

## Jerusalem Welcomes International Autism Conference, July 5-6

By Ruth Amber Gristak

Imagine if your child couldn't interact with other children. He wants to but tiny things set off cringing feelings inside of him that are too much to comprehend. Imagine Shabbos without guests because your child cannot process the actions of others. One out of every 91 children is diagnosed with autism; of these, one in 58 is a boy.

The numbers are up 59 percent in the last few years. Soon, Israel will be a part of the solution. The International Center for Autism Research & Education, Inc. (*Icare4autism*) is a New York-based non-profit devoted to being a catalyst to connect the universal autism community. *Icare4autism* also has an office in Jerusalem and will host the first annual International Autism Conference on July 5-6, 2010 at the Ramada Renaissance, Jerusalem.

Over 30 top autism professionals will be delivering original dissertations there. Speakers include such prestigious names as Eric Hollander, MD; and Eli Hatchwell, MD, Ph.D., both leading experts in the field. Other speakers include Amos Rolider, Ph.D., BCBA; Lonnie Zwaigenbaum, MD; Laura Schreibman, Ph.D.; W. Ted Brown, MD, Ph.D.; Hakon Hakonarsen, MD, Ph.D.; Agatino Battaglia, MD, D.Ped., DNeuro; Tal Kenet, Ph.D.; Stephen von Tetzchner, Ph.D., and more.

Hundreds of attendees, from Israel and throughout the world, are expected, including medical professionals, educational behaviorists, BCBA's, teachers, students, therapists, sponsors, vendors, individuals touched by autism and other interested persons.

The conference will feature an Opening Ceremony, Speaker's and Sponsor's Dinner, assembly gathering, keynote speakers, workshops,

symposia, luncheons and a trade show exhibition.

However, the main purpose of the gathering is to foster human connection; to create opportunities to connect as professionals and as people striving for support, both medical and emotional.

Presentation topics include: "The Fragile X Syndrome and Autism"; "Early Development in Autism: Insights From Studies of High-Risk Infants"; "Behavior Analysis in Every Home and School: Translating 'Cold Science' and Gaining National Acceptance"; "Imaging the Developing Brain in Autism"; "Modern Approaches to the Study of the Genetics of Autism" and more.

### About *Icare4autism*

In 2004, Joshua Weinstein founded the International Center for Autism Research and Education (*Icare4autism*). Weinstein is also the founder of Shema Kolainu - Hear Our Voices School and Center for Children with Autism (in Brooklyn) and Tishma: School and Center for Autism - Jerusalem.

Through awareness and funding, *Icare4autism* works in partnership with similar institutions worldwide to discover the etiology of autism, to search for the biologic and environmental causes of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and to promote medical and educational practices to best serve people with autism and their families.

*Icare4autism* was established to serve the community in this manner, gathering research projects, professional and scientific collaborations, promoting awareness and information, and developing programs for parents and professionals as well as training for teachers and therapists.

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Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat (R) meets with Joshua Weinstein in Jerusalem, to discuss upcoming projects with *Icare4autism*.

## Lite From Yerushalayim

### One Hundred and Eighty Degrees Plus Two

*Contrary to all expectations, my friend Mimi went to college and wrote a book on parenting that is a must for all Jewish homes*

By Sheindel Weinbach

Mimi was the last one in our class we expected to go to college and get a degree. I was, perhaps, the first.

As it turned out, Mimi eventually got herself a degree in psychology and another one in social work and wrote a book.

I stayed home and did not write a book. Surprised? I did start writing one about the clothing *gemach* which I called *Jerusalem Recycled*, but didn't know where to stop, as you can tell from successive "Lite" articles, so it is still in limbo.

Miriam Shechter and I (Sylvie Lamm at the time) sat side by side for two years, straight through Bais Yaakov seminary, an unlikely but complementary pair. She was the brain and the *bren* in *limudei kodesh*, and I was more into secular studies.

Our differences lay mainly in our backgrounds. Mimi was the daughter of a pure Kelmer *yeshivaman*: Rabbi Shmuel Shechter, z"l, a Litvisher Rav and educator par excellence, who established two Bais Yaakov high schools, in Monsey and in Lakewood (which did not last, probably for lack of backing), and taught in many schools, including B.Y. in Yerushalayim, after retiring and moving to Mattersdorf. He represented "Teirah" [Torah] in its purity. The word "college" was anathema, and Mimi very staunchly preached that position throughout.

I came from a westernized culture. My (spiritual) parents, aunt and uncle, were respectively from Germany and Belgium, where Torah-and-*Derech Eretz* reigned, where you earned a living not necessarily in *klei kodesh*. At home, my father was never without a *sefer* and a highlight marker. Years later, when I bought him a new set of Rambam to replace his worn one, he politely declined. How could he do without his marginal notes to refer to and add to? His *sefarim* were bound and taped up and rebound again and were part of him. But technically, he was a *baalebos* who believed in sending me to college for my own good.

Of course, there was pressure from the Belgian *tantes* who put their two cents worth in my upbringing.

Mimi and I must have spent dozens of hours arguing the pros and cons of the issue, remaining at a constant stalemate. After seminary, I went off to evening college until I got married and Mimi began teaching.

Our ways parted, but we kept tabs on one another, especially after her parents and brother

moved into our building.

"Whatever made you go back to school?" I ask Mimi Shechter Kleiman, interviewing her to round out a review for the readers on her recent book, *kids ... will be kids!* (390 pages, Israel Bookshop Publication and yes, the title in the lower case). I can't help adding, "And how did your father take it?"

Mimi spent four years in Eretz Yisrael. Strapped for money, she began a correspondence course for which the U.S. government was giving a \$350 scholarship. The first three years were a cinch, allowing credits in Jewish studies; the hitch came with a fourth year requirement in the U.S., including attendance.

A degree in psychology would help her land a good job.

"The clincher was an interesting link-up with a woman I was visiting on a *bikur cholim chessed* basis twice a week — a dysfunctional schizophrenic in deep depression, at home, heavily sedated. The family had requested that a volunteer come to talk to her. I went there and made small talk about my day and the people I was in contact with. She grunted occasionally and made some eye contact, but no more. I didn't give up, but kept on visiting her.

"After about six months, the family decided to move and on my last visit, she finally spoke a few words. She thanked me. She thanked me for 'not having given up on me.' Her words made a tremendous impact on me and became my motto in life: Never to give up on any one or any situation, but to keep on plugging. This actually helped me decide to go back to the States, get a degree in social work and psychology and pursue a career in those fields to be able to help people."

"And what did your father say?"

"He was apprehensive, but made no objections. He wished me luck. His trust was vindicated, *baruch Hashem*, because I was subsequently able to help many, many people, and before he passed away, he said to me, 'I am proud of you and of everything you did.'"

And she also wrote a book. ...

*kids ... will be kids!* is a very well written manual of "Practical & Professional Solutions to Your Parenting Challenges." It's not a book to read straight, as I told Mimi, nor was it meant to be. But it is a comprehensive and fantastic reference to all the problems that crop up in raising children of all ages.

Bedtime, hyperactivity, white lies, dieting for teenagers, homework, being victimized by bul-

lies and so much more! O.K., so we're familiar with the problems. How can we deal with them?

In her brilliant but very practical way, RCSW Kleiman analyzes each problem, introduced in letter form, offering point by point solutions, short- and long-term, and often adding a page which she calls "kids' notes," of how children view the problem and can offer their own solutions.

So how about a sample? Even though I am one or two generations removed from parenting (*baruch Hashem*), being from the "then" generation, this one appealed to me especially.

#### Excerpted from Part I 'I Have to Have It NOW!'

I am the mother of 10 children, and I believe that *chinuch* includes saying no to children when necessary. I don't think our household is excessively rigid, but my 10-year-old daughter throws a tantrum when she doesn't get what she wants. She is easily frustrated when things aren't the way she would like. ... She will say things like "I have to have it *now!*" or "I can't wait!"

[The excerpted reply:]

Thinking clearly about Shoshi's behavior now, when you are calm, is a good way to begin gaining control over the situation. When a child is having a full-blown tantrum, it is difficult to remain calm and not respond in kind. ...

Unlike younger children, children between 7 and 12 can understand explanations that involve someone other than themselves. At this age, they expect and deserve some reason for a parent's action. ...

The down side is that since children this age are into reasons and reasoning, they expect everything to make perfect sense (to them) and to be fair. ... When [she becomes frustrated, annoyed, argumentative,] remind your daughter that a parent cannot always be fair according to a child's definition because parents take into consideration other factors. ... Be firm in your response and follow through. ...

Keep in mind, though, that children of this age pride themselves on being ... capable of coming up with acceptable solutions or alternatives.

[And she presents the following pointers:]

- State the problem as calmly, clearly and succinctly as you can.
- Let Shoshi know that *how* she talks is just as important as *what* she says.
- Focus on what's major, and overlook what's minor.

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