

Neshei Chabad Magazine

Turning 42, with my youngest in school, the family moved to Jerusalem, and I was looking for a side interest. An ad in a local paper screamed out to me “Labor Support Course” beginning soon. Briney Popack had been my labor support for five of my six children. She had warned me for my third, “don’t have your baby on Tuesday because I will be in Jerusalem”. Tuesday, of course, I woke with contractions. She visited me on Wednesday.

A doula, is that special woman who guides a woman thorough the birthing process, keeping her calm, supported and nourished. If we arrived a bit early, we paced the floors, squatted and whatever it took until I birthed my baby. The Rebbe had been very strong about another woman in the delivery room helping us bring a new life into the world. A few women in Safed had been trained regarding the layout of the hospital and what they were allowed to do and what not. I suppose they were the first doulas in our modern-day history.

With my births in mind, I could imagine how exciting it would be learning techniques, skills, and positions to help women ease the birth process. During the years following the 10-month, weekly sessions, I realized how much more there was to learn. I not only read the required reading but the 15 or so “elective” books. Even before finishing the course I began to tell everyone I knew about “doulas”, how we reduce cesarean rates and medical births, enhance the labor process, and help women to have more birth satisfaction. Heaven help the pregnant woman who sat next to me on a bus or a pregnant neighbor who stopped over to borrow a cup of sugar! It became my passion and my family put up with it- sometimes.

Some funny aspects were when my 10-year-old would answer the phone, handing it over to me saying, “Mom, I think her waters broke”.

While working in the birthing field, helping to strengthen woman’s belief in themselves and the birth process, I wanted to lend out books that were appropriate for the Jewish woman. Hashem is a big part of the picture and this point is quickly forgotten as labor progresses. They needed to hear stories that were not frightening. It was the scary, sudden, and unexpected which made a good story. It seemed that women did not share the low-key, happy, smooth-flowing scenarios. s.

I ordered birth story books whenever I saw a new one. I thought, *Okay, I can always edit or tear out parts which were not appropriate.* After 7 books and plenty of changes, I now thought, *I have attended enough births -over 1000 (bli ayin hora)- to write my own book!* So, I began collecting stories. I started to write up births I had attended which were inspiring. There were stories from long ago, from different countries and from Eretz Israel, my home of 33 years.

The book began with Rabbi Ezriel Tauber’s story which took place during the Shoah. He was the eldest of 4 children through the war when the Nazis marched in to Czechoslovakia. As this happened, the family ran from place to place, being hidden. The mother continued to build her family, despite the warnings from friends and neighbors about how dangerous this was. When

they were finally caught and taken to Auschwitz, she was sent to the special section for pregnant women. His mother understood immediately that this was the end. Suddenly Dr. Mengele, *yemach shemo v'zichro*, came in and said he wanted to conduct an experiment in hastening a birth. He performed the experiment on her, and she had a healthy baby girl. He took the baby from her immediately, and she remained in bed in the "hospital." She never saw her daughter again. Her husband and she were reunited after the war and continued to build their family of many. He asked her once, "How did you do it? Did you really think you would survive?" She answered, "Not at all! But we believe in the resurrection of the dead! When one bears a child, it is *eternal!*"

There is the emuna I was looking for. This is what women needed to hear while they were expecting. Getting to know Rebbitzin Yitti Neustadt, Rov Tauber's daughter, I ask her to take information I compiled and make 2 CDs; one called *Growth through Childbirth* and *Balancing Histadlus and Bitachon during Pregnancy*, an audio way to help women prepare in an emotional and spiritual way for birth.

Another story that happened in New York was something many women could relate to because many live far from their hospital or get stuck in traffic on the way.

While in a deep fog, a car stalls while the wife is in active labor. An obstetrician, heading out early to work at Beth Israel hospital due to the fog, sees a stalled car and asks if he can help. "My wife is giving birth!" shouts the husband. "I am an obstetrician", he answers. He proceeds to catch the baby, wrapping it in his coat. The father, offering to pay for the coat, is answered by the doctor. "Although I am Jewish, I am not religious, but this is "God's baby".

After a few more years and a few more births, I realized there were not enough stories which included options for women. Yes, technical and teaching books were out there, however, I wanted to present birth options and information in an easy way for the layman to understand. Hence, *More Special Deliveries* was born, so to speak. This book also shared memorable stories such as a horse-and-buggy ride on an unpaved mountain road on the way to the hospital. There is a chapter for fathers- by fathers; a very helpful and insightful section. There is the rejoicing of a baby after years of waiting, the regular delivery after cesareans and the births that are filled with unexpected medical complications which are also seen as the hand of God. In this book I included medical information, tips and the latest research.

What was so thrilling was the e-mail I received from New York stating that this woman always had her waters broken and now she told her doctor she did not want that. The birth was so much easier for her as the sac broke while she was pushing. She called to thank me for the advice in one of the stories. That was true satisfaction.

Women all over the country needed more information so I opened pregnancy and birthing libraries. We now reached 10 in total. Hashem should give me time and strength to open more.

