

The 5 Towns Jewish Times Interview
By Rochelle Miller June 24, 2020

Rebbetzin Naomi N. Herzberg-Flaum is a visionary. Forty years ago, the gifted artist and educator, who traces her ancestry, and creativity, to Yocheved, daughter of Rashi, and is a descendant of Dovid HaMelech, dreamed the impossible. She envisioned creating a truly unique educational experience: a full-fledged Torah seminary and sophisticated art academy, a “frum FIT.” Although throughout the ensuing years her dream remained precisely that, she never abandoned her hope of bringing it to fruition.

“The thought of embarking on the project was always on my mind,” Rebbetzin Naomi told the Five Towns Jewish Times. “But I realized that the scope of the project was very large and would require a great deal of my time and attention. While my children were young and at home, it wasn’t the right time for me to undertake such an endeavor.”

“Then my husband, HaRav Chanina Herzberg, zt’l, [longtime Menahel of Yeshiva Toras Chaim of South Shore] became very ill and my focus was on taking care of him. I returned to school, earned my master’s degree, and published a thesis specializing in art education. It was at this point that my longtime dream of opening an art academy and seminary started becoming more viable.”

Focusing on her family and her professional pursuits helped Rebbetzin Naomi deal with the pain of losing her beloved husband. Baruch Hashem, she found happiness again and is now married to Rabbi Tzvi Flaum, shlita, distinguished rav and posek. Currently serving as the Mashgiach Ruchani at Touro’s Lander College for Women in Manhattan, Rabbi Flaum has been involved in women’s collegiate education for over 50 years. Additionally, he is a professor of honors courses in both Judaic studies and medical ethics. He has introduced thousands of Torah tapes, and following his retirement from the world-renowned Congregation Kneseth Israel, he founded the Torah Studies Network that offers shiurim for hundreds of members of our community each week.

Spanning 50 years, Rebbetzin Naomi’s history in art education is impressive. She has served with distinction as a member of the accrediting committee of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools for the department of fine arts. She served as director of operations for Shulamith School for Girls for 15 years. She is a high-school art instructor teaching AP Studio Art, Judaica Art, and Portrait Drawing in addition to being a highly sought-after freelance artist, designer, and mentor for many private students and institutions.

With over a century of combined experience in their respective fields of higher education, Rebbetzin Naomi felt the time was right to bring her dream to fruition. “A new marriage, a new beginning, might be a good time to work on a new project,” she shared. She approached her husband, seeking his input regarding the concept. “Not only did he think it was a good idea, he was enthusiastic, excited, and encouraging.”

Sharing her passion, Rabbi Flaum suggested they make it a collaborative effort. Thus did Nachas Art Academy and Seminary become a reality, with Rebbetzin Naomi N. Herzberg-Flaum as dean and Rabbi Tzvi Flaum as rabbinical adviser. Named in loving memory of HaRav Chanina Getzel Herzberg, zt'l, and Rebbetzin Rochel Miriam Flaum, a'h, it will serve as a fitting and beautiful tribute to them as it builds generations of n'shei chayil.

As treasured members of our community and trailblazers in higher education, Rabbi Tzvi and Rebbetzin Naomi stand at the forefront of innovative concepts to meet the needs of the klal, and have now raised the bar in higher education for girls by creating a stellar seminary experience.

Nachas Art Academy and Seminary has been generating an enthusiastic response long before its anticipated September opening. The school will provide artistic and creative Orthodox women with a top-tier creative journey without compromising their religious standards. Under the expert auspices of this dynamic couple, and staffed by a premier faculty, it is a fusion of a Torah seminary and art academy that will offer an understanding of how to navigate the world of art from a Torah perspective.

The Torah seminary program offers highly sophisticated Torah courses in all areas of Torah knowledge taught by internationally acclaimed educators — including Rebbetzin Aviva Feiner, Rabbi Yaakov Feitman, Rabbi Tzvi Flaum, Mrs. Rivka Krischer, Mrs. Chaya Rothman, and Mrs. Esther Wein — who will enrich their students' knowledge base in understanding the many fascinating and diversified Torah courses. These will include practical halachah, Tanach, Jewish philosophy, and Jewish history. Featured as well will be courses dealing with contemporary ideological issues confronting the global Jewish community. Additionally, a special course will be offered concerning the medical-ethics dilemmas facing the world at large.

“We will also be offering a course in business ethics, taught by Mrs. Chaya Rothman, a prominent attorney with halachic expertise,” said Rebbetzin Naomi. “The course will discuss, among many other topics, how to conduct oneself in the work environment as well as how to set up a business, for those students who are contemplating launching a business in the future. Professional courses offered are fine art and design with a concentration in teaching, interior design, and fashion design being taught by highly qualified professionals

All graduates of the Nachas Art Academy and Seminary will receive a one-year professional diploma and a seminary diploma for the different programs they attended. Arrangements are being made so students can receive college credits for the seminary and professional programs through a world-famous prestigious university.

“We are planning to assist with job placement in their field of expertise,” said Rebbetzin Naomi.

In the Five Towns, Far Rockaway throughout the Metropolitan area and beyond, the response has been overwhelmingly positive as this exciting new concept takes flight. Rabbanim,

principals, educators, parents, and young women blessed with an abundance of creativity and artistic talent are eagerly anticipating this unprecedented opportunity to embark upon a journey of creative studies to explore new avenues of Torah study and art.

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