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From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles <editor@ascentofsafed.com>

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Simchat Torah for Mother

A nine-year-old boy in San Diego was walking home from *shul* on *Shemini Atzeret* eve. "Abba," he asked, with all sincerity, "could we bring the Torah home on *Simchat Torah*?"

"No, son, the Torah stays in *shul*, except perhaps for *hakafot* (circling dance) around the *shul*," he replied factually. "No one can take the Torah home."

The boy broke into uncontrolled sobs, while *Abba* tried to understand how he felt. After a few minutes, the son confided that he wanted his *Ima* (Mom), who was home in bed with cancer, to kiss the Torah on the holiday. *Abba* (Dad) knew his tears.

Yes, it's a true story. My name is **Chana Abrams** and I am challenged with a recurrence of breast cancer.

But there's more to the story. Although I am Torah-observant, my holidays lately have not been filled with synagogue prayers and pretty dresses and *Yom Tov* (holiday) food. Rather my holidays were filled with turning on IV pumps and looking out the window.

On Simchat Torah day I was sitting on my recliner in my living room, trying to distract myself from the effects of chemotherapy and bed sores when I heard the sound of singing coming from the direction of the *shul* [we live only one block from the Chabad House on Montezuma Avenue]. A smile came to my face as I thought of my six-year-old riding on his *Abba's* shoulders and my nine-year-old dancing in circles.

The singing became louder and louder... and a tear, the first of many, came to my eyes as I witnessed the whole congregation of Chabad House -- men in *talleisim* [prayer shawls], women in pretty dresses, children with flags, babies in strollers, friends and strangers alike -- march to my front lawn and dance the *hakafot*.

I treasure the memory as I watched my six-year-old waving a flag while sitting on a *yeshiva* boy's shoulders. It was priceless to see my husband dance with the Torah and smile with deep joy, transcending our family's troubles.

My nine-year-old son came in with the biggest and proudest smile that said "I love you" in the deepest way I have ever felt.

Then my closest friends came in, representatives of the *shul*, to wish me a *refua shleima* [complete recovery], the biggest get-well wish in my life of cards of encouragement and support and a speedy recovery. And yes, I did kiss the Torah! The festivities returned to *shul*, and I discovered a new-found *simcha* (joy) that helps carry me through my challenges. The *simcha* of love. The *simcha* of compassion. The *simcha* of *mitzvah*.

Thank you to Rabbi Yonah Fradkin for his ability to hear the tears of a child, and for his display of *Ahavat Yisrael*, unconditional love of a fellow Jew, which is what Chabad stands for. *Simcha, mitzvah, compassion*: this is what Chabad does best. I also thank the entire congregation of the Chabad House for this most untraditional display of *bikur cholim* (the *mitzvah* of visiting the sick). Please know that it gives me renewed strength and hope as I face life's challenges and come to a place of complete healing and Mashiach.

UPDATE:

Chana Abrams passed away in San Diego three months after this story took place, 25 years ago in 5757/1996). That 9-year-old boy and his wife are now the Chabad *shluchim* (emissaries) in Temecula CA! Mrs. Abrams herself wrote the above account, which was published in a local San Diego newspaper. [Her *yahrzeit* date, the 24th of the Jewish month of *Tevet*, is the same as that of the *Alter Rebbe* of Chabad.]

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Source: Lightly edited and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the article cited in the Update above.