

# PERSPECTIVES

ISSUE 14 | APRIL 2022 | PESACH 5782

The magazine of **aish**<sup>uk</sup>

AISH UPDATE  
**COSTA  
RICA**

**ALL THINGS  
EDUCATION**

BEYOND THE  
MAINSTREAM  
CLASSROOM

**ISRAEL'S  
UKRAINE  
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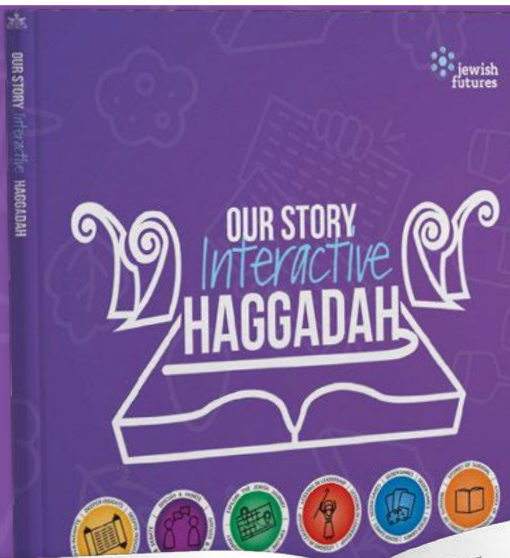
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# EDITOR'S WELCOME

## DEAR READERS,

A very warm welcome to our Pesach edition of Perspectives. On behalf of Rabbi Ari Kayser and myself, we hope you enjoy reading this bumper issue, which is packed with rich and relevant content. In this issue you will find two inspiring supplements, one on education and one on Pesach. I would like to thank our fantastic sub-editor Tammy and superb graphic designer Andrea who ensure that each edition is a joy to put together!

Let me begin by welcoming Rabbi Naftali Schiff as the new Executive Director of Aish UK. Rabbi Schiff has been the Executive Director of Jewish Futures, the umbrella organisation to which Aish belongs, and will continue to hold this position alongside his new role at Aish. Rabbi Schiff brings with him thirty years of experience in the field of Jewish outreach, and we have much to learn from his incredible vision and deep love of the Jewish people. To know him is to know greatness. At the same time, we bid farewell to Rabbi Daniel Rowe, who will continue to stay on as a consultant and educator for Aish. Rabbi Rowe has been nothing short of stellar and the last six years under his leadership have allowed Aish to flourish. He is not only a brilliant mind, but a committed and selfless leader whose guidance is an inspiration to us all.

The underlying narrative of Pesach is, “and you should tell the story of Passover to your children.” In fact, the main mitzvah/commandment of the Pesach seder is to tell the story of how we left Egypt. It is incumbent on every parent and person to ensure that he speaks it out loud, bearing witness to the miracles that God did for us by liberating us from Pharaoh’s torturous pit of slavery. It is for this reason that I chose to focus this issue on education, the most valuable investment of our lives. Judaism is a religion driven by education, and it lauds those who empower themselves to become both knowledgeable and wise. My grandmother is a most formidable woman and I admire her greatly. She has always said to me “Shira, nobody can ever take your education away from you.” Having been an educator for the past twenty years, I believe this with every fibre of my being. And indeed, her words are true, because an educated person is an empowered one - as Sir Francis Bacon said, “knowledge itself is power.”

On a recent flight to New York, I had the great privilege of watching the deeply inspiring film about Malala Yousafzai the young, Pakistani Nobel prize winner who, at the young age of fourteen, spoke out publicly against the prohibition on the

education of girls that was imposed by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. Her story is deeply moving to watch and made me think of how many of us take our education for granted, when in fact it is one of the greatest blessings of our day and age. As Malala said, “one child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world.”

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks campaigned heavily for Jewish children to be afforded a Jewish education, and I hope that this issue will not only enlighten you with insights into many important topics but will also provide you with outstanding educational content to read over Pesach. It is so important to make sure we educate our children with an appreciation for a Jewish education. If they are imbued with an understanding of its value, it will surely pave the way to a bright future for Anglo Jewry.

These last few weeks have been heart-breaking and feel eerily surreal as we sit glued to our screens, reading and watching the tragic footage that has destroyed Ukraine. The all too familiar rumbles of World War II have reverberated through Europe as millions flee for their lives with only their vital documents and a rucksack on their backs. I know I echo the sentiments of our entire community when I say that it is now more than ever, that we pray for the Pesach blessing of liberation from slavery for those in Ukraine. I can’t help but think of the tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews who have experienced their very own Exodus from Ukraine to other parts of Europe and many to the promised land. It is incredible to think of how many have been absorbed into Israel, the land promised to us by God Himself. Although fraught with pain, there is no doubt we are witnessing the fulfilment of God’s promise to Abraham where he pledged the land to him in the covenant. On seder night, may the words, “next year in Jerusalem” be uttered with great fervour.

On behalf of Rabbi Naftali Schiff, Rabbi Kayser and the entire Aish team, we wish you a Pesach of liberation. May you find the strength to break through the shackles that constrict you so that you can taste the blessing of true freedom. I hope you enjoy the crunch of the matzah and savour the fine wine which remind us that we are the chosen nation whom God redeemed and continues to love. I encourage you to teach your children that message this Pesach: it is a powerful and transformative one.

## CHAG KASHER VE’SAMEACH,

*Shira*

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## OUR COVER ARTWORK



Although I leave a lot of my paintings to the interpretation of the viewer, this piece definitely represents the leaving of Egypt (exodus) and our Jewish nation's journey into the holy land. The theme running through this painting is one of hope and aspiration to once again enter as nation into the promised land with the rebuilding of the temple. This purity is reflected in the colour scheme of the piece.

Gila Sandler is a budding young artist based in the UK. She specialises in custom commissioned artwork, working closely with her clients as she strives to bring their vision to life. Her clients are based all over the world, including America, Israel and the UK.

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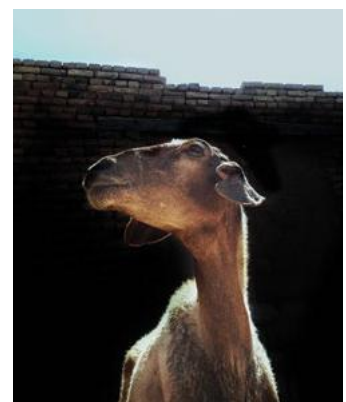
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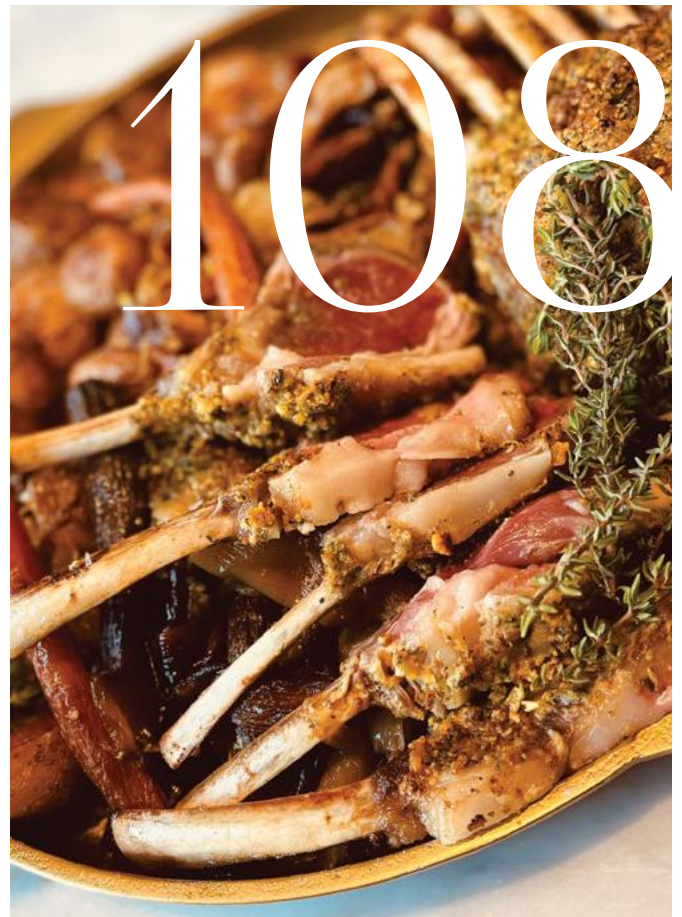
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# LIGHTHOUSE OF HOPE FOR ODESSA

by SHIRA DRUION

A HEROIC STORY OF COURAGE AND COMMITMENT  
TO THE CHILDREN OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Everyone has left someone behind: an elderly grandmother; families who won't leave their military-aged sons or husbands behind; Sasha, who for 25 years has been seeking out Jewish orphans and will not leave Odessa. He says the need is too great and he has to be there." These are poignant words of Anthony Moshal, Aish trustee, philanthropist and loyal friend of the Tikva family, who recently returned from a trip to Romania where he flew with two medics, a doctor, and 600kgs of medical supplies and clothing two weeks after the Tikva family had relocated there. Since then, a 22 ton truck has transported hundreds of items of clothing and supplies to the group of nearly 1200 strong who are currently residing there as refugees.

Just as we thought we had left Covid in the past, we find ourselves in the midst of a war so horrific and tragic that it seems we are living through a full-blown apocalypse. The magnitude and utter devastation that has taken place in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries is testimony to both the best and worst of mankind and has demanded every one of us to stand up and be counted. Tragedies always highlight the great benevolence of which humanity is capable and it is this magnificent show of 'ahavat chinam' that I have tried to capture in this article, which

characterises the London Jewish community, renowned worldwide for its generosity and philanthropy.

I spent most of 2021 in South Africa due to Covid. But when August came around, the panic of how I was going to get back into the UK became real. There was no way I was going to return to the UK and be locked up in a quarantine hotel for eleven nights, so I waited with baited breath to see when the UK would ease the travel restrictions. But even when they did, the Schengen consulates in South Africa were closed and very few countries remained an option for transit. By chance, I was chatting to Anthony Moshal, and he advised that it was possible to apply for a Ukrainian visa online. After a tense visa application with six rejections, I boarded a plane to Ukraine after nine months in South Africa. I had no idea what to expect as I landed in a former Soviet Country and was blown away by how strong, inspired and surprisingly large the community was. They were so committed to spiritual growth and it was extremely moving to see it in action. Those ten days made an indelible impact on me. I had never seen a community built around an orphanage and an infrastructure so dedicated to support Jews from all walks of life.



During those ten days in Odessa, I really got to know Rabbi Refael and Ayala Kruskal and experience first-hand the magic of Tikva. Rabbi Refael and Ayala, alongside Rabbi Baksht and Jeremy Posen and all other dedicated Tikva staff members, quite literally act as surrogate parents to hundreds of Jewish children who come from all over the former Soviet Union. These are children who may come from homes where they are severely neglected or abused, or from non-Jewish state orphanages and would otherwise be starved of a Jewish education. There are no words that could adequately praise them for the tremendous work they do with such genuine love and care. They have shouldered the full responsibility and wellbeing of the orphans and of the families in their community in Odessa. Tikva runs multiple programs and homes which take care of children from infants age all the way through to university, and takes many through into marriage.

A few weeks before the war broke out as tension was starting to mount, I messaged Rabbi Kruskal to say I had been thinking about them all and was praying for their safety. The news then arrived that Tikva would be evacuating those over the age of sixteen (not including men of army age) to Moldova and would then be evacuating children the following day to the Carpathian Mountains. They had not a second to waste because it was clear that things had spiralled out of control and they were in grave danger. When I asked Rabbi Kruskal what this experience has been like for him, his answer moved me deeply, “As you can imagine this experience has been very difficult for me, both

running away and feeling like a refugee. My father was a survivor of Bergen Belsen and when he told me the stories of running away on Kristallnacht, or how his father ran away in 1939, I never grasped the reality of it all. Then there we were, having to tell the community that we needed to flee. This was heart-breaking for us as we had spent years rebuilding after the Communist era and we thought we had made it. We were uprooted just like that and the grave responsibility of having to look after over 1000 people is massive because the implications are huge. We have been accompanied by miracles all along the way, from being able to take food with us, to finding a place in the Carpathian Mountains in Western Ukraine and then in Romania. All through this process, we feel we have been guided by the hand of God. It has been a true privilege to witness the deep kindness and care that our community members have shown towards one another and my sincere hope and prayer is that we will be able to go back to Odessa and rebuild.”

Tikva CEO Karen Bodenstein has spent weeks glued to her phone, helping the team navigate the stormy seas of escaping a war zone. In an exclusive interview she shares her thoughts, “Whilst we sit at home and watch the news from afar, some may be wondering how can this be happening in 2022? If it isn't a global pandemic, it's a war.... When will things go back to 'normal'? Unfortunately for the children and community of Tikva, things may NEVER go back to 'normal'. They have fled their homes, the orphanage, all that they knew and loved with little more than a plastic bag containing a few possessions, some



even less. Tikva is committed to ensuring the needs of the 1200 plus people, including 350 children that are in our care. From psychological support and medical needs, to the bare necessities of having food and a roof over their heads. This comes at an enormous cost but this is a time of war and we cannot turn our backs on those in need. The war has brought out the best in humanity - from those who have taken up arms to fight, including a number of our Tikva students, to people lining up on the borders handing out warm blankets and food to those who have fled. Tikva is and continues to be part of that humanitarian effort, where daily evacuations are taking place for anyone who needs us. Those who wish to evacuate are housed in our girls' orphanage the night before. The Tikva team put themselves in harm's way, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of others."

When the war broke out, Lauren Moshal and Batya Richman spearheaded a collection campaign to collect clothing, and a few other necessary items for the relocated 1200 Tikva members. When I sat with Lauren in her dining room late one night, surrounded by piles and piles of donated goods and asked her why she works so hard to ensure that each item donated is in good condition, honouring the integrity and self-worth of the recipients, she looked at me without even thinking and said, "Anthony and I can't sleep at night knowing how so many are in need at a time like this. Tikva has been a part of our lives for the last twenty years. We love our Tikva family and the wellbeing of the children and of the entire Tikva team is of utmost importance to us." Batya mirrors this selfless sentiment, saying: "When we heard about what was going on, I desperately wanted to get involved. I have always felt strongly for the Tikva cause and so admire their dedication to the children who flourish from the love poured into them. It says in Megilat Esther that the help will come from one source or another and I wanted to grab the opportunity to be a part of helping."

Bodenstein is emphatic about how much she needs the community to support Tikva in the road ahead. "Yes, our children are safe in Romania, but this is just the beginning of the journey. We NEED YOU to continue to support our effort, we need YOU to ensure that we have the funds to make the right decisions. Please don't turn off your TV or fold up your newspaper and say 'it isn't my problem'. Had British Jewry said that during WWII, I would not be here today. My grandmother came on the Kindertransport from Poland to London. We have a responsibility to learn from the past and do all we can to protect our communities and our future."



**WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES  
WITNESSING A WAR WHERE  
HUMAN LIFE HAS BEEN TOTALLY  
DISREGARDED, IT DEMANDS OF US  
TO BECOME PART OF THE SPIRITUAL  
HEALING PROCESS THAT THE  
WORLD SO DESPERATELY NEEDS**

Just before Purim, Rabbi Daniel Rowe gave a talk for a group of women and in it he discussed the lessons that this war could be teaching us in relation to Purim. He speaks with great eloquence and piercing insight and shared many pearls of wisdom. He shared one particularly profound insight that made a big impact on me, "When we find ourselves witnessing a war where human life has been totally disregarded, it demands of us to become part of the

spiritual healing process that the world so desperately needs. We can all play a role in healing the world and bringing about a spiritual healing by being extra careful with honouring human life, and in doing so, this ripple effect will no doubt affect humanity as a whole." He explained that good deeds bring more light to a world gone dark.

The words of the Israeli national anthem seem more appropriate now than ever, "Hope will not be lost." The world is filled with great pain from this war which has left a trail of trauma and loss in its wake, but it is Tikva, the Hebrew word for hope, that can propel us forward and illuminate the path ahead to help build a better tomorrow for our fellow brethren. As the timeless words of the Talmud say, "Kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh – all Israel is responsible for one another."



Shira Druion obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in English, psychology and education and then qualified as a speech and drama teacher through the Trinity College of London. She is an experienced journalist, the former editor of YALLA magazine and the executive editor of Perspectives, the magazine of Aish UK. She has been an educator for many years, teaching students from nursery age through to university, where she lectured on communication and writing skills. She currently co-runs the Aish schools department, teaches at Hasmonean Girls School, tutors English and runs her own drama company called Dramatix, where she teaches a broad age range of students. Shira is passionate about women's education and runs women's programmes in the community.







J»ROOTS

JROOTS  
STUDENTS  
HELP  
UKRAINE'S  
NEWEST  
REFUGEES

*by* ZAK JEFFAY

JROOTS STUDENTS SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND  
HELP TO UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN A POLISH CHURCH HALL



Young children wide-eyed with exhaustion, three to a bunk. Bewildered after being plucked from their homes in Ukraine, and spending many hours in transit across the border to Poland for their own safety.

Across the street from this Krakow church hall, a group of teenagers from a Jewish school in England eats in a kosher restaurant. I'm the guide for their Jewish heritage journey, and I've wandered off because I heard rumours of a rescue operation in the neighbourhood.

It's surreal. We have just finished a long day learning about the Holocaust and, specifically, the Righteous Among the Nations and what propelled them to act. It wasn't their suffering, but they felt they simply must act. And now, I'm watching Christian Poles of today show that the very same fundamental values are alive and well.

I went back to the restaurant, told the teenagers from Manchester what I had just seen, and the penny dropped. They realised immediately that modern day heroes were epitomising the very values we'd been learning about, just across the road.

It took no prompting from me or any teachers. The students, a credit to their families, community and school, spontaneously emptied their wallets and pockets. Within minutes, Bogdan, the church activist who is running things across the street is heading to the local supermarket with a large pile of money to buy everything needed to keep the new refugees warm and fed. News spread on Facebook and quickly donors, most of them Orthodox Jews, bolstered this effort inspired by Christian values, to the tune of 25,000 shekels (\$8,000).

I had to navigate trucks and cars blocking the street in order to get inside. I found myself among countless young Poles and Ukrainians carrying boxes of supplies, loading trucks to be dispatched to the border. On one side a man was hoisting a Ukrainian flag to stand alongside the Polish flag outside the building. There was no doubt that these people were here to help.

The traffic wasn't just outbound. Cars arrived as I stood outside and volunteers rushed to help women and children out, carrying their suitcases and unbuckling their car seats. Bleary-eyed toddlers were picked up as the mothers tried to comfort them. They are missing home, and their dads. Adult men are unable to flee Ukraine - they are expected to pick up arms to defend their freedom. The people I saw had made the unfathomable decision to separate their families.



“

## THE PEOPLE I SAW HAD MADE THE UNFATHOMABLE DECISION TO SEPARATE THEIR FAMILIES.

Despite having some experience in packing the trunk of my car with my family's baggage for a weekend away, I was only now struck by the realisation that you can really fit very little into the back of your car. I couldn't help imagining what would be in my two suitcases - sure that I would abandon the stroller in favour of clothes but not quite sure how I'd manage without it.

I walked inside, conspicuous in my kippa and inability to speak Polish or Ukrainian, and asked who was in charge, or at least who could speak English. When I found someone to speak to I was nervous to speak the only words I could: "I want to help, what can I do?"

I was greeted by Bogdan, a member of the local church in his late 20s who is helping to run the shelter. We were moved five or six times while we spoke, as every available space was being used for storing boxes of shampoo, crates of diapers or piles of blankets. As we moved deeper inside the cavern – a place of worship become warehouse overnight – I turned around to see a sight which I couldn't quite believe.

There in front of me were rows of bunkbeds and at 11 o'clock at night, pairs of eyes stared out at me; multiple pairs of eyes from each bunk. These children, spending their first night outside of their home country watching the greatest kindness of strangers working 24/7, while somehow realising that their world is crumbling in front of them. Just as the image will haunt me forever I am terrified by the thought that this will be the defining experience of their lives. The night they became refugees.

Bogdan told me what they needed – blankets, bedding, food and toiletries. My students, on a Jewish heritage journey with JRoots, just 50 metres away, sat eating their dinner and processing the night's activity. We had just visited Schindler's Factory recounting the bravery of the Righteous Among the Nations.

My daughter is named after such a woman from Krakow, Paulina Kisielewska, who passed away childless three years ago. We had met often and I had always been struck by her answer to the inevitable question: "Why did you save Jews?" She would nod her head and

although I never understood her Polish, her eyes said it all: "It was obvious," she said. "We had the opportunity to help so we did." I had just implored my students to absorb a drop of her moral clarity and I couldn't believe that an opportunity would present itself for them to act so quickly, emboldened by her example.

We have become used to talking about current events as the defining moment of our generation. The unfolding humanitarian tragedy in Ukraine may or may not be the worst thing that we ever witness. But maybe the lesson is that our reaction to helping those in need should always be as if this is the greatest tragedy, with no time for equivocating or feeling content with what we have done. This is the clarity of purpose I saw in my students. If we can absorb this message, maybe then we can hope that our actions will not come up short in the eyes of history.

*JRoots is now working to support a number of 'on the ground' initiatives to assist refugees from the Jewish community and beyond. Our ground staff will be ensuring that all donations go directly to assist refugees in need. To donate visit [www.jroots.org/donate](http://www.jroots.org/donate) (please write "Ukraine Campaign" in the donation category).*



Zak Jeffay works for JRoots leading Jewish heritage trips to Poland, Italy, Ukraine and beyond. He has a degree in History and a master's in Jewish Education. Zak is also a guide at Yad Vashem. He made Aliyah from the UK and was involved in founding Darchei Tzion, a growing community in Modiin. He previously served as Mazkir of Bnei Akiva UK and Head of Informal Jewish Education at JFS.

# JOINING FORCES FOR UKRAINIAN JEWRY

by SHIRA DRUION

TWO SUBSIDIARY ORGANISATIONS OF JEWISH FUTURES, GIFT  
AND JROOTS, COMBINED THEIR EFFORTS TO SUPPORT JEWISH  
VICTIMS OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

**R**abbi Naftali Schiff, CEO of the Jewish Futures family, speaks passionately about the efforts of two of the subsidiary organisations, GIFT and JRoots that fall under the banner of Jewish Futures. “One of the insights we put into action in establishing the family of Jewish Futures is the reality that a multifaceted community requires a diverse array of opportunities and approaches in order to engage the rich tapestry of the Jewish community today. No one organisation can cater for all types of people and be ready for new situations that arise. We established GIFT in order to respond to needs in the community and to galvanise young people to engage in social action.”

GIFT was quick to respond to the terrible events in Ukraine. Her Excellency Mrs Tzipi Hotovely visited the GIFT Giving Hub to see the work GIFT is doing for Ukraine. She noted, “During my visit to GIFT I was very impressed to see what they are doing for the people of Ukraine and with the number of volunteers packing donations for those in need.”

GIFT sent out WhatsApp messages and social media requests asking for dry non-perishable food items. Within just two hours, thousands of pounds-worth of food, toiletries and essential items had poured in. The whole community rallied together and hundreds of people from across the community responded. The collection was so successful that GIFT sent over 12 tons, including a very generous donation of 2 tons of pasta, rice and couscous anonymously donated, donations from Saatchi shul, The Happy Puzzle Company, and a large donation organised by Shloime Chontow and family directly to Lviv. Shloime Chontow, friends of the Rabbi of Lviv, said, “GIFT was there at the right time, willing and able to mobilise so many volunteers to do such incredible work - totally unbelievable.”

Tikva orphanage, which has relocated all its children from Odessa to Romania, also approached GIFT to help with their efforts in collecting much needed clothing. GIFT’s Managing

Director Rabbi Sandor Milun, together with the chairman of the trustees of Tikva, flew to Romania with the collected clothes, to be received by the hundreds of grateful children.

In response to a request for kosher food from the Chabad Rabbi of Kishinev in Moldova, GIFT collected an additional 4 tons of food, clothing and bedding. The food arrived this week to the delight of the Rabbi, who remarked: “Thank you so much GIFT for your incredible donations – I can’t wait to see the joy of the faces of the children when they receive these.”

R. Sandor Milun, GIFT’s MD told us, “We feel very blessed to be in such a position to support the people of Ukraine in this way. We have received an incredible amount of food and essential items from the community. Our community has stepped up in an unbelievable way. It is a huge privilege to be part of this campaign. GIFT will continue to be there to help mobilise the community to support the community in giving.” GIFT would like to express a huge thank you to all their extraordinary supporters, volunteers and friends for enabling to do a little something to help all those affected by the war in Ukraine.

It is evident that Rabbi Naftali is passionate about both of these robust organisations and is ensuring they are doing all they can to step up to the plate during this crisis. “It is gratifying to note that both GIFT and JRoots continue to ensure that our community shall not be mere bystanders as this human tragedy evolves, rather shouldering responsibility to ease the suffering and pain of others all over.” He continues, “The principal milieu of JROOTS experiences has been Poland and the subject of Holocaust education. ‘Never Again’ are words that we have communicated to tens of thousands over recent years. Our extensive logistical network on the ground has made it possible to provide real time tangible assistance to both victims of the war in Ukraine and for huge numbers of refugees pouring into Poland.”



Shira Druion obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in English, psychology and education and then qualified as a speech and drama teacher through the Trinity College of London. She is an experienced journalist, the former editor of YALLA magazine and the executive editor of Perspectives, the magazine of Aish UK. She has been an educator for many years, teaching students from nursery age through to university, where she lectured on communication and writing skills. She currently co-runs the Aish schools department, teaches at Hasmonean Girls School, tutors English and runs her own drama company called Dramatix, where she teaches a broad age range of students. Shira is passionate about women's education and runs women's programmes in the community.



*Her Excellency Israeli Ambassador Mrs Tzipi Hotovely together with R. Naftali Schiff Chairman of GIFT & Founding Director Michelle Barnett MBE outside the GIFT Giving Hub with boxes of toys donated by the Happy Puzzle Company for the children of Ukraine*



*GIFT Staff & volunteers taking a short break after loading the van with Kosher food, blankets, toys and toiletries, headed for Lviv, Ukraine*



*Dedicated volunteers in the GIFT giving Hub, packing and labeling requested items bound for the community in Ukraine and Moldova*



*Two hours into GIFT's kosher food drive for the Lviv community, with GIFT MD R. Sandor Milun, Michelle Barnett and dedicated volunteers*



# UKRAINE THEN & NOW

**RITA WEISSMAN REFLECTS ON LIFE IN UKRAINE,  
DURING AND POST-WWII, AND TODAY.**

**T**he Russian attack on Ukraine is something no one could imagine would happen in my generation's lifetime. We knew how much our parents suffered during World War II, and believed they had gone 'le ulamam', taking all the suffering with them, so that their children and future generations would not have to experience such horrors again. But now, with Covid and this terrible war, we are taking their place, fearing for our children and grandchildren.

It is ironic, perhaps, that the Ukrainians, who did so much damage to the Jews throughout history and during WWII, as the willing assistants to the occupying Nazis in killing Jews (remember Babin Ya'ar), are now the object of our sympathy and even pride – for those of our own who come from that country. Things change though, and I believe that the new generation has indeed changed in this respect.

It is true that Czernowitz, a charming city where we come from (not to be confused with Chernobyl), is perhaps unique in its relationship with the Jewish world. It was a seat of Jewish learning for over 200 years under the Austro-Hungarian

Imperial rule and produced famous people such as the poet, Paul Celan, and the singer, Yozef Schmidt, until the Soviet Union occupied it in 1940, followed a year later by the Nazis and the Romanians. Many Jewish Ukrainians perished in labour camps, and my own grandparents were killed in their village by locals. When the Russians returned after the war, all religion and Jewish knowledge were banned. Antisemitism became an established part of life, and the word Jew was more often than not substituted by the pejorative 'Yid', something that we, as children, felt was shameful, undesirable and humiliating. I remember coming home one day when I was 7 years old and asking my father why I felt so bad when I had to fill out my library card and write 'Jew' in the nationality space. We had a long talk and at the end of it he told me: "Remember, you are Jewish, and you must be proud of it". Perhaps this reassurance is what I needed to consolidate my Jewish identity growing up in that part of the world – the knowledge that we are a people, a nation, and a proud one at that.

All the Jews and other educated people spoke Yiddish and Russian, but there were also Austrians, Romanians, Moldovans,





*With family in israel*



*Getting married in Israel*

Ukrainians, Ruthenians and a few others, so there was a great deal of diversity, and we didn't feel alienated. But you couldn't go to university in your own city because there was a Jewish quota or take up any leadership positions, which were all allocated to Russians and Ukrainians. It was not overt antisemitism, but we felt it acutely. The lack of freedom to do what you wanted with your life and the Soviet propaganda – again, not overt lies but some twisted variety of the truth (much like what we hear now) – became so intolerable throughout the country that we all knew that there were certain things we could only speak about in the safety of our home. So, we left for Israel in 1972, as soon as they let us go. We had previously tried four times, in the 1950's and 60's but were not permitted to join all my father's brothers and sisters in Israel, which is where they had ended up after the war.

We came back to visit Czernowitz 3 years ago as part of a Roots trip before my grandson's bar mitzvah, and I saw how free and proud the local Jewish Ukrainians had become. They mostly speak Ukrainian now yet play klezmer tunes in restaurants and the streets; the new synagogue is thriving (although the Jewish community shrunk from 90 thousand in 1970 to about 1000 now, as everyone left for Israel or the West).



Rita Weissman worked at the BBC World Service for over 30 years as a broadcaster, producer and presenter on East-West politics and English-language teaching. As a principal newsreader within the Russian Service during the 1980s she became known among her listeners in the Soviet Union as their 'voice of the West'. Rita grew up in Czernowitz, a Ukrainian city on the border of Romania, and she finally moved to Israel with her family in the 1970s after attempting to get an exit visa for over 20 years. She graduated with an MA degree in History and Literature at Tel Aviv University and translated and published English and American fiction. In recent years she has been a strategic adviser to a variety of businesses trading in Russia and Ukraine. She now lives in London with her husband and has two children and three grandchildren. She speaks English, Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish and a little Romanian.



*Visiting Chernowitz with the family in 2018. At the new synagogue with Chabad Rabbi Glinzstein*

I believed that in the end we had won - we left and came back 47 years later to visit a country and a city that used to be so hostile to us, yet had become stronger, more educated, more tolerant and welcoming. This part of Ukraine was following a democratic path and building a new national identity.

That's why we feel their pain: seeing as they flee the old way of life where the dictator is pulling them back and does not allow for much freedom. It is still fairly quiet in Czernowitz – my friend there keeps me abreast of everything that is happening. The city has received over 60 thousand refugees and there are sirens blaring every night, but they have not been bombarded, perhaps because they are so far to the west of the country. But they are not leaving and are trying to stay strong.

Those that are leaving remind me of our own flight – fearing Russia. The difference is that the Ukrainians are being bombed and fear for their lives. But they will go back in time – it's their land, their country, their choice. And I hope for another late Purim miracle – for all the suffering to end.

# ISRAEL'S UKRAINE DILEMMA



## AND OPPORTUNITY

*by* **DARREN COHEN**

ISRAEL IS PERFORMING A PRECARIOUS  
BALANCING ACT IN ITS ATTEMPT TO SUPPORT  
UKRAINE WITHOUT ESTRANGING RUSSIA

*Disclaimer: The views expressed are that of the author and do not necessarily express the views of Aish UK.  
This article was written on 20 March 2022 and is therefore reflective of events up to this date.*



## ISRAEL'S POLICY IS ROOTED IN LONG-TERM STRATEGIC SECURITY CONCERNS THAT REQUIRE CORDIAL TIES AND COORDINATION WITH MOSCOW.

On 24th February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the launch of a “special military operation” in Ukraine after a months-long build-up of Russian forces along the frontier separating the two countries. The governments in Washington and London had warned for weeks prior that a Russian military invasion into its sovereign neighbour was a real possibility, which was deemed alarmist by many international actors. At the time of writing, a month since the war began, Europe has returned to scenes that for many seemed unimaginable just a short time ago - brutal sieges of cities, millions of refugees fleeing to safety, innocent children dying, and the birth of babies into a world of unthinkable atrocities and suffering. The reports and footage that have emerged from Ukraine resemble 1942 far more than 2022, and echo some of the darkest episodes in human history. States around the world have been forced to take sides, with the vast majority of the US-aligned West opting to unleash unprecedented punitive measures against Russia in the form of economic sanctions and weapons deliveries to Ukraine. Israel, the nation-state of the Jewish people, which knows only too well the horrors of mindless human aggression, has been faced with an immense geopolitical dilemma amid the recent crisis. Jerusalem must strike a balance between multiple conflicting interests and priorities, which present both incredibly challenging decisions and potential geostrategic opportunities.

## THE DILEMMA

### ISRAEL'S HESITATION TO ESTRANGE RUSSIA

Many observers of international affairs, Jews around the world included, have been perplexed by Israel's actions in the context of the Ukraine crisis. Unlike its Western partners and allies, most notably the US, Jerusalem has refused to impose sanctions on Moscow and has remained tight-lipped in its diplomatic rhetoric. Although Foreign Minister Yair Lapid has issued denunciations of Russia's invasion, illustrative of the two schools of thought and ideologies in the Israeli cabinet, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has been very careful not to antagonise or criticise Russia or its leader Vladimir Putin.

Israel's policy is rooted in long-term strategic security concerns that require cordial ties and coordination with Moscow. First, for several years now, Israel has conducted what it refers to as the “campaign between wars” (CBW, in Hebrew MABAM). This military initiative consists of striking Iranian-linked and Syrian government positions throughout Syria, particularly near the Israel-Syria border. This is with the aim of countering the Iranian effort to entrench its proxies, such as Hezbollah, and other Shi'ite militias in the country. Upon its entry to the Syrian arena, Iran actively supported the build-up of these forces in the

country to directly threaten and attack Israel on a periodic basis, while also presenting the opportunity to open a second front on Israel's northern border in the event of a more large-scale armed conflict. Israel has largely succeeded with this campaign over the past years through thousands of strikes, and has driven Iran-backed militias back from the border and prevented hundreds of Iranian weapons deliveries to its proxies within Syria, and by extension, to Lebanon.

The operation has been partly facilitated by cooperation between Israel and Russia in the form of a deconfliction mechanism that the two countries established following Moscow's military intervention into the Syrian Civil War in 2015. This mechanism serves as a form of coordination between the two militaries to prevent inadvertent clashes, particularly between the two air forces. As recently as late February when tensions rose over the Ukraine crisis, Russian officials noted that the mechanism has “proven to be useful”. Herein lies Israel's dilemma - it essentially shares a border with both Iran and Russia, and therefore must gain favour with Moscow in the fight against Tehran, and maintain its freedom of operations in Syria. The risk of alienating Russia is high - it can give the green light to Syrian troops to use the more sophisticated S-300 and S-400 air defence systems deployed to Syria that could complicate Israeli aerial operations or share intelligence on Israeli operations with Jerusalem's adversaries that would reduce the effectiveness of the campaign.

The second reason Israel seeks to curry favour with Russia is that Moscow is a key party to the negotiations between global powers over Iran's nuclear program, which the Jewish state considers is aimed at developing nuclear weapons and is thus an existential threat to Jerusalem. Although Russia also broadly shares Israel's goal of preventing Iran from obtaining this capability, together with China, it is more aligned with Tehran's geopolitical camp than it is with the four Western members

of the talks - the US, UK, France, and Germany. Iran relies on Russia for support at the talks and Israel therefore also aims to maintain a strategic relationship and open channels of communication with Moscow on this issue in order to ensure its concerns are heard and to maximise its ability to influence the talks. Overall, Israel has very legitimate security needs that necessitate the continuation of its strategic cooperation with Russia to safeguard its own interests. However, conversely, Israel has also sought to demonstrate its alignment with the West and humanitarian values.

### **THE POLITICAL AND MORAL OBLIGATION TO ALIGN WITH UKRAINE**

Israel is certainly not numb to the Ukrainian position. From the outset of the conflict, the Bennett government adopted a somewhat nuanced stance and stated that it supports “the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of Ukraine”, without referencing Russia. Illustrating the depth of Israel’s dilemma, it also has political, moral, and strategic motivations to show its solidarity with Ukraine and align with the West.

Let’s first look at the ethical considerations - detractors of Jerusalem’s policy ask how Israel, a country established as a safe haven for a persecuted people that is home to a large Ukrainian population, turn a blind eye to an unprovoked act of wanton aggression against a sovereign state? Worse still, how can it legitimise this perceived injustice by continuing to support and engage with the perpetrator of the evil? Israel is not blind to these arguments and has attempted to balance its reticence to condemn Russia by providing vital humanitarian aid to Ukraine and allowing Ukrainian refugees into Israel, especially those with connections to Israeli citizens or who qualify for Israeli citizenship under the Right of Return. Israel established a field hospital in mid-March in western Ukraine to leverage its significant capabilities in this field, which it reportedly coordinated with Russia in order to prevent an attack against the site. Israel’s cooperation with Moscow over this issue serves as justification for the government of the virtue of its balanced policy.

On a political level, Israel also has significant considerations. Its most staunch ally, the US, has been arguably the most critical voice on Russia since the outbreak of the conflict and has gradually escalated the level of sanctions on Moscow, weapons deliveries to Ukraine, and rhetoric against the Russian leadership. In mid-March, President Joe Biden referred to Putin as a “war criminal” and a “murderous dictator”. Although it has its own unique circumstances, Israel does not seek to position itself at a distance from the family of Western nations, many of which have also sacrificed their citizens’ economic interests in order to punish Russia for its invasion.



The strategic angle is more of a long-term factor and relates to a combination of the two previous points. Israel frequently urges the world, especially the US, to back it diplomatically and through military support against its many regional foes. Israel can ill afford to create a global perception that it is not a reliable partner at times of global crises. Jerusalem needs to show that other countries can depend on it and that it does not only look out for its own interests. This is especially crucial in the long-term mission to counter Iran’s destabilising activities throughout the region. Israel’s position vis-a-vis Iran will be bolstered on every level by the backing of the West. As a whole, Israel is in an undesirable position. However, and without being cynical at a time of profound human suffering, like all crises, the situation also presents Israel with an opportunity.

## **THE OPPORTUNITY**

### **ISRAEL’S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE GLOBAL POSITIONING AS MEDIATOR OF THE CONFLICT**

At the time of writing, efforts continue to reach a ceasefire to end the war in Ukraine. A report from 16th March indicated that Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has been the “primarily international mediator” in the diplomatic sphere. This followed an act of shuttle diplomacy on 5th March that even former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger would have been proud of, for its audacity if not the outcome, when Bennett travelled to Moscow for talks with Putin, spoke on the phone with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and French President Emmanuel Macron, and flew to Berlin to meet with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. It should be noted that Bennett, an observant Jew, did all of this on Shabbat, which indicates how seriously he takes the issue as a matter of life and death.



## ISRAEL'S UNENVIABLE POSITION

Over the past weeks, Bennett has reportedly spoken to the leaders of Ukraine and Russia multiple times in an effort to broker an end to the hostilities. Israel has identified an opportunity to leverage its position as one of the only countries globally with the political clout and relationship with both countries to have its voice heard and considered. As stated earlier, this policy is certainly not devoid of risk; by refusing to clearly align itself in the anti-Putin camp and thus enabling itself to play the role of mediator, Israel may pay a price later down the line. Instead of a mediator, it could be seen as a legitimiser of a person labelled by its closest ally as a tyrant and a war criminal.

However, the political rewards for bringing an end to this conflict could be immense. As much as Western states seek to punish Putin for what they believe to be unjustified aggression and gross violation of international norms, the longer this crisis continues and necessitates further punitive action, it will destabilise the world order and create social tension globally. This is partly because Ukraine and Russia are both exporters of crucial commodities such as gas, oil, and wheat, which countries worldwide rely on for their local populaces. The former is currently subject to a relentless bombardment that renders commercial activity impossible while the latter is on the receiving end of some of the most extensive economic sanctions against a state actor of all time. Therefore, governments around the world will certainly welcome an end to the conflict, which will likely eventually precipitate a resumption of exports of essential goods and a lowering of prices. If Israel can be the country that delivers, it will undoubtedly bear political fruit.

Irrespective of this political opportunity, Israel is certainly in an unenviable position. It has tried at every juncture to carefully balance its interests. It voted in favour of a motion at the UN General Assembly condemning Russia but refused to acquiesce to the US request to co-sponsor a Security Council resolution. It has extended humanitarian aid to Ukraine and opened its doors to Ukrainian refugees, although some argue not enough, but has refrained from condemning Russia for the shelling and airstrikes that prompted that humanitarian support. It permitted President Zelensky to address the Knesset but was also receptive to the Russian Ambassador to Israel's denunciation of the speech by granting him a meeting. It refused to impose sanctions on Russia but is engaged in efforts to make sure Russian oligarchs do not use Israel as a base to circumvent those sanctions.

This fence-sitting has somewhat frustrated the US, which initially conveyed that it understood the complexity of Israel's position but has likely since become less understanding as the conflict has gone on. This is despite comments by US Ambassador to Israel, Tom Nides, indicating that Bennett has "not made a move [on Ukraine] without talking to the White House" and that Israel has worked very closely with the US on diplomatic messaging. The US, too, would certainly welcome an Israeli mediation to the end of a conflict that is creating great strife and distracting from the administration's domestic agenda. Israel has also at times angered Ukraine, with its Jewish President stating that unlike a group of Jews photographed at Israel's Western Wall wrapped in the Ukrainian flag, Bennett does not seem to be "wrapped in our flag". Such condemnations are inevitable given Israel's balancing act.

Ultimately, this conflict has posed a major dilemma to Israel and there are those who will always criticise its decision at the crossroads of history to not take a side. However, when faced with either safeguarding its own strategic interests or backing the interests of a foreign actor, no matter how moral that cause may be, the leadership in Jerusalem will likely respond that it is clear what the first duty of any government ought to be.



Darren Cohen, born and raised in Manchester, made Aliyah to Israel in 2014 and served as a combat soldier in the IDF's Nahal Brigade. He currently works as the regional director of intelligence of the Middle East and North Africa division at a private security firm. Darren holds an MA in Conflict Resolution from Tel Aviv University, having completed his BA at King's College London.



MY MOST

# MEMORABLE PESACH

*by* SHIRA DRUION

PESACH IS ALL ABOUT STORYTELLING AND DIALOGUE.  
THIS COLLECTION OF ANECDOTES, MEMORIES AND  
STORIES FROM OUR DIVERSE CONTRIBUTORS REMINDS US  
WHY THIS NIGHT IS DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER NIGHTS!

# MY GRANDFATHER'S SEDER

by RABBI YEHUDA DAVIS



As a child we used to go to my grandparent's Pesach seder. It always finished after 3am, and we loved every second of it. My grandfather ran the most beautiful seder and made sure every single grandchild was involved. As a holocaust survivor and being the only member of his family that survived, he had such an abundance of love for all of us. We used to turn up before candle lighting and I remember how he would come over to embrace me with a powerful hug and give me these huge wet kisses on my cheeks. He would keep on kissing me for a full minute which always felt like hours, until my grandmother would tell him to stop and finish getting ready for Pesach. He would then move on to my sister and the same scene would repeat itself, followed by my other five siblings. Each time my grandmother became more and more determined that he had to get a move on, but he would just reply, "I loves them all so much, I can't stop kissing them."

Eventually after all the men had come home from shul and my grandfather had gone round kissing all of us again, followed by my grandmother telling him to hurry up, we would sit down and my grandfather would start the seder. I will never forget him telling us the story of the Jews leaving Egypt. He would get up

from his seat and say, "I just need to run out". Then he would come back into the room wearing his dressing gown, a walking stick in his hand and a bag with matzah flung over his shoulder. He would announce in a loud voice, "children we are leaving Egypt, come and join me". We would all jump out of our seats and form a line behind him, holding hands. He would then walk round the table, and every adult he walked past would be softly hit with his walking stick as he said, "Goodbye naughty Pharaoh, we will never see you again!". We would all follow him around the table with one hand holding onto the person in front of us, and the other hand lightly smacking the adults around the table saying, "Goodbye naughty Pharaoh!".

These memories will remain with me forever: the abundance of love, the way my grandfather made the Passover story come to life, and the message of being part of the Jewish nation that he passed onto us.



Rabbi Yehuda Davis grew up in London. After graduating from high school, he went to a yeshiva in Manchester for two years, and then moved to Israel and studied for another seven years in various yeshivas, graduating as a rabbi for community leadership and Jewish education. During his time in Israel, he also studied life coaching and cognitive behavioural therapy.

He now lives in Nottingham with his family, working for Aish on Campus, and really enjoys connecting with the wide variety of Jewish students.



## A SEDER NIGHT EXPERIENCE WITH A SURVIVOR

by **RABBI ZVI GEFEN**

Each year we would meet up again. Jews from America, Vienna, Canada, Italy, Antwerp, UK and France would choose to spend Pesach at my grandparent's hotel in Lugano, Switzerland. So many personalities, so many experiences. The Manhattan property tycoon, the eye doctor from Vienna, a Rabbi from France, the diamond seller from Italy, a Swiss banker and his children living in Israel, the famous Sternbouch family that obtained visas and secured passage for Jews to escape the Holocaust and saved so many lives.

Then there were the survivors: Isaac Cohen from Canada, Grosskop from London, the Netzers and my own grandparents.

Pesach meant something very different to them than it did to us. They knew what it meant to have been taken into exile. They had lived 'normal lives', with parents, siblings, schools – all of which was snatched away from them. In 1941, my grandfather's entire family was sent to Treblinka and murdered within hours, whilst he moved from place to place, including Bergen Belsen and Auschwitz.

These survivors truly understood that "in each generation, there has been someone who has tried to destroy us".

My Grandfather, Saba (Moshe Chaim Gefen) would share moments of certain death, a noose around his neck, lying in a mass grave feigning death.

When he ate the maror (the bitter herbs), he cried about his past - the beating, the death marches, being forced to use soap that was made from Jewish bodies. He cried about being alone in 1945, with no brothers, no sisters, no parents, wondering how he would carry on? Would there ever be a time when he would sit around with family and celebrate Pesach?

Then the emotions of the evening would switch. We would raise our glasses together (the only time we were all in sync the whole evening!) and sing "And God saved us from them all". My grandfather would rejoice in the miracles and moments that allowed him to stay alive; he would express his gratitude for this family, look around the Seder table and express delight and pleasure in his family and the continuity of the name Gefen, that was unfolding in front of him.



Rabbi Zvi Gefen hails from London and received Rabbinic ordination in Jerusalem under the prestigious programme led by Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits. In 2014, Rabbi Zvi and his family moved to Whitefield, Manchester, where their home has become a hub of learning and socialising for teens, young professionals and families. He is the Director of the Aish Manchester Branch, teaching in schools, campuses and within

the wider community, featuring as a guest speaker and leading groups of students on trips to Poland.



# A PESACH TALE: THE STORY OF A SEDER IN A SMALL SOUTH AFRICAN TOWN

by REBBETZIN SHALVIE FRIEDMAN

Klerksdorp is a city about 2 hours out of Johannesburg, the centre of Jewish life in South Africa. It was once a gold mining town which, in its heyday, was home to about 200 Jewish families. Today there are only about 30 Jews left in Klerksdorp.

So how did my husband and I - newly married, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed - wind up in Klerksdorp for Passover in 2012? Well, that is truly a Pesach Tale....

My husband (a born and bred American) and I (a native South African) decided to spend our first married Pesach in my home country. Idealistically, we reached out to see if there was a community that would appreciate our help over the festival. Someone suggested that Klerksdorp might be an option. The rabbinical post had been vacated for well over 15 years and the Chazan, an elderly man who had been the lay leader of the community and had led the services, had recently passed away. They found themselves without a minyan, a rabbi or a chazan. We decided that going to Klerksdorp to run their annual communal seder would be a perfect way to celebrate Pesach.

My own grandfather grew up in a town similar to - and not very far from - Klerksdorp. He often told us of his childhood in Parys. In his heavy South African accent he would speak about how he would take the chickens down the road to the Shochet - the kosher butcher/ritual slaughterer - who would slaughter them while he waited. Parys, like almost all small towns in South Africa, has few, if any Jews left, but it still has a Jewish cemetery, where my great-grandparents are buried.

So there was something nostalgic about 'returning' to Klerksdorp for Pesach. As a South African married to an New York Jew and now living in Israel, I couldn't wait to show my husband a world that was so tied up with my identity and yet a world that didn't quite exist anymore.

We were told to expect about 40 people at the Seder, many of whom would be coming from nearby towns where they were the only remaining Jews. We were also told that most of the people at the seder would be over the age of 70. We brainstormed and discussed how to create a fun and inclusive seder. We invented games and wrote songs. My husband planned a rap song.

And so I found myself standing in the Klerksdorp shul kitchen the day before Pesach. I was peeling potatoes. And as I looked onto the African vista through the window, I had a funny feeling

that my great-grandmother had stood doing similar preparations in her Pesach kitchen in a similar town so many moons ago.

Suddenly I felt a tap on my back. I looked behind me to see a little old lady leaning on her walking stick, peering over my shoulder. She said, "Do you know whose pot that is?"

I felt like I was about to be reprimanded. In my daydreaming nostalgia, had I mistakenly used a chametz pot from the shul kitchen? Or had I taken something that wasn't mine? "Oh I am sorry! I found it here on the Pesach shelf! I didn't realise..."

She waved my apologies away with a smile. "You didn't do anything wrong." she said.

"It's just that that was my mother's Pesach pot. When she passed, we donated it to the shul. It's nice to see potatoes back in that pot."

The mitzvah of the seder night is to engage in a dialogue. It is a dialogue which has been spoken for generations. We have been celebrating Pesach - eating matzah and maror and telling the story of the Exodus for so long, that perhaps we aren't just telling our children the story - we are telling the myriad of stories of our ancestors who themselves told the story and have now become the story that we tell. On the Seder night, we don't just tell about the Exodus from Egypt, because interwoven into that tale are national and personal memories. It is our duty and our deep privilege to tell the story of our People and the Seders they have celebrated, year after year, link after link, in an everlasting glorious chain.

I recently heard that last year - for the first time since Jews have been in Klerksdorp - there was no communal Pesach seder in the town. The elderly had passed on. The younger people had moved away. The shul that had housed us was up for sale. It was indeed the end of an era, and I was grateful to have had an opportunity to be a part - however briefly - of the small communities and faithful traditions that have kept the Jewish people alive. And now I have a story to tell my children of a Pesach quite unlike any Pesach they have experienced before. It's the story of their ancestors and the story of their destiny.



Rebbetzin Shalvie Friedman grew up in Johannesburg, South Africa and received her BSc in Maths and Finance from the University of South Africa. She studied Jewish Thought and textual analysis at the Nishmat Seminary in Jerusalem. Shalvie has taught in high schools in Johannesburg, as well as at many seminaries in Israel, both for newly observant students as well as those from religious backgrounds. She currently teaches

Jewish Studies at Hasmonean Girls School as well as teaching for various parts of the Aish family, all while raising her own family.

## HOME FOR PESACH

by JANE TOBIN GREEN

One thing is constant in life: I'm always going to be at home for Pesach. We are not a family of travelers, and I listen with amusement and bemusement at kosher-friendly travel plans for the slopes, or safari, or to crash on a sun-soaked deckchair. Too timid to risk a family fallout, I have never not celebrated Pesach in north-west London, and never not held a seder without my parents round the table. That is, until the Spring of 2020, when the government edict meant that for this Pesach, everything was to be different.

It's strange to say, with so much loss and anguish that was around, but I now remember that time with a fondness that borders on ecstasy. I'm not sure if my memory got hold of the rose-coloured spectacles, or if I felt such relief from down-regging my Pesach prep, but from now on, wherever I am, the smell of heavy-duty cleaning chemicals reminds me of Pesach, and *that* time, with much fondness.

My son's barmitzva had been cancelled. My daughter's GCSEs were cancelled. Friends were getting sick. The high streets were deserted. While people shivered silently in distanced queues to stockpile paracetamol and oxygen monitors, I was one of the rare souls in Kosher Kingdom, rattling down the empty aisles, begloved and masked, accompanied by the crazily sinister Covid anthem, "Let's be safe and protect each other..." We were reacting day-by-day to trembling foundations, and trying to survive a new paradigm, a new version of reality.

Yet under all this unfamiliarity, I relished the opportunity for change. Once the familiar heady aromas began to announce the coming of the Seder, I knew Pesach was on its way. When erev Pesach appeared, the sun shone down, and we opened the windows to magnificent birdsong. Just before Yom Tov, my precious friends and I shared pictures via Whatsapp of our seder tables, set only for immediate family. They were beautiful and intimate, filled with flowers, love and hope. At we started, our seven-year-old announced he was going to lead our Seder. Why not? Who was there to stop him? The rest of us were startled at how he reignited the story for us through his precious confidence and simcha. We debated and discussed and sang at the top of our lungs. We felt utterly blessed and elated to be experiencing a taste of true freedom: our freedom to shape, create and change our reality. Our freedom to feel the fear and navigate around it with simcha.



Jane Tobin Green is an Alexander Technique Teacher based in Primrose Hill. Among other things, she is really proud to be a gabbayit (a female gabbay) at South Hampstead synagogue.

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**WE FELT UTTERLY BLESSED AND ELATED TO BE EXPERIENCING A TASTE OF TRUE FREEDOM: OUR FREEDOM TO SHAPE, CREATE AND CHANGE OUR REALITY. OUR FREEDOM TO FEEL THE FEAR AND NAVIGATE AROUND IT WITH SIMCHA.**

**ALL WHO ARE HUNGRY, COME AND EAT!**

by REBBETZIN LISA LEVENE

Alone. Single. Thousands of miles separating me from my family in London. Pesach 2005. And yet it was one of my most memorable Sedarim. We open our Seder with the words "*ba labma anya*" which includes the line "Kol dichfin yeitei v'yeichol" - "All who are hungry, come and eat!" A beautiful invitation urging us all to take responsibility to fulfil the first law of Hilchot Pesach - that everyone should eat and partake in the four cups of wine. (Mishnah Pesachim 10:1).

The invitation and insistence of another family that I join them at their seder allowed them to fulfil this mitzvah. But that year, I took it upon myself to fulfil this mitzvah too. While it may not have been my table, and my mind could have been miles away, I took the opportunity to enjoy the gift of receiving and joining another family's powerful spiritual journey.

That year I was particularly needy, but the same is true every year. 'Hungry', 'thirsty' for knowledge and inspiration, yearning





## SEDER NIGHT CONNECTIONS

by **RABBI ELI BIRNBAUM**

Seder night. A night of high drama. A night of questions and answers. A night whose thread stretches back through the very centrepiece of the Jewish tapestry, retracing our footsteps to when it all began.

for more. Connection. Love. Knowledge. Stuck in my own inner Egypt, with my own personal slave masters holding me back. That year, I gave myself permission to be present, and in doing so, I was able to fulfil this first halacha.

I read the Haggadah and related it to myself, thinking about the personal 'slave' behaviour that held me back. I ate the matzah, the symbol of faith, holding on to the belief that my life would soon change and I would be able to invite others to my table; and I drank the wine, as though I was royalty and truly free. It was an opportunity that had been gifted to me through this family's outpouring of love and sensitivity and meant that I too, was able to fulfil this mitzvah. I did not rush through the experience, even though a part of me so desperately wanted to, because of the overwhelming sadness and the sense of discomfort and embarrassment I felt at the time. Rather, I allowed myself to join the journey and let the words of freedom sink in and become a part of me.

It was a Pesach that has never left me. I will never forget the warmth, lessons and '*hachasnas orchim*' - hospitality -that I experienced that year.



Rebbetzin Lisa Levene serves with her husband, Rabbi Marc Levene as the Rabbinic leadership of Belmont United Synagogue. A graduate of Bradfield's Kol Sarah programme, a Ma'ayan and a certified international Core Mentor, Lisa and her husband's first rabbinical post was at the Hampstead Garden Suburb Synagogue, where they will be returning as the senior rabbinic couple from 1 July 2022. Born and raised in Northwest London, Lisa

completed her BSc and Masters degree and then spent seven years in Israel. During that time, she founded her own virtual consultancy firm. Mother of four beautiful daughters, Lisa manages her family, consulting and synagogue teaching with her warm sense of humor and infectious laughter.

I suppose it would be a disservice to describe a particular Seder night as 'memorable' when every year tends to create memory anew. The years spent with loved ones; the years spent missing them. Years celebrated with friends; years celebrated in isolation. Different years in different houses. Different guests. Different ideas. At least the songs and the recipes stay the same, right?

Maybe that's the point: we cannot carry the magical tale of our past into our present without bringing some stardust with it. Seder night isn't merely an evening of revising what was. It is an affirmation of what *still is*. And therein lies the furnace in which true memory is forged as the present refuses to let go of the past.

Perhaps the first Seder Naomi and I ever hosted stands out though. I'll begin by throwing in a caveat: making Pesach is a beautiful experience, but not an easy one. Making Pesach and hosting Seder night compounds the beauty but also the difficulty. My wife deserves boundless credit for braving both challenges within the first years of our marriage.

It was first night Seder. The electricity had already fused, the oven broken, the timer for the lights gone wrong and our youngest had decided that this night should *not* be all too different from all other nights and had introduced his cot to kosher for Passover vomit. The evening was Forrest Gump's box of chocolates if someone had eaten all the good ones and left the wrappers in the box.

Naomi and I put brave if tired faces on, kept as calm and collected as we could, and prepared for the first knock at the



door. Invitations had been a complex affair, to say the least. A Pears Foundation published that year (2013) stated that over 70% of all British Jews attend some form of Pesach Seder *every single year*, which is truly remarkable (and, I hope, has not been too adversely affected by the impact of Covid). However, the collateral fallout of this otherwise joyful statistic is that the positive respondents to our invitations were ‘eclectic’, to say the least.

As we went around the table introducing one another, it became apparent that we had ten guests who shared eight nationalities and spoke a collective total of twelve languages. For my part, I soon discovered that multilingual awkward silences are *far* worse than regular ones. The silence itself speaks with an accent.

But we pushed through, and with the help of stories, singing and a healthy leg-up from the manufacturers of Bartenura, our comically diverse group warmed up and began participating. They shared versions of how they did things ‘back home’, added variations to the tunes, and in broken English, brought some of their own stories to our humble table.



Shira Druion obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in English, psychology and education and then qualified as a speech and drama teacher through the Trinity College of London. She is an experienced journalist, the former editor of YALLA magazine and the executive editor of Perspectives, the magazine of Aish UK. She has been an educator for many years, teaching students from nursery age through to university, where she lectured on communication and writing skills. She currently co-runs the Aish schools department, teaches at Hasmonean Girls School, tutors English and runs her own drama company called Dramatix, where she teaches a broad age range of students. Shira is passionate about women's education and runs women's programmes in the community.

Because that's Pesach. That's the magic of Seder night. If memory is the stardust thrown into the air when the present participates in the past, and if that past is the tale of the shared participation of our ancestors as they walked the long and dusty desert road back to Eden, then it surely follows that these are memories we cannot create on our own. If indeed it is true that Pesach traces a thread through the core of Jewish history, I understood as I sat listening to our American, Canadian, Hungarian, Croatian, Israeli, French and German guests that we all collectively weave that thread, extending it strand by strand, year on year.



Rabbi Eli Birnbaum studied in Talmudic College in Israel for six years before attaining Rabbinic Ordination after two years in the Jerusalem Kollel. During this time, Rabbi Birnbaum completed a BSc in Criminology & Social Psychology. Together with his wife Naomi, Rabbi Birnbaum moved back to London to take up a position in the JLE's campus department, where he set up the infrastructure for regular Lunch & Learns across

London's major campuses, as well as creating the 'Genesis+' programme, aimed at older students and post-graduates. He is now the Director of Education at Aish UK.

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# A NIGHT OF Storytelling

RABBI NAFTALI SCHIFF REFLECTS ON HOW THE RICH STORY OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONNECTION AND HOPE

Some years ago whilst running for a long haul flight just a few days before Pesach, I fortuitously ran into WH Smith to grab some extra reading material. An unlikely volume – Carmine Gallo’s ‘The Storytellers Secret’ impacted my thinking, not only around that Seder night, but it also began to inform a fresh perspective of the way I have viewed the multifaceted landscape of Jewish education ever since. It has even provided inspiration for both the physical design and the vision behind Our Story, the ground-breaking community facility powered by the family of Jewish Futures organisations soon to be built in NW London.

Pesach is a time when memories are both recalled and made anew. It is a time to think about where we come from and perhaps even more importantly, where we are going. Pesach is unique in that the focal point of the festival is the dining room table at home, rather than the Synagogue - something that is clearly by design. Fascinatingly, despite the fact that Torah means teaching and Seder Night is about a journey, the main mitzvah of the evening is to tell a story, as opposed to teach of a journey; to create dialogue around our shared experiences, rather than dictate a monolithic answer to our questions. Each family has its own traditions and special ways of telling our story, one that connects the past with the present and evinces anticipation towards the future.

Many have vivid memories of the Seder as children, perhaps because Pesach in general and the Seder in particular, disrupt the normal pattern of life. We do things differently precisely to stimulate interest and engagement. We have various tools and props, from the four cups of wine, to the matzah or the bitter herbs, or even fake blood and plastic frogs to make our storytelling as interactive as possible.

One of the things that I probably took for granted growing up, is that the small house we lived in was lined with books. There is something immortal about the written word. We are, after all,

known by some as the People of the Book. There’s something about stories that endures. Despite the fact that the Exodus is all about a long, protracted and challenging journey, that we are often referred to as the ‘Wandering Jew’ with reference to our 2,000 year trek seems that to convey the fundamental sense of identity, that stories are our key. The essence of the Seder night became not so much one of journeys, but rather that of “Haggadah” – of storytelling. “Vehigadeta levincha”-“sippur yetziat Mitzrayim” the story of the exodus from Egypt. “Kol hamarbe lessaper... harey ze meshubach” The more stories we tell, the more praiseworthy we are.

Like many of us I suspect, I had until recently viewed life, especially as a Jew, as a journey - and a particularly tough one at that. As an individual, as a community, as a nation, and I guess as a parent and teacher, my image had always been that we are all travellers on a long, challenging journey - at times comforted or spurred onwards by the fact that there may be the proverbial ‘light at the end of the tunnel’. Our job? Just keep going, irrespective of how many ‘Anatevkas’ there are on the way.

However, journeys can also be really hard and testing. On journeys people can, and do, lose their way and are often distracted by the many detours off the main track. Journeys involve ups and downs, invariably a fair degree of suffering and tribulation, and for so many, alas - despair.

Unsurprisingly, for the length and trauma of our journey, we have accumulated a fair amount of baggage. That long worn Yiddish phrase - “shver *tzu zain a Yid*” (“it’s tough to be a Jew”) - comes to mind. It’s a sentiment, however, that does little to ensure a joyful commitment to Jewish continuity. There are those who, when faced with the heavy mantle of royal responsibility, cast off the perceived yoke. How do we ensure the joy of continuity of our royal lineage in our contemporary world on this Yom Tov of freedom?



Enter the story. Suddenly we have multiple characters, personalities and possibilities. We have a beginning, a middle and an end. We are no longer faced with the daunting prospect of the inevitable (forced) march of history alone. Stories suggest choices, colours, textures and imagination. Stories are compelling, dynamic, unpredictable and exciting. The plot can go in many directions. The dramatic story of our 3500 year narrative is an epic tale of such proportion. Its richness serves as an open invitation for everyone to connect. Everybody loves a good story. Our children, young and old, can identify with this character or that, feel the emotions of this event or the other. They suddenly see themselves, as do we all, as part of an incredibly engaging narrative, with choices as to which roles they can play, chapters they are going to complete and ever evolving opportunities presented for us all.

Sure, we're all part of the longest road travelled, but our tradition gives us fantastic cues and clues, as always, about how to pass the baton to the next generation. Not by lecturing, cajoling or forced march! Tonight, dare I suggest, everyone is a story teller. Stories have actors. Stories are replete with suspense, drama, choice and opportunity. Stories can and do offer an invitation for each of us to play our own unique role. As Rabbi Sacks z"l suggested, there exists no word in Hebrew for history. History is necessarily some else's. Our story, however, can be owned by us. Our story can be an invitation to our children to make it their own; to choose their role; to play their part.

Our journey is transformed into the most exciting story of world civilisation. Look where we come from. Engage with the characters and events that brought us here. "Shehecheyanu vekiyemanu lazman haze"- Who has kept us

alive and sustained us to reach this time, this chapter, this page in our story! Kids - we're a part of this! Join in! What role do you want to play? Which mantle do you wear? Which character are you?

We all know what happens when we engage for real in such a story. Everyone gets involved. Each has a part to play. All the dots join up. Remarkably our millennial trek has become a story. Our story has its ups and downs, its trials and travails, its pain and its celebrations. But you know what happens? The very last mitzvah each of us is invited to fulfil by the Torah is the privilege to write a Sefer (story) Torah. It has now become my story. All the dots of history, learning and practice join together.

All is connected, and the word remarkably used to describe the Torah as it nears its end is 'song'. What do we do towards the conclusion of Seder Night? We burst forth in song! Not only do we avoid educating our children via the 'krechtzing' – the negative connotations of "Shver zu zein a Yid!" – but conversely we share in the joy of being a part of the Jewish People! Who does that? Yedidim! Friends – 'chaveirim' – who are 'mechubarim', genuinely connected "venatnu Yedidim- zemirot, shirot...." to the glorious reality of our heritage and survival.

Our journey, which is indeed replete with tragedy and often remorse, shifts to a story – a real one; a dramatic tale with all the elements of life lived to its fullest. We choose to remember, yet not to wallow in the pain or stagnation of self-pity. We suddenly become actors in the greatest narrative of world history. We look forward with renewed hope, vigour and vitality. Our story transforms into a song that shall resonate forever.



Rabbi Naftali Schiff is the founder and chief executive of the Jewish Futures Trust. He is a graduate of an elite IDF combat unit, Yeshivat Hakotel, the London School of Economics and the Hebrew University. Rabbi Schiff is the Executive Director of Aish UK and has over 30 years of experience in formal and informal education. He is the founder of each of the diverse and dynamic organisations that today make up the family of Jewish Futures.

# THE SHEEP MENTALITY

by **RABBI DOVID LICHTIG**

BREAKING AWAY FROM THE HERD  
AND BECOMING MASTERS OF OUR  
OWN DESTINY

One of the central themes celebrated on Passover is the freedom of the Jewish people. Up until that point in history, the Jews were a nation of slaves in Egypt, and with the Exodus, they were freed and became masters of their own destiny. This message is prominently placed in the beginning of the *Haggadah*, where we declare that while we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, if God had not taken our ancestors out, we would all *still* be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.

The trouble with this peculiar opening statement is that while ancient Egypt endured for an extortionately long time, perhaps as long as three thousand years, it (the most advanced culture the world had seen) also ultimately fell to the Roman Empire and became just another Roman province. Christianity then





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*How is the exodus of an ancient people thousands of years ago from a civilisation that has since crumbled - never to rise again - relevant to Generation Z in the world of social media, artificial intelligence and Netflix?*

took root, followed by Islam, when Egypt was conquered by the Muslim army under the Rashidun caliphate in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout the centuries, the ever-evolving Egypt eventually came to bear almost no similarity at all to its historical counterpart of Biblical and ancient fame.

If so, what are the chances that the Jewish people really would have ‘remained there as slaves to Pharaoh’ as entire civilisations rose and fell around them and even the mere concept of a ‘Pharaoh’ became a distant memory more closely correlated with an artefact in a museum than a powerful leader?

Our sages also direct us to view the experience of leaving Egypt as if it is *currently* happening, in real time. How is the exodus of an ancient people thousands of years ago from a civilisation that has since crumbled - never to rise again - relevant to Generation Z in the world of social media, artificial intelligence and Netflix?

Enter the ancient Egyptian god turned Jewish sacrifice and perhaps the most obscure character of the Exodus story: the Pascal lamb. With since lost technology that still baffles engineers and scientists today, the ancient Egyptians were light years ahead of other civilisations in terms of engineering, agriculture and societal development. What did such an advanced, cultured nation see in the sheep that they venerated it so much? And why did the Jewish people slaughter the sheep as they left Egypt?



On Friday, July 8<sup>th</sup> 2005, in the Van province of eastern Turkey, shepherds watched in horror as hundreds of their sheep followed each other over a cliff. The BBC reported that one sheep had ostensibly stepped over the cliff edge by mistake only to be followed by the entire flock with thousands jumping off and hundreds falling to their death. Turkish newspapers reported a loss of about £42,000 in all. As the old adage goes, they literally followed each other like sheep! This brief newspaper report symbolises the essence of what sheep do. They follow. Even if following is counter-intuitive and clearly detrimental to them to the point of being fatally harmful. Sheep will literally follow to the death. As long as there's a sheep in front of them going somewhere – anywhere! – the rest of the sheep will follow.

This concept of blindly following what was previously accepted is the very bedrock on which Egyptian culture was built. There was nothing that made a Pharaoh different to a slave other than the fact that a Pharaoh was born into the royal family and a slave was not. In other words, serfdom and the feudal system reigned supreme. How you were born was how you lived and how you died. Born a Pharaoh you died a Pharaoh and born a slave you died a slave, for that was your fate. And in a society governed by fate, you follow - you don't create; your value and worth are signed and sealed from the day you are born with no chance of escape. This sheep mentality, echoed in the animal itself, is what the ancient Egyptians worshipped, and just like sheep, in ancient Egypt, you followed to the death. I am struck by the powerful imagery of Pharaoh exhorting his soldiers to follow him in pursuit of the Israelites to the Red Sea. And they follow. Even though he and they know full well that it will be the death of them.

This mentality, attitude and societal philosophy is also the polar opposite of what Jewish culture believes in, espoused by Moses and the newly established Jewish law. Their dissenting view at its core was that all human beings have unlimited potential, and no matter what you are born into or what your circumstances are, you have the innate ability to change the world. From Jethro to Ruth, from King David to Rabbi Akiva, your circumstances and background mean nothing, and you are only judged by what you achieve - not where you come from. In this system, the only thing holding you back from greatness is yourself.

*The Jewish people's exodus from Egypt wasn't simply a matter of a physical departure; they were also undergoing a monumental mental shift.*

This is precisely why the Jewish people were commanded to risk their lives and slaughter an Egyptian deity at the onset of the first Passover. They were slaughtering the sheep mentality that had held them back for hundreds of years. They were embedding in their DNA that the background you come from and the family you were born into are all meaningless. Man is judged solely by what he accomplishes, in direct contradiction to the Egyptian culture.

The Jewish people's exodus from Egypt wasn't simply a matter of a physical departure; they were also undergoing a monumental mental shift. They were leaving this mentality behind them, symbolically slaughtered and its blood pasted on the doorposts of the homes that for so long had been little more than prisons. From this point on they were now masters of their own destiny and creators of their future, not followers of a herd.

Let's return to our opening statement: If the Jewish people had not left Egypt, they would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. This means that had the Jewish people not bought into this new mindset they would still be slaves to this sheep mentality, be it under the ancient Egyptians, Rome or any other culture or society that would rise after that. It was the sheep mentality that they were escaping, and this concept is just as relevant to a Jew in London in 2022 as it was to a Jew leaving Egypt in 1476 BCE. Possibly even more so.



Rabbi Dovid Lichtig holds a B.A. in Business Management from Wayne State University and an MBA in Business Administration from Missouri State University. He has studied in various top Talmudic institutions across the world and has received rabbinic ordination in both the United States and Israel. He spent a decade in Detroit, Michigan as the NCSY Associate Regional Director where he was responsible for staff management, programme development and providing strategic vision to the Central East region of NCSY. In 2019, Dovid and his family returned to the UK to take the position of Managing Director and in 2022, Deputy CEO of Aish UK

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# DISSECTING LANGUAGE: LEARNING THROUGH THE PESACH SEDER

by RABBI MOSHE FRIEDMAN

HOW AN EXPLORATION OF LANGUAGE DEFINES  
THE TRUE OBJECTIVE OF THE PESACH SEDER

Try dissecting the meaning of the English language and you will find yourself amazed at how arbitrary its sounds are. There is nothing about the ch' sound in 'chair' that gives any hints about what that word represents. With the minor exceptions of the obvious onomatopoeic phrases – the 'boom' of an explosion or the 'chatter' of shivering teeth – most English words are a distant representation of their true meaning.

This disconnect seems all the more disappointing when one compares English to the Hebrew language which, according to some scholars, may be the most ancient alphabetic language in history. Not only do the sounds more closely represent what the words mean, but the letters represent a logical *narrative* that describe the concept of each word.

Take the word *sh'ma* meaning 'to hear', which many will recognise from the ubiquitous phrase "Shma Yisroel..." The three-letter root describes a process of listening. It begins with the white noise of the *shin* – 'shhhh' – a harsh, dissonant sound that signifies the undifferentiated noise of this world. That is the beginning of all sonic perception. Once we take that cacophony and turn it into recognisable sounds, we transition to the harmonious 'mmmm' of the *mem*. This sound is the perfect sine wave, representing an act of interpreting the noise of the world into something sensible and distinct. Finally we move to the *ayin*, a guttural 'ahh' (meaning it's pronounced in the back of the throat), depicting an act that goes beyond mere interpretation, but represents the actual integration of the sound and what it means. This is true listening – conversion of nonsensical noise into recognisable patterns of sound that can then be internalised. This process of interpreting the letters of each word can theoretically be replicated for every single

Hebrew word, given enough knowledge about the depth of the Hebrew letters.

But that doesn't mean the English language is entirely illogical. Many of our greatest words are derived from Greek and Latin roots, whose original meanings may well convey a deeper understanding of the word itself. A once-indecipherable word like *autodidact* becomes perfectly clear when you know that in Greek, *auto* means 'self' and *didact* mean 'teach' – aha, someone who is self-taught!

It can also reveal the poverty of some English words, and how profound Jewish ideas often lose their brilliance when translated into the modern tongue. Many of us think that the primary goal of Yom Kippur involves the serious business of *repentance*, dissected as *re* meaning 'looking back' and *penitere* meaning 'regret'. Yes, Yom Kippur is a day of self-loathing, where we revisit our sins and feel horrible about them. Yet if we read the prayer book in its original Hebrew, we see that the focus of the day is actually on *teshuvah*, which in Hebrew simply means 'to return'. Indeed, Yom Kippur is actually about returning to one's true self, and while regret may be a necessary step towards that self-realisation, it is by no means the ultimate destination.

However, once in a blue moon the English language will surprise you with a linguistic gem. When the stars align, even a word in English can illuminate a concept that was previously misunderstood. One such example is the word 'education'. What does it mean to educate someone? In common usage, it usually refers to the act of transferring knowledge from one person to another. "I went to school to get educated in the liberal arts." "Allow me to educate you on the subject of ancient Turkish history." Or, as is frequently seen on Twitter: "You need to educate yourself!"

But a deep dive into the word 'educate' suggests a different meaning altogether. The prefix *e-* is short for *ex-* meaning 'out of', and the root *duc* means 'to lead or draw', as in an aqueduct, which is a place that draws water. Thus to educate literally means 'to draw out'. Instead of implanting information or knowledge, real education means the act of drawing out the hidden skills and talents that already existed in the student!

We know intuitively that this definition makes infinitely more sense. As the popular distinction goes, indoctrination teaches you what to think, whereas education teaches you how to think. If I simply stuff you with information, no education has occurred. You now carry the load of the information around with you, but anyone who has taken a standardised exam will attest that the memorisation of knowledge in no way guarantees actual integration of that knowledge. But when we encounter that rare, excellent teacher, we find that what we learn most is about ourselves. The teacher challenges us to actualise parts of us we never knew existed, and instead of being pushed to devour words on a page, the motivation comes from within.

Indeed, we find the same definition arising from the Hebrew word 'chinuch'. As King Solomon wrote in the book of Proverbs, "Educate the youth according to his path..." The key to education is to find the unique abilities of the child, and then to draw them out of him or her. The greatest of Medieval Biblical sage, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, otherwise known as Rashi, tells us similarly that *chinuch* means "the initiation of an individual or an object into the role for which it was destined." In other words, the obligation of the educator is first to peer into the eyes of the student to see what raw material already exists, and then plan an appropriate method for shaping that material into the finished product it was already meant to be.

As Jews, our greatest didactic tool (remember *didact*, meaning 'to learn'?) is the Pesach seder. It is here where we, the adults, are implored to use every method possible to elicit questions from the children. Note that our job is to encourage questions, not answers. Not what to think, but how to think. And these questions cannot be judged with a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather in a manner such each of the four sons asks a different question and demands a different response. The seder is education at its finest.

Some have a custom at their Pesach seder to recite the four questions in the original Hebrew. Others may sing it in Yiddish. And still others will stand on their chairs and belt it in the Queen's English. While some of the nuance and beauty of the original Hebrew may be lost, we can be assured that one word still remains accurately translated: this night is a night of *education*.



Rabbi Moshe Friedman grew up in Manhattan, New York, and received his BA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics at the University of Pennsylvania. He studied Jewish Thought and Talmudic Law for ten years in Israel, including several years at the Mir Yeshiva, and has passed Rabbinic Ordination examinations from the Israeli Rabbinat. In 2017, he moved to London with his wife and two children to take up the role of FJL UK Liaison, a role which includes regular campus visits and London-based educational programmes.

# WOMEN IN THE HAGGADAH

*by* REBBETZIN SHALVIE FRIEDMAN

THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY, JEWISH WOMEN HAVE BEEN A FORCE OF RESISTANCE, STRENGTH, WISDOM AND LOVE. PESACH IS NO EXCEPTION.

The exodus from Egypt is a timeless tale – the story of our redemption is epic. But it is not the last time that Jewish survival was threatened, and we triumphed. It is timeless, not just because it is told again and again, year after year. It is timeless because it is a story that just keeps happening.

Through all the iterations of the story of Jewish continuity, the pivotal and inspiring role of Jewish women is well known and documented. They have kept the flame of Judaism alive and burning in the direst of circumstances.

The righteous women in Egypt refused to accept defeat when Pharaoh plied them and their husbands with backbreaking labour. They convinced the men to continue identifying as part of the

family unit and to bring another generation of Jewish children into the world. Those same women left Egypt with drums and tambourines – ever believing that the near future would bring reason to sing and dance.

In the first century, Jews in Israel revolted against their oppressors, the Roman Empire. Three years after the revolt officially ended with the fall of Jerusalem (70 CE), the Romans besieged Masada – the last Jewish holdout. There is endless archaeological evidence of the presence of women living and raising children on Masada. From spinning wheels to hair combs to hair nets and cosmetic items, we can only imagine the determination of these women as they kept their families and faith alive in a dismal and ultimately tragic situation.

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In the time of the Spanish inquisition, many women, *'anousim'* – Jews who had converted to Christianity – privately lit Shabbat candles in hidden cupboards in hidden rooms. They were willing to risk their own lives to ensure that the spirit and the flame of Shabbat entered their homes. We have preserved many of their *techinot* – their own personally composed prayers which they said as they lit those candles.

During the holocaust, it was the Jewish women, many of whom were students of the visionary and revolutionary Sara Schneireer, who bravely lit Chanukah candles in potato peels in the camps. They sang songs of faith and comfort to others on the death marches, and they taught those around them to scream 'Shema Yisrael' in the gas chambers.

If the Haggadah is an invitation to us all to revisit the endless tale of Jewish resistance and persistence to survive, we can find the archetypal female presence in that book too. Indeed, the unique and critical female voice weaves her way subtly through the Haggadah – forever moulding the tone of the seder experience.

The Maharal of Prague explains how the seder night is built around the four cups of wine on the one hand, and the three matzot on the other. The three Matzot represent the forefathers – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The four cups of wine represent the foremothers – Sara, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. But it is not merely the numbers three and four which teach about this.

Matzah is a food which is consumed through hard work. It needs to be chewed and chewed before it can be swallowed. Even once inside the digestive tract, we know how hard our body has to work to break down the matzah and make it something digestible and absorbable. Wine, on the other hand, is easily ingested. It loosens up the tongue and heart of the drinker and puts everyone at ease.

Similarly, Jewish wisdom of masculinity is theoretical in nature. It needs to be broken down, diluted and deconstructed in order for it to reach the heart and the life-force of a Jew. Wine, however, represents the power of the Jewish woman. She brings to the seder table Torah, faith, Judaism that is easily accessible and relatable. She knows how to set the tone in such a way that everyone feels comfortable and at ease. The Torah of the Mother is instantly understood and deeply felt. She knows how to take theoretical knowledge and allow others to experience

*Through wise words, impactful stories, personal example and real-life experiences, she unlocks not the merely the wisdom of Judaism, but the very essence of it.*

that knowledge. Through wise words, impactful stories, personal example and real-life experiences, she unlocks not the merely the wisdom of Judaism, but the very essence of it.

As a Female Torah educator, I teach the Torah of the female in my classroom as much as I teach it in my kitchen, as I ladle out the chicken soup. My children learn the Torah of their mother as I read them bedtime stories and sing them to sleep. And my students learn that same Torah as we schmooze in the corridors of the school.

This force of female appears once again in the four sons. The wise, wicked and simple son are all answered by their father. They enter into an intellectual dialogue and debate. They discuss, analyse and dissect. But the one who does not know how to ask, the Haggadah tells us *לך חתך תא* – you (female) open him up. A maternal, feminine approach to Judaism is easy to access – even for someone who doesn't know what it is that they are trying to access. King Solomon recognises this when he proclaims (Proverbs), "Listen my son to the rebuke of your father and do not turn from the Torah of your mother." The Torah of the Mother is intuitive, understanding and relevant.

In truth, the entire seder night is a night of the feminine. The Torah of the pulpit and the classroom is like matzah – it engages with us only to the extent that it asks of us to analyse and break down the deep or interesting ideas being handed to us. The Torah of the Seder is the Torah of the home. It is experiential, impactful and memorable. It engages with our hearts and its effects leave ripples that are great enough to carry us to the end of time.



Rebbetzin Shalvie Friedman grew up in Johannesburg, South Africa and received her BSc in Maths and Finance from the University of South Africa. She studied Jewish Thought and textual analysis at the Nishmat Seminary in Jerusalem. Shalvie has taught in high schools in Johannesburg, as well as at many seminaries in Israel, both for newly observant students as well as those from religious backgrounds. She currently teaches Jewish Studies at Hasmonian Girls School as well as teaching for various parts of the Aish family, all while raising her own family.

PESACH

A scenic view of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, partially obscured by vibrant pink cherry blossoms in the foreground. The tower stands tall against a clear blue sky with light clouds. In the foreground, a paved walkway leads towards the tower, flanked by green park benches and manicured hedges. People can be seen walking in the distance, and a few cars are visible on a road to the left. The overall atmosphere is bright and cheerful, capturing the beauty of spring in the City of Light.

# PESACH IN PARIS



## HAVA LESLIE REFLECTS ON THE DIVERSE CUSTOMS THAT INFORM OUR PESACH CELEBRATIONS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD

Where are you from? This question is quite common when you live away from home and have a very thick French accent. In my case, my accent is so obvious that people often ask, “Where in France are you from?” I have only lived in the UK for 12 years, after all.

My parents were born and grew up in Morocco and Algeria, so this question was also very common when I was growing up: “Where are you from? Morocco? Tunisia? Algeria? Are you Ashkenazi?” Sometimes I would even be asked about the city I came from – was it Fez, Meknes, Alger, Djerba...?

When I was at school, I was often drawn into debates about who makes the best couscous, who is the nicest, the strictest... and every other superlative you can imagine. The truth is that these debates arose from the sad reality that the French Ashkenazi community was decimated in the war and the French community became Sephardi.

To give a brief background: the Sefardi exodus first originated when Napoleon conquered Algeria and later Tunisia and Morocco, and they became French protectorates. These colonial events meant that Jews in North Africa were allowed to learn French as part of their school curricula. In Algeria, the Jews were even given French citizenship because the Jewish minister,

Cremieux, thought it would be useful (and easier) to give all members of the Jewish community a French passport.

In 1948, with the establishment of the State of Israel, many of the Jews in North Africa started considering Aliyah as an option. Slowly but surely, the so-called “Juif errant” (wandering Jew) gave rise to the establishment of new communities in Israel, Canada, South America...and in France. The French community to which I belonged comprised immigrants from different places across the world. From such diversity emerged a host of different customs and traditions. Even my parents, who came from two North African countries, brought with them two completely different cultures, languages and *minbagim* (customs).

One *minbag* from my mother's side is a unique custom from a city called Constantine in Algeria. The idea was to sit like kings on Seder night, so the whole Seder was set out on low tables and the participants sat on couches to feel as comfortable as possible while wearing *djellabas* (traditional robes) to increase the comfort! There was no space for all the children on the couches, so we ‘sat’ on mattresses. I remember feeling so comfortable that I would fall asleep after ‘ma-nishtana’ without asking for any permission to leave the table! This custom was not my dad’s - so we only celebrated the Seder this way when we were with my mother’s family.

In France, the preparation for Seder night takes place, like anywhere else in the world, in the kitchen – but also in the marketplace. In typical Mediterranean culture, we get our fruits and vegetables from the market, and in the days before Pesach, men and women come to the market to choose the most beautiful fruits and vegetables in honour of the coming festival. This exercise literally involves all the senses, especially because at this time of year the smells and sights of nature give a sense of a new beginning. To take advantage of the opportunity to experience the delicacies God gives us in the spring season, the Pesach recipes in our custom include cardoons, fresh broad beans, artichokes, fresh peas and fresh herbs. This may sound like an Ottolenghi recipe, but it also involves hours of preparation in checking, cleaning and cutting – making fresh broad bean soup for a large family involves hours and days of work!

I remember seeing my grandmother in her kitchen, preparing the food for Pesach. It was inspirational to watch her - her devotion appeared to be religious. When I think about it today, I realise that it *was* indeed religious - our grandmothers prayed for us while making these magical dishes, and gave us the gift of the taste of freedom in their culinary treats.

When I moved to the UK, I was blessed to meet my husband who moved from South Africa with his own culture and customs. Our first Pesach as a married couple was colourful to say the least. We both expected to find similar ways of running the seder, but the language of the seder was different - he would read the Haggadah predominantly in English and I would read it in Hebrew, with some Arabic songs interspersed here and there. When we lifted the seder plate around the guests in the beginning of Maggid, my husband asked, “What is that?” When my husband prepared salty water not only for the karpas but also to submerge the eggs, I responded “What is that?” I expected the men and women to wear comfortable djellabas,

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*The Mishna in Pirkei Avot reminds us of three things: “Know from where you came, where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give a judgement and accounting.”*

he expected suits and ties. Everything was so different on that day of Pesach when we celebrate the splitting of the sea that I felt we were each standing on different banks of the sea. But over time we learnt to adjust, and combine our customs, and make our family’s Pesach experience as colourful, tasty and fun as possible. I believe this is what makes us stronger on an individual and a collective level.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot reminds us of three things: “Know from where you came, where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give a judgement and accounting.” While the rest of the Mishnah gives the answers to these questions, I also think it has a different meaning. We need to know where we are from and what strength and beauty we receive from our origins, where we are heading, and we certainly need to give how we will account for what we have done with our heritage.



Hava Leslie Hava Leslie was born in Marseille and raised in Paris. After finishing her Baccalaureate, she moved to Israel for six years where she first studied in the French section of Neve Yerushalym and then went on to study Computer Science in Seminar Ofakim in the Negev. She moved from Paris to London in 2010. She currently works as a licensing manager for a Canadian IT company. Hava is married to a South African man and has a son.



# FOUR IN ONE

*by* **RABBI DR BENJI LEVY**

CONSIDERING OUR CURRENT IMPACT IN SHAPING  
THE FOUR CHILDREN OF THE NEXT GENERATION

The Pesach Seder is a masterpiece in Jewish education. With nearly every type of Jew present at the table, one of the Seder's most celebrated passages describes the four different types of children: 'one wise and one wicked and one simple and one that does not know how to ask [a question].'<sup>7</sup> Layered with meaning, there are countless interpretations of this ancient text and for the purpose of our focus on Jewish education, I would like to highlight two: the four generations leading up to ours (our educational context) and four types of teachers (our educational practitioners):

The Lubavicher Rebbe (or as some say, the Friediker Rebbe) suggests that perhaps the four children are a homily for different stages along the Jewish generational continuum which can be seen during the two centuries since the onset of the Enlightenment. The wise child represents the generation prior to immigration, engaging in a fulfilling religious lifestyle with deep comfort, familiarity, love and respect for ancestral heritage. Confronting the new realities of displacement, many among the next generation rejected the past which they perceived as antiquated. Represented by the wicked child, this generation chose to build a different future through rejecting their past, favouring all that is modern and innovative over a lifestyle steeped in tradition and practice. Born into this intergenerational sociological mire, the third generation is often characterised by confusion between striving for a life of modernity while still revering the roots of their grandparents. As such, this generation is 'simple' in the sense of being helplessly trapped in this conflict.

In the absence of the guidance of the righteous great-grandparent, the next generation, the fourth in line, is rather confused by the parent's relatively simple understanding of their grandparent's departure from the righteous lifestyle. Unfortunately, while the second generation is steeped in learning because it was raised in a house of righteousness, this fourth generation has been severed from their ancestry, and rendered incapable of engaging with their ancient texts and ideas. They have no way of appreciating the depth of our heritage and are ill-equipped to ask probing, meaningful questions in the pursuit of spiritual growth.

What about the fifth? What is the forecast for the next generation, the fifth generation in line which is where we now find ourselves? While humanity marches forward from generation to generation, age-old legacies – suffused with ancient meaning and inspiration – pervade and perturb the minds of many. In this context, the silence of the fifth generation is deafening. With no clear memory of their righteous predecessors, a glimmer of their 'wicked' great-grandparent, a simple but confused grandparent and a parent that doesn't even know how to ask, the tragedy of the next generation is that they often do not even make it to the seder table. The Midrash states that four-fifth of the Jewish People were not prepared to adopt

a new lifestyle outside of Egypt and disappeared in the plague of darkness. Today's society – the fifth generation – is steeped in the tragedy of apathy that precludes the presence of a fifth child, and as such, a cloud of ignorance and distance leads approximately a fifth of Jews to absent themselves from the ritual beauty of seder night. So how do we respond? What kind of teachers do we need?

A different interpretation of the four sons, shared by Rabbi Norman Lamm,

understands them to represent four distinct approaches to parenting and/or teaching. These four approaches obviously do not exhaust all, yet they do reflect four distinct styles of imparting knowledge and values to our children. Some parents and educators adopt a top-down domineering approach. They tell instead of teaching; they preach rather than pursuing a connection. Their approach can lead to children who are not interested in, nor excited by the treasures of our tradition.

Their children can feel alienated and disconnected from their roots, rendered incapable of articulating their questions. A second type places their universal human identity above their particular Jewish identity. They invest their energies in caring for broader humanity at the expense of focusing on the Jewish community, rather than balancing both. Their approach leads to simple children that appreciate the broader world but have no understanding of their unique place within it. A third category of teachers fail to provide adequate boundaries. Under the false impression that they are helping their children, they allow them to carve their own path alone.



**THE WISE CHILD REPRESENTS  
THE GENERATION PRIOR TO  
IMMIGRATION, ENGAGING  
IN A FULFILLING RELIGIOUS  
LIFESTYLE WITH DEEP COMFORT,  
FAMILIARITY, LOVE AND RESPECT  
FOR ANCESTRAL HERITAGE**



In the absence of a strong moral compass to guide them, and in a life void of meaningful direction, these children often end up straying, wandering along the path of wrongdoing, represented by the wicked son. The fourth prototype represents a true role model for their children. Their approach of integrity, respect and passion is closely observed by their children. With sincerity breeding sincerity, these children want to actualise the example of their parents and teachers. Such children, having observed an earnest pursuit of wisdom expressed in a palatable way, make an autonomous decision to follow suit. They too become wise, behave with integrity and respect those around them, gaining respect accordingly.

The phrasing describing these four children is strange in its extraneous use of the word 'one': 'one wise and one wicked and one simple and one that does not know how to ask a question.' Perhaps the word 'one' is emphasised before each of the categories because, despite their differences, each and every one of them has a place at the seder – each person is considered a world in and of themselves. Traces of each one can, in fact, be found within the same person. Life is by no means a linear journey with black and white results. The discussion of these four children within the seder teaches a lesson to all those present – adults and children alike. This section of the seder calls upon us all – parents and children, educators and students, leaders and followers – to reflect upon ourselves and one another. The most glaring truth is that the uniqueness of each student must be matched by a plurality of educational approaches. The 'one size fits all' paradigm

of education must be relegated to an antiquated past, as each person is encouraged to 'educate the student according to their own way.'

Throughout the journey of life, each person sits at the seder table, regardless of which stage they are currently leaning towards or which personal category they currently occupy. They sit at the table complete with the multiple and often contradictory elements of their personality. They sit at the table, as blended products of the array of parenting and teaching approaches that they have experienced along their journey.

They sit at the table, whether intentionally or not, representing the unbroken chain of their heritage and the convoluted journeys of their predecessors.

But most importantly, they sit at the table.

If we want our precious nation to survive, if we believe that our legacy must last, and if it is important to each of us that we continue growing and connecting with our heritage, then we must keep coming to the table and inviting others; we must allow those who seem to have strayed to sit; we must preserve important rituals and we must engage in the diverse and cross-generational conversations for which the seder has provided a perfect platform, from biblical times until eternity!



Rabbi Dr Benji Levy is a founding partner of Israel Impact Partners, which works with funders to accelerate the growth of the non-profits they care about. He is the former CEO of Mosaic United, Dean of Moriah College, Sydney, and has just published *Covenant* and *The Jewish Conversion Question* with Palgrave Macmillan. Rabbi Benji shares his wisdom on social media @Rabbi Benji and on [www.RabbiBenji.com](http://www.RabbiBenji.com).

PESACH

# A KEBAB IN EGYPT

*by* DOVIE SCHOCHET

DELVING INTO THE SYMBOLISM OF  
THE SLAUGHTERED LAMB



**H**ave you ever had the feeling that something was ‘off’? That something just didn’t seem quite right? Reading over the Korban Pesach story, in which Hashem commands the Jewish people to sacrifice a lamb in Egypt, I had such a feeling.

After 210 years in slavery, God decided it was high time the Jewish people were freed from Egypt. Moshe was sent to redeem the Jews, and 10 plagues later, the Jewish people left. However, all was not done. Changing his mind, Pharaoh and his army gave chase to the Jews and a grand miracle occurred - the sea split. While the Jewish people crossed and made it out to the other side, the Egyptians drowned. Finally, the Jewish people were safe.

What I find perplexing in the story is that four days before leaving Egypt, the Jewish people were commanded to take a lamb - the Korban Pesach - and sacrifice it to God. What purpose did this serve in the redemption process? Sure, I can understand the need for plagues to weaken the enemy’s stronghold. I can also understand the need for the Egyptian army to drown at sea, thus providing reassurance to the Jewish people that they would not be captured again. What’s puzzling though, is the need for the Jewish people to remain in the land that enslaved and tortured them for over 200 years, just to enjoy a lamb kebab?

However, a closer look at the story reveals a fascinating lesson in what true redemption is all about. The lamb in those times was no ordinary domesticated farm animal - it was worshipped as an Egyptian god. For a Jew in Egypt, to take hold of the lamb and sacrifice it would be tantamount to a suicide mission.

Naturally, at this point, one imagines that the Jews would have tried to think of ways to fulfil this command without putting their lives at risk. The first obvious thing to do would be to sacrifice the lamb at night, cloaked in darkness, so that no Egyptian would be the wiser. But to this God responded, “It shall be slaughtered in the afternoon.”

“Okay,” The Jew may have thought, “I will at the very least not make a scene out of it.” Yet God countered, “Take of the blood and put it on the doorposts and lintel of the house.”

The Jew’s mind may have begun to race, “I’ll eat it raw and be done with it or cook it in a pot so as not to be noticed.” However, God responded, “Roasted over the fire, its head, its legs and with its innards.”

Take a moment to picture the scene. The lamb slaughtered in the middle of the day, its blood painted onto the doors, with the flesh of the lamb all intact for everyone to recognise, is slowly roasted on a fire for all Egyptians to see. Yet in spite of all this, the Jews did it anyway. Notwithstanding the threat involved in murdering the Egyptian god in public view, the Jewish people practiced ‘mesiras nefesh’ - ‘self-sacrifice’ and obeyed God’s command.

This was the crux of the redemption process. Living in the 21st century, we are blessed with many freedoms that previous generations did not have: air travel, communication, freedom of religion and democracy. Then there are personal freedoms that some of us are lucky enough to have, such as financial freedom or physical health. And yet, with all these freedoms, a person can still suffer from anxiety, stress, inner turmoil and live a pretty miserable life. This is because ultimately, freedom isn’t something you have, it is something you are. It is your state of being - your mindset. A person can be holidaying in the sweet sands of Hawaii and still feel miserable and trapped. Another could sit in the fortress of Alcatraz prison, yet feel as free as a bird. Physical confinement may trap the body but it does not imprison the mind.

Before the Jewish people could leave their geographic exile, they first had to leave their internal exile. They needed to look within in order to escape their slave mindset. By taking the lamb, the Egyptian god, and slaughtering and roasting it on the fire, they confronted their greatest fear. This signified the real redemption - and then they were ready to leave Egypt to receive the Torah.

In the days of communism in the Soviet Union lived a chosid called Rav Mendel Futerfas. He was incarcerated by the authorities for the ‘crime’ of spreading and teaching Judaism. Sitting behind the bars of his cage, he would remind himself that everything was by Divine Providence and would try to learn a lesson from everything he encountered. One day, he was watching a group of prisoners playing with a deck of cards. No matter how often the police came to inspect the prisoners, they could never find the illicit items. Rav Mendel Futerfas was baffled by this, and he asked his fellow inmates, “How do you manage to hide the cards so well? Where do you put them?” The inmates responded, “When the guard walks in, we slip the deck in his pocket and right before he leaves we quickly pickpocket them out.” The lesson Rav Mendel learnt from this was clear - sometimes to find the thing you are looking for, you need to search in your own ‘pockets’.

Pesach is a time for introspection. It is a reminder that real freedom comes from within, and when we all find our own personal redemption, this will lead to the ultimate redemption with the coming of Mashiach.



Rabbi Dovie Schochet graduated from the Rabbinical College of America where he received his semicha and BA in philosophy. He then went on to teach at Hasmonian High School and received his 'Qualified Teacher Status' from LSJS. He currently resides in and runs Chabad of Mill Hill East together with his wife Jessica and two children.

# THE FOUR SONS





## RABBI YEHUDA DAVIS EXAMINES THE DEEPER SYMBOLISM OF THE FOUR SONS IN THE HAGGADAH

For the past twenty years, I have had a very basic understanding of what the Haggadah was talking about when it came to the part of the four sons. As the eldest child, I pictured myself as the wise son asking the best question and then receiving the most compliments for it. I then pictured the bully that everyone hated in school as the evil son and smiled when we were told to blunt his teeth. The simple son was represented by the child that sat in class and daydreamed, never paying attention, and always failing his exams. Finally, the one that didn't know how to ask was just a baby, sitting there, smiling, and being cute.

But last year during Covid, when I was forced to lead the seder myself with my wife, I spent time studying the four sons and was shocked to realise how little I really knew, and how my understanding had always been flawed. I came across an explanation from a renowned Rabbi in Israel, Rabbi Reuven Leuchter, that really resonated with me, and I hope will be meaningful to you too.

Just a short note about Rabbi Leuchter: Rabbi Leuchter has an amazing ability to look at any text, think about it deeply, analyse it carefully, and recognise a new, different perspective that others usually miss. Aside from using this ability to study Torah, he uses it to analyse difficult situations that people may be experiencing, and he offers advice and guidance based on his understanding of the root of the problem. I have used his fantastic guidance in the past to solve a difficult problem I had and was blown away by how he saw things that seemed so evident after he had said them, yet no one else I had spoken to had even noticed them. Before explaining his take on the four sons, I would like to

suggest that each of us has a little of all four sons within us - they don't necessarily need to represent four separate people. Sometimes we can behave like the wise one, other times like the evil one, and often we can be the one that doesn't know how to ask. Every person is so complex and has so many different moods and personality traits, that everything said below can apply to each one of us at any given time.

### 1. THE WISE SON



The wise son represents the part of us that has a sincere desire to know and understand everything that we are doing. Why do we perform all these funny rituals, and talk about what it was like leaving Egypt thousands of years ago?

We are told to teach this son the laws of the Korban Pesach, and how we cannot eat anything afterwards. We use this custom to explain the idea that the Pesach night must become part of us - it's not just about performing rituals and remembrance, but rather, the experience on Pesach night should remain with us forever, in the same way, that the taste and the flavour of the afikomen (korban Pesach) should not be ruined and should stay with us for the remainder of the night. Often, we do things by rote, or because that's how we were taught, but the idea of Pesach is to take Judaism and make it part of us; to savour the taste and give ourselves a year of experience, and not just rituals.

## 2. THE EVIL SON



The evil son is not someone that does bad things or breaks laws as I used to think. Rather, he is as religious as everyone else around, but asks “What are all these things you are doing.” This does not mean that he is not doing them too, but the focus is on you, and not on us. He excludes himself from everyone else and looks at the world as if he is an individual, rather than part of the collective.

Being Jewish, we are all attached, part of one organism; all individuals who are part of the bigger picture. But this son separates himself. He may be with us at the same table, but he thinks about his connection to God as something individual; he is someone that doesn't connect to those less observant than him, or even to those more observant than him.

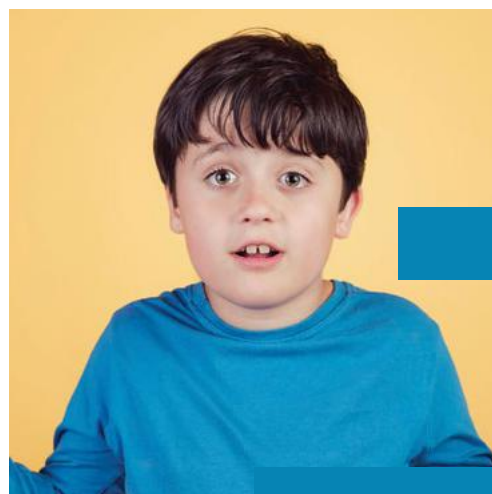
To this we reply, “no matter how many correct things you do, if you don't realise that all Jews are connected, and all Jews are in this together, then you would not have come out of Egypt with us.” There are times when we can all feel like this. Sometimes

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BEING JEWISH, WE ARE ALL  
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BIGGER PICTURE.

we feel haughty and disconnected from everyone else, and other times we feel small and disconnected from other Jews around us. The lesson here is to learn that we are all in this together - all part of something bigger than us.

## 3. THE SIMPLE SON



The simple son can represent any of us when we are not in an intellectual mood. We perceive what is going on around us, but we cannot really be bothered doing anything about it. This son asks, “What is this?” without any depth or much interest. We reply simply, matching his mood by saying, “The essence of the whole exodus and the reason we are here tonight is because God took us out of Egypt.” Unlike the wise son, we don’t try and tell him that whatever he is experiencing should stay with him, because we realise that this son is not yet ready for that yet. Rather, we explain on a basic level, which will hopefully open his curiosity, and next year he may be ready to hear what the wise son hears.

## 4. THE SON THAT DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO ASK



This son is not, as many people believe, a baby or child, rather, he is a regular grown person who performs and partakes in everything going on at the seder, just like everyone else. He just doesn’t ask anything. This is because to him, everything we do is just symbolic – it is something that is done repeatedly, for no reason or purpose, and that is why he does not ask: he thinks there is no answer.

So, we answer him by saying, “because of this we were taken out of Egypt.” This refers to the matzah, maror, and Pesach that are surrounding us. It is so that we can be the Jewish nation, perform the mitzvot, grow as people, and build a relationship with God.

This is different to the simple son because the simple son realises questions can be asked, and that there may be meaning behind things. The simple son wants to know what the meaning is, so we teach him that we do things for a purpose. In contrast, this last son doesn’t even realise there is any significance at all. So, we teach him what’s going on, and hopefully next year he can be the simple son and can continue growing.

As I explained earlier, all these four sons can live within each one of us. Sometimes we are curious and want to understand how to grow. Other times we think we are doing everything correctly, and don’t care about anyone around us. There are also times we do understand and know what we should be doing, but we just cannot be bothered doing anything about it. And sometimes we don’t think something has a reason at all, and we think everything we experience is just a ritual or meaningless.

We are taught here by the Haggadah how to react to ourselves and others when experiencing different moods. No person should be getting the same generic answer, and even the same individual must be dealt with and treated differently depending on their frame of mind or mood in a particular moment. The Haggadah is a master at education, and if we take only one thing away from our seder night, it should certainly be the Haggadah’s example of true education.



Rabbi Yehuda Davis grew up in London. After graduating from high school, he went to a yeshivah in Manchester for two years, and then moved to Israel and studied for another seven years in various yeshivas, graduating as a rabbi for community leadership and Jewish education. During his time in Israel, he also studied life coaching and cognitive behavioural therapy. He now lives in Nottingham with his family, working for Aish on Campus, and really enjoys connecting with the wide variety of Jewish students.

# CLEANSING THE 'CHAMETZ' FROM OUR INNER SELVES

JUDGE SHLOMO KREIMAN TAKES A  
DIFFERENT LOOK AT PREPARING FOR PASSOVER



It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that anyone making Pesach has an uphill struggle ahead of them. Had Jane Austen shared our faith, she may have started her seminal work of *Pride and Prejudice* with just such a sentence. Any reader will readily agree that the preparation for the upcoming festival is an outstanding challenge beyond what any other festival in the calendar requires of us. Setting aside our personal preferences about how we complete the physical work and reconstitute our homes, what remains a constant is the need to eradicate chometz as the primary objective of the work.

Were life as simple as that, our tasks would be sufficiently tough to a point of “dayenu“, but the obligation extends far beyond the disposal of physical chametz. We also need to internalise the exercise of removing chametz, not just from our environment, but also from inside all of us. This is not an easy concept to grasp. Indicative of the pride and arrogance to which any human being can be susceptible, we are given an opportunity to look introspectively at our own conduct and behaviour and nullify those weaknesses in a parallel manner, while we are disposing of the physical leaven around us.

Let's take a breath and consider just how we can undertake such a process - operating in tandem, the physical and spiritual march together toward a festival which is not only fulfilling from the dinner plate but also in cleansing the *nesbama* of the inner Jew.

A window to comprehension appears in the first Mishna to the second chapter of the Talmudic tractate called *Pesachim*. The writer addresses the subject of what a person can do with any leaven remaining in their possession late on the eve of Passover. The text tells us:

*“As long as it is lawful to eat leavened bread, one may also give it to his domestic staff or wild animals or to fowls; he may also sell it to strangers or derive benefit therefrom in any other way; when that time is passed, however, it is unlawful [i.e. against the halachah] to derive any benefit from it whatsoever, not even use it for fuel or to light therewith an oven or a stove.”*

*Rabbi Yebudah said: “The removal of leaven cannot be effected except by burning; but the Sages maintain, It can also be effected by crumbling it into small particles, casting it to the wind or throwing it into the sea.”*

This is a powerful combination of statements with an exciting element of inbuilt controversy. At the most basic level, we can derive that there is a time limit for an individual to benefit from leaven, and after that neither the person nor dependents can profit in any way from that asset. The big question that arises is about how to eradicate what may be left over.

Subtly focusing on the materiality element, we are left with a more profound conundrum for ourselves. What are we doing to eliminate from our personalities the symbols of leaven that can so easily detract from humility within ourselves on the one hand, and empathy with our fellow humans, on the other hand?

The act of burning is deceptively simple. It is a straightforward destruction which renders the article so burnt as to be considered null and void. What once existed is completely destroyed. Can it really be so easy to wave away some of our worst traits in a moment?

By contrast, crumbling an item into pieces requires more effort. There is an element of determination and concentration involved in focusing on the target. A combination of the physical and mental faculties coalesce to give effect to an achievement made possible only by hard work.

Taking the chametz out of inner ourselves may seem as easy as burning something which we wish to remove. Reducing it piece by piece is not so simple. It makes us look into the way we can dismantle our character flaws for long term gain and, to adopt the words of our Mishneh, to cast it to the winds and throw it into the sea.

Go on - try it and see for yourself!

# BUILDING THE GESHER

*by* JJ SUSSMAN

GESHER IS ALL ABOUT BRINGING TOGETHER DIVERSE SECTORS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE TO EXPLORE, BUILD AND STRENGTHEN A COHESIVE SOCIETY, NOT ONLY IN ISRAEL BUT ACROSS THE WORLD.

*A Haredi advisor to the mayor of Israel's largest city, a secular actor, and a Religious Zionist journalist board a plane to Los Angeles...*

Although this sounds like the beginning of a joke, this was the scene as I recently led a Geshher trip: a broad delegation of Israeli movers and shakers on their way to study the thriving kaleidoscope of rich Jewish life outside of Israel. This is what Geshher is about - bringing together diverse sectors of the Jewish people to explore, build and strengthen a cohesive society.

Geshher is an organisation that has been recognised for decades as the leader in facilitating dialogue and shattering stereotypes between the often-conflicting sectors of Israeli Jewish society. Many leaders today in Israel cite their earlier participation in a Geshher seminar (often in high school) as one of the most nationalistically transformative, identity-forming moments of their lives.

Just a few years ago, we decided to expand our efforts in two crucial areas. First, we chose to evolve from a strictly educational

organisation to one focused on tangible social impact. The most dramatic operational change was initiating our work with Israeli society *leaders* currently influencing society – not just students or soldiers representing the next generation. The second was our decision to expand our focus, from bridging the gaps only in *Israeli* society to also focusing on rifts between Israelis and *world* Jewry by increasing Israelis' sense of connection to the global community.

Taking on these goals meant we needed to develop projects geared towards leaders in Israeli society becoming better educated and more aware of world Jewry, and to imbue within these leaders a sense of responsibility to those Jews around the world. The most prominent manifestation of this goal is a three-month intensive course for a cohort of about 20 senior civic leaders in Israel. With almost half of the Jewish people now residing in Israel, we are living through a paradigm shift: Israel and Israelis need to assume more responsibility for global Jewry and inject some tangible substance into the well-oiled idiom of the “state of the Jewish people.”





“

MANY LEADERS TODAY IN ISRAEL CITE THEIR EARLIER PARTICIPATION IN A GESHER SEMINAR (OFTEN IN HIGH SCHOOL) AS ONE OF THE MOST NATIONALISTICALLY TRANSFORMATIVE, IDENTITY-FORMING MOMENTS OF THEIR LIVES.

The question we put to this group: *What does that responsibility mean today for us in Israel?*

With many Jewish leaders (and laypeople) sensing a widening gap between Israel and world Jewry, it is crucial now more than ever to close that gap. For decades, Gesher has believed that the way to shatter stereotypes and break down barriers is through meeting face-to-face. But two years of Covid and travel restrictions have further distanced Israel and Israelis from the hearts and minds of Jews around the world. For many Israelis, Jews living abroad are, *at best*, expected to donate money and, at worst, not able to live a “true” Jewish life.

Yes, for many Israelis, ignorance of Jewish life abroad is par for the course. And as in any community, many of these attitudes come from leaders and those who often “have the microphone” in the media. As such, we decided to focus on creating this transformative experience for leaders in Israeli society: we educate, expose, and encourage them to try and further promote these goals through them to their spheres of influence.

Just this past November, for example, the Head of Education in the IDF participated in one of our courses. It included an intense week of meeting the Jewish communities in Washington DC and New York, and he emerged transformed. How did we know? Upon his return, he immediately sought ways to implement his newfound sense of Jewish peoplehood through





his organisation. Already, we have seen tangible results: Whether it was the show of solidarity with the Jewish community in Colleyville, Texas, and their harrowing hostage situation, or helping to settle the Jewish refugees from Ukraine, the newfound sense of Jewish peoplehood in the IDF's education corps is palpable.

Gesher will be leading a senior group of Israeli educational leaders on a delegation to London in just a few months. Once again, the goal will be to instill a sense of connection between these Israelis and Jews living outside of Israel. Having these educational leaders undergo this transformative experience will not only change their perspective but will impact the curricula they implement and the pupils they teach. It will add meaning to the sense of *Kol Yisrael Areivim Ze Lazeh* – all Jews are responsible for one another.

What better message is there to transmit during the *Pesach* season than a sense of mutual responsibility?

As we sit around the *sefer* table with our families and relive the Exodus from Egypt, we recount the story of how we came together to become a nation in the desert. We are commanded to reenact the exodus experience every year so as not to forget our roots, to remember that we all share a heritage and that we can all work together to better our common destiny.

This sense of empathy and compassion for Jews worldwide is even more relevant today – and with a heightened sense of importance – as we witness thousands of Ukrainians become refugees.

As a people, we need to care. We need to act. And we are. With a renewed sense of Jewish peoplehood, we can take pride in the heroic, selfless efforts that our fellow Jews are putting forth in stepping up for the Ukrainian refugees. This is the truest manifestation of *Kol Yisrael Areivim Ze Lazeh*. And this is the Gesher – the bridge – that we will continue to build.



JJ Sussman is the International Director of Gesher ([www.gesher.co.il](http://www.gesher.co.il)). He is responsible for forging partnerships and strategic relationships for the organisation. Over the last five years he has led numerous delegations of Israeli civic leaders to experience the challenges and opportunities of Jewish communities outside of Israel. JJ joined Gesher after having worked for 15+ years in Israel's high tech industry. He lives with his wife and six children in Modiin, Israel.

# COSTA RICA

## PURA VIDA!

by **RABBI ELI BIRNBAUM**

A GROUP OF YOUNG AISH UK MEMBERS  
TRAVELLED ACROSS THE GLOBE TO COSTA RICA  
FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

Over February half-term, Aish Young Professionals embarked on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the stunning surroundings of Costa Rica. Our first trip in over eight years, we chose a destination as far removed as possible from the stress and pressures of cold, Covid-ravaged Britain and set off with a group of over forty young Jews for a week of exploration and discovery, becoming the first Jewish group from the UK to explore the 'Pura Vida'!

Despite a heavy delay departing Gatwick, the group arrived in San Jose in good spirits as we travelled to the Rio Perlas resort a few hours outside the capital. The off-country trail to get there was reminiscent of scenes in Jurassic Park, with tight bends and precarious cliff-edges very much the norm.

Glorious sunshine greeted us on our first morning, and after a delicious breakfast featuring lots of fruit we'd never seen before and a hilarious ice breaker session, we split into smaller groups for focused talks on the theme of Morality. Each morning's

educational programming orbited around one overarching theme, which each of our expert educators tackled from a different angle. Despite tiredness and jetlag, discussions, questions and insights were top-notch and only dampened (figuratively and literally) by the fact that an unexpected cold front swept in to remind everyone why they call it a **rain**forest! Reflecting on the educational structure, trip participant Stanley Offord remarked: "My reflection post-trip is that the classes were either just as or more important than the activities. There are so many things I've come away with, morals that I want to work and apply to my everyday life."

We aimed to communicate valuable life lessons through each of the daily activities. Our visit on our first day to a coffee and sugar cane plantation was a brilliant platform for discussing just how much patience and how many steps are required along the way to take something unusable and transform it into something that changes the course of history.

“

FROM JEWISH HISTORY, TO  
KABBALAH, TO THE HIDDEN  
SECRETS OF HEBREW AND  
JEWISH LIFE WISDOM, TRIP  
PARTICIPANTS ROTATED  
THROUGH THE OPTIONS SO THAT  
BY THE END OF THE WEEK THEY  
HAD COMPLETED ALL FOUR.



**PURA  
VIDA**





## THE AFTERNOON WAS ALL ABOUT CONQUERING FEAR AND STEPPING OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONE AS WE ZIPLINED AND RAPPELLED THROUGH THE SPECTACULAR FORESTS OVERLOOKING SAN JOSE

Evenings back a Rio Perlas were a combination of interactive ‘workshops’ which showcased core topics within Jewish life and thought. From Jewish history, to Kabbalah, to the hidden secrets of Hebrew and Jewish life wisdom, trip participants rotated through the options so that by the end of the week they had completed all four. Other evening highlights included a manic team-building activity based on events typically seen in a primary school sports day and a beautiful campfire on our final night in Rio Perlas where we sang, shared stories and P’chaims with the ambience of the resort’s waterfall and the rainforest’s natural symphony providing a stunning backdrop.

Day 2 saw a continued downpour, which meant the morning classes on Community were held in a fine drizzle. In fact, things got so much like England, we had to stop at a small shop up a mountain and everyone bought bright pink ponchos. The highlight of the day was scaling the crater of the incredible Irazu volcano. Being in the middle of a cloud further contributed to the other-worldly experience of the volcano. From the plant life to the rock formations, we were surrounded by the fascinating marvels of nature’s beauty. Then the sun came out for fifteen minutes and everyone got sunburnt, because we’re pasty Britons. We then visited the historic town of Orosi where we learned more about the Jewish history of Costa Rica and its connection to the Spanish Inquisition. An impromptu game of football was arranged with the local under 16’s side. We lost. Badly. Football didn’t come home.

Day 3 brought with it two good tidings – the arrival of Rebbetzin Miriam Gefen from Aish Manchester, as well as the glorious (Mancunian?) sunshine, which stuck around for the rest of the trip. Morning talks about Relationships opened up some fascinating discussions as we explored the Jewish perspective on a topic that is obviously urgently relevant and important to the young professional demographic. The afternoon was all about conquering fear and stepping out of our comfort zone as we ziplined and rappelled through the spectacular forests overlooking San Jose. And yes, some of our senior educators may have turned a peculiar shade of green while rappelling. They shall remain nameless.

Day 4’s morning conversations brought our content home to roost as we tackled the true role of faith and belief within our lives as young Jews living in modern Britain. Teamwork and appreciation of God’s creation were very much the afternoon’s takeaways as we rafted down rapids. And yes, a certain Rabbi

may have fallen in. Twice. Participant Yasmin Cooper had a whale of a time: “When we went water rafting, I was looking round at the beautiful forest and just felt so spiritual and reconnected with the world around me, and afterwards I took a swim in the river and swam underwater. I can’t fully describe it, but when I emerged, I felt rejuvenated, like some spirit had come over me and I could see the world in a different way. I’ve never been particularly religious but going on this trip has encouraged me to become more actively involved in the Jewish community. I feel like my energy has been rekindled from this trip - it really has been life changing for me in the best of ways!”

Friday night’s atmosphere in the breath-taking San Jose community centre was without question a highlight of the whole trip. We were told that dozens of locals had come to shul just to meet our group, and we responded in kind by putting on quite a show, greeting Shabbat with singing and dancing. The Friday night meal was shared with a group of local young professionals, which really gave us a chance to get to know the community and also to appreciate just how much there is for young Jews back in the UK. A lively and moving Oneg featuring the full litany of ‘bangers’ from the Aish songbook was held back at the hotel before we were politely asked to stop singing by the concierge. Participant Rosie Haftel said about the Shabbat experience: “To experience the Jewish life of somewhere halfway across the world never ceases to amaze me. As we sit in shul on Shabbat, singing the same songs in the same tunes, just wow. I feel refreshed from the trip, like something I didn’t even realise was missing has been restored. Thank you!”



Shabbat day was relaxing and uplifting: lunch with the whole community followed by a guided tour through the Jewish history of Costa Rica, then classes

on the grass outside with a rainbow stretching overhead. We walked to the fabulous penthouse home of the Rosenstock family for the final Shabbat meal and a truly moving 'closing the circle' before a rocking Havdalah concert. Plans for a big night out were scuppered by Costa Rica's Covid curfew, so we put on a hilarious 'pub quiz' of Jewish general knowledge at the hotel instead. Numerous P'chaims later and the group was once again in full voice, working its way through the 'bangers' again. Concierge had given up by this point and the singing went on until 2.00am.

By the final day, the togetherness and atmosphere throughout the group is difficult to describe without doing our whole experience a severe injustice. As we finished off our closing

ceremony, it was clear that the activities, the classes, the workshops, the games, the singing, the connections, indeed the whole trip from start to finish was the stuff of dreams. Looking back at the journey, participant Toby Winston said: "It reinforced the fact that no matter where you live, all Jews share the same beliefs, culture, history and traditions and that we are all a big community despite the fact we all live in different places. Aish provides Jewish teachings in a really accessible way that allows you to strengthen your own Jewish beliefs in your own way. Questions on Jewish beliefs, God, morality and ethics etc are always encouraged and the educators are never judgemental of any questions or statements you may have. This trip taught me that being Jewish isn't something that just remains stationary. It's important to constantly look to improve yourself and others around you, even if you are only making small changes."

Costa Ricans have a greeting. They say 'Pura Vida'. What does that mean? Pure life. And that's exactly what we found.



Rabbi Eli Birnbaum studied in Talmudic College in Israel for six years before attaining Rabbinic Ordination after two years in the Jerusalem Kollel. During this time, Rabbi Birnbaum completed a BSc in Criminology & Social Psychology. Together with his wife Naomi, Rabbi Birnbaum moved back to London to take up a position in the JLE's campus department, where he set up the infrastructure for regular Lunch & Learns across London's major campuses, as well as creating the 'Genesis+' programme, aimed at older students and post-graduates. He is now the Director of Education at Aish UK.

הגדה של פסח

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For more information, contact:  
[LeeJacobs@aish.org.uk](mailto:LeeJacobs@aish.org.uk)

# aish<sup>uk</sup> UPDATE

Wishing all our readers a happy Pesach! Thanks to your generous support, we are able to offer such a wide range of Jewish experiences to keep young Jews connected. We are proud to share some of the recent Aish UK highlights across the country.

SINCE JANUARY 2021

Total Participations	30 000
Unique Participants	3 424
Schools Participations	7 245
Campus Participations	9 315
YP Participations	4 764
Community Participations	8 636

1.5+ million  
1.6+ million  
350,000  
25,500  
1,200  
120

video views  
minutes watched  
online engagements  
magazines distributed  
new subscribers  
new videos

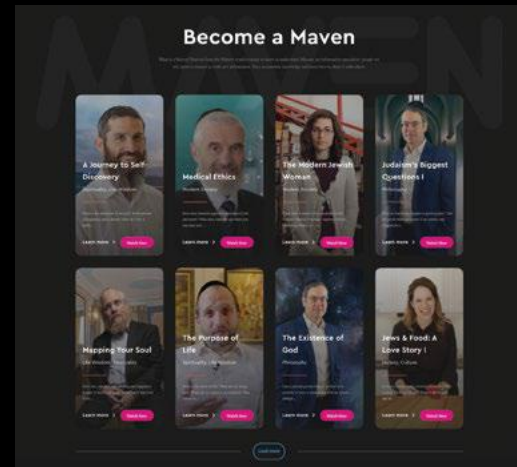
## Online Stats

[www.aish.org.uk](http://www.aish.org.uk)

## Maven

Maven has become the place to go for online Jewish education. Since the start of the academic year, we have had almost 700 course applications from Jewish students in the UK. **WITH OVER 300 MENTORING SESSIONS TAKING PLACE IN THAT TIME, STUDENTS ARE EARNING MEMBERSHIP POINTS WITH MAVEN TO UNLOCK ACCESS TO OUR AMAZING MERCHANDISE AND TRIPS ABROAD.**

Two exciting new courses currently in development include Jewish wisdom from author and Head of Culture, Diversity and Inclusion at TikTok, Michal Oshman; as well as a leadership course from Israeli National Marathon Champion and mother of five children, Beatie Deutsch. Sign up at [www.aish.org.uk/maven](http://www.aish.org.uk/maven)



## Manchester Poland Trips

After missing out on their Year 12 experience to Poland, **AISH UK RAN THE TRIP FOR 70 YEAR 13 STUDENTS IN MANCHESTER ACROSS ALL SCHOOLS IN OCTOBER.** In addition, we ran the current Year 12 trip in February for 60 students. The trips were for students across Manchester including Manchester Grammar School, King David High School, Withington, Altrincham and other colleges.

Parents were so impressed with their children's experiences, they wanted to experience it for themselves too! In March, Aish Manchester ran a first of its kind community Poland trip for over 20 adults.



# Aish on Campus

**BIG WEEKEND:** The BIG Refreshers Weekend welcomed over **90 STUDENTS FROM OVER 10 DIFFERENT CAMPUSES** to the beautiful Woodland Grange Hotel in Leamington Spa for a weekend of delicious dining, stimulating conversations, and fantastic fun. Featuring an interactive competition, The BIG "Q"; an innovative platform for asking the questions that matter; and a full Casino evening. Students walked away inspired to connect and learn more with the Jewish community on campus, reconnected to their friends and campus educational team and having made new friends with Jewish students all over the country.



**CHAMONIX TRIP:** 45 very fortunate students travelled with us to the beautiful ski town on the border of France and Switzerland: Chamonix. The daytimes saw the group enjoying one of the prime ski slopes in the world, whilst the evenings allowed the students to relax in our exclusive five-star chalet hotel and engage with the world-class interactive education programme on offer.

## Aish London Campuses

The newest branch of Aish on Campus has opened its doors... in the city of London itself! Servicing over eight different universities, AOC London is off to a running start with its flagship London Lounge programme. The Lounge ran fortnightly this term in the upscale Arboretum members' club located in Leicester Square, boasting large dinner buffets, drinks on tap, live music, prize giveaways, and 'curated conversations' - discussions of hot-button Jewish topics moderated by the students themselves. **OVER ONE HUNDRED NEW STUDENTS PARTICIPATED, WITH OVER 250 TOTAL PARTICIPATIONS THROUGHOUT THE TERM.**



## Young Professionals

**COSTA RICA:** A group of almost 50 young professionals embarked on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the stunning environs of Costa Rica for a week surrounded by the beauty of God's creation. Twice daily learning sessions covered topics as diverse as morality, community, belief, relationships, text, history, kabbalah and life wisdom. Daily activities included scaling a volcano, ziplining through the rainforest and white-water rafting. The trip concluded with a magical Shabbat spent together with the incredible community in San Jose. **WE MADE MEMORIES THAT WILL LAST FOREVER!**



**CHANUKAH:** Over 150 young professionals descended on London Bridge to celebrate Chanukah together in one of our first large scale 'post Covid' events. Live music, delicious food and drink and an immersive candle lighting ceremony were the absolute highlights of an unforgettable evening.

**PURIM:** This year, we did things totally differently and hosted a megillah reading and masquerade Purim party with a twist on a boat down the Thames! What was the twist? To access the bar, our 120 YPs had to 'pass' a number of interactive Purim-themed challenges designed to teach and spark conversation about the festival. Despite the appalling weather, behind every mask was a beaming smile as we welcomed an unprecedented number of new participants!



[www.aish.org.uk](http://www.aish.org.uk)

# Making Mavens

[Sign up now >](#)

*by* **RABBI ARI KAYSER**

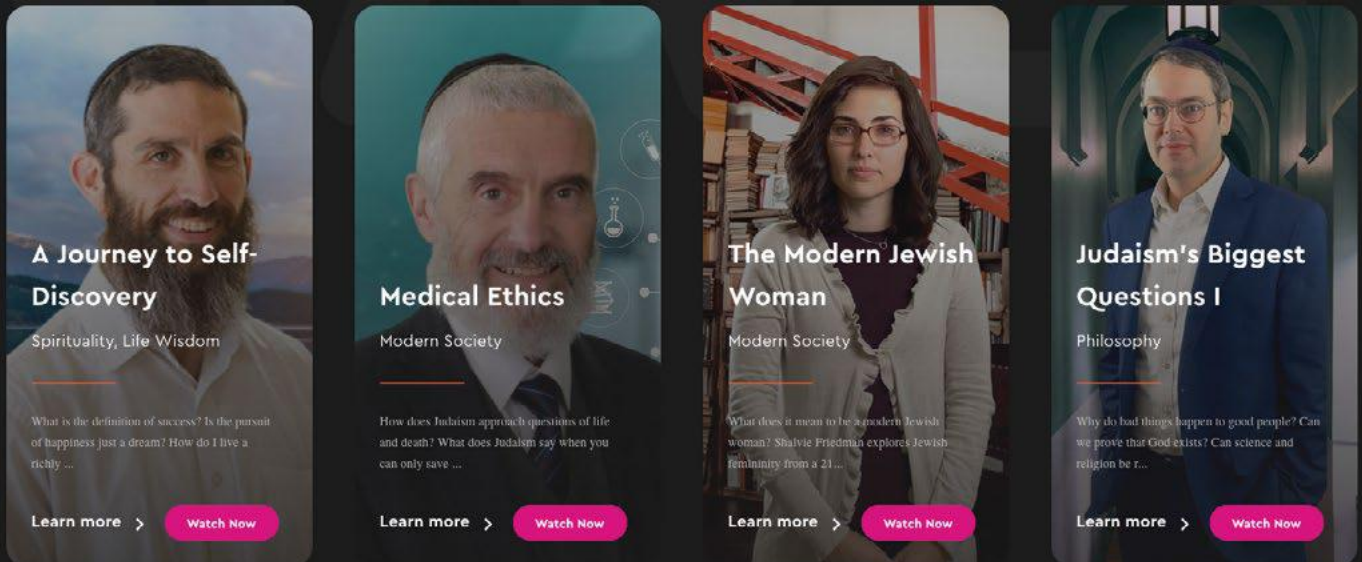
AISH'S MAVEN PLATFORM BREAKS BOUNDARIES  
BY BRINGING JEWISH WISDOM AND MENTORSHIP  
TO STUDENTS THROUGH A COMBINATION OF  
ONLINE AND IN-PERSON COURSES

Let's face it, learning has moved online. With a growth rate of more than 900% since the year 2000, online learning is the fastest growing market in the education industry. A report published by the German marketing and consumer data group Statista, suggests the eLearning market is growing exponentially and by 2026 will reach \$370 billion. And it is showing no signs of slowing down.

As a Jewish charity which historically centred around its ability to forge in-person relationships, it was a great challenge for me to take on the role of Director of Online Education, with a focus on creating educational content online for the future. Prior to the pandemic, my incredibly talented team and I began to delve into the world of online courses. The idea was to create a place for high level, beautifully produced, authentic Jewish wisdom accessible to everyone. We started small and allowed time for experimentation and failures. Then the lockdowns came, and every organisation in the world – from small

charities to multimillion dollar corporations – were scrambling to find creative ways to keep existing without being able to gather in person. Lucky for us, we had already put the basic building blocks in place, and we were able to shift into a higher gear when we needed to.

In early 2020 we launched our online course platform: Maven. The word Maven is derived from the Hebrew word 'meiyvin' meaning 'to know or understand'. Mavens are information specialists and experts in their field, who not only possess knowledge but can also share this with others. When developing the course platform, we wanted to ensure we could retain a connection with students across the country and enable them to remain a part of the wide network of Jewish students as well as giving them the chance to get involved in our wider programming such as trips and big events. With that in mind we developed a hybrid system of online learning matched with offline connection.



## "Maven is transforming online engagements into offline relationships."

To qualify for our campus membership scheme – whereby the more points a student earns the more they can access our trips – students are required to meet with our Maven Mentors and go through the course content. Those relationships have developed into new connections, with students coming for Shabbat meals with their friends and creating a Shabbat-space for them to connect to their Judaism while away from home. In that way, Maven is transforming online engagements into offline relationships.

Working with some of the most talented Jewish educators in the world, we have developed a wide range of course content. Shalvie Friedman is the instructor on an in-depth course about the role of women in Judaism. In the course she talks openly about the challenges and aspirations of Jewish women today and how much has shifted in the past century. Renowned lecturer and founder of the Jerusalem Ethics Forum, Rabbi Dr Akiva Tatz, covers topics such as the Jewish response to medical dilemmas and questions arising from developments in the field of genetics. Author and educator, Rabbi David Aaron, has a course in which he shows viewers an ancient Jewish 'soul-map' to their inner world and outlines practical steps to achieve a greater level of happiness.

If Jewish history is your passion, Maven boasts courses charting the greatest controversies throughout the ages, the history of Jewish foods and the interplay between religion and secularism. Renowned educator Rabbi Daniel Rowe tackles many of the fundamental questions in Judaism such as "Can a rational person can believe in God?" and "Do science and religion conflict?"

Two more exciting courses currently in development include Jewish wisdom from author and Head of Culture, Diversity and Inclusion at TikTok, Michal Oshman; as well as a leadership course from Israeli National Marathon Champion and mother of five children, Beatie Deutsch.

The beauty of these courses is that students can learn at their own pace and have a built-in system to gain better insight into the content via the Maven Mentors scheme. This allows a more personal learning relationship to develop and provides a chance for students to ask questions so that they can explore the subjects further.

Rebbetzin Leah Moszkowski, who is co-director of the Aish on Campus Leeds branch along with her husband Ozer, has been involved with the Maven course since it was launched and is currently tutoring several university students. These students are based not only in Leeds, but across the country, and she is even currently working with one student who is studying in Paris for the year. She feels that the courses offer "real knowledge in bite size pieces", making it a more accessible and less overwhelming way to learn. "I have seen how it changes students over the course and they really get something out of it. The Maven courses are a positive thing for their souls and is almost like a form of self-care. It is an investment in themselves and their religious well-being."



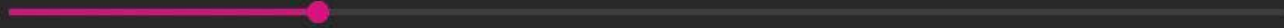
**Bronze**  
Membership Level

**15** Points



**1** tutor sessions

## Membership Progress



**Bronze**

**25 Points**  
**+ 1 Mentor Meeting**



Vodka Glass  
and 5cl Smirnoff Vodka

**Silver**

**50 Points**  
**+ 3 Mentor Meetings**



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Next Level **Silver**

To achieve  
your next level:

**35** Points



**2** tutor sessions

Being able to engage in meaningful discussions means that students can ask questions that are important to them and gain a deeper understanding of Judaism and Jewish teachings. She feels that this way of learning makes it beneficial not only for the students but for her as a mentor, and she enjoys the opportunity to share viewpoints and gain new perspectives from each other. "I believe that we are all students and all teachers. Being able to learn and explore these topics together and gain further knowledge and wisdom from each other is very powerful." During lockdown, all of Leah's tutorials were held online, but she has recently started doing in-person and group sessions in students' homes and really enjoys being able to interact in this way with students.

Membership for the Maven platform is completely free for students and gives them unlimited access to all the Aish UK courses. Through completion of both the online course and the accompanying mentor sessions, it is possible for students to gain valuable Aish membership points. Working on a tiered system, the more courses completed the more points are available, and these can be used for Aish events and activities, including trips and weekends away.

At Aish UK we have embraced technology as a way to enhance Jewish learning. Since I joined in 2014, we

have built a department of videographers, editors, social media experts and creatives to produce educational, fun, cultural and interesting content that encourages students to engage with their Judaism. Aish UK has invested more than most outreach organisations in the world in creating a platform like this, and it is my belief that harnessing what technology has to offer will inform the next phase of Jewish education.

Through Maven and our Mentors, we have started to create a community of learning where geography is not an issue, which is particularly significant to students who may lack a Jewish connection and gives them a chance to connect in a meaningful way and strengthen their Jewish identities.

My hope is that the Maven platform will inspire other organisations within the Jewish community to tap into this new way of communicating with their target audience.

This process has already begun. Aish UK has partnered with Olami, a global community of young Jews, educators, and communal leaders across 320 member organisations in 28 countries. An adapted version of Maven has now been rolled out across 12 US college campuses, with the aim for this to be integrated into all other campuses across the USA.

**"Being able to learn and explore these topics together and gain further knowledge and wisdom from each other is very powerful."**

**Sign up now >**

Our online team recognise the potential of this platform and are currently developing more exciting functionality to enhance the level of learning and improve the user experience. We are looking to introduce an interactive discussion board to encourage students to ask questions that tutors can then respond to through the forum. We also have plans to introduce a live streaming element so that course instructors and mentors can deliver live classes in real time to groups of students.

There is no better way to understand the online revolution we are trying to spearhead in the Jewish world than taking one of our courses!

**Sign up for a course today at [www.aish.org.uk/maven](http://www.aish.org.uk/maven).**



**638 Student Sign Ups  
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**17 Exciting Online  
Courses**



Rabbi Ari Kayser is the Director of Online Education for Aish UK and the Editor-in-Chief of Perspectives magazine. Ari leads the Aish Online team in producing a wide range of media and publications, including short inspirational videos, podcast series and developing online courses. He relishes the challenge of conveying authentic Jewish teachings into the language of the 21st Century. Aside from qualifying as a Rabbi, Ari also has a BSc in Economics from UCL and certification as a professional cocktail bartender. His interests include backpacking across the world, writing poetry and meditation.

EDUCATION



# **OLD** *School* **RULES**

**GARETH KOBRIN** SHARES HIS FAVOURITE,  
TIMELESS PIECES OF ADVICE ON LEARNING

I was chatting with friends on WhatsApp and halfway through the funny anecdote I was typing, my iPhone screen went black. I panicked of course, and after all the tricks I found on YouTube failed to revive it, I accepted that the phone had died (*olav ba-sholom*). It's sad to admit, but I felt vulnerable and isolated from the world - not because I couldn't banter with mates or answer any of my wife's hourly phone calls, but because this device has become my source of *knowledge*. News, business, the stock market, even Torah... I felt intellectually naked.

I rushed to book an appointment at the sacred Apple store in Brent Cross, which has more congregants on any given morning than any (other) place of worship, and my daughter joined me because she needed some goodies for school, which we purchased first. While waiting for the meeting with the iPhone minister, my daughter was doodling on her new pad of paper, and when he finally graced us with his presence, he said something to her that was wiser than he knew:

*"It's so refreshing to see a child playing on a pad of paper, rather than an iPad."*

Everything in our lives has gone virtual, and education as we know it is virtually gone. The classroom has been replaced by Zoom, workbooks are now tablets and our library is called Google. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but as I often preach, we must never forget the old ways. My mission is to try and rediscover what our Elders have always known and adapt this wisdom where necessary to the digital age. My usual disclaimer applies: I am smart enough to know how little I know, so I like to borrow insight from the ancients. I have a habit of writing lessons down when they resonate (well, typing them into my phone), and thus I present to you my 5 favourite Old School Rules for Learning:

## LESSON 1: PEOPLE DO WHAT YOU DO, NOT WHAT YOU SAY

*Teacher: Rav Chaim of Volozhin*

There is a well told tale that recounts how the Russian minister of education asked Reb Chaim at what age Jews start educating their children. "20 years before they are born" was his timeless response.

Our children, our employees, even those friends who look up to us, will instinctively mimic our behaviour, but not necessarily listen to verbal instruction. I can't lecture my daughters about not being on their phones and then blatantly ignore them for an hour while I play on mine - the actions speak far louder than the words.

If we want others to learn from us, we need to constantly work to ensure we embody whatever message we are trying to convey.

## LESSON 2: TEACH OTHERS EARLY WHAT YOU LEARNED LATE

*Teacher: Professor Richard P. Feynman*

Richard Feynman is curious character: an American theoretical physicist who assisted in the development of the atomic bomb, won the Nobel Prize for physics and is widely accepted as one of the greatest teachers of all time. Feynman was a secular Jew, but later in his life during a visit to a yeshiva, he encountered the Talmud for the first time. Whilst it did not convert him, in his seminal autobiography, *'Surely you're joking, Mr Feynman'*, he explains, "I saw that it contained the original text in a little square on the page, and surrounding it were commentaries written over time by different people. I realised that in this way, the Talmud had *evolved*, and everything that was discussed was carefully recorded. This impressed me, as it dispelled my preconceived idea that the religion was somehow stuck in the Dark Ages."

Despite being a (literal) genius, he always described himself as a slow learner (he only started talking after his third birthday) and his golden rule was to try to teach his students the things he had learned most recently.

Often, we think that just because it took a few decades to learn something, we should wait to give it over to our children – *let them figure it out for themselves, like I had to*. Whilst it is true there is no substitute for experience, I am a firm believer that if you are still learning life lessons as an adult, they must be particularly important and should be shared with anyone who will listen. (A fact my unfortunate wife, children, friends and colleagues probably don't agree with!)

### LESSON 3: IT IS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS TO AVOID SHOWING SIGNS OF WEAKNESS

Teacher: Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Taleb is one of my favourite thinkers and although he is the only non-Jew on my list, he is a Lebanese-Christian who shows a deep respect for all religion in his writing and often quotes the Talmud.

It probably won't surprise the reader that as a South African, I am a big rugby fan. There was a legendary Australian player named John Eales, a 2m tall titan who captained them to 2 World Cup victories and was not only a powerful forward player who could soar high above opponents to catch the ball, but also kicked the penalties (something that is practically unheard of for giants who play in his position). Eales had the best nickname I have ever heard in sport: his teammates called him "Nobody". Do you know why? Because *Nobody's perfect*.



Recognising limitations is key to realising limitless potential in areas of strength.

'Nobody's Perfect' is not just an expression, it's a fact. I learned this the hard way in business; many times, I was arrogant and thought I could do everything, and instead of hiring people who were better than me, I stubbornly did it myself and failed. It's a tough thing to admit we are *bad* at something, but it's critical to be honest and acknowledge our flaws and either seek help in those areas or work extra hard to overcome the natural shortcoming. Recognising limitations is key to realising limitless potential in areas of strength.

Every weakness contains within itself a strength, so the trick is not to focus on the things we aren't good at, but instead to understand why we lack in that area and try using that to develop the areas where we know we excel.

Every person that you meet knows something you don't - learn from them.

### LESSON 4: NO MATTER HOW THIN YOU SLICE IT, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE TWO SIDES

Teacher: Baruch Spinoza

Baruch Spinoza was a Dutch philosopher of Sephardic origin. His name is somewhat ironic as he wasn't exactly a blessed member of Jewish society: after yeshiva he developed highly controversial ideas regarding the authenticity of the Torah and the *Beth Din* issued a *herem* against him, causing him to be expelled and shunned by the community, including by his own family, at age 23.

He may not have been popular with his fellow Yids, but he went on to become widely accepted as one of the most important philosophers of all time. I haven't read any of his stuff, but I came across the quote above which echoed true: it is so important to remember that there are two sides to *every* story. Everything under the sun can be seen from two perspectives, which is why I strive to work on developing rigorous empathy. Whenever I find myself disagreeing with someone – whether it is their opinion or their actions – I try on their shoes and imagine what it's like to walk in them. Once you make space for their perception, even if you still ultimately disagree, it creates humility and a framework for peace, not conflict. My wise colleague Ben taught me the most brilliant rule: every time someone says or does something that you instinctively disagree with, before you react, pretend that they had inserted the following disclaimer before:

*"I may be wrong, and I welcome your opinion if you can prove otherwise, but this is what I think."*

It is possibly more important to consider the other side even when you agree with something, which leads us onto our final lesson...



“

It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal schooling – where children are told what the ‘truth’ is and then tested on it.



## LESSON 5: THE IMPORTANT THING IS NOT TO STOP QUESTIONING

*Teacher: Albert Einstein*

From the Jew who brought us the theory of relativity comes the relatively simple, but perhaps most important lesson: question everything. Einstein described himself as neither especially clever nor especially gifted. “I am only very, very curious”.

Classic Jewish education drills this message home from a young age: the most poignant example being the Pesach *seder*, where our children are taught to ask as many questions as they can. This continues into formal education, where the Talmud engages in the give-and-take of argument about what one is obligated to do and not do, mostly through a series of questions.

The same cannot be said about secular education. It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal schooling – where children are *told* what the ‘truth’ is and then tested on it. And an inability to regurgitate these unchallenged facts in exactly the form the teacher wants results in failure. What a pathetic way to train young brains.

The Talmudic way is to allow a debate to develop its themes through inquiry into fundamental, unifying principles – but in some cases no ‘solution’ is offered, which in itself teaches us something: Nobody ever figures out what life is all about, and it doesn’t matter. Explore the world. Nearly everything is very interesting if you go into it deeply enough.



Gareth is a South African businessman, father of two beautiful daughters and one truly special boy. He loves sports, dogs and writing and is a compulsive reader. He is currently involved in a business that helps properties transition to Net Zero, specialising in Electric Vehicle charging. So technically, he is saving the planet. Contract him for sports banter, tax advice or to charge your Tesla at [garethkobrin@gmail.com](mailto:garethkobrin@gmail.com)



# NORMALISING INCLUSION IN J&WISH & EDUCATION

JODI SAMUELS REFLECTS ON THE VALUE  
OF PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT IN  
OUR SCHOOLS FOR LEARNERS OF ALL ABILITIES



While watching in horror as Russia begins its invasion into Ukraine, I remember a conversation that I had with Benzi Gruber, a Brigadier General in the Israeli army. He founded *Ethics in the Field*, and among his projects is the inclusion of people with disabilities in the Defence Forces. One of the most powerful militaries in the world has multiple programmes where people of varying abilities are given the opportunity to serve and protect the State of Israel. As Benzi explained, this is not only about giving opportunity to those with special needs, but is for the benefit of all soldiers. In order to create a moral army, every soldier must see every person as a human of value, and one who adds value to society.

Imagine if every school system believed that every person has the right to an education, and that providing this education in an inclusive setting has the power to impact every student and teacher. Inclusive education has the power to teach equality, compassion, and to open minds. Students within this kind of system understand that everyone is challenged in certain ways and gifted in other ways - including people with physical, neurological, emotional or other types of disorders.

Differentiated instruction is the process of tailoring lessons to meet each student's individual interests, needs and strengths. Teaching this way gives students choice and flexibility in how they learn and helps teachers personalise learning. It is a framework for effective teaching that benefits both the student with the disability and all students with various challenges.

When our daughter, Caila, was just 2 years old, we wanted to send her to the community Jewish Day School that her siblings attended - a private day school in one of the most expensive neighbourhoods in the world. She would have had a basket of support services from New York City, renowned as the best in the US. The school reluctantly met us and told us they did not think their school was the right environment for Caila. I challenged them, reminding them that the stated goal of their programme for 2-year olds is teaching socialisation and communication skills. We were not asking for guaranteed entrance to first grade, to high school or to Harvard.

After many weeks of waiting, they finally gave us a definite NO. They could not accept Caila. Again, I challenged them and was given multiple reasons for their decision:

"We don't have the resources." I responded incredulously that each class has 18 kids and 3 teachers, as well as a basket of New York City services - what resources were missing?

"We don't have room for a shadow." Again I challenged that I had other children in the school and was well aware that almost every class had a shadow - why would Caila's shadow take up more room?

Isaac was blind.  
Moses, objectively the  
greatest leader of the  
Jewish people, had a  
speech impediment.

"Parents might protest that a disabled person with a cognitive disorder like Down syndrome will take too much attention from the class." My objection: when neuro-typical children are unmotivated and disruptive, parents do not protest that they may hold up the class. A child like Caila might be much more motivated and bring tremendous benefits to the learning environment.

"Those children are a liability." I was curious what kind of liability "those children" might present. Apparently, according to the school, people with Down syndrome bite and kick. Pretty big generalisation. After all, they had neither met her nor assessed our daughter.

"Rabbi, are you saying that you don't have room for children with Down syndrome?" I asked.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a piece of American legislation that ensures students with a disabilities are provided with a "free, appropriate public education" that is tailored to their individual needs. Parochial schools are private, and often dodge the law, but that does not make it right. My call to action: "We are not asking you to do what is easy - we are asking you to do what is *right*?"

As Jews - the 'People of the Book' - we only have to look at our own Torah to find numerous examples of inclusion. Isaac was blind. Moses, objectively the greatest leader of the Jewish people, had a speech impediment. When the Jews were



instructed to gather at Mount Sinai they were instructed to each bring a half shekel. Every Jew - without discrimination or differentiation - was counted. The Torah teaches us repeatedly that each human has value, and should be appreciated for the gifts and skills they bring. What lessons are we teaching children in Torah classes when we don't live this reality? Inclusion in action gives authenticity to the Torah!

We finally found a school that embraced Caila and made inclusion a priority. It has been challenging to figure out the required resources and how to facilitate true inclusion where Caila learns a subset of material in a regular classroom alongside her peers. The social aspect is not easy either. Still, anyone who knows Caila will marvel at her independence and her ability to manage in the world. Caila continues to amaze everyone with her ability to learn. We define her success by her ability to move from point A to B. Her success is relative to her, not to her neurotypical peers.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wisely stated: "Education means teaching a child to be curious, to wonder, to reflect, to enquire. The child who asks becomes a partner in the learning process, an active recipient. To ask is to grow." Today, Caila is 14, and we are confident that we are achieving the goal of education with the benefit of inclusion.

Inclusion enriches the class, and then helps the person with the disability continue on in life, beyond their education, with the social skills and practice that will allow for a smooth transition and successful integration into society. Meanwhile, their peers continue on in life, beyond their education, with the social skills and practice to see and include all people within society with empathy and understanding. These skills are relevant long after they graduate - not only in the workplace, but in social and communal settings, normalising people with disabilities.

Normalising an inclusive education system is the key to normalising disabilities and creating an inclusive society with less judgement, division and hatred, and more empathy, support and unity.

**Normalising an  
inclusive education  
system is the key to  
normalising disabilities  
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with less judgement,  
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and more empathy,  
support and unity.**



Jodi Samuels is an author, connector, speaker, non-profit leader, world traveller, community activist, special needs advocate, wife and mom. Jodi founded Jewish International Connection to provide a community for foreign Jews in New York, and now also runs outreach programmes in Israel. Jodi, her husband Gavin and their three children currently live in Jerusalem where they host hundreds of people every month for Shabbat meals and events in their home. She is author of 'Chutzpah, Wisdom and Wine: Journey of an Unstoppable Woman.'

# SOME FUN FACTS ABOUT CAILA, BY CAILA:

**I am started high school - 7th grade. I go to a regular modern Orthodox Arts High School.**

**I am still learning 7th grade math. I don't learn with the kids in class as it takes me longer.**

**I am a great dancer and I love to teach my friends dances.**

**I have travelled to 50 countries with my family.**

**I made Aliya at 6 and I was fluent in Hebrew in 6 months.**

**I have been going to 4 weeks sleep away camp in the US since I was 9 years old.**

**For my batmitzvah instead of having a big party we raised \$25,000 dollars to take water and electricity to a tiny village in Zambia.**



**I go to Bnei Akiva and other after school activities even though making friends is hard for me.**

**I have been a model for different clothing companies.**

**I like to think I am the Mayor of Jerusalem as I know everyone and say hi to everyone.**



# EARLY INTERVENTION

*by* SUSAN ROSENTHAL

IDENTIFYING AND TACKLING THE CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE YOUNG CAN PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN SHAPING THEIR FUTURES



Most things that are broken can be fixed. Unfortunately, some things cannot. Take a heart, for instance. It may never be the same after it has been broken. This problem has taken on more focus of late. The argument goes that early intervention in our children's lives may avert later problems from becoming unfixable.

In June 2021, the Duchess of Cambridge launched her Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood. This Centre will raise awareness and research into the impact of the early years to transform society for generations to come. The Duchess of Cambridge's inaugural report considered the £16 billion British Society spends annually addressing issues that could be avoided through early intervention. "What shapes our childhoods, shapes the kind of adults and parents we become." In other words, why wait for something to break before we attempt to fix it?

This idea of early intervention is not unfamiliar to me. When my daughter was born 15 years ago, she received a neonatal hearing test at the hospital on the day she was born. Had she not been tested

we would never have known that our incredibly alert child was severely hearing impaired. We would not have known to fit with her hearing aids when she was a few months old. I too, would not have given up my job, to ensure that I could provide her with as much language as possible and she would not have become the verbal, chatty child that she is today. There is no doubt in my mind that this early intervention changed the course of Aimee's life for the better.

If we look at the major issues in society today, we can divide them broadly into four main categories: Physical, Social/Emotional, Behavioural and Cognitive. Physical intervention in the early years could address problems such as infectious diseases, obesity and physical disabilities (like Aimee's hearing loss). Social/Emotional issues are associated with a child's ability to form positive relationships with others, develop healthy self-esteem and reduce the incidence of mental health problems. Behavioural difficulties during childhood are often indicative of children's involvement in crime in teen and adult years, while positive cognitive development is strongly associated with a child's success in school and entry into the workforce.

In addition, threats to a child's development, such as child maltreatment, substance misuse and risky sexual behaviour are also strongly associated with adverse outcomes during adolescence and adulthood.

The Duchess has been on a mission for the past ten years to make an impact. She believes it is not simply about how we raise our children, but how they will influence the society we will become. She recently visited Denmark on a fact-finding mission, meeting health workers and academics at the forefront of Denmark's approach to early childhood development. She also met with researchers at the 'Copenhagen Infant Mental Health Project'

(CIMHP) where academics have developed an innovative screening tool to identify infants at risk called The Alarm Distress Baby Scale. It assists health visitors to identify infants subject to adverse social and emotional development.

The academics have also launched a project called 'Understanding your Baby Research Project' which provides training for health visitors so they can help parents to notice and

interpret their babies' behavioural cues.

Kate believes that by conducting research into the early years and collaborating with people across the private, public and voluntary sectors, we can make positive change. Her aim is to make transformative societal change through creative campaigns and activity.

Speaking about the research, the Duchess said: "Over the last decade I have met people from all walks of life. I have seen that experiences such as homelessness, addiction and poor mental health are often grounded in a difficult childhood. But I have also seen how positive protective factors in the early years can play a crucial role in shaping our futures... The early years are not simply about how we raise our children. They are, in fact, about how we raise the next generation of adults."

Tanya Gelbart, a speech therapist with over 20 years' experience in both the private and public sectors, confirms that early intervention in the development of a child's speech, language and communication is critical. Children develop their language and communication skills from birth. She states that if we intervene



## WHAT SHAPES OUR CHILDHOODS, SHAPES THE KIND OF ADULTS AND PARENTS WE BECOME



## Beit Issie Shapiro

Changing the lives of people with disabilities

On the Willie & Celia Trump Campus

at an appropriate time children can make excellent progress that is not entirely linear – for example, they can make two years' progress within six months. Equally, early intervention could also help to undo unfavourable habits that a child may have developed.

If a child is not engaging, attending or processing information, and not making connections with the world around him, speech therapy would be offered from around 18 months. Following a parent's instinct is important as they often can tell when something is not right. Paediatricians can be helpful in providing a medical view of a child. Sometimes a child may need an occupational therapist to develop their attention, regulation and sensory processing systems. Working with parents, teachers and other professionals will ensure all targets are aligned and the best outcome for the child is reached.

Beit Issie Shapiro is an organisation in Israel that has been at the forefront of early intervention for children with disabilities, campaigning for their rights and developing solutions for their therapy and care. It opened the Aaron De Lowe Early Intervention Centre in 1982 in response to the dearth of facilities and lack of expertise in this arena. Its early intervention model, which nurtures independence and self-advocacy from a very young age, has been replicated throughout Israel (130 centres now exist, treating 3500 toddlers aged 0-3).

Beit Issie Shapiro is also a leader in the 'assistive technology revolution' which integrates the use of I pads and other adapted technological tools into the children's daily routines for education, therapeutic and recreational purposes. It uses sophisticated "eye-gaze" technology for children as young as 1 year and 9 months old, whose disabilities prevent them from speaking clearly and using their hands, enabling them to communicate using their eyes. This technology also serves as a speech therapy tool. This approach is based on the experience that when a child is able to communicate with the help of technology, their verbal skills tend to catch up.

For children with sensory and cognitive issues, Beit Issie has created 'Issie Senses', a multi-sensory, therapeutic environment in a room consisting of specially adapted harmonious sensory stimuli that dramatically impact the sense of well-being for children with disabilities. This unique environment, together with input from the specially trained therapists, has shown both behavioural and physiological improvements, including relaxing,

arousing and focusing the child's curiosity and exploration. Beit Issie advises other organisations on how to set up these rooms and has trained over 7000 professionals. 'Issie Senses' is being successfully used in therapeutic centres, hospitals and schools in several countries and was recently launched in the UK.

Beit Issie's latest innovation in early intervention is its Michal Aharanoff Ben-Rai Early Childhood Emotional Therapy Centre. This centre works with toddlers, their parents and therapists, researching and developing methods to deliver crucial emotional therapy to toddlers with disabilities, enabling them to self-identify, express their emotions, build their sense of self and develop secure attachments. The results of their research will be shared globally.

Whether the problems in society are physical, emotional, social or behavioural, there is no doubt that the sooner the issues are identified and addressed, the better for the individual and for society at large. As the Duchess is aware, collaboration and shared research is optimal for a more favourable outcome for us all.

Here are five ways in which we can intervene early to make a difference, both for ourselves and our children:

1. **Have babies and infants checked by a Health Visitor, Paediatrician, Audiologist, Speech or Occupational Therapist if you are concerned your child is not meeting his or her milestones, developing language/communication or struggling with sensory or integration issues.**
2. **Get support for your own mental health if you are in crisis. Call Mind Helpline (0300 123 3393) or text SHOUT to 85258.**
3. **To access support for all aspect of parenting, call Family Line (0808 802 666)**
4. **If you require relationship support, contact RELATE or if parenting alone, contact GINGERBREAD.**
5. **If you are a parent of a child with special education needs or disabilities, contact SENDIASS for advice or support.**

Beit Issie Shapiro is welcoming opportunities to collaborate and share its expertise in the UK. For further information contact: [consulting@beitissie.org.il](mailto:consulting@beitissie.org.il)



Susan Rosenthal qualified as a lawyer in South Africa before moving to London in 1998, where she worked in law and asset management. More recently, Susan worked with Jewish-Interactive and 2Simple, both tech-education companies. She also writes articles for community publications. Susan lives in North West London with her family and her dog. Her greatest joys remain laughing with good friends and travelling to undiscovered places (at least prior to Covid).



## DID YOU KNOW?

- Someone investing \$100,000 in whisky casks in July 2018 would have assets worth close to \$160,000 by the end of June 2020 [*The Times, September 2020*]
- An average whisky cask bought for £340 in 1996 is worth approx £30,000 today [*Ben Nevis, auction, April 2021*]
- Rare whisky has outperformed gold, stocks and every other major asset class in the past decade [*Knight Frank, 2019*]
- Whisky cask investments are totally tax free and have a low entry level

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**BEYOND THE**

# **MAINSTREAM CLASSROOM**

*by* **GILLIAN ROEDIGER**

THE ELIJAH CENTRE IN NORTH LONDON PROVIDES  
SPECIALISED, TARGETED SUPPORT TO PAVE THE WAY  
FOR HAPPY, CONFIDENT NEURODIVERSE CHILDREN,  
TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

**"TRAINING IS EVERYTHING.  
THE PEACH WAS ONCE A BITTER  
ALMOND;  
CAULIFLOWER IS NOTHING BUT  
CABBAGE WITH A COLLEGE  
EDUCATION."**

**MARK TWAIN**



**B**rain plasticity is everything. This is the fundamental belief in the newly built, fast-cluttering enclave, 'The Elijah Centre.' This north London centre is a hub of activity, and despite the apparent disorder of the lunchbox heap and the growing collection of disparate shoes - all, I assure you, is well.

The Elijah Centre is a specialist centre providing for children, teens and young adults who display social communication and sensory difficulties, ADD and ADHD. It champions, supports and heralds every other kind of normal that is encountered in the school classroom or the university hall today.

So, if you, like so many other parents, are ironically ambushed into the realisation that your own child behaves in a way that is entirely alien to you, you need look no further. Early and entrenched signs of delayed development, verbal dyspraxia, speech and language difficulty, sensory and motor skill difficulties and cognitive control challenges are only some of the types of realities that are considered here. If you are that bemused parent unable to accurately pinpoint what these are, or what it is exactly that makes your child stand out and struggle; if you are witnessing the painful difficulty of being unable to achieve school and social success; or are noticing the gradual corrosion of self-esteem through childhood into adolescence and beyond, the Elijah Centre is here to help.

At the Elijah Centre, Dr Elijah's PROSCIG programme of targeted early intervention and thorough diagnosis is reinforced by the process where individuals learn, in the words of prominent psychiatrist Besse Van der Kolk, "to become aware of their inner experience, and to befriend what is going on inside themselves."

The Elijah centre emphasises the need to use learning activities which are functional, meaningful and motivating to each student. The centre welcomes children from the age of two into its early intervention program and it is common to see these young children involved in unusual practices, such as learning to sequence by baking or discussing a subject with their hands submerged in sand.

Primary school children are also welcome at the centre, which provides assistance to those who have difficulty following instructions, staying seated, completing work or who display disruptive behaviour or miss academic targets. One of the groups open to primary school children is the Executive Function group. It usually includes snack time where the children are required to wash, dry and stack their plates and cups. Ordering behaviour can help to order thinking. Another useful activity is the process in which children record their thoughts on a voice recorder before initiating a written task so that impulsivity can be tempered and planning slowly becomes a skill.

The neurodiverse child often grows into a bewildered teenager who is unable to access a more demanding curriculum, to organise tasks, to form and sustain vital social relationships and to focus or concentrate. These teens routinely receive mental health input tackling issues such as anxiety, defiance and sometimes substance abuse. Here, at the centre, behaviour is understood to be a primary means of communication. It's brain-emotion, behaviour - a refrain that echoes in every motive and every intervention that is delivered.



The atmosphere is one where the gap between expectation and achievement is entirely deconstructed. Each child is treated as an individual, their difficulties managed, as per Shlomo Hamelech's adage, "according to their nature – al pi darko". Purpose-built and targeted mediation seeks to understand each child holistically, so that this schism between attainment and performance becomes rewritten and redefined according to each child's abilities. Lesson plans here are always written in pencil: the student, whatever their age, is not moulded to a prescriptive formula, but rather works together with teachers and therapists to write and rewrite new understandings of the self and navigate new perceptions of their own abilities.

The Elijah centre offers a combination of best practices in education and clinical neuropsychology. Students receive the necessary input to better relate to the environment around them. Targets are set for each pupil and measured at regular intervals to ensure progress is steady and goals are being reached. They receive the necessary input to relate better to the world around them. Skills gained by the child, the teenager and the young adult are often successfully transferred to a typical mainstream classroom, lecture hall or professional environment. The end goal is to mould all learners into confident and capable individuals able to tackle everyday challenges.

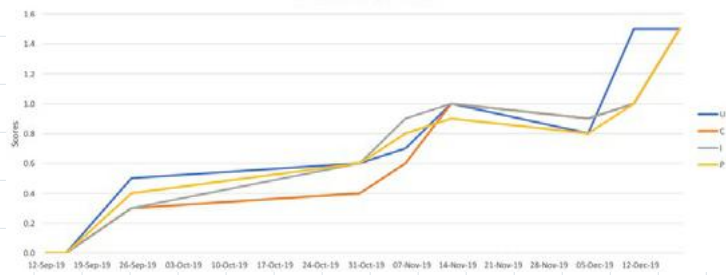


**THE ATMOSPHERE IS ONE WHERE THE GAP BETWEEN EXPECTATION AND ACHIEVEMENT IS ENTIRELY DECONSTRUCTED**

According to Dr Elijah herself, the centre's purpose is simply to "empower every individual to achieve their true potential and to enable them to lead a happier, more fulfilled and meaningful life".

The charts show the development of one child over a 3-month period at the Elijah Centre in relation to their executive functioning, critical thinking and auditory processing skills, as well as their ability to self-regulate and their emotional development.

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS



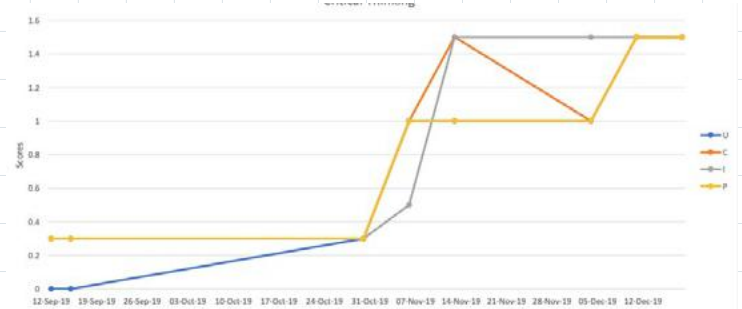
## LISTENING SKILLS



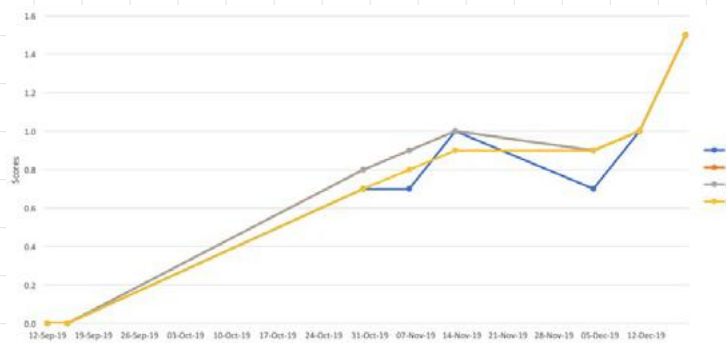
## SELF REGULATION



## CRITICAL THINKING



## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## ABOUT DEBORAH ELIJAH

Professor Dr Debora Elijah is a highly esteemed cognitive neuropsychologist, practising

privately at the Elijah Social Cognitive Skills Centre in North London. Dr Elijah attends to a range of age groups from 20 months old to young adults, specialising in building social communication skills, ASD, ADHD, self-regulation and anxiety. She is renowned for her holistic approach, treating everyone as an individual and offering treatment that is tailored specifically to that individual.

Her work has been globally recognised and she has appeared in numerous news articles.

In 2020, Dr Elijah was appointed as Professor of Autism Spectrum and Alternative Communication. She is also a social sciences coordinator, delivering lectures in Autism Spectrum Disorder and Increased Alternative Communication Module at the Fernando Pessoa University.



Originally from South Africa, Gillian has lived in the UK for over twenty years. After completing her undergraduate degree in Johannesburg, she studied further in the UK at UCL and Cambridge universities. She has had experience teaching English in a wide range of secondary contexts including disadvantaged teens from poorer backgrounds as well as adult refugees. Gillian has recently launched a secondary literacy hub as part of the Elijah Centre, where she hopes to use her passion for literacy for social as and psychological impact work.



# INITIATING Life

by **DR ANDREW SOLOMON**

A RENOWNED LONDON ENDOCRINOLOGIST SHARES  
HIS KNOWLEDGE ON THE CYCLE OF LIFE, FROM  
PRECONCEPTION TO POSTNATAL CARE

**W**e all live through life-changing events. In my case, it's a real privilege to be a Jewish doctor, and particularly to be associated with the cycle of life. The process of initiating life is incredible and spiritually uplifting, yet it can also be linked to immense uncertainty and pain. My work includes assessing people with endocrine (hormonal) factors influencing fertility; those with associated early pregnancy loss or miscarriage; people approaching the birth of a baby and, in another context, the other end of life too. I also sit together with obstetricians in a special antenatal clinic to discuss and optimise all aspects of well-being during pregnancy and delivery in the most holistic way possible.

This article will explore the topics I have touched on above and share some relevant information, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as aspects of the Jewish perspective.

For those looking to conceive, an endocrinologist will treat health conditions related to fertility such as conditions of

pituitary (such as prolactinoma), thyroid, ovaries (such as polycystic ovary syndrome) as well as those scenarios in men that impact testicular function. New understanding in this field is immense. We are now fortunate to be able to make an accurate diagnosis in most people, with the benefit of combining modern blood tests and imaging techniques.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a real challenge in terms of how it has affected the ability to access fertility interventions for those needing them. There have been interruptions to many processes of care, from outpatient visits to procedures. It has also been necessary to consider and deal with the possible impact of Covid-19 viral infection itself and/or vaccination.

In broad general terms, for both men and women, the following lifestyle-related factors are known to have a potential impact on fertility: minimising excess alcohol; reducing and ideally discontinuing smoking (in both these scenarios a range of support is available); and aiming towards an appropriate and

suitable body mass index (BMI) for that individual. It should be mentioned that BMI does not properly account for body composition, so really healthy eating and keeping active are the main messages.

## PRE-CONCEPTION

When looking at the optimal pre-conception health of a person with a condition already present, we know certain factors are important. For those with diabetes, excellent glycaemic control is associated with better outcomes. In addition, being up to date with eye checks, blood tests and other standard checks also makes a difference, and people will need to ensure they take the correct dose of folic acid for their specific needs.

Similarly, for those people with a thyroid condition, having their blood levels well within range – and sometimes at a specific target - has been shown to be relevant. Those on medication for pre-existing endocrine conditions must consult with their specialists regarding what their status should be to give the best possible chance of conception. In general, people with all types of diabetes, thyroid and all other significant medical conditions are well advised to seek specialised input to inform pre-conception planning. When pregnant, these individuals will then be entered into a suitable specialised antenatal service.

## DURING PREGNANCY

The process of conception is remarkable, and our understanding of early pregnancy, fetal development and the ability to investigate early developmental stages has improved dramatically in recent times. In addition, features of this process have been hugely debated in Jewish literature, based on the goal of enhancing and preserving life, which has elevated sanctity in Jewish law.

*'The sanctity of life is almost absolute (with few exceptions) in Jewish Law'*  
[paraphrased from Talmud Sanhedrin 84a]

It is relevant to mention at this point that Covid-19 has led to many adaptations to antenatal services. Many pregnant women have been admitted to hospital while severely unwell



The process of conception is remarkable, and our understanding of early pregnancy, fetal development and the ability to investigate early developmental stages has improved dramatically in recent times.

with Covid-19, and the majority of these women have been unvaccinated. The benefits of having Covid vaccines far outweigh the risks and are thus highly encouraged.

In addition, some changes occur exclusively in pregnancy. One of these conditions, for example, is gestational diabetes, that reflects subtle changes in various glucose levels and must be diagnosed and treated to enable the best possible outcomes. This condition requires dietary modification, may require medication, and benefits from intensified support from the professional team. For those with pre-existing diabetes, enhanced antenatal checks will take place and many patients now benefit from novel technologies. Those with Type 1 diabetes may use an insulin pump device and/or continuous glucose monitor.

In relation to thyroid - those taking thyroxine tablets will normally require a significant increase in dosage during the pregnancy, and this will be monitored by regular thyroid blood tests.





More broadly, throughout the whole of the pregnancy and post-natal period, the importance of peri-natal mental health has rightly been given increased attention. I work alongside a specialist Perinatal Obstetrician and both inside the NHS and across our community (see below), increasing support and dedicated organisations have been developed, to support mental wellbeing.

*Jewish thinking gives immense focus to the needs of both the potential mother and the fetus, and this is quoted in numerous sources (for example, Rashi in Talmud Yoma 82a).*

## AFTER DELIVERY

For women with any endocrine condition, their care around the time of delivery/perinatal care should be supported by the specialised healthcare team, and additional checks will be arranged in the post-natal period. It is highly likely that those on medication for gestational diabetes will need to reduce/re-assess their need for treatment after delivery and women on medications such as thyroxine replacement will most likely return to their pre-pregnancy dosage.

## SUPPORT THROUGH JEWISH ORGANISATIONS

In terms of bringing all of this into the world of Jewish life and Jewish organisations, there is an energy and passion across

the community in supporting, advising and enabling people pre-, during and post-conception. A wide range of charities/non-profits now exist, especially here in the UK, the USA and in Israel that support people in many ways, whether there have been fertility issues or miscarriage or a lack of access to care.

The level of expertise in these organisations is immense and I urge anyone looking for help to reach out to them. For example, in the UK there are several organisations, of which Chana is an example, and it has been a pleasure to be a member of their medical advisory board for over a decade ([www.Chana.org.uk](http://www.Chana.org.uk)). There is also Bonei Olam ([www.boneiolam.org](http://www.boneiolam.org)) and Puah ([www.puahfertility.org/](http://www.puahfertility.org/)) which are outstanding fertility organisations.

This article has been written with the help of Dr Amiee Baron, a senior doctor who now runs a remarkable support organisation in the USA called IWSTRHAB ([www.invasupposedtohaveababy.org/](http://www.invasupposedtohaveababy.org/)).

These are just a few examples of the increasing number of ways to access direct individualised or group support across many online platforms. There is also new dedicated mental health support through charities such as Menucha ([www.menucha.info](http://www.menucha.info)).

There are huge opportunities and rapidly advancing knowledge across the world in the field of fertility and related healthcare. Treatments today are highly individualised, focused and sophisticated, giving rise to real optimism about the future. Jewish communities respond to these challenges in a continuously creative and innovative way.

We can all play our part in the cycle of life.



Dr Andrew Solomon graduated with Distinction at Medical School, then trained in general (internal) medicine, diabetes and endocrinology. He did a research doctorate and then travelling fellowships in the USA and Canada. He and his wife learned from several rabbonim in London and in Shapell's & Midreshet Rachel in Jerusalem. They now live with their family in Edgware.

MENTAL HEALTH

A close-up photograph of three young women lying on their stomachs on a textured, light-colored surface. They are looking directly at the camera with serious expressions. The woman at the top has long dark hair and blue eyes. The woman in the middle has dark hair and is looking slightly to the side. The woman at the bottom has dark hair and blue eyes, looking directly at the camera.

# *MENTAL HEALTH*

**THE NEW TEEN PANDEMIC?**

by **RIVKA BENARROCH**

A SENIOR TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE ON  
MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

**W**e all have mental health, just like we all have physical health. Life is constantly throwing us curveballs, which we must learn to navigate our way through. Some days our physical health, just like our mental health, is in a fit state, and some days our physical or mental health (or both!) needs some support. Young people, parents and the whole school community need to accept that it is equally as important to look after one's physical *and* mental health.

Many people take care of their physical wellness even when they are in good health, by adopting precautionary or general maintenance measures, from taking daily multivitamins, to exercising or seeking regular health checks. When we are physically unwell, we treat the symptoms, building our body's resilience to fight the illness, and we put strategies in place to try and prevent becoming severely physically ill. This same tactic needs to be applied when dealing with mental health. We should be tending to our mental health to keep it as stable as possible, whether we are predisposed to mental illness or not, continuously building up resilience to deal with any challenges that may arise. We will all experience challenges at some point, and it is important to develop tools and strategies to guide us through them.

Unfortunately, it is increasingly apparent that many young people today lack resilience and the fundamental tools to deal with life's normal and everyday challenges, let alone mental health concerns. There are various explanations for why this has happened, including the impacts of a disposable society, social media, and more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic. As a society, we need to recognise that if we do not instil a sense of resilience in today's youth, we are responsible for doing them a massive disservice; preventing them from thriving and becoming the best people they can be. As Steve Maraboli explains in his book 'Life, the Truth,

and Being Free': "Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving; we get stronger and more resilient."

Thankfully, the UK's education system has changed significantly over the last few years, appreciating that young people deserve to get more from their time in school than simply an outstanding academic education. Schools are encouraged to identify the needs of their young people, offering them the guidance they require. Young people can only truly make real progress if they are in a safe environment which considers all of their needs. Promoting an understanding of mental health has rightfully become a priority within the UK education system. According to the Department of Education, "Research indicates that taking a coordinated and evidence-informed approach to mental health and wellbeing leads to improved emotional health and wellbeing in children and young people, and greater readiness to learn."

In June 2021, the UK government acknowledged this when it pledged a £1,200 grant for a senior member of staff from every school and college to access quality-assured training to enable the implementation of an effective, whole school, cultural approach to mental health and wellbeing. It is vital for schools not only to focus on high level diagnosable mental health illness, but on all notions and perceptions of mental health and wellbeing, including both positive aspects as well as concerns.

Whilst this is essential work for schools to undertake, it comes with many challenges, from financial to societal pressures. Therefore, it is even more important that schools, the parent body and wider community work together, holistically, ensuring that they are up to date with current research and ideas related to mental health. It is not just a case of understanding mental health and wellbeing but fostering a practical environment for it to flourish.

In order to understand mental health and wellbeing, it is crucial to understand a young person's stages of brain development, as the two concepts cannot be viewed in isolation. If we focus specifically on the teenage brain, which is an extraordinary complex organ, we can understand how certain behaviours are natural for a teenager and are part of the development of mental wellbeing. Nicola Morgan, in her excellent and accessible book, 'Blame My Brain, the Amazing Teenage Brain Revealed', explains the scientific fundamentals of a teenager's brain and how it effects their everyday being. At around the age of six, a young person's brain is fully developed in size, however, it does not have the complete functions of an adult brain until the mid-20s, with significant growth and development of functions and processes occurring during adolescence. The development into an adult brain is called the pruning process, during which the brain is remodelled. The prefrontal cortex, the area responsible for decision-making, is the last to be remodelled. It is helpful for those living or working with teenagers to understand that teenagers typically only think about the 'here and now', without necessarily giving adequate consideration to the consequence of their actions. Throughout the pruning process, teenagers will rely on the amygdala, the area of the brain associated with emotional process, aggression and instinctive behaviour, more than an adult will.

For the process of brain development to be successful, young people need to be allowed to make mistakes, experience what failure is and learn how to pick themselves up - building and developing a bank of tools and strategies to further their levels of resilience. This is not to say that young people should be allowed to make dangerous and life-altering mistakes but should be provided with the opportunity to make mistakes in a safe environment.

The responsibility lies with schools as well as mental health and wellbeing experts to ensure that this safe environment is created, developed and maintained, allowing all young people to discover their own abilities and levels of resilience. Schools should be the 'safe place' for young people to make mistakes and learn from them. Part of the learning process may result in sanctioning the young person, but this is to ensure that it is understood that actions have consequences, ultimately aiding the brain's pruning process. Early help provisions are another essential ingredient in supporting young people to develop and maintain their mental health. This could be in the guise of seeking a mentor, a regular appointment with the school counsellor or support from the local authority's mental health organisations. Schools should be encouraged to identify the needs of their students, and where possible prevent the deterioration of existing situations.

Many parents understandably want to wrap their young people in cotton wool and protect them from all of life's challenges. However, this can be detrimental and dangerous for young people's mental wellbeing. Parents should work with their child's school to make sure that they are given the opportunity to develop naturally, within a relatively safe environment. This will enable them to build their own resilience to life's challenges, ultimately assisting them in their adult lives, when they are most likely to have to deal with challenges on their own.

#### References:

Senior Mental Health Lead training: [www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training)

*'Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing'*, Public Health England for the Department for Education

*'Blame My Brain, the Amazing Teenage Brain Revealed'*, Nicola Morgan.

*'Life, the Truth, and Being Free'*, Steve Maraboli.



Ms Rivka Benarroch is Assistant Headteacher of Pastoral Strategy and Student Progress and Behaviour at Hasmonean High School for Boys. She studied History and Politics at Goldsmiths University and undertook a PGCE in Secondary History Education at Roehampton University. Recently, Ms Benarroch has had a significant career in education that started with teaching history, and recently enrolled in an MA course, Leadership and Management in Education at Roehampton University.

A young boy with light brown hair, wearing a black t-shirt, is hugging a young girl with long brown hair, wearing a pink floral top and blue jeans. They are standing in a field of tall grass at sunset. In the background, a man in a blue shirt is walking away. The text "RAISING KIND CHILDREN" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# RAISING KIND CHILDREN

*by* **MIRIAM GEFEN**

HOW CAN WE, AS PARENTS, TEACH AND EXEMPLIFY  
KINDNESS AND COMPASSION TO RAISE A GENERATION  
OF CARING CHILDREN?

A few years ago, a Special Olympics took place in Washington. A group of Down syndrome children stood at the starting line. The signal sounded and the children began to run. Just a few minutes into the race, one little girl fell over. She sat on the floor and began to cry. The other children heard her cries and turned back to the little girl. They helped her to get back up. Then all the children together linked arms and in unison walked to the finish line in happiness.

Unfortunately, the majority of children today do not display this level of empathy and kindness in their behaviour. Some say that we are, in fact, raising one of the most self-absorbed generations ever to have lived. Babies are born into the world with their fists clenched tightly. Some of their first words are “me”, “mine”, “give me” and “no”. As parents, it is our duty to open their tightly closed fingers one by one.

Young children are totally obsessed with their own needs and wants, and very often they overlook the needs of others. They live constantly pursuing their own desires, very rarely do stopping ask, “what can I do for others?” As they grow, we need to strive to teach our children to become givers rather than takers. Children have the capacity to grow, to become givers, and to think of others, but it is incumbent upon us to teach our children these skills – to give, to feel for others, look out for others, feel the pain of others and to show empathy.

Sometimes we think that in order to teach our children kindness, we must provide an awesome experience that they will never forget. On the contrary, we must look out for the everyday moments where we can carry out small acts of kindness, for it is the small acts that become the building blocks of our children’s characters. Each action has an impact and further develops the child’s nature. The more frequently we do something, the more it becomes part of our nature. For example, if you have one hundred pounds to give to charity,

it is better to give each pound separately rather than give the hundred all at once. Each time you give you are enhancing your nature and developing your capacity for loving kindness. It is transforming you into a giver.

Just the other day I observed this, and it really touched me. My 6-year-old was feeling unwell and was resting on the couch with her blanket. She started reading a book that happened to be my younger son’s favourite. Even though she was feeling unwell, she naturally moved up, made space for her brother, and started reading the book to him. She then pulled her blanket over to cover him too.

Often, we don’t realise how many of these opportunities we miss throughout the day – opportunities to grow in our giving. We need to make our children aware of these small acts of kindness, not allowing them to pass by unnoticed, but rather helping our children to use their skills, talents and abilities to give to others.

When it comes to fostering kindness among siblings, there are several strategies that can be employed. If each sibling is encouraged to feel that they play a unique and different role in the family, that promotes love. Each child needs to feel that they make a vital personal contribution to the family and are loved for who they are. This enables them to be kind to their siblings without worrying that they will lose out. If we, as parents, want our children to live together peacefully and behave with kindness, then we need to help our children to achieve harmony. We have to imagine that each child is a different musical instrument, that together make up an orchestra.

A very powerful way of developing a real bond among siblings is starting a family project together, where each child feels they are bringing something unique to the project, yet the success of the project depends on them all supporting each other at the same time.

Another way we can promote kindness amongst siblings is by creating an atmosphere of gratitude in the home. It's important that we, as parents, model this behaviour by thanking each other and encouraging children to express gratitude to each other as well. This will lead to them think of others – when a child gets a snack for himself, he should turn to you or a sibling and offer them one too. When a child sees someone coming home with bags of shopping in their hands, they should want to run and offer help. Little acts that establish an atmosphere of gratitude slowly add up to build a home of loving kindness.

It's not adequate to simply speak about kindness and generosity – we have to live it! Our children will then join us on this path of kindness. Once we understand our role, we realise the importance of seeking out opportunities to practice kindness with our children. We just have to open our eyes and see the needs around us.

From the youngest age, our children are watching us and learning how to behave in every type of situation. They learn character traits, values and priorities. We can't fool our kids – they know who we are. They are learning the most important lessons of life, all the time, just by observing us. No teaching can make a bigger imprint on the child than the impression of the parent's behaviour.

In order to educate our children, we need to work on ourselves; to be people that are totally focused on loving kindness. Our children don't just pick up what we do, but they also pick up what we want and what we are moving towards. They know we are not perfect and they can see if we are trying to do something that we don't really want to do.

It is not just about performing acts of kindness or acts of charity where we need to guide our children – we also need to impart to our children the message that they must give of their emotional selves to others. This may involve showing empathy, sitting with others in their pain and praying for them, giving a comforting word or smile, or making a call to lift someone up. We want our children to become adults who are constantly thinking about others and what they can do for them.

My good friend Shira Joseph, who works for our sister organisation GIFT, shared with me the most beautiful example

of this. During lockdown, at the height of Covid, when almost everyone was at home, key workers like Shira worked from early in the morning until late into the night helping the elderly and the vulnerable, and organising the volunteers who were assisting with the incredible projects that were being run by GIFT to help those in need. Shira wasn't able to spend as much time as she would have liked to with her own children. One of her son's teachers confided in her that she had noticed how kind and caring her son had been in the past few weeks and had made a point of telling her son. Her son's response to the teacher's praise was, "if you think I'm kind, you should see my mum". Her son then went on to describe to the teacher all the different projects that Shira had been working on, that she had never told him about but that he had just absorbed.

In summary, here are five practical ways to instil kindness in our children and encourage them to become givers:

- 1. Look out for opportunities to accomplish small acts of kindness.**
- 2. Identify acts of kindness that you and your children can enjoy performing together like visiting the sick or elderly, helping them with errands or packing food bags for those in need.**
- 3. Foster kindness between siblings through a family project.**
- 4. Create an atmosphere of gratitude in the home.**
- 5. We need to work on ourselves as parents and ensure that we are practicing loving kindness in our daily lives – our children absorb everything that we do!**

Our children are capable of great kindness. Practicing loving kindness should begin when our children are very young and that way it will become part of their nature. It has to be important to us to be important to our children – they really are watching everything we do!



Rebbetzin Miriam Gefen grew up in London. After studying and living in Israel, Miriam moved to Manchester with her husband Zvi and their children to join the Aish Manchester team. Miriam is passionate about helping others apply the ancient wisdom of the Torah to their modern lives. Her greatest satisfaction comes from teaching women to learn about the vital elements needed for building a Jewish home, including the beautiful mitzvot related to Family Purity. She has infused a deep appreciation for Shalom Bayit (marital peace) in the many women she has taught.



# YOUR DOCTOR IS ON THE PHONE

*by* PETER SUGARMAN

BREAKTHROUGH MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES EMERGING  
FROM ISRAEL ARE PROVIDING 'REAL TIME' LIFE-SAVING  
CAPABILITIES AT THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON



Covid-19 shut down economies globally and placed healthcare systems across the planet under huge strain. Many suffered, but some thrived. Of the industries that benefitted, perhaps one of the greatest winners was ‘Telehealth’ - the use of digital information and communication technologies to enable individuals to remotely manage health outcomes. And, as with other areas of high-tech, it’s an arena where Israeli companies are playing a leading role.

As Russian tanks roll westward, Ukrainian citizens, mostly women and children, are running from the fighting, in what has become the largest European humanitarian crisis since 1945. So far over two million refugees have fled, many of whom have arrived in neighbouring Moldova, whose border is just thirty miles from Odessa.

In Chisinau, the Moldavian capital, a team of healthcare professionals sent by United Hatzalah of Israel, is dispensing much needed assistance. But while there are medics on the spot, much of the care is being delivered by doctors based in the Sheba Medical Centre in downtown Ramat Gan.

According to Professor Gadi Segal, head of internal telemedicine at Sheba, “The limits of geography and distance are being abolished. We can execute the best clinical judgment and the best professional consultations for patients in a war zone and even on the front lines.”

One of the systems being deployed is one in which I have a personal interest as an investor. PulseNmore is an ultrasound device like no other. The firm has found a way to convert an ordinary smartphone into a medical grade ultrasound machine. Photos can be transmitted from the patient, whether at home in North West London, or in war ravaged Eastern Europe, to the doctor who can be sitting in her lab at the other end of the world.

Adopted by Clalit Health Services, the largest of the four Israeli Kupat Holim, PulseNmore’s technology saw increasing adoption during Covid with over 15,000 scans performed, allowing routine observation of expecting mothers to be achieved without the necessity for hospital visits. The company’s technology is saving lives: *“Perhaps it was mother’s intuition, but in my 39th week I felt the sudden need to do a scan one evening. I then got a call from the doctor referring me to ER with too little amniotic fluid. My little girl was born within a few hours. Every minute was critical, and this really saved us!”*

And now the company has a new offering. Historically, women undergoing IVF fertility treatment have had to attend daily

clinics in order to assess both the diameter of follicles and endometrial thickness - critical parameters in determining optimal timing for retrieving eggs for fertilisation. Using PulseNmore’s device, all relevant measurements can be performed simply and securely at home, significantly increasing the odds of a couple identifying the appropriate time for maximising the chances of achieving conception. In contrast to pre-natal care, fertility clinics are often the province of private medicine. With over 2.5 million IVF cycles performed worldwide each year, the market for the device is potentially huge, a

fact recognised by investors when the company floated its shares last summer on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

My professional life is spent assessing investment opportunities, and the quality of the management team, size of market and business model are all central to the decision to invest. But, when looking at Israeli start-ups, particularly those in the medical field, I also have a personal preference for those already achieving some measure of commercial traction, funding expansion, rather than product development. For example, many Israeli companies want to enter the US market, by far the world’s largest. If a device has obtained all necessary approvals in Europe, as well as Israel, there is a high chance that FDA clearance can be obtained, given the appropriate resources.



THE LIMITS OF GEOGRAPHY  
AND DISTANCE ARE BEING  
ABOLISHED. WE CAN EXECUTE  
THE BEST CLINICAL JUDGMENT  
AND THE BEST PROFESSIONAL  
CONSULTATIONS FOR PATIENTS  
IN A WAR ZONE AND EVEN ON  
THE FRONT LINES.

This philosophy brought me to another Israeli medical company. Many of you will have used an Apple Smart watch, or similar wearable to monitor your fitness. But please do not try going to your GP and regaling him with vital signs as reported on the device. The accuracy does not meet the needs of medical professionals, a problem now solved by CardiacSense. Their watch provides 24/7 continuous monitoring of Atrial Fibrillation, with an alert sent via the owner's smartphone to one's GP or cardiologist.

Like PulseNmore, CardiacSense has a roadmap for future product extension. Additional functionality has already been tested and will be integrated into the watch in the near future: this includes detection of heart arrhythmias and cardiac arrest, along with continuous monitoring of Respiratory Rate and Oxygen saturation.

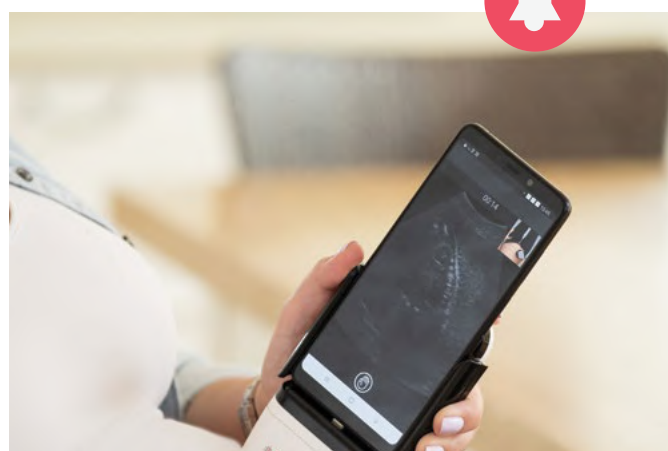
The combination of multi-factor monitoring with real-time alerts represents a huge advance relative to what is currently available, and the company expects rapid adoption of its products, a perspective validated by some \$60m of orders already placed in advance of the product's launch in April. With cardiovascular disease accountable for an estimated 17 million deaths annually, around one third of the world's fatalities, it seems likely that CardiacSense's optimism is fully justified.

At this challenging time when our smartphones are used as vehicles for displaying the worst of man's behaviour, I find it particularly heartening to know that Israeli and Jewish creativity offers an alternative approach; a focus not on death, but rather on the preservation of health and life.

For those Interested in more information, please see:

PULSENMORE: [www.pulsenmore.com](http://www.pulsenmore.com)

CARDIACSENSE: [www.cardiacsense.com](http://www.cardiacsense.com)



Peter Sugarman held senior roles in some of the world's largest investment banks, before becoming a partner and COO at JRJ Group, a London based Private Equity Firm. He travels regularly to Israel where he has a portfolio of investments in the fields of medical technology and cybersecurity.

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# I AM MY BROTHER

SHIRA DRUION ASKED CHILDREN IN THE UK IMAGINE  
WHAT IT MIGHT BE LIKE TO LIVE AS A YOUNG SLAVE IN EGYPT  
OR A UKRAINIAN REFUGEE

## My Name Is Yehuda

BY DAVID GREEN

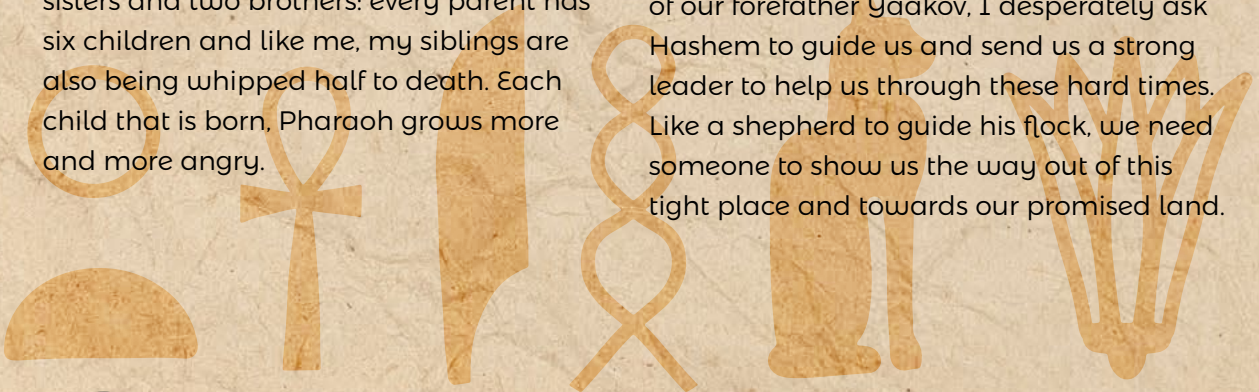
The sand stings my eyes and my back aches from the wounds the taskmasters have given me today. I tried to help my friend, Reuven, who was suffering under a heavy load of bricks, while being whipped. Before I knew it, I was being whipped too for showing an act of kindness toward my friend. This life of ours is insufferable. The Bnei Yisroel were predicted 400 years of slavery so it can't be that long until we are freed by our One God.

My name is Yehuda and I am 12 years old. I am from the tribe of Yehuda. My ancestors lived in Eretz Canaan and one day we will be able to return. I hope and pray to our One God for this. I have three sisters and two brothers: every parent has six children and like me, my siblings are also being whipped half to death. Each child that is born, Pharaoh grows more and more angry.



At the moment, we are based in Raamses, which is one of the new 'storage cities' that we are building. Or more accurately, forced to build. We are encamped on the marshy banks of the river Nile where we are forced to build on waterlogged land and it is impossible to build firm foundations. The spiteful Egyptians got us to build here to make our lives even harder, and the bricks keep sinking into the ground. Pharaoh's taskmasters make our existence more and more miserable.

Each night as I pray maariv in the merit of our forefather Yaakov, I desperately ask Hashem to guide us and send us a strong leader to help us through these hard times. Like a shepherd to guide his flock, we need someone to show us the way out of this tight place and towards our promised land.



David Green is eight years old and goes to North West London Jewish Day School. He loves cats, football and learning gemara with his amazing teacher, Dovi

# A 9-YEAR OLD'S JOURNEY FROM HEARTBREAK TO HOPE

BY YAKIRA ADLER

Hiding in the small, dusty basement of our humble hut with my family; my mum, dad and baby brother Eli, hoping, wishing, praying for a miracle to end this pain and sorrow, having to hide and protect Eli from being thrown into the river.

As I woke up at 6am to the unsettling smell of horse-poo and ashes, feeling the rough floor beneath me, hearing cries of desperation and seeing my fellow Jews enslaved and whipped, I always wondered how it would feel to wake up as a normal 9-year-old. Tears ran down my cheeks as I saw the terror and fear in my family, friends and loved one's eyes, trembling with fear.

One night when my dad came home (thank goodness alive) from his horrifying torturous work, I overheard him talking to my mum that there might be hope for the Jews! There might be a chance for us to live a normal life. He also said something about 'blood' in the Egyptians drinks, showers and even in their saliva! But not for the Jews... I am so excited I can't believe this is happening, but I don't want to get my hopes up yet in case I get disappointed. There's a part of me that wants to feel sorry for the Egyptians but, seeing what they have done to us, I hope they get what they deserve.

Every week my dad would come back home and take my mum into a private corner to tell her about a different miracle that God is doing for us. One week, frogs, the next week lice and the latest one, darkness. As I looked out of the small, square basement window, I saw the frozen Egyptians and it made me think if there's really a God taking care of us, watching us, loving us. Could it really be? Maybe this God is going to save us from this tormenting darkness. Is there really a light at the end of this never-ending tunnel? For the first time I felt hopeful so tonight, when I lie down to go to sleep, I will pray to this God whoever he is because he might just save us all.

A few weeks later my dad came home happier than ever. Just as I was getting ready to eavesdrop on my parents, my dad screamed "we have a chance of being freed!!" I was ecstatic! There were no words to express my excitement. My body was

shaking, my heart pumping, my brain exploding. We were going to be freed!

After the exciting news, my family all sat down for our mingy supper of breadcrumbs and a water. I know it's not much but that was all about to change, my father explained to us about Moses and God's latest miracles. Suddenly we heard a knock on the door. Immediately mum hid Eli and I in the basement, our usual hiding place, as my dad tiptoed to the door. Surprisingly, it was a Jew informing us that we should all kill a lamb, the Egyptian's god, and put its blood on the door to prevent our first-borns from dying in the final miracle. My parents were quite hesitant. They were not sure how they felt about killing the Egyptian's god. How would the Egyptians react when they find out? It is risky but they decided to trust Moses and our God.

That same night, I saw Pharaoh wondering the streets in pyjamas asking for Moses so out of instinct, I pointed him to the opposite direction. I saw other kids doing the same. It made me giggle.

A few hours later we received the fantastic news that we were free! After all this time, after generations being tortured and in pain, we were finally going to leave. My gratitude to Moses and God was immeasurable. There were no words to describe this feeling. I was exploding with joy. To think that I was part of the lucky generation freed from this misery. Finally, freedom!

Walking out with my nation overjoyed and in shock, floating with happiness, we saw the wavy sea in front of us and desert sands all around - it looked perfect compared to where we came from... Until suddenly, the fuming Egyptians came raging towards us. My heart sunk and flew into panic that we would be killed or worse - have to return to Egypt. I should have had more faith though, God saved us. The sea miraculously split! The emotions that I shared with my nation walking through the split sea was unimaginable. As the sea collapsed on the Egyptians, we sang together in joy. We were one soul, one family, one nation. This is an experience I will never forget and will thank God forever!



12-year-old Yakira Adler began her educational journey in Menorah Primary school and is now in Year 7 at Hasmonean High School. Yakira likes to express her creative talent through story writing and art.

# Dear Diary

BY MIA ELIAS

Dear Diary,

It all started last night. It was about 10 o'clock and I was reading my book. At this point, we all knew Putin wanted to start a war, but it hadn't gotten so crazy yet. Suddenly, I heard an ear-splitting siren. I quickly got out of bed and dashed down the stairs, stumbling on the last one. I saw my dad heading towards the stairs. "Where's mom?" I asked in a shaky, panicked voice. "Already outside with your brother! Where you and I need to be right now!" he replied.

All of a sudden, we heard a bomb plane overhead and started to run towards a bomb shelter. I looked back and saw my house burst into flames. I felt sick. I tried to swallow the lump in my throat, but I couldn't. I had just witnessed my home disappear before my very eyes.

We all had to move far from our neighbourhood to find somewhere to sleep that night. Dad warned me that the next day, me and my brother were going to have to evacuate far away from there without him or mum. I didn't want to have to leave without them, so I said I would stay. My dad told me it was too dangerous. When I protested, he told me it was getting late and that we should just go to sleep.

So I gave in, lay down, and hoped that I would wake up the next morning and this would all have been a dream.

But sadly it was not to be. The next day, my parents dropped me and my brother, Oleksiy, off at a place where other children were saying goodbye to their parents. They told us that they loved us. I asked my parents once again why they couldn't come with us, but they just pulled Oleksiy and I into a big hug and then dad said something very mysterious, "We'll see you on the other side". I didn't know what he meant.

So, off I went, my small suitcase in one hand, Oleksiy's in the other, with him waddling beside me, wondering what was going on, asking me never-ending questions. After a while, I shouted at him, saying that I didn't know why we had to leave mum and dad. My poor brother burst into tears and I felt awful for shouting at him. Soon, a kind lady came up to us and asked us what our surnames were. I told her, and she checked an official-looking list. "Ah yes you're with me," she said. "Come along. I think you're the last ones." We walked with a group of about 10 other children for a few minutes before we came to a minivan, which is where I am writing this from.

So here I am, in the middle of nowhere, not knowing where we're going or what's going to happen to us next. I am petrified.



Mia is 10 years old and lives in London. She goes to North West school and loves reading comics.

# WILL I EVER SEE MY PARENTS AGAIN?

BY ETHAN WOOLFE

Puffs of insipid grey smoke rose up towards the sky. Sounds of sirens startled the surrounding area. "What has this world become?" I questioned. Tears began streaming down my face like a waterfall losing control. Anger. It's the first thing that hit me as I stared at the other innocent children standing around me.

"де мої батьки!" (Where are my parents?) My face had turned a bright fire red as more tears began running down my cheek. Seconds later the ground trembled. A bomb had exploded in the distance. Was it my home? Were my parents inside? A million questions and thoughts flooded my mind. Overwhelmed, I sat down.

A couple of days ago is when it all started. The rumours and the gunshots. It was the 24th of February, and school had closed. I sat with my parents completely clueless of what was about to come. They knew but didn't speak a word. Thinking back to the time, they were awfully calm and quiet. How had I not seen it? Eventually, I would find out. And I did. It was many hours later and the sirens went off. I had never heard them go off before, and believed they were fake. I was wrong. tato and mama rushed me into the basement with them. Following that, they locked the doors. I had so many questions.

***Why is Russia doing this?***

***Is this what the holocaust was like?***

***Is Putin Anti-Semitic too?***

Once again I was overwhelmed. Sweat dripped down my body as goosebumps began running up and down my back. Fear slowly crept over me. I thought I was going to die, or worse, my parents dying. My tato sat in the corner praying with his siddur to God. His face was masked with a strong

one for me. There was a crack in the basement and I tried peering out, but the crack in the wall was too small to look through. The fear had begun to make me tired. I decided to sleep. It wasn't easy with the terrifying thought of soldiers marching in, but I had made it to the next day.

tato and mama told me I would be moving to a Jewish Refugee camp later that day. From the second I was told, it created a sombre mood in the household. I spent every last second with my parents. I couldn't let go. A globus sensation filled the back of my throat as I couldn't comprehend anything.

***My tato and mama were my world. I just couldn't let them go. They are all I live for. They're my heart and soul, I cannot live without them.***

The sound of footsteps walking up the driveway startled me. It was time. Once again, I refused to go and tato, mama and I all shared a cry. I clutched onto mama's shirt as the men tried to pull me away. I could see the pain and sorrow in my parents' eyes. I pulled tato in with mama for a last hug, and I feared this may be goodbye, forever. Wailing, I was dragged down the driveway. It felt like forever by the time I reached the border. My kippah firmly gripped to my head as I prayed, not for me, but for my parents. I heard screams and shouts. We were back to where we started. A million questions and thoughts flooded my mind. Overwhelmed, I sat down. All I really cared about was my parents. Would they be alright? Would I ever see them again?



Ethan Woolfe is 12 years old. He lives in London with his parents and has a 23-year-old brother. He currently attends Lyndhurst House. He loves football, table tennis, singing, creative writing and playing video games.



# BACK TO BASICS

*by* SYLVIE BOLLAG

WITH THESE SIMPLE HACKS, PESACH PRESENTS AN  
OPPORTUNITY FOR HEALTHY EATING AND LIVING

I grew up in Switzerland, in a town with one kosher restaurant, one kosher bakery and one kosher shop. At Pesach time, we had to be very swift at the shops and ready with a good shopping list at hand - choices were limited, and latecomers had no second chance - like Black Friday, just without the discounts.

I remember that the spice department was particularly scarce: on the shelf there was a choice between salt, pepper, paprika, and on a good day, garlic salt. No fancy spices and no soup powders.

So, what did we do? We went the old-school route ... and used real food, unprocessed and straight from mother nature. We picked bunches of herbs from the market or gardens and added extra vegetables to flavour dishes. Some went foraging in the forests and collected garlic leaves and chives. As a result, Pesach food was naturally free from many additives and took us back to basics. Without monosodium glutamate (MSG), colourings, flavourings and stabilisers, the Pesach meal was ideal for any compromised or delicate stomach.

The menu had a simplicity which felt comforting. We focused on meaningful time spent together in our homes and enjoying freshly prepared and delicious food. There was no production and no need to create original menus. Having limited ingredients and a limited number of pots and serving dishes gave everyone the perfect excuse to keep things basic. We cooked most meals from scratch and most of them did not have more than five ingredients. I have taken this concept along to London and I take solace in preserving my old traditions.



## VEGGIES:

Vegetables act as healthy fillers and provide super fibres. Incorporate vegetables of all colours in your meal planning and add at least one portion of veggies to every meal. These can be included in many forms, from salads to steamed veggies or even vegetable soup. You can use vegetables to add natural flavour to your food with fresh herbs, garlic, ginger and whatever else takes your fancy.

## HEALTHY SNACKS:

Keep healthy snacks on hand. This will help you to avoid poor food choices and ensure you don't become ravenous, which tends to lead to overeating at meals.

Some great options for snacks include nuts, yoghurt or vegetable sticks with dips. As a dip, I love soft cheese with chopped radishes and chives. Or for the lucky ones eating kitniyot, hummus and tahina are top choices too. Plain yoghurt is delicious topped with fresh berries, homemade berry stew or apple sauce, or topped with toasted nuts as a Pesach -friendly granola alternative. As a treat, make delicious and relatively healthy coconut or almond macaroons and biscuits.

## BAKING:

For your baking, use less sugar for blood sugar balance and gut health and instead add a quality vanilla paste (ideally home-made) or freshly ground cinnamon. Cakes become wholesome if prepared with plenty of natural ingredients like ground nuts and desiccated coconut. Where possible, I recommend you use extra virgin olive oil or coconut oil instead of margarine and sunflower oil, as these alternatives have anti-inflammatory properties.

## STAY HYDRATED & KEEP MOVING:

Increase water intake, especially if you are a matzah consumer, and drink in between meals instead of during them. Walking regularly or making sure to have some form of daily movement will also help to keep the digestive system working well.

## DON'T GO MATZAH-CRAZY:

Matzah isn't as innocent as it looks. It's made of processed white wheat and 100g of matzah contains double the calories of 100g

of white bread. Try to only eat matzah when needed.

Cut down on how much matzah you consume by reducing your intake of dishes that have crushed matzah/matzah flour added to them such as Pesach 'bread' rolls or 'pizza' dough, matzah brei, matzah crumbs and other recipes.

## GO FOR 'REAL', NOT FOR PROCESSED:

Create homemade alternatives to processed products – For example, soup noodles 'lokshen' and 'croutons' can be replaced with home-made egg noodles. These can be prepared like a little 'crêpe' made of eggs, potato flour and a little soda water which, after being mixed together and pan-fried, can be cut into strips and added to soup. I recommend adding some chopped parsley for extra colour and flavour.

## DRINKS:

It can be tempting to overdose on over-processed fizzy drinking during the festival, so instead, try out some healthy natural alternatives to offer yourself a detox. You can go for flavoured water by infusing water overnight with lemons, oranges and cucumbers. Or for a 'fizzy drink' experience, dilute apple juice with sparkling water to create homemade 'Appletiser'.

Pesach can be approached as an opportunity for us to cleanse our bodies and improve our eating habits. The suggestions in this article are not necessarily labour intensive and can be carried out as family activities. Your family can experiment with all sorts of different toppings for breakfast or compete to see who can make the tastiest drink using only natural ingredients.

An additional perk to adopting this approach is that it is far more economical! Fruits, vegetables and all sorts of nuts can be bought from regular shops, not just kosher shops (where prices are higher for these products), and you could end up spending much less when choosing 'real' food over processed alternatives. All festivals are expensive, and for many this can be particularly true for Pesach - but it doesn't have to be. It just requires a shift in mindset about where we shop, what we cook and how we eat.

Here are some healthy recipes that follow for you to try this Pesach:



## ENERGISING BERRY SMOOTHIE

Makes 2 servings

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups almond milk
- ¾ cup of mixed berries, frozen or fresh
- 1 date (no pip!)
- Half a banana, frozen or fresh
- A handful of nuts (go for 4 Brazil nuts, for extra selenium, 4 walnuts for omega 3, or 15 almonds to top up vitamin E and calcium)

### METHOD

- Blend in a powerful blender for about 30-60 seconds and enjoy right away!



## VANILLA CHIA SEED PUDDING

Makes 2 servings

This delicious Chia Pudding is a great way to include anti-inflammatory Omega 3 into your Pesach diet.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups almond milk or coconut milk
- ¼ cup of chia seeds (Note that chia seeds are not considered kitniyot)
- ½ tsp vanilla bean paste or essence
- 1 tsp of Maple syrup (optional)

### METHOD

- Combine all the ingredients in a jar and mix well.
- Place in the fridge and allow to gel for 30 minutes. Then shake again and refrigerate.
- Allow it to set for at least 3 hours or overnight.
- Enjoy for breakfast and serve topped with berries and roasted nuts.

This keeps well in the fridge for about 3 days





## AMARETTI (ALMOND BISCUITS)

Inspired by Ottolenghi

### INGREDIENTS

- 200g ground almonds
- 100g sugar
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- ½ tsp vanilla paste or 1 sachet vanilla sugar
- 1 pinch salt
- 2 egg whites
- Icing sugar
- 100g flaked almonds

### METHOD

- Preheat oven to 160°C.
- In a bowl, mix the ground almonds, sugar, lemon zest and vanilla paste and rub together with fingertips.
- Whip egg whites with a pinch of salt.
- Gently fold the whipped egg white into the almond mix to get a soft paste.
- Roll or dollop individual portions onto baking paper. The mixture should make 20 biscuits.
- My trick: form a sausage and cut in 2 cm long strips and press down in the middle with a fork or finger. A little bit like shaping gnocchi ;)
- Then roll them in icing sugar and flaked almonds.
- Bake for 20 min until they turn a light golden colour.



Sylvie Bollag was born in Switzerland, where she grew up in an organic-conscious, outdoorsy environment and developed her passion for a healthy lifestyle and delicious food. After moving to London and raising a young family, she enrolled at the renowned College of Naturopathic Medicine so she could share her enthusiasm and benefit others. Sylvie is a qualified Nutritional Therapist and an active member of the British Association for Applied Nutritional Therapy. She is also an avid fan of the Thermomix® as she believes a healthy lifestyle is best sustained once easily prepared. As such, she is an official advisor for Thermomix®- Vorwerk. For more information, follow Sylvie on Instagram @nutritionbysylvie or visit her website at [www.nutritionbysylvie.com](http://www.nutritionbysylvie.com)

# PERFECT FOR PESACH!

by SHOSHANA GERTNER

FOUR DELICIOUS PESACH RECIPES YOU'LL  
WANT TO MAKE ALL YEAR ROUND

## CANDY BEETROOT SALAD

### INGREDIENTS

- Candy beetroots x 2 (ocado)
- Golden beetroots x 2 (ocado)
- Confit garlic\*
- Sea salt
- Olive oil
- Balsamic vinegar
- Honey
- Fresh Parsley
- Green chillis
- Toasted walnuts

### METHOD

- Thinly slice the beetroots into rounds.
- Place in a shallow dish, alternating the beetroots to create pretty effect.
- Slice chillis and scatter on top.
- Drizzle generously with olive oil, balsamic vinegar and a little honey.
- Add sea salt and confit garlic.
- Garnish with parsley.

### \*TO MAKE CONFIT GARLIC:

Roast shelled garlic in a Pyrex dish covered with olive oil and seasoned generously with salt and pepper at 180°C for 1 hour. These can be used to add flavour to many dishes so I make a big batch and keep them in the fridge to use whenever I like!



# SLOW COOKED SHORT RIBS WITH GNOCCHI

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 packs short ribs (8 ribs)
- Sea salt
- Silan or honey
- Dry rub spices (a coffee rub works well)
- 2 packets pre-made gnocchi (available at Kosher Kingdom)
- Fresh parsley
- Confit garlic (recipe provided on opposite page)
- 3 white onions

## METHOD

- Preheat oven to 120°C.
- Thoroughly dry the ribs.
- Place in an ovenproof container.
- Sprinkle with a little sea salt and a generous amount of spice rub.
- Drizzle silan or honey generously all over the ribs. Add about 10 kernels of confit garlic.
- Cover dish well but allow some air in.
- Place in the oven for 6 hours.
- Meanwhile, chop the onions into long, thin pieces and sauté in olive oil with a little salt until caramelised and golden.
- Remove from the oven and shred. Meat should fall off the bone.

## GNOCCHI

- Bring salted water to a boil in a medium sized pot. Once boiling, add 2 packets of gnocchi for 3 minutes.
- Remove from the heat, drain and set aside.
- Spoon the ribs mixture into the gnocchi and add generous amounts of caramelised onion. Mix well but make sure not to mush!
- Spoon mixtures into individual ramekins to serve and garnish with parsley.



# FRENCHED RACK OF LAMB WITH SPRING VEGETABLES

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 to 3 racks French trimmed rack of lamb (6 pieces per rack) (Basar butcher prepare the lamb beautifully for this and are always very accommodating!)
- Sea salt
- Black pepper
- ½ C fresh parsley
- 2 tbsp fresh rosemary
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme
- Confit garlic (as always, but can omit!)
- 1 C almond meal
- Handful of pistachios
- Mustard replacement (Be aware that regular mustard contains kitniyot. if you want to avoid you can find a mustard replacement in local kosher shops at Pesach time.)

## FOR VEGETABLES

- 3 packets rainbow baby carrots
- 1 packet new potatoes
- 3 packets shallots (Kosher Kingdom sells the ready peeled ones which are very useful for Pesach preparations.)
- Olive oil
- Sea salt

## METHOD

- Preheat oven to 180°C.
- Arrange carrots and shallots on parchment paper. Drizzle with olive oil and seat salt. Roast for 1 hour.
- Bring a pot of water to the boil. Add new potatoes. Allow them to cook until fork tender and then drain and set aside.

- Meanwhile, with a sharp knife, score the fat side of the lamb in a criss-cross pattern.
- Preheat the oven to 190°C.
- Sprinkle sea salt and lots of black pepper all over the lamb .(You want to really coat it with pepper.)
- Heat a large pan and add olive oil. When hot, sear the lamb on each side until golden brown for about 4 minutes. Start with the fat side 4 for minutes and then 4 minutes on the other side.
- Once they are all seared, set aside.
- In a food processor, add the parsley, rosemary, thyme, almond meal, pistachios and about 6 kernels of confit garlic.
- Blitz until a crumb-like texture forms.
- Now, place your parboiled potatoes, carrots and shallots in a large silver foil container or an oven proof dish and set aside.
- Coat the lamb in mustard and then generously in the herb mixture using your hands.
- Wrap the bones of the lamb in foil to prevent burning.
- Lay the racks of lamb meat-side up on top of the vegetables.
- Transfer to the oven and cook for approximately 25 minutes.
- Remove the lamb from the oven and let rest for 10 minutes before carving. While it is resting, you can pop the vegetables back in the oven to cook a bit longer.
- Arrange the vegetables on a platter and lay the lamb on top for best effect. Scatter with some herbs and slice at the table!

## NOTE:

If you want to make this dish for Friday night or heat for a Yom tov meal - only cook the lamb for 9 minutes initially. Then completely seal the whole container with silver foil and put in the oven on Shabbat mode at 120°C just before Shabbat until the meal (approximately 1.5 hours before.



# HEALTHY 'TWIX' BARS

## BASE

- 3 C ground almonds
- 6 tbsp melted and cooled coconut oil
- 4 tbsp maple syrup
- 2 tsp vanilla essence
- ½ tsp salt

## NUT BUTTER LAYER

- 11/3 tbsp nut butter of your choice (On Pesach I like to use hazelnut butter or cashew butter)
- ½ C coconut oil
- 2/3 tbsp maple syrup
- 2 tsp vanilla
- ½ tsp sea salt

## CHOCOLATE LAYER

- 1.5 C choc chips
- 2 tbsp coconut oil

## METHOD

- Preheat oven to 180°C.
- Line a square silver foil tin with parchment paper.
- Mix all ingredients for 'shortbread' base in a bowl. Place the mixture in a square container lined with parchment paper and evenly press down.
- Bake for 20 minutes.
- Allow crust to cool down.

### Make the nut butter:

- Put all ingredients for the nut butter in a medium pot and cook on a medium heat until caramel starts to slightly bubble.
- Poor over the cooled crust.

- Place in the fridge for at least 30 min to harden the caramel layer.

### Then make the chocolate layer:

- Add choc chips and coconut oil to a microwave-safe bowl and microwave at a low temperature until melted.
- Pour the chocolate over the caramel layer, making sure it is evenly distributed.
- Sprinkle with sea salt if you like.
- Place in the fridge until chocolate hardens (approximately 20-30 minutes).
- Remove from container and cut into bars.

## KEEP IN THE FRIDGE UNTIL READY TO SERVE.



Shoshana Gertner is a lover of food who runs @yumartisanchocolate.  
Contact Shoshana for your boutique catering needs on 07583733222.

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