

PERSPECTIVES

ISSUE 12 | ROSH HASHANAH 5782 | SEPTEMBER 2021

The magazine of **aish**^{uk}

**18 INSPIRING
IDEAS FOR THE
NEW YEAR**

FESTIVE FOOD

**MY ORTHODOX
LIFE**

**FEAR & LOATHING
ON YOM KIPPUR**

**ISRAEL'S
GOVERNMENT
OF CHANGE**

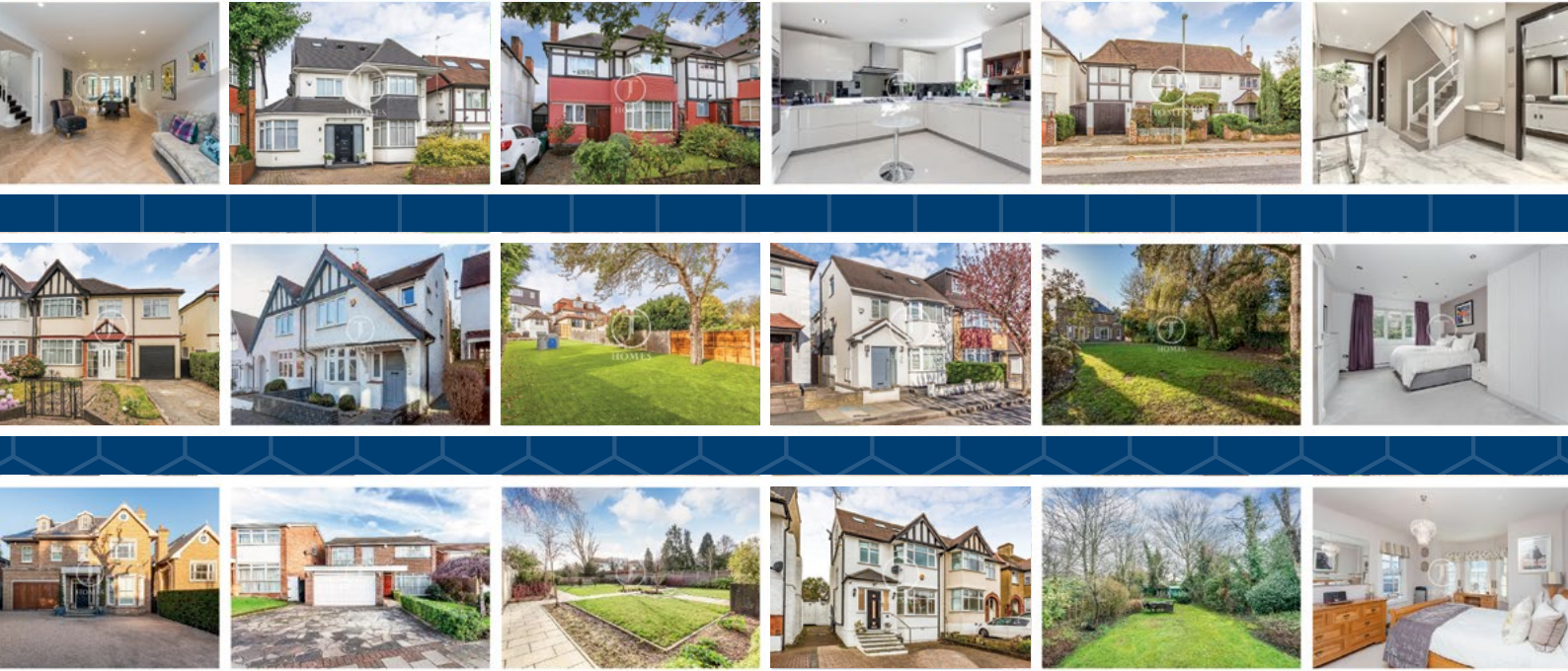
**CAGED: TWENTY DAYS
CAPTIVE IN NIGERIA**
RUDY ROCHMAN

**ROSH HASHANAH
2021**

OLAMI MEMBER



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Josh Tenenblat MNAEA
Director

☎ 020 8202 7222

☎ 07877 123 978

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EDITOR'S WELCOME

DEAR READERS,

A very warm welcome back and a heartfelt thank you, to each and every one of you, for your loyal support and encouragement over the last year. Your generous feedback has motivated Rabbi Ari Kayser and me to work even harder to produce this beautiful issue which we hope will enrich your High Holy Days with golden threads of bright light and deep wisdom. We welcome our outstanding new sub-editor Tammy Lieberman who has been absolutely stellar and thank our superb graphic designer, Andrea Jonker.

I don't think there is a person on this planet who is not thinking about how their fate is going to unfold in 5782. To me, the world has never felt as unpredictable as it feels now as countries go in and out of lockdowns, and we continue to navigate our way in this cryptic maze that seems to have no roadmap. But amidst this universal confusion there has also been profound redemption. When I think about how many millions have been vaccinated, how many have been helped by magnificent acts of kindness, how many have come to understand what is truly important on this earthly journey, I acknowledge how God in His infinite wisdom has offered us a real opportunity to lift the opaque veil from over our eyes. That is not to deny it has been piercingly painful to endure and witness, but sobering too. We have woken up from our slumber.

And so, when I sat down to think about the New Year message I would like to impart, the word 'relationships' shone in neon lights. COVID has compelled us to examine our relationships with an amplified sense of gratitude, empathy and humility. How could it not? We have been brought to our knees. Hashem has brought great challenge to the world, not to harm us, but rather to wake us up. We can no longer live as we have been living. We have to rise and elevate ourselves to become greater individuals who are more understanding, empathic, generous, committed and selfless. Our invincibility is no longer hidden but is crystal clear and the reality of our fragility is as real as ever.

When we stand together on Rosh Hashanah and sing the stirring melodies, we will do so with many more barriers dissolved. This year we have been witness to the most heroic acts of kindness universally. I am writing this from my desk in South Africa where I have been privileged enough to have been involved with humanitarian efforts to help desperately poor African families. Hundreds more were fed, clothed and warmed as a result of the incredible generosity of others.

There is no doubt in my mind that the greatest joy we can ever experience comes from being from a good person and from becoming better versions of ourselves. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks captures it perfectly, "When I use the flame of my faith to light a candle in someone else's life, my Jewishness is not diminished. It grows because there is now more Jewish light in the world. When it comes to spiritual goods as opposed to material goods, the more I share, the more I have. If I share my knowledge, or faith, or love with others, I won't have less; I may even have more... So, share your Judaism with others, take the flame of your faith and help set other souls on fire."

A close friend recently shared a deeply moving idea in the name of the holy Klausenberger Rebbe of blessed memory, who lost his wife and eleven children in the Holocaust. I think that if we take one message with us into 5782 let it be this, because the bricks of kindness are what pave the road to a blessed life.

The Rebbe used to say, "Promise me you will remember this forever: The greatest thing in the whole wide world is to do someone else a favour."

A story is told of a Jew from the town of the Klausenberger who was on the verge of committing suicide one night in Auschwitz when he realized his whole family had been burnt in the gas chambers. Then he heard the Rebbe's voice echoing in his ears: "Remember, the greatest thing in the world is to do a favor for someone else." The Jew recalled, "you know how many favors one can do in a night in Auschwitz? There are broken people all around and then even more arrive. I sat all night listening, giving empathy and love and so I guess that's how I survived."

If we can sew this message from the Klausenberger Rebbe into the fabric of our new year, we will not only be able to build a year of merits but also one of strengthened relationships. Let us endeavour to do good in all of our days and in turn we will become good and invoke a favourable judgement from above.

My sincere hope and prayer is that this year will taste sweet like caramelized apples and that goodness, health and abundance will fill all the days of our lives.

On behalf of Rabbi Rowe, Rabbi Kayser and the entire Aish team, Shana Tova Umetukah. Make it count, make it kind. It's what God would want, more kindness in His world.

WARMEST BLESSINGS,

Shira

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rabbi Daniel Rowe

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Rabbi Ari Kayser

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Shira Druon

SUB-EDITOR

Tammy Lieberman

DESIGN

Andrea Jonker

Contributors

Maria Beider
Rabbi Eli Birnbaum
Dr Michelle Braude
Darren Cohen
Naomi Cohen
Shira Druon
Sara Elias
Rebbetzin Shalvie Friedman
Rabbi Moshe Friedman
Deborah Gabay
Rabbi Raphy Garson
Rabbi Ari Kayser
Gareth Kobrin
Judge Shlomo Kreiman
Kim Kushner
Paula Levin
Rabbi Dr Benji Levy
Sophia Mohsal
Rebbetzin Leah Moskowsky
Rabbi Shimshon Hakohen Nadel
Chaya Necha Milun
Dr Jeremy Rees
Susan Rosenthal
Rabbi Naftali Schiff
Nadine Shane
Esther Taylor

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Jeremy Newman - Chairman
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Sandra Green
Dalia Meshulam
Anthony Moshal
Jacqueline Rashbass
Asher Steene

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Thoughts? Contact us at

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FESTIVE FOOD



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GAGED

TWENTY DAYS CAPTIVE IN NIGERIA

HOW THREE ISRAELI FILMMAKERS DOCUMENTING
THE LIVES OF NIGERIAN JEWS WERE ABDUCTED AND
IMPRISONED BY THE NIGERIAN AUTHORITIES

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
RUDY ROCHMAN *by* RABBI ARI KAYSER

This wasn't my first meeting with Rudy Rochman, a Jewish and Israel-rights activist and host of the *We Were Never Lost* project, a documentary series set to tell the stories, struggles and aspirations of lesser known and disconnected communities of Jews around the world.

In October 2020, Rudy contacted me through a mutual acquaintance to talk about a subject of particular interest to me – the Lost Tribes of Israel. He was planning to make a Netflix-style documentary about Jewish groups around the world who claim descent from the Lost Tribes. Researching this topic has been a big hobby of mine, and I published a feature-length article on the topic in the last issue of *Perspectives* magazine. Rudy told me then that the first season of the *We Were Never Lost* documentary series would focus on groups in Africa. He asked me to provide a synopsis for him and his team on the history of the ten lost tribes, as well as some information regarding groups in Africa. Little did we know then just how things would unfold for the team once they reached Nigeria.



Rudy (centre), along with his crew - David Benaym (left), a film producer, and Noam Leibman (right), creative director - arrived in Nigeria with a Torah Scroll to gift to the local community.

The Igbo people are a meta-ethnic group native to south-eastern Nigeria numbering around 30 million. The origins of the Igbo are disputed to this day, although many consider themselves to be Jews in accordance with the oral tradition passed down from parents and grandparents. The earliest mention of this connection was in Olaudah Equiano's celebrated biography 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African' (1789), where he observes many similarities between Jewish laws, customs and beliefs and those of the Igbo. He notes in particular the customs of circumcision, animal sacrifices and ritual washings and purifications, which are not found among other ethnic groups in the area. British historian and Lost Tribes writer, Tudor Parfitt, in his book 'Black Jews in Africa and the Americas', discusses the problematic elements of Equiano's book, while also admitting that some of what he wrote about the ethnography of the Igbo appears to be authentic.

“Several thousand Igbo are deeply connected to their Jewish roots. Many of them are also in contact with Jewish groups that aid them in learning Hebrew and teach them about the normative rituals and customs of Judaism today.”

That history aside, there are Igbo today who claim to be of Israelite origin. The prevalent view is that the Igbo Jews are descendants of the Tribe of Gad, son of Jacob. This view suggests that three of the sons of Gad – Eri, Arodi and Areli – as mentioned in the Torah (Genesis 46:16), settled in present-day Nigeria and established kingdoms in towns that exist to this day. Igbo King Eze Chukwuemeka Eri claims to preside over the throne of Gad's son, Eri. Although they are not recognised as Jews by the State of Israel, several thousand Igbo are deeply connected to their Jewish roots. Many of them are also in contact with Jewish groups that aid them in learning Hebrew and teach them about the normative rituals and customs of Judaism today.



Rochman presenting King Eze Chukwuemeka Eri with a shiviti artwork in his palace.

Rudy and his team faced one fundamental problem in their expedition – some people within the Jewish Igbo framework have been, and continue to be, entangled in a complex political story that has spanned many years. In 1967, the Nigerian civil war was fought between the Nigerian government and the Republic of Biafra, a secessionist state which declared independence in south-eastern Nigeria. Biafra represented the national aspirations of the Igbo who no longer wanted to be dominated by the Muslim Hausa-Fulani of northern Nigeria. The civil war lasted three years and left millions of Igbo dead. Although the end of the war signified the end of an independent Biafra, aspirations of independence still exist among many of the Igbo. Of great concern to the Nigerian government is the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement, founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, which seeks to restore an independent state of Biafra in south-eastern Nigeria. In Nigeria, IPOB is classified as a terrorist organisation and Kanu is a staunch believer that the Igbo are a lost tribe of Israel. Inserting the Jewish claim into this political minefield has likely endangered the lives of many of the Igbo Jews, many of whom have no involvement in the political aspirations of Kanu or IPOB.

“We went there without any political intention, and not part of any government or diplomatic mission. We were very clear about what we were doing. We have a website with trailer videos and a pitch deck which details what our plan is. We did a lot of research; there were certain areas on our itinerary we had to change because we knew it was too dangerous.”

In spite of all the preparations the group made to ensure a safe visit, they didn’t calculate the impact of Rudy’s 350,000+ followers on social media. Soon after their arrival in Nigeria there were some posts from the group about empowering Jewish identity, and a rumour started circulating online that they were actually Mossad agents sent to inspire the uprising against the government.

“It was a small room; you could only take three steps in any direction. No chair, no bed - just a floor with bottles of urine, cockroaches (dead and alive), and rat faeces everywhere.”

On Friday 9 July at 7:30am, as the group were preparing for a day of filming the Igbo Jewish community of Ogidi, their local contact called to inform them that the police were waiting for them downstairs and that they had to bring their passports and phones with them. At this point, since they knew they had done nothing wrong, they saw this as nothing more than an inconvenience to their filming plans for the day, and they complied.

“We came down, there were 15 armed gunmen – ironically holding Israeli-made Tavor rifles; they were wearing black ski masks and combat boots,” tells Rochman. These men were Department of State Services (DSS) agents. As their leader explained to the filmmakers: “We are like the FBI or Shin-Bet of Nigeria.” The leader reassured them that this was a routine check to determine whether certain rumours were true, and that they would like to interview

them quickly to make sure everything was legitimate. He emphasised that it shouldn’t take much longer than an hour and they could be back on their way to film.

The men were loaded into three separate vans along with their tour guide (who is still in prison) and Ima Lisbon, who is the matriarch of the community. They met with the director of the nearby DSS centre and explained the purpose of their visit. Rochman also explained that it was Friday, that they had planned to spend Shabbat with the community, and that it was important for them to document the day. The director agreed, saying that they could return in 15 minutes and continue the interview on Sunday. That didn’t happen. Instead, within the next couple of hours, each of the men was taken individually to be interrogated. The interrogations were very aggressive but once again, the group was confident they had nothing to hide. As the day wore on, they began to realise they would be staying for the night.

“We asked one of the officers for some food and were given some leftovers – a bunch of grapes and some crackers. So, we said Kiddush on the grape and HaMotzi on the crackers and we slept there that night.”

When I asked Rudy how that experience felt to him, he said, “I’ve travelled around the world and been in many situations, but I have never missed a Kiddush in my life, and I was determined not to break the ritual then.”

At 7am, the 15 masked, armed DSS agents stormed into their room shouting for them to get out. They were loaded onto a van and when Rudy asked where they were being taken, the answer was clear – “You don’t need to know”. At that point he realised they were not being taken back to their hotel and that they were in real trouble. Rudy had a feeling that they were being taken to their execution and he started to plan how they would attempt to overpower the gunmen. He told me: “There is no way we were being taken to our slaughter; if we were going out, we were going out with a fight.” The three men agreed that if they were not told where they were being taken within the hour, they would try to escape. It was fortuitous that shortly thereafter they were told they were being taken on a 9-hour drive to the DSS headquarters in Nigeria’s capital, Abuja, where their ambassador would be waiting for them, along



All image credit: We Were Never Lost

with their passports and phones, and they would then be permitted to leave. Rochman noticed that the signs on the roads were indeed heading to Abuja, and the three opted to believe the men.

On arrival in Abuja, however, the men were confronted with a very different reality. Instead of an ambassador and their phones, they were told to remove any items on them, including belts, shoes, rings and watches, and to get into a dark cage in the facility. The men stood their ground and argued their innocence. They questioned whether they were being arrested and they were told they were not. The men refused to get into the filthy cage and were then coerced into the cage by the officers. “It was a small room; you could only take three steps in any direction. No chair, no bed - just a floor with bottles of urine, cockroaches (dead and alive), and rat faeces everywhere. The walls were a

“There is no way we were being taken to our slaughter; if we were going out, we were going out with a fight.”

thick layer of black from the human filth of people held captive there.” After some time, Rudy noticed some writing on the walls indicating the number of months people had previously spent there. One message scratched into the wall read, “Tomorrow they take me, this is my name, remember me before they kill me.”

The men soon realised that nobody would know where they were – they were now 9 hours away from their scheduled destination and they needed to find a way to escape. The first idea Rochman had was to try to steal a phone from one of the guards. The cage was small - it had a wooden door and a metal bar door behind it. He managed to pick the lock of the wooden door but was unable to do so for the metal one. He could reach out his hands between the bars and touch a table near the door. The guards spent time on their phones, and if he could catch one of them off guard, he could steal one. The problem, he realised, was that every phone is locked with a passcode, so obtaining the phone without the passcode would not be sufficient. This

is where Rudy used some of his Israel advocacy skills. One of the guards was a devout Christian, and Rudy initiated a debate with him about why Jesus was not the son of God. The guards tried to bring Rudy proof, which he debunked, but by drawing them into these discussions, he was able to monitor their phones as they went onto lock mode, and to carefully watch the guards unlock them in an attempt to see their passcodes. He attempted this repeatedly but failed to find the codes.

The men had not eaten for days, but on the fourth day when they were offered some food, they refused to take it, saying that they would only eat kosher food. Their plan was to force the guards to contact Chabad in Abuja to provide them with kosher food, hoping that this would alert the Jewish world (which is very connected) to their predicament. “They offered us pizza and salad, which sounded amazing as we were so hungry. But we decided to stick with the plan, hoping that the message would reach Chabad, and that Chabad would contact our parents.”

It turns out Rudy’s family had already guessed that he was in trouble. His brother had located Rudy on the *Find My Friends* app and had worked out that he was being held in a government building. His parents called contacts in Nigeria who were able to inform the ambassador about the situation.

After being held captive for a close to a week, Rudy and his colleagues were taken to meet the ambassador. At this point they still hadn’t showered, and they hadn’t eaten. In response to their plight, the Ambassador arranged the delivery of kosher food once a day to the detainees, which they divided amongst themselves and shared with the Igbo matriarch when she was brought near to them. They were eventually permitted to ‘shower’ – an arrangement that involved a bucket that had been used by other inmates to wash after relieving themselves.

After their sixth day in captivity, David, who suffers from an auto-immune disease, began to feel very sick. With his medication a 9-hour drive away, he insisted on being taken to a hospital, threatening that he may die in their custody. They eventually agreed, and David was taken to a hospital and only brought back a couple more times for interviews.

“At this point it was just me and Noam,” Rochman tells



me. “On the seventh day they moved us to a slightly bigger cage, with two Boko Haram militants, who looked at us like hyenas circling a wounded animal. After realising we were not intimidated, they began to act pleasantly and asked us lots of questions. We realised quickly that they were trying to get information from us to pass on to the DSS and we were very careful with our words.”

Asked about what helped to keep them going, Rochman says, “We were allowed to have our tefillin with us – it was the only thing we were allowed – and we put them on every day we were there. One day we staged a ‘tefillin protest’ and we kept the tefillin on all day, and when they took us through a lobby filled with civilians we started yelling that we were innocent and being held illegally against our will.”

After 20 days they were finally released. They were allowed outdoors for the first time in almost three weeks and were taken in a van to an immigration facility and then to the airport. They were only given their passports and phones once they were on the plane.

“No one could have predicted that some images posted on social media would give rise to a conspiracy theory about what we were doing; or that the Nigerian government would have no accountability for their actions and that they would abduct us and throw us into a prison,” Rochman said.

When pressed about how he feels about his experiences in hindsight, he told me, “Everything happens for a reason. Many people in the government didn’t know that the few thousand practicing Igbo Jews have nothing to do with the separatist movement. Maybe because of what we went through, the government and DSS will now understand the nuances better, and maybe they will persecute these

communities less.”

After this harrowing experience, many people would count their blessings and move on with their lives. Not Rudy Rochman. He tells me, “We are definitely going to use this as fuel to keep going. We were not turned off by our experiences. To the contrary, many Igbos sent us messages of support during this time and kept us inspired. We are very committed to the idea of ‘Tikkun Olam’ and reconnecting our family”.

I asked Rudy, given everything he has been through, what is he feeling as we approach Rosh Hashanah this year. “Every year we say ‘Leshana habaa biYerushalayim’ (next year in Jerusalem). We know that at the ‘end of days’ the tribes of Israel will reunite in Israel from the four corners of the earth. When I went to Nigeria and saw the community there, and witnessed their creativity, intelligence, and entrepreneurship, I realised how much they would bring to Israel.”

“The Jewish people are like one light that has been smashed into different pieces. Ashkenazim took some of that light, Sephardim too. So did Mizrachim and Ethiopian Jews. But some of that light is still missing, and when we have those missing parts back in Israel, we become who we are meant to be. We need them as much as they need us.”

“We came to Nigeria to tell the story of the Igbo, and instead we became the story.” The initial attempt to tell this story was put on hold, but Rochman and the *We Were Never Lost* project will continue.



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.



THE INNOVATIVE JEWISH EDUCATOR

RABBI DR. BENJI LEVY REFLECTS ON HIS CAREER,
HIS VISION FOR THE FUTURE AND THE CHALLENGES
FACING YOUNG JEWS TODAY

by SHIRA DRUION

Rabbi Benji and his wife, Renana, with their four children in Jerusalem

1 WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS IN YOUR CAREER AS A JEWISH EDUCATOR?

I recall one unforgettable moment as an educator during a trip to Poland. After the extremely moving experience of coming through the gas chambers at Majdanek concentration camp alive, everyone dispersed to different areas where they could reflect on their emotions in their own way and in their own time. Suddenly, one of the boys in the group who had been less engaged during the trip, pierced the eerie silence and screamed at the top of his voice: "I'm Jewish!" - sending a chill down our spines.

While I have hosted prime ministers, spoken to large audiences around the world and worked with influential people to invest tens of millions of dollars in worthy causes, the highlights of my career as an educator have always revolved around personal relationships and seeing the growth of individuals. From more obvious settings, like the Holocaust memorial in the anecdote I shared, seeing the Kotel for the first time or around our Shabbat table, to less obvious places like on a bus, in a cafe or in a stadium - it is these extraordinary personal moments that stand out in my career more than anything else.

2 WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR JEWISH EDUCATORS STRUGGLING TO CONNECT STUDENTS TO THE SCHOOL SYSTEM?

Instead of trying to connect them to a system, try to connect with them. Understand where they are coming from, what makes them tick and what engages them. Often real educational growth is predicated upon the capacity to understand one another and build meaningful relationships.

I tried this with the first task I took on when I assumed the role of Dean at Moriah College. There was a notorious group of boys who weren't interested in Judaism but were obsessed with rugby. Having been a fanatic and competitive rugby player myself, I was familiar with the game and became their coach. I was committed and pushed the team in every way. It was tough and time-consuming, with so many competing responsibilities, but everyone knew that my time with this team was sacrosanct. The boys didn't care how much I knew until they knew how much I cared.

After that experience, they went from being potential resistors to my greatest allies in transforming the culture of the school community.

3 WHAT SHOULD WE BE WORRIED ABOUT IN THE WORLD AND DOES JUDAISM OFFER ANY SOLUTIONS?

Our world is plagued by identity politics, a deterioration of civil discourse, COVID-19, a scarcity of effective leadership and a myriad of other divisive issues. These rifts are imposed on a generation of young Jews, many of whom are apathetic and disengaged at worst, and uncertain about the meaning and relevance of Judaism at best. While many of these problems are amplified by social media echo-chambers, important influencers have shown how these mechanisms can also be used to inspire, unite and inform in a powerful way. We have not succeeded in harnessing the tools available to us and cutting through the noise to connect with these people enough from a Jewish point of view.

There is a tremendous thirst for meaning, especially as we approach the end of the pandemic. For every existential question the world is facing, Judaism has a few beautiful approaches. So many people turn to other sources, many of which are like fast food - providing a temporary gratification that doesn't nourish. You need depth, you need profundity, you need nuance. To share the beauty and relevance of Torah in a way that truly resonates and to unite our people are big challenges that keep me up at night.

4 WHAT NEEDS TO SHIFT TO ACHIEVE THIS WITH OUR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Judaism, when lived fully, includes enriching, positive substance that can make a far more enduring impact on the individual than the declining sense of obligation to raise an actively Jewish family and the often uninspiring 'schlep' to synagogue on the High Holidays. On the other hand, exposure to transformational experiences like a powerful Shabbat, for example, can lead to an appreciation that such perceived restrictions can unexpectedly grant the freedom and headspace to value the truly important things in life.

Jewish teachings about charity and hospitality allow one to appreciate how an ancient moral compass can enhance quality of life for the most vulnerable members of modern



Rabbi Benji meeting with Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks זצ"ל in London in 2019

society. Similarly, a deeper understanding of the vibrant, nuanced, multi-faceted reality in Israel can allow one to acknowledge the difficulties and complexities of the situation, enabling one to see past the falsified reputation and appreciate the truth of inclusivity in the flourishing democracy.

A healthy Jewish communal body cannot thrive on a diet of tragedy alone. It cannot devolve into a skeleton devoid of bone marrow based on external threats. Instead, we must celebrate the inner beauty of Jewish life. To move from 'oy to joy', we need a paradigm shift. The impetus for Jewish living must come from inside the Jewish world, being proactive rather than reactive. We must begin by truly believing that the Jewish story is worth telling and then reconsider how we tell that story. After all, our children no longer want to hear how not to leave. They need to experience why they must stay.

5 WHO HAS BEEN THE MOST INFLUENTIAL FIGURE IN YOUR LIFE AND WHAT IS ONE LESSON THEY SHARED THAT HAS INFLUENCED YOU?

My father is my mentor, and growing up, my home was my greatest classroom. He always explains that Jews don't believe in luck - we believe in mazal. Mazal, he says, is

an acronym for *makom* (place), *zman* (timing) and *la'asot* (action). We are all put in a certain place at a certain time, but the question is whether we realize this potential and are ready to take action. In my life, I have been blessed to notice when I was in the right place at the right time and strived to make my *mazal* in those moments because I lived through my father's ongoing tutelage every day.

6 WHY DID YOU MAKE ALIYAH?

I wanted to allow my children to enjoy this unique opportunity to play a leading role in defining our future as active participants at its centre, rather than passive observers. To live in this generation, at this moment, is a great privilege and we are so grateful to fulfil the prayers and dreams, sweat and tears of millions that laid the foundations for us to make aliya and raise a family in our ancient homeland!

7 WHY DID YOU CREATE ISRAEL IMPACT PARTNERS NOW?

Israel has one of the highest numbers of non-profits per capita in the world that are active in every sphere of society. However, the landscape has changed dramatically in recent times. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated a multitude of social and economic challenges, created new



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**A HEALTHY JEWISH COMMUNAL
BODY CANNOT THRIVE ON
A DIET OF TRAGEDY ALONE.
IT CANNOT DEVOLVE INTO A
SKELETON DEVOID OF BONE
MARROW BASED ON EXTERNAL
THREATS. INSTEAD, WE MUST
CELEBRATE THE INNER BEAUTY
OF JEWISH LIFE.**

ones and left the future feeling more uncertain for so many. Many philanthropists are particularly conscious of these shifts and have stepped up to help, giving rise to a dramatic increase in donations, including many that are unsolicited. Yet, while philanthropists want to give and organisations want to strive, it has often been the business world that generates the most efficient and effective processes for maximum gains.

In this context, I partnered with Michael Bloch, a former Senior Partner at McKinsey & Company and an absolute mensch, to establish Israel Impact Partners and forge a new path to allow more donors and lay leaders the opportunity to support a stronger and more sustainable society for Israel and beyond. We work to ensure that philanthropic investments help to scale up non-profits to increase their impact and social return in the same way that financial investments do.

8 WHAT ARE 3 EXCITING THINGS YOU ARE WORKING ON?

Everything I am working on is truly exciting, but the three I would choose to share would be:

1. Working with IsraAid to help the Eswatini government with their COVID vaccine rollout, focusing on spiritual influence and guiding tribal and religious leaders to help save lives in this beautiful part of Africa.
2. Creating a Jewish teen leadership program called 'Dreaming Bigger' with the incredible Dr. Erica Brown. We are writing a book and creating an educator's guide, masterclasses, trigger films and a digital platform combining rigorous leadership literature, seamless Jewish integration and an authentic teen voice in a comprehensive way to help to inspire the next generation.
3. Developing an impact fellowship to empower an exclusive group of lay people across North America that will be charged with a range of key leadership roles in the future.



Shira Druon obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in English, psychology and education. She then trained 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 through to university, where she lectured on communication and writing skills. She now teaches English and runs her own drama company called Dramatix, where she teaches a broad age range of students. Druon is passionate about women's education. She gives a weekly *parsha shiur*, as well as other *shiurim*, and runs women's programmes in the community.

CONNECTED IN LIFE, CONNECTED IN LOSS

IS THERE A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE
DEVASTATING TRAGEDIES THAT OCCURRED
IN MERON AND MIAMI?

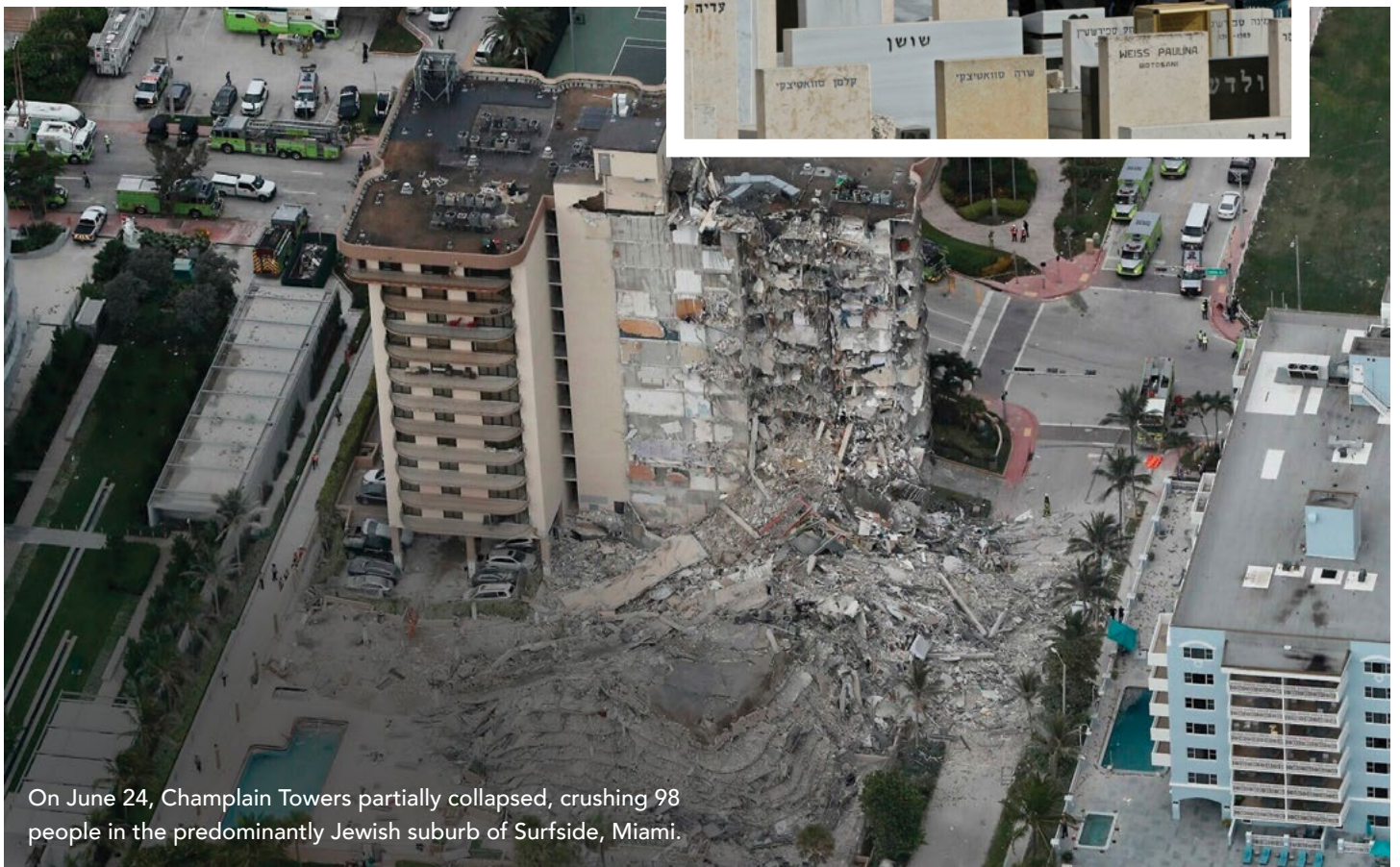
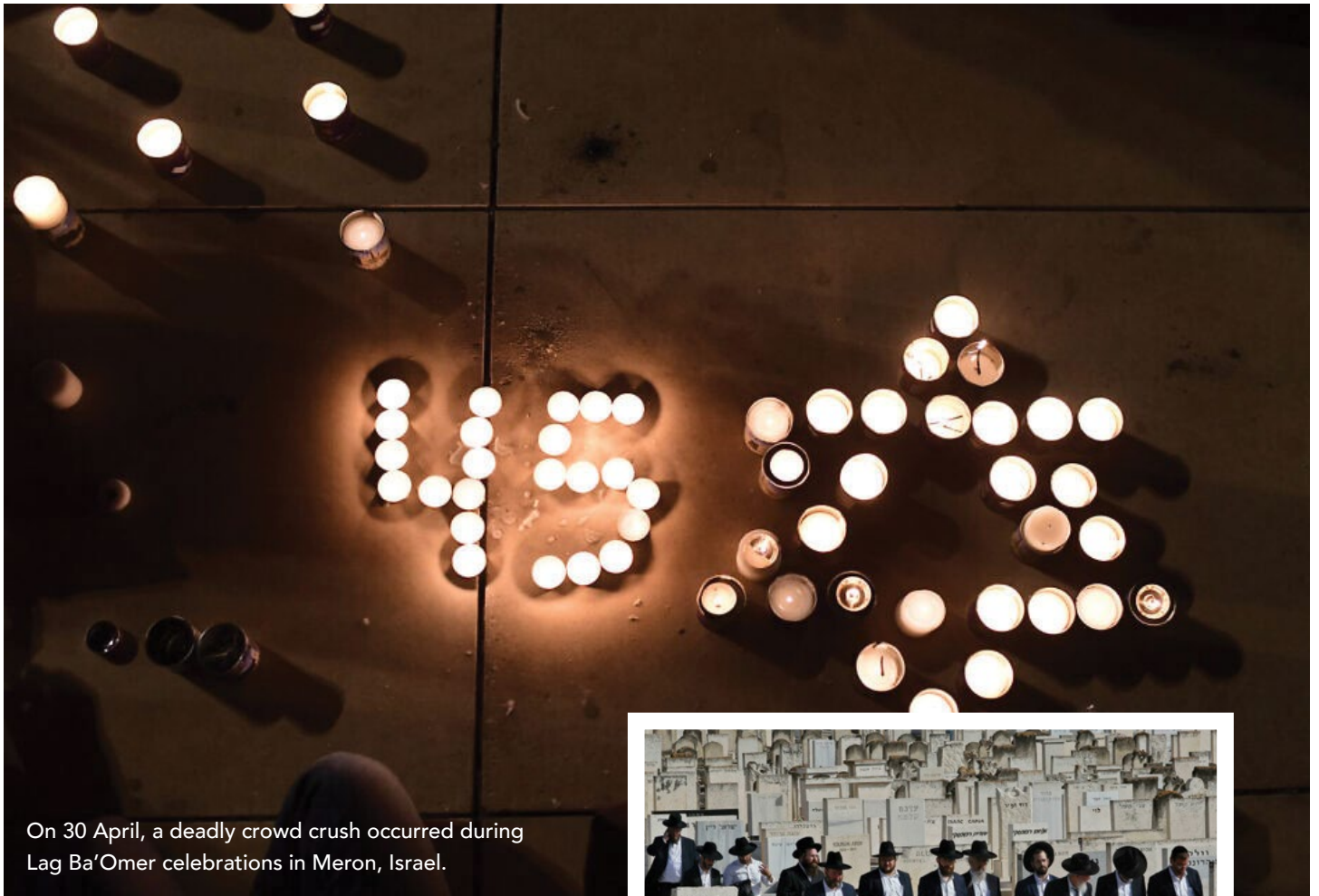
by PAULA LEVIN

On 30 April, a deadly crowd crush occurred during Lag Ba'Omer celebrations in Meron, Israel. On June 24, Champlain Towers partially collapsed, crushing 98 people in the predominantly Jewish suburb of Surfside, Miami. The editor of a Jewish magazine in England asks a South African journalist to write an article on these two tragedies of 2021. At face value, the very idea that some connection exists between these two events is strange - why put them in the same sentence, in the same article? That these catastrophes on different continents should deeply affect a community of readers on a third continent, a writer on a fourth, and millions of other people scattered across the globe is astonishing. And yet, for the Jewish people, the question is not even a question!

Close to 2000 years after our people were exiled from their land, scattered across the four corners of the earth, subject to countless cultures and 'isms', persecutions and annihilations, assimilations and absorptions, we still feel each other's loss and pain as if we were one body. When one tip of one finger hurts, it matters - the entire body

feels it. The victims may have been chareidim, chassidim, ashkenazim, sephardim, assimilated or unaffiliated, from communities across Israel, or across America, from Cuba, Argentina, Russia or Venezuela, but we all feel the loss of our fellow Jews as if they were family. Because they were.

Before taking a deeper look at our response to these tragedies, it is worth pausing to appreciate the foundation of unity revealed through them. My inbox was filled with voices from diverse Jewish communities and organisations all over the world, all expressing the same thing - their personal pain at our collective loss. It was reported that two secular young men - complete strangers - visited Rabbi Menachem Mendel England, father of Moshe Nosson Nota, 14, and Yehoshua, 9, to offer condolences. This fact alone saw the bereaved father repeatedly whisper to himself in awe - "Mi keamcha Yisroel?" - Who is like your nation Israel? "Know that what is taking place here," Reb Menachem Mendel said, "is the truth. You and I, together, are in agony over the great loss, and we are strengthening one another.



Regardless of whether you are secular or chareidi...We are Jews.” Reb Menachem Mendel concluded, “I want you to invite me to your simchahs. And I will invite you to my simchahs.”

Rabbi Steve Burg, CEO of Aish Hatorah, wrote that shortly after his friend Aryeh Morris lost his own son Donny in Meron, this bereaved father offered to travel with Rabbi Burg to Costa Rica to offer comfort to Jeanette and Isaac Wasserstein, whose granddaughter Deborah Berezdivin was among the missing in Surfside. Mi Keamcha Yisrael.

Two tragedies of huge proportions happened at close to 1 in the morning. Both events saw human beings crushed. Are these coincidences? Is God communicating something to us by shining a spotlight on our people in some way? Searching for meaning after these tragedies is in itself (even without finding answers) a deeply profound exercise. It too reveals a foundational Jewish worldview that everything happens for a reason.

These foundations of unity and of purpose are what historian Paul Johnson called “the moral furniture of the mind” - values you may take for granted and yet are hard won and not the ‘natural’ status quo. For thousands of years the Jewish people have retained a collective consciousness - a way of looking at the world. This is the Jewish search for meaning and purpose, a pattern, a rhyme and a reason beneath the surface of life. When tragedy strikes we wonder why? We search our hearts, our souls and our behaviours, and chart a way forward because we know there is a message. We have done so for thousands of years even as the world around us, starting with Amalek, has insisted that there is nothing deeper - what you see is what you get.

The Rambam writes that anyone who says that a tragedy happens for no reason is cruel. That 45 men and boys in the prime of their lives died because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time is the antithesis of Judaism’s clarion call. That they died because of police negligence, or a wet walkway or a poorly organised event (or any other physical cause) is unthinkable. The Baal Shem Tov taught that a leaf does not fall from a tree without Divine Providence.

That 98 people were buried in an instant because of structural instability is an outrageous thought. These factors may explain *how* these tragedies took place in a physical sense (and any negligence must face consequences to prevent future tragedy), but they don’t begin to scratch the surface of *why*.

Why, why, why? The question only arises because of our deep faith and love of God! Because we cannot reconcile His world with His essence - He and His name (His reputation) are not yet one. We know He is just and loving and kind - so why all the suffering? Instead of concluding that He is none of those things (just, loving and kind) as so many have done, we conclude that we lack the ability to comprehend His ways, and nevertheless remain loyal to what He asks of us. I once attended a shiur entitled ‘Why bad things happen to good people.’ The rabbi walked to the front of the room and said “This is going to be a really

short shiur. Do you want to know why? We don’t know. The end.” I don’t remember the rest of the talk but I loved the honesty of this introduction. But there is a critical distinction to make - just because we don’t know the reason does not mean there is no reason. The fact that our sophisticated prefrontal cortexes have developed rocket science and propelled our bodies

into space makes it hard to accept that there are limits to the human mind. But acceptance of our limitations may just be the greatest human feat. Far from diminishing us, this sense of surrender to something greater than us brings the deepest peace to those grappling with personal tragedy or loss. This is self-transcendence. It’s not something that can be described in words, or argued intellectually. Those who have felt it are forever changed. It is something felt so deeply, it feels more real than the tragedy itself, which almost takes on a dreamlike quality.

“Baruch Dayan HaEmet, God is the true Judge” is the blessing we say when faced with death. We surrender the ego, the preposterous notion that the created could understand the mind of the Creator. Instead, we trust Him. We transcend the conditional love of God because He is personally good to me, or does what I want or expect or think I deserve. We begin to love Him, to trust Him, unconditionally, innocently, like a child trusts his father.

Acceptance of our limitations may just be the greatest human feat. Far from diminishing us, this sense of surrender to something greater than us brings the deepest peace to those grappling with personal tragedy or loss.



Abraham rose early and eagerly to sacrifice his miracle son, who carried his own hopes for spreading the message of a kind and just world without human sacrifice! He rose early to sacrifice Isaac, who God had promised would grow to become a great nation. Abraham rose early because of love and trust that transcended his mind's ability to reconcile this commandment with who he knew God to be.

Jewish tragedy shines a spotlight on how Hashem runs the world - inexplicably, incomprehensibly! But it also shines a light on how His people respond to the challenges He gives us. Humility in the face of gigantic questions must never be mistaken for resignation or helplessness. We must react, we must respond, we must grow and change. We recommit ourselves to love what He loves. This, our 3000 year old unbroken tradition teaches, is goodness and kindness. In a webpage created in memory of aforementioned Donny Morris, his family ask people to do acts of goodness and kindness in honour of the boy's shloshim. Included among the suggestions is to greet three people before they greet you. This response epitomises the Jewish heart. When the parents of Elazar Yitzchak (Azi) Koltai, 13, asked people to honour their son's memory, they asked them to do what Azi called "micro-mitzvot," such as thanking the street cleaners every time he passed by for their work. For every soul that we lost, worlds of goodness and kindness are being constructed by the loved ones they left behind. And then, there's us - the extended family.

So many rabbis, thinkers and speakers have struggled to make sense of these painful tragedies, offering unique insights and seeing significant patterns. Their answers were different - but all the same - they asked us to be better, dig deeper, reach higher; to not be the same people we were yesterday so that those who have left leave a legacy. Death urges us to return to our essence and our values, it brutally pushes 'pause' on this busy, distracting world so that everything important stands out in sharp relief. "But the living shall take it to heart," says Kohelet. We take those we lost into our own hearts, and we are better because they lived.

To be a Jew is to keep making this world better and kinder, no matter how much it has let us down. To look forward with hope and purpose and innovate a million different ways to build a better world instead of looking backward with bitterness, anger and unanswerable questions. So, to wonder about Meron and Miami is to plug into the energy and power coursing through Jewish history, through every mitzvah and through our inexplicable bond with every Jew. We may not have answers, but we have the strength to live another day.



Paula Levin works as a copywriter at Brandsmiths Creative Agency, is a freelance journalist and is the author of *Recognizing Postnatal Depression* (Penguin) and *Journeys* (Chevrah Kadisha) among other publications. She is blessed to be a wife and mom and finds great joy in searching for meaning, answers and direction in the Torah. Paula lives in the Wild West (Johannesburg, South Africa).

#My Orthodox Life



ORTHODOX JEWISH WOMEN ACROSS THE WORLD ARE SPEAKING THEIR TRUTH ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN AN OUTCRY AGAINST THE CONTROVERSIAL AND INFLAMMATORY NETFLIX SERIES, *MY UNORTHODOX LIFE*. WHILE THE HURT AND ANGER IS VERY REAL, IS THERE PERHAPS A BETTER WAY TO ENGAGE?

by REBBETZIN SHALVIE FRIEDMAN

The Jewish community's response to the Netflix series *My Unorthodox Life* is fraught with controversy and high emotions. The show centres around Julia Haart (previously Talia Hendler), the CEO of a modelling agency and ex-religious Jew. She is hugely successful, beautiful and fashionable (and arguably self-absorbed). The show is about her and her children as they 'de-programme' from life in a Chareidi community to life as fashion icons, social-media influencers and millionaires.

Under the guise of 'self-empowerment' and 'being true to yourself', Julia justifies not just imposing her own opinions, but guilting her children into living a lifestyle that she demands, despite their personal feelings.

This is not the first time that Netflix has cashed in on denigrating Orthodox Jews. In 2020, they released the series *Unorthodox* (yes, not much creativity in the names), a 3-part drama about a woman fleeing from her unhappy and oppressive Hassidic life. What makes *My Unorthodox Life* different, is that Talia Hendler was not part of an insular Hassidic sect. She was a Beit Yaakov teacher in a Yeshivish community in Atlanta GA and later in Monsey NY. To borrow a title of yet another Orthodox-bashing Netflix show, many women watching the show see her as 'One of Us'. Thousands of frum women who watch Netflix, engage on social media platforms and shop in Monsey - are watching this show mock their personal lifestyles.

This is not a drama. This is reality TV (although the 'reality' part is questionable in its uncanny similarity in style to the Kardashians). In fact, some have argued that this show is less about the complexities of leaving Orthodox Judaism and more about just plain voyeurism. In response to the inflammatory series, Orthodox women around the world have taken to social media. Using the hashtag #myOrthodoxlife, women from various walks of Orthodoxy spoke about their love of the community, empowerment within it and why they choose to lead Orthodox lives. Rebbetzins, scientist, mothers and executives have spoken out. Some with anger, others with

hurt, others with humour - but all with deep-set pride.

Alex Fleksher, writer for Mishpacha magazine and the visionary behind the #myorthodoxlife movement, posted on her Facebook page:

"Can I let you in on a little secret? When I started this thing, I didn't really do it for them. (Would people outside our circles even see our posts? I never wanted to tag Netflix or the show either.)

I did it for us. Because only Hashem knows how much we all need the chizuk."

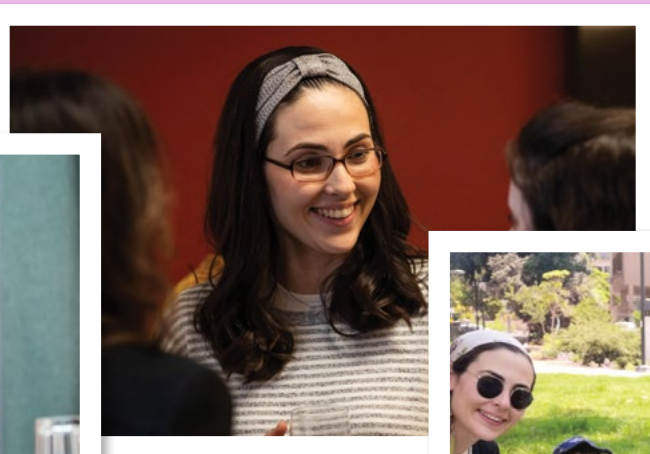
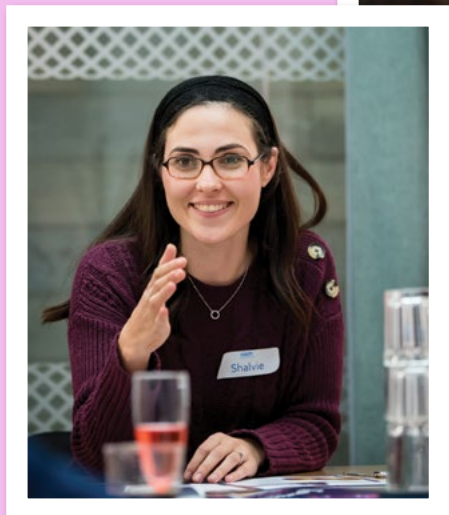
Rebbetzins, scientist, mothers and executives have spoken out. Some with anger, others with hurt, others with humour — but all with deep-set pride

The internet is now flooded with dozens of articles that attempt to explain the false claims made by Julia Haart and her daughters in the series. I too, could hop onto my soap box. I could talk about how as a female Torah educator in a male-dominated environment I am treated like more than just an equal. The men I work and study and engage with don't see me as a

stumbling block, they see me as a serious educator who has something unique to offer, whose voice needs to be heard.

I could talk about how I have had the privilege of studying to become a 'Yoetzet Halacha,' a woman qualified to answer questions from other women about issues of family purity, women's health and fertility. I could talk about the opportunities that I have had to delve into Talmudic and Halachic text, with no question that our Torah is material that women should and NEED to study. The Torah books on my bookshelf are studied equally by me and my Rabbi-husband.

I could talk about how I have studied the Jewish view on pleasure and understand that pleasure as a goal is not a Torah value, for in the long run it ceases to be pleasurable. But that the essence of life according to mainstream Torah ideology is to enjoy the pleasures of the world by using them for a higher purpose - love, connection, spirituality, harmony. I could talk about tzniut and privacy, and how they shape my home and my marriage, and how empowering and beautiful that is.



I nearly shared these thoughts on social media, I really did. But a few days into the campaign, doubt started to trickle through. When I scrolled through my newsfeed and saw post after post about people's pride in Orthodoxy, I wondered about the Orthodox women who don't feel Orthodox pride. Women who live within the frum community and have their own misconceptions about what Jewish law requires from them. Women who struggle to straddle two worlds. Women who didn't have the opportunities that I have had. Women who don't even know that those opportunities are available to them.

As a 'Yoetzet Halacha', I often answer questions which come from a misunderstanding of the laws of family purity. And my heart breaks when I hear how much suffering is caused. Don't get me wrong, I know that at its core, Jewish law is empowering of women. It is beautiful and it is not oppressive. But I also know that within the community we are battling against some of the very issues that Julia highlights. Some have accused the #myorthodoxlife movement of whitewashing the issues in Orthodoxy that urgently need addressing.

Julia Haart has been (probably accurately) accused of over-simplifying and demonising Orthodox Judaism. To quote Jenny Singer from Glamour magazine: "Julia Haart can reinvent herself, run a company, raise four children, and cook 'Shabbos cholent' in stilettos. If anyone can make reality TV more nuanced, it's her."

But let's be honest. Brutally honest. If Netflix has over-simplified Judaism, cute, short Facebook posts about people's Orthodox journeys does the same. Orthodox communities have problems. Not least of them is people who leave Orthodoxy. But I don't for one minute believe that the primary reason that they leave is lack of Jewish pride. And I think that education and dealing with the issues directly, not Jewish pride movements, are ways to combat this.

In one of the episodes, Julia meets up with a young woman who is currently living in Monsey in her parent's home and has stopped being observant. To support and help this woman, Julia gives her a makeover and pair of jeans. Certainly, as a mature woman who has been through similar experiences, Julia should have had a better awareness of what someone going through that existential challenge needs.

But if we, as a religious community, think that the counterbalance to that is Facebook posts about Jewish pride, we have a long way to go. In a world of superficiality, external facades are confused with real people and Netflix is confused with real life. Hashtags have replaced genuine dialogue and Facebook 'likes' and comments have replaced therapy. If Torah is all about nuance, complexity and bravery - we need to do better.



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.

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IT'S COMING HOME

RABBI ELI BIRNBAUM REFLECTS ON
COMPETITIVE SPORT, MODERN-DAY IDOLATRY
AND THE TRUE VALUE OF HUMANITY IN THE
AFTERMATH OF THE EURO 2020 FINAL

"Some people believe football is a matter of life and death, I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that."

The above quote, famously uttered by legendary Liverpool manager Bill Shankly, echoes a feeling shared by many tens of millions of Anglo-Saxons as Bukayo Saka, all of 19-years-old and playing for a mid-table Premier League side, stepped up to take the decisive penalty kick in the historic meeting between England and Italy in the Euro 2020 (it was delayed a year due to Covid and UEFA was too cheap to fund a rebrand, but hush-hush don't tell anyone) final at Wembley Stadium, the 'birthplace' of football.

Saka glanced left, Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma shifted right. Saka blinked. Donnarumma didn't. Saka shot right. Donnarumma dived. Donnarumma saved. Cue copious hand gestures and much cheek-kissing as the Italian camp erupted into euphoria, crowned European champions thanks to a single kick missed from 12 yards.

Within minutes, the most indescribably vile racist abuse came oozing forth from the social media cesspit. The 'for Queen and country' brigade – probably the types who got 'It's coming home – Euro Champions 2020' tattooed on themselves well before a ball had been kicked in anger, were quick to notice that each of England's three missed penalties happened to have been taken by a black player. Joining Bukayo Saka at target practice for keyboard warrior xenophobes were Jadon Sancho and Marcus Rashford.

Even established newsvendors perhaps inadvertently jumped on the bandwagon of insensitivity: Australian broadcaster 7News lead the story with a very poorly worded headline reading: "Three Black players failed in the penalty shoot-out".

The abuse directed at Rashford took an even nastier turn when his work campaigning for free meal vouchers for impoverished children during the lockdown was criticised for being a distraction from training and working on his footballing skills. As 'comedian' and now professional persona-non-grata Andrew Lawrence tweeted:

"I'd rather he'd practised his penalties and the kids had gone hungry."

Not pleasant. Not pleasant at all.

What with this and the similarly unpleasant scenes of ticketless In-ger-land fans storming Wembley's perimeter in a violent and anarchic attempt to enter the stadium illegally, perhaps it can be speculated that football as a sport hasn't evolved all that much since the village-on-village, fight-to-the-death-over-a-treated-pig-bladder days of yore. Indeed, violence in that un-halcyon era reached such dire straits that after a particularly lively game in Norfolk in 1321, the Pope himself had to intervene to grant clemency to a certain William de Spalding, who had killed a fellow townsman when the two collided and the latter fatally wounded himself on William's blade. Without VAR and slow-motion replays, it wasn't immediately clear whether the collision was intentional or not. Why the Papal dispensation? Well, William de Spalding was none other than the priest of Shouldham, Norfolk, and his parish needed him for Match of the Day's Easter omnibus.

Does the beautiful game simply have an unavoidably ugly side? Or have months in lockdown made us all stir-fry crazy? Let's take a step back.

'Sport and Jews' isn't a combination that goes quite as hand-in-glove as, say, 'Accountancy and Jews', 'Medicine and Jews', or 'Circling the venue for twenty minutes because I don't want to walk for two minutes and Jews'. We celebrate the rare occasion that a Jewish athlete makes it big. But we celebrate more when they refuse to play ball if it conflicts with their religious duties. Long story short, as the heinous anti-Semitic reaction following the European Super League miscalculation showed, it is far more common to find a Jew owning an elite football club than it is to find a Jew playing for one.

That isn't to say that a religion with a calendar that purposefully books dates for high-cholesterol feasting is anti the notion of breaking a sweat. After all, the Torah itself is pretty unequivocal when it comes to the directive to live healthy and take good care of ourselves: "And you shall guard yourselves greatly." (Devarim 4:15)

As expounded by Rabbi Solomon Ganzfried, author of the Halachic work *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* and ironically hailing from a corner of Jewish Europe famous for its paprika, meat and sugar-heavy diet: “The maintenance of a complete and healthy body is a Godly path - since it is impossible to understand or apprehend any knowledge of the Creator when one is sick - therefore you must keep away from things that damage the body, and develop habits that improve the body and heal it. Similarly, it is said: “You shall guard yourselves very well.” (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 32:1)

The big question is: It's one thing staying healthy, exercising regularly and maintaining a good physique. But what if that is done competitively? And, more subtly, is it inevitable that competitive sport leads to conflict, tribalism and sectarianism?

To begin addressing these more nuanced questions, it is necessary to contemplate the conclusion of the verse cited above: “And you shall guard yourselves greatly, for you saw no form on the day that Hashem your God spoke to you at Horeb (Sinai) from amidst the flame.” (*ibid.*) Most peculiar. What has the point about taking care of ourselves got to do with the belief that God is non-corporeal and addressed us thus at mount Sinai? And why does the latter buttress or even justify the former? Almost as inexplicable as Southgate’s decision not to start Jack Grealish.

Indeed, numerous commentaries are so perturbed by this seemingly arbitrary connection, they revise the meaning of the verse’s opening statement entirely, moving away from its general health message to focus on a narrower (though no less important) caution against the practise of idolatry i.e. “And you shall guard yourselves greatly [not to pursue idolatry], for you saw no form on the day [which clearly demonstrated the truth of monotheism and falsehood in deifying graven images.]”

However, notwithstanding this understandable about-turn, the overwhelming majority of classic sources – from the Talmud (*Berachot* 32b) to Maimonides (*Laws of Murder and Preserving Life* 11:5) – favour the holistic approach to that opening statement. In other words: Be healthy. Why?

Because a non-corporeal God spoke to you at Sinai.

Even Bonucci and Chiellini would struggle to defend this reading.

Looks like we're going to extra time.

The national revelation at Sinai is rightly regarded as *the* seminal moment in Jewish history. In fact, if we’re nit-picking, it was Judaism’s kick-off as a religion, faith and culture. God ostensibly spoke to the Israelites in order to communicate the Ten Commandments and lend an invaluable stamp of Divine approval to Moses’ subsequent prophecies. However, behind the scenes some pretty fundamental cogs were a-turning.

“For you saw no form”. This experience empirically dismantled the contemporary prevalence to paganism. “No form” whatsoever implies true Infinity. That’s not ‘infinite’ as in: ‘records Cristiano Ronaldo can break’. It is ‘infinite’ in its limitless, truest, most absolute form. It implies God of all things, at all times. That’s step one. Step two is to explore why the verse in *Devarim* hinges our duty to protect ourselves on our having come face to face with Infinity.

I believe the answer to this is twofold. Firstly, let’s deal with the implications of a non-corporeal God. i.e. a Godly system that fundamentally undermines the most basic tenets of paganism. A malaise of ancient idolatrous cultures was the fact that such a state of affairs almost inevitably gave rise to an ‘us’ v ‘them’ civilisation. At its root was the ugly stepsister of competition: conflict.

Different nations claiming varying degrees of subjective favour in the eyes of differing national gods meant that in times of hardship, nation clashed with nation, gods with gods, pantheon with pantheon and with the last man standing it was revealed whose patrons, gods and pantheon was truly favoured. And so, the blood-soaked cycle grinded on, generation after generation as kingdoms and empires rose, claimed supremacy for their catalogue of gods, but then decayed and met with defeat in battle, only for a new kingdom or empire to rise instead, adopt some of the ‘old’ gods, laud the ‘new’ gods as supreme and so on and so forth. Wash, rinse and repeat.

One of the greatest challenges our ancestors faced was a chronic inability to break free of the conflict born of a disunion between us and them. To sue for peace or worse – surrender – meant insulting ancestors, abandoning gods, dismantling shrines and betraying communities. War was a lower price to pay than the cost of peace.

Along came monotheism. And in one fell swoop it laid waste to the pantheon ideology and its theological catch-22. It isn't 'us' versus 'them' – our gods versus their gods, the spirits of our ancestors versus theirs. It's just us. All of us. All the time. Created by the same Infinity and sustained by it in every place, at every moment.

But that's not all. Let's go to penalties.

Second: It's bad enough that a politically defeated culture in ancient times would often be religiously defeated too, binning its idols and replacing them with the latest winners on the peninsula. But what does that defeat do to the psyche of the idol's adherents?

Intriguingly, the Midrashic work 'Mechilta D'Rabbi Yishmael' (author and date of authorship unknown but likely to have been compiled in the second or third century) expands on this dilemma with a comment that left me dumbfounded for its relevance to the social media hypocrisy following England's defeat: "When good befalls them, they honour their gods and leaders. But when evil befalls them, they curse their gods and leaders, as it is written (Isaiah 8:21) ... and he will curse his king and his gods." But, as for you (Israel), if I, God, bring good upon you, you give thanks, and when I bring afflictions upon you, you give thanks [for you know that there is a reason behind my actions]." (Mechilta D'Rabbi Yishmael, 20:20:1)

English when they score. Black when they miss. It's right here. Healthy competition degenerating into unhealthy conflict. Why? Because we still haven't quite freed ourselves from the shackles of 'us' vs 'them'. We still cling too stubbornly to modern-day idols and allow them to define the very fabric of our identity. And so, when we feel defeat's sting, we either switch allegiance and exchange the Ronaldo shrine for a Messi one, or – more commonly – we vent the fury of abandonment and betrayal on the gods who falsely vowed to take us to the promised land, cursing them for failing to bring

it home, denouncing and decrying them as false gods who were never truly part of 'us'.

You saw no form. Your value is not subjective, nor is it bound by space and time, success or circumstance. It is infinite. Just like the God who told you to take care of yourself. The God who told you: "For in God's image man was created." (Genesis 9:6). Not an 'image' in the pagan, corporeal sense of the word. 'Image' in the sense of unique and infinite value, an ability to create and destroy, to fix and heal, to bring the world to perfection.

Perhaps one of Judaism's greatest contributions to the archives of the human experience was, and still is, its claim that humanity derives value not from victory, power or might, but from the fact that it is intrinsically valuable, full stop. We are all created equal. We are all created valuable. Why? Because our existence echoes the existence of the God of all things, at all times. Therefore, we are charged with protecting that existence. Why? Because its true worth and importance brings us to the very brink of Infinity itself.

But that point is oh so subtle. It is not, contrary to what the founding fathers of the United States claimed in their Declaration of Independence, 'self-evident'. Far from it. That declaration was written at a time when the slave trade was in full swing and a fragment of a percentage of human beings had a political say. Truth, it is. Self-evident, it isn't. And for that reason, God declared what the Declaration didn't: He (Rabbi Akiva) used to say: "Beloved is man for he was created in the image of God". An extra measure of love is seen in the fact that it was made known to him that he had been created in the image of God, as it is said: "for in God's image man was created." (Genesis 9:6)

Remember that message, and suddenly it becomes possible to snatch victory from the jaws of every apparent defeat. And as growing numbers of people take to the airwaves and internet to stand up to the sectarian tribalism insistent on treating competitive football like pagan conflict more important than life itself, and while others travel to Withington to fix the mural celebrating Marcus Rashford's contribution to Britain's underprivileged children, it starts to become apparent: Step by step, football's coming home, just not the way we intended it to.



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.



Leslie Kleinman

A MAN AMONGST MEN,
A HERO IN OUR TIME



RABBI NAFTALI SCHIFF AND RABBI RAPHY GARSON
PAY TRIBUTE TO THE LATE LESLIE KLEINMAN,
HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR, JROOTS FACILITATOR AND
DEAR FRIEND OF AISH UK

Leslie standing in the cattle carts of Lodz at the Radegast in Poland

by **RABBI NAFTALI SCHIFF**

Many obituaries have been written about our dear Leslie (aka Reb Luzer) Kleinman z”l. This is not another. Rather, I would like to share some reflections on life, learned from Leslie - especially at this time of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and specifically for this special edition of Perspectives.

I spent many hours flying alongside Leslie either side of the numerous JRoots journeys to Poland that he led with us, so what I share comes from my own personal observations and first-hand experience. However, I do so within the biographical crucible of parts of his story.

When we established JRoots in 2006, we quickly realised that the window of opportunity to capture the legacy of Holocaust survivors for future generations was closing. Since then we have had the privilege of interviewing over 150 survivors across the world. We recently inaugurated a series of short documentaries entitled *Timeless Wisdom learned from Holocaust Survivors*. Beyond the stark reality of survival, the remarkable rebuilding of lives ripped apart, of families, homes, businesses and communities, stands an unparalleled legacy of life’s wisdom brought to us by a unique cadre of people who learned about life the hard way. Today, those hard earned and thoroughly authentic life lessons are ours, and it is our obligation to ensure that they are inculcated and passed on from generation to generation. Leslie’s remarkable story is no exception.

It is always humbling to share thoughts about the Holocaust, and its victims and survivors. Despite the passage of time, the pain remains too fresh, the inconceivable too unfathomable, the inexplicable beyond our comprehension. Leslie Kleinman’s life’s journey was not a simple one. Far from it. I share these few reflections with the trepidation of doing injustice or turning over stones best left alone. Be that as it may, if we can learn something or add a little more light by virtue of these thoughts, I am confident that Leslie OBM, would humbly encourage me to do so.

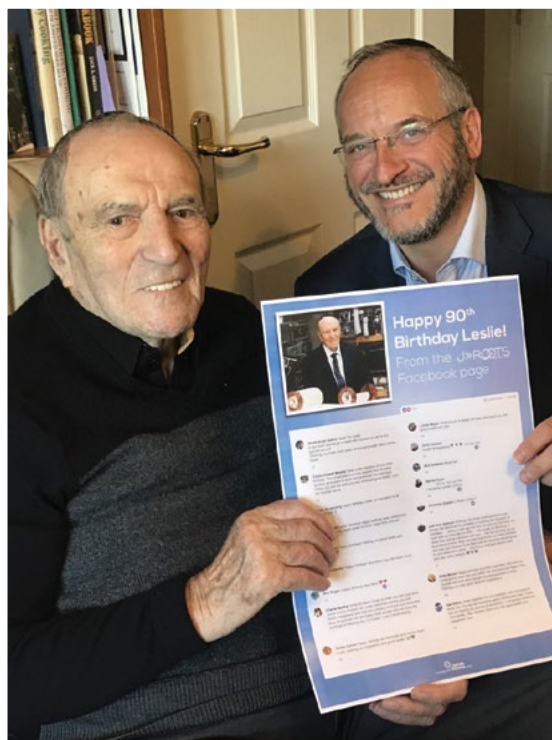
His name was ‘Klein’ meaning ‘small’, yet there was nothing small about him, apart from his self-effacing humility. It was a complicated voyage across lands hallowed in the blood of his 68 family members...

Leslie spends his early years in the tiny hamlet Ambud, near Satmar, Romania - one of eight children in an impoverished home with his father, an austere Satmar Chassidic Dayan, and his hard-working, sweet-as-sugar mother who would always protect the young ‘lobos’ (Yiddish for cheeky or mischievous) ‘Luzer’ from the stern rule of the patriarch of the house.

During the death march near the overcrowded camp of Sachsenhausen, after losing his entire family, 14-year-old Leslie boards a train and when it stops, the doors open and he falls into the mud, waiting to die. By his own admission, he and his God aren’t so close anymore. Nevertheless he makes a deal. “Hashem, I’ve got no family left, no friends; I’m left for dead. If you will save me, I’ll go to study in yeshiva for a year when this is over.” A testament to Leslie’s personal integrity, when he somehow survives and joins 700 children who become known as ‘The Boys’ on their journey to rehabilitation in England, he refuses the offer to go to school, and in keeping with his private promise to God, he goes to yeshiva.

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Life moves on, and so does Leslie. Now a young man with a modest business, Leslie has an enthusiastic compulsion for living life to the full. He loves dancing and throws himself into the good and free life. One Thursday evening he is on the dance floor at The Palace in Camden Town. He meets a young German lady and they hit it off. Evelyn comes from a non-Jewish, German family that was consistently unsympathetic to the Nazis and abandoned the motherland at the earliest opportunity. A couple of years later they are still dating. Driving down a country lane together, Leslie is beginning to explain with sensitivity that perhaps there’s really no long term future for them as a couple since he comes from a strictly orthodox Jewish family. At precisely that moment there is a collision. Evelyn flies through the



windscreen and is rushed by ambulance to hospital. Leslie is unscathed. He goes back to his long-forgotten Yeshiva to ask the Rabbi's advice. The Rabbi reminds Leslie to be a mensch and to go and take care of this young German girl without any other family in the country and ensure she is ok. Leslie and Evelyn marry and have two children - Rosalyn and Steven. They are happily married for 48 years. On her deathbed, Leslie recounts that literally with her dying words, his non-Jewish wife implores him to now return to his Jewish roots. He would joke that she guided him to find JRoots!

Leslie returns to the U.K. from Vancouver, Canada where the couple had retired early due to Evelyn's ill health. In accordance with their mother's last wishes, Rosalyn and Steven set their dad Leslie up in Westcliff, where they know he will meet other retired Jewish people. He visits the local shul where, for the first time, instead of judging the man with an Auschwitz tattoo on his arm, the orthodox Rabbi Bar welcomes our Leslie back to shul. Leslie begins to recall and wholeheartedly embrace his latent Yiddishe soul. He marries Miriam, the widow of another survivor.

When I think of Leslie, I often recall the Talmudic passage that teaches that sometimes great people step astray in order to teach future generations that there is always a way back home. We often look at people and we think we

understand. We think we know. We know where they come from; we know who they are; we've got it covered. Leslie taught us all that we don't know anything. You can never judge another human being. He taught me to see the good in everyone; to love every person.

"Life is about choosing. Everyone can choose to love; to live, to be positive. They gave me a gun at the end of the war and told me I could shoot any Nazi I find. I wouldn't know how to use it and I could never hurt anyone anyway."

I was once with Leslie visiting the barracks in Birkenau where he had spent many sleepless, famished, flea-bitten long nights. We left the group and just started walking slowly by ourselves, towards the place by the train tracks where we would all say Kaddish together for his family murdered in that accursed place. It was a few days before Rosh Hashanah. Suddenly Leslie spontaneously started praying, miraculously with the same Chassidic tune and intonation he had heard from his father 70 years before. After 70 years lying dormant within him, his Yiddishe neshama literally burst forth in song! I closed my eyes as we sang softly together and walked slowly, arm in arm towards the railway lines and the crematoria. Suddenly I opened my eyes and about 100 Israeli children, each wrapped in the flag of Israel, had formed a circle around us and they gently began humming along with his melody. He stood in the middle of the circle, crying, and begged them to say

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*Our world struggles to
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Leslie Kleinman personified
these qualities*

Shma Yisrael together with him. He then spoke for just two minutes. He implored them not to forget the Shma and to bring Jewish families and good Jewish children into the world. Tears rolling down his face with piercing honesty, he entreated them not to make the mistakes he had made. They spontaneously grabbed hold of Leslie and spun him round and round singing Am Yisrael Chai! He loved it. He was an uneducated kid from an impoverished Chassidic family who had left it all behind. Here he was speaking from the heart and touching hearts. I saw it time and time again – in the best of British public schools, in middle-aged Anglo-Jewish communities, with American college students, Chassidim and mainstream Jewish kids – Leslie's down-to-earth straight-talking wisdom, learned along life's rocky pathway, was shared from the heart, and as such it invariably pierced the minds, hearts and souls of all.

I heard Leslie sharing a word, actually merely a letter of Torah, that he recalled about the Hebrew letter 'yud'. He would say that the letter 'yud' is like a Yid, a Jew. A simple letter. You can cut it down. You can cut it down again - but a letter 'yud' will always be a 'yud' and a Yid will always be a Jew - no matter what! You may as well embrace it!

Whenever he and I would meet, we would make a 'lechayim'. Leslie loved life and he loved people, all people.

Young people would often ask him how he had the will to keep going on the infamous Death March, trudging on and on in the freezing winter of 1945 with just clogs and a pair of concentration camp issue striped pyjamas. His answer was always disarmingly simple yet profound - "It was hard. My dear friend, how do you keep going? Just one step at a time. Just never, ever give up. Keep moving forward - one step at a time." Our world struggles to instil persistence and resilience in our younger generation. I suggest we need look no further, for Leslie Kleinman personified these qualities.

About four years ago, when we met in the airport for another of our JRoots trips to Poland, Leslie was sporting a smart new hat. I remarked on it. He jovially told me how, after spotting the hat in a shop window in London, he went into the shop to buy it. The shopkeeper warmed so much to Leslie that he came out a few minutes later with four different coloured hats of the same style - for the price of the one! I love that quintessentially Leslie anecdote. Leslie wore many hats. Some may see them as incongruous. They weren't. Think about it!

We are at a time of the year in which each of us shall ask for forgiveness. They say that to the extent that we have the capacity to forgive, we shall be forgiven; the choice to love, we shall be loved; the propensity to give, we shall be given.

Each of us has the opportunity to choose. Leslie could have chosen differently. There were periods in which he did. But ultimately Leslie Kleinman chose life. Leslie Kleinman chose love. Leslie Kleinman chose reconciliation. Leslie Kleinman chose forgiveness. Leslie Kleinman chose to give, to care, to share. Leslie Kleinman chose to come home. Leslie Kleinman leaves us a legacy of love - A-0832.



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 a former CEO of Aish and Jerusalem Fellowships, with 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 Future.



Leslie Kleinman



by **RABBI RAPHY GARSON**

“**W**hat a legend” is one of those offhand remarks that is all too often cliché. Yet with the passing of the late Leslie Kleinman z”l BEM, so many thousands across the world mean what they say and say what they mean - “What a legend!”

Leslie’s death has left an indelible mark on our family. Over the course of his personal journey, he and his wife became known to our children as Zeida Leslie and Bobba Miriam, adopted grandparents.

How do we sum up the life of a man like Leslie - someone who went on a journey late in life and wasted no time in educating, inspiring, leading, guiding and nurturing so many people, with a particular focus on the younger generation?

Despite living in extreme poverty, his life reflected happiness. Leslie, you taught us that our 21st century perception that wealth is happiness, is flawed. Poverty does not mean unhappiness. How often did you lament the fact that you only got the chicken foot on Friday night, but you

were satiated with the love in your home? Your mother drummed home the message: “If you have your health, you have your wealth.” Having only one shirt was not distressing, because you had a healthy family. So often you claimed, “Shabbos was more important than the shirt.”

Your true ‘Yiddishe mama’ cared for and loved her children and cooked for the family single-handedly. She would tenderly smooth the mud floors on Friday afternoon in honour of the holy Sabbath. As you spoke, you painted a landscape of your days in the shtetl and brought those years to life. It was a place where Chassidic children were not allowed dogs as pets, so you received a pet goat instead. It followed you everywhere, yet one day you returned home, and the goat was gone. The family needed food that week!

Your strict father worked long hours to earn a weekly chicken that was completely consumed - a menu each week comprising *gribenes* (fried chicken skin) with mashed potatoes on Friday afternoon; the bones were used in the soup; the *shmalts* (fat) added flavour to a simple cholent,



Leslie, bottom left, with his family

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and the rest was divided up between a family of 10. Small delicacies created a home that was transformed into a palace on Shabbat, when the Kleinmans sat in the glow of Shabbat candles, their only form of light, and connected to a rich Jewish life. The village had no shops, except for a shoemaker. Here, electricity was unheard of, and food was all home-grown. Leslie, this simple life helped to create your positive outlook and a constant seeking out of blessings, so that even the death march - with only snow and grass to survive on for three whole weeks – was in your eyes “not so bad!”

Not a day went by where you didn’t think of your parents and siblings whom you loved so tenderly.

Your world crashed when, as a 14-year-old boy, you went through the deepest of hells in the ghettos, Auschwitz-Birkenau and the death march. Yet even then, during those darkest times, you inspired others. Whether it was singing

Rosh Hashana prayers by heart in the barracks when no one else wanted to sing or being grateful you were lashed 25 times and not shot for spending too much time in the latrines, you taught us always to express thanks and always to connect.

Everyone was moved by the story you told: “I had no friends in Auschwitz, so I asked God to be my friend.” From that moment on, you were miraculously protected. The simple innocence of a 14-year-old boy turning to his Creator, despite losing everything within hours, inspired everyone who heard the story. In answering the question “where was G-d in the Holocaust?” you replied, “He was with me in Auschwitz”.

After the war, tragedy continued as you heard your beloved sister Gittel had died two days after Liberation. Through your painful tears you imagined her being thrown into a mass grave in Bergen Belsen “like a piece of garbage.” After liberation you arrived in England and when asked “where do you want to study?” you chose not to continue your education and firmly replied, “I am going to Yeshiva, I have to keep my word.” What a lesson to anyone who heard that. No one knew about that promise except you. You taught us that one’s word is sacrosanct.

Rebuilding your life, you met and married Evelyn, a non-Jewish German. Married for over 50 years, you had two children Rosalyn and Steven, who loved you so deeply. Despite this departure from Orthodox Chassidic Judaism, you told us, “I never forgot where I came from.” It was this connection that behoved Evelyn to instruct you on her death bed to “go back to your Jewish roots”. With her blessing and encouragement from your children, you moved

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OBITUARY

to Southend. There you met Rabbi Barr and began your new journey home.

As God watched from above, you found yourself in one of many printing shops to get some cards to “remember your address.” The owners Ros and Richard invited you for Shabbat, where you met Ros’s mother, Miriam. Miriam’s first husband, Emil, was also a survivor of Auschwitz. She understood that a special soul had walked into her world. The romance blossomed and at the young age of 82, Leslie and Miriam, aged 72, were married. Miriam supported Leslie in every way and cared for him with devotion.

During those ten years, you wasted no time. With a palpable drive, you understood your mission: to educate the world about the horrors of the Shoa and to inspire the youth of this generation to stay glued together, to love and not hate, and to be proud of being Jewish. JRoots facilitated that mission and allowed you to impact and touch the hearts of thousands worldwide. You journeyed to Poland, a country where you came alive, reliving your horrors in places where your world had shattered, always with a smile and the encouragement to make this world better. Piercing souls, your story moved people and challenged them to become a better people!

Your humour was unique. On the first occasion you came to our home, my wife Deborah apologised that the room we had given you to sleep in was small and didn’t have a bathroom. You smiled and said, “Deborah I’ve slept in worse places.” On one occasion with a group in Auschwitz, we stopped for a bathroom break at the entrance to Birkenau. The imposing caretaker was checking that everyone had paid a zloty to enter. You calmly showed her your number and said, “I do not need pay, I’ve got lifetime membership,” Your smile was infectious, and you smiled through your tears - a rare trait you developed so as “not to upset people.”

To Deborah and me, you were a fatherly figure. We will miss your sage advice and wisdom. As our relationship

blossomed and you ‘joined’ our family, you found out that we had 4 boys and 3 girls. “I lost 4 brothers and 3 sisters, and Hashem gave them back to me,” you said. Those words were deep and profound and rang loud and clear with each passing day.

The relationship you had with our children was precious. Singing and dancing with you on Shabbat and the holidays, late into the night, was a priceless scene of connecting a past world to the next generation. Then there was playing in the garden, reliving a childhood lost - Leslie, your mark was made.

It was our son Avi who remarked one day that the number on your arm ‘8230’ added up to 13 - the numerical value of ‘love’ in Hebrew. “The Nazis thought they were branding me like an animal, but they gave me the blessing of love on my arm,” you said. That positivity struck a chord with our whole family, teaching us always to be grateful for our blessings. How moved you were to be ‘sandak’ (the person who holds the baby during circumcision.) We wanted to tell our youngest that during his bris he was held by a special man that had numbers on his arm. We named the baby Shmuel Tzvi Mordechai, the last name after your late father. At the bris through your tears, you told us, “All 3 names are of my family members - my grandfather, my father and my brother.” The bond that subsequently developed between the two of you spoke volumes. Oh, how we miss you so deeply.

Once with a group in Auschwitz, you asked me, “Raphy do you think my father is proud of me?” A loaded question! We looked up to the sky and we knew he was. You made this world a better place and we are forever grateful. May your memory be a blessing.



Rabbi Raphy Garson works for JRoots as an Educator and Guide, and has taken thousands on Jewish journeys to Poland, Spain, Portugal and Morocco. He also works with the Holocaust Educational Trust’s ‘Lessons from Auschwitz’ Project and has led over 6000 non-Jewish students to Poland. Since 2005, he has lived in Elstree with his wife Deborah and their children, and they comprise the rabbinic team of Ohr Yisrael Synagogue in Borehamwood and Elstree.

A Legacy of Love A-0832 is the title of the acclaimed JRoots documentary about Leslie Kleinman. It can be viewed on YouTube at https://youtu.be/Fm_GoNdXZ2Y



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</WORTH THE <!RISK>

ISRAEL IS A SMALL, YOUNG COUNTRY THAT HAS ESTABLISHED ITSELF AS A GLOBAL TECHNOLOGICAL POWERHOUSE. HOW HAS IT ACHIEVED THIS? SARA ELIAS SPOKE TO A GROUP OF TECH ENTREPRENEURS TO FIND OUT.

by SARA ELIAS

It is no secret that Israel is one of the great tech nations of the 21st century, second perhaps only to the USA. In fact, the area on Israel's coast is known as Silicon Wadi, a tongue-in-cheek reference to California's Silicon Valley. *Start-up Nation*, a book published 12 years ago, already recognised Israel's incredible tech potential, and things have moved on apace ever since. You have only to visit the website of the Peres Center's Israeli Expo 2021 to marvel at the number of ideas being generated - from meatless meat to sustainable, flexible packaging and many other creative concepts to benefit the planet. One start-up that recently made the news is Hargol, a company which harnesses the nutrients found in the humble locust to create a protein powder that, it asserts, will replace livestock. Kosher certification has yet to be granted...

In compiling this article, I interviewed a small group of tech entrepreneurs

working in different startup fields. Every one of them exuded a palpable sense of excitement and a strong sense of being on the cusp of something potentially groundbreaking.

Born and raised in Israel, **Sharon Mirsky**, COO at Firedome IoT, started her career in the 8200 elite intelligence unit of the IDF (which is a common factor in the journeys of many Israeli start-up entrepreneurs). "That was an amazing experience," Sharon recalls. "Using my brains to defend Israel against its enemies was my first step into tech." After finishing her military service in 2000, she started her career working for various tech companies while simultaneously studying for a degree in electronics engineering. She then completed an MBA – a joint programme between IDC Herzliya and Wharton, University of Pennsylvania, in the US – also a common denominator in the Israeli tech world.

In 2013, having decided to remain in the US after her MBA, Sharon co-founded ICONYC Labs, an accelerator programme based in New York for Israeli startups. "We identified a gap," she explained. "Although there was amazing tech in Israel, companies wanting to expand into the US didn't know where to start or how business was done in the US. There was a big need, but with the right support, the sky was the limit. In Israel, there are only 1 or 2 degrees of separation; if you want to talk to someone, you can do that in one or two hops. It's not the same in the US. But we are getting much better at it."

It was after her son was born 5 years ago (she also has a daughter who is 18 months old), that she met up with Moti Shkolnik. He told Sharon that he was setting up a start-up in the security sector for IoT (the Internet of Things - see glossary). In 2018, they joined forces and co-founded Firedome IoT –

“Technology is here. You can’t ignore it, you can’t deny it, you can’t expect your kids not to be connected. We are all connected. That’s the way the world is moving.”

a name derived from the idea of Israel’s famous Iron Dome and a firewall – as an organisation that protects through technology.

Sharon explains what they do: “We solve the security problems of IoT devices and help IoT manufacturers and brands to sell more of their products, with the differentiation that these are secure products. Many people are buying Alexa and Google Home, but most people know that these devices are not secure. There were projections that this market was going to have 20 or 30 billion devices by 2020, but we’re nowhere near these numbers. One of the major issues is the security aspect, because companies and consumers are afraid, and rightfully so, of what happens if you put these devices, which are not secured, into their networks and their homes.”

I ask Sharon how you make it more secure. “In layman’s terms,” Sharon replies, “it’s the antivirus for the IoT world. Today if you buy any computer, there is an expectation that it will be protected by antivirus software. We do something similar. We install a small software agent - something that sits on the device and prevents viruses, malware or hackers going into the device and taking control or eavesdropping.”

When I ask Sharon if she owns any of these devices, she laughs: “At home we have Google and Alexa – smart everything basically.” As a mother myself, I am interested to know how she feels about tech and children: “Technology is here,” she says. “You can’t ignore it, you can’t deny it, you can’t expect your kids not to be connected. We are all connected. That’s the way the world is moving. That said, we need to make sure that they still have a range of experiences that are not delivered through a screen, so I try to ensure a healthy balance of many outdoor and social activities, and not to let my kids be consumed by the screen, which is very easy! They’re naturals.”

FIREDOOME



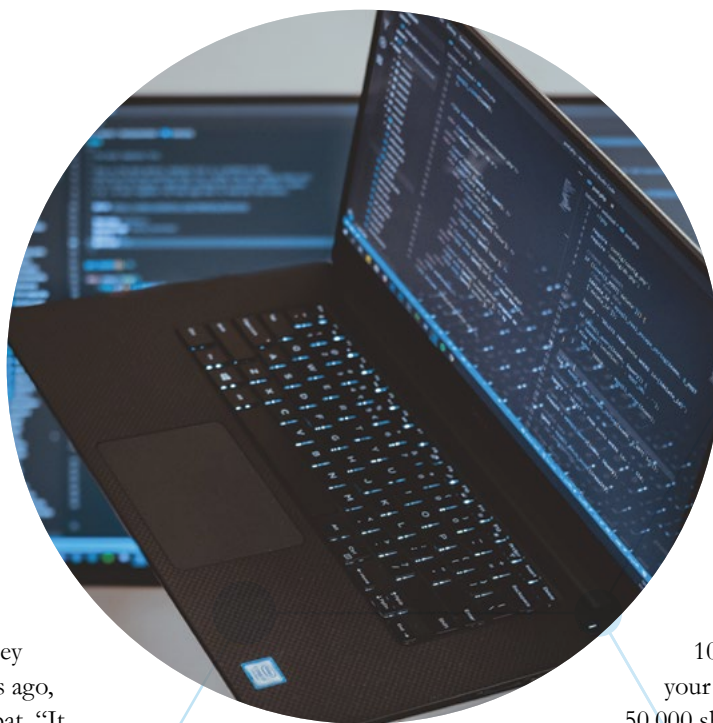
SHARON, CO-FOUNDER & COO, FIREDOOME

Although she has lived in New York’s Upper West Side since 2012, she tries to come back to Israel as much as possible, and the day we spoke she was at Firedome’s villa in Herzliya. “My heart is here [in Israel] and I hope to come back to live here,” she says.

Our conversation returns to the 8200 unit: “It definitely unites a lot of people in the Israeli tech start-up world. The Israeli army is very good at placing people and in 8200 I really felt at home. So that was the seed. Before 8200, I had been planning on becoming a doctor or a psychologist.” I ask if the IDF saw Sharon’s potential before she even realised it was there, and she agrees that that this could have been the case. She explains the selection process: “You don’t apply to the 8200 unit; if you have certain scores, they get to you.”

Of her time at 8200 she says: “The internet had only started to take off a couple of years before and there had not yet been mass adoption. It was also the beginning of social networking - where people who knew each other in the army started companies together, or worked together in companies, and it all evolved from there.” She continues: “You complete an MBA at a place like Wharton or Harvard and you have this network of super-smart, well-connected people. This is very similar to what happens in the Israeli military - people from elite units introduce their friends - chaver m-vi chaver. We are very fortunate to have amazing team members. Because of them we are where we are today.”

Omri Tal, CMO of YOURSTORY, is an upbeat interviewee who is passionate about his product,



an international e-commerce start-up that he co-founded with his wife Liat, who is CEO. As soon as we start our Zoom interview, he wants me to know that Aish has a very special place in his heart, as he and Liat were married by Rabbi Ziering, who runs Aish Tel Aviv and with whom they learn every week. Two years ago, Omri started to keep Shabbat. “It opens the heart and opens the mind,” he says. I suggest to him that in the tech world it’s hard to switch off, and he replies: “Without phones, without email, no television, only me together with my family – that’s beautiful. At the end of Shabbat when we start the week I say, ‘Wow, I started fresh.’” (The couple have two children, Ariel, 18 months, and Noam, who was one month old at the time of our interview.)

“I studied business economics at the IDC in Herzliya,” Omri tells me. “The IDC had an entrepreneurs’ club, and that was where I met Liat. We were a group of five people and were tasked with doing a sustainable project together – a student start-up. I was from Business, Liat from Law and the others in the group were from different classes. Liat and I took it very seriously. We worked extremely hard every day. We noticed that the others in the group weren’t taking it as seriously as we were. Eventually the project failed, but Liat and I saw that we were very good partners; we knew how to work together, but it was more than that – it was a really deep partnership.”

Omri, the child of an entrepreneur father, grew up in the north of Israel and was in the navy. After completing his time in the navy and then travelling, his mum told him that he needed to become a doctor, but Omri had other ideas. “My grandfather was killed in a submarine when my father was 6, so he grew up having to do everything from scratch. He didn’t come from a family with money and so he really pushed himself to meet people, to work, to generate new ideas and to read about all the latest innovations. I saw that as a child and as a young man. And I felt that I wanted to be like my father.”

“I remember that in my first start-up I made a big mistake and we lost about 50,000 shekels, which to me, then, was a lot of money. I called my father and he asked me to write a letter, describing what I had learned from the situation, and then he said: “It cost you 100,000 shekels to complete your BA at the IDC. Now, for 50,000 shekels, perhaps you learnt something that in the future would cost you much more. Say thank you for this lesson and keep going.”

YOURSTORY launched in 2017 as a bootstrap company, with an investment of about \$2000 of Omri and Liat’s own money. The company currently has a women’s clothing brand, Silk & Salt (shopsilkandsalt.com) and a couple more brands (jewellery and sports) in the pipeline. The company motto: “The data will talk to you if you are willing to listen to it’.

“We launched Silk & Salt at the peak of Covid. After 6 months we grew faster than the previous brand that we had launched (which was also an e-commerce site). Then we saw that we had returning customers, which really was a dream come true. The clothes are designed in Israel and all over the world. From Israel we manage all the online marketing, the strategy and the customer service. We have quality control in China where the clothes are manufactured, customer service in the Philippines, and people doing pick-and-pack and shipping from the warehouse in California.”

Omri explains that the vision for YOURSTORY is along the same lines as UK-based THG group – an e-commerce umbrella for many different brands. “They provide the infrastructure to these brands,” explains Omri, “and with all of their knowledge, they can take each brand and scale it up very quickly. This is what we are looking to do here at YOURSTORY. Silk & Salt is just one brand.”

When I ask what the story is behind the name of his company, Omri explains: “What we are doing here is



telling the story of each brand. It's also our story – my wife's and mine.”

I ask what he thinks gives Israel its edge as a start-up nation. “Look at the DNA of the Israeli. We are the survivors in history,” he says. “And if you want to survive you need to be very creative at solving problems. We [Israelis] don't have much oil, or an abundance of natural assets, but we have good minds, and we have Hashem with us.”

For Omri the IDF didn't bring with it the connections my other interviewees allude to, but his takeaway is this: “In the army you learn how to hit the target. If we were doing a running exercise - say we had to run to a tree - it wasn't enough to just run up to the tree and run back. You had to touch the tree with all five fingers and only then could you go back. Sometimes you are very close to the target - you can see it with your eyes - but if you don't touch it, it's not yours.”

When I ask if he has advice for future entrepreneurs he says: “Just do. People are always looking for big success. Don't. Every step that you take in your life can be a success. Even waking up in the morning is a success.”

Moshe Druion, a 34-year-old economist, works part time and studies at yeshivah part time, and he spoke to me from his base in Jerusalem. Originally from South Africa, Moshe works for Crowdsense, a company that describes itself as the social media intelligence platform for crypto investors. In other words, it has algorithms that track social media and websites looking for different events and interesting bits of information in real time that people could use to trade, especially in the cryptocurrency market. The company's CEO and co-founder, **Eliaz Tobias**, originally came up with the idea as he wanted to be alerted in real time to things going on around the world, so he developed software that would sift through social media to pick up these events.

Prior to becoming a full-time entrepreneur in March 2019, Eliaz held high-ranking positions at several companies including Alcatel-Lucent and Microsoft, where he founded the enterprise business of Microsoft's Azure Cloud, now a multi-billion-dollar business. **Eran Ruso** is the other co-founder and CTO of the company. According to Moshe, both have “very rich, deep experience in tech.”

A friend introduced Moshe to Eliaz and Eran at the Barclays Innovation and Techstars accelerator programme in Tel Aviv. Moshe's background in financial markets and geopolitical analysis, and the fact that the company



ELIAZ, CEO, CROWDSENSE.AI

where he worked at the time provided real-time financial intelligence to traders in the US and Israel, meant they were a great match for each other.

“Running a remote company is difficult and challenging, but very rewarding. We have employees I've never seen in my life, but I feel a very close bond with.”

Eliaz explains the origin of the company's name: “It comes from sensing what the crowd has to say. We listen to social media and analyse events and insights using signals from the entire crowd that posts online on Twitter, Telegram, Reddit, websites and other platforms.”

As for the AI part of Crowdsense (you will notice that .ai is part of its domain name), Eliaz explains: “Without AI, it would have been very difficult to do this. It helps us filter out the noisy posts in real-time, to merge posts related to the same event, to discover the sentiment of each post. We have developed algorithms and trained models to help us analyse 100 million feeds each day from more than 1 billion unique sources, while narrowing it down to a few hundred events and insights per day.”



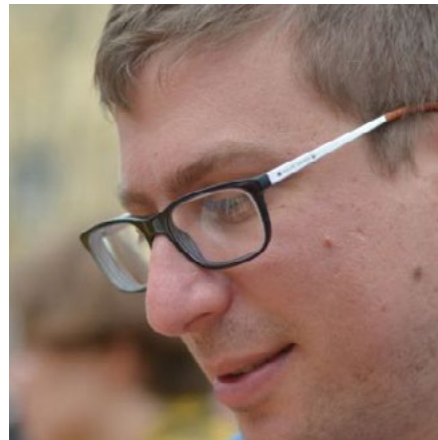
When I ask what gives Israel its start-up edge, Eliaz says that after having lived in Seattle for a few years, he thinks that Israelis like to challenge industries and show it can be done better. “I think this attitude allows Israelis to innovate and execute faster than corporations that need to drive internal consensus which makes them slower in innovation.”

When I ask Moshe the same question, he says, “In Israel there is a lot of networking. People are always saying, ‘my cousin or my brother or my uncle or...’ Also, the 8200 unit in the IDF is one of the best incubators for tech entrepreneurs. They have a production line of people ready to go out in the world to use their expertise to make start-up companies.”

“There is also an entire ecosystem, especially in Tel Aviv, where everything is done to help people succeed. I also think Israeli society is very risk-seeking, as opposed to being risk-averse. People would rather take a risk and try to build a company than take a job, for instance, in consulting. In Israel, people who come from a very tech-heavy or engineering background are encouraged to try, and fail, than not to try at all.” I ask if the attraction is purely about the potential financial rewards. “It could be part of that”, Moshe comments, “everyone knows that it’s hard to make money in Israel, but it’s also exciting to be in tech, in something that might change the world.”

I wouldn’t say that any of those I interviewed made getting into the world of tech sound easy, but there is a smoothness to their stories that makes it seem almost pain-free. So, I was interested by Eliaz’s candour when he admitted that “getting the first investor is one of the hardest challenges I have had in my career.” And this from someone with 20+ years of experience behind him. I was keen to know if he had any tips for presenting to investors. “Don’t try to go through all the slides in your presentation. Even better, conduct a short pitch while maintaining eye contact with the investor, and have a discussion where slides are only there as backup for specific questions.” As for advice for aspiring entrepreneurs, he counsels: “Be humble, talk to as many people as you can, listen, and make sure you think of all the questions you are going to be asked. It is better to pivot until you find the product-market fit than to continue on the wrong path.”

Yuval Gonczarowski was born and raised in Jerusalem. His mother was an AI professor so he learned how to code before he could ride a bicycle. “I still don’t really know how to ride a bicycle,” he laughs. After 6 years’ military service



YUVAL, AKOODA.CO

in the 8200 unit, he moved to the US to pursue an MBA at Harvard. He is married to Gili, a cyber security product manager, and is father to Harel, 4, and Ofri, 1.

In his last role, Yuval was the CTO at tomorrow.io, a leading weather intelligence platform. In March 2020 he launched his own startup, Akooda, which, according to its website is “an AI-driven solution to understanding and navigating the digital, hybrid, and remote work world.” (As you will have noticed, none of these start-ups is easy to sum up in short sentences). Yuval explains that it is “a tool for employees and managers to unlock knowledge from the company’s digital workspaces. It helps make sense of who knows what in the organization.” I am interested to know where the unusual company name comes from, but he declines to reveal it. “It’s a secret that I only share with our customers,” he says with a smile.

“Were the seeds of entrepreneurship sown early?” I ask him. “My grandfather was an entrepreneur, but not by choice,” he tells me. “He found himself as a post-World War II orphan in a refugee camp and started knitting socks for a living. Over the years his venture grew to be a large European textile business. I had a very special, direct relationship with my grandfather, and he taught me a lot about entrepreneurship and business.”

Akooda now has a dozen employees all over the world, across four different time zones. In a blog post from earlier this year, Yuval wrote: “Working remotely has its challenges, but we wanted to make sure we have access to the best talent out there – whether in Pristina, Utah, Boston or Tel Aviv.” Yuval elaborates on this: “Running a remote company is difficult and challenging, but very rewarding. We have employees I’ve never seen in my life, but I feel a very close bond with.”

“We have developed algorithms and trained models to help us analyse 100 million feeds each day from more than 1 billion unique sources, while narrowing it down to a few hundred events and insights per day.”

Launching a company in the first days of a global pandemic can hardly have been ideal, but Yuval is philosophical: “Covid had both an advantage and disadvantage: I had to assemble a team of rock stars from home. It was a slow process to create a sense of belonging and build this wonderful company without meeting anyone in person. But we essentially started by building Akooda as a tool for ourselves and have been using it in our company from day one. The market, of course, was also eager to learn how to improve collaboration and communication in these unprecedented times, and in that respect, we were in the right place at the right time.”

When I ask Yuval what gives Israel its start-up edge, he is clear: “It’s all about the mentality. We never say why things can’t be done; we simply ask how they can be done. And that’s really the secret sauce: relentlessly not giving up. In that sense, building a company is like building a country. You start with a crazy dream and don’t give up until you do it.” It’s not hard to read into this ‘crazy dream’ that was Israel and the indefatigable spirit that built it.

I end with Yuval’s cheery advice to future entrepreneurs, a perfect blend of that slightly chutzpadik-yet-charming, can-do attitude that seems to be an essential part of the Israeli start-up armour. “Smile,” he says. “I make mistakes every day, but that’s part of the magic: admitting your mistakes and continuing with confidence. Nobody’s perfect.”



Before becoming a mother, Sara Elias was a journalist, working mainly on a food magazine. Currently a governor at North West London Jewish Day School, she is an avid listener to radio, podcasts and *shiurim*.

GLOSSARY:

Accelerator: a source of finance, mentorship, educational and other services to help new businesses get established and cover some of the initial costs that startup founders may not be able to provide themselves. Accelerators usually have a fixed term.

Bootstrap company: building a company from the ground up with nothing but personal savings.

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CFO: Chief Financial Officer

CMO: Chief Marketing Officer

COO: Chief Operating Officer

CTO: Chief Technical Officer

IoT (Internet of Things): this is the concept of connecting any device with an on and off switch to the internet (and/or to each other). It includes everything from coffee makers and washing machines to headphones, lamps, wearable devices and almost anything else you can think of.

Start-up: this usually refers to a company in the first stages of operation. These companies often start with high costs and limited revenue and look for capital from a variety of sources such as venture capitalists.

FURTHER READING / LISTENING:

If you are interested in finding out more about this topic, I recommend exploring the Peres Center’s website, which showcases the latest in Israeli innovation, as well as the Israeli news website, nocomels.com. You could also subscribe to Israel21c.org or follow tech blogger Hillel Fuld. Recommended podcasts include ‘Founder Stories’ and ‘Bootstrap’.



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ISRAEL'S GOVERNMENT OF CHANGE

HOW DID ISRAEL'S FRAGILE NEW COALITION
GOVERNMENT COME INTO BEING AND WHAT
DOES ITS FUTURE HOLD?

by DARREN COHEN

On 14th June 2021, the citizens of Israel woke up to a new dawn. For the first time in over 12 years, Benjamin Netanyahu was no longer prime minister. The previous day, by the narrowest of margins, the Knesset had sworn in an ideologically diverse unity coalition that would have been unimaginable just a few months earlier. In a rotation of the premiership, the government will first be led for two years by Naftali Bennett from the right-wing Yamina party, which holds just 6 of 120 seats in the Knesset, and thereafter for another two years by the centrist Yair Lapid, from the Yesh Atid party, with 17 seats. The coalition will consist of six other parties that span the entirety of Israel's political spectrum: left-wing Labour and Meretz; centrist Blue & White; right-wing Yisrael Beitenu and New Hope; and in an entirely unprecedented move, the Arab Islamist party, Ra'am. This followed a political deadlock consisting of four inconclusive elections that persisted for

over two years, which always revolved around one man: Netanyahu. How was he eventually ousted and what is the future for this fragile coalition of former political rivals?

THE ROAD TO CHANGE

Netanyahu, known to Israelis as Bibi, is widely considered a political wizard by supporters and detractors alike. However, this time he ran out of tricks. Having failed on three occasions to form a right-wing government, he entered a unity government with Blue & White's Benny Gantz in May 2020. The coalition was hampered from the outset by in-fighting and mistrust, leading to a situation wherein cabinet meetings were a luxury and coherent policy a rarity. The government's response to the COVID-19 crisis was chaotic, resulting in widespread anger at the level of poor governance, ultimately leading to its fall in December that year. In March 2021,

Netanyahu tried his luck at the ballot box again and failed again. His bloc, led by his revisionist Likud and made up of ultra-Orthodox and religious Zionist parties, failed to secure the necessary 61 seats to form a coalition. Netanyahu, despite having led a highly successful vaccination campaign and delivered peace with four Arab states, was still incapable of gaining a clear mandate from Israelis for another term.

LAPID: THE ARCHITECT

Nevertheless, the emergence of a near-unthinkable coalition led by a party with a mere six percent of the vote, cannot be explained solely by Netanyahu's electoral failure. Yair Lapid, the secular former TV anchor and Finance Minister, is the real architect of the new government. By refusing throughout the campaign to declare himself to be a prime ministerial candidate and thus denying



“

THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS WAS CHAOTIC, RESULTING IN WIDESPREAD ANGER AT THE LEVEL OF POOR GOVERNANCE, ULTIMATELY LEADING TO ITS FALL IN DECEMBER THAT YEAR



ימינה

Leader: Naftali Bennett (first PM in rotation)

Party Name: Yamina (Rightwards)

Ideology: Religious Zionist, right-wing, legal reform, economic reform, against concessions to Palestinians



יש עתיד

Leader: Yair Lapid [second PM in rotation]

Party Name: Yesh Atid (Our Future)

Ideology: Centrist, secularism, liberal democracy, pro two-state solution



القائمة العربية الموحدة

Leader: Mansour Abbas

Party Name: Raam (United Arab List)

Ideology: Islamist, Arab party, socially conservative, Israeli Arab interests, anti-LGBT rights



תקווה חדשה

Leader: Gidon Saar

Party Name: Tikva Hadash (New Hope)

Ideology: Center-right Zionist, pro electoral reform, against concessions to Palestinians



מרצ

Leader: Nitzan Horowitz

Party Name: Meretz

Ideology: Secular left-wing, pro two-state solution, social democracy



כחול לבן

Leader: Benny Gantz

Party Name: Kahol Lavan (Blue & White)

Ideology: Centrist, liberal democracy, strengthening ties with moderate Arab partners



ישראל ביתנו

Leader: Avigdor Lieberman

Party Name: Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel is Our Home)

Ideology: Secular right-wing, Russian speakers' interests



העבודה

Leader: Merav Michaeli

Party Name: Labor

Ideology: Center-left, social democracy, pro two-state solution

Netanyahu a chance to make it a contest between the two that he would undoubtedly win, Lapid placed the interests of the 'change' bloc above his own personal interests. Following the election, he recognised that the only viable means to present an alternative to Netanyahu's bloc was to utilise the mandate he had received from then-President Reuven Rivlin to build an alliance with Bennett.

BENNETT: THE KINGMAKER

Bennett, the former leader of an organisation representing Jewish communities in the West Bank, had become the kingmaker following the election. Once it became evident that Ra'am was willing to partner with Zionist parties, Yamina's seven seats were enough to push the 'bloc of change' over the 60-line. However, this required Bennett to shift political camps. In quite a remarkable move, citing the need to resolve Israel's globally unprecedented political crisis and to "halt the insanity", he agreed to join, and lead, a coalition that included left-wing and Arab parties that ostensibly oppose his entire worldview. In doing so, he took a profound political gamble, arguably risking his own political future. Indeed, supporters of Lapid and Bennett's decision consider them brave patriots who responsibly saved their country from entering an interminable political abyss. Their detractors, led by the new opposition chief Netanyahu, accused Bennett in particular of the "fraud of the century", setting up a highly fraught situation that will likely further exacerbate the political polarisation of the recent years. It was no coincidence that the new government was voted in 60-59 by the Knesset.

PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

Arguably the number one priority of any government is to ensure the **security** of its citizens and nowhere on earth is this truer than Israel. The new Israeli government has no shortage of security threats to deal with - from Hamas and other terror groups in the Gaza Strip and simmering violence in the West Bank, to Hezbollah in Lebanon and the perennial threat of Iran, which seeks to establish a 'ring of fire' of armed proxies surrounding Israel's borders. Israel exists in a tough neighbourhood. Historically, new Israeli governments have been tested by Jerusalem's adversaries. This is particularly the case when the leadership is perceived by foes to be weak or when the coalition is fragile. In 2006, PM Ehud Olmert was faced with security escalations with both Hamas and Hezbollah within months of assuming the mantle. In contrast with Netanyahu, who was known for general cautiousness and reluctance to embark on overt kinetic operations, Bennett may seek to project his freedom of action in the security realm and thus demonstrate to his right-wing critics that his government will not be restrained by its left-wing elements.

This renders it somewhat more likely that Israel will become embroiled in a military operation, nearer or closer to home, in the not-so-distant future. This is especially given Israel's determination to thwart Iran's alleged nuclear weapons programme regardless of a potential revival of the nuclear deal, and the underlying tensions with the Palestinians, which remain unresolved since the flare up with Hamas in May. As evidenced from this period, any military escalation is likely to have an impact on Jewish communities in the diaspora and result in a rise in anti-Semitism.

Another potential minefield for the new government to navigate is social policy. The previous Netanyahu-led coalitions were eager to maintain the status quo in most questions pertaining to religion and state. This was in part due to the Likud's conservative ideology and its firm alliance with Haredi parties. The new coalition is a broad mix of largely secular parties from both the left and the right, alongside more conservative and religious leaning elements in Yamina and New Hope as well as the Islamist Ra'am party. This is likely to lead to internal feuds regarding questions such as LGBT rights; the integration of the Haredi population into the IDF, the workforce and the mainstream education system; egalitarian prayer at the Kotel, which is of particular interest to Jews abroad; and the question of public transport on Shabbat. The left, centre, and secular right components of the coalition will certainly seek to effect change in these areas in accordance with the interests of their electoral constituencies. The more conservative parties will aim to maintain the status quo and refrain from alienating Haredi parties who may be required as future partners as well as these factions' support base, which tends to prefer a continuation of the current situation.

In the sphere of diplomatic and foreign policy, the government will also be persistently challenged by the right-wing opposition. On the Iranian and Palestinian issues, Netanyahu branded himself as 'Mr. Security' and emphasised his endeavours to thwart efforts to create a Palestinian state as well as the covert and diplomatic campaigns that Israel is reported to have carried out on his watch against Tehran. Whenever policy debates relating to these themes arise, especially the Palestinian issue, the entirely conflicting worldviews of parts of the coalition will come under pressure. Netanyahu and those to the right of him will capitalise on this lack of cohesion as evidence of their assertion that this government is really 'leftist', which has become something of an insult in Israeli politics.

Bennett's nascent coalition, somewhat a social experiment, has stated that its priorities include uniting the nation and healing the rifts in Israeli society following years of alleged incitement and divisive rhetoric by Netanyahu and his allies; swiftly passing a state budget; advancing electoral reforms and term limits; investing in health and education

as well as in Israel's Arab community; and building in Jerusalem. Without doubt the most pressing issue amongst this list of objectives is the passing of a budget within 140 days from the swearing-in of the government following several years without renewed state spending plans.

However, herein lies the challenge that this government will face when trying to implement many of these policies: confronted by a combative opposition and holding a razor-thin parliamentary majority made up of diverse political factions alongside a 'parity cabinet' system wherein Bennett and Lapid can veto the other's proposals, governance and legislative reform will be hindered at every juncture. In some policy areas, such as the Palestinian issue, this is likely to lead to the two political camps nullifying each other and thus a continuation of the status quo, namely managing the conflict without committing to territorial annexation or concessions. In other areas, such as the priorities that translate into state funding in the budget, there will likely be significant disagreement and strife within the coalition.

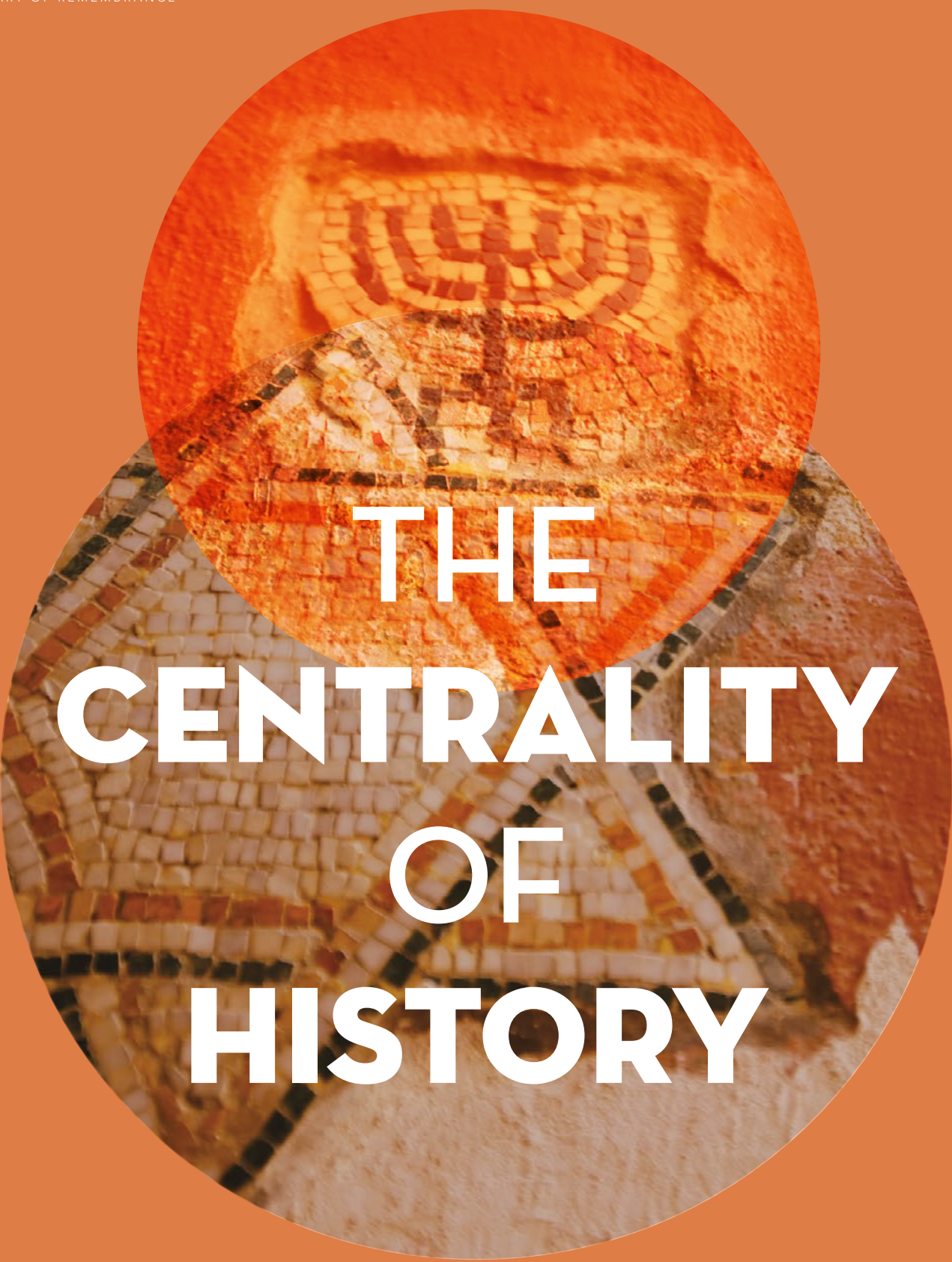
ROCKY ROAD AHEAD

The myriad security and social challenges mean that no Israeli government is ever in an enviable position. Even more so now, this unlikely coalition of diverse partners will be compelled to manage these dilemmas as well as the relentless, brutal scrutiny of an opposition that insists the government has zero legitimacy. Bibi pledged, in English, at the inauguration of the new government - "We will be back" - and there is no doubt an opposition under his leadership will try to embarrass and bring down the coalition at every juncture. Ironically, apart from their deep aversion to Netanyahu, the one thing all these parties share is that they have taken profound risks and made great political sacrifices to make this coalition possible, rendering it unlikely that any of them will want to drag themselves or the exhausted Israeli public through yet another election, especially without having any tangible gains from their period in government. Therefore, a mutual desire for survival may be what really binds this government together - at least for a few months.



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.

ART OF REMEMBRANCE



THE CENTRALITY OF HISTORY

THE CONSCIOUS ACT OF REMEMBERING AND
ENGAGING WITH OUR HISTORY GIVES A DEEPER
MEANING TO OUR EXISTENCE AS JEWS

by RABBI DR. BENJI LEVY

If you were to stand right at the base of a mighty mountain, at the front door of an extravagant palace, or an inch away from a sweeping tapestry, you might know that you were standing in the presence of something special, but you would fail to grasp its greatness. A single stone of the Kotel or a solitary chunk of rock at the base of Mount Everest can fail to impress. Retreat to a point at which you can take in the magnificence of its entirety, and only then will you be able to truly appreciate what your eyes behold.

On Rosh Hashanah, we spend a great deal of time mentioning remembrance. Indeed, a centrepiece of the main prayer service is called *zichronot*, remembrances, during which we invoke many heroic deeds of our ancestors in the Bible (such as the righteousness of Noah, the self-sacrifice of Yitzchak and the ironclad faith of the Jews in the desert). We beseech God to remember these great individuals, and in their merit, to remember us too. Like all compositions of prayer, these paragraphs are not addressed solely to God. They are equally written with the intention of impacting each of us.

" To be a Jew is to set aside time for intense and active remembrance, affording us an opportunity to reflect on our history, our mission, and our lofty purpose in this world. "

While we will never be able to fully comprehend the notion of God 'remembering,' this focus on memory and on memories teaches us a crucial lesson about the underlying meaning of Jewish living. To be a Jew is to remember. To actively remember. *Zachor*. This principle constitutes the essence of our existence and permeates throughout the contours of our calendar.

Every Friday night we lift a glass of wine to remember that there is a Creator behind creation; every Seder Night we engage our senses to relive and remember the salvation from Egyptian oppression; every Tisha B'Av we remember and commemorate the tragedies of a long, painful history, and every Yom Ha'atzmaut we remember and celebrate our miraculous national resurrection.

" We remind ourselves that we are part of a global Jewish community that lives in a time of both obstacles and opportunity, and therefore we pray for the strength to overcome the challenges. "

To be a Jew is to set aside time for intense and active remembrance, affording us an opportunity to reflect on our history, our mission, and our lofty purpose in this world.

As Jews, we must learn the art of contextualisation – to orient our internal paradigms until we perceive ourselves not only as individuals (which is important in and of itself), but as an essential element in an enormous tapestry of breathtaking beauty and irreducible meaning. Rosh Hashanah, as the first moment of the Jewish year, represents the opportunity to put this into action. This is the time to step back and contextualise.

The memories we invoke in our prayers compel us to recalibrate, to take the time to remind ourselves to see beyond our own interests and understand our larger contexts as we create new memories. This process reminds us that we do not stand alone before God. Rather, we are linked to vast networks that imbue our lives with purpose, significance and commitment.

We remind ourselves that we are part of a global Jewish community that lives in a time of both obstacles and opportunity, and therefore we pray for the strength to overcome the challenges. We remind ourselves that we are part of the magnificent Jewish story, a narrative replete with heroines and heroes, whose faith and righteousness serve to guide our own decisions in the service of God and our people. And we remind ourselves that we are part of humankind as a whole, whose peace and prosperity we yearn and pray for every day.

Through engaging with the depth and diversity of the world around us, we give meaning to our existence over and above the fleeting pursuit of our own individual ends. This expanded consciousness and broadened perspective enables us to unify the seemingly disparate elements of our identity into a meaningful fusion and connect to something infinitely greater than ourselves.

This Rosh Hashanah, may we merit to truly grasp the greatness of our existence, to experience this deeper level of unity throughout the upcoming year, and to spread our light across all those we encounter across the entire world.



Rabbi Dr. Benji Levy is the co-founder of Israel Impact Partners, an organisation that optimises non-profits on behalf of leading philanthropists. He was previously the CEO of Mosaic United, a large joint-venture partnership between the government of Israel and philanthropists to improve Jewish identity globally, and was the Dean of Moriah College of Sydney, Australia, one of the largest Jewish schools in the world. For more, see www.RabbiBenji.com and follow @RabbiBenji on Facebook and Instagram.

aish^{uk} CAMPUS UPDATE

DIRECTOR OF CAMPUS: R' GIDEON

After spending two years in Birmingham, Gideon moved to Campus HQ to oversee the national programme. He enjoys travelling around the country to visit students and check out the programmes on all of our campuses, as well as designing and running trips all over the world to provide memorable experiences.

Email: ggoldwater@aish.org.uk



DIRECTOR OF NORTHERN CAMPUSES: THE STROMS

R' Shauly and Adina, together with their four children, run our Manchester-based activity hub that caters to twelve northern campuses. The Stroms are the proud innovators of Deliverjew.co.uk, as well as many other fantastic innovations in Jewish education. Their shared experience puts them in the perfect position to share the 'Aish on Campus' magic with students in further-flung campuses.

Email: sstrom@aish.org.uk

Instagram: [@shaulynadina](https://www.instagram.com/shaulynadina)

NOTTINGHAM: THE DAVISES

R' Yehuda, Malky and their baby Shira are the newest members of the campus team. R' Yehuda loves a delicious dram of whisky, considers himself an amateur whisky connoisseur, and is always excited to share a drink. Malky is a wonderful nail technician who is delighted when she has someone to pamper and some nails to paint! They can't wait to meet the wonderful community of in Nottingham.

Email: ydavis@aish.org.uk & mdavis@aish.org.uk

Instagram: [@rabbiyehudadavis](https://www.instagram.com/rabbiyehudadavis)



LEEDS: THE MOSZKOWSKIS

Trailblazing across continents is the norm for R' Ozer, Leah and their daughter, who joined the Aish UK team last year after spending three years in Eugene, Oregon. As Mancunians themselves, they have that special northern warmth which they have put to good use in developing the Aish estate in Leeds.

Email: omoszkowski@aish.org.uk & Imoszkowski@aish.org.uk

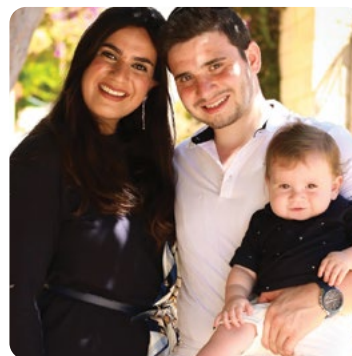
Instagram: [@ozer.the.top](https://www.instagram.com/ozer.the.top)

BIRMINGHAM: THE AMIACHS

R' Elieser is a creator and innovator who handcrafted a student hangout deck in the back garden of the Aish hub in Birmingham. R' Elieser and Mirah (with the help of their three children), run our longest operating campus branch. The Amiachs are well loved by the huge student body of the largest JSOC in the country.

Email: eamiach@aish.org.uk & mamiach@aish.org.uk

Instagram: [@the_brum_life](https://www.instagram.com/the_brum_life)



BRISTOL: THE NEWMANS

Aish on Campus welcomes R' Jonny and Elisheva who have come all the way from Jerusalem to run our newest campus branch in Bristol. It's an increasingly popular 'Jewniversity' with a fantastic reputation for deep thinking and its cutting edge programming. It is the perfect gig for team Newman and their two kids.

Email: jnewman@aish.org.uk & enewman@aish.org.uk

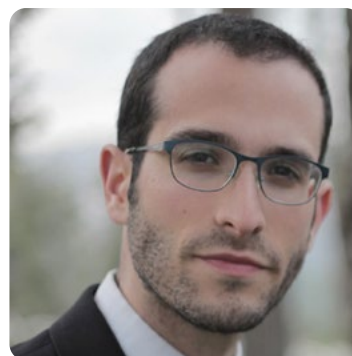
Instagram: [@briz_newmans](https://www.instagram.com/briz_newmans)

OXBRIDGE: RAV MO

Now famous in the online world, Rav Mo oversees programming at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. This is the perfect role for the UK Director of the FJL (Forum for Jewish Leadership) who is also a leading wordsmith and world-renowned for his gift in the spoken word and rap.

Email: mfriedman@aish.org.uk

Instagram: [@ravmo](https://www.instagram.com/ravmo)



FIELD WORKER: DANIELLE

Danielle has become somewhat of a celebrity as she took on the role of TV host extraordinaire throughout the pandemic. Despite being sought after by some of the leading TV stations, we are lucky to have Danielle as an Aish on-campus field worker who spends her weeks travelling around the country to meet students and assist in all our programming.

Email: djeffries@aish.org.uk

Instagram: [@daniellej_aish](https://www.instagram.com/daniellej_aish)



NETWORKING FOR A CAUSE

CAMP SIMCHA'S TOUCHPOINTS
AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME PROVIDES A
REWARDING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY
FOR CONNECTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

by **NAOMI COHEN**

Rosh Hashanah always presents a good occasion to reflect on the past year and to set goals and objectives for the new year. If you are looking for an easy but impactful way to make a difference without a major time commitment, then Camp Simcha's TouchPoints Ambassador programme might be the perfect volunteering opportunity for you.

Community Liaison Co-ordinator for Camp Simcha, Naomi Cohen, tells us about how the charity brightens the lives of seriously ill children and their families – and how we can all do our bit to assist more families to access the help they really need.

CAMP SIMCHA'S YEAR IN REVIEW

The past year has been a terrifying and isolating time for the families that Camp Simcha supports. Over and above the daily stress and constant worry of having a seriously ill child, parents have not been able to access much of the normal pre-Covid support they usually receive. Many have been unable to see the friends and family members who normally help to relieve some of the pressure, and children in hospital have had limited company – with only one

parent present and no other visitors allowed.

Sadly, referrals of new families to Camp Simcha have increased by 50% in 2021 compared to the previous year. During lockdown, children continued to be diagnosed with serious medical conditions: cancer, rare genetic disorders, inflammatory bowel disease, Type-1 diabetes and many other conditions, and Camp Simcha has been there for them.

This past year also saw a marked increase in referrals of premature babies including mothers with Covid-19 who went into labour early. Camp Simcha was able to provide support at these frightening times - quickly arranging hospital transport, crisis meals, support from our neo-natal nurse and help for the whole family.

Our pilot mental health project in London has been assisting the parents and siblings of ill children to overcome a range of disorders - including severe anxiety, depression and eating disorders - with practical and emotional support services.

Throughout the pandemic, Camp Simcha has continued to innovate and adapt its services to ensure families get the vital support they need. We have continued to deliver

practical services such as respite care, hospital transport and crisis meals in a Covid-safe way, and to provide other therapeutic services, such as counselling, therapeutic arts sessions and family support remotely or virtually.

Our Family Liaison Officers set up WhatsApp support groups, Zoom coffee mornings and regular telephone check-in conversations. We sent toys, books, games, gardening and cooking activities, arts and craft equipment and even iPads to help keep seriously ill children happy and occupied. At the height of the first lockdown, we were delivering over 300 packages per week to families throughout the UK.

We also started to organise online events for children and parents – mostly fun afternoons or evenings, designed to relieve isolation. We ran a ‘Camp Simcha’s Got Talent’ competition and a regular weekly art group, attended by over 100 children across the UK.

It is often the small acts that really count. There are countless stories of the way in which Camp Simcha has had an impact during the pandemic. One of our families was struggling to deal with practical issues at home while their son was sick in hospital for many weeks. Camp Simcha found out that his older sister was unable to attend online school because of a problem with her laptop. We quickly arranged for her laptop to be repaired so she could carry on with her lessons, keep up with her work and stay in touch with school friends during this very isolating time.

One of the positive changes that has emerged over the past year has been the development of our remote services which can now be accessed by families across the UK, not just families in London and Manchester. Zoom art sessions with our teachers, for example, have been a wonderful way for ill children and their siblings to express themselves and enjoy a fun distraction from their difficulties. Our Big Brother and Big Sister volunteers have also developed imaginative ways to keep in touch during lockdown - from pizza-making to Zoom escape rooms.

The Camp Simcha annual Spa Day, which is usually a special opportunity for mothers to switch off from their worries and enjoy a pamper session, was converted into a virtual offering where mums were sent a ‘Spa in a Jar’ and offered virtual group yoga and Zumba sessions.

As we emerge from lockdown, some of our families have now begun to meet face-to-face with Camp Simcha staff and volunteers outdoors and many have enjoyed summer outings with us. However, the children we support are



amongst the most vulnerable to Covid, so we continue to plan our services in a hybrid way that works for all – to ensure we can be there for them, whatever the future holds.

We have also initiated a new Bnei Mitzvah programme where anyone with an upcoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah can join other children to raise funds, collect and pack toys for our annual Toy Drive, participate in a sponsored walk and learn more about Camp Simcha. Please contact Naomi if you'd like to find out more about sharing their Simcha and making it a more meaningful experience.

TOUCHPOINTS AMBASSADORS – HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Camp Simcha supports children with over 50 serious, life-limiting and chronic medical conditions, providing a range of 23 practical, therapeutic and emotional support services for the whole family.

We can make a vital difference to the lives of these families, but we can only support them if they know about what we do. This is where you can help us. The TouchPoints Ambassador Programme aims to reach out across the whole spectrum of the Jewish community to make sure that families with seriously ill children hear about what we have to offer and can tap into our services.

A TouchPoints Ambassador can be anyone who is connected to other Jewish families – through their child's school class or year, to Guides or Scouts, dance, drama, youth football, play groups or perhaps via their communal or professional roles. As our eyes and ears in the community, ambassadors can help to ensure that no child who needs Camp Simcha slips through the net.

Since the establishment of the project, we have assisted more than 20 families who may not have accessed our support without the TouchPoints referral.

“IT'S THE EASIEST WAY TO VOLUNTEER, IT CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO A FAMILY HAVING A REALLY TOUGH TIME, AND IT'S NOT A TIME-CONSUMING JOB AT ALL.”

It's easy to become a TouchPoint Ambassador. Meet Nicky... she is one of our TouchPoints Ambassadors and this is her story:

Nicky joined TouchPoints because she spends a lot of time meeting other Jewish parents.

Nicky is active on Facebook and Instagram, and she is a participant in several WhatsApp groups for her children's school classes and the football team. She knows she would hear if a child or one of their siblings was seriously ill.

Nicky has always helped when possible - by making a meal or offering a lift home from school - but now that she has attended a one-hour training session with Camp Simcha, she can do much more.

“When parents receive a shocking diagnosis for their child, it feels like their lives have been turned upside down. It's overwhelming and can be very hard to ask for help from a charity,” Nicky explains. “The TouchPoints Ambassador's role is to make the connection to Camp Simcha so that someone trusted and familiar can explain the different ways that the organisation can help. That might be transport to and from the hospital, or Big Brothers and Sisters who volunteer to spend time with the ill child and his or her siblings. It also gives parents the opportunity to speak to one of Camp Simcha's family liaison officers about how they are coping so that we can assist to put a range of support services in place. It's the easiest way to volunteer, it can make a huge difference to a family having a really tough time, and it's not a time-consuming job at all.”

If you would like to find out more about becoming an ambassador, please get in touch with us at www.campsimcha.org.uk/touchpoints



Naomi Cohen has been the Community Liaison Coordinator at Camp Simcha for 4 years. She is passionate about telling everyone in the community about Camp Simcha's services so that no eligible family misses out on our help. She was previously a civil engineer and she now spends some of her spare time carrying out 'guerrilla pruning' missions to keep her local eruv kosher.

B'NEI MITZVAH PROGRAMME

MAKE YOUR BAR OR BAT MITZVAH EVEN MORE SPECIAL



**MAKING A
DIFFERENCE
FOR SERIOUSLY
ILL CHILDREN**



FUNDRAISING IDEAS

- | | |
|--|--|
| Art – sell your crafts | Netball tournament |
| Bake sale | Obstacle course |
| Car Wash | Playstation tournament |
| Dog walk | Quiz |
| Endurance challenge | Run |
| Football tournament | Swimathon |
| Give it up sponsored activity | Talent show |
| Haircutting | Uniform-free day |
| Ice cream night in with friends | Variety show |
| Jewellery making party | Walk 10km |
| Karaoke competition | X marks the spot – scavenger hunt |
| Lemonade stand | YoYo competition |
| Mini olympics contest | Zip it – sponsored silence |

Camp Simcha, Amélie House,
221 Golders Green Road,
London NW11 9DQ

CampSimchaUK

Charity Registered No. 1180646



**MAKING A
DIFFERENCE
FOR SERIOUSLY
ILL CHILDREN**

WWW.CAMPSIMCHA.ORG.UK/BNEIMITZVAH

At such a milestone moment in a young Jewish person's life, more and more families are looking for a meaningful way for their child to mark their Bar or Bat Mitzvah, beyond their simcha. Camp Simcha's B'nei Mitzvah Programme offers just this, with two opportunities to be part of an organised fundraiser and a group activity day – in June and November/December – together with other young people who are celebrating their B'nei Mitzvah.

Children can pick between these two opportunities in June and November/December or they can take part in both if they wish:

June – Sponsored walk and packing activity

- Your child will join us for an organised, sponsored walk culminating at the Camp Simcha offices in Golders Green.
- We will provide support setting up their fundraising page.
- Refreshments after the walk at our head office, followed by a packing session to help prepare activity boxes and packs for Camp Simcha's summer day scheme for seriously ill children.

November/December – Toy Drive collection and packing activity

- Your child will be part of our annual Toy Drive which sees us sending in some 10,000 toys and gifts to children in hospital.
- We will help them set up an Amazon wish list or collection site for toys.
- They will then join us for a packing morning – to sort and pack toys to deliver to 120 hospital wards.

All children who take part in our B'nei Mitzvah Programme will receive a goody bag and a certificate to display at their Simcha. They will also be offered the opportunity to join our Young Ambassadors initiative, where they will receive occasional updates about our work and ideas on how they can continue to help us raise awareness and reach families who need Camp Simcha's support.

We can also support your child if they want to do their own fundraising challenge – or take a look at our A-Z of challenge ideas overleaf.

Please email bneimitzvah@campsimcha.org.uk to get started.

Rafi raised £2,798 and made 2021 people smile for Camp Simcha to mark his Bar Mitzvah.

"When I was at primary school we often fundraised for Camp Simcha, so I know a lot about their work. I think what they do is lovely and I know they make sick children smile so it felt like that fitted really well into my challenge."



Katie organised a netball tournament to raise money for Camp Simcha.

"I was so excited to share my Bat Mitzvah with Camp Simcha. They made a real difference to our family when my brother Adam had leukaemia. It brought fun into our lives when we thought nothing could really be fun again."

SPICE UP YOUR INTERIORS THIS AUTUMN



DESIGN GURU **ESTHER TAYLOR** SHARES HER SECRETS
FOR CREATING A COSY, AUTUMN-INSPIRED HOME



@esthertaylor design

Autumn is here! The days are getting colder, the nights are growing longer, and there is no better place to be than under a cosy blanket with a hot chocolate next to a flickering log fire.

Here are some Esther Taylor Design tips and tricks to help you to create an extra-cosy home environment this autumn:

* COLOURS

Take inspiration from the colours outside to bring the cosy feeling of autumn indoors. Bring a touch of opulence to your home by combining warm lighting and reflective surfaces with the orange and brown hues of the fallen leaves, the deep green tones of the forest and even the moody greys of the sky. Nothing counteracts the cold chill of the outdoors more than the warmth of autumn colours - from oranges, golds, bronzes and greens to creams and terracotta.

* ACCESSORIES

Accessories allow you to introduce pops of autumn colour without having to make any major changes to your home.

There are infinite accessory options available in an array of shapes and sizes that can be selected to suit any home. Team a warm coloured vase with some cream flowers or use a smoky glass vase to bring earthy hues into your home. For those who don't want to worry about maintaining fresh flowers (as beautiful as they are), dried flowers are a fabulous option. Dried flowers have slightly muted tones which contribute to the autumnal feel.

Consider investing in a few porcelain bowls and filling them with some coloured decorative balls or collect an assortment of candles in different sizes and colours to create a perfect coffee table feature.

* FIGURINES

Using ornaments and figurines in bronze and brushed golds, or off-whites and clay tones, will bring a feeling of warmth to the chilly evenings. Figurines can be a fun addition to the room and are great focal points.

Alternatively, embrace the artisanal trend that favours craft techniques and simple materials. Introducing handmade objects from rustic materials, woven raffia and twigs will add texture this autumn.



ESTHER TAYLOR
DESIGN



TAKE INSPIRATION FROM
THE COLOURS OUTSIDE
TO BRING THE COSY
FEELING OF AUTUMN
INDOORS



ESTHER TAYLOR
DESIGN



ESTHER TAYLOR
DESIGN

ESTHER TAYLOR
DESIGN

* SCENTS

The mood-enhancing properties of scents are well documented. Scents are the perfect way to include a decorative element (in the form of a beautiful diffuser) as well as to create a rich, warm sensory experience when it is cold outdoors. Rich and warm scents like bergamot, frankincense and amber are ideal for simulating the feeling of an open fireplace on these dark cold evenings.

I would recommend two seasonal scents for Autumn.

Fougère fragrances have a strong link to nature and help to soothe and relieve anxiety. They include ingredients such as lavender, geranium, vetiver and bergamot that remind us of the great outdoors. **Woody fragrances**, on the other hand, are characterised by their rich, earthy aromas with base notes of wood, roots and sometimes leaves. Think sandalwood, cedarwood, patchouli, oakmoss and birch. Woody fragrances create a feeling of being strong, reassured and grounded – deeply rooted and tapped into your inner strength. Ingredients such as vanilla, ambergris and musk, whilst not woods themselves, are often found within woody fragrances to enhance the rich aromas of these fragrances.

* SOFT FURNISHINGS

Replace soft furnishings like cushions, rugs and throws to refresh your scheme without committing to any major redecorating. Swap out the brighter summer colours for richer and softer earthy tones.

* LIGHTING

Ambient lighting, also known as general lighting, provides overall illumination and tends to dominate the lighting landscape of each room. Ambient light usually sets the tone for the room, dictating whether a room is bright and homely or a little darker and more relaxed.

Nothing creates a warm ambience more than mood lighting. Lamps with a 'warm' light bulb will bring a feeling of warmth into the room, and as the natural light changes throughout the day will create beautiful shadows, which move and transform constantly.

Accent lighting adds the finishing touch to any room. An accent light could be a spotlight inside a glass showcase, a tall lamp in the corner of a room, or something small on a coffee table. Anything that adds some drama and is mainly for decorative purposes can be defined as accent lighting.

Accent lighting also works well for dimly lit spaces to illuminate certain areas of a room or to highlight specific features of a room. It can assist in eliminating shadows and lights up areas such as the tops of shelves or corners that aren't fully illuminated by the room's ambient lighting. Accent lighting can also be used to bring attention to a picture frame.

Decorative lighting is becoming an art form in itself, with designs that catch the eye whether the bulb is on or off. Consider mixing different styles with complementary tones or mixed metals to make a statement and brighten up the autumn evenings.



INTRODUCING
HANDMADE
OBJECTS
FROM RUSTIC
MATERIALS,
WOVEN RAFFIA
AND TWIGS WILL
ADD TEXTURE THIS
AUTUMN

* TEXTURES

Textures help to create depth, which makes a room feel cosy and warm. Introducing classic, sumptuous textures such as velvets, sheepskin, cable-knit and suede will bring both softness and warmth into the room. Focus on statement accessories like cushions and chaises.

* TABLE WEAR

A simple set of warm-coloured crockery and napkins in the vibrant colours of autumn will totally transform your kitchen and table. Porcelain bowls and ceramic mugs provide the perfect relaxed backdrop for any table setting and can be jazzed up with some patterned napkins and flowers to create a dramatic autumn table.

* FURNITURE

A whole room can be quickly transformed by investing in a statement piece of furniture that embraces the trends of the season. Consider occasional chairs that have a wow factor - perfect for your extra guests this autumn!

Autumn is more than just a season - it's a feeling and a mood that represents change. Although the weather might be getting colder outside, with a few small changes you can turn your home into your sanctuary. For more helpful tips and hints, please follow us on Instagram at [esthertaylordesign](https://www.instagram.com/esthertaylordesign) and feel free to get in touch regarding your next design project.



Born and raised in London, Esther Taylor attended the Chelsea School of Design, building on her passion. While Taylor's distinct style shines through each project, her adaptable approach enables her to work seamlessly across a wide spectrum of properties and developments, locally and across London.



@esthertaylordesign

www.esthertaylordesign.com

HEADACHES

10 MYTHS DEBUNKED

by DR JEREMY REES



FROM WORRYING ABOUT BRAIN TUMOURS TO UNDERSTANDING MIGRAINES, NEUROLOGIST JEREMY REES PUTS TO REST SOME COMMONLY HELD MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HEADACHES

Almost everybody knows what it feels like to suffer from a headache. In fact, each year over 70% of the population will have a headache at some point. Most people will take a painkiller and it goes away. Only 5% seek advice from a GP or pharmacist, and only a few of those come to neurology attention. For some people, however, headaches can cause significant disability - they become intrusive and frequent, and affect concentration, with knock-on effects on work, mood and social life. Severe headaches can also lead to health-related anxiety as many people fear that their headaches may indicate an underlying health problem such as a brain tumour.

Understanding headache is not straightforward and there are many popular misconceptions. Reassuringly, most severe headaches are *primary headaches*, which means that the headache is the main symptom and there is no serious underlying cause. Headaches may be equally intense whether they are caused by something as benign as neck muscle tension or as serious as a malignant brain tumour. It is important to be aware that headaches can arise from different structures in the head and neck including the neck muscles and joints, blood vessels in the head and the sinuses in the face. Ironically, the brain, which is the seat of all sensory experience including pain, does not in itself have pain receptors. This is useful when surgeons want to remove a tumour from the brain while the patient is still awake.

In this article, I would like to debunk some of the common myths that surround headaches and to pass on some of the knowledge I have accumulated over the past 30 years as a neurologist, consulting with thousands of patients with a range of headache disorders. This article is not meant to be a substitute for seeing your doctor if you are concerned about headaches, but I hope it will provide some reassurance and context about the headache you may be experiencing. Finally, I want to emphasise how important it is to get a clear diagnosis, and this is only possible through a proper consultation with your doctor based on a full examination and your clinical history, and not a short time spent with Dr Google.

1. MIGRAINE – IT'S JUST A HEADACHE

Migraine is a common headache disorder affecting about 25% of women and 8% of men at some point in their lifetimes. It comes and goes, but if not treated properly, can gradually turn into a daily headache, known as chronic migraine. Migraine is **much more** than a headache – people with migraine experience neurological and visual symptoms such as flashing lights, partial loss of vision, and on rare occasions, stroke-like symptoms. Migraines often cause nausea, and sometimes vomiting. Characteristically, people with migraine need to lie down in a dark room and can be 'out of action' for hours or even days. The day after a migraine is often a washout. Migraine is recognised by the World Health Organisation as one of the most common causes of disability.

2. A HEADACHE THAT DOESN'T GO AWAY MUST BE SERIOUS

The most common type of headache is *tension-type headache*, usually experienced as a tight constricting band around the head. This usually comes on towards the end of the day and can be present almost every day for months and even years. This is a benign condition which, although a nuisance, is not associated with any serious health problems. The longer a headache continues without any other symptoms, the less likely it is to be due to a serious underlying medical condition.

3. A VERY SEVERE HEADACHE IS USUALLY DUE TO A BRAIN TUMOUR

There are no specific characteristics of a headache due to a brain tumour. In most cases, there are other more concerning neurological symptoms accompanying the headache - such as loss of function (for example, speech, power or sensation), seizures, confusion and personality changes. Furthermore, brain tumour headache is rarely severe. If a brain tumour or other intracranial mass is growing within the brain, the classic headache is present on waking in the morning and is

HEADACHES MAY BE EQUALLY
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TUMOUR

associated with nausea and vomiting and made worse by bending down, sneezing or coughing. The problem is that this is also true of migraine. The difference is that migraine is an *episodic* headache which comes and goes, whereas a brain tumour headache gradually gets worse over time.

4. A SUDDEN, EXPLOSIVE HEADACHE IS USUALLY DUE TO A BRAIN HAEMORRHAGE

Although brain haemorrhage can cause a sudden onset headache known as a *thunderclap headache*, in most cases this is not due to anything serious. To be certain, the first time you experience a headache of this kind, you should get it checked out. If you get a sudden headache that feels like you've been hit over the head by a baseball bat, then go straight to A&E where you will be scanned to look for bleeding on the brain. Sometimes if the headache doesn't settle down and you're unwell with it, you may be offered a lumbar puncture to look for bleeding into the spinal fluid. In practice though, many young people get thunderclap headache for no clear reason. Thunderclap headache sometimes occurs during a gym session (known as *exertional headache*) or during sex (known as *sex headache*) and can be associated with migraine.

5. PAINKILLERS ARE THE ONLY WAY TO TREAT HEADACHES

Painkillers such as aspirin and ibuprofen are often all that are needed to relieve a headache but should not be taken on a regular basis as too many painkillers can lead to worsened and persistent headaches. This is known as *medication overuse headache*.

If you get migraines on a regular basis, then there are a variety of very good drugs that can reduce their frequency. None of these were developed for migraine so they all have other uses. The most common of these include propranolol, amitriptyline, topiramate and candesartan, which are usually prescribed by a neurologist. I would generally opt to initiate treatment with these drugs if someone has more than two

debilitating migraines a month for more than three consecutive months. A minority of patients with chronic migraine (which is defined as more than 15 headache days a month for more than three months, where more than half of these headaches are migraine) require more complex treatments such as Botox and monoclonal antibodies - but these should always be prescribed by a neurologist.

There are also numerous other non-pharmacological treatments including acupuncture, daith piercing and vitamin B2, which some patients find very helpful.

6. ANYBODY WITH A BAD HEADACHE SHOULD HAVE A BRAIN SCAN

As I have indicated, the vast majority of headaches are *primary headaches*, which do not require a brain scan, even if the headache is very severe. Doctors are trained to look for 'red flags' by asking appropriate questions which may indicate a *secondary headache* where the headache is due to an underlying more serious problem such as a brain tumour. They will usually refer the patient on to a neurologist if they are unsure or concerned that the patient will require further tests. However, in real life, brain tumours are extremely rare while headaches are extremely common. Scans are rarely needed and will almost always be normal.

7. HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE CAN CAUSE HEADACHE

Your blood pressure would need to be extremely high to cause a headache, so even if your blood pressure is slightly high, it is unlikely to be the culprit. Like any other stressful situation, headache itself can elevate blood pressure, so you should always check your BP

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TAKING TOO MANY PAINKILLERS CAN LEAD TO WORSENERD AND PERSISTENT HEADACHES

when relaxed and pain free to get a truly accurate reading. It is quite unusual nowadays for people to have dangerously high BP, otherwise called *malignant hypertension*, as blood pressure is routinely checked when consulting with a doctor or a nurse.

8. STRESS CAUSES HEADACHE

Surprisingly, there is no obvious relationship between stress and headaches. Many people experience tension-type headaches, but these can occur when they are feeling relaxed. There is no doubt that headaches can be one symptom of anxiety and depression, but they are rarely the only symptom. Interestingly, migraine headaches can occur after a period of stress and that is why they often start at the beginning of the weekend or a holiday.

9. HEADACHES CAN BE CAUSED BY HAVING THE WRONG GLASSES PRESCRIPTION

You should go to an optician for an eye test if you think your vision is not quite right and if you suffer from headaches, but it is very unlikely that changing your prescription will cure your headaches. The optician will check four important issues relating to your eye and brain health:

- The visual acuity of your eyes both with and without prescription glasses, which will indicate whether the problem is ‘refractive’ or neurological and whether there is any indication to see a neurologist.
- Your visual fields to identify whether there are any gaps in your vision or areas of your vision.
- The pressure in your eyes, which needs to be treated if it is high or it can lead to permanent loss of vision.
- The back of your eyes, which involves checking the health of your optic nerve. Optic nerve problems can occur in several conditions that are associated with headache, including raised intracranial pressure which causes swelling of the optic nerve and temporal arteritis which almost always occurs in elderly people, causes severe headaches over the temple and can affect vision by blocking the blood supply to the optic nerve. If these are suspected, the optician will refer you immediately to the local emergency department.

10. SINUSITIS IS A COMMON CAUSE OF RECURRENT HEADACHE

I have seen several patients over the years who had been referred by ENT doctors with suspected sinusitis as a cause of their headaches. In these cases, scans of the sinuses were completely clear, and 2 or 3 courses of antibiotics had failed to shift the headache, so the patients were referred on to me.

Acute sinusitis is an infection of the sinuses and causes severe throbbing headache and facial pain, made worse by bending forward. Other symptoms include fever, unpleasant nasal discharge and nasal blockage. The pain of sinusitis is often felt in the middle of the face, the jaws, the teeth and into the forehead and temples. Sinusitis needs to be treated quickly with antibiotics to stop the infection. People who suffer from recurrent headaches and facial pain without the other symptoms of sinusitis usually have migraine and not sinusitis. While sinusitis often responds to a course of antibiotics, migraine headaches will not.



Dr Jeremy Rees is a consultant neurologist and honorary associate professor at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London. He was the first neurologist to be appointed with a specialist interest in neuro-oncology and specializes in brain tumours and neurological complications of cancer and cancer treatments. In his private life, Jeremy is an observant Jew and a trustee of Toras Chaim shul. He has been heavily involved in the establishment and building of Shalom Noam Primary School and is the chair of trustees of the Noam Educational Trust.

YOGA

THE PATHWAY TO
A NEW ME



SHIRA DRUION INTERVIEWS YOGA TEACHER
NADINE SHANE ABOUT EXPLORING THE POSITIVE
BENEFITS OF YOGA FOR YOUR BODY AND YOUR MIND

MORE AND MORE PEOPLE, OF ALL AGES AND FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, ARE COMING TO REALISE THAT THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN CLIMBING THE LADDER, THAT WE ARE MORE THAN OUR RÉSUMÉS, AND THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO BUY INTO THE COLLECTIVE DELUSION THAT BURNOUT IS THE NECESSARY PRICE WE MUST PAY FOR SUCCESS.

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

Each new year, we have the opportunity for renewal and return. Soon, it will be Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. This is a time to reflect upon the previous year; to reflect on who we have been and what we have done, and to try and improve in areas where we may have been lacking, committing to do better next year.

I was brought to tears recently, in a 'mascara-down-the-face' moment reading a book called 'Thrive' by Arianna Huffington. Have you ever realised that when we die, our lives are eulogised in a very different way to how we define success as we live? Do we really want to build our lives on completed 'to-do lists', the next 'big' promotion or even how brilliant our cooking was for a big dinner party?

Society values avoidance and distraction. When we are busy and capable, we are 'successful'. When we give ourselves time out, or attempt to switch off, we often find ourselves in rabbit holes on mobile devices - an initial Google search to find out more about yoga can result, an hour later, in an online shopping spree on the Lululemon website as you decide which colour leggings you NEED before you even step onto a mat!

There must be more depth to how we live - more meaning. And I believe that this is what the world is calling 'mindfulness'. There is no better time in the Jewish calendar than now to step back and take stock of where we are at - to be mindful! Yet the word has become so overused it is often misinterpreted. In my own practice of yoga, I have come to really understand what being MINDFUL means. In essence it is about a mind-LESS-full! It is only when we empty our heads and our bodies, when we really stop all the 'doing' - that true transformation can begin. And while this may sound a little 'voodoo' and unattainable, believe me -

I was never your typical green-shake-hippie-namaste-yogi-Insta girl!

HOW DO THE PRINCIPLES OF YOGA HELP ONE TO NAVIGATE LIFE MORE SUCCESSFULLY?

For me - yoga has been a complete antidote to the 'crazy'. I was starting to feel like the story of my life - my eulogy - was the incessant buzzing in my head to do more, be more, read more, consume more and get it done perfectly! I have never been a fan of the concept of quick transformation - the 'new you' or the 'new me'. I don't really believe that collagen powders, new fad running apps and diets have a lasting impact on who we are and how our bodies feel. The 'body fix' world is saturated. And my realisation of this came with my first real exhale on a yoga mat over 8 years ago.

WHAT IS YOGA?

A quick google search will give you tons of information and tell you what yoga is. You'll find the origins, the founders and even the progressions of the practice throughout history. In short, the word Yoga (a Sanskrit word) means 'union' - the union of the mind, the body and the soul and how they work in harmony. The central element of any yoga style or form is the breath. Breathing is the very thing that sets the living apart from the dead. If you are moving and breathing and mindful, you are essentially practicing yoga.

Yoga has developed over many years, and through a variety of practices and generations of teachers it has evolved and developed into a range of styles. Some draw on selected philosophical and spiritual elements, whilst others are heavily influenced by anatomy and movement from western

therapeutic approaches. For example, Joseph Pilates included research of Eastern mind-body practices and developed Pilates.

Yoga has also been very misunderstood. It is not sitting on a pillow staring at a candle. It is not about touching your toes or bending your body into pretzel-like shapes. It is not (in its purest form) related to chanting and religion. I, like many of my teachers, am a religious Jewess and have never felt conflicted or challenged.

Yoga relies on improving your strength, flexibility and breathing through a series of increasingly difficult 'asanas' (poses). It is designed to help you think more clearly and improve your mental wellness. The result is a long-term enhancement of your overall health, state of mind and fitness.

WHAT TYPES OF YOGA ARE THERE AND WHAT STYLE DO YOU TEACH?

There are so many different types of yoga, and your choice will depend on whether you want a more physically demanding class or an easy, relaxing, meditative class.

I teach Vinyasa Yoga. There are other types of yoga that can also be considered Vinyasa flows such as Ashtanga and 'power' yoga. In Vinyasa classes, the flow is coordinated with your breath and movement as you move from one pose to another. Vinyasa styles can vary depending on the teacher, and there can be many types of poses in different sequences. My classes tend to incorporate an Iyengar element which is rooted in alignment.

There are numerous styles of yoga. Some of the most common types include:

- **HATHA YOGA** - Slower paced, with a classic approach to poses and breathing.
- **IYENGAR YOGA** - Founded by BKS Iyengar. Focuses on alignment as well as detailed and precise movements. Postures are usually held for a long time and props are used.
- **KUNDALINI YOGA** - Works your core and breathing with fast-moving, invigorating postures and breath exercises.
- **ASHTANGA YOGA** - Involves a physically demanding sequence of postures repeated in series.
- **BIKRAM YOGA** - Features a sequence of set poses in a sauna-like room that is typically set to high temperatures and humidity.

- **YIN YOGA** - Yoga poses are held for long periods of time. This cultivates a meditative approach to working deep into the body and its connective tissues and organs.

IF SOMEBODY HAS NEVER PRACTISED BEFORE, HOW DO YOU RECOMMEND THEY BEGIN?

JUST START - anywhere! Don't get lost in the styles and choices. Don't be put off by the attachment to anything around philosophy. Don't get sucked in by the Instagram of crazy bodies doing crazy things. Don't think about it - just do it - once. Yoga is suitable for ANYONE. If you have a body and a mind, and if you can breathe, you can do yoga - no matter what state any of those 3 things is in right now. And yes - there may be a chance it isn't for you, but I recommend that you try at least 3 classes before making a personal decision.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT TEACHING YOGA?

I don't really like to call myself a yoga 'teacher'. While I am indeed qualified, my teachers have earned their titles through years and years of study, self-practice, growth and vast amounts of knowledge. They learned under true masters and have imparted their wisdom to me. The joy of teaching, for me, is sharing my knowledge. The poses and the classes are my way of giving students the feeling that I am honoured to get through my educators. The more I teach, the more humbled I feel. I am indeed as much of a student as I am a teacher.

For me, the most rewarding clients are teenagers and students. They walk into class tense, worried about their exams or the number of 'likes' they have on Facebook and if they look 'okay'. They have screens in their hands and minds full of pressure and anxiety. A pervasive symptom of the COVID pandemic is that I can actually see that young people not breathing as they walk in the door! The transformation after the class is tangible. They are lighter, quieter and their shoulders have dropped. They leave slowly and mindfully and with a new calm energy - inhaling and exhaling!

WHAT WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT DO YOU HAVE FOR SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO GET INTO HIS OR HER PRACTICE?

Get real. Be honest. Give yourself a break!



We are all human. And the world is in chaos. While I'd love to say my life is in perfect emotional, physical and mental harmony - I've learnt that identifying our setbacks (sometimes even through injury), our daily constraints and our own realities - is real life. Getting into the practice of yoga was hard for me! I'm rather inconsistent. I approach rigidity with avoidance. I beat myself up about missed yoga classes, missed deadlines and missed moments with my loved ones. But I've cultivated a sense of self-compassion. Sometimes just 10 minutes on my mat reminds me that even if that's all I can manage today, it's good enough. We are all works in progress until the day we die. If you have started your yoga journey and feel 'stuck' or unmoved, there are so many excellent teachers and classes around you - try variety and change.

SO, CAN YOGA REALLY CHANGE YOUR LIFE?

I can only tell you about MY life, and the relationship between the asana (poses) and my world. Through practicing Yoga, I have come to feel:

- The open heart to give of myself to others after my backbends.
- The sense of emotional detox after opening my hips.
- The power I harness in every warrior pose that sees me through trying times.
- The fresh perspective I get on so many facets of life when I'm upside down.

- The grace and courage I have cultivated with an open, strong back.
- The sense of security that flows through my grounded feet in standing poses.
- The sense of appreciation for my health and life every time I observe my breath.
- The self-confidence I have developed as my ability grows.
- The humility I achieve in observing others practice.
- The discipline I have cultivated to just 'show up'.

My yoga practice has liberated my spine, organs, mobility and general wellbeing. My yoga practice has liberated my purpose and focused my mind.

And it goes without saying that any form of exercise which frees us from the shackles of the mobile world and the chitter chatter of the critics in our heads ... deserves some serious attention!

What better time of year to step back from the chaos of the world and the rush of our lives, and just to breathe. We have the opportunity for renewal every day. This Rosh Hashana, together with Yom Kippur, is the complete spiritual 'trip to the laundromat' so to speak, enabling us to wipe the slate clean through a process of repentance - 'teshuva'. Perhaps all we need to do to start is ask ourselves: "What do I want MY eulogy to sound like?"

"AND EVERY DAY, THE WORLD WILL DRAG YOU BY THE HAND, YELLING, 'THIS IS IMPORTANT! AND THIS IS IMPORTANT! AND THIS IS IMPORTANT! YOU NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THIS! AND THIS! AND THIS!' AND EACH DAY, IT'S UP TO YOU TO YANK YOUR HAND BACK, PUT IT ON YOUR HEART AND SAY, 'NO. THIS IS WHAT'S IMPORTANT.'"

IAIN THOMAS



Nadine Shane is a Yoga Alliance accredited Vinyasa yoga teacher. She also is a qualified architect with a master's degree (MArch, BSc Witswatersrand University). She arrived in London just over a year ago with the goal of bringing the passion of her South African teachers to London's northern suburbs. Nadine has been practicing yoga for 8 years and believes that yoga is the harmony between all things body, mind and soul. She also aims to bring the same harmony to homes. After years of gym, 4 pregnancies, Pilates and random diets, she believes in the powerful transformative power of Vinyasa yoga in building strength, flexibility and well-being.

GOOD ENOUGH

THE DARK SIDE OF *by* MARIA BEIDER Perfection

SOCIETY PUTS ENORMOUS PRESSURE US TO STRIVE
FOR PERFECTION, BUT THERE'S TREMENDOUS VALUE IN
MAKING MISTAKES ALONG THE WAY AND LEARNING TO
ACCEPT OURSELVES

How often do we hear that we should “strive for excellence” (or some variation of that expression) in our everyday lives? When did excellence become an end-goal and an aspiration in itself? Being excellent places tremendous pressure on an individual and has the potential to cause untold anxiety. If one is deemed to be excellent, one must constantly continue to live up to that elite standard, with no respite. It is not uncommon to find trailing just behind the expectation of excellence, its partner in crime - perfectionism. Talk about adding insult to injury!

Perfectionism is a very subtle, often angelic-looking creature, and yet it has the capacity, if unleashed, to grow into a dark, sinister and self-destructive character trait. Let us be honest: Do we, as parents, on a subconscious level, encourage our children to strive for perfection? We may inadvertently teach perfectionism by demonstrating it in our own efforts to lose weight and look ‘perfect’; in curating a flawless home that imitates a glossy magazine; or in pushing our children with hours of extra lessons to achieve near-perfect grades.

How often do we remember to praise our children for trying hard and persevering, or for being brave enough to tackle something new, even if it means making mistakes along the way? It is for this very reason that I have always had a pet peeve about people who regularly use Tippex. What is so wrong with drawing a line through a mistake? There is great beauty in human error - it not only emphasises our fallibility, but also reflects courage in risk-taking and creativity. Da Vinci’s sketches and Shakespeare’s musings sell for millions these days!

Just when we thought that the media could not stoop any lower with its constant barrage of unhealthy images of waif-like supermodels, along came the digital age of social media, and the next generation became exposed to airbrushed, enhanced images of their idols. Now our precious and lovely, but not necessarily ‘aesthetically perfect’ teenagers, who are dealing with the multiple challenges of being at a physically awkward stage, are under pressure to photoshop themselves to look like flawless pixies or Disney-eyed characters that portray a much cuter (and far less attainable) image than reality could ever convey!

Sadly, this generation has the tragic misfortune of falling under the spell of perfectionism and constant striving for excellence. It pervades so many aspects of their lives, beyond just social media. Why has the school system still

not fully comprehended that there is more to education than emphasising high grades and focusing on tests? Shouldn’t the timeless values of working hard, trying hard and doing your best be held aloft as the golden standard of the day? Should we not be grading ourselves against our own benchmark instead of comparing ourselves to others?

What would happen if we were not excellent, high achieving or perfect, as society demands, all the time? Now that is a terrifying thought for many people! If your brilliant genius of a son fails, or even comes second or third when he is used to being first, will he still be accepted by his peers, his teachers and his family? More importantly, will he accept himself? Will he be deemed good enough? For some of the kids who have been labelled the ‘high achievers,’ the ‘beautiful’ ones, the ‘popular’ ones or the perfectionist types, there is a huge fear that their self-worth is dependent solely upon their achievements, their grades, their looks or how many ‘likes’ they have. For these fragile characters, one failure or rejection could be devastating.

WHEN DID EXCELLENCE BECOME AN END-GOAL AND AN ASPIRATION IN ITSELF?

I remember the first time I tasted real failure. It was just after high school when I was learning to drive. I had always somehow managed to get by in school in a slapdash way (luckily for me, I have never been a perfectionist.) However, once I emerged from the academic environment, I was in for a shock! I successfully failed my driving test four times in a row. Ouch! I was mortified. Experiencing repeated failure was painful, but in retrospect, it was healthy for me too. Looking back, I am grateful to have had this experience in my youth because it made me more resilient, and I was able to accept that I was less than average in the spatial awareness department. (My patient husband can attest to this!) The lesson I took away from this episode was that you can fail, get back up, persevere and eventually succeed - and still survive with your self-esteem intact.

Perfectionism appears to be an epidemic in this warped reality in which we live. In adulthood, many of the brilliant

HOW OFTEN DO WE REMEMBER TO PRAISE OUR CHILDREN FOR TRYING HARD AND PERSEVERING, OR FOR BEING BRAVE ENOUGH TO TACKLE SOMETHING NEW, EVEN IF IT MEANS MAKING MISTAKES ALONG THE WAY?

people who have been groomed for excellence will be too afraid to try, for fear of slipping up. They cannot possibly take the risk and so they are better off playing safe and not even trying. Such perfectionistic tendencies can, in extreme cases, contribute to a host of mental health conditions including anorexia and other eating disorders, OCD, anxiety and depression. When the lack of self-acceptance has been so deeply internalised, life can become so painful that suicide may seem to be the only way out.

Incidentally, I have noticed that children who have accepted that they are not the highest achievers and are not striving for excellence often have much healthier levels of self-esteem and are content trying hard and achieving against their own standards, even if these are in the average range. Without the great burden of being excellent or perfect, they are free to try out new things and make mistakes. They have developed a greater resilience and, as a result, often those mediocre individuals who don't necessarily shine or stand out at school, are the very ones who become highly successful adults.

How can we, as adults, model fallibility and vulnerability? The antidote to this poisonous epidemic seems simple: teach the next generation that it is important to make mistakes and that there is nothing wrong with working hard, doing your best and achieving average results. If children learn to function by covering all their mistakes with Tippet, they will be highly anxious when it eventually

runs out! How many pictures do they need to take before they post the 'perfect one' on Facebook? If they do not take risks and try out new things, how can they learn?

When I was a primary school teacher, I felt very strongly that one of the most important gifts I could impart was to show my humanity and vulnerability. If I made silly mistakes, I would make a point of exposing them and laughing at myself in front of my pupils. If they asked me a difficult question (usually in science which was not my best subject) I would tell them I did not know the answer (but I would try to find out) and that adults are not all-knowing. My daughter recently told me that her English teacher asks the girls to help her to spell when she writes on the board because she claims her spelling is atrocious. This kind of modelling of imperfection is laudable.

Do your children know that they are good enough as they are, warts and all? My favourite psychoanalyst, the English paediatrician, Donald Winnicott, who worked in the 1950's in England, taught women that it was absolutely acceptable to be 'good enough' mothers. This term has proved invaluable to me, not just when I was a new young mother, but throughout my adult life. It is even more essential to impart this same message to our children: just be good enough.

Our job is to make the next generation feel loved and accepted unconditionally while encouraging (safe) risk-taking and perseverance. We need to remind ourselves and our children that it is important to experience failure and that one cannot learn without making mistakes. As for me, being excellent is a superlative that I think I would rather forgo. In fact, I think I might coin a new phrase: "striving to be good enough as I am."

Note to editor: Ironically, I find myself wondering if this article will be deemed good enough - before I have even submitted it!

ED: Note to the writer: "It was!"



Originally a primary school teacher from London, Maria Beider has been living in Israel with her husband and their five children for the past fourteen years. During this time, she gained a Master's in Social Work and subsequently practiced as a psychotherapist at the Neve Family Institute, specialising in trauma. She is also trained in EMDR and IFS (Internal Family Systems). The Beider family recently moved to Johannesburg, where her husband has taken up a Rabbinical post.

WHY RISK YOUR BABY'S HEALTH?



We live in a world of uncertainty. So much is currently out of our control. But minimising your chance of passing on a Jewish genetic disorder is not.

Jnetics is the only UK charity devoted to the prevention of Jewish genetic disorders (JGDs). We achieve our mission by providing subsidised JGD carrier screening in partnership with the NHS.

SO, WHAT IS CARRIER SCREENING?

Carrier screening is a genetic test used to identify if someone is a healthy 'carrier' for a recessive genetic disorder. 1 in 5 people of Jewish origin is a carrier for a severe recessive JGD.

Being a carrier does not typically impact your own health but means that you are at increased risk of passing on the disorder to your future children. Quite simply, if two people who are carriers of the same disorder have children, there is a 1 in 4 chance with every pregnancy that the newborn child will suffer from the disorder that they both carry.

WHO SHOULD GET SCREENED?

Screening is important for anyone who is planning to have a child who has not screened before, even if there are no cases of JGDs in their family, and whether this is a first pregnancy or not. Often babies affected by JGDs are born to couples who already have healthy children.

Screening is recommended pre-conception as it gives carrier couples the greatest number of options to manage their risk of having an affected child.

WHY IS SCREENING SO IMPORTANT?

Fortunately, there are options available for so called 'carrier couples' to avoid passing on the disorder they carry. These include advanced assisted reproductive techniques such as Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis. However, to access these, the couple must be aware of their carrier status first. This is precisely what screening achieves, and why it is so important.

WHICH DISORDERS DOES JNETICS TEST FOR?

Currently, Jnetics offers screening for 9 severe, recessive JGDs relevant to those of Ashkenazi origin.

However, we are imminently planning to launch a new enhanced test which will include an increased number of 'Ashkenazi disorders', and up to 20 disorders relevant to the Sephardi/Mizrahi community too. We are incredibly excited to be reaching this milestone, and to finally be able to provide the Sephardi community with such a critical service.

HOW CAN I ACCESS SCREENING WITH JNETICS?

Jnetics provides carrier screening for 9 (soon to be 30+) of the most devastating JGDs via The Jnetics Clinic, an entirely virtual bi-monthly service delivered by our dedicated NHS genetic counsellor. Participation in the clinic, which targets 21-39 year olds about to embark on parenthood, costs £250 per person or £350 for a couple.

Jnetics also educates and screens young Jewish adults through our GENEius Programme for both school and university students. At the end of November, we hope to deliver our second GENEius University Screening Week University which in 2020, saw over 250 university students take part.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

If you have any questions, simply email screening@jnetics.org or call 020 8158 5123. To book your virtual appointment at the Jnetics clinic, just go to www.jnetics.org/screening. More information about GENEius can be found at www.geneius.org.

CHAI

18 INSPIRING IDEAS TO CATAPULT US INTO THE NEW YEAR

by SUSAN ROSENTHAL

A MAGNIFICENT COLLAGE OF THOUGHTS
AND IDEAS TO HELP US TO START THE NEW
YEAR WITH A ZEST FOR LIFE

01



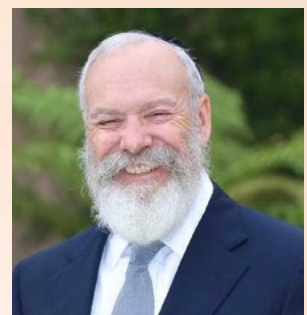
Rosh Hashanah helps us focus on who we truly are, what we are living for and where we need to be a year from now. Yom Kippur helps us focus on what has been holding us back, what we need to do differently, and what steps we need to take to get there. The journey is mapped out for us each year. Together these days challenge us to find the honesty, humility, and courage to drop the pretence of our own power and to let God's Will and Voice speak within us. This is the secret to true greatness.

Rabbi Daniel Rowe - Executive Director of Aish UK

There is no such thing as an insignificant human being. As Maimonides puts it: each person should view the world as equally balanced between merits and faults. One's next action can tip the whole world to the side of merit.

Rabbi Shlomo Levin - South Hampstead Synagogue

02



03

What is the true meaning of Rosh Hashanah? Perhaps it is actually a chance for us to look in the mirror and answer the questions that only we can answer for ourselves. I imagine two judges. One is the critical voice inside of us that asks if we genuinely tried our best and whether we will really try to do better in the future; and the other is the nurturing voice that asks whether we have been kind to ourselves, especially as we have all had a difficult year, and whether we will be kind to ourselves in the coming year. Perhaps that is really the essence of Rosh Hashanah - the journey to the realisation that both of those voices emanate from the one true judge, and what feels like pushing and pulling is really the invitation for each of us to be our personal best in the year ahead.

Rebbetzin Jacqueline Feldman - Bushey Synagogue

04



As life returns to a relatively normal rhythm, we revert back to old habits and places, and see our friends and family, but perhaps with a renewed awareness and appreciation of life.

The pandemic has shaken the world, reaching all four corners, touching everyone's lives. It has been a deep collective experience, yet also a very intimate and lonely one. Yet, I'd like to think that the collective exceeded and excelled, and that the empathy, generosity and selflessness of so many individuals made us stronger. I've been lucky enough to be involved with a wonderful charity, *You Donate, We Deliver*, where together with other chefs we gave our time and resources to cook for the NHS. We prepared thousands of weekly meals for the ICU staff and ambulance services. It has been an amazing experience and I feel so privileged to have been able to feed and bring a smile to many hard working people through my food.

May this renewed appreciation of life continue in the New Year and may your lives be filled with meaningful moments, new adventures, laughter and delicious food to share with the people we love.

Silvia Nacamulli – Italian / Jewish cooking expert

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR ABILITY TO DIG DEEP, MAKE NEW DISCOVERIES AND STEP INTO PLACES SO FAR OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY EXISTED

At the start of 2020 I would perhaps have been described as an expert - a consultant in respiratory medicine, a knowledgeable doctor. Covid has shown me how little I knew. Here was a brand-new disease that behaved in a way we had never encountered before. We did not know what Covid was or how to treat it. It brought with it the most unspeakable pain and sadness.

What I have learnt from this past year is never to underestimate your ability to dig deep, make new discoveries and step into places so far out of your comfort zone you didn't even know they existed.

In those places you will find brilliance, genius and strength.

Moerida Benton - Pulmonologist, Respiratory Medicine at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, London



05

06



I see life's challenges as mountains to be climbed, both literally and metaphorically. Gesher's mission is to give a marginalised group the opportunity to be included as vital citizens of the future, and Gesher has been the mountain that has kept on giving - just when you think you've reached the summit there is yet another peak ahead of you. Someone told me at the beginning of my Gesher journey that it would take ten years to set up a school and I laughed. But it has been eight years to date and there is still more to do. What starts with an idea at the beginning of a journey, becomes much bigger and more complex. The key is to surround yourself with others who share the same vision, 'get' the dream and work by your side to turn it into a reality.

The Bnei Mitzvah Challenge mirrors this, in that it literally involves climbing mountains; taking young people out of their comfort zones whilst inspiring them to give to others through charity - after all they will become the philanthropists of our community's future.

Sara Sultman - Gesher School Executive Committee

There will always be fear, uncertainty and doubt in the world. It is how we handle those 3 things that will determine the quality of our lives. I believe in looking at things with optimism and positivity. South Africa (and the world) was rocked by Covid. In South Africa there was also crime, bribery, corruption, a lack of vaccines and unimaginable poverty. Then there was looting...

Running a charity gives you a sense of purpose; no time to 'sweat the small stuff'. I like to look back at the end of the year and focus on all the good things that have happened and not on the negative. Look at how far we have come. Look at all the good in SA - the spirit of 'ubuntu' (humanity) has never been stronger. Black people, white people, Muslims and Jews have all come together. We have survived, and that is more than we can say for others.

Glynne Wolman - The Angel Network Charity SA



07



08

Be happy, get a pet so you are never alone, go on holiday to the beach and find some shells and make a sandcastle. Eat lots of fruit, always explore where you are, love to exercise and don't be lazy. Treat nature well. If you're feeling sad, make sure you're away from everyone, then you can get more calm on your own.

Gabriel Klein - Naima JPS, age 6

When you reflect on the year that has passed, it is equally as important to look at your actions and the 'why' or the purpose behind them. But most crucial is who you are and how you treat all people, the culture of your business and the values that influence your decision making. That is what is really important to people and what they remember most.

Ruth Leas - CEO Investec Plc



09



10

Let things go and things will always turn out fine with Hashem at your side. I wish everyone could be like Harry Houdini - able to escape from their troubles at will.

David Green - Year 3, North West London Jewish Day School

This year, more than ever, I have learnt that challenges can become opportunities. Weakness can become strength. Failure can become success. What seems like a problem can actually be a huge blessing. It's all about perception and gratitude. I am grateful for improved perception this year and pray that the coming year will be one of huge blessings, peace, good health and opportunity for all.

Chana Kanzen - CEO, Jewish Interactive



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Twenty-seven years ago, on erev Yom Kippur, my eldest daughter Talya was born. Within hours she had multiple organ failure and, although life support saved her, she was left with extensive brain damage. In the early years that followed, I would never have imagined that such overwhelming despair would bring me so much joy and the gift to help others. At this time of year, I find it reassuring that, after the 21 days of mourning which culminates with Tisha B'Av, we move into Rosh Hashanah and the 21 days leading to the end of Sukkot. This is an austere period of self-reflection which escalates into joy. This cycle, as with so many others in Judaism, is a poignant reminder that if you hang in through times of challenge and seek growth through the hardship, unexpected joy will follow.

Dr Beverley Jacobson - Chief Executive Norwood Charity

We stand side by side on Rosh Hashanah, shoulder to shoulder with Jews from around the world. Jews from Russia, Australia, South Africa, The United States, Europe and Israel listening to the Jewish national anthem: the sound of the shofar - The same ram's horn. The same blasts. We understand that these blasts are meant to be heard by all and this is what unites us in a common vision of the world, which is to piece together the fragments and build a better world.

Rabbi Zvi Gefen- Director of Development & Educator, Aish Manchester



13



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Showing care is one of the most powerful ways you can repair the culture around you, at work and in life. It costs nothing and takes little time. Care can be found in a thoughtful choice of words, a small gesture, or by simply taking into account how another person might be feeling. Ask yourself - "How am I going to show care today?"

Michal Oshman - Head of Culture, Diversity, Inclusion and Employer Branding, Tik Tok Europe

THIS CYCLE, AS WITH SO MANY OTHERS IN JUDAISM, IS A POIGNANT REMINDER THAT IF YOU HANG IN THROUGH TIMES OF CHALLENGE AND SEEK GROWTH THROUGH THE HARDSHIP, UNEXPECTED JOY WILL FOLLOW

Are you connected? Wwww - Zoom in! We all thought we were. The Corona reality has been a period of human disconnection. It's been tough but has provided an opportunity to take stock of virtual and superficial connections - an understanding that life is nothing without true connection, in Hebrew 'chibur' -. Rosh Hashanah serves as a reminder to return to, pray for, share and invest in a life of true connection; to foster genuine connection with self, with God, with significant other, family, friends, community and world.

Rabbi Naftali Schiff - Chief Executive Jewish Futures



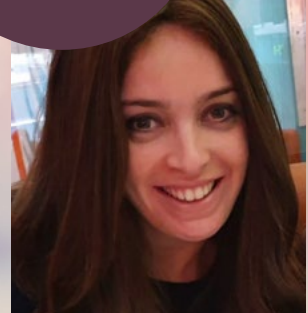
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16

The mitzva of the shofar is associated with the awesome festival of Rosh Hashanah. Maimonides points out that the shofar is intended to generate personal renewal. For this message to reach us we must be actively 'listening'. This is true of our interpersonal relationships too. It is not enough to just 'hear' others, it is vital that we 'listen' - to enable us to connect on a deeper level.

Active listening allows us to understand the point of view of another person and respond with empathy. This message is so important as Rosh Hashanah approaches - not just to 'hear' but to truly 'listen'.

Miri Ickowicz - Teacher JFS School



17

When I stand in shul on rosh hashana and Yom kippur- I take time to look around at the people praying next to me. I try thing of 1 nice thing about each person- even strangers! When we choose to look for the good in the people around us, not only does it fill us with optimism and joy- we know that Hashem chooses to judge us favourably in that moment too

Rebbetzin Shalvie Friedman- Senior Educator at Aish UK

We have to make space for the things that really matter: relationships, marriage, the family, being part of a community, celebrating, giving thanks, being part of a tradition and its wisdom, a faith and its blessings, giving to others and sharing with them our joys and grief.

There has to be room in life for something bigger than us, larger than self-interest and longer than a lifetime. There are times when we have to let the soul sing, to express gratitude and know that what we have is God's gift. That's what living Jewishly does. It structures our lives around the things that matter – the things that are important but not urgent, and therefore tend to be neglected until it is too late. Don't leave it too late.

For this is what Judaism shows us: how to take hold of life with both hands and make a blessing over it. That is what distinguishes happiness from mere pleasure, and gives meaning to our years and days.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (1948 - 2020) - Letters to the Next Generation 2, Letter 4, The Pursuit of Happiness



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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).

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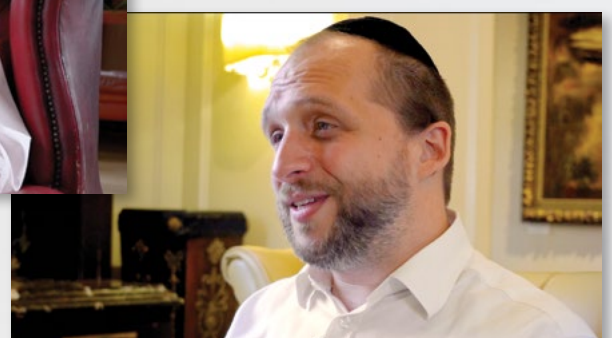
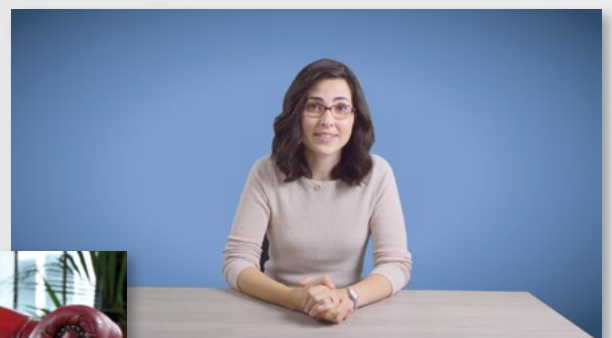
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RE-CREATING THE SELF

SPARKS & RECREATION

by GARETH KOBRIN

ROSH HASHANAH PROVIDES US WITH A PROFOUND
OPPORTUNITY FOR RECREATION. GARETH KOBRIN
EXPLORES WHAT THIS MEANS FOR EACH OF US AS WE
EMBRACE LIFE IN A POST-COVID WORLD.

As a boy, I believed astrology was hocus-pocus. How could the luminous balls of gas that we call stars affect me, all the way down here? My father loved astronomy – the science of the celestial bodies – but he used to call astrology a pseudoscience, the “mad daughter of a wise mother.” My mum used to reply, “That’s such a Leo thing to say.”

As a man, I am not ashamed of flirting with the zodiac for it is well worth the flirtation. Not the superficial horoscopes of magazines, but rather the mysteries of *mazal*, manifested in the heavenly constellations.

I was asked to write something about Rosh Hashanah as the time of re-creation – the short spell in a year where personal reinvention is within our reach – as Hashem makes it *mesugal*, or more accessible to us. The boy inside me laughs, but the man wants to know more. When a man wants to know more, he must ask someone wiser...

I have a colleague drenched in Torah wisdom, so I interrupt a serious business meeting to ask him the question. (He has humbly asked to remain anonymous, so for this discussion I will refer to him as Ben). “Ben, I have to write an article on Rosh Hashanah as the time of re-creation. Give me a short *vort* that I can use that’ll make me sound clever.” Ben then bombarded me with thirteen questions to make sure I knew what I was asking, but eventually he responded, “Hashem created the world on Rosh Hashanah, and He re-creates the world every Rosh Hashanah.”

While I had heard the idea of the world being re-created, I thought this was something that happened more regularly than just once a year. I read recently that every blade of grass has its own angel, urging it every heartbeat to grow, which is a magical way of saying that nothing happens by chance and that God wills every moment into existence.

So, if every moment is new, then what makes Rosh Hashanah so special?

It took Ben a day, but he came back with a delicious explanation. I had to wait, so you do too...

Let’s first set the scene: a deadly virus arrived uninvited to our Purim *seudot* in 2020, imposing itself on our lives and forcing the whole world to adjust to its terms. Every one of us has undoubtedly undergone a ‘reset’ of some kind – our lives will never be the same again. I wrote a blog back at the start of the pandemic where I asked readers to try the following thought experiment: scientists announce that there has been an unexpected defect in the ozone layer, causing the sun’s rays to give off a thousand times more UV radiation than usual. Being in the sun would expose you to an immediate risk of severe, potentially fatal heatstroke. Regardless of who is exposed, the pain is delivered indiscriminately, killing saint and sinner alike. If one believed in such things, this would have to point to some kind of collective meaning.

Very rarely in human history are we able to ask the question “Why is this happening to us?”

When something happens to an individual, perhaps we can say that it was their personal *mazal*, so when something happens to all of us, can we speak of a universal *mazal*?

To answer this question, we need to understand what *mazal* is. Frequently mistranslated as ‘luck’, the most poetic description I have heard tells of a divine energy which flows from Hashem’s crown (*keter*) and permeates the physical world, creating our reality. Do you know why it’s called coronavirus? Like most things medical, the term is derived from Latin. Coronaviruses, as a family, are named by the resemblance of their shape to a *corona*. Under the microscope, the germ is round with club-shaped protein spikes, making it look exactly like a crown.

This universal message, delivered by a representation of kingship, happened to arrive just before Pesach, the time associated with freedom from slavery. There was probably some ‘big picture’ reason for this pandemic – what economists would call the *macro* understanding. Perhaps we all needed a new world, but it is foolish to contemplate this.



The virus exists on the *micro* level and if anything, it forced us to look inwards. Each of us had to deal with the micro questions of our new reality, whether that was in the spiritual or secular realm. In our business, we were compelled to deal with the same day-to-day decisions as everyone else: in the beginning it was who should be furloughed, and later we had to determine how often employees should come back to the office, if at all. But at the same time, we needed to make decisions about the long-term vision of the business - the *macro* strategy. This pandemic thrust the world into the digital age quicker than anyone had planned, and now businesses must adapt, evolve or die.

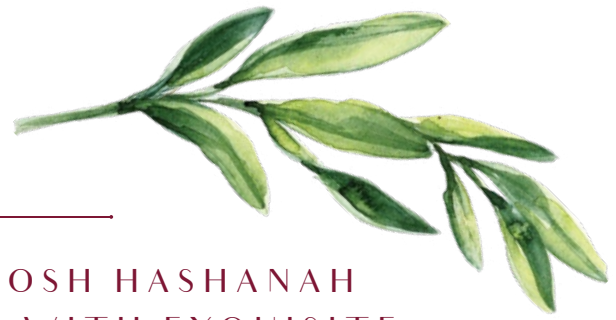
Perhaps the pandemic has reached the point in time where the micro choices have been made and now it's time to look a little bit deeper, into the next phase. Dare we consider the scariest of all macro questions: "What do I do now?"

Jean-Paul Sartre said that what is important is not what happens to us, but how we respond to what happens to us. Which brings me back to the question of why Rosh

Hashanah is the right time of the year to consider such lofty matters if the world is being re-created every moment?

Ben's beautiful mind provided a profound metaphor to help us resolve this, as taught by Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler almost a century ago. Rav Dessler, writing about free will, explains how the choices we make every day are defined by the *madregah* or level on which they are made. The classic example is that someone who grew up in an observant family, fully kosher, is not tempted by *treif*. On some level, this isn't even a choice for him. But someone who grew up secular and perhaps only chose a Torah way of life somewhere down the line, might fight demons every time he walks past a McDonalds. The same choice, different *levels*.

Rav Dessler explains that these choices, the micro decisions we make every day, exist along the contours of our own personal planes. Ben put it like this: we are each cruising along our own tracks, which lead us on a unique and private journey. An easy left turn for me might be a life-or-death decision for you. Then there are decisions we make which allow us to change our level; the *macro* choices which move



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EACH MOMENT OF ROSH HASHANAH
SHOULD BE UTILISED WITH EXQUISITE
CARE, BECAUSE IF ONE CAN FORM THE
GENES OF THE YEAR CORRECTLY, IT WILL
DEVELOP THE WAY YOU INTEND FOR IT
TO MANIFEST.

us onto a whole new track. Ben suggested that maybe the same can be said about Rosh Hashanah. While it is true that Hashem is re-creating the world every moment, and every day we are given a new opportunity to reinvent ourselves by making the right choices, the majority of these could be considered micro-decisions - the outcomes of which impact us within the confines of our current state - the same beaten track.

In contrast, Rosh Hashanah is that time when your world can be re-created, explicitly on the macro level. Now is the time to decide on those big-ticket items; the ones that keep you up at night even when you've made a hundred good decisions that day. These are the game-changing steps you might take that don't just move you forward along your current path but take you into a whole new league.

I don't know about you, but last year I didn't have the inclination to think too big. I was grateful to have survived, even felt a little guilty to have thrived, and with an uncertain future ahead, I was still focusing on the micro. It's now been long enough for us all to accept this 'new normal', so this Rosh Hashanah will be different for me. I am still grateful for all the little things, but now it feels like the time

to think about the big things. What can I do / change / improve in my life that might lift me onto a higher track? How can I tap into the *mazal* of this moment to spark a tiny change that might ultimately result in a true re-creation?

As Rabbi Akiva Tatz explains, time itself is also a creation and the Jewish year is an organic entity. Its conception takes place on Rosh Hashanah, and the way one begins the year will determine how the rest of the year reveals itself. Each moment of Rosh Hashanah should be utilised with exquisite care, because if one can form the genes of the year correctly, it will develop the way you intend for it to manifest. When the *mazal* rewards the most infinitesimal change with a potentially infinite impact, it seems silly not to try. What is required at the moment of conception is a decision about who I am in essence, not about which technical actions need work - that will come later. Think macro, not micro.

I believe all we need do is consciously pick a positive path, set a spiritual goal and begin movement in its direction. You cannot change your destination immediately, but you can change course in an instant.



Gareth Kobrin was born in South Africa where he graduated with a Master's Degree in Economics from the University of Cape Town. He moved to London just over a decade ago where he worked in the banking industry for a few years, and then qualified as a chartered management accountant. He is now the CEO of a tax technology company called VATGlobal, which is part of the VAT IT Group. He is married to Aimee and they have three children. When he is not doing VAT stuff, he loves to write and is obsessed with sport. If you need any advice on VAT or just want some sports banter, Gareth can be contacted at gareth.kobrin@vatglobal.com.

ROSH HASHANAH

ROSH HASHANAH

REJOICE OR RECOIL?



SHOULD ROSH HASHANAH BE A
DAY OF FEAR, DREAD AND JUDGEMENT,
OR A DAY OF CELEBRATION?

by RABBI SHIMSHON HAKOHEN NADEL

Rosh Hashanah brings a strange mix of emotions. The sound of the Shofar pierces even the most hardened of hearts, as the melodies of the Chazzan cascade up and down an emotional rollercoaster. In the liturgy, we invoke fear and dread and exclaim: "... and from the fright of the judgment my soul trembles... Angels will hasten, a trembling and terror will seize them... behold it is the Day of Judgment!" We reflect on how life is so impermanent, so fleeting; how we are so fragile and vulnerable. And then we wish each other a 'Gut Yuntif', before going home to dip apples in honey and eat a festive meal!

But just how should we feel on Rosh Hashanah? Is it a day of fear and dread – the Day of Judgement? Or is it a festival to be celebrated?

The answer is that it is both.

The Talmud discusses whether Hallel, the prayer of praise and thanksgiving recited on joyous occasions, is appropriate for Rosh Hashanah, and concludes: "The ministering angels asked the Holy One Blessed Be He, 'Master of the World, why does Israel not sing praise before you on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?'" He answers with a question, "Is it possible that the King sits on his Throne of Judgement and the Books of Life and Death are open before Him, and Israel should sing before Me?" (Arachin 10b; Rosh Hashanah 32b)

Filled with so much uncertainty and doubt concerning our fate, how can we sing Hallel? How can we even eat? Yet a famous passage from the Jerusalem Talmud instructs us to celebrate Rosh Hashanah and "eat, drink and rejoice," expressing our confidence and trust in God: "...Who is like this Nation? The practice of the world is when one knows that he is awaiting judgment – he wears black, wraps himself in black, grows his beard – for he does not know what the verdict will be. But Israel is not like that. They wear white, wrap themselves in white, trim their beards, eat, drink and rejoice – for they know that the Holy One Blessed Be He will be merciful and forgive them." (y. Rosh Hashanah 1:3).

On Rosh Hashanah we all stand before Hashem. And when one stands before Hashem there is tremendous fear, but

also tremendous joy. In the constant refrain of the Avinu Malkeinu prayer, we recognize Hashem as both our King (Malkeinu) and as our Father (Avinu).

Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach shared the following story: One day, a man was riding the subway on his way home from work. Looking around the subway car, his eyes met the eyes of a woman, and he was instantly smitten. He knew that she was his 'beshert', the woman destined to be his bride. It was fate. But just as he summoned up the courage to approach her, the train stopped at 34th Street, Herald Square. Before he could reach her, she exited, and the doors closed on him. He got off at the next stop and ran up the stairs, knocking over anyone in his way. He pushed through the crowd and opened the door to a taxicab. Ignoring the elderly couple waiting to enter the cab, he yelled at the driver, "Take me to 34th Street now!"

**ON ROSH HASHANAH WE ALL STAND
BEFORE HASHEM. AND WHEN ONE
STANDS BEFORE HASHEM THERE
IS TREMENDOUS FEAR, BUT ALSO
TREMENDOUS JOY**

As he entered the taxi, a police officer who had witnessed the commotion apprehended the man and began to question him. He tried to explain what was happening, but the cop wouldn't let him go. The man tried to run off, but soon found himself in the back of the squad car – arrested for public disturbance and resisting arrest. He spent that night in jail kicking himself and wondering if he would ever see that woman from the subway.


The next morning, he had to appear before the judge. He sat in the courtroom feeling devastated, dejected, and depressed. When his name was finally called, he looked up at the judge. And smiling back at him from behind the bench was the woman from the train.

Indeed, Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgement. But we know the judge!



Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel lives and teaches in Jerusalem, where he serves as rabbi of Har Nof's Kehilat Zichron Yosef and Rosh Kollel of the Sinai Kollel.

HIGH HOLY DAYS



THE TRUE VALUE OF REMORSE

A RETIRED ORTHODOX JEWISH JUDGE REFLECTS ON
ISSUES OF GUILT AND REMORSE IN THE COURTROOM
AND THEIR RELEVANCE AT THIS HOLY TIME OF THE YEAR.

by JUDGE SHLOMO KREIMAN

There is something compelling about a courtroom scene as portrayed in a film or on television. There is a magnetism in both the setting and the actors. The defendant stands in the dock and is asked to respond to the charge: “Guilty or Not Guilty?” The moments of silence as we await the answer hang like an eternity.

Frequently, the reply is one simple word – “guilty”. The defendant acknowledges the strength of the case and the evidence against him or her, and the court can then proceed to pass sentence. In the process of that disposal, the court is required to weigh the plea of guilty in favour of the defendant and to reduce the terms of the sentence by up to one third for a prompt plea of guilty.

The question that presents itself is what motivates a defendant to make this choice? In my experience after more than two decades on the bench, the answer frequently stems from remorse. Remorse is a feeling of deep regret for one’s wrongdoing, and a way of saying one is sorry for the act one committed or the way one behaved towards others.

One of the most difficult tasks a judge faces is deciding what punishment to mete out for a given offence. While a judge must consider all that is said on the defendant’s behalf and the wide range of options available, the element of remorse is also a significant ingredient in the mix.

The impact of sincere regret cannot be undervalued and is a vital part of that judicial exercise. There are times when what appeared to be guilt and remorse proves to be a smokescreen

and the return of the offender to the courtroom teaches a hard lesson in disillusionment and a breach of trust in human nature.

“Remorse is a feeling of deep regret for one’s wrongdoing, and a way of saying one is sorry for the act one committed or the way one behaved towards others.”

The above analogy is useful to consider in relation to Judaism and the High Holy Days. All of us will appear before a much higher court on Rosh Hashanah. Sentence will be delivered on Yom Kippur. Those special days in between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur provide us with an opportunity to show and express remorse for our mistakes. Personally, I prefer not to use such an old-fashioned and emotive word as ‘sin’ but rather to consider our shortcomings - a little bit like the school report which said we could do better.

In his ‘Letters to the Next Generation’ (2009), the late Rabbi Lord Sacks wrote:

“If you tried and failed, don’t feel bad. God forgives our failures as soon as we acknowledge them as failures.”

This is such a short expression with such a powerful message of hope for each one of us. It is sometimes daunting to say sorry to a spouse or a child, a work manager or even the local

rabbi. In his letters, Sacks opens a door for us to approach God and express our guilt, show remorse and then take the crucial step forward that inevitably follows.

That step is to show the determination not to repeat the mistakes of the past or to revert to the same behaviours, but rather to embrace the opportunity that this time of the year uniquely offers to recalibrate the spiritual clock.

In modern Hebrew, the expression that is used to indicate that you are unable to engage in conversation because you are at prayer is “ani mitpallel”. This is a curious but deep phrase. What it means in translation is “I am in the act of judging myself”. In other words, the process of prayer offers people the opportunity to look inside themselves, assess where they stand in relation to God at any point in time and then determine how they need to change or adapt for self-improvement. Although we can adopt this approach three times on any regular day, the wider parameters and intensity of the High Holy Days inspire a higher level of self-assessment, an extraordinary realisation of our personal faults and a better chance to admit our errors whilst seeking a way to make amends.

Accepting our personal imperfections, both in relation to God and our fellow human beings, is the trigger for initiating self-improvement and development. Dear reader, while I cannot offer you ‘time off for good behaviour’, the top Judge should look favourably on those of us who are willing to commit to a developing a positive relationship with God and with others.

FEAR & LOATHING ON YOM KIPPUR

RABBI MOSHE FRIEDMAN REFLECTS
ON GUILT, CONFESSION AND FINDING JOY IN THE
DAY OF ATONEMENT

There's an ironic meme that goes around every autumn that reads: "I don't need it to be a Jewish holiday for me to sit around reflecting on how much I hate myself." I'll give you three guesses to figure out the Jewish holiday in question...

Yes, Yom Kippur, the 'Day of Atonement', with its confessionals and crying, carries strong connotations of guilt, shame and self-hatred. After all, you must have done something wrong in order to require forgiveness, right? Perhaps the pessimistic reputation surrounding our holiest day is rightly deserved.

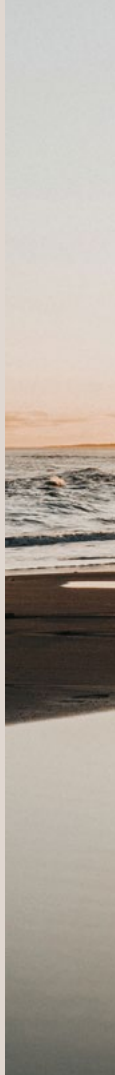
But just for good measure, let us employ a modicum of scepticism when it comes to the way popular culture represents Jewish ritual (I have yet to see a TV show or film depict a positive, let alone accurate, enactment of a Pesach Seder or Shabbat meal). While it is true that Yom Kippur is a day for asking forgiveness - and you may indeed hear soft weeping if you set foot in a religious service - the idea that it is a day dedicated to self-hatred or anything similar is not only incorrect but is diametrically opposed to the true intention of Yom Kippur.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, the appointed leader of the Jewish People and Chief Justice of the Jewish High Court, is quoted in the Talmud as saying, "there is no greater celebratory day for the Jewish People than on the fifteenth

of Av and Yom Kippur." Our authentic tradition views Yom Kippur as a day of incredible joy, not loathing. So why do we have such a distorted perception of what the day is meant to represent?

The source of this incongruence appears to lie in our very perception of human nature. We carry much cultural baggage around terms such as 'confession' and 'atonement'. Perhaps our minds may jump to associations or imagery that belongs to another religion entirely! Many of us may picture a dimly lit room with a small booth where we list off our endless and incorrigible habits, in which the only glimpse of redemption is the repetition of a meaningless phrase that somehow appeases the stern Creator. What does this tell us about how we view ourselves as human beings?

There are some world views that regard humans as fundamentally corrupt, incapable of mending our broken moral wills, and hopelessly dependent upon an outside force to save us from ourselves. According to this dogma, confession is a mere recognition of our despicable state. Atonement is a bread crumb of pity from a deity who feels sorry for our condition. With such a world view, Yom Kippur would truly be a day for self-hatred. With each utterance of past sin, we would be reminding ourselves of how impossible it is to change our evil ways.





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OUR AUTHENTIC TRADITION VIEWS YOM KIPPUR AS A DAY OF INCREDIBLE JOY, NOT LOATHING. SO WHY DO WE HAVE SUCH A DISTORTED PERCEPTION OF WHAT THE DAY IS MEANT TO REPRESENT?

But what if we tweaked that narrative ever so slightly? What if the starting assumption was that humans are good? Not just good, but perfect, pure, divine; that our past transgressions are but superficial errors and temporary confusions? We are not talking about apologetics or minority opinions here. Reish Lakish, a venerated sage of the Talmud, proclaimed: “A person commits a transgression only if a spirit of folly enters into him.” Sin is not intrinsic to humans; it is a detour, a patch of dirt that can be washed away. Even the Hebrew word for sin, ‘chet’, means ‘to miss a target’. In other words, the moral errors we commit do not define who we truly are. Some of them may be incredibly damaging and painful, but there is nothing that leaves an indelible stain on the human soul.

In this world view, confession and atonement take on a radically new meaning. With each utterance of past transgression, we distance ourselves from that errant behaviour. We are in effect saying that the ‘sin’ cannot possibly define who we truly are. Confession is not an exercise in self-hatred; it is a release from the illusion that

we are in any way evil. Atonement, then, is not an act of pity, but a deserved state of liberation. When we come to terms with our true selves, then we see atonement for what it truly is: at-onement. We have become ‘at one’ with ourselves; no longer hidden by temporary folly. Yom Kippur thus becomes a day of transformation and celebration. It is a day of return to the self.

A great rabbi once used a beautiful metaphor to describe this anomaly. When a person travels by train to a long-awaited holiday destination, every clickety-clack of the train track is a rhythmic sound of anticipation and excitement. But when a person is being shipped off to prison by way of railroad, the train track’s rhythm becomes a jarring thud that torments the future inmate. For those of us who see humanity as a pitiful and evil race, Yom Kippur serves only to remind us of the futility of moral progress. But for those of us who know that human beings are truly created in the image of the Divine, Yom Kippur is that joyous day when we can finally throw off the shackles of past mistakes and once again embrace our true nature.



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.

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AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING PEACEFUL
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

THE ROAD TO PEACE

by **SOPHIA MOSHAL**

It's really important not to fight with your niece
This specific expectation is called achieving peace
Without it you are bound to fight
Which can make your heart feel real tight
The purpose of peace is so you don't go through life alone
So you could have a chat by just picking up the phone
Peace welcomes loyalty
And saves you from hardcore misery
Give peace a chance just put in some effort
I believe this will give you real comfort



I'm Sophia Moshal and I wrote this poem in the hope that everyone who reads this is kind and loyal to their family and friends, especially at this time. I'm ten years old have two budgies: Sky (who's blue) and Passion Fruit (who's yellow, green, blue and black). I love art and devote most of my time to it. I hope my message gets through to you because it's so important to respect your community and keep peace.

VERDURE

by CHAYA NECHA MILUN

for Granny, whose soul is the same colour as mine

Night time:
The reason the strangulation of the skyline was witnessed.
Hands made up of own sickness
(fingertips made from sin)

Stars. panting in the corner I struggle in the corners of home.
And I've found the futility of missing
an emptiness that was never once full.

Sleep walkers don't know themselves.

Alive (impossible)
A slumbered body
birthed from grief, colossal continuum, trance like limbs flexible as

falsehood, the way you slip in thin
out again stretch me wholeheartedly.

Don't touch when i am sleeping and

This world:
A disturbance to nature
I find mirrors disturbing,

settlement of dusk i am thrust into a nightmare. Screaming.
The world is sick again -

(call the doctor)

rise high
dry low
form in sun a human, as if nightmares never existed and the world
finally rid it's blistering fever

(keep dreaming)

Everlasting springtime:
you climb up skulls of the uncoordinated. they gathered to witness
the first tulip inhale, until their own lungs fail, exhale the mud from
past plantation, it will become you.

(you are dying.)

I stole the tulip in the chilling
do you even see i'm living?
i wish to grow up like a cub does—

searching for completion before sinking soil:

"But you are too young to be searching" (a hiss from history)

"Too young to be awake in the night time" (adults in their own
misery)

Find yourself in the wake of the moon
"I am trying" (i whisper)

and try discover something wonderful "i am trying".

Try attend a flower funeral, hush the birds the herds of people, tulip
dead beaten born again in spring.

Cycle of chaos recycling souls.

Seasonal yearning to learn existence a blur. (wish i could replace my
eye)

I was sure of love.
Birds in the way of flight bellyache in a search for light.

Have you found no cure doctor?
Endings end eventually beginnings unending— everything looks
different now.

Wake Up Please!

Alas If i am to die a sleep talker
build a bench of dark wood burry my name and the date i came to
this land there

face me toward a willow tree.

promise the bench will say she

'Never got to see the world awake'

(shaken yet?)

A dream: of own wings
a lie made from sickness.
"Wings are for birds not people."
Am i sick for wanting to fly?

I've mapped out the sky in the slipping hours. Sat drank tea with
shadows silent for years.

Listen. the hailing of heavy breathing
it is not my breathe!
Halfhearted Lung.
Each psalm already sung.

Out of our hands
stop trying to be pure. My fingernails painted green. Just like a
cure.

I am healing.

Sleeping: created me a witness of detached cosmos.

Awake: and blinking billowed earths eternal self, the owl knows my
willowing health.

Tonight, dream of verdure.



Chaya Necha Milun is an 18 year old school student, who loves to meditate and practice yoga, and most of all loves to express herself through her poetry. She is involved with GIFT charity and believes in giving as a lifestyle. She hopes to write a book of prose and poems one day, that makes the reader interact with their full selves - that is her goal.

THE DANCE BETWEEN TRANSIENCE AND PERMANENCE

MUSINGS ON SUKKOT AND THE ELUSIVE
NATURE OF PLACE, SHELTER AND HOME

by REBBETZIN LEAH MOSKOWSKI

For eight days each year, place morphs into a transient flimsy construct, attached to our permanent dwellings, in our non-permanent sojourns in foreign lands. A nod to our Nomadic roots in distant deserts, with only shapeshifting sand dunes as anchors and flimsy bamboo rods; our shelters held together with pitiful quantities of zip ties and sky hooks. A nod to the centuries we trekked, with broken sandals and blistered toes, through hostile neighbourhoods, laying our weary heads for uncertain weeks which sometimes stretched on, but always with the breathlessness of fear and mistrust, and a tortoise-homed mentality.

But now, in our tentative comfort, it seems almost bizarre to sacrifice reliable roofs and modern plumbing for post-Neanderthal architecture and accidental bamboo garnishes in our soups and salads. Or does it? Unfortunately, in the very recent past, due to clashes in Israel, many of us tasted the terror of not belonging, the feeling of being unwanted in our own cities and streets and the uneasy possibility of having to hit the road once more in search of a safe haven.

From this vantage point of vulnerability, we might be able to relate to the post-golden calf-era when the Clouds of Glory were removed; when we once again trudged on

“

Imagine the absolute relief of the shade and security, when on the ancient anniversary of the day of Sukkot, God once again ensured that we wanted for nothing

blistered, bloody soles torn by the salt and thorns, our feet growing weary beneath the burden we carried as we snaked onwards, past empty ravines and colourless expanses. The buzzards screamed over bleached cattle remains, amid keening infants and bitter prayers of desperation and terror. And through the cruel threat of death from desert rattlesnakes and poisonous beetles and hunting predators, looming thirst or heat exhaustion, and the collective trauma of slavery haunting our daydreams as we toiled with salt parched throats, over twisted bamboo reeds and faded palms, we made flimsy attempts at shelter. Imagine the absolute relief of the shade and security, when on the ancient anniversary of the day of Sukkot, God once again ensured that we wanted for nothing - with a fresh spring to ward off thirst, a wonder pill of nutritious goodness in the form of the manna, clothing which never tattered and grew along with us, and the Clouds of Glory offering an impenetrable shield of comfort and protection on all sides. Place was once again safe, albeit transient.

For the Jewish psyche, home is a nestled piece of security deep in our minds, at the centre of the earth, with a magnetizing mastery over us and the sibilant soundwave cutting through the metropolitan buzz and chaos. Like our ancient fathers, our eyes are always far over the Eastern horizon, pining over unseen, dusty, Mediterranean deserts, and the smell of fresh hummus. For us, place is scarred and scattered with trauma, oppression, and loneliness, wherever we deposit pockets of ancestors to re-cement the dregs and bits of broken times and place. But our true home is woven into the deepest red pit of our hearts - the place no invader could ever reach and breach. In our synagogues we position the Aron and all meditation and prayer in the direction of our sacred place which beckons to us with a hushed call, to share in its warmth and security.

Sukkot reminds us of the portable nature of place, home and Judaism. It reminds us to keep Israel in our breast pockets, right by our hearts, front and centre in our minds, at all times. It reminds us of the need to erect constructs

and structures in our minds, our homes and our gardens which signify and celebrate our heritage - not just with garish blue Tzfat mosaics, but with the essence of Israel, the innate, ornate Jewishness, the kindness, the level-headedness, and the strength of conviction in morals, law and justice.

When we lay ourselves bare under the elements, we can look up and see the brokenness of a bamboo roof with cracks and spaces, and gaze at the distant clouds cloaking our cities in cotton shields. We can remember the Clouds of Glory protecting us in the desert, with the soft reassurance of a kindly mother caressing her helpless young, the wisps of her shawl stroking plump infant cheeks. Let's not simply remember them, let's lean into the power of the week, and recognize that we can carry away this gold crested shield of protection and security and set it above our heads, around our shoulders and in our pockets, and rest easy in the knowledge that the same God who warded off the beasts and burning sun, can and does protect us from our present-day threats. We should permanently cement this thought in our minds as we slip back into the rut of routine in our insulated brick places with double locks and alarm systems and remember Who is constantly protecting us.



After spending some years on the West Coast of America, Rebbetzin Leah Moszkowski now lives in Leeds together with her husband Ozer and daughter Tehillah. Together they run an Aish on Campus branch for the students at Leeds University. With a background in English literature and creative writing, Leah loves anything and everything to do with words.



STAY ON TRACK WITH HEALTHY EATING THIS YOM TOV

THE FOOD EFFECT APPROACH PROVIDES SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES TO HELP YOU KEEP YOUR HEALTH AND YOUR WAISTLINE INTACT OVER THE YOM TOV SEASON.

by **DR MICHELLE BRAUDE**

These days, Yom Tov has become synonymous with endless meals and an abundance of (often unhealthy) food. Whether it's the challah, giant soft kneidlach, honey cake or holishkes that tempt you, there are a wealth of tantalising food options laid before us on an almost daily basis for over a month! It's no wonder that most people believe weight gain is inevitable over the chagim! But this doesn't need to be the case.

While healthy options are becoming a lot more popular and common, there are still many more 'bad' choices available, and many opportunities to go wrong and ruin your waistline. This doesn't mean you should refrain from eating ouat or from entertaining with delicious food. You certainly don't need to become a social recluse just because you're leading a healthy lifestyle and watching your weight.

The Food Effect approach is all about enjoying life and living normally, and by following my healthy eating tips over the chagim, you can still maintain a healthy weight and enjoy your food in the process!

Here are my general tips for eating healthfully day-to-day, that are just as feasible to use as a guideline over the next month of festivals.

EAT WHOLE, NATURAL FOODS

Avoid highly processed, packaged foods as much as possible. Stick to eating whole, natural foods that are as close to their natural state as possible - such as fruit, vegetables, nuts, eggs, dairy, fish, poultry or plant-based proteins (like beans, chickpeas, lentils, or even vegetarian cholent!). I always tell my clients: the shorter the list of ingredients on the package of food, the better it is! Don't buy products with an endless list of ingredients you can't pronounce or have never heard of.

CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

Don't think of healthy eating and weight-loss as a 'diet' – something you 'go on' and eventually 'go off'. Reframe it as a new way of life. That way, if or when you slip up or overindulge for a few days (think Rosh Hashana), you'll be less likely to give up and become despondent. You will quickly realise that one or two meals (or even days!) of imperfect eating won't undo your overall commitment to a healthy lifestyle; you'll just get straight back to your normal healthy routine afterwards.

STAY WELL HYDRATED

Often when we think we're hungry, we're actually just thirsty. Make sure to drink plenty of water throughout the day, as well as one glass **BEFORE** every meal or snack you have. Water aids weight loss by keeping your cells functioning at their fat-burning best, and helps your kidneys flush out excess toxins and chemicals which may be slowing down your metabolism. If you have difficulty drinking enough plain water, herbal teas, green tea (hot or cold) or lemon in hot water are all just as good.

SLOW DOWN YOUR EATING, CHEW THOROUGHLY & ENJOY YOUR FOOD

Focus on the food you're eating and don't just wolf it down. Avoid eating lunch in front of your computer, or dinner whilst trying to catch up on e-mails or messages (of course not during Yom Tov!) Take time out to enjoy your meal and really pay attention to what you're eating. Chewing your food properly will aid efficient digestion, stop you from overeating, and reduce any uncomfortable bloating you may experience from eating too quickly. It will also ensure your brain registers when you've eaten enough food... before it's too late!

EAT HEALTHY FATS... DON'T GO FAT-FREE

Healthy fats are the unsaturated fats found in nuts, avocados, peanut or almond butter, olive oil and various other healthy oils. Incorporating good fats into your diet will help to reduce sugar cravings, increase energy levels, and keep you fuller for longer. In the absence of fats, we tend to reach for sweet and starchy foods, so don't go down the 'fat-free' route! Healthy fats are also proven to lower the risk of heart disease and aid the body in absorption of vitamins and minerals (for example, from any salads or vegetables you eat). While too much fat can cause weight gain, an inadequate amount of the right fats prevents your cells from functioning properly, which affects fat metabolism, hormone balance and energy – all leading to weight gain. Conversely, trans-fats (often listed as 'hydrogenated oil' or 'hydrogenated vegetable fat') that are found in many packaged, processed foods, are toxic, have no health benefits, and should be avoided as much as possible.

DON'T SHUN CARBS

Try and stick to whole-grain, unrefined carbohydrates such as oats, whole-meal bread, brown or basmati rice, sweet potatoes, quinoa, chickpeas and lentils, which are great sources of fibre and various other nutrients. Don't try to cut out all starchy foods – this is the biggest diet disaster (and myth) and slows down metabolism in the long-term. And I never make any of my clients cut out regular white challah - that is an exception to the rule so enjoy it!

KNOW YOURSELF & BE REALISTIC

Every individual has a different body type and genetic make-up, as well as different needs, goals and preferences. It is important to recognise your individual needs and be realistic about the changes you can make. If you absolutely live for chocolate or a sweet treat, for example, don't try to stick to a long-term healthy eating plan thinking you'll never have these things again. Instead, be realistic and allow for special occasions, indulgences, or controlled amounts of your favourite 'vice' food – or try switching to a healthier version of it, such as 70% dark chocolate instead of poor-quality, highly processed milk chocolate.

EAT A RAINBOW

Whether it's fresh, frozen or canned – try to increase and vary your intake of fruit and vegetables. You'll feel so much better, and your body will benefit from all the added vitamins, nutrients, antioxidants and fibre. Diets rich in fruit and vegetables have been proven to decrease the risk of heart attacks, stroke and a variety of cancers, and healthy, glowing skin is another by-product of eating a colourful, varied diet so it's a real win-win!

KNOW YOUR PORTIONS

It's essential to understand that just because something is healthy, it doesn't mean that it can't make you gain weight. Even if you stick to healthy foods, you must still watch your portion sizes and quantities when consuming foods such as nuts, hummus, avocado, olive oil and dark chocolate. There is a definite benefit in snacking on nuts but eating an entire large bag will lead to excess calories and weight gain. Learn what a normal serving size looks like and stick to that.

BE PATIENT - DON'T GIVE UP OR GET DESPONDENT

Making sustainable changes to your diet and lifestyle and noticing results can take some time. Don't expect to shed weight and have glowing skin overnight. It can take a few weeks to achieve noticeable results. We're all human and have our ups and downs. There will be days when you don't eat as planned or slip up on your new healthy regime - it's not the end of the world. Don't beat yourself up, or worse, give up! Be patient, get back on track, and stick with your new healthy habits. Your body is benefiting every day in all its internal processes from the changes you make. If you become despondent and impatient, or insist on seeing fast, drastic results, this will sabotage all your efforts. Stick with the changes you are making, and you are guaranteed to see lasting results!

Follow me on Instagram [@thefoodeffectdr](https://www.instagram.com/thefoodeffectdr) where I share recipes, healthy eats, tips, tricks, advice, and lots more! More information about me, my books and THE FOOD EFFECT can be found on my website: www.thefoodeffect.co.uk



Dr Michelle Braude is the founder of The Food Effect, www.thefoodeffect.co.uk, and author of The Food Effect Diet and The Food Effect Diet Vegan.

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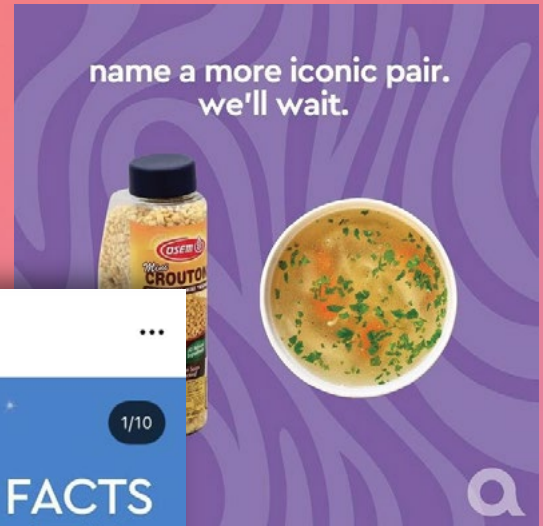
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FESTIVE FOOD

FESTIVE *FOOD*

by KIM KUSHNER

CRISPY CHICKEN & RICE WITH SWEET POTATO & LEMON SLICES

A TANTALIZING COMBINATION OF CRISPY CHICKEN AND BUTTERY SWEET POTATO, CLEVERLY CONTRASTED WITH CRUNCHY RICE AND A LEMONY ZEST

This delectable combination of chicken, rice and sweet potato slices roasted together in the oven, releasing juices and flavors, will make your mouth water. I know that many people may not opt for rice and potatoes in the same sitting, but I love the contrast of the soft, buttery sweet potato slices with the tangy lemons and crunchy rice. If you'd rather leave the potatoes out, feel free to do so - but I'm warning you that the experience just won't be the same! If you don't have a whole butterflied chicken, you may use chicken pieces, skin on and bone in.

MAKES 4-6 SERVINGS.

FOR THE CHICKEN

- Extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 sweet potatoes, scrubbed, trimmed, and cut into 1/8-inch (3mm) slices.
- 1 large yellow onion, cut into 1/8-inch (3mm) slices
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 lemon (preferably Meyer), scrubbed and cut into 1/8-inch (3mm) slices
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 4 sprigs thyme or 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 whole butterflied chicken, skin on and bone in, trimmed of excess skin and fat

FOR THE RICE

- 200) long-grain white rice
- 1 tsp light olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 500 ml boiling water



METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. To prepare the chicken, drizzle 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil into a large baking dish (at least 9 by 12 inches / 23 by 30 cm).
3. Add the sweet potato and onion slices, season with salt and pepper, and toss them in the oil. Arrange the potato and onion slices in a single layer in the base of the dish. Place the lemon slices over them.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, onion powder and thyme. Drizzle this mixture over the chicken and rub into the top and underside of the chicken, coating it as much as you can. Place the seasoned chicken, skin side up, in the centre of the baking dish.
5. To prepare the rice, rinse the rice under cold running water and drain. Transfer to a small bowl and stir in the light olive oil, turmeric, lemon zest, 1/2 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper.
6. Scatter the rice around the chicken in the baking dish. Pour the boiling water directly over the scattered rice (but not over the chicken).
7. Cover the dish tightly with aluminum foil and bake in the oven for 45 minutes. Remove from the oven and uncover. Return to the oven to cook until crispy for another 30 minutes.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP: This dish may be marinated and stored in the fridge for up to 24 hours (without the rice). Add the seasoned rice and boiling water just before cooking.

CAN I FREEZE IT? Do not freeze.

HOW TO REHEAT: Reheat, uncovered, in a 350°F (180°C) oven for 10 minutes.

RED RUBBED BABY LAMB CHOPS

THE SECRET TO THESE BABY LAMB CHOPS IS IN THE FLAVOURFUL RUB!

This is my go-to recipe for lamb chops. The flavours are bold, but unlike some strong flavour combinations, they don't mask the taste of the lamb - they enhance it. I know that not everyone eats lamb, but everyone loves this rub - so if lamb isn't your choice of meat, try it on chicken or beef. See my tips below for pre-cooking the lamb in advance and reheating.

MAKES 10 BABY LAMB CHOPS.

- 10 small lamb rib chops, frenched
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar
- Zest of 1/2 lemon
- 1/2 tsp roasted garlic paste or 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp dried rosemary, crumbled between your fingers

METHOD

1. Lay the chops out on a large piece of parchment paper. Sprinkle both sides of the chops with 1/2 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the oil, vinegar, lemon zest, garlic paste, paprika, cumin and rosemary. Spoon the mixture evenly over the chops and use your fingers to rub it in on both sides.
3. Preheat a grill or grill pan to medium-high heat. Working in batches if necessary, add the chops and sear for about 2 minutes on the first side. Flip the chops over and cook for another 3 minutes for medium-rare and 3 1/2 minutes for medium. (If you prefer your lamb cooked medium-well, simply transfer the chops to an oven-safe dish and cook, uncovered, in a 375°F [190°C] oven for an additional 3-5 minutes. Save this step until just before serving if you are working ahead.) Remove from the heat and serve.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP: Red-rubbed baby lamb chops can be cooled and stored in the fridge for up to 2 days. If you're making ahead of time and plan on reheating the lamb, I suggest undercooking it on the grill (2 minutes per side for medium-rare, 2½ minutes for medium), so that the lamb will not overcook when you reheat it later. See reheating instructions below.

CAN I FREEZE IT?: The lamb chops can be stored in an airtight container in the freezer for up to 1 month. Thaw in the fridge overnight.

HOW TO REHEAT: Let the lamb come to room temperature before reheating, covered, in a 350°F (180°C) oven for 5-7 minutes.





1-2-3 BABKA FRENCH TOAST LOAF

IMPRESS YOUR GUESTS WITH THIS FRENCH TOAST WITH A TWIST

This is one of those recipes that sounds very complicated but is actually very simple. I asked around to see if my friends thought I should include it, and the response was a unanimous “Yes!” Using store-bought babka makes this recipe as easy as 1-2-3, but if you happen to bake your own babka, make sure to use that instead! Before serving, I transfer the slices into a loaf pan and line them up in a row so they go back to forming the original loaf shape to surprise guests with pre-sliced chewy goodness!

MAKES 8-10 SERVINGS.

- 1/4 C (4 tbsp/60g) unsalted butter, plus more for greasing
- 1 babka loaf or cinnamon loaf, about 15 oz (430g)
- 3 large eggs
- 1/3 C (75ml) heavy cream
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract or seeds from 1 vanilla bean
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 300°F (150°C). Grease a loaf pan with butter and set aside. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Use a large chef's knife to cut the babka into slices 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick. Lay the slices out on the prepared baking sheet and set aside.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, cream, vanilla, and cinnamon.
4. Dip the babka slices, 1 slice at a time, in the egg mixture. Coat both sides for about 30 seconds, allowing the babka slice to absorb some of the egg mixture without getting too soggy or falling apart. Repeat with all of the slices, placing them back on the parchment-lined baking sheet while you finish up.
5. In a large sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of butter over medium-high heat. Once the butter is melted, add 2 slices of babka and fry, turning once, for 1-2 minutes per side until golden.
6. Transfer the browned slices to the prepared loaf pan, lining the slices up to re-create the original loaf shape.
7. Continue heating 1 tablespoon of butter at a time in the pan and browning the babka slices in batches, 2 slices at a time, and transferring them to the loaf pan. Use all of the French toast slices to fill the loaf pan.
8. If serving right away, place the loaf pan in the oven, uncovered, for 5–7 minutes. This will heat all the slices up to the same temperature and make them toasty.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP: Babka French toast loaf can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and stored, covered, in the refrigerator. If preparing ahead of time, do not bake in the oven before refrigerating.

CAN I FREEZE IT?: Can be stored in the freezer for up to 1 month. If preparing ahead of time, do not bake in the oven before freezing.

HOW TO REHEAT: Reheat, uncovered, in a 400°F (200°C) oven for 10 minutes just before serving. Frozen French toast loaf can be thawed in the fridge overnight and reheated as indicated in the recipe above.





HALIBUT WITH BLITZED CHICKPEAS, CARROTS, LEMON & GARLIC



SATISFY THE WHOLE FAMILY WITH THIS SIMPLY BRAISED HALIBUT SERVED OVER A BED OF CHOPPED CHICKPEAS, HERBS AND SPICES

Ready in under twenty minutes, this is a perfect, healthy choice for lunch or dinner. This recipe appeals equally to toddlers, school children and adults with sophisticated palates. Swap out the halibut for your favorite fish and experiment with different veggies, like cherry tomatoes and zucchini, to make this dish your own.

MAKES 4-6 SERVINGS.

- 3 carrots, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed and seeded, cut into chunks
- 1/4 of a lemon, skin on, seeds removed, cut into small chunks
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 tbsp chopped cilantro
- 1 can (15 oz/430 g) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 tbsp light olive oil
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tbsp paprika
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 skinless halibut fillets, about 6 oz (180 g) each
- Extra-virgin olive oil

METHOD

1. In a food processor, combine the carrots, bell pepper, lemon and garlic. Process until chopped into small pieces. Add the herbs and chickpeas, and pulse 1 or 2 times until all ingredients are chopped into tiny pieces, but not mushy.
2. Heat the light olive oil over medium-high heat in a large sauté pan. Add the chickpea mixture and stir in the turmeric and paprika. Season generously with salt and pepper to taste. Cook the mixture until bubbly for about 3 minutes.
3. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Season the halibut with salt and pepper, and place the fish over the chickpea mixture. Drizzle the halibut with extra-virgin olive oil, cover, and simmer for 10 minutes. Uncover and spoon some of the sauce and chickpea mixture over the fish before serving.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP: The chickpea mixture can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and stored in an airtight container in the fridge. Halibut with blitzed chickpeas may be prepared up to 4 hours in advance and stored in the fridge.

CAN I FREEZE IT? Do not freeze.

HOW TO REHEAT: This dish may be reheated in a sauté pan, partially covered, over medium heat for about 5 minutes.



Born in Canada, Kim Kushner grew up in an Orthodox home, learned to cook from her Moroccan-born mother, and spent summers with family in Israel. A graduate of the Institute of Culinary Education, Kim worked as a recipe developer for Food & Wine and Chile Pepper magazines and as a private chef before becoming an instructor. Her third book: *I LOVE Kosher: Beautiful Recipes from My Kitchen* (Weldon Owen, 2018) sold out in less than three weeks and continues to be on bestseller lists. Kim lives in New York City and New Jersey (in the summer) with her husband and four children.



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ROSH HASHANAH



CELEBRATING WITH APPLES & HONEY

THESE TASTY TARTS TAKE THE ROSH HASHANAH CUSTOM
OF DIPPING APPLES IN HONEY TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL
OF CREATIVITY AND DELICIOUSNESS

by DEBORAH GABAY



ROSH HASHANAH

APPLE TART WITH HONEY & WALNUT

This delicious apple tart uses ready-made puff pastry and can be rustled up in no time. The addition of honey and walnuts makes it the perfect dessert for Rosh Hashanah.

- 7 apples
- 10 walnuts
- ¼ C Confectioners' sugar (also commonly known as icing sugar)
- Frozen puff pastry
- Gefen kosher applesauce (or any other brand of your choice)
- 5 tsp organic honey

METHOD

1. Peel and slice all the apples very thinly.
2. Roll out the puff pastry, cut it into a round and lay it flat on a baking tray.
3. Top with the applesauce and honey.
4. Arrange the apple slices on top of the puff pastry.
5. Cut 1 apple into small pieces. Chop the walnuts and mix with the small apple pieces. Heap this mixture into the middle of the tart.
6. Bake in the oven for 35 minutes at 350°F (180°C).





APPLE ROSE TART WITH HONEY & ALMOND

Red apples are the star of this eye-catching Apple Rose Tart. To create the spiral design, simply arrange the apples in an overlapping circular pattern and continue until you reach the centre.

- ½ C almond flour
- 80 gr margarine
- ¼ C honey
- ¼ C brown sugar
- Frozen shortcrust pastry
- 8 apples

METHOD

1. Slice all the apples very finely with the skin on.
2. Roll out the shortcrust pastry. Line a tart pan with the pastry.
3. Mix the almond flour and the honey. Add the brown sugar and margarine and mix.
4. Spread this mixture evenly onto the pastry.
5. Arrange the apples in an overlapping circular pattern (as shown in the picture).
6. Bake in the oven for 35 minutes at 350°F (180°C).



HONEY TARTE TATIN

This is a beautiful version of the traditional upside-down apple tart which consists of pastry baked over slices of fruit, arranged in caramelised sugar and served fruit-side up after cooking.

- ¼ C honey
- 7 apples
- 200g sugar
- Frozen puff pastry
- 100g margarine

METHOD

1. Peel and slice the apples into quarters.
2. Place the quartered apples, margarine and sugar into a saucepan. Fill the saucepan to halfway with water and heat gently for 15 minutes until the apples are coated in caramel.
3. Roll out the pastry and cut it into a round (using your tart pan as a template).
4. Arrange the caramelised apples in concentric circles on the bottom of a tart pan with a removable bottom.
5. Lay the puff pastry on top of the apples.
6. Using a fork, poke holes all over the pastry to provide ventilation.
7. Bake in the oven for 30 minutes at 350°F (180°C).
8. Invert and serve!



Born in Paris, Deborah Gabay has travelled and studied extensively. After studying fashion for 3 years at Esmod in Paris, and working with high fashion brands like Chloe and Dior, she moved to Sri Lanka where she learnt about gemstones. She lived in Thailand between 2006 and 2013, where she studied Thai cooking and expanded her education in gems and jewellery at GIA Bangkok. Deborah worked in the jewellery industry in New York before studying as a pastry chef in Tel Aviv and Paris. In 2019 she launched her own company 'CakeBoxe26ByDeborah' which specialises in making French-style kosher cakes.

THE **aish** uk 2021 UPDATE

WISHING ALL OUR READERS A HAPPY, HEALTHY, COVID-FREE, SUCCESSFUL YEAR 5782 AHEAD. THANKS TO YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT, WE ARE GRATEFUL TO BE ABLE TO SHARE SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 5781.

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There are now 15 courses available that cover topics such as 'Social Justice for Jews', 'The Existence of God' and 'The Modern Jewish Woman'. The courses are designed to include interactive sessions, live online learning with Aish Educators as well as ongoing support throughout the course and effective post-course development with students. **TO DATE, OVER 300 STUDENTS HAVE PARTICIPATED AND OVER 1500 VIDEOS HAVE BEEN VIEWED.**

Be sure to check out our three brand new courses: Rabbi Dr Akiva Tatz teaching 'Jewish Medical Ethics' and Rabbi David Aaron and Rabbi Gavriel Friedman teaching courses on 'The Purpose of Life'.



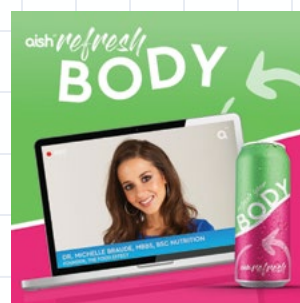
Summer internship in Israel



This is an 8-week summer programme run in collaboration with J-internships for 40 students and staff, combining a two-week intensive introductory programme packed with trips, learning and experiences, followed by a six-week internship programme. The students lived in Jerusalem and the internships provided them with a career boost as well as an experience of real Israeli and Jewish life in the workplace. The interns were also involved in a weekly learning program as well as Shabbatonim. **THE PROGRAM PROVIDED AN AFFORDABLE, IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE OF THE JEWISH WORLD CONNECTING 3,000 YEARS OF THE PAST WITH THE CUTTING EDGE OF TODAY.**

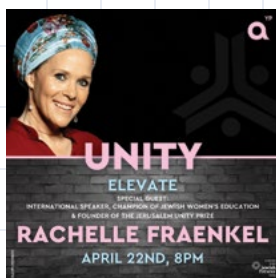
Refresh

As summer approached, we saw the launch of the summer **'REFRESH PROGRAMME'** focusing on and physical and spiritual wellbeing (Mind, Body and Soul).



Forum for Jewish Leadership Summer Program

Aish UK is proud to be the UK partner of the international forum. Usually, students spend 5 weeks in New York and Washington DC. This year the program moved to Israel, and 30 young potential leaders were offered a chance to live in Tel Aviv, intern with some of the 'start up nation's' most successful firms, whilst partaking in an intensive Jewish leadership and learning program. **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TRIP INCLUDED MEETING THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL, ISAAC HERZOG, CHIEF RABBI LAU, AND MANY OF ISRAEL'S TOP LEADERS.**



Elevate

Elevate is a forum for young Jews to discover and discuss keys to success and wellbeing through personal development. It features monthly online gatherings, including special guests, motivational speakers, interactive breakout sessions and Q&A panels. Elevate's dynamic approach to self-development combines novel Jewish insight with research to develop and improve relationships, careers and personal development. **OVER 500 YOUNG PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPATIONS IN THIS INCREDIBLE MONTHLY PROGRAMME,** proving how effective and engaging our hybrid learning model can be.

Wisdom

Wisdom is an online series for young professionals offering insightful courses on a broad range of topics ranging from Jewish history to Ulpan, to contemporary ethical dilemmas. **60 YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PARTICIPATED ACROSS TWO TERMS OF LEARNING** and were challenged and engaged by Rabbi Eli Birnbaum's deep knowledge and sharp wit as they explored these topics together to better understand some of the main issues and narratives of Jewish thought.



JFS Poland Holocaust Education Seminar

In a normal year, Aish UK together with JRoots, **HELPS TO RUN THE YEAR 12 JFS POLAND TRIP, BRINGING 150 STUDENTS TO ENCOUNTER 1000 YEARS OF JEWISH LIFE** in Poland and its devastating end in the Holocaust. This year, Covid travel restrictions deprived students of what is a highlight of their Jewish life in the school. Aish UK and JRoots ran a two-day seminar helping students to grapple with different aspects of the Holocaust. The trip included a visit to the National Holocaust Museum in Nottingham. Depending on travel rules we are hoping to offer a Poland trip to all year 13s in partnership with Tribe in the October half-term.

THE FRENZY BEFORE THE FEAST

PREPARING FOR YOM-TOV MAY NOT BE FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED, BUT THE BUZZ IS INTOXICATING

by SARA ELIAS

As I write, the nation is warming up for a summer of sport - Wimbledon and the Euros are in full swing and the Olympics are looming - so a sporting analogy seems apt. You know the way elite athletes appear to be propelled by an amazing adrenaline rush - runners who are boosted out of their starting blocks like rockets and footballers who somehow find that extra something that keeps them going at full throttle for 90 minutes? Well, I'd wager good money (or at least a generous sportsman's bet) that they have never experienced the kind of adrenaline rush that courses through a Jewish household erev chag.

It is this very rush of pre-chag adrenaline that makes it possible for a woman to bake 80 challot, 65 cakes, 25 mains, 30 sides and 20 salads (and this is only a very slight exaggeration) all on the same day! This is, of course, in addition to bathing children, ensuring that all family members have the right outfits, tights and socks, laying the table to perfection and completing a million and one other tasks. All in the course of about 12 hours. If you think about it, it's nothing short of miraculous.

A similar kind of frenzied activity sweeps through our broader society every year as we draw closer to December 25th, and the media sees an explosion of articles about how to cope with the domestic chaos of the season and prepare for festive meals. I often wonder why the journo's haven't thought about interviewing a classic Jewish 'balabusta' for her insights. This skilled homemaker - who cooks, cleans, bakes and does it all with elegant flair - caters for just this sort of feast every week for Shabbat without batting an eyelid. You might just see her bat one of her eyelids the day before a 3-day chag - but only just.

I am not for a minute imagining that every household is always perfectly, calmly prepped and camera-ready in time for candle-lighting. In fact, the sprint to the finish can sometimes be incredibly hair-raising and, let's be honest, corners often have to be cut: you may have to turn over tablecloths

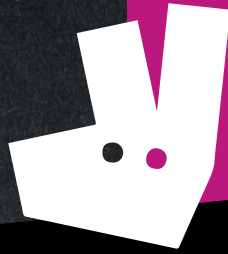
to hide a wine stain spotted only at the last minute, or run to the store to purchase several dishes (or entire meals) because you have simply run out of time to make it all yourself. But I love the sheer resourcefulness and ingenuity that can come out of the rush to the finish line. I reckon it's probably a pretty important life skill and I am always fascinated by how laser-focused my mind becomes during the countdown to chag. I only wish I could summon such focus every day of the week!

My laser-focus was put to the test in a major way on erev Rosh Hashana a few years ago. About 90 minutes before chag, the doorbell rang. It was my husband's rabbi, who had brought the visiting chazan along with him. "You remember," the rabbi said. "You said you would host him over chag?" A distant memory from weeks earlier popped into my head. I had definitely said yes to this very request! Within about 3 minutes I had gathered the appropriate sheets and towels, made the bed, grabbed some of my son's clothes and pyjamas and moved his bedding into another room. Voilà! The guest bedroom was ready. I recall I had been baking an apple cake at the time (one of those 'I-think-I'll-bake-just-one-more-cake-before-chag' cakes). Those cakes are rarely a good idea, and if memory serves me well (and my dessert memory is pretty good) that cake was not a brilliant success. I would be lying if I said I was smiling throughout this whole event. However, our guest could not have been more appreciative and a beautiful chag was enjoyed by all.

As I prepare for the upcoming chagim with some trepidation and much excitement, I know that all the best intentions and precision planning in the world will not stop the curveballs that come my way and the frenzy that will inevitably ensue. But in the tradition of the many great Jewish domestic goddesses that came before me, I will embrace the chaos, savour my moments of focus and take pride in all the small achievements - for the joy lies not in perfection but in the celebration.



Before becoming a mother, Sara Elias was a journalist, working mainly on a food magazine. Currently a governor at North West London Jewish Day School, she is an avid listener to radio, podcasts and shiurim.



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