Do anything for your child so that he or she can do well in school, at home, or anyplace else," she says.

Yocheved Fried is thankful that the cochlear implant, coupled with her therapies, have permitted her to lead a life like anyone else.

(1) *Gemara Sukkah 52A.*

(2) *Yaviba 19:14.*

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