



Exclusive Interview with Rabbi Nachman Seltzer

Upon the Petirah of Rebbetzin Gittel Kaplan, a”h

Hours after the Petirah of Rebbetzin Gittel Kaplan, the FJJ had the zechus of sitting down with Rabbi Nachman Seltzer and his wife, Aliza - who shared an extremely close (almost family) connection with the entire Kaplan family. The following are highlights of the interview, chronicling the almost 20-year relationship they shared.

Q. HOW DID YOUR RELATIONSHIP BEGIN?

A. I came to the Mir when I was 21. I asked a friend of mine what Shiur he was in. He told me Rav Nissan Kaplan. I asked Rav Nissan that day if I could join his shiur. It was the last zman he was giving shiur in the dining room and we were learning *mesechta makos*. I was lucky enough to get a seat 3 boys away from Rav Nissan. The same week I asked Rav Nissan if I could learn with him *b'chavrusa* and if I could come to a seudah that Shabbos by his house in Har Nof. That Friday night I went with another *bochur* to his house. Rav Rubin's shul was in the old location and Rav Nissan spoke between *kabolas* Shabbos and Maariv. It was immediately evident to see the respect that was accorded to him by the members of the shul and the Rov, Rav Rubin. In my mind, it seemed obvious that this man was going to become one of the Gedolei Yisroel. The Seudah was very beautiful. Rav Nissan and the Rebbetzin had 3 little girls at the time, Chana Liba, Esty, and Leah. Though I was at my new Rebbe's house, I felt completely at home as if I was already a member of the family. The Rebbetzin was very warm and welcoming to us and the girls were adorable. And when Rav Nissan found out that I sing, he asked me to sing song after song after song. When I left the Kaplan home that Friday night, I knew that I had found my Rebbe and planned on remaining close to him for the rest of my life.

And we did - any time we came for Shabbos he never stopped encouraging me and my boys to sing at his Shabbos table.

Q. WHAT WAS YOUR MOST RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH RAV NISSAN AND HIS REBBETZIN?

A. I called Rav Nissan to find out how he was doing and what I could do to help. Rav Nissan said, "what I would like you to do is please take your boys to the hospital to sing for my wife. I hope this will bring her some simcha and *chiyus*." I had something to do that night and I asked him if it could be the next day. He said "please come tonight." So we drove into Yerushalayim that night and made our way to the 7th floor Oncology department. The door was open and the Rebbetzin was sitting in a chair next to her bed, a tray of sushi on her bed that she was offering to every visitor. We sat down and immediately fell back into our regular mode of conversation visiting *mishpacha*.

While we were there, the Rebbetzin was telling us about the family in the next room where the wife was 40 years old and on the brink of death.

Those of you who know Rav Nissan are familiar with his *mehalich hachayim*. Basically, wherever he is, he becomes friends with every person in the area. Even in the hospital, with the Malach Hamoves surrounding the area, Rav Nissan went out of his way to interject a ray of sunshine and life into the ward. He brought in music and brought in everyone into the circle to sing and dance. The son of the woman in the next room had

gone through some challenges in life and Rav Nissan went out of his way to develop a *kesher* with him on the spot, took his phone number, and was embarking on Rav Nissan's trademark way of adopting another yid. The other room heard us singing and they wanted us to sing for the patient as well. So the Rebbetzin sent us to sing for the other woman and was very insistent that we make her as happy as we could. Our boys, 13 and 10 years old, stood in front of this woman and sang Adon Olam and it was a moment of sheer magic in what was otherwise an extremely bleak environment. The family was very appreciative and joined in the singing but the real credit goes to the Rebbetzin who, even in her final days, was not focused on herself but rather on her ability to help another person.

Needless to say, my wife, myself and my children feel immensely grateful to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for giving us the opportunity to see the Rebbetzin one last time and to share yet another incredible moment with Rebbetzin Kaplan, a *choshuve*, *choshuve* woman who was so much a part of our lives.

Q. WHAT MOMENTS TOGETHER WITH THE REBBETZIN STICK OUT IN YOUR MEMORY?

A. Sitting in her little Sukkan in Har Nof with the Rebbetzin's father, the Rosh Yeshiva of Gateshead, *shlita* and her mother, singing together, sharing stories and *divrei* Torah, having the *zechus* to invite the entire family over to our house in Ramat Bet Shemesh for supper during summer Bein Hazmanim, hosting Rav Nissan and his boys for a simcha (and watching Shua,) and spending Shabbos at the Kaplan home on countless occasions during the year. Many of those times Rav Nissan's father was there too and we sat at the same table as the legendary Mashgiach, Rav Naftoli Kaplan. Through all this, through every single occasion, no matter what, the Rebbetzin stood as a backbone for Rav Nissan, not only allowing him, but encouraging him to do what he needed to do for the world. There was no question in her mind what her role was. Not because she didn't work or have a life outside the home, because she did work, for many hours every day. Not only that, there was another facet to my *kesher* with the Rebbetzin and that was due to the fact that she worked at Targum Press, the publishing house where I published my first three books. Any time I came to the office, I knew that I would see the Rebbetzin's smiling face welcoming me and happy to see me, proud of me like a mother would be proud of her son. She reveled in my accomplishments, she took pride in everything I did and she and Rav Nissan were our family's number one supporters. The Rebbetzin became more like a friend to my wife than a Rebbetzin - always insisting that a friend was what she was.

With Rav Nissan, it was never just a relationship with one person which meant that my parents became close to Rav Nissan and when I married my wife, my in laws became close to Rav Nissan and every kid who got married became close to Rav Nissan. To the point where a few summers ago he was going through tremendous crisis in his personal life but one of my *mishpacha* needed emergency guidance and Rav Nissan put aside all of his own issues. And if you know Rav Nissan and his family, there were many challenges at the time, and he helped us break

through what could have been a terrible situation, putting aside his own pain to help us.

Q. WHAT OTHER SPECIAL MOMENTS COME TO MIND?

A. I was on the way home to Ramat Bet Shemesh a short while after Rav Nissan opened his new Yeshiva. My wife and I had been at the Kaplan family the first Shabbos the Yeshiva opened and we were able to envision already from then, what a magnificent Torah edifice Rav Nissan was going to build for Klal Yisroel. As I was driving, my phone rang and it was Rav Nissan. He asked me to come to his Yeshiva and to do an in-depth interview with him to discuss the Yeshiva and his plans for the future. I turned the car around and drove back to Har Nof where I sat with him and really got into his dreams and aspirations. He wanted his Talmidim around the world to know what he was building. But you have to understand something. There was no way in the world that Rav Nissan would have been able to not only be the star Magid Shiur in the Mir, to not only be an incredible Rov in Ramat Eshkol, to not only run countless Tzedaka organizations and *chesed* operations, to not only help raise the most beautiful family, and to not only take on the position of Rosh Yeshiva and spiritual guide to hundreds and eventually thousands of future Talmidim. Rav Nissan you see, was poised to launch a revolutionary movement within the Israeli Yeshiva system. But there was no way he would have been able to do any of this were it not for the stability, the solidness, the support and belief of the Rebbetzin who was so great and so normal at the same time. She gave him a *velt* of encouragement and she did it in a way that was unassuming, pleasant, down to earth, warm, caring and welcoming to the point where I see my Rebbe knowing that when it was finally time to come home after a day spent in Yeshiva, or a trip around the world, or speaking at the Siyum Hashas, or flying to Lublin - the one thing that kept him going was the fact that waiting for him at home was his incredible *eishes chayil*, Rebbetzin Gittel Kaplan.

Q. WHAT CAN WE, AS HIS TALMIDIM AND SUPPORTERS, DO FOR OUR BELOVED REBBE AND HIS FAMILY IN THEIR TIME OF GREAT NEED?

A. I feel that every single *talmid* should ask himself right now what he has done for his Rebbe through the years and whether he was *yotzay* his obligation of *hako-ras hatov*. Now is the time to ask yourself "what can I do for Rav Nissan right now?" I'm sure everyone will call. But think of the *nachas* and yes (tiny measure of *nechama*) that you can bring our Rebbe at this critical time.

And then do it.

This is the time to show our dear Rebbe that we haven't forgotten everything he has done for every single *talmid* - day, night or anytime in between.

Q. FINAL THOUGHTS?

A. My wife and I were heartbroken at not being able to take part in the Rebbetzin's *levaya*. We were in the States and only returning the next day. But then the call came asking us to discuss our thoughts about the Rebbetzin.

A tiny *nechama* in a sea of pain. Or as Rebbe always says, *besamim* for Yosef Hatzadik on his way down to Mitzrayim.

May the entire Kaplan *mishpacha* worldwide see true *nechama* and share in *simchos* together.

A Heartfelt Tribute to Rebbetzin Gittel Kaplan, a"h

MORDY MEHLMAN

Rebbetzin Gittel Kaplan, a"h, wife of the legendary Rosh HaYeshiva and Manhig HoRav Nissan Kaplan, shlita, was niftar this week, a tragic blow to her family, the Talmidim, and all who were zoche to know her.

Rebbetzin Kaplan was the daughter of Rav Avrohom and Rebbetzin Sarah Gurwicz, the Gateshead Rosh Yeshiva. The chinuch she received on the importance of Limud and Harbotzas HaTorah was transformed into the legendary support and encouragement she provided to her husband, which afforded him the time and tranquility to fully immerse himself in spreading Torah and leading the Klal 24/7. As the Rosh Yeshiva himself said at the levaya, "she didn't just help me in my avodas hakodesh, rather her whole life and whole

essence was devoted to me and my harbotzas Torah."

Together they raised eleven children, a beautiful mishpacha, raised in a symphony of Torah v'chesed. The ruach in their home was extended to the many guests they had every Shabbos, and the countless individuals that would come day and night for counsel and consolation.

For many years, the Rebbetzin worked for Ichud Hatzalah, selflessly devoting herself to its important lifesaving work. Despite the demands of her family and job, she greeted each guest with a genuine smile and open heart. Even in her years of illness, she maintained a pleasant demeanor, maintaining her simchas hachayim despite her yisurim. Never did she complain, never did she have tainos, due to her immutable emunah and bitachon in Hashem.

Many thousands of Talmidim and acquaintances felt like they were an "only child" to her. In truth they were, for she listened to their problems with an open heart, and rejoiced with their successes as only a mother would. Their secrets were held in confidence, never divulging them or the remarkable chesed she helped them with.

Tragically, her levaya was on her birthday, after completing 49 remarkable years on this earth. As in the Sefira, she completed her mission in the most exemplary fashion, l'mailah miderech hatevah. She leaves thousands of yesomim, so many in Klal Yisroel who considered themselves children of her and the Rosh Yeshiva. She will be sorely missed, but her memory and maasim tovim will live on in the hearts of all who were zoche to know her. Yehi Zichra Boruch!



Photo Credits: Yosef Kletzki, United Hatzola



קהילת גבעת המבחר אבילה וחפיה על הסתלקותה בטרם עת, לאחר שנזדככה ביסורים גדולים וקבלה אותם באהבה אשת מורינו ורבנו מורה דרכנו וראש ישיבת דעת אהרון

הרבנית גיטל קפלן ע"ה

בת יבדלח"ס הגאון רבי אברהם גורביץ שליט"א ר"י גייטסהד אשת יבדלח"ס רבי ניסן שלמה הכהן קפלן שליט"א

אשר עמדה לימינו בכל דרכיו ומעשיו גידלה ורוממה משפחתה ומשפחות רבות של בני תורה ללכת בדרך התורה והיראה בת גדולים מזרע תרשימים אשה יראת ה' בטוהר מידותיה ונועם הליכותיה השפיעה על כל סביבתה את דרך ה'

תנוחמי כל בני הקהילה והמתפללים למורנו ורבינו אשר הוא לנו לעיניים ולכל משפחתו הרוממה בניו בנותיו חתניו וכל צאצאיו

בעל הנחמות ירפא וינחם את המשפחה האבילה לעמוד מתוך השבר הגדול אשר הושברו

הלויה תצא מרח' אגסי 31 הר נוף בשעה 20:30 להר הזיתים

השבעה בבית המנוחה מרח' קצנלבווגן 64, קומה 2-

בני קהילת גבעת המבחר פארן 8 וכל המתפללים

אשת חיל מי ימצא

המומים ומזועזעים שבורים ורצוצים אנו בפסידתה בדמי ימיה של אשתי, אמנו, בתנו, אחותנו, כלתנו וסבתנו, עטרת ראשנו, האשה הגדולה והצדקנית, יראת השם היא תהלה, רבת החסד והמעש, ויתרה מזאת בהצנע לכת, בת גדולים, חכמת לב ואצילת הנפש, מופלאה בעוז רוחה ובאהבתה והתמסרותה בכל כוחה לתורה משוש ליבה, עמדה לימין בעלה אבינו במסירות נפש ממש יומם ולילה וכל מעיניה היו נתונים לגדל בניה ובנוחיה לתורה ויראת שמים ומידות טובות, היתה מעוז לכל בני הישיבה ובאי ביתה הגדול ודאגה ונשאה כל אחד ואחד מהם על ליבה והיתה להם כאם העניקה ידירות אמת לכל סביבותיה והשפיעה והקרינה על כולנו אהבת הבריות ושמחה וטוב לבב

הרבנית

גיטל קפלן ע"ה

אשת הגאון רבי ניסן הכהן קפלן שליט"א בת הגאון הגדול רבי אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

ההלויה תצא הערב יום שלישי כ"א במרחשון תש"פ בשעה 20:30 מביתה רחוב אגסי 31 הר נוף להר הזיתים

המשפחות המתאבלות:

קפלן, גורביץ, לוי, ברלינר, סינקלר, יפה, פיבלזון, פרלוב, אלטוסקי, בערל, ברקוביץ

יושבים שבעה בביתה רח' קצנלבווגן 64

זמני ניחום אבלים: 10:00 - 14:00, 17:00 - 22:00