

Talking Books

Special Delivery

by Sarah Goldstein

Review by Batya Yaniger

Do you look at giving birth as something to endure and get through as quickly as possible? A new book about birth stories aims to help women see childbirth as a positive experience, a time of growth. The stories illustrate the wide variety of ways that one can choose to give birth, and the great number of twists and turns along the way. *Special Delivery* was written in order to give strength and courage, as well as humor, to bolster women on this journey.

The key to childbirth is in the hands of Hashem. Hence, the subtitle "Jewish Birth Stories of Faith and Inspiration." Hearing women tell their stories does indeed strengthen one's faith. The moment of birth is a moment of revelation of the hand of G-d. A new life, a new soul is coming into the world. Birth is often not easy, but together with the pain comes a special feeling of closeness to Hashem. By relating her experience, each woman shares her personal story of Divine Providence.

Sarah Goldstein has collected the stories of many women. They have given birth at different hospitals, at home, and in all kinds of interesting places. Expressed in a simple, easy to read style, the stories are written by the women themselves. Sarah is a doula, or professional labor assistant, there for support and encouragement, and guidance. In sync with what the woman needs at every stage of labor, she helps the new mother get in touch with her innate knowledge of what she needs.

The author also uses the opportunity to teach. There's a lesson or note at the end of many stories. For example:

" If you suffer from post partum depression, you can get help.

" A Jacuzzi should be kept at 98

degrees Fahrenheit or lower.

" Different positions for labor and delivery might feel more comfortable for you than others.

The story "In for a landing" really spurred me to write this review. The writer managed to have as natural a birth as possible in an environment where "standard hospital procedure" was the norm. I admired this woman's guts. At the same time, I was sobered by other stories about things that went wrong - some of them expected and some not. For those women whose baby was in distress or who experienced other signs of danger, life-saving medical interventions were critical.

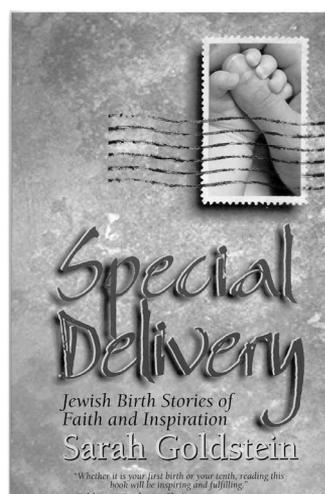
This complex reality leads me to conclude:

Even when women need help during childbirth, they still deserve to be treated with respect. I hope and pray that some day the place where women give birth

will always be a place that is enabling and responsive, never threatening and coercive. In my dream, it would be a place that provides all of the advanced technology and medication that one might need for an emergency together with all of the natural childbirth devices that one might choose to use. This would be accompanied by supreme respect for the woman's wishes, along with exclusive concern for what she and her baby both need as the process unfolds.

Sarah Goldstein's book proves that every birth is a miracle, and a *Special Delivery*. One Mom wrote about her child, "When she was around three years old, I took her to meet Eileen, the midwife who had delivered her. Eileen looked down at her and said, 'I remember you when you were so little.' Menucha looked up at her and said firmly, 'Well, I grewed!'"

And that is a miracle too.



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