

PERSPECTIVES

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The magazine of
**jewish
futures**

UNITY *in Bloom*



PESACH

Seder Guide, Recipes
and Inspiration

EXCLUSIVES

Israel Schachter, Eitan
Chitayat and more

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DEAR READERS,

Welcome to the 20th edition of *Perspectives Magazine*. Once again, I find myself writing into an unknown future. I hope from the bottom of my heart that by the time you read these pages, everyone we are waiting for will be home, safely - those who need to be rescued, and those who are protecting us on land, from the sea and in the air.

There has been an extreme amount of hatred, violence, negativity and conflict in the streets and on our screens. With every passing news cycle, protest and awards ceremony, the normalisation of antisemitism has been shocking; the silence, deafening. Everyone around the world aware of the barbaric massacre of October 7th, ensuing war and its global media coverage has had to make a choice: speak up, or remain silent. The Jewish people far and wide have been reminded of our identities; we must own who we are with pride, support one another and speak up for those who cannot.

In the spirit of a couple of Pesach's epithets, *Zman Cheiruteinu* (The Time of our Freedom) - and *Chag HaAviv* (The Festival of Spring) - we have chosen to focus on the positive. Some among us are feeling very empowered and connected through the verbal battlefield of social media's comments sections to speak for the Jewish people, in support of Israel's right to defend itself and simply, to uphold truth. Others might be heavily engrossed in constantly reading the news, leading to the discovery of a bond with a Land and a People far away. There are sparks of identity igniting among us; a luminous silver lining of one of the darkest clouds of modern Jewish history.

There is much international and internal pressure for a plan for the 'day after' (you can read a comprehensive analysis of the potential scenarios in our features section); what will our 'day after' look like if we only relate to our Jewishness and unite as a People under duress?

With this in mind, we have put together this edition focused on positivity and unity. In their own exclusive interviews, Israel Schachter discusses generosity and identity in truly unique environments, while Eitan Chitayat shares insights on reclaiming our narrative with his impactful social media campaigns. Instagram's favourite tour guide (and paratrooper) Arky Staiman offers a special itinerary for your next trip to Israel, while our own Editor-in-Chief tells the intriguing history of a lesser-known cave-dwelling community in Libya. This edition's empowering introspection and fresh Pesach sections are essential - designed to be kept next to your holiday table as both a guide and conversation starter. Finally, indulge in the articles about food, wine, fashion and art.

My greatest hope is that by the time you, dear reader, turn these pages, we as a nation will be totally united, with each one of us truly free and experiencing the greatest, ultimate redemption. *Chag Pesach Kasher veSameach* - wishing you all a beautiful and meaningful Passover.

Sasha Silber

Sasha Silber has a passion for creativity, demonstrated throughout her career as a professional concert pianist, vocal coach for opera singers and performance coach for Oscar-nominated actors in movies such as *Star Wars* - among other artistic endeavours. A native of New York, she has worked on three continents, speaks several languages and lives in Jerusalem with her fabulous husband Daniel and their adorable children.

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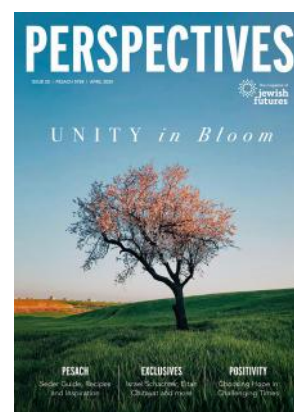
Karen Harris

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The unity among the Jewish people is in bloom. The roots are deep and strong, and the potential for blooms and fruit is there. Pesach is a time for blossom, for spring, for potential.



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CONTENTS



FEATURES

Bridging Worlds: Israel Schachter 10

Sasha Silber

For the Love of the Land 16

Arky Staiman

Valor Stories: The Strength and Sacrifice of Jewish Women 20

Yisca Weisz

The Day After 24

Darren Cohen

When the World Tells You to Shrink, Glow and Shine 28

Daniel Schay

JEWISH FUTURES

Strength in Unity 32

Jessica Finger

Legacy Live: Preserving Life Stories for Generations 38

The Perspectives Team

INTROSPECTION

Thoughts & Prayers 42

Gareth Kobrin

The Power of Metaphor 44

Bari Gold

Becoming Antifragile 46

Rabbi Moshe Friedman

Manifesting Victory 48

Beatie Deutsch

The Gift of Choice 52

Ariella Goldwicht

PESACH

Once Upon a Place 58

Rabbi Eli Birnbaum

The Seder Unpacked 60

Keep it Fresh 66

Rabbi Naftali Schiff



FOOD & DRINK

Prep + Rally's Passover Playbook 80

Dini Klein

A Toast to Freedom 87

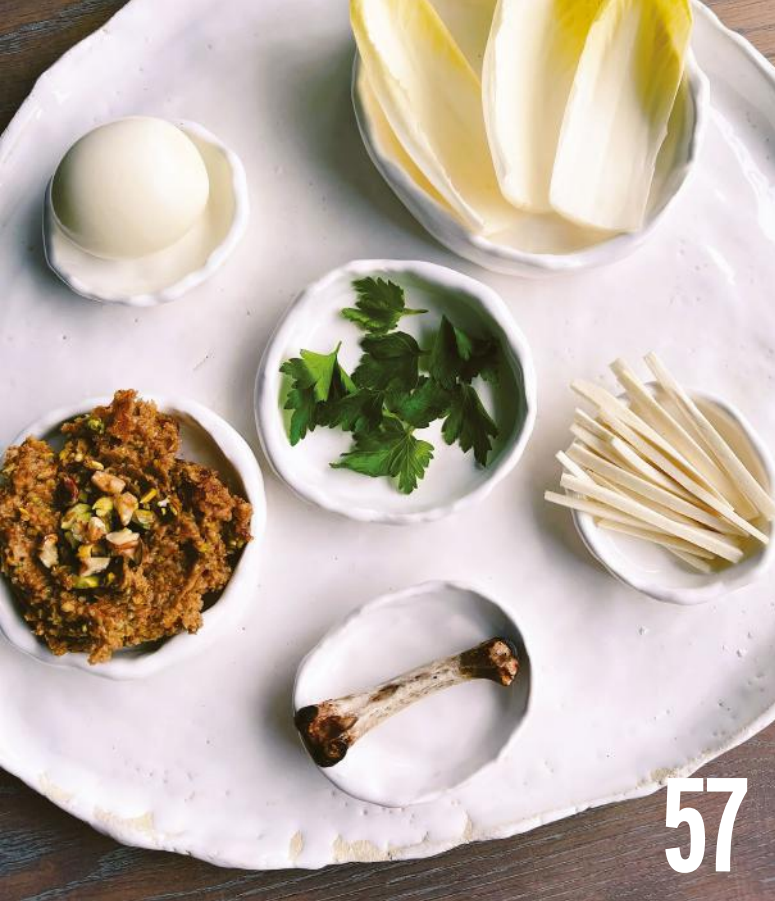
Gabriel Geller

Mufletta with Orange Blossom Syrup 88

Danielle Renov

A Taste of Home: Sivan's Kitchen 90

Sivan Kobi



57

WELLNESS

Parenting with Purpose 70

Esther Hecht & Bat-sheva Levy-Hecht

Healing Without Words 72

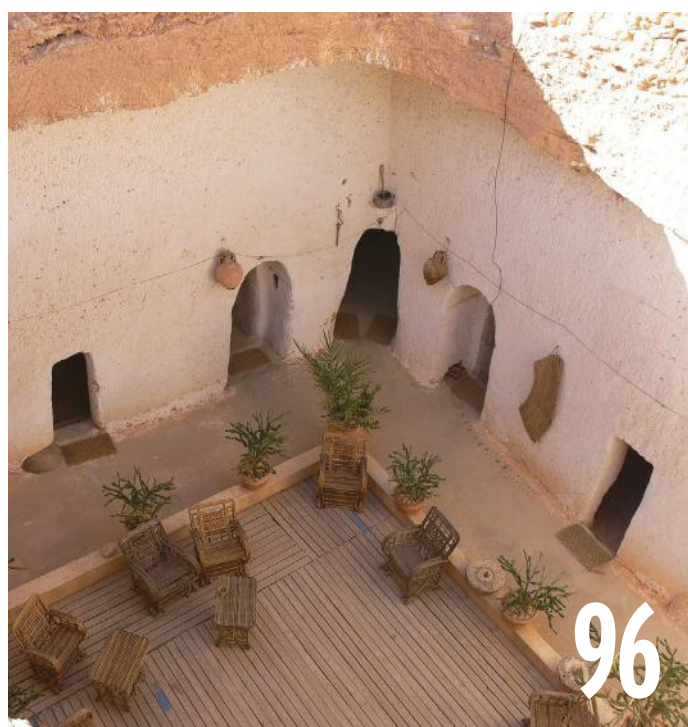
Shiri Lader

Never Broken, Nothing to Fix 74

Chana Studley

Beyond the Butcher 76

Alex Shandrovsky



96



58

CULTURE

The Cave-Dwelling Jews of Libya 96

Rabbi Ari Kayser

True Colours 100

Chaya Baumgarten

Connecting on Canvas 104

Sasha Silber

You Don't Get To Define Us: Eitan Chitayat Speaks Up 107

Sasha Silber

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RABBI

ELI BIRNBAUM

Eli studied in Talmudic College in Israel, gained rabbinic ordination from the Jerusalem Kollel and earned a BSc in Criminology & Social Psychology. After working at the Jewish Learning Exchange and Hasmonian High School, he joined Aish UK as Director of Young Professionals. Eli now leads community development at Stanmore & Canons Park.



DARREN COHEN

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.



BEATIE DEUTSCH

Beatie is the Israeli national champion in the marathon and half marathon. As a mother of five young children, she has learned to apply her training since taking up running six years ago and training as an elite athlete to the real marathon of life - a journey that has empowered her to dream big and keep reaching higher.

📷 @marathonmother



RABBI

MOSHE FRIEDMAN

Rabbi Moshe Friedman grew up in New York City and earned a BA at the University of Pennsylvania. He then studied in Israel for ten years and earned his rabbinic ordination. For the past seven years he has taught students and young professionals for Aish UK. Rabbi Moshe is also a prolific rap artist, spoken word poet and video essayist.

🌐 rav-mo.com



GARETH KOBRIIN

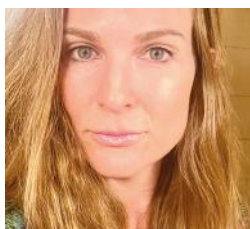
Gareth is a South African part-time writer and full-time husband and father of 3. He is co-founder of Yonda, a tax software business. He loves sports, reading, writing and eating. He's a dog lover who can be spotted walking the streets of London with his best mate Buddy the border collie.

🌐 garethkobrin.substack.com



SHIRI LADER

Shiri Lader is an experienced HCPC registered Art Therapist with a specialization in mental health and emotional wellbeing for children, adolescents and adults. Born and raised in London, she trained and practiced in Mental Health Rehabilitation in Israel for 8 years. Since returning to London in 2017, she has dedicated her efforts to supporting Jewish communities.



BAT-SHEVA LEVY-HECHT

Bat-sheva Levy-Hecht, from Johannesburg, now lives in Miami. She is a mother of three and a conscious parenting advocate. She leads workshops, represents MUST, supports the Friendship Circle's special needs community, has directed youth programs and founded the Maimonides Leadership Institute in Palm Beach. Bat-sheva holds a BA in Psychology and is now pursuing her Master's degree in counselling.



DANIELLE RENOV

Danielle Renov, cookbook author/blogger behind Peas, Love + Carrots, shares delicious recipes and lifestyle tips from Israel. Half Moroccan, half Ashkenaz, she shares her culinary journey and motherhood experiences. She embraces the melting pot of cultures, especially in Jerusalem's Machane Yehuda Shuk. Danielle's mission: to unite people through food, spreading peas and love globally.

📷 @peasloven carrots

🌐 peasloven carrots.com



DANIEL SCHAY

Daniel Schay is a member of the Johannesburg City Council, where he currently serves as the Shadow Member of Mayoral Committee for Development Planning. He's a father and a husband, he holds a degree in civil engineering from the University of South Africa, he attended school at King David Linksfield and studied at Yeshivat Har Etzion.



BARI GOLD

Bari Gold is a poet, writer and essayist. She currently lives in Boston where she's pursuing an MFA degree in creative writing. Her writing focuses on Jewish themes and perspectives. She hopes to teach, write and contribute to Jewish literature and art. Bari will be returning to Israel to further her Jewish education this summer.



ARIELLA GOLDWICHT

Ariella studied in Parsons school of Design in NY and works as a freelance graphic artist and writer, living and raising her family in Jerusalem since 2005. Ariella is passionate about uniting the Jewish community in Israel. Her social initiatives include connecting seniors with the younger generation, hosting large Shabbat meals and creating programs for lone soldiers.



ESTHER HECHT

With over ten years in early childhood education, Esther Hecht serves as Director of Professional Development at Chabad of Sandton Nursery School and Director of the Sandton Hebrew Club. Passionate about nurturing young minds and hearts, she coaches parents and teachers in social-emotional learning. Esther is proudly child-centric, dedicated to fostering supportive environments in early childhood spaces.
 @theholisticeducationist



RABBI
ARI KAYSER

Rabbi Ari Kayser is the Director of Media for Jewish Futures and Editor-in-Chief of Perspectives magazine. Ari leads a talented team of creatives, producing impactful video content and was instrumental in creating *Maven*, the online courses of Aish UK. Ari relishes the challenge of conveying authentic Jewish teachings in the language of the 21st century, particularly through immersive experiences and travel.



DINI KLEIN

Dini Klein, founder of Prep + Rally™ meal prep service and author, collaborates with brands like Walmart, Starbucks, Weight Watchers and appears on channels like CW and Hallmark. Her innovative approach makes weeknight dinners easier for busy families. Discover her creativity in the kitchen. Her cookbook is available at favourite booksellers around the world.
 @prepandrally
 prepandrally.com



RABBI
NAFTALI SCHIFF

Rabbi Naftali Schiff is the founder & CEO of Jewish Futures, a family of educational organisations including JRoots, Gift, Aish, Chazak, Chazon and Shelanu. He read International Relations at the London School of Economics, gained rabbinic ordination from the Jerusalem Rabbinat, a Diploma of Education from the Israeli Ministry of Education and saw active service with the IDF Givati infantry unit.



ALEX SHANDROVSKY

Alex Shandrovsky specializes in advising early-stage climate tech firms on fundraising, with a focus on alternative protein leaders like Oshi and CA Cultured. He's an advisor to top accelerators like Fusion and Proveg. Before moving to Israel, he founded Lchaim Foods, a social impact venture providing jobs to former prisoners.



ARKY STAINMAN

Beloved tour guide, Arky was born and raised in Baltimore, MD, before deciding to make Aliyah to Israel and join a Hesder program. He served as a Paratrooper and married his best friend, Avigail Kranzler. They now reside in the scenic hilltop settlement of Tekoa, on the edge of the Judean desert, with their three little kids.
 @israelwitharky
 israelwitharky.com



CHANA STUDLEY

Chana Studley is a certified Life Coach with 30 years of experience. She has a diploma in psychology and is a World Health Organisation Psychological First Responder. Chana is a successful author, international speaker and runs an online women's membership group. Her books are available on Amazon.
 chanastudley.com



YISSCA WEISZ

Since studying English Literature at UCL, Yissca has contributed to different publications, including the *Observer* in New York, Jewish history magazine *Segula* in Israel and *Valour Lifestyle* in London. With a keen eye for detail and sensitivity to the pulse around her, Yissca conveys on the page what is experienced within.

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FEATURES



Vision & *Insight*

Meet Israel Schacter in an exclusive interview about generosity, unity and identity. Discover new places to tour in Israel with Arky Staiman, get a behind-the-scenes look at some incredibly moving stories of valour and strength, and don't miss an in-depth look at some potential 'day after' scenarios.

Bridging Worlds:

ISRAEL SCHACHTER

Sasha Silber

As one of nine children of Rabbi Hershel Schachter, a renowned authority in Jewish law, Israel's heritage is deeply rooted in tradition. Yet, despite not being directly involved in the "entertainment business," he frequently finds himself in unexpected situations and exclusive circles as though he were. For over twenty years, Israel has leveraged his gift for building relationships to precipitate exponential growth for corporations, charities and careers. As a master of connecting people with mission-driven business ventures and purposeful nonprofit organisations, he has guided thousands of individuals and clients through uniquely creative fundraising, marketing and social media campaigns.

He has been instrumental in establishing organisations like United Hatzalah of Israel, Hatzolah Air and Chai Lifeline Canada. Moreover, he initiated and produced Unite to Heal in support of Amudim, aiding those facing mental health challenges, abuse and addiction, with a series of virtual events drawing over 4 million viewers and raising more than \$20 million since 2021.

Having raised over \$500 million for philanthropic institutions around the world, Israel has dedicated his life and career to promoting projects and people that spark meaningful and lasting change. As a world-class producer, he has proven that the wheel can, and should, always be reinvented.

“

Generosity is a lifestyle. It's a mindset. You can be generous with your time, with your contacts, with your words and with your ideas





Israel Schachter with artist, Usher Raymond

Rabbi Hershel Schachter is a tremendously respected influential leader of our generation; he is also your father. How did your father's public persona shape your private family life?

Well, for one, instead of wasting my time reading fairy tales to my kids before they go to bed, we discuss ethical dilemmas, rabbinical debates and Talmudic law.

I'm kidding. What a way to kick off an interview though!

I'd say that one of my father's greatest attributes is how he treats absolutely everyone with respect. You can be a world leader, a chief rabbi, a peer, a student, a security guard, a janitor or a 6 year-old child; no matter who you are, my father is listening when you speak, he is making you feel important and he is giving you a greeting or an answer with the utmost dignity and consideration.

Having seen this from the time I was born, I learned that, regardless of one's status or title, nobody is better than anyone else. As such, I have never been intimidated to engage in conversation with anyone I've ever met. After all, they're just people. They put on their pants the same way I do every morning. The ability to be comfortable around all kinds of people, and to engage in conversation with absolutely

anyone, has been an incredible tool for me. The same way that there's something to learn from everyone, there's also something that I have to give to others. Knowing that, and believing that, gives one incredible confidence and power. Try it. Thank me later.

Tell us about August 9th, 2001, a pivotal moment in your life. What happened? Did it change you?

I was working in a summer camp in Israel for my third summer in a row, and Thursdays were usually the day that I'd be with our cab driver from morning to night running all over Jerusalem doing errands. Every time we passed through the centre of town around lunchtime, the driver would pull up onto the curb on the corner of Yafo and King George, and I would run into Sbarro Pizza to grab him a slice of spinach pizza and a diet coke. I'd bring it back into the car for him, and we'd continue on our way.

Thursday August 9, 2001 started off no different.

As I was crossing Yafo Street about to enter Sbarro, the driver, for no reason whatsoever, ran across the street from where he was waiting for me with his car, grabbed me by the shirt and told me not to bother going in. He decided that we were too pressed for time and

that he was not in the mood for pizza.

That had NEVER happened before. Standing in the middle of the street, I argued with him. I told him it'll only take me two minutes.

Finally, as the light was about to change, I gave in. I ran back across with him and hopped into the car.

We made a right turn onto Strauss Street, and as we approached the first traffic light, we heard a huge explosion. Just 90 seconds after I was about to walk into Sbarro, a terrorist detonated a bomb injuring 130 people and claiming the lives of 15 innocent men, women and children.

This experience absolutely changed me. It was the day I went from being someone's child, to realising that I had my own purpose in this world. The only sense I could make of it all was that there were things God still wanted me to accomplish.

I have tried to become a continuously better version of myself since that day.

How did you discover your purpose/passion?

Interestingly, I grew up in an incredibly musical family, and music has always been a constant in my life. Starting as a teen, and continuing into my adult life, I would find causes that spoke to me, I'd introduce them



Israel Schachter at the Grammy Awards

“

I often joke that my life is a movie with the most incredible cast of supporting actors, though I'm still working on figuring out the plot

to people who I thought might be interested in supporting them and I'd often produce events for them. As a hobby. As a way of giving back at a time when I could not support them financially.

It was not until COVID killed my actual business when I realised that my hobbies could be turned into a business. So, as much as I hate this word, we had to 'pivot,' and it's been nothing short of wonderful and fulfilling. I have been able to use my creativity, my passion for music and comedy, and my production and fundraising experience to create music with some of the greatest musical talent in the world to write and produce comedy bits with some of the most recognisable comedians in the world, and to produce events and raise awareness for some of the most incredible organisations in the world. In fact, since the start of COVID alone, my team and I have helped raise over \$250m for charities around the world. We've saved lives. We've created movements. We've moved needles. We've started conversations. We've given new life

to established organisations who needed a bit of a boost, and we've given wings to new organisations so they could start to fly.

I feel so blessed to have figured out how to use my passions in this way. While I put in many more hours a day than I should into my work, I don't feel like I've worked a single day since the start of COVID. It's truly such a joy and privilege.

How did you learn this business? How did you start?

Like many other things in my life, I figured it out along the way. Nobody "taught" me how to do what I do. I have always been one to identify a need and either find, or create a solution. I don't know what I did to deserve it, but God loves me; I'm very lucky.

The incredible work you do with your company, Charitybids, has you spending time with

celebrities and household names while fully grounded in Jewish values and Torah observance, giving you the unique opportunity to represent the Jewish people in unusual circumstances. What does that look like?

What does it look like? It usually looks like a very hopeful glimpse into the future: a beautiful bridge between two very different worlds. I've joked around with the Pope about Talmud and have learned *Pirkei Avot* (*Ethics of our Fathers*) with Glenn Beck. I've discussed Torah ideas with the likes of Deepak Chopra and Petra Nemcova, *Chassidut* (Hasidic philosophy) with Jennifer Garner and Jennifer Hudson and Jewish/Israeli history and politics with the likes of Usher and Jamie Foxx. If you come to my house for Chanukah candle lighting, don't be surprised if you run into Shulem Lemmer and Emmanuelle Chriqui

there. I have helped bring many celebrities and influencers like Demi Lovato, Ellie Zeilier and Hailee Steinfeld to Israel, and had the idea to produce a TikTok Holocaust docu-series that I'm sure most of your readers have seen by now. I arranged for both Emeril Lagasse and Wolfgang Puck to cater their first-ever Glatt Kosher dinners, introduced Bartenura Moscato D'Asti to Drake (which then went on to become the company's highest-grossing product) and when a cashier at Costco in Toronto pulled a one-of-one trading card, I introduced him to Post Malone who purchased it from him for \$2m on the spot.

And somewhere in between it all, I manage to teach the daily *Daf* (page of the Talmud). Overall, more bridging of worlds is what we all can use a bit more of right now.

What a truly extraordinary combination of people and experiences - and it sounds like those relationships are often grounded in authenticity and a level of depth.

I'll tell you, celebrity or not, they're just people. They have feelings, they have struggles, they have private lives and they have pressures of being in the public eye. While not entirely comparable, I certainly know about the pressures of growing up in the public eye.

As far as celebrities are concerned, I have found that many of them are surrounded by "yes" people; people who are on the payroll, or people who are afraid to lose their place in the inner circle. People who, despite being close, are afraid to be real with them. I, on the other hand, have never had a problem being real with anyone. I am not in "the business" and I have nothing to lose.

There are unique values, traditions and lots of Jewish wisdom that I often share with people in the entertainment space that they really connect with. Many celebrities, despite "having it all," are not actually that happy in their lives, and, whether they know it or not, they're searching for meaning and purpose. When they hear something fresh and unique, or they're able to have conversations that feel so different from many of the others they have, you begin to stand out. By communicating on a different frequency than

so many others in their life, by discussing everything BUT what everyone else wants to talk to them about, by being the one who always puts your family and religion before anything else, you make an impression.

How do you navigate any form of prejudice or misconceptions with regard to your faith in your professional encounters?

By wearing it loud and proud, there is no room for misunderstandings. It's actually quite simple: I have values, I have a family and I am part of a beautiful religion. There are things I do, and there are things I don't do. This is who I am. Period. Any questions? Good. Didn't think so.

Have you had any unusual guests join you for Shabbat and Holidays in your home?

We've had the opportunity to share many Shabbat and Holiday meals with interesting people. This isn't the forum to go



From left: Rabbi Shlomo Amar, Israel Schachter and his father, Rabbi Heishel Schachter



Israel Schachter backstage with Jennifer Hudson



Israel Schachter golfing with Michael Jordan



Israel Schachter at an event with Gal Gadot

Israel Schachter
with Elton John



into specifics. But, we're very proud of our community and of our heritage, and we're happy to share our family values and the beauty of our traditions with anyone who wishes to learn or be inspired. I prefer to keep these encounters private, though one such encounter can be found on my Instagram page. I decided, instead of having a quiet Menorah lighting with some Jewish friends before an Andrea Bocelli concert at Madison Square Garden in NYC, that we'd light the Menorah in Andrea's dressing room along with any Jews we could find in the venue hours before the show began. Two nights in a row.

Did the events of October 7th have an effect on any of these relationships?

Many people have disappointed me since October 7th. I completely understand the pressure they're all under, as public figures with millions of followers, to "take sides;" BUT, terror, kidnapping and rape is NEVER ok. I completely understand people who wish to reserve comment on issues they don't fully understand, but if that's the fear, then they should probably be a lot more quiet around other issues that they use their platforms to speak up about. I was shocked at how many people I had considered friends did not even reach out to me privately.

At the same time, perhaps we need to do a better job at educating them so that the next time something happens, they'll at least know enough to speak up against terrorism. I never imagined a world in which terrorism would be justified.

I don't want to leave this off on a sour note, so I will give a special shout-out to my non-Jewish friends who really stepped up and made an effort to check in on me and my family, to ask questions, to try and understand the situation, to use their platforms to fight against anti-semitism and to assure me that they're always there for me and my People. In addition, I could not be more inspired by how many Jews embraced their Judaism and stepped up in such incredible ways since October 7th – both online and offline.

How has your spirituality fueled your creativity, especially in situations that required innovative solutions?

I have always been a creative, out-of-the-box thinker. Since I was not a particularly great student, and I did not have the greatest attention span (I still don't ... and I actually cannot believe I am still in the middle of this same interview!), I had to always think creatively and differently than everyone else in order to keep up.

But one thing that noticeably changed at the start of COVID, and one thing that I have continued since then, is that instead of chasing opportunities, I begin each year - and each day - with a clean slate. I pay closer attention to the opportunities in front of me. I allow God to show me the way. I have learned to say no to the things that don't feel right, and whenever I do, I allow the space for something that feels right to present itself. There are so many incredible opportunities that I have had over the past few years; many of them were probably in my face all along. I am now allowing myself to notice them more, and giving myself the time to reflect on why God put certain people in my life, or why He's put me in certain positions or situations.

That's a remarkable way to constantly maintain focus, isn't it, especially considering that you've just told me about your attention span.

This is another thing I saw at home. I have never, ever seen my father waste a single minute of his time. Not once. He always has a book with him. If there's a lull in conversation, a delayed flight, a line in the Post Office, traffic or family waiting around at a celebration for a photographer to snap a photo, his face is in a book.

When you have a burning passion for what you do, every second counts and every second is enjoyable.

I absolutely love what I do. Every single day. There isn't a single doctor in the world who would say that I get enough sleep, but I rarely waste any time. I am always doing something, and I always try to make the absolute most of every moment I am privileged to be on this earth.

What has been the most surprising or unlikely friendship you've developed through your journey, and what have you learned from it?

I think that most of my friendships are "unlikely," but for those who know me, none of them are surprising. I stopped being surprised at anything in my life a very long time ago. I often joke that my life is a movie with the most incredible cast of supporting actors, though I'm still working on figuring out the plot.

As for what I have learned from these friendships? A lot. But mostly, I have just

confirmed that people are people. We all have goals, frustrations and fears. We all experience challenges and disappointment. We're all in search of validation, meaning and purpose. We all want to do the right thing. We want to be great children, we want to be great parents. We want to give our children everything, but still want them to be grounded, respectful and grateful. We want them to grow up to be contributing members of society. We're all the same at the end of the day.

They may have tens of millions more followers than I do on social media, they may have not been on a commercial flight in over 30 years, they may have had 130 million people tuning into their Super Bowl halftime show, but, other than that, they're not much different than you or me.

Your business is focused on giving, and you just mentioned many examples of ways you aspire to give. What is generosity?

I actually think most people do not understand how generosity works. I learned,

from watching my parents, that generosity has absolutely nothing to do with money. I didn't grow up in a wealthy home, but I grew up with incredibly generous parents. Generosity is a lifestyle. It's a mindset. You can be generous with your time, with your contacts, with your words and with your ideas. There are so many ways to be generous; most of them have absolutely nothing to do with money. I know many major philanthropists who give millions of dollars a year to charity, who I would never describe as being generous.

Give a little piece of advice to our readers?

The best advice I can give is to always remember that we're part of an absolutely amazing People. There's really nobody like us. Each of us has a mission and purpose in this world. There's a unique gift that each person reading this possesses which nobody else in the world does.

Take the time to find your unique talents and gifts and use them to spread love and light in the world. There's something you have that we all need. You're special. You're amazing. Know it and own it!



From left: former US President Bill Clinton, Israel Schachter and former President George W. Bush



For the *Love* of the *Land*

Natural spring in
Ein Prat, Israel

Photo, Bali Letayel

Arky Staiman

It all began with a slip of the tongue. I was sitting with my parents, and accidentally said, "When can I have my *bar mitzvah* in Israel?" They said, "What did you just say?" I said, "Yeah, that kind of sounds like a good idea."

So my first introduction to Israel was for my *bar mitzvah*, where we spent two weeks touring - and our tour guide was awesome. We jumped into pools together, had a good time and learned about the history. I really started to fall in love with Israel. For years afterwards, I tried to raise money to go back to programmes in Israel. I started my own car cleaning company for *Pesach* so that I could participate in Bnei Akiva and Mach Hach BaAretz programmes in Israel during the summers.

I want to tell you a story. When I was in Israel, we had one Shabbat off. That Shabbat, I decided I didn't want to go to some typical American place. I wanted to go somewhere special, somewhere unique. My love for the Land of Israel has always been for the unique places, that random hilltop, the place where you can see the stones connected to a story in Jewish history and going as far back as the Torah. So, I told my counsellor that I wanted to go to Hebron for Shabbat - not Katamon, not Raanana, not Chashmonaim - but Hebron. I got a bus to Hebron by myself, not speaking any Hebrew at the time. I was a 15-year-old boy and got picked up by the family that was hosting me. It was a cousin of a cousin of a friend. He said in a heavy Israeli accent, "When they throw the rock, you put your head down." It was the only English I heard that entire Shabbat.

I had an unbelievable experience. We slept on the top building of Tel Uromeda, overlooking all of Hebron. We dipped in a spring inside of a cave on our way to synagogue at Ma'arat Hamachpela (The Cave of the Patriarchs) for the most unbelievable prayer services. That Shabbat changed everything for me.

The truth is, all of my experiences in Israel have been shaped by amazing tour guides who had a passion for Israel, who live meaningful and exciting lives. I decided, "I want to do that. That sounds amazing." That's how I fell in love with the land. By the time I came here for my year of Yeshiva, I knew I wanted to serve in the IDF, I wanted to make *Aliyah* (immigrate to Israel) and I wanted to learn Hebrew. In 10th grade, I was the guy in synagogue for Friday night services wearing sandals - everybody else was wearing suits. Everybody always joked, "You're going to end up on some hilltop in Israel." They weren't so wrong.

My love for Israel developed in the army and really changed once I did the tour-guiding



Binyamin region,
Israel

Photo, Mark A. Wilson

Shiloh, Israel:
Wine jugs dated
to the Shiloh
tabernacle period

Photo, Wikipedia Commons



Natural spring in
Ein Prat, Israel

Photo, Kohav Benofesh

Ein Prat
Nature Reserve

Photo, Arky Staiman





Ein Keshatot,
Israel

Photo, Ofer Blank



observant Jews, have likely never heard of, but contains so much mystery. It's called Umm el-Kanatir. It is a synagogue up north. When I say synagogue, it is not what you're thinking. This is a synagogue that goes all the way back to the times of the Talmud, 600, 700 CE - a synagogue that has not been used in thousands of years. How is that possible? In the Golan Heights,

there was an earthquake in the year 749. The entire synagogue was destroyed, and the stones fell right next to where they originally were. Well, guess what? About 15 years ago, a computer programmer decided, if we have the stones and they're next to where they originally were, we can create a computer program that tells us where the stones actually go and start to rebuild. So you can actually go in the middle of the southern Golan Heights, kind of in the middle of nowhere, to go pray in a synagogue where you can say that these past few years are the first time that any Jew has prayed in over 1,300 years. Who knows what kind of rabbis, Amoraim or Talmudic sages once prayed in that synagogue? It's amazing because it is completely rebuilt. The walls, the ceiling, the *Aron Kodesh* (Torah Ark) - you can see exactly as they built it back then. So that's really exciting.

View of Tel Azekah from
Khirbet Qeiyafa, Israel

Photo, Mark A. Wilson

course. There is so much more to learn than we might think, and so many unique places that really turned me on to Israel and have made me feel connected as a Jewish person to my roots. I decided I have to give that back.

My tours don't necessarily focus on every date - they are not lectures. A trip to Israel is not just about having fun, and not just about a history lesson: we are going to have a good time, and we are going to connect to the Land, igniting the flames of passion that the Jewish people inherently have for Israel - especially for the kids.

My love for Israel comes from hiking, from jumping into water, from connecting to our history, from the Torah, from the beauty and from the people. You can't separate any of those from the Land of Israel. It comes from the holiness as well. There are countless places to discover, but there are a few that I like to talk about specifically, that I like to bring people to that have really excited me.

Umm el-Kanatir

The first is a spiritual, holy place - one that I bet most Jews, even the most well-learned and



Nahal Prat

The next place I'm excited about is not all about the history or even the stories - sometimes it's also about the fun. Nahal Prat (Wadi Qelt, in Arabic) is a water hike in the desert that is beautiful most of the year. The water is so clean and fresh that you can see right down to your toenails. There are deep water pools, cliffs on both sides, shallow pools, waterfalls and rock slides. It's as if I told you, within 15 minutes of Jerusalem, you could get to the most amazing hikes that are at least as good as the ones in Arizona. You'd be like, "What? That's crazy!"

Tel Azekah

In the winter, Tel Azekah is all green. It is the mountain that overlooks the site of the battle between David and Goliath. And you know what? Just that, in and of itself, is quite the

Acting out David and Goliath at the place where it happened, Tel Azekah



experience to see - the place where one of the most epic battles in all of history that the entire world knows about. I have an entire production there where we actually reenact the story with costumes and props to feel what it would have been like for David as a boy to try and hit Goliath with an actual sling! We have a lot of fun, there's a lot of laughing, and we love to have a good time. That is Tel Azekah.

Shiloh

The next place I love to take people to is Shiloh, one of those places where you actually see the stories that we teach our children about the *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible), about Chana, praying for a son, about the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle). If we think about it, there's almost an entire book of the Torah dedicated to the building of the *Mishkan*, and you can go to the place where we believe they found it. You can see the walls: we can explain, based on the combined scientific study of archaeology and Torah sources to truly understand where our history took place. You get to tell your kids, remember that whole story that I told you about? This isn't Santa Claus or the tooth fairy, where parents have to tell their kids he's not real as they get older. This is real. You bring your kids to Israel and say all those things that we learned about in school? Here's where they actually happened, for real, which is really exciting.



Jumping into a natural spring in Nachal Prat

SERVICE



For the past 114 days,¹ I was in the army, serving as part of the unit that did a very important mission of bringing soldiers and

civilians who fell in battle, making sure that they come back to Israel for a proper burial, even if that means sometimes going in under fire.

Many people have heard of the ZAKA Search & Rescue organisation; we're like ZAKA in battle, during war. It's a very difficult and complicated mission, but it's also a mission that brings us a lot of pride. When I come back to Israel after a mission in Gaza, I like to go out to the hills outside of my house in Tekoa and I like to look over the canyons and say, "Wow, this is what I'm fighting for." I go back and look at my people who have been supporting us: my wife, my family, all of the Israelis and the Jews around the world, and I say, "These are the People that I'm fighting for." It gives it so much meaning. Every time we came out of Gaza and there's barbecues, people standing on the sides of the street giving us underwear and socks (so many that in the army we call them *chad pa'ami* (disposable), all of it reminding us, not just about the Land of Israel that we're protecting and how amazing it is, but the People of Israel. We read from the Torah and we're reminded about the Torah of Israel and those are our values that we're going into war with, and those are the values that we come back out with.

As I transition back into civilian life, I take with me this extremely powerful experience, one that deepened my love for the Land of Israel and deepened my love for the People of Israel. The truth is, I think it's harder to be a Jew outside of Israel right now than to be in it. I really feel like Jewish history is being written right here, right now in what could be seen as the forthcoming chapters of Tanakh, the ensuing narratives of the Jewish story of the Maccabees, of King David's army - these chapters are being crafted about us, about Israel. We are living in extraordinary times, and I'm just so happy and proud to be a part of it.

¹ At the time of writing this article.

Valor Stories

The strength and sacrifice of Jewish women

Yissca Weisz



Shifra Soloveichik is unapologetically unapologetic for her passionate pride in being a Jewish woman in Israel. The singer-songwriter, content creator and marketing specialist *olah* (immigrant to Israel) from Atlanta, Georgia, has been sharing the beauty of Judaism from the lens of an observant woman in Israel with refreshing, upbeat and authentic energy on social media for quite some time.

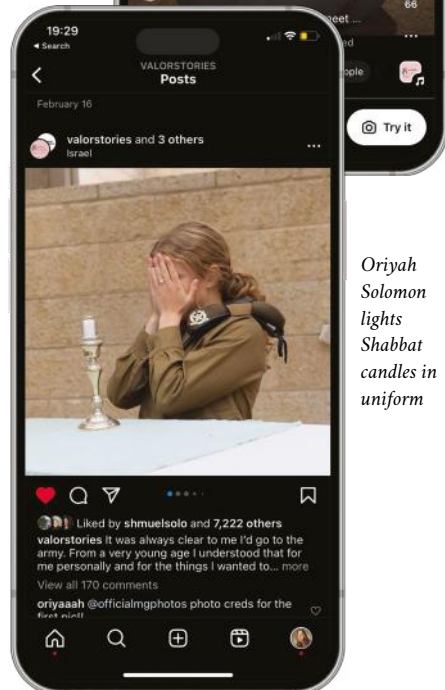
Since October 7th, Shifra has been focusing her creativity through a digital media campaign called *Valor Stories* (@valorstories), spearheading a movement to headline ordinary women with extraordinary stories and showcasing the unique strength of Jewish women in Israel during this challenging time of war.

When Shifra and I sat down to chat, she had just wrapped post-production for a new short film, and was already prepping the next one. She radiates grace and poise.



Jerusalem, Israel

Iris Haim's interview with Valor Stories



Oriyah Solomon lights Shabbat candles in uniform

What inspired you to start telling *Valor Stories*?

On October 7th, my husband, like many others, was called to army reserve duty. After that horrific and traumatising Shabbat, I posted an ironic but stress-laden 'Get Ready With Me' reel on my Instagram platform as I hurriedly packed up my house to stay with family, anxious not to stay by myself. A follower responded to the reel, saying how hard it was, and that she was praying for both our husbands to be safe. We were both consumed with this difficult situation, so I sent her back some heart emojis. Her name: Senai Guedalia.

Two days later I found out that her husband, Yosef, part of the elite Duvdevan unit, was killed by Hamas terrorists after heroically saving countless lives of civilians in Kibbutz Kfar Aza. He had returned to the Kibbutz four times to protect and defend. I was so shaken by it. I watched Senai at the funeral, so stoic and proud of her beloved husband, declaring "I wouldn't have changed anything." When she responded to my Instagram message that week, following up and wishing my condolences, all she asked was for me to "tell the world how amazing he was."

She too is a hero, I thought. Senai is exemplifying sheer strength by choosing to continue living, even though her world has been ripped apart. As I sat on the couch together with my community of *eishet chayalim*¹ - wives of soldiers - knitting our way through shared pain and fear for our loved ones, I was propelled to create something positive. I also needed a personal coping mechanism to combat the toxic antisemitic hatred that was filling my online feed. It was important for me to show the beauty of Judaism, like I do on my personal Instagram page; now I would do it by showcasing the extreme strength of women in Israel.

The idea of *Valor Stories* was born.

Let's talk about the name of this project. We literally sing praise to a generic, unspecified 'woman of valour,' every Friday night. What does it actually mean to be a 'woman of valour'?

I don't believe there's one answer to this question. Every woman can be a 'woman of valour'. I think it extends beyond the

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We have such a rich history and unique traditions, but our achievements are not necessarily external

¹ A play on words coming from the song called *Eishet Chayil* ('woman of valour') that comes from the Book of Proverbs (31:10–31), traditionally sung at the beginning of a Friday night Shabbat meal, *Eishet Chayil* (literally, the Wife of a Soldier) has become a popular expression in Israel, especially since October 7th and the mass call-up of reservist IDF soldiers



Oriyah and Natan Solomon. Oriyah (19) is a Torah observant IDF soldier, while her husband Natan is studying in a Yeshivah, whom she has called the most supportive "ish chayal" (soldier husband)



Shifra Buchris, a mother of 10 and a commander in the Magav, went back and forth from Re'im, saving as many lives as she could on October 7th

assumption that to be an admirable woman you need to be a certain way, or fit a particular stereotype. In my opinion, that's anti-feminist, and it defeats the point. Rather, a 'woman of valour' possesses an internal mentality that can consist of any or all of these qualities: resilience, dignity, pride, grace, bravery, creativity, kind-heartedness, generosity, trustworthiness and commitment.

I think anybody can fit the bill. Look at these Israeli women, acting strong for themselves, their families and absent counterparts. A 'woman of valour' can be dressed as a female soldier, a mother taking care of children and a twenty-two year old widow who decides to continue forward, believing in redemption and having hope for a brighter future. It's clear that you don't necessarily need to be a soldier's wife to be able to exhibit the strength, courage and grace to qualify.

It is awesome to be a Jewish woman; we have such a rich history and unique traditions, but our achievements are not necessarily external. There is a spiritual element to this treacherous war which I am convinced that we as females are capable of battling, whereby the national and religious pride we bear can act as its backbone. My hope is for this project to empower Jewish women around the world to embrace their own strength and beauty.

Can you share a specific story that resonated deeply with you?

Becky Stern (who has a *Valor Story* of her own, having had no contact with her husband while fighting in Gaza for three months) submitted a story about her friend Rose Lubin (21) who was murdered in a stabbing attack by a terrorist in Jerusalem on November 6th. I hadn't realised what a warrior this girl was until I read this story:

Rose courageously fought off terrorists at the gate of Kibbutz Sa'ad on October 7th, successfully preventing infiltration. I was so moved by her commitment to making Aliyah to Israel by herself, the pride she had in guarding Jerusalem as part of the Magav Border Police Unit and how she was the life of the party wherever she went.

More and more people are submitting stories, like Rose's. I was surprised by how much the 'woman of valour' concept resonated with people. I'm used to people refusing to agree to do a film project, but even before I had posted the documentaries of the women I had personally met, there was lots of excitement and self-submitted stories.

Someone thanked me for the therapeutic opportunity enabled by the project, that there was room to release and share, to look back

and be proud of herself during this challenging time of war. I started crying, thinking that I've found my purpose and done my 'job,' in helping validate one person, one army wife, fiance or friend.

How did this moment affect you and your project?

Who am I to lose it and fall apart when I know how many women are dealing with horrific loss as a result of this war, and somehow find it within themselves to continue to live as a proud Jew? They are the real heroes. I was inspired to continue sharing women's experiences of the war, now feeling that it is my responsibility to listen and help tell their stories.

Your platform also highlights the diversity of cultures and communities within our nation.

Yes. Another inspiring woman who shared her experience is Regi Kagan, a convert from Hungary. After October 7th she saw through the media that to be a Jew, means that people you don't even know hate you. She has had countless opportunities to go back to Hungary with her husband in reserve duty in the elite forces. I asked her why she's still here, and she responded "I can't leave, I belong here."

Regi chose to become Jewish. Witnessing this internal journey to proactively cling to *Am Yisrael* (the Nation of Israel), was very powerful; it struck a chord within me. There are so many beautiful things to be proud of and focus on here. It's important to not allow the negativity and hate to fester its way through.

Not all heroes wear capes - or carry weapons in defence. Can you tell me about a different kind of 'woman of valour' who features her story?

I began the project by documenting the stories of some truly remarkable women, meeting and interviewing them myself. I have gained strength from witnessing such dignified determination firsthand, and I am set on sharing these empowering messages from these women with the world, particularly those watching

from the Diaspora, so that their connection to Israel is not only that of tragedy, but through our strength and power as Jewish women.

Iris Haim responded with supernatural inner strength, love and sensitivity when her son Yotam, who was abducted by Hamas, was mistakenly killed by the IDF while trying to escape captivity after seventy days. Juggling a profound loss, she nevertheless opened her heart to the soldiers, reassuring them there was no anger or blame, but that she loved them and wanted to speak with them.

I was fortunate to sit and chat with Iris, and it was plain to see that she is a true 'woman of valour.' With great poise, she told me "I made an active choice every day after October 7th to see Yotam in the light. My energy was focused on the positive part of the story. I will not dwell on the past, his soul is in a good place, he leaves a message of life, a better world. We have a shared factor between us, our *Yahadut* (Judaism). In the end we are one Nation, and must be united. With the pain, we must continue to live."

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A 'woman of valour' can be dressed as a female soldier, a mother taking care of children and a twenty-two year old widow who decides to continue forward, believing in redemption and having hope for a brighter future

Filming Iris Haim's Valor Story. In the background, a painting of Yotam Haim by'd



Regi Kagan telling her story



The Day After

Darren Cohen



The atrocities perpetrated by Hamas on October 7th prompted an Israeli aerial and ground operation in the Gaza Strip unprecedented in its might and scale. To date, the IDF has recorded some impressive operational achievements. It has gained control of most Hamas strongholds above ground, destroyed underground militant infrastructure, largely eliminated the Gazan factions' rocket arsenal and killed or wounded thousands of terrorist operatives. Notwithstanding the tragic humanitarian ramifications of the campaign and the deaths of hundreds of Israeli troops, the increasingly salient question remains - what is the strategic long-term vision? How does Israel transition from militarily defeating Hamas to providing genuine long-term security for its citizens? The current crisis presents an opportunity, which many actors in the region and the world are eager to leverage.

Bottom Line Up Front

There are no good options without significant reform or compromise. Many parties will be required to adopt pragmatic, flexible, and potentially unpopular stances to achieve any meaningful progress. Except for the Qataris, all of the serious actors and scenarios outlined below foresee a 'day after' that either excludes Hamas or entails a radically transformed Hamas committed to recognition of Israel. Herein lies a major challenge: is it possible to destroy or reform a terrorist organisation? For a plethora of reasons, the group and its supporters have become deeply embedded in Palestinian society. In some parts of the Palestinian and broader Arab world, Hamas has gained support and respect for its ability to terrorise mighty Israel.

Another question relates to trust: most of the scenarios described in this article require Israel to relinquish some element of control to external entities. This requires Israelis to trust again - a profound challenge in the aftermath of October 7. This process may take years, if not decades, and is another element that will likely complicate efforts to move to the 'day after.'

PART I: POSTIONS

Current Israeli Government

The current right-wing Israeli government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, has made it clear what it opposes. It is adamant that neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority (PA) can govern the Gaza Strip once the IDF operation

concludes. Israel's goal to eradicate Hamas is clear, although Netanyahu has rejected the idea of it being replaced with the more moderate PA, or in his words, "Hamastan with Fatahstan" [Fatah - the dominant party in the PA]. The PM has cited the PA leadership's alleged refusal to condemn the massacre of October 7 and the education of Palestinian children geared toward hatred of Israel. Netanyahu contends that the debate between Hamas, the extremist Islamist group, and Fatah, the Palestinian secular nationalist party, is "not *whether* to eliminate Israel, but *how* to do it".

The only clear indication that Netanyahu has given of what he *is* in favour of, and not opposed to, is "full Israeli security control over all the territory west of Jordan", which he argues is "contrary to a Palestinian state." While Netanyahu historically oscillates on policy in response to international pressure or the Israeli public mood, his flexibility on these positions is limited due to the right-wing makeup of his current coalition. Thus, without political change, the Israeli government's stance is likely to remain ambiguous and incoherent in the short-term at least.

Alternative Israeli Government

Since October, former IDF Chief of Staff and Netanyahu's centre-right political rival, Benny Gantz, has consistently risen above the incumbent leader in the polls by a wide margin. While a lot can change in Israeli politics, if elections were held tomorrow, the former military chief would have a reasonable chance of leading a coalition that replaces Netanyahu's government. Gantz has been circumspect about his vision for the Palestinian issue - both as a campaigning politician and a minister in Netanyahu's war cabinet. Judging by Gantz's previous actions and words, he is far less inclined to engage in a public confrontation with the US and is a strong believer in bolstering the PA as an independent and robust Palestinian entity. He would therefore likely support a significant role for a reformed and reinforced PA in the Gaza Strip while adhering to the stance that Israel must maintain overall security control over the territory to prevent a reemergence of Hamas. This would effectively mirror security arrangements in the West Bank, and while empowering the PA to take responsibility for the civil administration of the territory, it would fall short of a fully independent Palestinian state. Regardless, any talk of a change in leadership is premature.

Netanyahu has fought back before; there is neither a guarantee that he would be defeated in an election, nor anything to suggest such an election will happen in the near future.

US Administration

The current administration under President Joe Biden has been vocal in its preference for the 'day after' and has provided more strategic clarity than Israel itself. First, the US predicates any post-war plan on the removal of Hamas from power. For this reason, Washington has categorically defended Israel's right, and indeed duty, to defend itself and defeat Hamas.

Second, the US envisages a "revitalised PA" that undergoes serious reforms. These are likely to include new leadership, a reinvigorated political vision, the building of state institutions, mechanisms to fight corruption, educational reforms, free and fair elections and an end to the "pay for slay" practice that incentivises terrorism through payments to Palestinian militant prisoners or the families of "martyrs." The US envisions a strong and unified PA that is present in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of an eventual path toward a two-state solution.

Third, the US seeks to tie this vision to a normalisation agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia as part of a broader doctrine that aims to counter Iranian influence and forge an alliance of US-aligned states that embrace peace and prosperity. Of course, while these are the Biden administration's goals, there is the small matter of a US presidential election later on in the year. The potential return of Donald Trump, and his unpredictable approach, may usher in an entirely new and radical Middle East policy. Regardless of

the eventual victor, the election itself will play a major role in the ability of the current presidency to manoeuvre.

PA & Sunni Arab States

While these actors' interests are certainly not hermetically aligned, there is a broad agreement on the end goal. The PA, together with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, aim to see a two-state solution reached that engineers sustainable regional stability. The Sunni Arab states are therefore opposed to any Israeli unilateralism or permanent control of the Gaza Strip.

The PA, while willing to assume control of the Gaza Strip as a security and civil administrative body, cannot be seen to be riding on the back of an IDF tank. Therefore, all of the members of this generally aligned grouping have predicated their involvement in the reconstruction and governance of Gaza on Israel's commitment to a meaningful political process that leads to a two-state solution. The only other actor worth mentioning in this context is the current lead mediator - Qatar. Doha has an interest in Hamas' survival in the Gaza Strip. As its largest financial donor, the Gaza issue grants the Qataris outsized influence and leverage in the international community. A revitalised PA backed by a Saudi-aligned bloc would undermine this influence.

PART II: SCENARIOS

(in no particular order)

1. Current PA

This scenario lacks credibility and viability for many reasons. First and foremost, Israel is not

willing to entertain the idea of the PA in its current form assuming governance in Gaza. This position and the associated absence of a political process tied to the PA's involvement in Gaza also means that the Palestinian body would be less inclined to enter the Gaza Strip. The US would also likely oppose such a framework given the lack of reform and Washington's goal to see a sustainable solution to the conflict. More so, the Palestinian people themselves would reject this option. The PA is incredibly weak, with its support in the West Bank hitting an all-time low, manifesting in areas of lawlessness in militant strongholds of the West Bank where it essentially no longer governs. Its credibility has been shattered by decades of corruption and anti-democratic governance. An entity that can barely control its territory in the comparatively stable West Bank will surely fail in volatile Gaza. The current PA is thus neither able nor likely willing to take responsibility for post-conflict Gaza.

Feasibility: Low

2. Revitalised PA & Israel-Saudi Normalisation

The revitalised PA described above is not something that can happen overnight. Such meaningful reform and institution-building will take years to advance. It is therefore extremely optimistic to expect a democratically elected, pro-Western and responsible leadership to emerge that is ready for peace with Israel within such a short period, especially one that the Palestinian public deems legitimate. This is especially given that Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups will not disappear completely, with pockets of armed resistance likely to continually hinder the PA's progress. Even then, while the US and the Saudi-aligned bloc would be more inclined to pump funds, provide security training and give diplomatic weight to a reinvigorated PA, getting Israel on board would remain a hefty challenge - especially its current leadership. The most likely carrot

Photo courtesy of IDF Spokesperson's unit

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How does Israel transition from militarily defeating Hamas to providing genuine long-term security for its citizens?



PA leader Mahmoud Abbas meets with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman in Riyadh. Thaar Ganaim, APA images

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There is no day-after scenario that is void of risk. What is certain is that all of the peoples of the region deserve a better tomorrow

that can be presented to Israel would be tying this to a normalisation process with the Saudis. Although Netanyahu can likely be convinced of this, given it remains one of his long-standing goals, his right-wing coalition partners are unlikely to budge, requiring a coalition change. This entire process would thus need all the stars to align and is likely to take a significant period. This could collide with a radical leadership change in the US that could unravel any progress.

Feasibility: Low-Medium

3. Local Governance

In early January, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant became the only senior Israeli government minister to present a plan for the 'day after' - albeit uncoordinated with the rest of the cabinet. The plan foresees a West Bank-like model where the IDF has freedom of operations inside the Gaza Strip and military control of borders. However, Israel would neither settle nor permanently occupy the territory. Gallant's plan envisages non-Hamas-aligned Palestinian administrative bodies governing the territory through some form of local leadership. This would follow a process in which a US/European/Arab task force would enter Gaza and assume responsibility for civil affairs and reconstruction. This plan is destined for failure. The international task force is almost certain to reject the idea given that it fails to lead to any form of sustainable Palestinian national governance or statehood.

The local clans that Gallant believes can administer civil control are highly unlikely to remain loyal to Israel, will likely face internal infighting and lack the legitimacy of the public,

ultimately producing more instability. Gazan society would likely collapse into anarchy and Hamas would emerge again in such conditions.

Feasibility: Low

4. Arab States/Foreign Militaries

In leaked comments to a closed-door Knesset Committee in December, Netanyahu suggested that after the IDF defeats Hamas "the UAE and Saudi Arabia will support the rehabilitation" of Gaza. Both of these states have vehemently rejected any such commitment - either through investment or an on-the-ground presence - without a political process. This moment of hubris by the Israeli leader provided insight into his vision for others to pick up the pieces. Coupled with Gallant's plan, it highlights the prevailing desire in Israel to maintain security control while shifting responsibility for the provision of healthcare, education, rubbish collection, electricity, water and transportation for Gaza's 2.3 million people.

While this is naturally an undesirable task, Israel cannot have their cake and eat it. Whether it be Israeli allies in the US, Europe and/or Arab states, or adversarial states in Turkey or Qatar, no nation will risk the lives of its troops and waste its funds if it believes Gaza will simply be destroyed again and no sincere change is on the horizon.

Feasibility: Low

5. Israeli Military Control & Resettlement

In late January, a conference attended by ministers was held in Jerusalem to call for Jewish resettlement of Gaza and the

encouragement of Palestinian voluntary emigration from the Strip. While these notions were formerly ideological pillars of the fringes of the right, they have seeped into the mainstream and have garnered increasing support. These individuals also see an opportunity emerging during a crisis. Overall, the majority of Israelis, the key decision-makers in the government and the security apparatus are either opposed to such visions, contend that they are unrealistic, or both.

However, it is important to mention this sentiment because while the current government remains in place and representatives of this political movement are in the cabinet, the prime minister will need to find a way to pacify their demands. This will therefore form an added layer of political complexity in terms of realising any of the slightly more feasible plans above.

Feasibility: Low

Conclusion

There are no easy solutions and no outcome will please everyone. Depending on where one stands on the political spectrum, you will see this crisis as an opportunity to advance your vision - Israeli resettlement of the Gaza Strip, peace based on two states, bolstered Israeli security control, increased US involvement in the Middle East, or Israeli-Saudi normalisation. There is no day-after scenario that is void of risk. What is certain is that all of the peoples of the region deserve a better tomorrow and it is incumbent on the leaders of the world to identify the formula that will, one day, allow this dream to become a reality.

When the World Tells You to Shrink, GROW AND SHINE

Daniel Schay

Johannesburg, once the economic heart of Africa, a vibrant metropolis where opportunity seekers the world over converged to try make a name for themselves in Africa's City of Gold. Johannesburg was once a shining example of the potential of Africa, but today, after decades of misgovernance and blatant corruption, the city's infrastructure is crumbling, the number of jobless people swells daily and there are areas within the city where law and order are completely foreign concepts. It was on 1 November, 2021 that I was elected by residents of one of the 135 wards in Johannesburg to represent them in the city council and arrest the decay taking hold in the city.

Fast forward two years to late October

2023, the decay in the city is accelerating whilst the criminal coalition governing council have gifted Johannesburg a mayor who never graduated high school. In a city going through this absolute crisis you would think the members of its council would want to discuss issues like the failing road network and the broken electrical grid or the housing crisis, but yet the needs of the six million residents of Johannesburg are the last thing the councillors want to discuss. We gathered for a two-day council meeting and yet every speech coming from the governing coalition councillors, draped in their *keffiyeh*, rings out about the plight of the Palestinian people and contains a call for the destruction of the world's only Jewish State. For two days, those representing

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In the face of adversity, there exists a powerful antidote – pride in one's identity

the people of Joburg conveniently forgot about their constituents and their needs, instead choosing to spew hatred towards a people on distant shores.

The same story repeated itself at the November Council meeting, although they briefly took an interlude to pass some blatantly corrupt and illegal council resolutions before



resuming to call for the genocide of Jews.

When the January council meeting came around, they were now armed with an interim judgement from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and renewed vigour in their genocidal calls, however I decided I could not remain silent or be dictated to on how I express my heritage. So I donned a tie with an Israeli flag, a yellow ribbon in support of the hostages, and continued to proudly wear my *kippah* to council. Covering from my own beliefs and principles in the face of intimidation was not an option.

I might have dressed according to my beliefs and heritage, but I was there to debate on issues affecting the residents of Johannesburg as is my elected mandate. When I got up to speak about the urban development framework for a neglected Black African township on the southern tip of the city, I was immediately greeted with chants of “Free Palestine” and “from the river to sea” - the tone for the rest of the speech was set. It didn’t take long for the first point of order to come in, which really was just a tirade that “a Zionist should never be able to quote Mandela.” The next disruption was the one I was expecting, but the way it was said took me by surprise. A councillor from the Economic Freedom Fighters got up and questioned if the emblem on my tie is permissible in council, the irony being that the only symbols banned in council are political party logos (meaning, if one came in wearing a giant swastika, that would be acceptable).

What shocked me is that he didn’t go after the whole flag of Israel, but just the “emblem” - the *Magen David* (Star of David) - at the centre of the tie. Immediately, I was compelled to respond by insisting if he has an issue with Jewish symbols that he should state it out loud. After much verification, the speaker of council deemed it to be a “star” and ushered me to continue. Those minutes of indecision where the tolerance of antisemitism was allowed to stand have been viewed millions of times around the world and have contributed to the discussion around the tacit acceptance of antisemitism.

The South African government's decision to take Israel to the ICJ on genocide charges, a move undoubtedly orchestrated in tandem with agendas aimed at delegitimising Israel, serves as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by Jewish communities worldwide.

As a Jewish and Zionist politician, I find myself at the intersection of this turbulent landscape, confronted with the imperative to uphold and defend my identity in the face of



Speaking up in Council Meeting, proudly wearing a kippah, yellow ribbon in support of hostages and an Israeli Flag tie with a Star of David at its centre

political manoeuvrings. The decision by the ANC-led government to target Israel is not merely a legal dispute, it is a calculated effort to undermine Israel's standing on the world stage. Embedded within this agenda are two distinct objectives: firstly, to erode support for Israel by conditioning military aid from Western governments, a tactic increasingly evident in recent developments in the United States. Secondly, and perhaps more insidiously, it seeks to sow seeds of doubt and shame within the diaspora Jewish community, thereby weakening the bonds of solidarity that underpin support for Israel.

In response to these challenges, I have chosen a path of unwavering defiance – proudly displaying my Jewish heritage and unapologetically advocating for Zionism. I hope my actions serve not only as a form of resistance against the ANC's machinations, but also as a source of inspiration and empowerment for Jewish youth worldwide.

The decision by the South African government to target Israel on the international stage underscores the ongoing challenges faced by Jewish communities worldwide. However, in the face of adversity, there exists a powerful antidote – pride in one's Jewish identity and unwavering support for Zionism.

As a Jewish and Zionist politician, I stand as a testament to this defiance, proudly displaying my heritage and advocating for the rights of the Jewish people. It is my hope that by doing so, I can inspire others to embrace their identity and stand firm in their support for Israel, ensuring that the flame of Jewish pride and Zionism continues to burn bright in the face of darkness.

Join me in standing up for who we are. Join me in proudly standing for our Judaism and our Zionism



Addressing Social Media before Council Meeting, January 2024

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JEWISH FUTURES



Cultivating *Connection*

Check out exciting updates from some of Jewish Futures' charities such as Aish UK, JRoots, FJL and GIFT, including a report from their recent Gala dinner. Be sure to check out a spotlight on Legacy Live, capturing the profound narratives that shape our families for generations.

STRENGTH *in Unity*

Jessica Finger

Director of Public Relations, Jewish Futures

In the shadow of the October 7th atrocities, Jewish Futures has been actively strengthening the bonds within the Jewish community, emphasising the importance of connection and the celebration of Jewish identity, bringing individuals together and highlighting the enduring message of *Am Yisrael Chai* (the nation of Israel lives)



Photo courtesy of Manfred Goldberg



Manfred Goldberg and Rabbi Naftali Schiff

LIVING MEMORY

In a moving tribute to Holocaust Memorial Day, JRoots joined forces with Aish on Campus, bringing 10 London campus JSocs together in order to host an evocative event at University College London (UCL) with Holocaust survivor Manfred Goldberg. His gripping story of survival captivated students from seven London universities, emphasising the importance of learning about and understanding the Holocaust. This initiative didn't stop at UCL; JRoots and Aish organised another session for young professionals and spoke to 300 JFS students, broadening the impact of Manfred's message. Rabbi Schiff, founder of JRoots, highlighted the relevance of Holocaust remembrance in today's world, urging the audience to uphold the vow of 'never again' with sincere action. Concluding with an opportunity for attendees to discuss and connect, JRoots and Aish on Campus showcased the enduring significance of engaging with the past to inform and improve our future.

VIRTUAL REALITY

JRoots introduces JFAR - Holocaust education *Far* into the future - a groundbreaking virtual reality experience enabling users to interact with a Holocaust survivor through AI by posing 100 questions. This innovative approach keeps JRoots at the cutting edge of Holocaust education, increasingly vital as direct encounters with survivors become rarer. At the VR unveiling, JRoots also presented rare artefacts, including two yellow stars and a *siddur* smuggled from concentration camps, now being converted into 3D for VR integration. Holocaust survivor Manfred Goldberg and his wife, along with 200 Aish students and young professionals, were some of the first to explore this immersive technology.



AM YISRAEL CHAI

This winter featured several impactful JRoots trips to Poland, including two notable journeys. In one, 70 students from universities across the UK, from Scotland to Brighton, embarked for five days with Aish, leaving an indelible mark, and inspiring them to embrace their Jewish heritage with pride. The experience culminated at Auschwitz, where the group, singing 'Am Yisrael Chai' ('The Nation of Israel Lives'), left with renewed confidence in the Jewish future and a commitment to contribute positively.

In another significant trip, Aish Schools collaborated with Yavneh College to take over one hundred Year 12 students on a comprehensive tour of Poland's historical Jewish sites, including Warsaw, Auschwitz, Krakow and Lodz. This JRoots journey offered deep insights into Jewish history and the Holocaust as well. The trip reached an emotional peak in Krakow with a memorable Shabbat and a poignant *Havdalah* ceremony near Oskar Schindler's factory.



Above left: Yavne School students at the Lodz cemetery. Above right: Yavne School students at the Radegast train station

ACTION PACKED

Amid challenging times, there is a palpable drive among attendees to deepen their connection with their Jewish identity and unite with fellow students. AISH UK is making waves across the country, engaging diverse age groups with a dynamic mix of events that merge community, education and connection.

In an effort to connect students from across the UK, Aish Campus London's Winter Special at the Arboretum drew 175 students, while in Hampstead, an evening at the Must Wine Bar for young professionals combined cheese, wine and networking. The weekly Level-Headed program has captivated 60 attendees each Tuesday night, featuring study and learning sessions followed by diverse educational breakout discussions. Manchester played host to a deeply meaningful Shabbat experience for university students, featuring communal meals, discussions and a poignant encounter with a Holocaust survivor. Regular challah bakes in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham keep tradition alive, engaging students in meaningful practices that strengthen community bonds. Northern campuses including the Universities of Durham, St Andrews and Edinburgh held discussions and events tailored to these smaller communities. Specifically, Aish Birmingham has introduced a variety of engaging events, including special weekly programming and Hebrew classes.

Aish UK recently completed a mentorship programme that took 25 young professionals on a highly impactful journey to Sao Paulo, Brazil. This adventure wasn't about sightseeing; it was a deep dive into the local and Jewish cultures, enriched with discussions on social issues, interactions with local communities and personal development activities. Participants explored the vibrant city, from the graffiti of Batman Alley to the melodies of favela musicians, engaging in a variety of experiences that broadened their perspectives and fostered a sense of global awareness. The programme highlighted the importance of mentorship, community engagement and the power of immersive cultural experiences. As they returned, participants carried with them not just memories, but a renewed commitment to making a difference, inspired by the diverse people and stories they encountered.



Aish football team at the University of Birmingham unites post-protests, fostering a safe, fun space for Jewish connection and solidarity on campus



The group at the Kotel (Western Wall), Jerusalem, Israel



*Above left: Olami Batman alley Aish trip 2024
Above right: Rabbi Cookie Cohen, Rabbi Yoni Abadi Brazil Olami 2024*



Volunteers picking oranges to help local farmers while on the GIFT, JRoots and Aish UK combined Israel Mission trip

DEEPLY CONNECTED

Since January, GIFT, JRoots and Aish UK have joined forces for a series of impactful solidarity and volunteering trips in Israel, each contributing its unique strengths. JRoots organised the trips, GIFT led volunteering efforts and Aish Young Professionals enriched Jewish identity and connection to Israel. The collaboration featured activities like farming, supporting local communities, hosting BBQs for soldiers and distributing donations. A poignant moment was the engagement with Adi Efrat, a survivor of the Kibbutz Be'eri massacre, who shared her experiences with the groups. Another highlight was an evening hosted by Aish Young Professionals with 98-year-old Holocaust survivor Josef Lewkowicz and the parents of fallen IDF paratrooper Sgt. Binyamin Meir Airley (21), offering deep personal connections to historical and recent tragedies. Participants expressed the trips' profound impact on their sense of identity and commitment to making a difference. Rabbi Naftali Schiff, Founder & CEO of AISH UK and Jewish Futures, praised the synergy between the organisations, emphasising their role in connecting British Jews to their heritage and to Israel in meaningful ways.

“

Seeing Jewish heroism of the past in Josef Lewkowicz and in the present from the Airley's, gave everyone present the conviction that we have it within our national spirit to make it to the finish line of history

Rabbi Yaakov Klein



Rabbi Yaakov Klein and Rabbi Naftali Schiff with Robert Airley and Jennifer Airley, parents of heroic fallen soldier Binyamin Airley hy"d, at the special event with holocaust survivor Yosef Lewkowicz in Jerusalem

GIFT GALA

The GIFT Gala Dinner at Camden's Roundhouse this past March celebrated two decades of inspiring and enabling acts of giving in the community, drawing 650 guests to commemorate the charity's transformative impact. Founding Director Michelle Barnett MBE expressed gratitude, reflecting on GIFT's origin to foster a culture of giving over self-interest. Rabbi Naftali Schiff and Rabbi Sandor Milun shared insights on GIFT's broad engagement across the UK, highlighting educational initiatives reaching thousands of school children. The evening was further enriched by captivating performances, including an awe-inspiring rendition of *Shir Hama'alot* (Song of Ascents) by Yoni Shine and Robbie Staffler. Guests were also moved by the screening of *The Hero*, a poignant film created by GIFT that left not a dry eye in the house. A highlight of the evening was the touching story shared by Miriam Ibigi, a shining example of the impact of GIFT's work. Miriam, who as one of 11 children, once relied on GIFT for meals and support during challenging times, shared her journey from receiving assistance to becoming a dedicated volunteer, culminating in the creation of the Giving Kitchen, an initiative that provides hundreds of meals weekly from the GIFT kitchen.



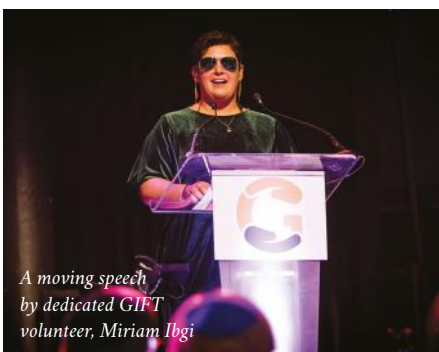
Overhead view of the GIFT gala event at the Roundhouse, London



Rabbi Sandor Milun - Managing Director, GIFT



Some of the 40 teenage ushers at the GIFT gala



A moving speech by dedicated GIFT volunteer, Miriam Ibigi



Michelle Barnett MBE and Jewish Futures CEO, Rabbi Naftali Schiff - the founders of GIFT



Violinist, Bar Markovich, performing



Table Centrepieces for the GIFT gala were adorned with small plants to take and "give it forward" - complete with little tags to write personal messages



Singer, Yoni Shine, performing

WORDS & ACTIONS

Seed and GIFT, with support from the Wohl Legacy, have initiated the Clean Speech Project, a yearly effort engaging 70 communities and schools to foster positive and mindful communication. This endeavour emphasises the transformative power of words through educational sessions, including a significant seminar at Norrice Lea synagogue attended by 150 women, and an expansive online course offered by Aish. A highlight, the Clean Speech focus week, involved 35 schools and synagogues, promoting positivity with activities like compliment t-shirts for students. The project's reach is exemplified by 1,300 participants in a 30-day series of Clean Speech videos, underscoring the collective drive towards a respectful and united community. Concurrently, GIFT is expanding its Bnei Mitzvah programme under Shosh Hill's leadership, reinforcing the values of responsibility and community service. The programme inspires acts of charity among youth, marked by achievements like Aurelia Evers raising over £12,000. Upcoming efforts include an after-school Giving Club, aiming to deepen engagement in philanthropic endeavours, highlighting GIFT's commitment to nurturing a culture of giving and kindness among the younger generation.



Aurelia Evers with Michelle Barnett MBE, GIFT Bat Mitzvah



GIFT Bat Mitzvah Programme Making Soup Packs

EXPANDING HORIZONS

FJL brought eight alumni to Cambridge to speak with the students from the Jewish Society as they start to think about what careers they'd like to pursue after graduating. A panel of barristers, solicitors, consultants, investors and commodity brokers all shared their journeys and life advice before breaking off into 5 minute individual appointments. The students were so grateful for the opportunity to learn from and connect with FJL alumni going all the way back to 2009.



FJL Cambridge University networking event

“

I really enjoyed meeting the professionals in finance and consultancy. It gave me insight into what a career in those industries is like day to day and how I would go about starting my career Jude Lewis, co-president of the JSoc

GET INVOLVED





LEGACY LIVE:

Preserving Life Stories for Generations

The Perspectives Team

Capturing a life story is more than simply recounting events; it is about capturing the essence of a person's character, passions, dreams, their quirks and values.

In the bustling world in which we live, time often slips through our fingers like sand, leaving behind buried memories and untold stories. Yet, the essence of our loved ones - their laughter, their wisdom and their experiences - deserve to be captured and preserved for generations to come. Legacy Live offers a unique and heartfelt opportunity dedicated to immortalising the life stories of individuals through video documentaries and books.

The inspiration for Legacy Live traces back to a poignant moment between Rabbi Naftali Schiff and Conrad Morris, of blessed memory. Rabbi Schiff, visiting Morris in the hospital as he recuperated from broken ribs, was struck by Morris' unwavering commitment to community service, even during his own pain



David Hammelburger shares insights on his father's life during an interview with Rabbi Naftali Schiff

as he sat in his hospital bed raising money for a communal organisation. The Rabbi's question, "Who did you learn this from?" sparked a realisation – here was a man with a compelling story, a life rich with experiences and values worth preserving.

Having known the Morris family all his life, Rabbi Schiff offered the family the idea to capture his story for future generations to understand who their grandfather was. Drawing on his experience interviewing Holocaust survivors, he enlisted the help of a videographer, producer and writer to document Morris' life. Thus, the seeds of Legacy Live were sown – a venture born out of friendship, respect and a shared belief in the power of storytelling.

The process of creating a Legacy Live documentary is a collaborative journey, guided by the memories and insights of family members, friends and associates. Sifting through family archives and photographs, the team conducts extensive research and a

series of in-person interviews. A narrative is crafted that captures the essence of the individual – their triumphs, struggles, and most importantly, their values.

For Conrad Morris, the experience of having his life story immortalised was deeply meaningful. As the first recipient of a Legacy Live documentary for his 80th birthday, Morris saw his legacy come to life before his eyes. Through the words of loved ones and the pages of a beautifully curated coffee table book, his story was preserved for generations to come.

Since then, Legacy Live has continued to celebrate the lives of individuals worldwide from all walks of life, capturing their legacies in film and print. With each film and book, families are given the opportunity to reconnect with their roots, to understand the values that shaped their ancestors and to pass on their stories to future generations.

What sets Legacy Live apart is its commitment to authenticity and storytelling. Each documentary and book is not just

a chronological retelling of events but a celebration of life itself. Through carefully curated interviews, heartfelt storytelling and meticulous and sensitive attention to detail, Legacy Live ensures that every aspect of the individual's life is honoured and remembered.

For families, the experience of working with Legacy Live is often surprisingly cathartic and enjoyable, providing an opportunity to reflect on cherished memories and celebrate the life of their loved one in a meaningful way. It's a chance to come together, share stories and create a lasting tribute that will be treasured for years to come.

In a world where time moves swiftly and memories fade, Legacy Live offers a priceless family heirloom for every grandfather and grandmother who is a hero, worthy of the gift of soulful storytelling. By preserving the legacies of our loved ones, we ensure that their stories live on, inspiring future generations and reminding us of the power of the human spirit.



Conrad Morris looking through their Legacy Live Book together with his daughter Liz Pushett and grandson Yishai Ben Tzvi



Michael Hammelburger being filmed for his Legacy Live film



Rabbi Naftali Schiff interviewing Gerald Addlestone for his Legacy Live film



EVERYONE HAS A STORY TO TELL WE WILL HELP TELL YOURS

Our team of skilled and experienced professionals capture the life and experiences of your parents or grandparents, weaving them together through timeless interviews, family documents, research and pictures. We uncover their values and tell their story.

BESPOKE FILM & BOOK PRODUCTION
www.legacy-live.com

INTROSPECTION

A person is seen from behind, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a patterned shirt, standing in a field of tall grass. The person's face is obscured by the hat. The background is a soft-focus field of green grass.

Meaningful *Reflection*

Choice. Prayer. Intention. Potential. Doubt.
Resilience. Disappointment. Vision. Faith.
This section is absolutely packed with
beautiful writing, brilliant insights and
deeply empowering ideas.

Thoughts & *Prayers*

Gareth Kobrin

I was in my happy place. Lazing on a beach, sipping local beer from a green can, using the Greek sun as my reading lamp.

My paragraph was interrupted by an unwelcome exclamation:

"I can't believe it!"

My wife was using her *Bad News* tone, and I knew it was serious because she was wearing the pain already.

"What?"

"They think *A* has cancer".

I know a story isn't as juicy without a name, but *A* was my daughter's age, *close* to us - and very young. Whenever I hear that cancer has someone, my response is the same: "Which cancer?"

The answer landed like a punch to my stomach - it was one of the bad ones.

I'm not an emotional person, but I couldn't stop *thinking* about it all day. If a thought ever starts to consume you from the inside, the trick is to spit it out. Say it out loud to

someone. When something upsets me, I try to laugh at it. You can't fear something that's funny.

Cancer must turn a lot of atheists into believers, because they have no one to blame it on.

The Voice within

I remember having conversations with God from a very young age, with no doubt that He existed. In my teens I chose to stop these chats because the science says it's stupid - and I hate sounding stupid - so I forced myself to bury this embarrassing compulsion for many years.

But I can't deny it any longer, it's how I was born. I believe in God. There, I said it.

I still prayed during my atheist years. Even though I told myself it was foolish to believe in an Almighty Being (with a beard who lives in heaven), I hedged my bets and read the prayers when I went to *shul* on Friday nights and the high holidays. I read first year philosophy at university, so I'd learned the famous "Pascal's

Wager." Blaise Pascal was the child prodigy mathematician in the 1600's who came up with the famous premise:

Human beings bet with their lives whether God exists or not. Given the possibility of God's existence, he suggested it is a better "bet" to believe in God than not to. If God exists and one believes, one gains infinite happiness (heaven); if one does not believe and God exists, one faces infinite loss (hell).

I am not an expert, but when a child is sentenced to terminal cancer, I know in my soul, that comes from God.

It's a funny thing - my mother was in hospital for over a year before she passed away, but I don't remember praying for her. I have a son with special needs who spent most of his early life in critical care, and I don't think I said a prayer. I had this stubborn belief that if God wanted someone to be sick, it is futile for me to ask Him to change His mind.

But when I put on *tefillin* (phylacteries) the

“

True self-discipline is when your conscience tells you to do something and you don't talk back

you to experience your thoughts as an *observer*. When you blurt out something like “*Please don't let her die,*” it forces self-reflection.

One better than saying something, is *singing* it. Song is transcendent – even if you don't know the words, a humble hum along with the harmony can be undeniably uplifting. Part of the reason I came out as a Believer was because my son was incurably sick, and I was struggling to make sense of it all. I was lucky to be part of a small *minyan* graciously hosted at the home of Rabbi Tatz. It was never more than thirty people, but that small room generated some serious South African *gees*, which sounds a lot like the Hebrew word *Chiyut* and means the same thing: Life Force.

One specific prayer we sing on Saturday morning used to get me: *El Adon*. This mystical poem, written as an alphabetic acrostic (each line begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet), is a meditation on the heavenly lights, describing how the sun, moon and stars obey God's will and sing God's praises. I have absolutely no idea what it means, but there is a particular tune that would bring me to tears every Shabbat for a year. I even contemplated wearing sunglasses to shul.

Saying please and thank you

Prayer teaches us basic manners, and even those who pray mindlessly out of habit build mental muscle. But giving it even a moment's thought forces one to ask two fundamental questions: what do I want, and what am I grateful for? Daily prayer does not make you good, but it does keep the question of your own goodness and failings constantly before you. It is a partial antidote to obliviousness.

This requires rigorous discipline and consistency, which can translate to other areas of life. A popular technique embraced by billionaires, life coaches and overachievers is *Manifestation*: the practice of bringing something tangible into your life through attraction and belief. Essentially, if you say it, it will come. It is rooted in the faith that by focusing your thoughts on specific goals or desires, you can influence the outcome of your reality by bringing it into reality through speech.

True self-discipline is when your conscience tells you to do something and you

don't talk back.

Finally, the repetitive nature of prayer can positively affect the brain, altering its structure and function. It can lead to increased mental clarity, improved memory, and more efficient cognitive processing. Prayer is powerful even if God isn't listening - so imagine if He is...

The magic words

It takes courage to believe. Jews need no proof of the apparent injustice of life. It is written on the blood-soaked pages of our history and lie-stained webpages of our present. Ultimately, all we have ever had is an invisible God and the line connecting us to Him: the *siddur* (prayer book), the words of prayer. All we have is faith. In Judaism, faith becomes real when it becomes prayer.

I once heard the great Rabbi Jonathan Sacks describe it best: “We speak to a presence vaster than the unfathomable universe yet closer to us than we are to ourselves: the God beyond who is also the Voice within.”

There is a specific difficulty of Jewish prayer. There are laws: how to pray, when to pray, what to pray. There are fixed times, fixed ways, fixed texts. On the other hand, prayer is worship of the heart, the outpouring of the soul. Therefore, Jewish prayer is guided by two opposing forces: order and outburst, regularity and spontaneity, uniformity and individuality, law and freedom.

Embracing the ancient vocabulary of prayer is not easy. I find it difficult to connect to the words, which seem to come from a world so different from our own - one whose language and metaphors are puzzling or alien.

Language *must* fail when we try to describe a Being beyond all parameters of speech, yet language is all we have, and it is enough. We learn that God made the world with creative words, and He listens to our prayerful words. Language is the bridge that joins us to Infinity.

I don't want young girls to die. I want my family and friends to be healthy and yes, I want to be wealthy. There is a God and He gave us a simple toolkit to get everything we want: pray for it.

Let the philosophers speculate about God and let the scientists argue about God. We Jews do something simpler and ultimately more profound: We talk to God.

next morning (which is one of the few things I do somewhat religiously), I caught myself asking Him not to let this little girl die. Back on the beach later that day, I returned to the comfort of my reptile brain, and he laughed at the Foolish Believer who dares negotiate with the King of the World.

My thoughts and prayers were at war, and I was supporting the spiritual forces, so for the first time in my life, I decided to double-click on prayer.

The act itself is (spiritual) therapy

Reason is the guardian of the mystical, so whenever I'm evaluating something supernatural, I like to look for scientific justification. Whether you believe in God or not, the therapeutic benefits of praying are well documented. The difference between a thought and a prayer is the act of speech. Hearing something in your own voice allows

THE POWER OF

Metaphor

Bari Gold

I once heard an acquaintance express disapproval for the influx of Jews in her neighbourhood. As I processed what she'd said, she turned to me and added, "Not you, Bari. You're *normal*." What she meant was *You look and act like one of us*. I didn't seem all that Jewish. I thought Judaism was like a publication I could unsubscribe from. I knew my parents were Jewish, but what did that have to do with me?

While studying at university, an antisemitic student journal article aroused my interest in Israel. Everyone seemed an authority on the subject. What was it about the only Jewish state in the entire world that was so sensational? I sleuthed around the Jewish Studies building and attended Jewish Critical Theory lectures to find out more. My curiosity culminated in my meeting with a Rabbi and, eventually, purchasing a one-way ticket to Israel to explore my Jewish heritage.

I discovered a tradition thousands of years old. I met Jews from all over the world, and every single one of them could read Hebrew. How could it be that Ariella from South Africa

knew the same ancient alphabet as Rut from Austria, Nicole from Uruguay and little old me from Florida? It was as if we were connected by something deeper than language. We shared a history and a purpose. Getting to know my fellow Jew was like getting to know myself.

Before long, it was time to return to the States. I was newly minted, observing Shabbat for the first time. I'd enrolled in a graduate program to pursue a Masters of Fine Arts in poetry. I wondered, Would I be judged for my beliefs? Would I make any friends?"

My classmates got together on weekends, and I worried about missing out and becoming isolated from my peers. As soon as the braided candle hissed in the wine, separating Shabbat from the week, I'd rush over to spend time with them. I'd decided there was no real difference between us (other than how we dressed, what we ate and how we spent our weekends, of course). I thought to myself, *This is what it is to be Jewish, to live in both worlds.*

October 7th was a horrifying wake-up call. Days after the attack, the same classmates

I'd hurried out of the house to spend time with began protesting Israel. Students with megaphones attracted big crowds, marched across campus and shouted for liberation, but not for any of the captives taken hostage days prior. One evening, I walked past the Hillel House and saw that it had been vandalised. The next morning, it was painted over. Weeks went by before I realised the incident had gone unreported, and if I hadn't seen the vandalism with my own eyes, I wouldn't have known about it.

It seemed the entire campus was infected with an anti-Israel bug. Going to class and carrying on with the quiet minutiae of everyday life felt wrong. Even praying felt, to some degree, trivial. What could I do from outside of Israel, on my university campus in Boston? What does God want from me?

A wise mentor taught me that life is like an episode of *Survivor*, a call to navigate unfamiliar terrain with nothing but a backpack of tools. Each of us has our own unique backpack— a set of skills, talents and gifts given to us directly

from God to help us overcome our tailor-made, personal challenges. When I feel uncertain about how to respond to a challenge, I peek into my backpack and ask myself, “How do these tools correspond to this challenge?”

A brief look inside my backpack: I’m a poet and an essayist. I’m fascinated by words and language. I love creativity, truth and meaning. Above all else, I’m a Jew. In response to the antisemitism on campus, I wrote poems about Israel, making a pen and paper my sword and shield. Met with vehement resistance, I wondered what kind of an impact words can really have.

In *The Path of the Just*, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto¹ writes extensively about the evil inclination’s bag of tricks, and the imagination is its arsenal. Abstract desires dress themselves in comprehensible words and images such as a glass of wine or a slice of cake. I’m reminded of a few lines by William Wordsworth²:

*The hiding places of my power
seem open; I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
may scarcely see at all, and I would give,
while yet we may, as far as words can give,
a substance and a life to what I feel:
I would enshrine the spirit of the past
for future restoration.*

Like Rabbi Luzzatto, Wordsworth recognised the ability of words to give “a substance and a life” to the intangible.

Sitting in the attic of our minds is the world’s oldest artisan, contriving images, forming metaphors, inclining us to action. Picture

something bittersweet. Now picture a sugared lemon. Which is easier to imagine? As we approach precision, we approach meaning and the ability to create something real.

Imagination allows us to participate in the divine act of creation, dressing our feelings in words and images. The more precise the image, the more meaningful the idea becomes. Meaning moves us, inspires movement, inspires action.

This is the power of creativity and the role of the artist in the world. And yet, all I’d done with my words was turn my classroom into a war zone. I’d dressed my pain in poetry and fed it to my peers. Looking for a fight, I’d created one. I’m reminded of another few lines, this time by Emily Dickinson³:

*As lightning to the children eased
with explanation kind,
the truth must dazzle gradually
or every man be blind—*

Beholding raw truth is like beholding the sun with a naked eye. To even come close to perceiving its light, we’d first need about 93 million miles of distance between us. Add a hat. Some sunglasses. Sunscreen. And yet! Both the sun and the truth look best at an angle.

Enter the imagination and its metaphors. Its power is twofold. On one hand metaphors clarify. They dress feelings in comprehensible words and images. On the other hand they obscure. They *dress* feelings in comprehensible words and images. Truth is perceived in its deviations, in the shade, in the dark.

The evil inclination isn’t the only artisan in the attic. The good inclination carries the same

bag of tricks and uses the imagination to inspire action. The war between good and evil is fought on the battlefield of the imagination.

All Jews all over the world are fighting a war right now. We aren’t fighting with our classmates, our professors, our coworkers or our neighbours. We’re fighting within ourselves. The Israel-Hamas war is a very real, very physical, devastating war. It is also a physical manifestation of the spiritual war between Israel, “perseverance” in English, and Hamas, “injustice.” Each time one of us perseveres over injustice within ourselves, we’re supporting our brothers and sisters in Israel and fighting this war.

Like the good and evil inclinations, poetry, through precise and meaningful words and images, can influence thoughts, speech and action. At the same time, approaching precision is like approaching truth, which can be painful to perceive. Antisemitism is the perfect example of this. When we received the Torah on Mount Sinai, hatred, “*sina*” in Hebrew, was unleashed in the world. On that day, we saw that moral law comes from God and not from man. Antisemitism is the manifestation of man’s rejection of an objective, divine and moral law.

Thank God for antisemitism. Antisemitism is like a compass always pointing East. It is, in a strange way, a part of our heritage and an indication of our everlasting covenant with God. It can be a strength and a gift, reminding us of what it means to be Jewish and of our moral obligation to the world. Besides, if we’re hated, it’s for what we *represent*. In other words, the Jewish nation is one big metaphor.

A lot can be done with a good metaphor...



Boston University students block the BU bridge, November 2023. Photo, Joel Brown

¹ (1707-1746), aka *The Ramchal* ² *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth ³ *Tell all the Truth*, Emily Dickinson

Becoming ANTIFRAGILE

Have we become victims of comfort?

Rabbi Moshe Friedman

An Israeli student in the UK recently shared with me the most powerful experience of his life. During a year-long *mechina* — a post-high school gap-year programme in Israel — one week in particular stayed with him forever. The students were given an in-depth tutorial on navigation, then told to pack some basic toiletries and a change of clothes into a rucksack. The instructors filed them onto a bus whose windows were tinted on the inside, so that they could not see where they were going. After travelling for a few hours the bus stopped, and the students stepped out into the middle of the Negev desert. They were divided into groups of six, given small rations of food, water and a map. “Make your way to the destination. See you in a week.” The bus pulled away and they were alone.

For the next week they struggled through intense heat by day and cold by night. The food was sparse. “I lost five kilos in a week,” the student told me. At least one member of the group had to stand watch at all hours of the night — sometimes the instructors would sneak up on the groups at night, and if nobody

was awake they would steal some of their food. By the time they made it to their destination they were starving and sleep deprived.

That was the best week of his life.

It is an incredibly recent phenomenon that a large percentage of humans have been able to live with unprecedented comfort. We buy unblemished fruits and vegetables from local supermarkets. We sleep on coil mattresses in climate-controlled houses that keep us safe and dry from the elements. Our hot water comes through pipes in the floor, and our toilets flush away waste with a literal push of a button. Many of us are privileged to work jobs that require almost no manual labour whatsoever.

One would think that such a high quality of life should make us the happiest people on the planet. In truth, our first-world countries have higher levels of clinical depression and anxiety than ever before. Books such as Jonathan Haidt’s *The Coddling of the American Mind*, and Michael Easter’s *The Comfort Crisis* have argued that protecting ourselves and

our children from challenges leads directly to mental disorder and existential misery.

Haidt addresses the “snowflake” generation of children who take offence to everything, and find mundane areas of life to be “traumatic.” He traces the phenomenon to the rise in “safe spaces” and “trigger warnings” that began in the 2010s, and even further back to “helicopter parenting” in the 1990s. Parents and teachers who tried to safeguard their charges from any mild discomfort ended up destroying the youth’s ability to deal with hardship.

Easter goes into even more detail, citing study after study of how much we suffer from the absence of pushing ourselves physically and mentally. At the other end of the spectrum, endurance experts who train Navy SEALs and professional athletes have shown that by intentionally placing ourselves into situations that go beyond our comfort zones, it makes us far happier people.

Their arguments are both based on a concept that was most famously illuminated by the rogue financial wizard Nassim Taleb. Objects, people and cultures fit into one of three categories. Those that get weaker when subjected to stress are called *fragile*. Those that maintain their integrity through stress are called *resilient*. But there is a third option, one that might sound counterintuitive at first. Some things not only withstand stress, but actually become stronger because of it. They are called *antifragile*.

You can find many examples of this principle. Our immune system exhibits antifragility when it builds antibodies in response to fighting a virus. Our muscles are antifragile — every time we exercise our muscles tear and grow back stronger. And yes, our psychologies are antifragile too. When we experience small levels of discomfort and hardship, we end up being able to cope much better with larger difficulties.

But what happens when you remove all

Photo courtesy of MATANEL (Mechinat Meitarim Lachish) programme





these small stressors? What happens if, in the name of compassion or idealism, we decide that children shouldn't be around peanuts for fear they may be allergic to them? Or that students should have to be subjected to views that cause them to squirm? Then we end up suffering far more unintended consequences. Peanut allergies become more rampant. And most destructively, students become simply incapable of facing anything that challenges their comfortable worldview.

It would seem obvious, then, that what we all need is our own version of the Israeli *mechina* desert week. If only we could bus all these snowflakes out to the desert or some other remote natural location, and give them a healthy dose of what it means to take responsibility for their own survival, then maybe we could inject a bit of antifragility into a culture that has become shockingly delicate.

In many indigenous cultures this experience has a name. It's called a *rite of passage*. In the Australian outback, the African bush and the South American rainforest, these cultures subject their young ones to gruelling, even painful, rituals that force the child into maturity and adulthood. Anthropologists like Mircea Eliade have studied these rites extensively, and have found that they not only create adults, but they also bind these adolescents to the sacred religions of their tribes. They create a reverence for the elders and for the traditions that have come before them.

So where is our rite of passage? One could

ask this question broadly to most Western societies, but let's start with a hard look in the mirror? Where is the Jewish adulthood ritual? I know what you're going to respond, and the answer is no, a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* does not count. There is no hardship or transformative experience in memorising a few lines of Hebrew and then celebrating with a party and a good meal.

The answer for why we don't have such a ritual may lie in our past. It could certainly be argued that Jewish history has been by and large one long rite of passage! "In every generation they rise against us to destroy us." So goes the famous line in the Pesach *Haggadah*. From the slavery in Egypt, to the travails in the desert, to the constant battles with the Assyrians, Plishtim and other surrounding hostile nations in the land of Israel, to the Babylonian and Persian exiles, to the Greek invasion, to the Roman conquest and to the millenia of pogroms and expulsions we've endured in the current exile; there almost did not exist a generation of Jews who did not have some very real hardship that was naturally built in to their lives.

The Jewish People have maintained its survival instincts out of necessity. It has been beaten, battered and bruised for so long that antifragility is in our bones. Friedrich Nietzsche, who was no fan of the Jews, admitted that the Jews are the strongest race on Earth. We may have discovered the reason why.

For many Jews, this onslaught of

persecution continues. Certainly those living in Israel face the constant threat of annihilation, and the October 7 massacres have confirmed that the veil of security is tissue thin. And indeed many Jews who are still scattered through parts of Eastern Europe, South America and other enclaves still live with the constant reality that they are unwelcome simply because they are Jewish. One student from Berlin confided in me that his parents taught him to hide his Jewishness. When he was twelve, he let slip that he was a Jew. Exactly one week later his parents were forced to take him out of the school because of the incessant bullying.

But what about we Jews who have grown up in relative prosperity and security in the UK and United States? The verbal assaults still exist, and seem to be getting worse in recent times. But by no means are we the embattled Jews of yesteryear. So how do we maintain that antifragility when our greatest challenges are whether we can purchase a car when we're seventeen?

Perhaps it's time to take a cue from our Jewish brothers and sisters in Israel. Before we turn into greater snowflakes, maybe it's high time we developed a "desert week" of our own. If we can push past the parental screams for "safety" and the larger society's criticisms of "backwardness," we might just recognise that our mental wellbeing, and even our very survival, depends on becoming the time-tested Jews that our ancestors once were.

Manifesting



VICTORY

Beatie Deutsch

I can vividly remember the first time I learned about the concept of manifesting, at the end of 2018. It was a cold and dreary day in Jerusalem, and I was out on my early morning run, listening to the final class of a parenting series. I was immediately intrigued by the speaker's opening offer to teach us how we can create our own reality.

I found myself listening intently to her explanation of the way we can directly impact the blessings we receive in this world, through our thoughts, speech and actions.

God is your shadow, His actions mirror the way you act in this world.

God is infinite. He has unlimited resources and we get to choose the life we want to live.

God's spark of divinity lives within each of us (tzelem Elokim). We ourselves are connected to His infinite power.

As my feet pounded a steady beat on the pavement, I let those words sink in and suddenly felt exhilarated. In less than two weeks, I'd be racing my first National Championship in the marathon, could I actually manifest my own victory?

This practice of manifesting and visualising success is second nature to me now as a professional marathoner. But it connects me to a tradition that has been part of Jewish faith for thousands of years - the power of manifesting dreams through unwavering belief.

One of my all-time favourite quotes from our Sages is "In the merit of the righteous women of that generation – Israel was redeemed from Egypt, and in their merit they will once again be redeemed in the future."¹

During their long exile in Egypt, the men felt hopeless and despondent. They couldn't believe they'd ever get out. They were broken

and exhausted, yet their wives clung to faith. Even in the darkest moments, they could envision God's salvation. They imagined the miracles He would perform for them, and created beautiful tambourines so they'd be ready to celebrate when it happened.

When Moses instructed the Jews to pack their provisions hastily and come with him, the Jewish women made sure to grab those tambourines.

That is how the women were able to sing and dance after experiencing the splitting of the sea. "The righteous women of that generation were so confident that God would make miracles for them, they prepared tambourines and dances."²

As a Jewish woman, I feel this legacy coursing through my veins – the courage to believe in miracles, and manifest my future desires. As a professional runner for Israel, I



Crossing the finish line of the 2019 Tiberias National Championship Marathon in first place and completely mind-blown

Standing on the podium with my daughter in 2019, an image I visualised throughout training



¹Talmud Sotah 11b ²Rashi (Exodus 15:20)

Visualising it all on the startline, with composure and clarity



Crossing the finish line in Tiberias December 2022, winning my fourth consecutive national title

have learned to apply these practices and use them as my secret weapon before every race.

It begins with setting intentions. Getting super clear about the goals I am striving for and understanding my *WHY* – why this achievement will benefit me, and help me grow as an individual. I like to write my dreams down in a journal, and list at least three ways it will make a difference for me in life. I always write them down in present tense, so I can see myself there. Sometimes it's in bright red lipstick on my mirror, other times it can be 50 times over on the same page, each time engraving it deeper in my heart and mind. I have sealed it in my consciousness, but it's in my *SPEECH* as well. *I AM* a 2:29 marathoner. *I AM* a healthy athlete. *I AM* representing Israel on the podium.

Then there's the more tricky part – getting rid of limiting beliefs and transcending the worry and doubt. It is a daily practice of turning my fears into affirmations, and clearing out negative emotions like guilt and anger. Working on the *THOUGHT* plane is

hard. It requires being intimately aware of the constant chatter in my head, choosing to amplify the thoughts that serve me and ignore those that stand in my way.

And of course, it takes *ACTION*. Mapping out an exact plan for how I will get from where I am today, to where I hope to be. Doing something every single day to get one step closer to my goal, while trusting that God will make it happen.

It's December 2018, and there are less than two weeks until the big day. Fired up by everything I've learned about manifestation, I begin to incorporate a new ritual into my training: visualisation. I can already see myself crossing the finish line victoriously. I imagine all the details and can feel the sensations – from the way the medal feels around my neck, the loud cheering of the crowds and my children all there to hug me. I immerse myself in the experience and it's the only thing I can think about on my last few runs.

When we line up at the start line of the Tiberias National Championship race, I am

relaxed and composed. There are throngs of runners around me, all clamouring for a spot at the front, but I am in my own world. The loud gun jolts me back to reality and we begin racing. It feels surreal; every step is effortless and I can barely believe that we are ticking off four-minute kilometres.

As I reach the half-way point, I am shocked to see another woman on her way back, already well ahead of me. I sense a sinking feeling in my stomach. For a second I am disappointed, as I recognise this woman, an outstanding athlete and previous national champion. There is no way I can beat her.

Less than a moment later, I changed my narrative: "*God is with me every step of the way, and anything is possible,*" I repeat with deep conviction, the words my own Jewish great-grandmothers had chosen to hold onto as slaves in Egypt. I proceed to push the pace, running way faster than my coach had prescribed, intent on catching the first-place woman. I am mind-blown when I cross the finish line in 2:42, as first-place female. I cut *SIX* whole minutes off

my time, in the second half of the marathon, running way faster than I ever dreamed possible and manifesting my dream into reality.

Science will tell you the brain is an extraordinary thing. By persistently focusing on goals and desired outcomes, we can gradually mould reality to match our visions. I've seen that to be true, but I will add: when we understand God's infinite capacity to create and tap into *that* power, *then* we can achieve anything we set our mind to. With tireless effort and unwavering faith, we can make our dreams reality.

Not every competition has been victorious, and not every race has been successful. Manifesting is a powerful tool, but it doesn't mean that I will never experience failure. I certainly have had my fair share of struggles in the last few years as a professional athlete. At the same time, I've come to understand that life is a process, and I need to go through these experiences to help me become a better vessel.

I'll be honest – as I write these words, I am currently going through the most difficult

period in my career. A dream I believed in and chased for the last four years is now over. *I AM AN OLYMPIAN*, the words I carried in my head and heart, will not come true this summer. The injury I thought I was over is back again; it will take months to heal. There is no way for me to qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympic team. I am heartbroken and shattered, shaken to my core. Does this manifesting thing still work for me?

I thought I did everything right. I aligned every aspect of my life towards the goal I believed in so deeply. Over the last four years, I visualised myself running in Paris hundreds of times over: the Eiffel tower in the background, Israel on my shirt, my family cheering proudly. This was not the ending I had ever imagined.

It's hard to get over the deep pain and loss that I feel. I have invested so much time and energy, I can't believe it's all gone. And then I hear a voice, a soft whisper in my head.

Don't let go of your tambourine.

During the darkest moments, the Jewish women didn't lose faith. They saw what those around them couldn't see. And they manifested the most incredible miracle.

I might be struggling right now, but the journey isn't over. I can't see the light at the end of the tunnel, but I *know* it is there.

I thought I *needed* to be in Paris, but I've learned that I can move forward. I am stronger and more resilient than I ever imagined. I might not be an Olympian yet, but LA 2028 beckons me.

There will be more goals and dreams to manifest, and I am open to experiencing miracles.

BECOMING A CHAMPION

Check out my MAVEN course on Becoming a Champion!





Hasmonean Channel at the northern end of the Western Wall tunnel. Photo, Berthold Werner

The GIFT of CHOICE

Ariella Goldwicht

The events of October 7th and its aftermath have left no one unscathed. We are hurting as we attempt to use our national suffering as a stepping stone to propel us forward in positive action. There may be uncertainty as to how to reach our goals or confusion regarding our mission and how to get there, but the desire for a more harmonious, peaceful tomorrow is a value more relevant than ever before.

A recent weekend getaway with some of Israel's top young professionals and CEOs in the Old City of Jerusalem afforded these busy, goal-oriented, forward-thinking innovators an opportunity to step away from their high-powered positions. It allowed them to fully immerse themselves in a meaningful, all-encompassing experience we call Shabbat.

As the sun set, the group gathered, together with a variety of other individuals, in the aesthetic and mystical underground synagogue of the Kotel tunnels. The beautiful tunes of *Kabbalat Shabbat* (prayers welcoming in the Sabbath) warmed our hearts, and

seemingly, the coolness of the ancient stones that form a beautiful domed ceiling overhead. I felt as though the ascent of our unified prayers whispered to them messages of hope, pleading them to absorb our harmonised, yet non-identical tune.

Stones of Jerusalem, you have stood the test of time, you have witnessed great tragedy and absorbed thousands of years of pain. Cold to the touch, as you have been filled with the tears of divisiveness and discord, we beg you to behold our newfound camaraderie. In the glowing aura of this peaceful Friday night, we are making the choice to focus on our similarities and not our differences.

I imagine taking this moment of unity and the warm and inviting feelings that ensue, to keep in a treasure box. I want to tap into these emotions when the news is too difficult to bear, when dark, heavy clouds mask over the sunshine I am currently feeling.

The actual winter weather in Jerusalem has been full of inconsistencies, evading the supposedly all-knowing output-based

Weather App. Conditions from warm and sunny to cold, windy and rainy seem expected and unexpected at the same time. A quick glance at the weather app is our usual go-to when deciding if to grab the vest or jacket, hat or umbrella. Yet these especially inconsistent days have us, more often than not, musing at the fallouts; "the app said rain all day, of course I didn't bring my sunglasses."

Conversely, there is a new trend that is all about input. Mood tracking is a positive psychology technique, whereby an individual logs his personal mood on a regular basis, either in a journal or an app. Tracking one's mood is known to regulate the emotional state, often resulting in the improvement of mental health.

When I walk down the Jerusalem streets during this difficult winter, inconsistencies at their peak (and this time I'm not referring to the weather), I often wonder what it would be like if we had a fusion of these two popular apps. Imagine a national mood tracker app that we can open in the morning, similar to the

weather app that guides us through our moody winter weather.

The news of the previous day, coupled with personal polls of various demographics may provide an indication of what to expect as we open the door in the morning. Input and output both significant players, we may log our feelings, whilst gaining insight as to the mood and emotional state of others. The hardships and pain, miracles and blessings have us holding our breath for some sign or indication of how our people are holding up.

How stabilising would it be to leave the house with a more accurate assessment of the emotional front? The overall input indicates that early morning will bring in an intense rush of hope based on the feelings felt by thousands who gathered in prayer yesterday. However this positivity will likely be followed by extreme clouds of heaviness blowing in from the South. A strong rush of anxiety sweeping in from the North is likened to an extreme cold front, only to be pacified by evening, leaving us in a state of confusion, mildly at peace, a prayer on our lips and hopeful for a better tomorrow.

Today my mood tracker is indicating a strong element of emotional exhaustion. The ups and downs have us holding the edge of our seats on a roller coaster with far more loops than we signed up for. I peek under umbrellas and see tired puffy eyes, occasional tears mixed in with drizzling rain.

Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar, positive psychology lecturer at Harvard University, explains that one of the key ways to become happier is to accept painful emotions. When we give ourselves the permission to be human, to experience the full gamut of human emotion, we open ourselves up to positive emotions as well. When we accept that which we are facing and let ourselves truly feel, it gives us the ability to choose what we would like to focus on.

Two hostages are home; we are elated. Overjoyed by the pictures of spouses and siblings reunited, grandchildren hugging their grandparents they thought they would never see again. A sense of relief washes over the nation, hearts filled with pride as we begin hearing snippets of the rescue mission conducted by our own soldiers, the modern day heroes.

Yet our losses are piling high in front of us, growing taller in a way that is blocking our emotional vision towards positivity. I am giving myself permission to feel the sadness, to feel pain and to cry. Today however, I will choose to focus on miracles.

Yitzi, a lone soldier and good friend of ours described his experiences in Gaza on the front lines. As the elite unit combs through south



“

We are noticing our similarities, we are seeing unparalleled miracles, we are using the positive experiences, the hero in every story, to propel us forward through the darkness

Gaza, home by home, looking for weapons and explosives, they find themselves with ‘down time’ in the eerily-abandoned homes of enemy territory. With military rations leaving much to be desired, our men noticed flour in one home and a working oven in another, and decided to bake fresh, hot pitas for the Friday night meal. Ironically as we sat home biting our nails through another Shabbat at war, our boys only a short distance away enjoyed a peaceful respite with their hot baked bread elevating the holiness of the day. They choose to focus on that which they have access to at any given moment, using the pockets of quiet in the storm to reinvigorate.

When Yitzi came to visit during his days off, we sent him back with a hug and a food package in addition to our game of

Rummikub. A few short days later we received a picture of men from the elite fighter unit sitting around behind enemy lines, outfitted with military headlamps, engrossed in an engaging game of Rummikub. Thank you for being our heroes. Thank you for playing games and smiling while enjoying each other's company, all while risking your lives for our protection. Thank you for reinforcing that the choice of how we view our current situation is indeed ours to make.

Dror, a young Israeli lawyer whom I met over the professionals' weekend, described his experiences following the October 7th tragedies. Propelled by the loss of a good friend and the fact that he had served in an elite fighter unit during his time in service, Dror made strong attempts in the initial days

following the massacre to enlist as a reservist.

He explained that he reached a point of desperation where he practically begged to become a fighter, only to be turned down on the premise that too much time had elapsed since his previous service, resulting in what the army considers an inadequate level of training for the current situation. Dror detailed his frustration, explaining that he sat at home feeling useless and irrelevant while many of his counterparts were indeed called up to base.

After two weeks in this state, he decided to take matters into his own hands. He chose to take his talents and his professional background as a lawyer and team up with a high tech professional and psychologist to form an organisation that would provide for the legal and emotional needs of injured soldiers. To date, he and his team have provided assistance, advice, legal and emotional services for over one hundred soldiers and their families. There are numerous ways to enlist in the cause, to make a true difference, if we choose to recognise our strengths and step up to the plate.

Perhaps there is no one more suited as Dr. Edith Eger, author of the award winning *The Choice*, to help put our values into perspective during these current harrowing times. Hungarian-born American psychologist, Holocaust survivor and a specialist in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, Dr. Eger, describes a life-changing moment that occurred in Auschwitz. Dr. Eger relates that her sister Magda had loved her hair, and would not leave the house until it was styled just so. When the sisters arrived in the concentration camp, their heads were promptly shaved. Magda turned to Edith, crying, with hair in her palms, and asked, "how do I look?" This is the moment that Dr. Eger describes as the 'point of choice.' She explains that she had the choice to point out the negativity in another, to point out that which was missing. Instead, however, she realised that she had become her sister's mirror, and had the ability to describe that which she had still possessed. She said, "Magda, you have beautiful eyes, and I didn't notice them when you had your hair." Making the right choice has the ability to restore dignity in even the darkest moments.

Itai, a wonderfully warm young gentleman working in the field of robotics, was another participant of the weekend retreat. As Shabbat came to an end, Itai pulled out his guitar, but not before revealing the necklace from under his shirt. Itai wears his good friend's army dog tag, keeping a lost friend's memory close to his heart. Itai has lost eight friends since October 7th. His personal pain fills the already

crowded room, as he proceeds to play and sing his emotionally charged original Hebrew song about our nation's resolve. "Rise up from the dust, how beautiful you are... in your long and arduous journey, in the far reaching depths that you search, you are a small boat in the heart of the storm, you don't cease to wave your blue and white flag." Despite his deep hurt and numerous losses, Itai encourages us to make a choice, to deliberately decide to rise up yet again.

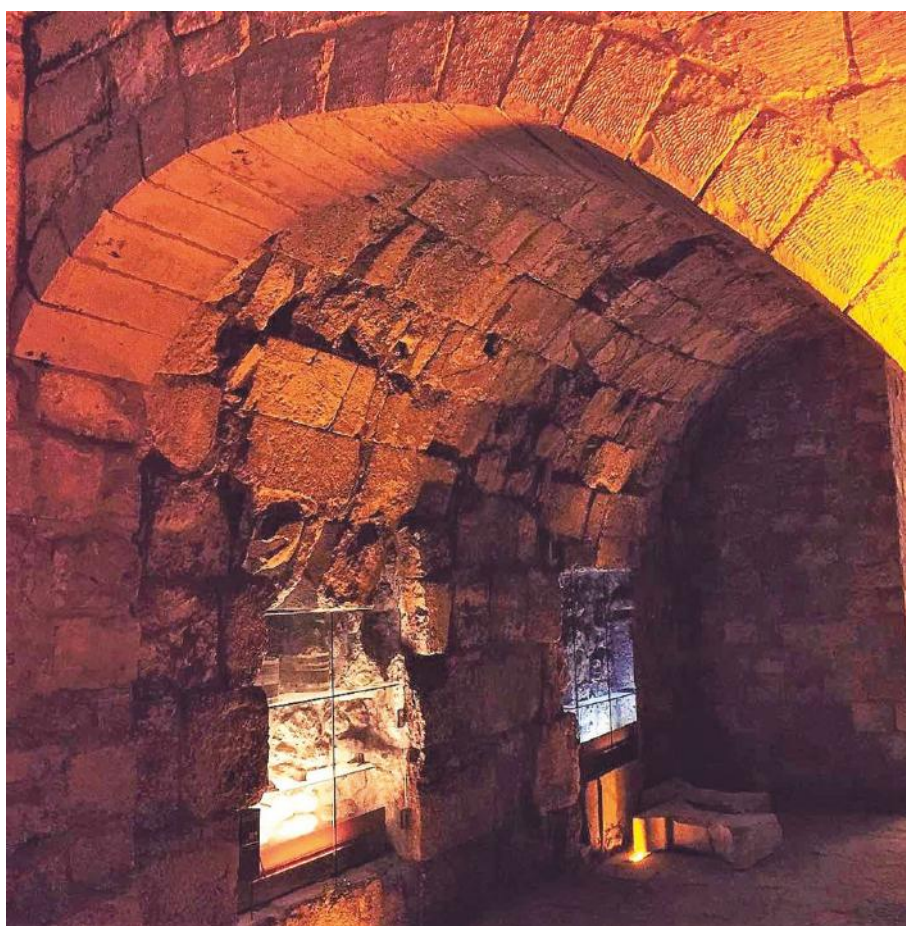
Dear broken-hearted people, we have exercised our muscles of resilience and resolve these last few months in ways we never have before in our generation. We have a newfound sense of unity, an awakening towards the most precious elements of life. We are noticing our similarities, we are seeing unparalleled miracles, we are using the positive experiences, the hero in every story, to propel us forward through the darkness. In short, we are exercising our ability to choose what to focus on.

The close of our spiritually uplifting weekend left us all on a high. As we channelled the gifts of Shabbat in order to develop a deeper sense of unity, the last exercise was perhaps the most significant of all. Participants were encouraged to grab a chair in a large open space, and sat quietly with their eyes closed as other participants and group mentors walked around, whispering something positive

in their ear. The exercise was called 'The circle of the positive eye.' The compliments, positive observations of the other and words of affirmation left the closed-eye participant glowing. Watching the facial expressions and posture of the compliment-recipient evolve with each additional positive word was a truly remarkable sight. When we choose to see the good in others, we are exposing the diamond that has been there all along.

My oversimplified mood app concept may be whimsical, yet perhaps somewhat logical, considering the ever-changing reality we find ourselves in. However, I am realising that it may be an unnecessary download. While it seems that we are treading underwater with our eyes closed, enveloped in confusion and certainly unsure of the coming days' emotional forecast, it now becomes clear that the choice is ours. I need not fear the pain, the sadness and the tears that accompany us in our worst of times, although I wish I could wave them away. Rather I will embrace the ever-changing emotions in front of me, and decide which will take precedence. If I witness tragedy and miracles, I will focus on miracles. If I witness suffering and nurturing, I will focus on nurturing. If I witness bereavement and benevolence, I will focus on benevolence.

Happiness, positivity and unity are indeed choices, but they are choices we can't afford not to make.



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PESACH



Experiencing *Our Story*

Our comprehensive seder guide (the in's and out's of what, when, how and why) is sandwiched between an exceptional piece on storytelling and an inspiring piece on freshness - neither are to be missed. Bookmark this section to have on hand during your holiday meal!



Once Upon a *Place*

Rabbi Eli Birnbaum

Do we ever fully grow out of that childlike desire to just sit and absorb a cracking story? Whether from the nostalgically fragrant pages of an old favourite book, the shimmer of the silver screen, the dancing sparks around a bonfire (invariably ruined when some enterprising Johnny-come-lately whips out a budget guitar and starts playing *Wonderwall*), we are beckoned to lose ourselves in a world of pure imagination.

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, the child within us possessed the ability to build those worlds for themselves! Back gardens turned effortlessly into magical fantasy forests complete with fire-breathing see-saws and knights in shining wellington boots. Imaginary friends competing for time on the best swings. Ship-wrecked stowaways washing ashore the feared pirate cove of the sand pit.

And then, at some point in our development, we stop imagining. Instead, and forgive me for being blunt, we outsource our imaginations to television and film studios, to publishing

houses and record labels. “I’m far too busy and far too important to be dallying in this make-believe piffle. Please make-believe on my behalf!” To make matters worse, we don’t just abandon our ability to tell a story to faceless corporate behemoths...we pay them handsomely for the privilege!

Pesach urges us: Reimagine how you imagine.

Before we explore this further, consider the following: There is an intrinsic and profound inter-relationship between freedom and the power of a story. A slave’s imagination is barely his own. His every waking moment is dedicated to the wants and whims of his master. He collapses exhausted into bed at the end of a laborious day. He dreams of one thing, for it is the only thing he truly desires: Freedom. What he imagines beyond this will be inevitably dulled and narrowed by the acute drudgery of his day-to-day experience. Pity him, for he has no other frame of reference.

Mediaeval peasants dreamed of a utopia called *The Land of Cockaigne*. The poems

and ditties describing this place are both amusing and, after a fashion, so pathetically unimaginative they are quite depressing. What did mediaeval peasants dream of? Streets made of pastry, houses made of cake and livestock that didn’t foul themselves so that there would be no dung to shovel.

In quieter moments when I catch myself dreaming of a world with affordable housing and streets made without potholes, I inadvertently touch the character arc populated by the peasants of Cockaigne: Together, we are united in our creative endeavour to imagine a world that is only slightly different to the one we already occupy; one where the major inconveniences are removed, and the good bits are amplified. Nothing more outlandish please, we’re British.

We are slaves to Disney and Warner Bros.

This narrow thinking is echoed in the Israelites’ complaints in the desert: “We remember the fish we ate in Egypt; the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic!”¹

Imagining a land ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ a land within which they will be able to build their own society and culture, is beyond the grasp of a generation raised in slavery.

‘Give us what we already know, just more of it!’

In other words: There is an intrinsic and profound inter-relationship between freedom and *the ability to tell a story*.

The free man has all paths open to him. Every fork on every road is another chapter in a book that he writes, knowingly or otherwise.

Paradoxically, Seder night juggles both. We eat the ‘bread of affliction’ as we lean like kings. We celebrate freedom with one of the strictest and most intricately ritualised services in our entire calendar. And to make matters more confusing, the stuff that’s meant to represent the very mortar of our slave labour (*charoset*) is the sweetest and most delicious thing on the table!

Perhaps the Seder does this because within the free, limitless imagination comes an inherent danger:

The lustre of a story hides a paradox: On the one hand, an individual can detach themselves from the collective in a world of pure imagination, but on the other hand disconnected individuals can coalesce around the story and become a group.

This paradox is reflected in the two Hebrew words for telling a story: One, *sippur*, shares a root connection with a seemingly bizarre cluster of words: Barber (*sapar*), border (*sephar*) and money counter (*saphar*). Sounds like the opening of a cringeworthy anti-Semitic joke, doesn’t it? A barber and a money-counter walk into a bar on the border.

Take another look. All three words imply differentiation and separation. This coin is not that one. This hair is no longer connected to that head. This country is not the same as that. So too, *sippur*. This is storytelling that builds a gap in time I can get lost in, temporarily separating myself from everyone and everything around me. But it is not intrinsically me. It is fictional, belonging to the distant past or fictional future. Once upon a time.

The other, *aggadah*, shares a phonetic connection with the word for a bundle tied tightly together: *agudah*. This is the storytelling of shared narratives that bind us to and establish commonality with almost total strangers, leading to remarkably quick and deep levels of cooperation. Leading us from individual isolation to finding somewhere we belong. Be that a community, a school, an entire country, a sports stadium, it’s all the same – shared spaces where previously there were none. Once upon a place.

Seder night overtly leans (no pun intended) toward one. The simplest clue is in the name of

the book we use: *The Haggadah*, a cautionary tale: This isn’t the moment for the individual to lose themselves in the drama and drift away from the group.

Indeed, the only obvious thing the ‘wicked’ son does wrong is that “he excludes himself from the collective.” And yet, this is enough to evoke a particularly harsh response. Why? Because he seeks to turn *haggadah* into *sippur*, Once Upon a Place into Once Upon a Time, Pesach from a night of celebration into a night of remembrance. He has misused the privilege of his freedom. It gave him an imagination, but he confined it to the dusty archives of the past.

Pesach urges us: Reimagine how you imagine.

It does this right at the end of *Maggid*,² when things might seem to drag on a bit and we’re so hungry even the matzah and *maror*³ look appetising. There, we quote the Mishnaic sage Rabban Gamliel:⁴

“In every single generation, every person must see themselves as if they personally left Egypt, as it is written: ‘And you shall tell over to your child on that day, saying: For the sake of this, *God did this for me when I left Egypt*’.”⁵

Remarkably, this same verse is the ‘official’ response to the wicked son’s exclusivity as we draw his attention to the fact that I, the parent, do not read this as a *sippur*. I do not exist in isolation from the story, nor does the story exist in an isolated time. Rather: it is happening right here, right now!

Seder night is not a night for ‘Once upon a time.’ This isn’t merely an annual get-together lamenting the fact that our ancestors didn’t allow the dough to rise. We cannot lose ourselves to the exclusion of others. This story is shared. A story in the mode of *aggadah*, not *sippur*. A shared narrative that crushes barriers and transcends time itself, connecting parent to child ‘in every single generation.’

This story cannot be outsourced to a third party. My apologies to *Zaides* up and down the country. You might be leading the Seder,

in fact you might be the only attendee who can read the *Haggadah* in its native tongue but be mindful: In every generation we must create a place within which every individual can close their eyes, return to the gardens and playgrounds of their childhoods, claw back imagination from Disney and Warner Bros and realise: This isn’t actually a story; it is a description of our reality as Jews. Then, now and forever.

How is this accomplished?

I say without a shred of irony, as someone born and raised in the cradle of Western commercialised imagination, it is fiendishly difficult. But this is what I would tell my younger self when he first dismantled the ‘fort’ in the garden and trudged inside to watch *Star Wars*:

The Seder table is heaving with props. They are meant as starting points, not finishing lines. The extra-strong oak-cask matured horseradish from the restricted section at Kosher Kingdom isn’t there to be survived. It is there to be experienced, to trigger a different response. As you chew on that *Marror* and get to the point where your eyes start watering, instead of wondering ‘when will this be over?!’, try the following: ‘I wonder what my life would be like if everything I ate was this bitter, because it was all I had to eat.’ And as you lean on a pillow to eat the matzah or drink the wine, instead of thinking ‘this is funny’, try the following: ‘I wonder what my life would be like if I always ate at such a leisurely pace?’ And as you sit around the table with so many familiar faces, singing so many familiar tunes, try the following:

‘I wonder what my life would be like if I connected to this wondrous shared narrative, this generational *haggadah* whose messages and values aren’t relics buried in the sands of time but lived and breathed in the here and now and in all generations to come. Somewhere we belong. Once Upon a Place.



“
*Reimagine how
you imagine*”

³Bitter herbs ritually eaten as part of the Seder

⁴Pesachim 10:5 ⁵Exodus 13:8

THE SEDER

Unpacked



Michael Aram Seder
Plate via Bloomingdales

The Plate

The seder plate is the focal point of the seder night. It may be an ornate bowl, wicker basket or simple plate. The plate contains symbolic foods that are eaten or displayed at the Passover Seder

1. BITTER HERBS **MAROR**

Probably the most readily-understood element of the seder plate. The *Maror* symbolises the bitterness of our suffering in slavery, and indeed that of Jewish people throughout the generations. From exile to pogrom to blood libel to inquisition to Holocaust to resurgent antisemitism, to the latest pains of terrorism and kidnappings in the Land of Israel, the Jewish people have seen more than our fair share of pain.

2. EGG **BEITZAH**

Like the *Zeroa*, the egg represents a special offering that would have been made in Temple times: the Festive Offering (*Chagigah*).

It is no coincidence that the first night of seder always falls on the same day of the week as Tisha B'Av, a fast day and the greatest day of national mourning. The contrast between the joy of Pesach and despair of Tisha B'Av couldn't be starker. And yet, on both days we eat an egg; the last meal we eat before the fast of Av is an egg dipped in ashes and on Pesach we eat the egg dipped in salt water, representing the tears of the Jewish people in slavery.

3. LETTUCE **CHAZERET**

Chazeret is a bitter lettuce (often Romaine – don't forget to check for insects!) that traditionally accompanies the *Maror* and is used to complete the specific amount – the *Kezayit* (appx. 35 grams) – that one is required to eat. Before eating it, we briefly dip the *Maror* into the sweet charoset. This signifies our belief that – forgive the cliché – every cloud has a silver lining. That no matter how desperate times may get, there is always a glimmer of hope.

4. SHANKBONE **ZEROA**

Traditionally the leg bone of a lamb, the shankbone represents the Paschal offering, sacrificed the day before Pesach and eaten before midnight on seder night. As such, there is a custom to slightly 'roast' the shankbone over a flame, as would have been done in Biblical times. The word *Zeroa* means 'forearm', an allusion to the verse that says "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm."¹ Due to the fact that, without the Temple, sacrificial offerings are now forbidden, one must be careful not to eat the *Zeroa*.

5. SWEET PASTE **CHAROSET**

Just as no two fingerprints are the same, no two *Charoset* recipes are ever identical. Precisely how to combine the delicious mixture of apples, cinnamon, almonds, wine, lemon juice, honey, raisins and walnuts (or none of the above) tends to be a fiercely-kept family secret passed down through the generations since the revelation at

Mount Sinai itself. A thick consistency, the *Charoset* symbolises the cement and mortar used by our ancestors to construct the Nile Delta cities of Pe-Atum and Rameses. It is surprising that a symbol of such hardship and servitude should merit such a sweet taste, but the reality is that without hard work and sincere toil, we accomplish very little and end up looking back at an inconsequential life with a tinge of sadness and regret. Nothing in life is sweeter than the fruits of arduous toil.

6. VEGETABLES *KARPAS*

Another item that demonstrates the diversity of tradition, customs range from celery to parsley to radish, even travelling as far as the humble potato. The only binding prerequisite for the *Karpas* is that it should be a vegetable whose blessing is 'Ha'Adamah' (from the earth). There is a fascinating discussion in the Talmud that seeks the symbolism of the *Karpas*, but hits a dead end. Our conclusion? The *Karpas* is placed on the plate and eaten

having been dipped in saltwater "so that the youngsters ask questions." An answer that, at surface value, looks like a rather unconvincing cop-out actually gets to the core of what seder night is all about: transmitting the epic tale of the Jewish Nation from one generation to the next.

To this end, we introduce numerous peculiar elements to the meal in order to arouse the curiosity of the table's younger occupants, thus encouraging active participation and conversation.

The Plate

The Passover Seder plate contains six symbolic foods that are eaten or displayed.





The Order

The 15 stages of the Passover Seder

Passover marks the individual pilgrimage of every Jew from bondage to liberty. To illuminate our path, the Sages meticulously penned a volume detailing 15 stages toward freedom known as the *Haggadah*. Passover aligns with the 15th of the month of Nissan, symbolising the moon's 15-day waxing cycle, mirroring our own incremental progression.

These 15 components compose the Passover puzzle; once assembled, they unveil the essence of freedom.

1. BLESS THE WINE *KADESH*

Wine can be used for getting drunk, but it can also be used for joy and elevated consciousness. Like so much in this world,

it all depends how we use it. We believe that holiness is not a withdrawal from the world, but rather, *Kiddush* involves taking the worldly and making it holy.

2. WASH YOUR HANDS *URECHATZ*

In contrast to those that idealise blind obedience, Judaism has always demanded an active participation of the mind. To this end, the Talmud gives the seemingly unsatisfactory explanation behind *Urechatz* of "it piques peoples' curiosity." Unsatisfactory, and yet crucial. Without a rigorous process of question and answer, we cannot learn and cannot pass traditions down through the chain of future generations.

3. EAT A VEGETABLE *KARPAS*

Karpas symbolises mankind's journey from exile to redemption. This vegetable started life



in the dark and frozen depths of winter. Over time it grew slowly, receiving nourishment from the earth. Despite this, in the spring, it sprouted realising its full potential. The Jewish journey also began in the darkness of slavery where they formed as a nation, before breaking through the barriers of exile and attaining freedom.

4. BREAK THE MIDDLE MATZAH **YACHATZ**

We live in a world of instant gratification. Our choice to break the middle *matzah* and put the bigger half aside for later teaches us a life lesson: true freedom includes freeing ourselves from the shackles of immediate indulgence, sacrificing the pleasures of today for the future of tomorrow.



5. TELL THE STORY OF THE EXODUS **MAGGID**

The art of storytelling is not simply one of fables and lore, but on Pesach we are implored to re-enact the drama of the Exodus *as our own story*. This story is the very core of Jewish identity. Contained within this narrative are the values we bequeath to our children.

6. WASH YOUR HANDS AGAIN **RACHTZA**

By washing our hands as a preparatory step before eating, we become mindful of what it is we are about to eat. Water is symbolic of purity, and in effect we are cleansing our hands, the medium through which we act in the world. Washing our hands is thus a statement that our actions will be pure.

7. APPRECIATE THE FOOD **MOTZI**

Curious are the words of this blessing “He who takes out bread from the ground.” Any farmer will attest to the year-long process culminating in the production of bread, it is anything but simply extracting it out of the ground! However, herein lies the secret: even that which we toiled in, which has many composite parts, is essentially directed by God.

8. EAT THE MATZAH **MATZAH**

Matzah is free of extras, it is bread without the hot air, and represents the bare essentials. It proposes a focus on necessities over luxuries, and that we concentrate on our ‘personal bests’ in life rather than ‘world records.’ Matzah rids us of ego and the delusions of self-importance holding us back from achieving our true goals.

9. EAT THE BITTER HERBS **MAROR**

By scaling peaks of hardship, we truly appreciate the brilliance of success. Freedom and pain are inexorably linked. We eat bitter herbs to recognise that pain and suffering emanate from the same source as joy and pleasure.

10. MAKE YOURSELF A SANDWICH **KORECH**

Hillel the Elder would sandwich together the *matzah*, bitter herbs and *charoset*, and eat them together. This “Hillel sandwich” is created by bringing together a mixture of bitter and sweet flavours, symbolising that the redemption came from the Jewish people being united. The hardships are durable and the blessings enhanced if we share them with others.



11. BON APPÉTIT **SHULCHAN ORECH**

Why is this meal different? Our experience of life can be rich, we have about 10,000 taste buds and can see millions of shades of colours. Will we use that to swallow our food quickly or instead be mindful of what we eat to satiate us with energy to do good in the world?

12. EAT THE AFIKOMAN **TZAFUN**

‘*Tzafun*’ means ‘hidden’. The word for universe ‘*olam*’ is derived from ‘*ne’elam*’, meaning concealed. The world, so to speak, conceals its true nature, taking time to see beyond the superficial. We entrust our children to search for the *Afikoman* as our collective future lies in our ability to transfer our Jewish values to the next generation.

13. MANY THANKS **BARECH**

God does not need our blessings, but we need to bless God. In an age when a simple ‘thank you’ is so hard to come by and when so much is taken for granted, it is important that we work on developing the art of appreciation and gratitude.

14. PRAISE GOD **HALLEL**

Hallel is a prayer recited on happy and joyous occasions. What makes its recital here unique is that it is the only time that it is said at night. Night time is symbolically seen as a time of fear and confusion. On Pesach, we attest to the clarity and confidence gained as a result of the Exodus.

15. GRAND FINALE **NIRTZAH**

The finale of the *Haggadah* is a series of songs that allude to the end of history. As always, Jewish consciousness is steeped in the belief that in the end, good will triumph. Full of faith and hope, we conclude the evening with our dreams of “next year in Jerusalem!”



Unique Passover *Traditions* FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Excerpt by Oren Peleg, reprinted with permission from jewishunpacked.com

The centerpiece of the holiday is the Seder, a ritual feast on the first night of Passover spent around the table retelling and reflecting on the story of the Israelites' salvation from slavery in Egypt with prayers, songs, food and lots of wine. No two seders are exactly alike, and depending on whose home you're in, traditions that take place at a seder may look, feel, taste and sound entirely different. Here are four unique Passover traditions found in seders around the world.

YEMENITE MATZAH IS MORE LIKE PITA

Even the main food item associated with Passover and the seder — matzah — differs among some communities. Matzah is the thin, cracker-like bread Jews eat on Passover. According to the Exodus story, the Hebrew slaves left Egypt in such a hurry that they didn't even have time to allow their baked bread to

rise. So, for symbolic reasons, Jews eat this unleavened bread - matzah - during Passover.

Let's face it, matzah gets a bad rap. Jews give up leavened or fermented grain, or *chametz*, on Passover, and most people aren't exactly clamouring for it year-round.

But, some Jewish communities enjoy a very different matzah.

If you go to a seder with a traditional Yemenite-Jewish family, you'll notice the matzah looks less like a cracker and more like

pita bread. This matzah is thicker and softer. AND it's actually believed to be far more similar to what the Hebrews of the Exodus story likely made.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, most Jewish communities, even Ashkenazi ones, ate softer matzah. We're talking as recently as 180 years ago. The hard, square matzah most of us know stays fresh longer and fits nicely in a box, which is one of the main reasons it became the norm, and is mass produced and sold in grocery stores around Passover.

But Yemenite Jews, as well as some other communities, do still enjoy the soft matzah, which only stays good for a day or two.

PERSIAN-JEWISH WHACKING TRADITION

Something you'll experience at most seders is a hearty rendition of *Dayenu*, a song whose title translates to "it would have been enough." The song is a list of miracles God performed in the Exodus story and it's usually just a fun sing-along. But at a Persian-Jewish seder, it's... well, a bit of a free-for-all.

Before the singing starts, guests pass around large green onions and... whack each other with the stems.

In case you were wondering... uh, why? Well, the custom is meant to remind us of the slave drivers in Egypt. Some Persian Jews get super into it and really belt each other. So, if you find yourself at a Persian seder, be prepared.

HUNGARIAN JEWS GET BLINGED OUT

While Persian Jews get bruised-up on Passover, Hungarian Jews get blinged-out. Jews from Hungary go all out when decorating the seder table. You'll likely find the table at a traditional Hungarian seder decked out in silver and gold.

According to the story of the Exodus, God bestowed ten plagues on the Egyptians to ultimately force Pharaoh to free the Israelite slaves. Some rabbinic interpretations of the Biblical story claim that amid the devastation, the Egyptians even gave their precious metals away to entice the Israelites to speed up their departure from the land.

So, Hungarian Jews lay out all their finest

jewellery to serve as a symbolic reminder of this part of the Passover story.

HOW GIBRALTAR'S JEWS DO CHAROSET

Continuing this talk about symbols, every Jewish seder plate features *charoset*, a sweet mixture that's usually made with fruits, nuts, wine and spices. The name *charoset* derives from the Hebrew word *cheres* (clay), which is fitting. Each family has its own unique recipe for *charoset*... you may find figs, apples, dates or honey. In Gibraltar, each year families look forward to seeing who will bite into a chunk of brick dust.

What's consistent is the symbol; *charoset* is meant to symbolise the mortar Hebrew slaves used to make bricks - and the Jews of Gibraltar take the symbol quite literally! In this tiny British territory jutting off the Iberian peninsula with less than a thousand Jews, Passover Seders feature *charoset* with actual brick dust in it. Some households there use the same brick for decades, shaving off faint amounts of dust with a knife every Passover to put in the *charoset*.



Make a Mufletta

For Danielle Renov's gorgeous mufletta recipe, please see page 89 in our food section

THE AFTER-PARTY: MIMOUNA

Moroccan Jews throw the ultimate post-Passover bash called *Mimouna*. Picture this: right after a week of celebrating our deliverance from Egypt by eating matzah, Moroccan families quickly turn their

kitchens back over after the completion of the holiday to host a lavish open house that's all about sweetness, community and the star of the evening, *mufletta*. This isn't your average pancake. It's a soft, yeasty delight that's slathered in honey or butter, rolling deep in flavour and tradition.

Mimouna isn't just about indulging in

some post-Passover carbs; it's a full-blown symbol of prosperity, friendship and throwing doors wide open to the whole neighbourhood in the spirit of generosity. Moroccan Jews take this chance to deck out their homes with symbols of good fortune and spring. The idea? To spread the wealth of joy and community far and wide.

Keep it Fresh

Rabbi Naftali Schiff



It's spring 2024. Big companies spend a fortune to convince us that we need to buy new things to be happy and up to date. And let's face it, we all love the freshness and excitement of a new outfit, phone or menu, yet it's not long before they too become old news and don't seem to satisfy us all that much, so we look for the next one...

Over the last 30+ years I have met thousands of young Jews who have the same complaint: Jewish life can be pretty repetitive, whether it's the same daily prayers, shabbat meals, *Yom Tov* customs or High Holidays services. Of course, there is something warm and comforting about being in a familiar space, but more often than not there is a feeling of *been there, done that, got the T-shirt, get me out of here!*

To be honest I think they are spot-on. Doing things out of habit and just going through the motions is the arch enemy of any meaningful sincere religious experience. Whilst it's always beneficial to develop healthy habits which provide us with structure and order, the flip side of doing things by rote is more dangerous than we often realise.

The biblical prophets were well aware of this challenge. Isaiah lamented¹ that although the people worshipped with the words of their mouth, it was their hearts that God desired, something that could not be remedied by performing actions by rote.

Perhaps the place where we experience this challenge most is during a synagogue service or the Pesach Seder. The words, tunes, songs and actions may be so familiar to regular attendees that they can go through the motions without even giving them a passing thought. This is all the more ironic, given that we define prayer as 'service of the heart!' It seems that the need for formality and structure have overtaken the essence of prayer which is meant to be an emotional, heartfelt experience.

In Jewish thought, the heart is depicted as the seat of our emotions; when we are told to develop a love for God, it is meant to be '*bechol levavecha*,' (with all your heart). Moreover, our Sages discuss² how the Almighty desires our *hearts*. Mere observance by rote is neither inspiring nor attractive, but doing *mitzvot* in a heartfelt and passionate way most certainly is. Jewish observance needs to be pulsating with life, passion and energy.

If we are told that God desires our heart and

that we are to develop a loving relationship with Him with all our heart, then we need to appreciate what our hearts do, in order to understand the metaphor.

The heart is the muscle at the centre of our circulatory system, pumping blood around our body with every beat. This blood sends oxygen and nutrients to all parts of our body, carrying away unwanted carbon dioxide and waste products. Put simply, the heart allows each and every cell in the body to be maintained by newly oxygenated blood, enabling constant renewal.

How then, can we ensure that our performance of *mitzvot* (whatever we are and whatever we do or don't do) doesn't end up being meaningless and mechanical? What can we do to get the maximum value from this spiritual investment? And crucially, how can we do things as a family in a way that secures a vibrant Jewish future for generations to come because after all, this really is the heart of the matter.

The Torah may be an ancient document but it needs to be treated with the excitement of something new. This isn't an act; rather, it's an attitude, an awareness that the depth and beauty of Jewish wisdom is contemporary and relevant to all people at all times - we just need to look at it with a fresh pair of eyes.

This is why prayer is referred to as 'service of the heart.' Just as our hearts pump the blood around the body renewing the life-force within us, so too our prayers should reinvigorate us on an ongoing basis. Prayer is so much more than reading from a *siddur* (prayer book), it is an opportunity to have a heart-to-heart conversation with the Creator of all life. It gives us the chance to pour out our hearts and unburden ourselves, sharing all of our worries and concerns, hopes, dreams and aspirations. Although the text of the prayers rarely changes, no two prayers are ever the same because we change as we go through our daily lives. Our needs vary from one day to the next and even within any given day our experiences can vary wildly.

¹ Isaiah 29:13 ² Sanhedrin 106b

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Our continuity as a nation is dependent on our ability to renew and refresh

This sense of renewal is part and parcel of Jewish life; our calendar months are defined by the lunar cycle, one that waxes and wanes. In fact, the Hebrew word for month, *chodesh*, is deeply connected to the word *chadash* - new. The Pesach story - the birth of the Jewish People starts with the *mitzvah* to establish a calendar based on the renewal of the lunar cycle and the imperative to do so in the spring, which itself is a time of rebirth and renewal. This is so critical to Jewish life and practice that we add in an extra month every two to three years to ensure that Pesach always falls in the springtime. Our birth as a nation is intimately connected to the cycle of rebirth in nature. Our continuity as a nation is dependent on our ability to renew and refresh.

There is therefore no better time to look at our Jewish identity anew than Pesach - specifically Seder night. Whilst the structure and text of the Seder is highly organised (*sefer* actually means 'ordered'), this is really to provide a framework to ensure that key points are covered and that the story is told in a compelling way. The fact that the Haggadah speaks of four different sons and gives us a way to reach each one of them is really a springboard to encourage each one of us to think about how to reach every child, grandchild and participant personally, and in an age-appropriate fashion.

Pesach is a time to think creatively about the various props, tools and methods needed to pass over the eternal message of Jewish survival. Seder night is meant to be so exciting and unusual for the children that they won't be able to help but exclaim, "*Ma Nishtana!* - Why on earth is this night so different!"

Let's take the time to invest in new ideas to share those at our seder, so that rather than being passive attendees, we become active participants, ready to play our part in the next chapter of the epic story of the Jewish People.

FRESH IDEAS

Jewish education needs to be personal, immersive and experiential. We need to 'break the script' and come up with new, fresh ideas to grab their attention. Our website sedernight.org has a range of resources for you to download, but it's really just a starting point. There are loads of inexpensive toys and props available online that make for great conversation starters and prizes for those who get involved!



WELLNESS



Challenges, Choices and *Changes*

On October 6th, we all faced challenges. Since the 7th, Jews worldwide have been faced with ongoing trauma, on top of existing struggles. Discover therapies and coping mechanisms inside. Families, don't miss an insightful, purposeful parenting article; while vegans and biochemistry fans - there's a cool piece for you too.



Parenting with Purpose

A conscious approach

Bat-sheva Levy-Hecht & Esther Hecht

As parents, we're continually learning and evolving. The journey of parenthood is a dynamic one, shaped by our experiences, insights and the ever-growing body of research guiding us along the way. In 2024, we're fortunate to have access to ground-breaking studies that shed light on the critical importance of the early childhood years. Armed with this knowledge, it's an opportune time to elevate our parenting game and embrace a more conscious and intentional approach to raising our children.

As our generation gravitates towards a more conscious and mindful approach to various aspects of life, encompassing how we nourish our bodies, engage in physical activity, foster relationships and navigate the world around us, it is exciting that we now get to extend this mindfulness to our roles as parents.

Embracing conscious parenting

At the heart of Conscious Parenting lies the recognition that we can always strive to do

better. It's about moving beyond traditional paradigms and embracing a mindset that values connection, empathy and understanding. But let's clear up a common misconception right off the bat: *conscious* parenting is not synonymous with *permissive* parenting. On the contrary, it's about striking a delicate balance between nurturing our children's emotional well-being and setting clear, respectful boundaries.

Understanding parenting styles

To embark on our journey of Conscious Parenting, it's crucial to understand the spectrum of parenting styles. At one end, we have Authoritarian Parenting, where strict rules reign supreme and emotions may be dismissed or suppressed: Not all feelings and behaviours are welcome. At the opposite end lies Permissive Parenting, where anything goes and boundaries are scarce: All feelings and behaviours are allowed.

But nestled between these extremes lies the healthy balance: Authoritative Parenting. Here,

all feelings are acknowledged and respected, but not all behaviours are allowed. It's about honouring our children's emotions while gently guiding them toward constructive ways of expressing those emotions. Picture this: validating your child's frustration while also setting a boundary against harmful behaviour.

Two things are true

Dr. Becky Kennedy, Founder of Good Inside & Parenting Expert beautifully articulates the concept of "two things can be true," a cornerstone of conscious parenting. This notion underscores the importance of acknowledging multiple perspectives in any healthy relationship, especially the one we share with our children. Showing our children that we hear and see them by validating their feelings and experiences helps us connect with them and give them a strong sense of self, acknowledging that their internal feelings are true and real. When we approach our children with *understanding* as opposed to *convincing* it helps them feel safe in their relationship with us.

Imagine a scenario where your child throws a tantrum demanding a LEGO set during a shopping trip for their cousin's birthday gift. This happens even after having discussed that this shopping trip is specifically to pick up the birthday gift - not for them to choose something for themselves.

What happens if you only honour your own truth here? You might get upset and say, "You knew we weren't getting you a gift today. Stop crying!" What your child learns in this response is that their desires are not validated.

What happens if you dismiss your own truth and only honour your child's truth here? You might give in and buy something for your child. What your child learns here is that their wants and needs are so overpowering that they can change the mind of their sturdy leader.

There is an approach that honours both their truth and yours, fostering empathy and mutual respect.

Instead of resorting to frustration or blame, we acknowledge their desire for the LEGO set while affirming our boundary.

"You really wanted this LEGO set today. I hear you, it's hard to just get a gift for your cousin, without being able to choose one for yourself (validating their truth). Remember, today we are just getting a gift for your cousin. If you'd like we can take a picture of this LEGO set for next time it's your turn to choose something. Today we are not getting it." (holding your boundary).

Remember: you do not have to choose between firm boundaries and loving validation. Children feel safe in our firm boundaries and feel seen in our validation. Feeling safe and seen are two of the most important ingredients in childhood.

Navigating boundaries with grace

Boundaries are an important foundation of conscious parenting, but they're not about control or coercion. Instead, they're a means of fostering safety, security and growth. When

setting boundaries, it's essential to lead with empathy and understanding.

Boundaries are not what we tell kids what *not* to do e.g.: ("stop hitting," "stop running.")

Depending on the situation; boundaries are either things we tell kids we *will* do, OR, instructing kids *what* to do instead of *what not* to do. Consider the scenario of coaxing your child away from the TV for dinner. Rather than resorting to ultimatums or scolding, acknowledge their enjoyment of the show while gently asserting the need to transition. By validating their feelings and calmly asserting your boundary, you demonstrate respect while maintaining authority.

Here's how this may look:

Walk over calmly to your children watching TV and say:

"It's now time for dinner. I'm going to switch off the TV. I know you really want to continue watching. It's hard to switch off when you are really loving the show."

This is all said in an assertive voice - avoiding aggression ("Switch off the TV or else!") or passiveness ("Please switch off the TV my darling,").

At this moment, your child might not be happy, in fact they may be quite upset. That feeling is allowed. We avoid shutting down those feelings by saying things like "stop being a baby," or "you will not watch TV again if you cry like this when we need to turn it off," or "you knew you only had 30 minutes;" - instead, we communicate loving empathy:

"I get it, it's really hard to turn off the TV when you are enjoying a show."

From rules to routines

In the realm of Conscious Parenting, we move away from running our homes on rigid rules (which invites rewards and punishments), toward running our homes through nurturing routines and teachable moments.

Let's say you have a rule: "No grabbing from your sister."

Two of your children are playing and one grabs the doll from the other one.

You respond: "No grabbing! That's not nice!"

What's happening here?

Your child wants the doll her sister has, but she is not sure how to get it, so she grabs it. If we tell her "don't grab," we are missing an opportunity to teach her the skill of asking for something she wants. When we move to helpful boundaries, instead of saying "no grabbing," we say:

"You wanted a turn with the doll, put your hand out to your sister and say "turn please."

In this way, the moment becomes a teachable one, rather than shaming or punishing our child for a skill we never taught them. This shift empowers children to develop essential social-emotional skills while fostering a sense of autonomy and responsibility.

Connection before correction

There's a short, well known piece of advice in Conscious Parenting which is, "connection before correction." Just as a gardener ensures his ground is primed for flourishing crops, so too must we as parents create the ideal soil for children to learn the skills they need for their lives ahead. How do we do this? By prioritising understanding, we create a nurturing environment where children feel valued, supported and empowered to thrive in the skills we work hard to teach them.

Parenting with purpose

As we navigate the complexities of parenthood in the 21st century, let's embrace the transformative power of Conscious Parenting. By adopting a mindset of empathy, understanding and flexibility, we can cultivate deep connections with our children while nurturing their growth and development. Let's embark on this journey together, armed with insights from the past and contemporary research as we strive to become the best versions of ourselves for our children's sake - and our own.

THREE PARENTING STYLES

PERMISSIVE PARENTING

All feelings allowed
All behaviours allowed

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING

All feelings allowed
Not all behaviours allowed

AUTHORITARIAN PARENTING

Not all feelings allowed
Not all behaviours allowed



Healing *without* Words

Art Therapy in times of trauma

Shiri Lader

Creativity is a language in itself. It reveals how we process experiences, how we interact with the world and how our relationships impact us. With the correct guidance, creativity can develop into a language that ultimately promotes healthy boundaries, self-care, self-compassion and confidence.

From the very moment that we enter the world we are immersed into an experience of sensorial overwhelm. We find ourselves surrounded by sights, sounds and sensations that are predominantly unfamiliar and amplified. We are petrified and curious simultaneously, and in most cases, we find solace in the arms of a caregiver that helps us

to feel a form of safety.

As infants, we express our needs through sound, physical expression and touch. Words do not exist in our reality until we start to appreciate their value a few years down the line. Even when words become a part of our being, they cannot always satisfy the thing that we really want to communicate. For example, 'fear' is a word that we use to describe an intense emotion that has the ability to consume us in mind, body and soul. We know what fear feels like when we recall events that caused us to feel afraid, yet somehow, the word itself fails to emulate the intensity of the feeling.

We respond to events and experiences instinctively by accessing feelings, thoughts and actions. The words that we use to process our thoughts, feelings and actions, often provide a watered down version of the incident itself. When we really think of it, nothing can truly describe that moment when we feel so overwhelmed that we accidentally leave our car keys in a refrigerator, or that moment

when someone keeps a heavy door open for you without even needing to ask. Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is famous for her ability to behold a 'knowing smile' because she reveals a gaze that invokes empathy. Empathy is when we can sense, and understand, the feelings of another being. When we connect with another person in this way, we create an experience of recognition and validation. In consequence, it is through our relationships that we encounter a deeper sense of our own existence.

In Art Therapy, the therapeutic process invites this experience and beyond.

Art Therapy aims to create a practice which embodies the expression of the self through art-making. By creating, in the presence of a therapist, we are provided with an opportunity to bring ourselves into being through our own creativity, and in turn, we feel seen without having to talk it out.

Over the years of practising as an art therapist, it has become ever clearer that the majority of us struggle with unprocessed



NEVER BROKEN, nothing to fix

Chana Studley

I had never thought of myself as a sick person until I started helping others with chronic pain and physical issues. When I made a list of all the physical issues I had endured over the years, it was quite a shock. From cystitis to chronic allergies, eczema to asthma, paralysing back pain and sciatica - all of these came and went with agonising and debilitating regularity right into my early 50s, and then suddenly, about eight years ago, it all stopped.

How? What changed?

I had tried every single treatment you can think of - traditional medicine and surgery, homoeopathy, chiropractic and iridology. Then came the yoga and pilates, meditation retreats and spiritual self-help books. I had trained as a Trauma Counselor back in college when I was studying at Manchester University and continued to coach and counsel people alongside my career in the film business. By

day I was working with Steven Spielberg and John Travolta; by night I was listening to suicidal addicts and counselling trauma survivors, sharing the latest self-help thing that had helped me.

I found that everything worked for a while, but sooner or later the pain or the stress was back. I had gotten as far as seeing that the problem was in my thinking, but like many of us, changing thinking, jobs, relationships - even countries - was all a bandaid. The misery would return followed by the endless rounds of physical symptoms. I knew the problem was in my thinking but I just didn't know what to do anymore.

About eight years ago I was visiting with an old friend and she mentioned that she had just gone to a workshop.

"I think you would really like it."

"Ok, what is it?" She paused. We had been talking for over 2 hours and suddenly my

lovely friend was searching for words. I laughed, "How good was it if you can't even explain it? Is it a diet?" I had no idea.

"No!"

"Is it an exercise program?"

"No!"

"Is it a kind of philosophy?"

"Well, not really ... but kind of ..."

My friend had just discovered a new paradigm in psychology called the Three Principles and it was about to change my life. She grabbed a napkin and wrote;

Mind

Thought

Consciousness

SYDNEY BANKS

Listening to Sydney Banks, the first thing I heard was that I didn't have to do anything to fix myself. *What?* How can you get better if you

don't do anything? But as I listened further, it hit me. Thoughts are always moving. Thought is some kind of spiritual energy and energy is *always* moving. If thoughts are always moving on, then there is nothing to do to fix them. Thoughts are like trains leaving a station. Any kind of analysing or reframing is like dragging the train back into the station to work out how to make it leave! I started to see that all the busy work I had been doing for decades to fix my judgemental, perfectionist thinking was unnecessary. All the meditation and expressive writing I had been doing was actually messing with the system. I had been trying so hard for so long that I had become an expert at "thought hygiene" but I was innocently making it worse! My brain was getting the message that there was always something very wrong and continuously preparing my body for a fight. Underneath all of the busy thinking I saw that we all have innate health and wisdom. We can never be broken and don't need fixing, meaning all of the exhausting busy work could stop. What a relief!

I was so taken by these ideas that I decided to go to London to take a six-month course to become a practitioner.

For the previous 25 years, I had had a monthly appointment with various chiropractors ever since my neck was broken during my 3rd mugging. (Yes, you read that right.) In the early 1980s, I was mugged 3 times. During the first one, my skull was fractured in a nightclub. In the second I was jumped by three guys whilst walking at 6pm near my home in Manchester and received three herniated discs in my lower back as they slammed me on the ground, and then after moving down to London, I was mugged again by a teenager who cracked the top two vertebrae in my neck whilst stealing my bike *with me still on it*. Not surprisingly, I suffered PTSD for over 10 years. But all the work to fix my body and my mind had only gotten me so far.

To afford the course - the flying back and forth from Jerusalem to London, and all the expenses that go with that - I cancelled my chiropractic appointments but the strangest thing happened. At the end of the six months, I noticed that I didn't have any pain. I checked in with my back and it felt strong.

"That's weird!?" I had stopped all the treatments and was feeling great. No IBS or allergies either. So I started reading pain books and pain research. The first thing I learned was that all injuries heal. Apparently, under normal conditions, all injuries heal within 4-6 weeks, so why had my back hurt for 25 years? I got curious. Why had my pain gone away now, just as I stopped trying to fix it?

My chronic pain (read: all chronic physical

issues) went away because my mind had slowed down. All those years of perfectionist, judgmental thinking was actually anxiety. As a trauma counsellor and trained member of the Hatzalah psychotrauma unit, I had learned all about the fight or flight response; when we are stressed, for whatever reason, our brain believes we are in danger and sends adrenaline and cortisol into the body to help us survive. This lasts for about 20 mins, and then in 72 hours, we are ready to face another emergency. But I, and most of my clients, weren't sitting in stress for just 20 mins. Many of us are stressed for 4, 10 - even 18 hours a day! My nervous system was so revved up all the time that my brain was reacting as if I was in mortal danger all day, every day. I have spoken to many clients who have said that they have felt like this since childhood. The problem is, we are not designed to sustain that level of stress hormones, so our bodies start screaming at us to slow down. Migraines, foot pain, neck pain, infertility, food intolerances, brain fog, fatigue, insomnia: there is an endless list of chronic physical issues that flare up as our minds overload with anxiety and our bodies try to get our attention to slow down. Fibromyalgia is a siren that is getting louder and louder.

As I put this together with the Three Principles of Mind, Thought and Consciousness, I saw that my back pain, sciatica, allergies and IBS were all signals from my body that I had innocently misunderstood. Our bodies were created with incredible wisdom to heal and survive; hunger is a signal that we need to eat, sweating is a signal that we need to cool down. We were also created with a way to heal our minds. Tension, for example, is a

quiet signal that my mind is going too fast but if I can't hear that whisper I'm going to have to hear it scream.

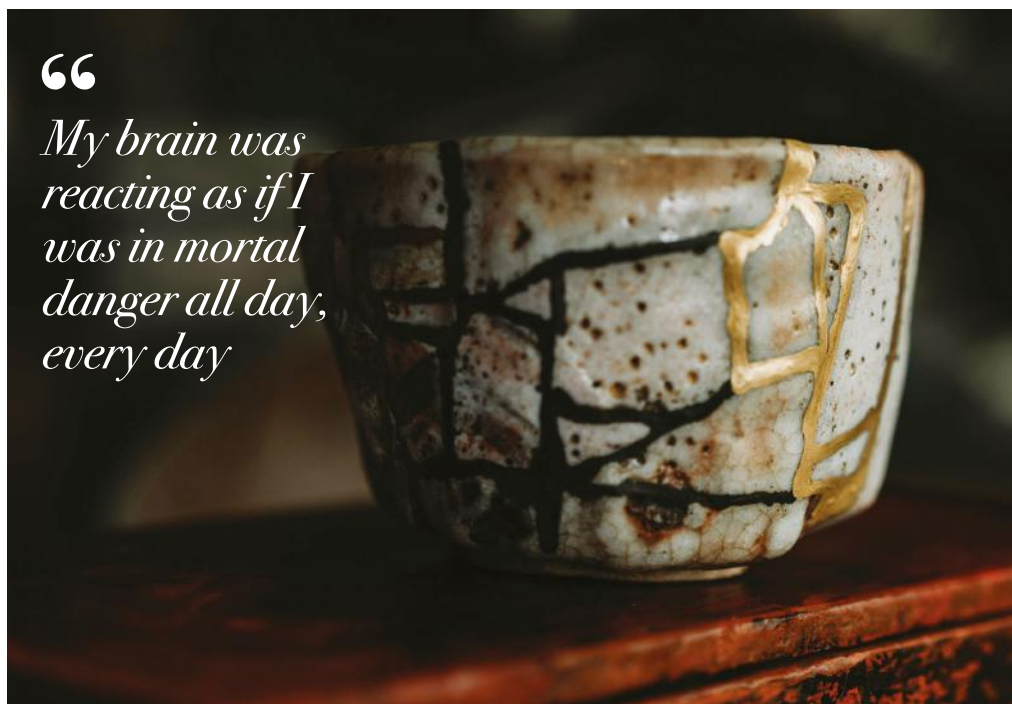
Understanding what Sydney Banks was pointing to, I began to feel safe in my own skin for the first time. As my thinking calmed down, so did my nervous system. It was that simple.

Most people don't enjoy reading research like I do, but we all love stories - so I started to write books. In my novels, my characters do the suffering, the falling down and the searching. Like me, they see that they have innocently misunderstood how experience is created and start to have insights into their own innate wellbeing and wisdom. Facts about trauma, pain and hormones fuel these stories but the happy ending is their liberation from their old limiting ideas that allows them to start living their best lives.

My introduction to the Three Principles enabled me to get free of physical issues but for many more, the freedom has been from mental health problems.

Pesach is a time of redemption and renewal. Before understanding the Three Principles, I was living in my own 'thought-created' prison. I didn't know how to leave behind the pain and misery until I was guided out of it. I couldn't get free until I saw that I was safe. God doesn't produce garbage; we all have innate wellbeing underneath all that misunderstanding. Our *neshamas* (souls) can never be broken, so they don't need fixing no matter what we have been through. All we need is to be open to a fresh new perspective, and insight - a sight from within. My insight was that I am loved and I am safe, no matter what I have been through, and that I can never be broken and never need fixing.

“
My brain was reacting as if I was in mortal danger all day, every day”



Beyond the Butcher



Tech is changing what's on your plate

Alex Shandrovsky

In the shadows of San Francisco's Eddy Street where the stark realities of urban life unfold with a palpable intensity, an unexpected epicenter of innovation thrives amidst the chaos. This is not the Silicon Valley of sleek offices and endless perks, but a laboratory where the future of food is being reimaged. IndieBio, a biotech accelerator, stands as a stark contrast to its surroundings, a place where the problems of the world are not just discussed but actively tackled with the tools of biology.

The journey to this point was anything but conventional. Eight years ago, my world revolved around a Kosher catering business with a social mission, employing recently-released prisoners and catering to the tech industry's giants. It was during this time that a chance introduction to IndieBio shifted my trajectory towards a future where food technology could redefine ethical consumption and environmental sustainability.

At IndieBio, I encountered visionaries like Dr. Uma Valeti of Upside Foods, whose

ambition to cultivate meat from cells rather than animals presented a radical departure from traditional agriculture. Fast forward to today, and Valeti's venture has not only garnered over \$600 million in funding but also achieved a milestone with FDA approval for its cell-based chicken. This is not just an achievement for Upside Foods but a landmark for the entire cell-based meat industry, which has seen a \$3 billion investment in the promise of a more sustainable food system.

The environmental stakes couldn't be



Photo courtesy of Aleph Cuts

“

This isn't just about creating an alternative to traditional meat; it's about redefining what meat can be

higher. With the food industry accounting for 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions—60% of which comes from meat production—the shift towards cell-based meat offers a compelling narrative of change. Similar to the electric vehicle's rise, cell-based meat represents the next evolutionary step in a necessary but environmentally damaging industry. The process, which involves cultivating meat from a cell biopsy in nutrient-rich bioreactors, could slash greenhouse emissions by 92%, presenting a revolutionary approach to mitigating climate change.

Yet, the implications of this technology extend beyond environmentalism into the realm of culture and tradition, particularly for the Jewish community. My own experiences, from running a Kosher catering business to hosting vegan Shabbat meals, underscore the potential for cell-based meat to align with Jewish ethical and dietary laws. Didier Toubia

of Aleph Farms, speaking at a vegan Shabbat, highlighted the significant role meat plays in Jewish tradition and the pioneering potential of "slaughter-free meat."

With Aleph Farms' recent approval to sell its cell-based beef in Israel, the conversation around cell-based meat and Jewish law gains new dimensions. This isn't just about creating an alternative to traditional meat; it's about redefining what meat can be in the context of age-old dietary laws. The implications are profound, including reducing animal cruelty in line with *tzar baalei chaim* (suffering of living creatures), navigating the challenges of *shechita* (ritual slaughter) regulations and reimagining kosher culinary experiences by creating a way

to taste "meat" mixed with milk.

This moment in food technology is not just about the technical feasibility of producing meat from cells; it's a cultural inflection point. It suggests a future where a kosher *pareve* (neutral) meat stew could be as commonplace as its traditional counterpart, even in countries where kosher slaughter faces legal challenges.

As the cell-based meat industry moves from concept to consumption, it invites us to take another bite at our relationship with food, ethics and the environment. This technology's power is not only capable of reshaping the market, but will help us to find new creative ways to address many of the ethical considerations that are part of our tradition.



Laboratory technician working with cell culture

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FOOD & DRINK

A top-down photograph of a meal. In the upper left, a glass bowl with a metal clasp contains a smooth, yellowish soup. To its right is a white bowl with a black floral pattern, filled with a colorful salad of red and green leafy greens and shredded white cheese. In the lower center, a black plate holds three slices of medium-rare grilled steak, a portion of yellow mashed cauliflower, and fresh green herbs. The dishes are arranged on a light-colored surface with a fringed white cloth runner.

Beyond the *Matzah*

What is Pesach without the food? From a fun and festive menu reminding us of the tastes of Israel, to wine recommendations and an exclusive comprehensive meal Prep+Rally plan for the intermittent days - these pages are full of clean, vibrant and family-friendly recipes. We are excited to feature Danielle Renov's gorgeous *Mufletta* recipe for that first sweet and chewy bite after the holiday.



PREP + RALLY'S

Passover Playbook

Effortless meals for the intermittent days

Dini Klein

Just hearing the word Passover seems to make us nervous. I get it. When you're the one that handles all the cooking, there is endless prep to do. Between the shopping, cooking and hosting - all while the house is turned upside-down, I can completely understand the anxious feeling.

I used to find that simply getting a weeknight dinner on the table was immensely taxing. After cooking as a private chef for clients all day, coming home to cook for my own family was the last thing I felt like doing. That is how Prep + Rally came to be. My meal prep system helps thousands of busy families get dinner on the

table easily as we prep staple dishes at the start of the week and then creatively mix and match those staples into fast dinners all week long.

I realised that it comes down to planning, great organisation skills and meal prep. So whether it's a weekday meal or a holiday feast, always be sure to make a roadmap of everything that needs to be done. Write it down on paper so you can visually see it and cross things off the list as you accomplish them. Figure out what can be done in advance and what needs to be prepared fresh. Take any shortcuts you can to make your life simple (precut vegetables is a good one!) and enlist the kiddos to help get the

job done. Once you have a Prep in place you'll be ready to Rally though stress-free.

Here's a fun kosher for Passover meal prep menu that is designed for weeknight *Chol HaMoed* (intermittent days) dinner - but you can definitely pull some items to make and serve at your Seder or even to utilise any other time of the year. It's jam-packed with some delicious recipes that are light, fresh and bursting with flavour.

The most important thing is to take a deep breath, know that it will all get done one way or another and enjoy the holiday with your loved ones!

THE MENUS

Each recipe/meal serves 4

MONDAY: DAY 1

Salmon Fish Sticks with
Cauliflower Steaks and Pesto

TUESDAY: DAY 2

Ratatouille Sheet Pan
Chicken with Quinoa

WEDNESDAY: DAY 3

Mashed Cauliflower with
Grilled Steak and Salad

THURSDAY: DAY 4

Quinoa Pesto Carbonara
Bowls and Salad

DINI'S TIPS & TRICKS

Here are some tips, tricks and alternate serving ideas for this week's prep!

Save time and waste less this week

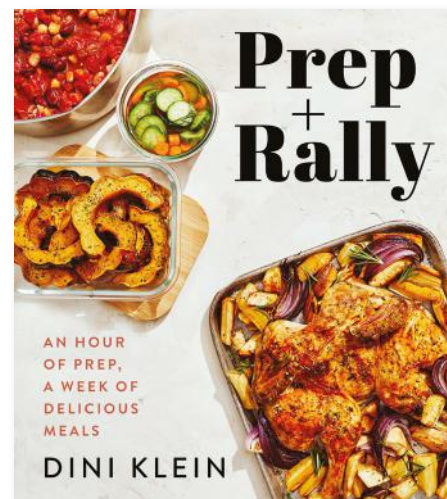
- Buy bags of cauliflower florets instead of using cauliflower steaks to save time!
- Buy spinach or other greens for salad in the bulk section, so that you only buy what you need!

Make this week more kid friendly

- Serve the fish sticks in buns (or Passover buns) with mayonnaise and lettuce!
- Use noodles (or Passover egg noodles) instead of quinoa for the carbonara bowls!

Other tips + notes

- For an additional easy side dish always consider keeping the following on hand: frozen mixed veggies and fresh salad ingredients
- Don't eat quinoa on Passover? Feel free to omit, use courgettes (or passover noodles) for the carbonara bowls or swap in roasted vegetables!



Top tip

Write it down on paper so you can visually see it and cross things off the list as you accomplish them

SHOPPING LIST

Produce

1 red onion
 8 cloves garlic
 1 red bell pepper
 8 ounces cherry tomatoes
 2 squashes or courgettes
 6 heads cauliflower¹
 4 cups fresh basil
 1 bunch chives
 1 bunch parsley
 Salad ingredients for 2 nights of salad!

Pantry

Salt
 Pepper
 Paprika
 Garlic powder
 Onion powder
 Oregano
 Balsamic vinegar
 Honey
 Olive oil
 3 tablespoons coconut cream (from the can) or non-dairy butter
 2 cups quinoa
 2 cups almond meal
 1/4 cup walnuts
 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
 1 teaspoon sugar (optional)

Dairy / frozen

7 eggs + for serving
 3 cups finely grated parmesan
 1 cup shredded mozzarella

Poultry / meat / fish

2 chickens, cut into eighths
 2 pounds salmon, boneless and skinless, cut into strips for fish sticks (about 6 half-inch-thick individual steaks)

SUNDAY PREP

(Or, for *Chol Hamoed*, take 1 hour the evening after the first nights of the holiday/morning before the first nights of the holiday)

1. RATATOUILLE SHEET PAN CHICKEN

INGREDIENTS

2 chickens, cut into eighths
 Salt and pepper, to season
 2 tsp paprika
 2 tsp garlic powder
 2 tsp onion powder
 2 tsp oregano
 1 red onion, cut into wedges
 4 cloves garlic, minced
 1 red bell pepper, sliced
 8 ounces cherry tomatoes
 2 squashes or courgettes cut into rounds
 3 tbsp freshly chopped basil
 3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
 2 tbsp (30 ml) honey
 3 tbsp (45 ml) olive oil, to drizzle

METHOD

- 1 Preheat oven to 400°F / 200°C. Place chicken on a sheet pan and season with spices.
- 2 Add the vegetables and basil to the sheet pan and massage all with the balsamic, honey and oil.
- 3 Bake for 45-50 minutes until cooked through and golden.
- 4 Cool and store.

Top tip

For an additional easy side dish always consider keeping the following on hand: frozen mixed veggies and fresh salad ingredients.

2. CAULIFLOWER STEAKS AND MASH

INGREDIENTS

6 heads cauliflower¹
 Salt and pepper, to season
 Olive oil, for drizzling
 3 tbsp (45 ml) coconut cream (white part from the can) or non-dairy butter

METHOD

- 1 Line two *pareve* baking sheets with parchment paper.
- 2 Wash¹ each head of cauliflower and remove the leaves.
- 3 Cut each head into thin slices cutting through the core to keep the “steaks” intact as much as possible.
- 4 Place all of the smaller florets that don’t look like steaks into a large (*pareve* or meat) pot.
- 5 Place all of the “steaks” onto the lined baking sheets.
- 6 Drizzle with olive oil and season all sides with salt and pepper.
- 7 Bake the “steaks” (in the 400 degree oven) for about 30 minutes until golden.
- 8 Let cool and store.
- 9 Meanwhile fill the pot with the smaller cauliflower pieces with about 1/2 cup of water.
- 10 Cover with a tight-fitting lid and cook on high heat to boil. Let steam and continue to cook for about 10 minutes.
- 11 Once fully softened, either mash with a fork or blend with an immersion blender.
- 12 Season with salt and a few tablespoons of either canned coconut cream (the white part) or non-dairy butter.
- 13 Let cool and store.

¹ Be sure to wash and check your cauliflower for bugs

3. QUINOA

INGREDIENTS

2 cups (370 g) white quinoa
3.5 (830 ml) cups water

METHOD

- 1 In a medium pot (pareve) mix together quinoa and water.
- 2 Bring to a boil and then cover and simmer until water is absorbed, about 10 minutes.
- 3 Uncover and fluff with a fork.
- 4 Remove to a storage container and store.

4. SALMON FISH STICKS

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds (900 g) salmon, skin and bones removed, cut into strips for fish sticks about 1/2 inch thick
Salt and pepper, to season
2 cups (190 g) almond meal
2 cups (180-200 g) finely grated Parmesan cheese
3 eggs
Olive oil, for drizzling

METHOD

- 1 Line two standard (dairy) baking sheets (or one extra large baking sheet) with parchment paper and spray with cooking oil.
- 2 Mix the almond meal and parmesan together on a large plate.
- 3 Whisk the eggs together on another large plate.
- 4 Season the salmon with salt and pepper and then dip each into the egg and then coat in the almond-parmesan mixture.
- 5 Place on a baking sheet and spray tops with cooking oil to coat.
- 6 Cover with plastic wrap and store.



Top tip

Take any shortcuts you can to make your life simple (precut vegetables is a good one!) and enlist the kiddos to help get the job done.

Prep+Rally
in action, Photo
courtesy of Dini Klein

5. PESTO

INGREDIENTS

4 cups fresh basil
2 cloves garlic
1 cup (240 ml) olive oil
1/4 cup (30 g) walnuts salt, to season
1 cup (100 g) shredded parmesan

METHOD

- 1 Blend all ingredients together with an immersion blender, or finely chop and mix together if you don't have a blender.
- 2 Store covered.

6. BASIC VINAIGRETTE

INGREDIENTS

2/3 cup (160 ml) olive oil
1/4 cup (60 ml) red wine vinegar
2 cloves garlic, minced
Salt and pepper, to season
1 teaspoon sugar (optional)

METHOD

- 1 Shake all ingredients together in a storage jar.
- 2 Store covered.

TIME TO RALLY!

MONDAY: DAY 1

Salmon Fish Sticks with Cauliflower Steaks and Pesto (*pareve*)

INGREDIENTS

Salmon fish sticks
Cauliflower steaks
Pesto (1/4 of the jar)

METHOD

- 1 Preheat oven to 450°F / 230°C.
- 2 Remove salmon fish sticks from the fridge and uncover. Spray tops with additional cooking spray if needed and bake for 15-20 minutes until cooked through and crisp!
- 3 Heat cauliflower uncovered in the same oven for 10-15 minutes to warm through and crisp up again.
- 4 Serve fish sticks with cauliflower and pesto on top.



TUESDAY: DAY 2

Ratatouille Sheet Pan Chicken with Quinoa (*meaty*)

INGREDIENTS

Sheet Pan Chicken
Quinoa (half)

METHOD

- 1 Heat oven to 300°F / 150°C and warm chicken and quinoa separately but both covered for 30-40 minutes until warmed through.
- 2 Serve family style!

WEDNESDAY: DAY 3

Mashed Cauliflower with Grilled Steak and Salad (meaty)

INGREDIENTS

Mashed Cauliflower
Vinaigrette (half)

Additional Ingredients:

4-6 steaks (such as a ribeye, oyster steak etc), quantity and weight depend on preference, typically ranging from 6-12 ounces or 170-340 grams per steak

Side salad ingredients

Fresh chives and/or parsley

METHOD

- 1 Heat mashed cauliflower either covered in a 300°F / 150°C oven for 25 minutes or so until warm.
- 2 Prepare steaks (such as a ribeye, oyster steak etc) either on the grill, pan, or under the broiler and season with salt and pepper.
- 3 Prepare your favourite side salad and serve all together with the vinaigrette. Garnish with fresh chives and/or parsley.



THURSDAY: DAY 4

Quinoa Pesto Carbonara Bowls and Salad (milky)

INGREDIENTS

Quinoa (half)
Pesto (3/4 of jar)
Vinaigrette (half)

Additional Ingredients:

1 cup (100 g) shredded mozzarella
4 eggs
Side salad ingredients
Fresh chives, for garnish

METHOD

- 1 Heat quinoa in a large frying pan and add the pesto, warming together on medium heat.
- 2 Add shredded mozzarella, and keep mixing until all has melted and mixed together.
- 3 Push mixture to the side or in a separate pan fry up eggs to desired doneness. Place quinoa mixture in individual bowls and top with the egg.
- 4 Serve with your favourite side salad and vinaigrette! Garnish with fresh chives.

COMPLEMENTS TO THE CHEF



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Matar Rosé
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Vitkin Pinot Noir
2021



Shiloh Secret Reserve
Cabernet Franc 2020

Passover celebrates the Jewish people's redemption from slavery in Egypt. However, we are not free of obligations. The purpose of breaking free from Pharaoh was so we could fulfil God's promise to our forefathers and connect through service. Every *mitzvah* we do is part of this covenant with God, including the yearly Passover Seder and its four cups of wine. Thankfully, we are free to choose *which* wines to use for this special obligation.

There are different customs among families and communities for which type of wine to drink at the Seder. Thankfully, the selection of kosher wine is more extensive than ever, which allows us the freedom to try more varieties and enjoy new wines for the holiday.

Personally, I like to use rosé for the four cups. According to most opinions in Jewish law, rosé is a shade of red and counts as such as it is made from red grape varieties. Using one of several production methods, the winemaker decides how red they want the wine to be by limiting the contact between the must, the grape juice and the grape's skins from which the colour comes.

Here are the rosé wines I plan on enjoying this coming Passover: The **Herzog Lineage Rosé 2023** is quite successful, blending refreshing acidity and mouth watering fruitiness. On the higher end is the superb **Matar Rosé 2023**, with its complex notes of tart strawberries, vanilla cream and herbaceous undertones. The **Château Roubine 2023** is quite sophisticated. It pops in the mouth with layers of berry and stone fruit flavours, combined with lively acidity and vibrant mineral notes.

For the meal, *Shulchan Orech*, I will grace our Seder table with one of my favourite wines from Israel, the **Flam Noble 2011**, which I have aged for quite a few years. The current 2020 vintage is also excellent and will gain even more flavours and complexity if you wish to put some away, as I did.

There is another popular strategy. Start with a light wine. It can be a rosé, but it can also be a Pinot Noir, such as the **Vitkin Pinot Noir 2021**. Then, work your way up and enjoy a bigger wine, such as the **Shiloh Secret Reserve Cabernet Franc 2020**. It is rich and layered, with complex black fruit and herbaceous notes and a long and plush finish.

You can then move back to your Rosé or Pinot Noir or keep going with the Shiloh.

For the 4th cup, if you can handle it, maybe a sweet wine dessert wine? The **Teperberg Essence Fortesse**, for instance. Port-style wines are heavier, high in alcohol and therefore not everyone's first choice for the Seder. Still the sweetness and balance allow a unique drinking experience to wrap up the ceremony.

May these delicious wines and any other wine you choose to enhance your Pesach Seders. *L'chaim!*



Gabriel Geller is a WSET Level 3 - certified wine industry professional with over 15 years of experience. He is

also the founder and admin of *Kosher Wine: Sharing and Experiences*, the largest online forum discussing the world of kosher wine, with over 10,000 members following his recommendations. Geller writes regularly about kosher wine in many English-speaking newspapers and magazines.

Top tip

To make *mufletta* hours after Pesach, prepare the dough right after *havdalah*.¹



MUFLETTA

With Orange Blossom Syrup

Danielle Renov

From the time I was old enough to remember, this was my absolute most favourite food on the planet. It was the first and last dish I requested from my grandmother upon each visit. How privileged was I that I didn't even know how labour intensive they were to make, because any time I asked for them, my grandmother

simply said OK. When I was a teenager, she spent many hours teaching me the exact right way to stretch out the dough to make the *mufletta* paper thin and as light as possible. These "pancakes," which are really closer to crepes, are perfectly light, crispy, chewy and satisfying all at the same time. Aside from being delicious all year long, mufletta

is traditionally served at a henna (a pre-wedding Moroccan party) and always right after Pesach. Literally hours after Pesach has ended, there is the traditional Mimouna party, where people open their homes and everyone goes from house to house tasting all the new delicious *chametz* (leavened) treats that that home has to offer!

INGREDIENTS

For the Mufletta:

8 cups (1 kg) white flour, sifted
3 Tbsp (12.5 g) sugar
1 Tbsp (14.3 g) kosher salt
Warm water
3 tbsp (45 ml) + 3 cups (710 ml) canola oil (or any neutral oil)

For the syrup:

1 1/3 cups (300 g) sugar
1/4 cup (60 ml) orange blossom water
1/2 cup (120 ml) water

METHOD

For the Mufletta:

- 1 Add the sifted flour to a large bowl; create a deep, large well in the centre.
- 2 Add sugar into the centre of the well.
- 3 Pour 1 cup (240 ml) of warm water into the well. Using a wooden spoon, gradually start stirring from the centre, slowly incorporating flour as you stir.
- 4 Once half the flour is incorporated, add 1 1/2 cups (355 ml) of warm water and start mixing with your hands to combine. Knead for 3 minutes. The dough should be cohesive but still sticky.
- 5 Pour 3 tbsp (45 ml) of oil over the dough.

- 6 Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and a kitchen towel. Let the dough rest for 2 hours.
- 7 After resting, place 2 baking sheets on a work surface and spread 1/4 cup (60 ml) oil onto each sheet pan. Set aside 2 cups (475 ml) of oil in a bowl.
- 8 Oil your hands lightly, and form small balls of dough by pushing about 2 Tbsp of dough through a circle made with your thumb and forefinger.
- 9 Place these on the oiled sheet pan and brush a bit of the reserved oil over each.
- 10 Cover the sheet pans with plastic wrap loosely and let the dough balls rest for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

To cook Mufletta:

- 1 Prepare a clean workspace next to your stove. Preheat a pan over medium heat.
- 2 Drizzle and spread 1/2 tsp (2.5 ml) of oil over the countertop.
- 3 Take one dough ball, and using oiled fingers, gently press and stretch the dough until it's thin enough to see through.
- 4 Place 1 tsp (5 ml) of oil in the preheated pan and carefully transfer the stretched dough to the pan.
- 5 As one piece cooks, prepare another and flip the first over once partially cooked, stacking each new layer on top in the pan.
- 6 Continue this process, creating a stack of

about 15 muflettas. Then, remove from the pan, roll up the stack jelly-roll style and keep covered with a kitchen towel to stay warm.

- 7 Repeat with the remaining dough balls.

For the Syrup:

- 1 Combine all syrup ingredients in a small nonstick pot over medium-high heat.
- 2 Stir constantly until the sugar dissolves.
- 3 Once dissolved, let the mixture cook for 1 minute to slightly thicken.
- 4 Remove from heat and drizzle over mufletta as desired.

To Serve:

Gently unroll a mufletta, drizzle with a bit of syrup, roll up like a wrap and enjoy.

Variation:

Spread butter over a warm mufletta, drizzle with a little honey, roll it up and dig in.

Tips + tricks:

To make mufletta hours after Pesach, prepare the dough right after *havdalah*¹, assigning kitchen tasks to everyone to help transition back to *chametz*. After preparing the dough and a brief rest, assist in the kitchen until it's time to form the dough balls. This way, warm, fresh mufletta is ready within 2 hours after Pesach.

A Taste of *Home*

From my kitchen

Sivan Kobi

I came to the United States from Israel when I was just four years old. Even though I've lived here ever since, I have always felt so connected to Israel. Part of me wishes that I lived there, especially during holiday times. Just as we end the Seder with a heartfelt, "Next Year in Jerusalem!" our hearts are always yearning eastward, connecting home. These days, with our thoughts and prayers particularly focused on Israel, I was inspired to put together a festive menu that reminds me of home. Enjoy!



MOROCCAN FISH PATTIES

These Moroccan fish patties are so fragrant and tender. The sauce has the depth of having been cooked all day, filled with whole garlic cloves that just melt onto your matzah.



INGREDIENTS

For the fish patties:

- 1 whole onion
- 2 Serrano chillies
- 7-8 garlic cloves
- 1 red pepper
- 1/2 bunch of parsley
- 1/2 bunch of coriander
- 10 oz. (280 g) skinless salmon fillet
- 10 oz. (280 g) white fish fillets (cod or tilapia)
- 2 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) olive oil
- 1/3 cup matzah meal

For the sauce:

- 2 red peppers
- 2 red chilli peppers
- 3 Serrano chillies
- 1 bunch of coriander
- 1 cup whole peeled garlic cloves
- 2 soft grated tomatoes
- 2 tbsp. paprika
- 2 tbsp. fish seasoning
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) olive oil
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) water

METHOD

Prepare fish patties:

- 1 Finely mince vegetables, or use a food processor.
- 2 Mince fish in a food processor or ask the fishmonger to grind it.
- 3 Combine vegetables, minced fish, seasonings and oil in a bowl; mix well.
- 4 Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to use.

Make spicy pepper sauce:

- 1 Slice peppers into long strips and place in a pot.
- 2 Add sliced chillies, chopped coriander, whole garlic cloves and grated tomato.
- 3 Season with paprika, Moroccan fish seasoning, salt and olive oil.
- 4 Sauté on medium flame.
- 5 Add water, cover the pot and cook for about 20 minutes.

Cooking patties in sauce:

- 1 Shape about 1/4 cup of the fish mixture into an oval patty.
- 2 Place the patties into the bubbling sauce.
- 3 Repeat until all patties are made and arranged in the pot.
- 4 Cover and cook for an additional 25 minutes.

Serve the fish patties with the spicy pepper sauce while hot.

GREEN SALAD

As simple as this salad is to make, it is vibrant and bursting with freshness, reminding me of traditional Israeli *salatim*.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 green cabbage, shredded
- 1 fennel bulb, sliced thin
- 4 celery ribs, chopped (leaves included if available)
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 1 green apple, sliced thinly and into strips
- Optional: 2 Serrano chillies with seeds, for a kick
- 1/2 bunch chopped fresh mint
- 1/2 bunch chopped fresh coriander
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) olive oil
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. salt

METHOD

- 1 Chop, slice, toss and enjoy!



MATZAH BOUREKAS WITH MUSHROOM GRAVY

These Matzah Bourekas, with their rich meat filling and savoury mushroom gravy, are sure to impress. Paired perfectly with a smear of date spread on the matzah, they promise a deliciously unique experience.

Recipe yields about 12 matzah bourekas.

INGREDIENTS

For meat filling:

- 1 large chopped onion
- 1/2 kg ground beef
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) avocado oil (or any neutral oil)
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 2 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 bunch freshly chopped parsley

For mushroom gravy:

- 1 medium chopped onion
- 1 can (375 g) “pieces and stems” mushrooms, or 225 g fresh, cleaned mushrooms
- 1.5 tsp. potato starch mixed with 3 tbsp. of water (to make a slurry)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1.5 cups (350 ml) of water

Additional requirements:

- 6 matzah squares
- Optional, 1/3 cup (110 g) date spread
- 1 egg for brushing
- Optional, for those who eat *kitniyot* (legumes) on Pesach: sesame seeds for garnish

METHOD

Prepare the meat filling:

- 1 In a pan, heat oil and sauté chopped onions until translucent.
- 2 Add ground beef, separate and brown. Season with salt, pepper and paprika.
- 3 Cook on medium heat for 5-7 minutes.
- 4 Remove from heat, strain excess oil, stir in parsley and set aside.

Prepare the Matzah:

- 1 Wet matzah squares under running water until completely drenched.
- 2 Cover with a clean kitchen towel and set aside until flexible, rewetting if necessary.

Assemble the Bourekas:

- 1 Cut each matzah square down the centre.
- 2 Optional, smear a small amount of date spread on the matzah.

- 1 Spoon meat filling along the centre and roll up.
- 2 Place in a baking dish.
- 3 Brush rolls with beaten egg.
- 4 Optional, for those who eat *kitniyot* (legumes) on Pesach: sprinkle on sesame seeds for garnish
- 5 Bake in a preheated oven at 350°F / 175°C for 25-30 minutes, uncovered.

Prepare the mushroom gravy:

- 1 Sauté chopped onion until translucent.
- 2 Add drained mushrooms, season with salt and pepper.
- 3 Mix potato starch with water to create a slurry, then add to the pan.
- 4 Cook on low heat until smooth, about 2 minutes.

Remove Bourekas from the oven and serve warm with a generous dose of mushroom gravy.



CREMBO CAKE

This cake has transformed the beloved and iconic Crembo, an Israeli cold-weather treat, into a stunning holiday dessert. The idea is the same: fluffy marshmallow-like filling sitting on top of a cookie base, coated with a beautiful chocolate glaze.

INGREDIENTS

For base:

- 6 room temperature eggs
- 1/4 cup (60 g) granulated sugar
- 1 packet (95 g) chocolate pudding mix

For cream centre:

- 2 cups (480 ml) heavy whipping cream (or non-dairy whipping cream)
- 3/4 cup (180 ml) of milk (or alternative milk for non-dairy)
- 1 packet (95 g) vanilla pudding mix

For chocolate topping:

- 1 cup (175 g) semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 full tbsp. (14 g) coconut oil

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 350°F / 175°C.

For the base:

- 1 Separate eggs. Whip egg whites with a pinch of salt, gradually add sugar until peaks form.
- 2 Gently fold in yolks, then pudding mix. Pour into a sprayed pan and bake for 20 minutes.

For the cream centre:

- 1 Combine heavy cream, milk and vanilla pudding. Whip until thick. Spread over cooled cake.

For the chocolate topping:

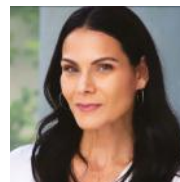
- 1 Melt chocolate chips and coconut oil. Pour over the cake.

Chill and serve:

Keep refrigerated. For a softer topping, allow it to come to room temperature before serving.

“

Fluffy marshmallow-like filling sitting on top of a cookie base, coated with a beautiful chocolate glaze



Sivan Kobi is a baker, chef and full time content creator. Her journey began in her parents' Jewish bakery where

she first learned the art of challah baking; she is dedicated to preserving this heritage. Sivan is most grateful for being given the opportunity to showcase the ease and beauty of bringing Shabbat and Jewish food into followers' homes.

📷 @sivanskitchen

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CULTURE



Vaults, Visions *and Voices*

Have you heard about the cave-dwelling Jews of Libya? Take a look at how they got there, the way they lived and where they ended up. Then switch gears to a colourful fashion edit with *Valour* magazine, a look at exquisite, inspired art and a feature interview with branding sensation Eitan Chitayat, dedicated to speaking up for the Jewish people.

The Cave-Dwelling Jews of Libya

Rabbi Ari Kayser

Among the lesser-known chapters of Jewish history are the cave-dwelling Jews of Libya, a community whose existence is intricately linked with the rugged landscapes of the Djebel Gharian. Set on the high plateau of the Gharian mountains, lies the cave villages of this small Jewish community of yesteryear. These subterranean cave dwellings were dug thirty to forty feet deep underground, with long and narrow tunnels winding toward a single entrance. These were intentionally narrow to allow people to proceed in single file, preventing invaders from overwhelming the cave dwellers from mass attack.¹

The network of dwelling areas or ‘apartments,’ which each had several rooms housing a nuclear family, were connected by a shared courtyard open to the sky, providing natural light and fresh air.

How did Jews come to live in these cavernous homes? To understand, we must first take a look at how Jews came to Libya in the first place.

At the beginning of 1949 there were about 35,000 Jews living in Libya.² Today, Libya is home to not even a single Jew. However, like so many other North African and Middle Eastern countries, the history of Jewish inhabitancy is

ancient, and pre-dates the Muslim era by more than a millennium. Roman-Jewish historian Josephus suggests that Jews arrived in Libya during the rule of Ptolemy I in 323 BCE, although they may have arrived as early as the 10th century BCE during King Solomon’s reign.³ Historian, Martin Gilbert, writes that Ptolemy settled many Jews in Cyrenaica – the Libya of antiquity which included Egypt – to strengthen his kingdom.⁴ The community prospered and some historians suggest they were the largest Jewish community in the diaspora at the time, reaching numbers around one million.⁵

The situation of the Jews of Libya changed dramatically for the worse after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE by the Roman emperor Titus. One of the emperor’s generals had brought over 30,000 Jewish captives to Libya and the Roman rulers quashed Jewish revolts and killed thousands of people in the process. Over the centuries, Jewish life in Libya had moments that were marked with more freedoms and opportunities, coupled with massacres, pogroms and forcible conversions. When the Arab crusaders invaded Libya in 670 CE, Jews, Christians and pagan Berbers joined forces to repel the attacks, but eventually either fled or

remained and converted.

Writer, traveller and historian, Nahum Slouschz, believed that many Berber tribespeople of the Tripolitanian hinterland were descended from Jews who had deserted their historical faith.⁶ Jews from around the Mediterranean began to arrive in Libya, attracted by a more tolerant Muslim regime. Although they were considered *dhimmi* (non-Muslims living in an Islamic state), this afforded them certain protections, allowing them to live in relative security. That said, they were nonetheless obligated to pay the *jizya* tax,⁷ wear distinctive clothing and were forbidden from taking positions of authority. It was not until the rule of the Almohads that the Jews of Libya endured harsh physical persecution too.

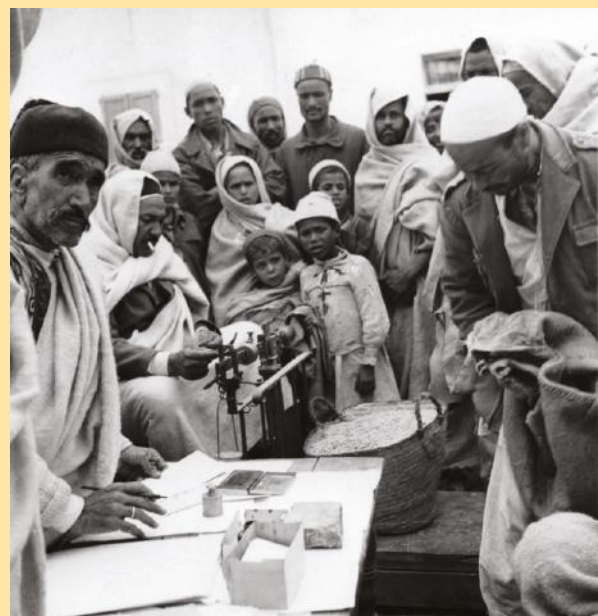
At the tail end of the 14th century and anti-Jewish massacres in Catholic Spain, many Sephardic Jews found a safe haven in Libya. One historian describes how that safety disappeared soon after with the conquest of Tripoli, “When the Spaniards captured Tripoli in 1510, they persecuted the Jews mercilessly. Many Jews were killed, imprisoned or sold as slaves. Some fled to the secure mountains of Djebel Gharian in Tripolitania, where they took refuge in caves.”⁸

“

Despite the challenges of their remote existence, the Gharian Jews found solace in their shared rituals and celebrations

Below left: Jewish boys in a classroom of the community of cave-dwelling Jews in Gharian, Libya (1947). Photo: Wikipedia Commons

Below right: Jewish salesperson weighing wheat in the Gharian market, Libya (1947). Photo: Wikipedia Commons



¹ Ken Blady, Jewish Communities in Exotic Places, “Cave Rabbis? Cave Synagogues?” p. 322. ²Harvey E. Goldberg, Cave Dwellers and Citrus Growers, p. 9. ³Archaeological surveys made in Sirte dated a synagogue to the 10th century BCE. ⁴Martin Gilbert, In Ishmael’s House, pp. 2-3. ⁵ H Z Hirschberg, A History of the Jews of North Africa, vol. 1, page 27. ⁶ Nahum Slouschz, Travels in North Africa, pp. 109-111. ⁷ A tax historically levied on dhimmis. ⁸ Ken Blady, Jewish Communities in Exotic Places, “Cave Rabbis? Cave Synagogues?” p. 317.

*Underground house in Gharian, Libya,
now a unique tourist destination*



Libya saw the Ottoman conquest in 1551, which lasted four centuries with relative prosperity for the Jews. In 1911, Libya was colonised by Italy, at which point *dhimmi* laws were abolished and Jewish life began to flourish - but not for long. In late 1939, the Fascist Italian regime began to pass antisemitic laws, such as forcing Jewish shopkeepers to open on the Sabbath and stamping their

citizenship papers with “Jewish race.” Despite these oppressive living conditions, Jews still comprised 25% of the population of Tripoli in 1941 and boasted 44 synagogues in the city.⁹

When the Nazis occupied Tripoli in 1942, some Jews again fled to the caves of Djebel Gharian. The Jews of Benghazi, the second largest Jewish community in Libya, saw many of its members deported to the Giado

concentration camp, where hundreds died from starvation and disease.

Throughout the centuries, Libyan Jews found refuge in the caves of the Gharian hinterlands, and the community had a unique *modus operandi*.

The *sheikh*, acting as both a political intermediary and spiritual guide, played a pivotal role in navigating the intricate

“

*A small glimpse into a world shaped by
geography, history and faith*



relationship between the Jewish enclave and the broader governing authorities. Tasked with ensuring the community's physical security, the *sheikh* bore the weight of safeguarding their interests amidst shifting socio-political landscapes. During Ottoman rule, for instance, the *sheikh* required astute awareness of regional dynamics to effectively advocate for his people in distant centres of power.

Despite the absence of a formal salary, the sheikh's duties included many responsibilities, from managing the community's finances for taxes and bribes, to representing their interests in official matters. This role demanded not only political acumen but also a commitment to upholding the community's social, cultural and religious values.

Central to the cohesion of the Gharian Jews was their unwavering devotion to communal worship and religious traditions.

Professor Harvey E. Goldberg, a distinguished anthropologist, documented the intricate living arrangements of the community, highlighting the unique architectural layout of their cave-dwellings. Each dwelling, or *hūsh*, formed a nucleus for family life, interconnected by a central courtyard where communal activities took place.

Despite the challenges of their remote existence, the Gharian Jews found solace in their shared rituals and celebrations. The

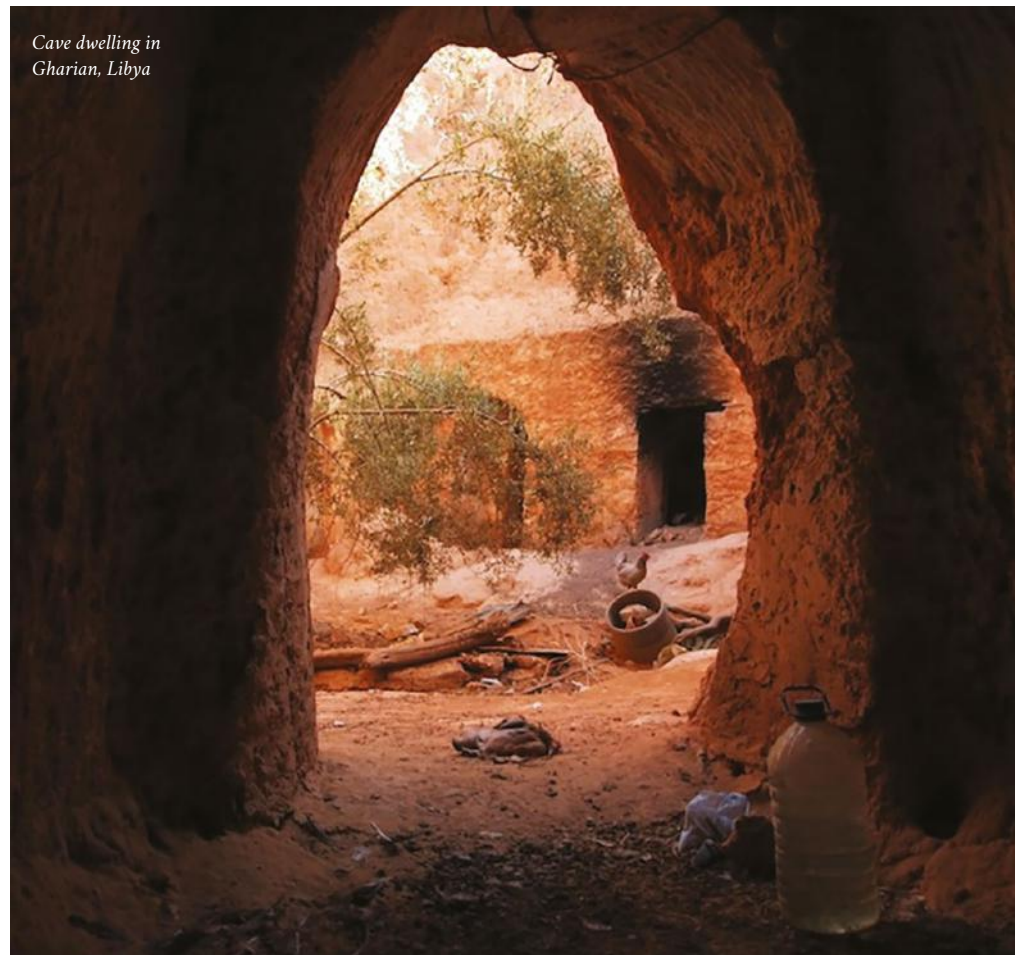
pinnacle of their religious calendar was marked by the observance of Yom Kippur, where the honour of holding the Torah scroll held profound significance. Generosity towards the synagogue and active engagement with visiting rabbis underscored their commitment to nurturing their spiritual heritage.

Due to high rates of endogamy, the celebrations of circumcisions, weddings and funerals, would be attended by the entire community. Through these rites of passage, the fabric of Gharian Jewish identity was intricately woven, preserving traditions across generations.

Following Libya's independence, most Jews, including those of the Gharian, fled to Syria, propelled by worsening conditions, including pogroms. Today, the descendants of the Gharian Jewish community reside in Israel. The caves, once inhabited by this resilient community, are now occupied by modern Libyans, who have enhanced the dwellings with electricity, running water and sewage disposal. Some of these subterranean habitats have even emerged as sought-after lodgings for those searching for 'unique stays' on their travels through North Africa.

While the sands of time may have shifted the location of the Gharian Jewish community, they offer us a small glimpse into a world shaped by geography, history and faith.

Cave dwelling in Gharian, Libya



Modern appearance of cave dwellings in Gharian. Photo: Klaus-Norbert Müller

True Colours

Unlock your seasonal palette

In collaboration with
VALOUR
LIFESTYLE

Chaya Baumgarten
Founder of Valour magazine

Choosing the right colours for your wardrobe is more than a matter of taste; it's a strategy that can significantly enhance your look.

The perfect shades can illuminate your natural beauty, complement your skin tone and bring out your vibrancy, while less suitable choices might not do you justice. Colour analysis is a technique that identifies the most flattering colours for your natural beauty, based on your skin tone, hair and eye colour. It sorts people into four seasons — Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter — each with a unique palette that enhances your appearance. By determining your season, you can select clothing and accessories that not only compliment you but also express your personal style, revolutionising your fashion and beauty approach.



Cutwork sleeve tiered dress £79, John Lewis



Charles & Keith court shoes £65, John Lewis



Shopper £19.99, H&M

Alice + Olivia pleated metallic skirt £685, The Outnet

Spring

Natural Vibrancy

We love!



Flared long skirt £32.99, H&M



Breda trench £120, Jovonna London



Rhinestone pearl hanging earrings £35, & Other Stories

Top tip:
Go for bright, acidic colours



Knit t-shirt £67, H&M



Vibrant stone hoop earrings £23, H&M

If you have ivory, peach, golden beige or light golden brown skin, with eyes that are blue, green with golden splashes or golden brown, and hair in shades of blonde to golden brown, you might be a Spring. This season thrives in bright, acidic colours such as pinks, greens, blues and yellows, enhancing their natural glow. Avoid dark or pale shades that can diminish this vibrancy. Springs benefit from a palette of apricot, coral, turquoise and bright greens, with fashion tips encouraging cardigans in peach or acid green, and coats in bold colours like lime or orange, to maintain their radiant and stylish presence.

Hobbs broderie midi dress £169, John Lewis



Mobile phone holder with crossbody strap £29.95, Benetton



Boden Kate shirt dress £135, John Lewis



Perfect powdered blue



Malina maxi dress £400, Selfridges



Oversized crinkle dress £37.99, H&M

Printed silk scarf £57, H&M



Summer

Soft Radiance

Alice + Olivia sweater £488, The Outnet



A-line denim skirt £64.99, H&M



Top tip:

Avoid earth tones, go for blues/greys



Joseph pleated midi skirt £345, Selfridges

Bow-detail chambray shirt £77, H&M



Summer types are marked by their soft, delicate features and a preference for soft, neutral colours, reflecting their pink, bluish, or greyish skin undertones. Their skin may range from pale to pink/beige, often adorned with dark brown freckles, while their eyes can be light blue, green with a grey halo or aquamarine shifting in tone based on their attire. Hair shades vary from platinum to ash blonde, and brown with red or greyish blue tints, often greying early with a pearl-blue sheen. Summer's ideal palette includes blue-tinted greys, soft whites and powdered blues, avoiding earth tones to preserve their natural radiance. Wearing season-specific colours near the face enhances their classic, glowing look, while other seasonal colours are best worn on the lower half.



Rib-knit dress
£34.99,
H&M



Fear of God
Essentials
midi dress
£80,
Selfridges



Harrietta Mary Jane leather pumps
£59, John Lewis



Dress with belt
£45.99, Reserved

Top tip:
Choose intense
warm colours



AJE. maxi skirt
£380, The Outnet

Sam Edelman
heeled loafers
£185,
John Lewis



Autumn

Luscious Glow



Midnight Dahlia
eye colour cream
£17, & Other Stories



Dixie sunglasses
£170 Vehla



High waist belt
£22.95, Benetton

Autumn types glow with golden and toast-brown skin shades, embodying the richness of the autumn season. Their skin spans peach to black, occasionally including Asian women with rare golden pigmentation. With eyes in dark tones like golden chestnut or turquoise blue, and hair in hues from red to golden white, Autumns exude warmth. Their ideal colour palette consists of intense, warm colours like ochre, brown and hazel, alongside turquoise blues and vibrant orange reds. Neutrals for Autumns are off-white, beige, camel and khaki green, perfectly complementing their natural colouring and enhancing their appearance with a deep, earthy vibrance that mirrors the autumnal essence.

Jessie
button-down
midi dress
£115,
Forever
New



Patterned
scarf
£22.95,
Benetton

New Balance 327
£100, JD Sports



Top tip:
Accentuate your cool undertones



The White Company pleated midi skirt £119, Selfridges

Skirt with contrasting trim £39.99, Reserved



Sophisticated stripes



Embroidery-detail cap £14.99, H&M



Cotton flannel shirt £21.99, H&M



Pearl drop earrings £23, & Other Stories



Sandro cropped sweater £259, The Outnet

Midi skirt £99.95, Benetton



Garment-dyed trench coat £199, H&M

Winter

Cool Vibrancy



Asymmetric wrap shirt £77, H&M



Sandro zip-up cardigan £149.40, Selfridges



Ro&Zo midi shirt dress £119, John Lewis



Winters have cool undertones, looking vibrant in pinks and blues but less so in oranges and golds. Their hair and eyes typically showcase deep, cool shades. Winters stand out for their defined, contrasting traits and the way soft or pastel colours can mute their appearance. Unlike others, their skin doesn't flush easily with temperature changes. Embrace the Winter palette for fashion that highlights your individuality and style with icy shades, deep purples and crisp neutrals like black and white, enhancing your natural elegance. This season's styling tips include wearing colours that accentuate your cool undertones, utilising silver jewellery and incorporating pops of pink in makeup for a sophisticated and timeless look.

CONNECTING *on Canvas*

An interview with artist, Shani Shaffern Greenfield

Sasha Silber

Please tell me a little bit about yourself.

My childhood in Flatbush (Brooklyn), where I was born and raised, was mostly warm, happy and well rounded. I went to good schools, had wonderful friends and family. I have enjoyed everything creative since I was very young, having always loved bright colours and breathtaking nature, astounded by the gorgeous world we live in. I could never pass a beautiful flower, an interesting tree, a radiant bird or a breathtaking sunset without

taking a moment to receive the pleasure of the splendour around me.

What led you to discover your passion for art? What motivated you to start creating art, and was there a specific moment that propelled you to begin?

Years ago, my husband bought me a paint set and canvases, which sat unused until the pandemic kept us home. While striving

to keep our home lively and positive, I discovered painting - laying down colour and movement without any prior knowledge, finding joy and a newfound passion in the process. I took out the paint and canvases, kind of as my own form of therapy. It helped. I knew absolutely nothing, but I was free to put down colour and movement on a canvas. Suffice it to say those were not masterpieces, but they brought me joy in a bleak time. Still, something was missing: it was the passion that I needed. I was encouraged by my husband and parents to try painting more. It





was kind of humorous to me, it took hours to finish anything at all.

Can you describe your self-education process in art? What resources or methods have you found most helpful?

I had no real skill at all. I had no specific method and no training. What I did have was an imagination, and I felt like I would try anything. The first painting I made that I was satisfied with was a very abstract *Kotel* (Western Wall, Jerusalem). I realised then that my paintings were connecting me to something deep within. When I felt connection to God, to a prayer or an emotion, my painting needed to reflect that. I used every material available: my fingers, a paint brush, the sides of a paintbrush, paper, glue and foil; I was trying to express myself.

It's incredible to hear your story and see your art, complete living works. Could you walk us through your creative process from an initial idea to a finished piece?

To begin a new painting, I first spend a long

time trying to envision what I want on the canvas. I am very open to making mistakes and admitting when something doesn't come out the way I want it to. My process is a lot of trial and error. When I envision an idea that I like in my mind, I wait until I can access the emotions that I need to feel before painting. Most, if not all paintings I have made came from an expression of prayer and yearning - to have a deeper connection to God, His creations and to Israel, my home.

What challenges have you faced as a self-taught artist?

Probably one of the biggest challenges I face as I create new paintings is second-guessing myself. I am surrounded by very talented people who tell me when something looks potentially excellent - or just plain old wrong. It's hard to know what other people will like when painting from something deep within myself. At times, it can feel as though I may have gotten out a form of prayer or inspiration, but it may not actually show up in the actual painting. I have made countless paintings that I then decided were too ugly to finish or just not working for me. Still, I am very okay with making mistakes and admitting that I have no idea really what I'm doing. When people ask me how to become successful in any creative new adventure, I often suggest they accept the possibility of

failure. Don't be so down on yourself. Get up and try again.

How has your art evolved since you began, and who or what are your artistic influences?

For some time I felt like I had imposter syndrome. When people would buy a painting from me, I thought it was some level of ridiculous. But as I've been painting and selling I realised that people like and connect with what I do. That makes it easier to try and try again.

I find inspiration everywhere: the beautiful world we live in, and the holy places that I feel so blessed that I get to go visit. When I go to pray at the *Kotel*, I can sit for a long time to pray and observe. Every stone has some magic built on layers of prayers and tears. It's overwhelming and so very beautiful. I am inspired by nature all the time. Sometimes when I see a beautiful sky, an interesting flower or the bark of a tree, I think, *how lucky am I to live in a world that was created by the greatest artist?* Every form of art does inspire me as well. Many people who discover that I paint like to show me pictures of what they do. I'm always impressed, even if it's something that doesn't specifically resonate with me, I find the level of talent in the world is outstanding. I have



seen some exquisite calligraphy, embroidery, children's art and oil paintings, each of them beautiful in their own way.

Art that has meaning is most appealing to me. Even the best artist is lacking something if they can't convey emotion through their work. I like to paint when I feel joy. I enjoy those paintings the most. Obviously the world is filled with all sorts of emotions; many paintings come from a prayer of yearning for a world of peace. Sometimes I paint with tears literally flowing down my cheeks, but the one thing I never do is paint from a place of despair. Even if I myself have felt deeply sad, especially now during the times of war, I cannot paint unless it comes from a hopeful place.

How has your work been received within your community and beyond? Can you share any memorable responses?

I am so grateful that my art has been well received by many people in our community in Jerusalem, Israel and around the world. People who I have never met own some of my art, which I find to be somewhat humorous. I admit it is quite enjoyable for me to walk into someone's house and see a painting of mine hanging on their wall. The most memorable response I got when someone saw a painting of mine is "I have been looking for this painting for a long time." She said she's been searching for something that was speaking to her and I had just finished painting it. It was an abstract Old City of Jerusalem. I was hoping that the message I conveyed of the light shining through the City of Gold was obvious, and before I explained it to her, she was able to explain it to me. It is now adorning her living room wall.

Can you tell me about *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav (Jerusalem of Gold)*?

This is my favourite painting, and it hangs on my living room wall. I'm looking at it as we speak. It's an expression of the love I have for living in Jerusalem. I came to Jerusalem in 1994, fell deeply in love with the country and its people and knew I always wanted to live here. I used to walk around different neighbourhoods seeing families about, thinking to myself, I just want my family to look like that, to sound like that, to feel like that. I love being in a country and in a city surrounded by holiness, where people are doing their best to find their place and connect. This painting tries to imbue the holiness of our city. The light is shining on the gold and it feels like a condensed place that makes room for the light. Jerusalem's crowded buildings squish next to other buildings but yet there's room for us all. I live in a small apartment with a bunch of very lively children and I still feel like there's always more room. I hope this painting conveys the feeling of holiness and of joy. That's what I felt when I painted it and that's how I feel when I see it.

Kotel (Western Wall) in the Rain has a totally different feeling...

One winter when there had been very little rain, I went to pray at the *Kotel*. When I got all the way up close to the wall, I happened to sit near women who were crying so hard. At some point, I spoke with some of them. They were farmers' wives, crying bitterly over the dry winter. I was overwhelmed by the depth of their emotion.

Each season we as a nation rely on our Creator to provide us with exactly what we need. We pray for rain in the winter. We then pray that the rain stops because the season has changed, and we now don't want rain. We want dew - but just the right amount, at just the right time. And again, we are provided with what we need.

The fact that they were able to reach a place of deep tears because they need the rain, literally, for their livelihood moved me in such a profound way. I was able to sit with them and cry with them - though certainly not on their level. When I got home, I realised I felt a need to paint this emotion. I painted and cried the picture of the Western Wall in the rain. Literally two days later it started raining for a period of at least two weeks. I felt a bit of their pain, and I hoped to help carry a bit of their deep burden. This painting represents that feeling of calling out to the Creator to beg for our greatest needs that only He can provide.

Finally, can you tell me about your new work, *A Mother's Tears*?

The painting I recently finished is of a woman, lighting candles and bent over in prayer. It is a painting that came during these last few months of war. As a woman who lights candles every Friday at sunset, I feel a unique bond with all the women across the entire world who keep Shabbat together. When I light my candles every week, I pray for my children, but the idea of the entire Nation of Israel being connected has come across through this war more than anything else. I have to hold myself back (and often I can't) from the emotion that I feel as I pray for all of our soldiers, our hostages and our wounded. This painting is my way of conveying this feeling of a mother praying for her child, her friend's child and a stranger's child - all still deeply connected with her.

What are your aspirations for your art in the future? Are there new areas you're eager to explore?

I don't want to give myself any limitations. I often think about taking classes, but even that feels somewhat constricting to me. I am happy to explore other mediums and I often think that painting on something other than canvas might be somewhere that I want to take my art. I myself feel like this has gone from zero to great progress in a very short time. I have to be patient with myself; I understand that learning is a process, art is a process, and I am open to take my art wherever it may.

Above: A Mother's Tears

YOU DON'T GET TO DEFINE US

Eitan Chitayat speaks up

Sasha Silber

A global citizen and founder of Natie Branding Agency in Tel Aviv, Eitan Chitayat has been delivering international brands for over 25 years and has lived in Hong-Kong, London, Tel Aviv, New York and Boston. He created the viral sensation *I'm That Jew* which has been viewed over 15 million times on various platforms and has been exhibited at the Museum of the Jewish People. He also gave a TEDx talk about why he created it. Since then, his work on social media advocating the Jewish People has reached over 70 million people.

His clients have included Google, Apple, Facebook, YouTube and countless companies big and small from the Start-Up nation. He's worked at Arnold Worldwide in Boston, Ogilvy & Mather and BBDO in New York and was TBWA Digital's executive CD in Tel Aviv. Eitan consults regularly, speaks at global conferences and has been a judge for advertising's finest, *The One Show*. Eitan is happily married with two wonderful children and loves LEGO.

I caught Eitan at his office in Tel Aviv.



Eitan, you've undoubtedly been shaped by such diverse experiences, living and working around the world. So many of us know you over social media because of the smart and inspiring Jewish advocacy work you've been creating. Where did this all start?

I grew up in Hong Kong and went to a very diverse international school. I remember being picked on a few times by a kid in my class who did the whole Heil Hitler thing, marching around, calling me a "Jew boy" when I was around 9, maybe 10 years old. When we moved to London, I was in JFS in Camden Town, back in the day when it was in a pretty rough neighbourhood. There were kids from nearby schools who made their way over to us, hurling insults and even small stones at us on a daily basis just because we were Jewish. We had private security regularly accompanying us to Camden Town Tube Station. It's how I grew up; it was kind of normal. I also got picked on once antisemitically by groups of boys in the streets who saw me with my school blazer. I always just thought that that was really unfair, as a young kid, and I didn't get it. I still don't. We were just regular kids.

How did you react?

Well, I think that these experiences helped shape my resolve to just speak out, so that's what I would do whenever I was confronted - I would always speak up. That's always been something I've done - for better or worse. And yes, I get in trouble for it. A lot.

What would you say?

Once, on my way home, I saw a group of 12 or 13 boys near Swiss Cottage that were approaching me... clearly trouble... so I crossed to the other side of the street. I was wearing my JFS blazer and had my *kippah* on. They gathered

around, shoving and calling me, "Jew, *Yid*." After they tossed me around a bit I told them I'd take them all on, but one by one. The ringleader cracked some jokes at me and I took a calculated risk by retorting for all to hear, "Why are you doing this? You're black." He answered angrily, "What, you're calling me black?" So I answered, "I'm not calling you black. You're black. I'm Jewish. Why are you, of all people, picking on me?" That shut him up as he didn't know what to say. I'd appealed to his being a minority as well, and even the other kids saw I had a point. They kept on calling me names but that was it - they walked off and let me be.

To me, that was a win. I think my resolve has always been, "Whatever I do, will I be able to look at myself in the mirror at the end of the day?" Had I not said something, I wouldn't have felt good about myself.

Speaking up should be a default, not something we only do when times are bad. At the same time, being proud of your heritage doesn't mean you are perfect. It just means, when you want to say something about your identity - say it. That's what I have been trying to do for the past fifteen years: just not hide it. Not be quiet. That applies to anything - I will speak up about the things I believe in. If I see someone being picked on for who they are or what they were born as, I'll speak up. And not just on social media.

15 October 2015, you posted a very powerful short narrated film called *I'm That Jew*, which has been viewed more than 15 million times. Tell me about it.

That film was a letter to the Jewish people. The message was to not let the hate get you down or question who you are. And at the same time, to remind people that we're not easy to define. To most people "that Jew" is a land-grabber, money-hungry, someone who controls the media - all of the lies we know about. But hey, I'm a father of two, you're a journalist, she's

an entrepreneur, he's a scientist, she's a girl that loves football, he's a zoologist. I wanted to show that we're human beings that happen to be Jewish. It's a ridiculous thing to have to say, but what happens is that when people say that you are "a *Jew*," an occupier, a coloniser, a supporter of genocide and apartheid they've just stuck a label on you. So the idea was to break the stereotype. When we do that, we're re-humanising ourselves in the face of a coordinated attempt by haters of the Jewish people to dehumanise us. Making a proud and unequivocal statement about who we REALLY are is the start of the antidote.

So is this most recent campaign an evolution of the original film?

Yes. I have lots of ideas and this is one of them. I was just thinking, wouldn't it be great to showcase people in today's digital age and provide the opportunity to express these statements and put them out there boldly, unapologetically, confidently and full of colour? Each one of the banners is honest and unique. And I want to keep putting them out there for people to share them on their social media feeds with colour and positivity and to counter the hatred. This campaign alone has gotten over 5 million views so far and I want to keep going.

How do you choose who to feature in the campaign?

When I first had the idea, I just sat down and wrote a list of people. My wife and a few friends helped me when I hit a wall. Some people are super famous, and some people aren't at all. Some are alive, and others aren't with us anymore. There are hundreds from Albert Einstein, The Three Stooges, Paula Abdul, Lizzy Savetsky, Debra Messing and Barbara Walters to Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Eylon Gold, Elizabeth Taylor, Jessica Meir, Hillel Neuer, Montana Tucker, Hen Mazzig,





Lior Raz... and many more. I recently created a spinoff to feature non-Jewish people who are really putting their reputations and careers on the line to speak up for us. It's the same art but instead of 'That Jew' it's 'That honorary Jew.' It's so important to me to give kudos to our brave allies speaking up.

Have there been any critics?

Oh, yeah, I get a lot of hate and death threats. Overall it's been overwhelmingly positive, and a lot of people have told us they want their own banners now, so I'm trying to figure out how to build a generator which would allow people to go online and upload their photo, pick a phrase and be able to share it. These things take a lot of work, time and money so I'm trying to figure it out as I'm a one-man show.

You volunteered for the IDF when you were 19; now you are using your prowess and passion to fight in this war.

This is the most important thing I've tried to do in my life as a professional brand builder and communicator. I've always tried to be an ambassador for Israel in an unofficial capacity, knowing the impact of staying silent. Our enemies have hijacked our narrative for a long time. They've tried to define us and dehumanise us and they've done a good job in that capacity, unfortunately. Though we've always been great at celebrating ourselves within our community, we've always kind

of sucked at celebrating ourselves externally - which is the difference between us and other minorities. We've failed to speak about ourselves outwardly over the course of decades, allowing our enemies to speak for us, and the result is what we see today. We are outnumbered and behind the curve with a narrative that has no strategy. I've been saying this for 15 years. In terms of our leadership, it's been a colossal failure and we're only now starting to right the wrong. Narrative is just as important as investing as all of the other things being invested in. We should invest in people like us who get the power of the right words.

You decided to not be anonymous on social media over 10 years ago, despite the danger. Why was it so important for people to know who you were?

That's a great question. Ten years ago when I made the film, people weren't really expressing such overt Jewish pride on social media. I had written an article about someone who I'd unfriended for expressing antisemitic views that had gone viral, but it wasn't that common. Then I posted the film along with a caption that started with "My name is Eitan Chitayat. And I'm that Jew." I didn't want it to be anonymous. It wasn't for fame and fortune. Look, I'm not an influencer. I'm 52 years old, happily married with two kids. I run a successful branding agency. But I thought that if I could inspire others to speak up through

the films and the campaign by stamping it with their own names then I'd be leading by example. No fear.

How does leading by example translate to 'real' life off-screen?

I've been confronted with real hatred - when I used to backpack a lot, if I told people I was Jewish or Israeli, the hate would come out. With real haters, there's no convincing. But sometimes, I'd meet people who simply misunderstand what an Israeli or Jew is... cluelessness. That's when I'd simply say, "I'm Jewish." It's a good starting point to not overthink it and just say it. Like, just come out and say it. They'll respond however and maybe that's an opening to counter the stereotype.

Around 30 years ago, professional basketball players were coming from abroad to play in the Israeli league. There was a really nice guy sitting at a bar with me and a few friends. Maybe because of my international background, he didn't think I was Israeli, let alone a Jew, so when I asked him, "hey, what's it like in Israel?" His response was, "I mean... Jews will be Jews." What do you do in a situation like that? So I answered, "Well, I'm Jewish." That was it. There was an uncomfortable moment but then we spoke about it. You just say something and see where it goes.

Recently a woman with a massive following on social media said some really nasty things in the comments of one of the campaign banners directed at my new friend Tiffany Haddish. So I reached out to her privately and

asked if I could ask her a question. She said “yes, but I don’t think we are going to agree.” When I asked her why not, she didn’t have a real answer, so I wrote to her, “I think it says a lot more about you that you’re not willing to engage in a conversation with someone just because he’s Jewish than it does about me. You sure don’t want to talk?” So then she agreed, and we messaged back and forth. I wasn’t going to get into it with her and have a massive argument, but I did have a conversation, which is a step towards my personal humanisation – and that of Tiffany.

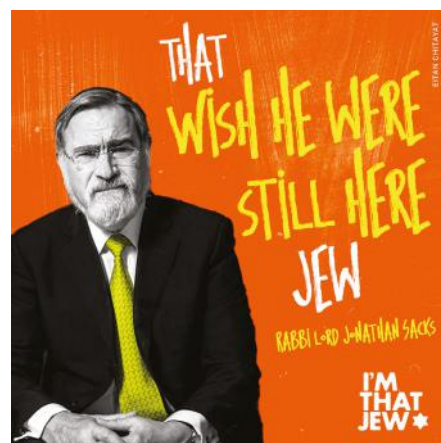
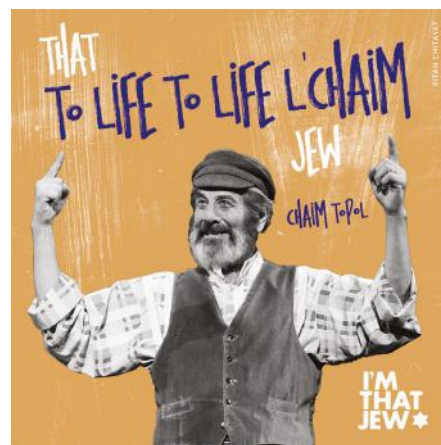
It takes time, it takes energy and it takes a bit of bravery to come out of your comfort zone. You might not end up agreeing, but at the very least they’ll see I’m not a ‘coloniser,’ ‘genocide supporter’ or ‘baby killer’ - something that I’m being called left, right and centre.

Our humanity is something we should wear on our sleeves. And not let haters dress us up however they want. Look, I’m not talking about situations where we’re up against hateful, violent mobs. You have to be smart about how and when you speak up – but we should. All of us. No trembling knees.

What is the best way to engage in speaking up?

As ridiculous as it sounds, just be your honest self. A human being. Don’t cower - don’t be afraid to go there. No fear unless there’s a real threat. And even then, form allies and don’t let the hate slide. If we don’t speak up for ourselves, who will? That’s why it’s so important that we do. And I genuinely think we all need to get better at speaking up - not only on social media, but in person. And not let others do it for us. You do it. You know, people say things to me online that they would never tell me in person. I’ve never been called a baby killer to my face...so understand that it’s OK to talk about the real Jew hatred out there. And that you’re a human being that wants to be heard.

One last thing. And I said this before - I believe Jewish leadership around the world must invest in our own narrative. We’ve seen what happens when we let others speak for us. The world starts believing things that aren’t true because of the sheer number of haters out there. Let’s ALL talk about who we are as a people and not just when we’re in a crisis. We have to put our best foot forward and fight false narratives as a community. We are actively being dehumanised, and that is not stopping anytime soon, if ever. We each have a responsibility to take these people on. That’s my agenda. And I’ll do it not because I want to lead by example, but because it’s just who I am.



I'm That Jew social media campaign banners, courtesy of Eitan Chitayat

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