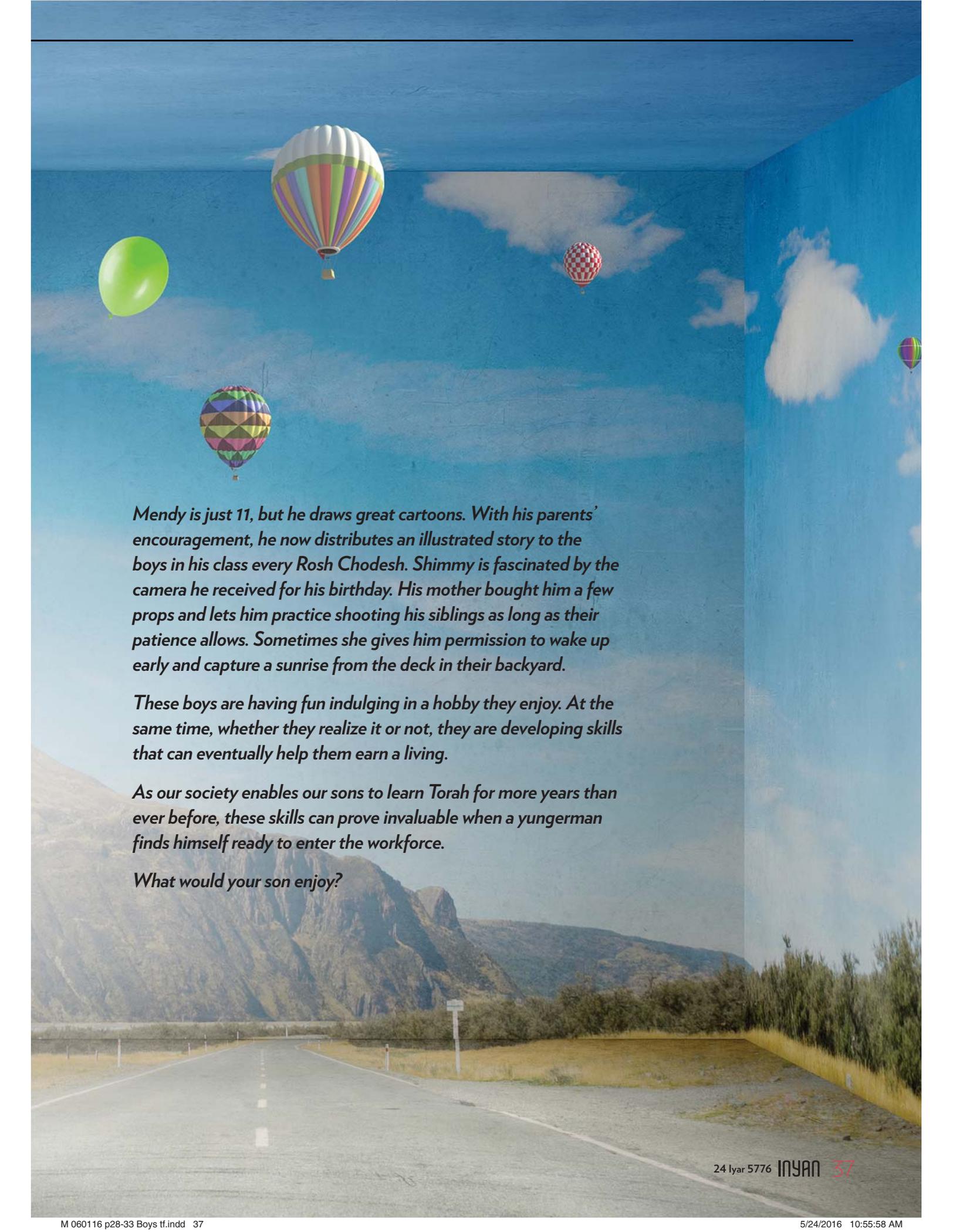


# BOYS WILL BE BOYS

BY BEILY PALUCH



A photograph of a paved road leading towards a range of mountains under a clear sky. The sky is overlaid with a blue gradient and several hot air balloons and a green balloon. The balloons are in various colors and patterns, including a large multi-colored one, a smaller checkered one, and a green one. The mountains in the background are rugged and brownish-green. The overall scene is bright and clear.

*Mendy is just 11, but he draws great cartoons. With his parents' encouragement, he now distributes an illustrated story to the boys in his class every Rosh Chodesh. Shimmy is fascinated by the camera he received for his birthday. His mother bought him a few props and lets him practice shooting his siblings as long as their patience allows. Sometimes she gives him permission to wake up early and capture a sunrise from the deck in their backyard.*

*These boys are having fun indulging in a hobby they enjoy. At the same time, whether they realize it or not, they are developing skills that can eventually help them earn a living.*

*As our society enables our sons to learn Torah for more years than ever before, these skills can prove invaluable when a youngster finds himself ready to enter the workforce.*

*What would your son enjoy?*

## CONNECTING TO FAMILY

The ideas in this section can be worked on by one child or by a group. They also offer an opportunity for mother and son to collaborate, spending time together on a meaningful project. Choose the option that suits you best, and create a masterpiece the entire family will treasure.

### *Build a Family Tree:*

Have your son speak to older members of the family and collect as many names from each as possible. If there is one family member who is the “keeper of the legacy” and has access to documents, birthdates and *yahrzeits* that others may not, let him start there and then have others fill in any gaps.

Use poster boards as a base. Since family trees need room to grow as new information comes to light, do not write directly on the board. Use Velcro dots to position strips with names of family members, so that you can move them when more relatives need to be added.

If you have old documents belonging to previous generations, make copies, slide them into sheet protectors and put them in a binder. Number each person’s name strip, and write the corresponding number on the documents. Using this method, new sheets can be added as information comes in, including photos, short bios or stories about each individual.

To map your family tree digitally, you can install “Family Tree Builder” from the MyHeritage site. Once registered, this can be used on a computer without internet, though some features, such as syncing with other family trees, will not work.

### *Write a Family History:*

Interview older family members and write up their memories in a book.

This can also be a wonderful way to perpetuate the memory of a family member who has passed away. Family members contribute their recollections, and your son can organize the content and compile it into a book.

### *Make a Photo Album:*

This can make for a truly engrossing project for a creative child, and can be approached from various angles. Software can be downloaded from the popular photo album printers such as SmileBooks, and do not require internet for everyday usage (just for the initial software download, and to place your order).

One approach is to collect individual pictures of all the grandchildren/great-grandchildren and lay them out page by page, organized by family. You can also include family pictures, or a wedding picture of the parents, for each family. It can be fun to add one or two tidbits about each person near his picture. “His first word was tomato” or “Barefoot, as usual.” Older children can also write a personal message.



**“TO BECOME A STORYTELLER, YOU NEED TO BE BLESSED WITH A VIVID IMAGINATION. IF YOU ARE, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO BRING YOUR STORIES TO LIFE. IT DOES NOT MATTER IF YOU ARE SHY OR NOT. WHEN YOU TELL A STORY AND LITERALLY BECOME THE CHARACTERS, YOUR SHYNESS WILL DISAPPEAR, BECAUSE THE CHARACTERS YOU ARE BECOMING ARE NOT SHY.”**

Another idea is to find pictures that tell the story of Bubby/Zeidy and organize them into an album, starting from their younger years, and then with pictures of each of their children, perhaps from various family *simchos* and special occasions, or just Chanukah, Purim and everyday shots.

Spending Pesach (or summer vacation) with Bubby and Zeidy? Take loads of pictures, and when you return home, let your son create a photo-book of memories. Print one for your own family, and one for the grandparents. It will be an expressive thank you that they will cherish for years to come.

### *Variations on the photo album idea:*

Depending on the goal of your project, the same information and pictures can also be collected into a PowerPoint presentation. Especially if the grandparents being researched are no longer alive, and many family members would like to enjoy the results of your work, a PowerPoint presentation might be the better option. This can be shown at any family gathering, and then distributed to all family members on disk.

A somewhat simpler method is to purchase large foam boards and have your son cover each one with pictures representing the life of one family member. Use bold marker or felt letters to write each person’s name at the top of the board.

Present your project for the first time at the next family get-together.

### *Create a Family Video:*

For boys who lack the ambition to sift through photos for a photo-book (and often, to scan dozens of pictures from the



days before digital cameras!), it can be easier to create a family video that is mostly rooted in the present.

For a family documentary, have family members prepare a few words to say in honor of Bubby and Zeidy. It's best to have a few questions prepared, so that you don't have 30 repeats of the same general 'I love Bubby.'

For example, have your son ask each person, "What's your favorite thing in Bubby's house?" "Which of Zeidy's songs is your favorite?" "What do you think I should buy Zeidy for a birthday present?" "What is one thing you learned from Bubby?" This will generate unique answers suited to

each person's personality, and the video will have that much more sparkle and interest. He might want to ask different questions of the adults and children.

For extra fun, take the video camera to the grandparents' corner grocery, next-door neighbor, *chavrusa* or *chessed* partner, even the gardener, and have them say a few words, too.

The video should then be edited so that adults, children and friends are shown randomly. Going in order is predictable and feels boring. The element of surprise will keep your audience at the edge of their seats.

Other options are to prepare a choir or skit with all the grandchildren, film it, and then share it at the next family gathering.

### Write a Family Newsletter:

Writing a family newsletter can bring out many sides of a boy's creativity. In addition to news from his own home front, your son can call his cousins every month and collect the news from each family. He can also add a *dvar Torah*, jokes, a maze, or an in-depth interview of one family member or other acquaintance. Include a *mazel tov* corner, and of course, quotables from the kids.

## TORASO UMNASO:

### Binding Sefarim:

Binding *sefarim* is a craft that is best learned from someone with experience. In some yeshivos, there are boys in charge of binding *sefarim*, and a *bachur* who is so inclined can sign up to join; the more experienced members will train him.

Bookbinding requires a certain level of perfectionism and attention to detail, and of course, the ability to sit still for extended periods of time.

Tzvi Liberman of TL Bookbinding is a perfect example of how to turn a hobby into a *parnassah*. Still in yeshivah full time, he's been binding books and selling supplies on the side for nearly ten years. What does a boy need to get started? Tzvi recommends binding tape, a hand drill, string, a binding needle, scissors and a razor.

Eli Hofstatter of The Sefarim Organizers even made a business out of organizing *sefarim*. If your son loves *sefarim*, Eli invites him to apply for a job when he grows up!

## LIFELONG SKILLS:

### Typing Hebrew and English:

The ability to touch-type is a skill that will serve your son well wherever life takes him. Those who stay in Torah will appreciate the ability to type *shiurim*, class handouts and *chiddushei Torah*. And in today's computerized business world, typing might be more important than writing.

Best of all, this quiet activity requires only your home computer and teaching software. After comparing various programs, it was a thrill to discover "Touch Typing Now – Hebrew and English," available from TES/jewishsoftware.com (Tel.: U.S. 845-362-6380). This popular software, enjoyed by individuals and schools alike, teaches both the Hebrew and English keyboards.

Upon special request, Rabbi Emanuel Fishman of TES has graciously offered to make this popular product available at the discounted price of \$39.99 for the next two weeks only. Readers are kindly asked to respect the deadline and purchase immediately to take advantage of this generous offer.

### Storytelling:

For tips and insights on storytelling, we turned to master storyteller Rabbi Yitzzy Erps.

"To become a storyteller, you need to be blessed with a vivid imagination. If you are, you will be able to bring your stories to life. It does not matter if you are shy or not. When you tell a story and literally *become* the characters, your shyness will disappear, because the characters you are becoming are not shy."

Rabbi Erps encourages children to believe in themselves, but at the same time realize that perfection in anything requires work.

"You can become the great storyteller you wish to be if you work on it without giving up. Experiment with your voice. Practice different levels of high and low pitch. Use your imagination to try to create a voice that matches your character. Not everyone is blessed with the ability to imitate a large variety of voices, but everyone can do something. When you hear a sound effect that you like, use your mind

to influence your vocal cords to imitate it. With practice, you will improve.”

When Rabbi Erps tells a story, he takes on the persona of each character, becoming that character as long as the character is speaking. As a result of this total immersion, he never confuses the voices.

How does one keep the audience mesmerized? “It’s a lot of *siyatta diShmaya*. Some key points: Make eye contact with your audience; move around a lot. Do not talk too fast or too slow. Speak at a pace that keeps their attention without giving them a chance to lose interest. Know your audience and tell a story on their level.”

### First aid/CPR:

Many boys dream of joining Hatzolah when they grow up. Why not take concrete steps toward that goal, and learn vital skills along the way?

Mr. Efraim Krausz, head lifeguard at the Boro Park Y and at Krasna summer camp, says kids should and CAN learn first aid. In a course he gave boys last year, he covered first aid and basic CPR. “We try to integrate with real-life examples: If you’re home alone with your grandfather, and he has the following symptoms, what should you do? Sometimes just recognizing the symptoms and calling for help can save a life. It also helps them keep calm when a family member is hurt, because their training makes them feel competent.”

Mr. Krausz pointed out that when purchasing first-aid books for a child, it’s important to review them for suitability, as some sections may be inappropriate.

### Singing Lessons:

Singing is an outlet many boys enjoy. As long as they can carry a tune, they are usually able to enjoy singing lessons, whether individually or in a group.

According to Rabbi Tzvi Zilberberg, who runs the Kol Haneorim singing groups for boys age 9 to 13, most boys in his groups do not have the stage in mind. They are there to have a good time, to release energy, and

for the boost in confidence that comes from learning any skill well. He teaches them to carry a tune with better modulation, to keep pace with the beat of a song, and to breathe optimally. Usually, this has an immediate, noticeable effect on the family Shabbos *zemiros*, providing a great sense of accomplishment.

Another option is send a boy for private voice lessons, and perhaps have him record his favorite song in a local studio. Rabbi Zilberberg does this for each boy in his group, with the rest of the boys accompanying as a children’s choir.

### WE’RE IN BUSINESS

Boys enjoy the rattle of pocket change earned by the sweat of their brow. Luckily, Friday afternoons and Erev Yamim Tovim are when a boy’s spare time can also be an opportunity to make some spending money.

Here are some ideas that can work year-round.

#### Shoe-shine stand:

- Set up shop outside the early *Minchah minyan* or your local *mikveh*.

#### Selling seasonal items:

- Home-made *l’shanah tovah* cards before Rosh Hashanah
- *Lulav* rings before Sukkos
- Dried-fruit kabobs and bracelets before Tu BiShvat
- Franks and fries during the week before Pesach (pass around or hang up fliers a day before so mothers will know they can skip making supper that night)
- A small yard sale (am I the only one with too many Avos Ubanim prizes?)

#### Drawing/painting signs and banners:

A boy with artistic talent can open a small business drawing or painting signs. These can be for a classroom, for a family’s front door, for a Bubby’s 80th birthday, or to welcome a visiting *tzaddik*. He can also make and sell homemade *sukkah* decorations or *Mishenichnas Adar* signs. Some boys might enjoy learning to create their art on computers, as most art

## COMBINING LEARNING WITH HOBBIES

Some boys thrive on incorporating learning with their hobbies. They love to learn, and having a *Torahdig* hobby keeps them fully integrated, even during their leisure time. In many cases, these are the boys who will *iy”H* become *klei kodesh* (*Rabbanim, chazzanim, rebbeim, sofrim*, etc.); their hobbies deserve as much attention and investment as any other!

#### Learning Mishnayos by heart:

For external motivation, have your son join a learning group such as *Pirchei*, or provide monetary incentives. Of course, don’t forget to plan an exciting *siyum*.

#### Writing chiddushei Torah:

There are beautifully bound journals today embossed in gold containing *chiddushei Torah*. Let your son know that when one *sefer* is full, there will be a new one ready and waiting for him.

#### Leining:

No reason to wait until the bar mitzvah. Boys can learn to *lein* as soon as they show interest.

#### Hotline:

There are free hotline providers where anyone can run a hotline. Your son can choose a *sefer*, a theme, or any learning program of his choice, and have friends or relatives call in to listen to his “*shiur*” on a weekly or monthly basis. Many families use this successfully to learn together as a *zechus* for or *l’iluy nishmas* a family member.



is moving to the screen today. This can also be helpful for producing multiple copies of the same artwork, or for printing the same picture on different items.

Chany Judowitz, an artist/illustrator who produces both conventional and computerized artwork, notes that it's always best to first learn to draw on paper. Then, to draw/paint digitally, one should purchase a tablet and stylus (computer pen). She recommends a Wacom tablet, with prices starting at around \$75. The most popular painting software is Photoshop, but Corel Painter or Manga Studio might be more suitable for a beginner.

### *Tzedakah carnival:*

Only enterprising boys (and mothers) need apply for this one! Running a carnival requires organized preparation, plenty of manpower, and a hefty dose of parental supervision. That being said, it's also great fun and an excellent opportunity to exercise various skills, such as planning, budgeting, leadership, money management and customer service, to name a few.

What is involved?

- Preparing the booths
- Purchasing supplies (review the booths you'll have and determine what supplies are necessary, plus refreshments, prizes of incremental value, and tickets)
- Preparing some small change to start off
- Appointing staff (You will need a staff of boy volunteers — one boy for each booth, plus some backup so boys can

take a break. Backups can be put to good use replenishing supplies at each booth, like more cups, more prize tickets, more frank buns). If you will be accepting cash at more than one table (tickets/food), make sure a responsible boy stays with each cash box at all times.

- Arranging parental supervision (Boys demonstrate incredible resourcefulness and management skills when given the opportunity. You might want the parental supervision to appear incidental, but calculatedly so. Sometimes there's a need to give a child extra tickets or a cup of popcorn even if he only came with a dollar. Perhaps a kid "lost" at a booth three times and should be presented with a winning ticket.)
- Keeping an eye on the grill
- Collecting the large bills from the cash box every half-hour or so, and transferring them to a safe place indoors (A carnival is a busy, busy event, and your son will be focused on keeping everything moving.)

For those who want "The Complete Guide to Carnival Making," there's a full chapter in my book, *Boy Oh Boy!*, listing booth ideas, purchasing lists, how to compute prize values fairly, and more.

(Note that we titled this *Tzedakah Carnival*. Since your neighbors are the unwitting participants whose children will inevitably be your customers, it is best to dedicate the profit to a worthy cause.) ■

*Mrs. Paluch lives in Brooklyn and is the author of "Boy, Oh Boy!" — the engaging guide to the wonderful world of Jewish boys, for mothers of one boy or a dozen.*