

PERSPECTIVES

The magazine of

aish^{uk}

THE REFERENDUM
ON BIBI

FIGHTING
ANTI-
JEWISH
LEGISLATION
IN ICELAND

IS TECHNOLOGY
DESTROYING
THE WAY WE
COMMUNICATE?

BERESHEET
MOON MISSION:
ONE GIANT LEAP
FOR ISRAEL

PLUS:
10 TIPS FOR
SEDER NIGHT!

ISSUE 7 | Pesach 5779 | April 2019

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OLAMI MEMBER



LETTER **FROM** THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Pesach 2019 edition of *Perspectives*, the magazine of Aish UK. I'm really excited to share this issue with you, not only because we have some really interesting features but also because we have listened to your feedback and have included some more diverse articles than in previous editions and I hope you find something inside just for you!

The past few months have seen Israel in the news for a whole host of reasons. Between the Palestinians protesting the economic conditions in Gaza, President Donald Trump declaring Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and Tel Aviv being ranked in the top ten most expensive cities in the world, we have chosen to include some Israel-related stories with you, and they are all significant when thinking about the future.

In an exclusive interview with *Perspectives*, Adam Green, the only British person involved in the SpaceL Beresheet Moon Mission, shared his experiences working on this unique project. With the spacecraft expected to land on the Moon's surface in just a few days' time, it is an exciting time for the future of space industry. Geopolitical intelligence analyst, Darren Cohen, gives us a glimpse into the upcoming Israeli elections, offering insight into all the different people and parties involved. Journalist Shira Druion takes a look at the Israeli tech scene in her interview with Dudu Azaraf – a blockchain technology researcher and consultant who is passionate about accelerating the adoption of cryptocurrencies.

We follow Rabbi Yonatan Goldschmidt's journey from North West London to becoming a community rabbi at the 452 year old Paradesi synagogue of

Kerala, India. After interviewing survivors about their life prior to the atrocities, photographer and writer Jono David shares his masterpiece called 'Life Before the Holocaust: Portraits of Character'. Board of Deputies communication officer Simon Round recounts the story of how they had to fight with the government of Iceland to protect Jewish rights abroad.

Check out the Jewish education section which, as always, aims to be relevant, informative and purposeful. We are also sharing our 'Pesach Guide' – which includes a guide to the Seder plate, ten top tips for Seder night, and an insight into the fifteen stages of the Haggadah.

Be sure to explore our packed Wellbeing section including a whole host of articles that are both insightful and relevant to healthy living. With new and improved Kids and Community sections, and a full and Pesach-recipe-laden Food section with expert Ilana Epstein, there is definitely something inside for everyone!

Also, don't forget to have a look at what Aish UK has been up to across the country.

We would love to hear from you! If you have any questions, suggestions on how we can improve, topics you'd like to see covered, or if you have a story to share, please be in touch.

Wishing all of our readers a Happy Pesach!

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LETTERS ^{TO} THE EDITOR



THOUGHTS ON THIS ISSUE OF *PERSPECTIVES*?



Dear Editor,

I was intrigued by the article titled 'A Journey to the Heart of Africa' which appeared in your latest edition.

I found the article very insightful, peering into a world so different from the constraints of my selfish little incubated bubble. It explored a world that on the exterior looks so foreign and distant to my North West London lifestyle, but gave me a stark realisation of how different paths and backgrounds adds breadth to the Jewish people, which unites us by our common belief in God as one nation. The article gave me a sense of how each one of us brings our own unique ingredients to the party allowing us to all contribute to the overall flavour of our people. Throughout the article I could not help but think about the Lost Tribes of Israel and how much we have lost.

Please can you have a section like this in every edition exploring communities from around the globe which in my opinion brings communities together.

Marc from Edgware



Re. 'When the Rational becomes Irrational'

I think the author makes many good points here. I had never encountered those opinions of Rav JB Soloveitchik, which surprised me given how he is often perceived as the unfeeling 'Halachic Man', although his other essays attest to the contrary. However, my feeling from the Rowe/Grayling debate was that Rabbi Rowe was trying to present a rational reason for God, much in the same lines of the Kuzari and Kalaam Cosmological arguments (popularised by W L Craig). If one wants to present an 'irrational' or 'emotional' argument for God, then I don't think that a debate with an atheist would serve those means. Also, I think that 'irrational' is the wrong word. If you read the likes of AJ Heschel, Rabbi Sacks, Rabbi Cardozo or even Robert Prisig, Jonathan Haidt and Jordan Peterson, you may find that we're talking about hyper-rational, rather than irrational. It depends which way you look at it. Either way, I think that Jewish education could seriously benefit from more than the typical rational arguments for God. But I'm not sure if it's helpful to call this approach 'irrational'.

Anonymous

Dear Editor,

I was fascinated by the 'Exiled from Bangladesh' article in the January 2019 edition of your magazine.

It was very interesting to read about Dr Shadman Zaman's journey from Bangladesh to Israel and to Judaism.

Despite all the obstacles he has faced, and continues to face, his passion and belief for Israel and Jews is inspiring. I admire how the abuse he's received for converting to Judaism has not deterred him.

I look forward to the next magazine!

Shelley from Stanmore



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YOU ARE THE ONLY BRITISH MEMBER OF THE BERESHEET MOON MISSION WHICH HAS CAPTURED THE WORLD'S IMAGINATION. HOW DID A YOUNG MAN FROM ESSEX END UP ON THIS PROJECT?

I've always been fascinated by flight. When I was a kid I built an Airfix model aircraft with my Dad, flew balsa wood rubber-powered aircraft with my Grandad, and went to loads of airshows with my primary school 'model making club'. It wasn't a huge surprise to anyone that in 2008 I wound up studying Aerospace Engineering at the University of Bristol.

Part way through my third year, at the end of 2010, I read about three crazy Israeli engineers who wanted to land the first commercial spacecraft on the moon. Until then I'd always assumed space was for the egghead NASA geniuses you see in Hollywood movies. But a new commercial space race was beginning, sparked partly by the Google Lunar XPrize, the largest incentive competition of all time. Some of these 'NewSpace' organisations were trying to do, for a fraction of the cost, what had only been so far achieved by two nation states (the USA and USSR) – to soft land a spacecraft on the Moon. Of the thirty-four unmanned missions attempting to make such a landing, two national space programmes with huge financial and technological resources had succeeded only a dozen times: a 35% success ratio. Now three guys from Israel wanted to take on the challenge. With no resources. I absolutely had to get involved.

I found the cofounders details on Facebook and messaged them asking if they needed any help. Then in the summer of 2011, I interned as an Engineer with Spacell. The 'cutting edge aerospace organisation' that I imagined consisted of only a handful of full-time staff working out of an abandoned room in Tel Aviv University. I had a blast, and when I was offered a full-time job leading one of the engineering teams, it was a fairly easy decision.

WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE IN THIS PROJECT?

Soon after graduating from Bristol in 2012 I joined Spacell as the sixth employee, leading the 'Mission Analysis' group - the 'spacecraft navigators' responsible for figuring out how to get the spacecraft from A to B. The Mission Analysis team plans the manoeuvres and trajectories and designs the systems necessary to determine where in space the spacecraft is, where it will be, and how to get it where it ought to be. I feel very fortunate to have been able to work with such a talented group of individuals.

PEOPLE THOUGHT THIS IDEA WAS DOOMED FOR FAILURE. WHAT DID YOU DO THAT WAS SO RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS MOON MISSION ATTEMPTS, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THE CRITICISM?

Firstly, Spacell's very purpose is radically different from all other lunar missions. Spacell aspires to use the mission to advance science and engineering in Israel, and to acquaint the younger generations with the exciting opportunities in

ONE GIANT LEAP FOR ISRAEL

AN INTERVIEW WITH ADAM GREEN

their future. Through the anticipation and preparation for the historic landing on the Moon, students are motivated to broaden their knowledge of science, technology, engineering and mathematics which will in turn foster further entrepreneurship and innovation. Spacell aims to close educational gaps in Israeli society. The lunar mission is a means to this end, and serves as a source of inspiration for a long-term impact on the next generation of Israeli scientists and engineers.

On a technological front, the mission is ground breaking. We now have an Israeli non-profit attempting what only the three most advanced spacefaring nations have managed so far! Israel is not only the first nation to launch a commercial lander to the Moon, but if successful, it will be the lightest spacecraft to ever land on the Moon – all at a fraction of the typical cost, demonstrating how to reduce the cost of lunar exploration by tens of millions of dollars.

One way we were able to reduce the mission cost so much is by 'hitchhiking' into space. In our case, instead of flying straight to the Moon, we hitched a ride into space on a rocket with an Indonesian communication satellite into a relatively low orbit around Earth. This shared launch significantly reduced the cost, but added all sorts of technical complexities. Firstly, the space available on the rocket is reduced, meaning the physical design has to be considerably leaner. Secondly, you need to design a trajectory that is flexible enough to not only get to the Moon from the lower orbit, but also from an orbit which doesn't

actually point towards the Moon at the right time. This adds unprecedented challenges to the mission as a whole, but so far the mission has proven that these challenges can be overcome!

AS WE SPEAK (IN MID-MARCH) WE DON'T KNOW IF THIS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL, WHAT IS THE MARGIN FOR ERROR?

It's pretty slim! There is a whole daisy chain of events that have to go right before you get to land on the Moon. You can only really progress to the next stage of the mission if the previous stage is a success. The launcher must successfully get you into the correct orbit without blowing up, the spacecraft then has to turn on and communicate with the control room, you need to navigate well enough to perform the first manoeuvres, the engines and control systems need to work, and not only work, but be accurate enough so that you don't miss the Moon. You then need to operate in a space environment where harsh radiation bombards the electronics, and the spacecraft is subjected to temperature extremes. All before you get to attempt a landing on an incredibly rocky and cratered surface at a distance of 400,000km. Exacerbated by the fact that it's not actually possible to fully test the spacecraft in these environments on Earth!

As an example of the slim margins of error, the space shuttle Challenger exploded due to a failure in the O-rings. It only takes one small failure in a tiny component to lead to a complete catastrophe. An often-stated remark, by





astronauts and engineers alike, is that “space is hard.” But as President Kennedy said, “We choose to go to the Moon... and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organise and measure the best of our energies and skills...”

Beresheet is performing remarkably well and has progressed very far in its own daisy-chain of events. There were a few teething problems at the beginning of the mission, but the team banded together and overcame them, and the mission is on track to arrive, and then land on the moon at the beginning of April. Spacell has accepted a higher amount of risk than previous missions, but with higher risk comes higher reward.

HOW DO YOU RECONCILE YOUR BACKGROUND AS A ROCKET SCIENTIST WITH YOUR BELIEF IN GOD?

I actually see no contradiction between the two. Science is necessary to religion, and religion to science. They complement each other. To quote Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, "Science is about explanation, religion is about meaning." Our sages tell us not to rely on miracles, and to do this, we need science. Maimonides was a doctor and astronomer, and Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein believed in God.

For me, my time working in space exploration provided perspective. I got a miniature 'overview effect' - the cognitive shift in awareness reported by some astronauts during spaceflight, often while viewing the Earth from outer space. It is the experience of understanding the reality of the Earth in space, which is immediately understood to be a tiny, fragile ball of life, shielded and by a paper-thin atmosphere. From space, national boundaries vanish and inter-country and inter-personal conflicts become less important. To quote Apollo Astronaut Edgar Mitchell, "And suddenly I realised that the molecules of my body, and the molecules of the spacecraft...were prototyped and manufactured in some

ancient generation of stars, and that was an overwhelming sense of oneness and connectedness."

I HEARD THAT YOU MANAGED TO PLACE AN OBJECT OF MEANING ON BOARD THE SPACECRAFT. CAN YOU SHARE WITH US WHAT IT WAS AND WHY YOU CHOSE IT?

Yes, there's currently a photo of my late Grandmother on the way to the moon!

The original landing date was on the 13th February, my Grandmother's birthday, but in typical Israeli fashion the spacecraft was a little late. Beresheet is also carrying DVD-sized digital-analogue hybrid disks containing copies of the Bible, drawings from Israeli schoolchildren, English Wikipedia and 30 million pages of records representing a "backup" of humanity's knowledge.



WHAT IS NEXT FOR ADAM GREEN?

Since leaving Spacell in 2016, I spent two years earning an MBA and I'm currently working as a management consultant. 'Man plans, and God laughs' and all, but my plans are to help apply technologies and project management techniques to drive social impact. I'm drawn to projects based on their mission and potential for impact, and firmly believe that technology and sound managerial practice are invaluable tools for creating positive change in the world. I was truly honoured to lead the Mission Analysis team at Spacell for four years. It was a privilege to work with such amazing people, whose depth and breadth of talent was only surpassed by the size of their hearts. Whether Beresheet lands on the Moon or not, I already consider it to be a success - for the spark it has created in the imagination of thousands of Israeli children, and the path it has shone for a new wave of commercial space exploration.

WISHING YOU A
HAPPY PASSOVER

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An illustration featuring three yellow pyramids of varying sizes in the background. In the foreground, two brown camels are walking from left to right. The first camel has a silhouette of a person riding on its back. The entire scene is set against a solid orange background.

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**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 a Middle East and North Africa geopolitical intelligence analyst. Darren is also a Conflict Management MA student at Tel Aviv University, having completed his BA at King's College London.

THE REFERENDUM ON B I B I

WHEN ISRAELIS GO TO THE POLLS ON 9TH APRIL, they will essentially be voting in a referendum on the legacy of Prime Minister Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu. The hawkish Likud Party's leader will become the longest serving prime minister in Israel's history should he succeed in forming a coalition in the upcoming plebiscite. However, Netanyahu, accused of corruption and bribery, will face the most significant challenge to his premiership in the last ten years when he comes up against the Blue and White list, led by former IDF Chief of Staff, Benny Gantz, and ex-Finance Minister, Yair Lapid.

Blue and White has successfully mustered together an electoral list headed by a team of leaders with the security gravitas to challenge the perception of Netanyahu as 'Mr. Security'. The merger of political newcomer and former Chief of Staff of the IDF, Benny Gantz, with former TV anchor and Finance Minister Yair Lapid, propelled the centrist bloc into a lead over Netanyahu's Likud Party in the polls. Joined by former Chiefs of Staff Moshe (Bogi) Ya'alon and Gabi Ashkenazi, the Blue and White list poses a formidable challenge to the Likud's hegemony.

Over the past ten years, Bibi and his followers have successfully instilled into the Israeli psyche that without the US-educated darling of the Revisionist Zionist movement,

Israel's security and prosperity cannot be assured. Netanyahu, with his perfect English, excellent oratory skills and shrewd political manoeuvring, has positioned himself as simply irreplaceable and the only way to prevent a catastrophic 'leftist' Gantz-led government. This, ultimately, is what the upcoming elections are about.

Netanyahu is under attack from all quarters. In addition to the challenge posed by Gantz, Lapid, Ashkenazi and Yaalon, on 28th February, Netanyahu was indicted on corruption charges, pending a hearing, by Israel's attorney general, Avichai Mandelblit. Netanyahu was accused of bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three different corruption cases. While Bibi has zealously denied all the allegations, which he dismisses as a witch-hunt orchestrated by the left and the press aimed at "toppling the right", Gantz insisted that an Israeli leader cannot be a part-time prime minister and part-time defendant, arguing that "Israel deserves better than that." Most importantly, Gantz made a commitment not to sit in a Netanyahu-led government, therefore burying any chances of a national unity government while Bibi remains Likud leader.

However, Blue and White face significant challenges ahead of their own in their attempts to finally bring Netanyahu down at the ballot box. Although the party insists that it is



a centrist bloc in an age in which 'right and left is no more' and a dedicated group of patriots that put Israel 'before everything', the lack of clarity surrounding the party's ideological leanings or policy priorities has led critics from both the left and the right to denounce the party as lacking any fundamental ethos or *raison d'être*, other than being anti-Bibi. While the right accuses the party as being weak and the left in disguise, the declining Labour Party labels them as rightist.



Regardless, Israel's proportional representation electoral systems means that success at the ballot box is deemed not necessarily by who wins the most votes, but who garners the most support from other parties to cross the line of 61 of the Knesset's 120 seats. Therefore, in light of the refusal of all of the parties to the right of Blue and White to join a Gantz or Lapid-led government, Netanyahu's Likud Party has persistently reminded voters that in order to replace the right-wing bloc, Blue and White will necessitate some form of coalition or external support from Israel's Arab parties.

While Blue and White has consistently polled at between 32-36 seats since its conception, in comparison with Likud's average of 30, even if it successfully forms a coalition with the Labour Party and left-leaning Meretz as well as potential support of Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon's Kulanu Party, according to even the most optimistic of current polls, it will fall short of the requisite 61 seats to constitute a parliamentary majority. Netanyahu and his followers have thus built their campaign around two main messages – 'Bibi or Tibi' (in reference to Arab Member of Knesset Ahmed Tibi) and the fight against 'fake news' as well as alleged efforts by the media and the left to bring down a rightist government, at any cost.

Moreover, in order to facilitate the formation of more stable coalitions and hinder the entry of extremist factions to the Knesset, parties that fail to cross the threshold of 3.25% of the vote, the equivalent of four seats, are not represented in the Knesset. Their votes go to waste. Thus, Netanyahu embarked on a mission to merge the smaller and more fringe parties on the far-right of Israel's political spectrum by personally orchestrating a merger of several rightist parties to ensure that they cross the all-important electoral threshold.

Bibi controversially worked behind the scenes to forge the 'United Right List', made up of the Jewish Home, the National Union and Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) parties. Otzma Yehudit is led by former disciples of the late Meir Kahane, whose Kach party was outlawed in Israel and designated a terrorist organisation by the US. The current manifestation of the Kahanist faction supports 'encouraged' emigration of non-Jews from Israel and forced expulsion of any Arabs who refuse to declare loyalty to the Jewish State. While the political saliency of the move was evident, the inclusion of perceived extremists into the mainstream and Bibi's role in empowering them was condemned by many from the left and centre of Israeli politics, as well as important voices abroad, including the powerful pro-Israel lobby, AIPAC.

Overall, the election campaign, whilst without doubt one of the most momentous for several years, has become a matter of personality rather than policy. Issues of peace and security, regional threats and opportunities, the economy, the environment, the cost of living, health and education – that truly need addressing – have been put on the back burner. Nevertheless, should Bibi be re-elected, his reinforced rightist government is likely to be more hawkish than ever before. Thus, when Israelis cast their votes in a few days, the election is likely to have a lasting impact on Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state.

Disclaimer: The views expressed are that of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Aish UK.

**SHIRA DRUION**

Shira Druion obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in English, Education and Psychology. She then trained as a Speech and Drama teacher through the Trinity College of London. She has been an educator for the past 15 years, teaching students from nursery to university where she lectured on writing and communication skills. She now teaches English and runs her own drama company called Dramatix where she teaches a broad age group of students. She also works for Chazak where she is the editor of YALLA Community Magazine and is responsible for PR/Marketing and events for young professionals. For more info on Dramatix classes in North West London, contact Shira at shiradru@hotmail.com or on 07587400516.

A LOOK AT THE ISRAELI TECH SCENE

The tiny country of Israel – known globally as the 'Start-Up Nation' – has more high-tech start-ups and a larger venture capital industry per capita than any other country in the world. In this exclusive interview, Perspectives gets an insight into some of the industry secrets and things to watch out for in the future.

1: WHAT AREA OF TECH ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

I work in blockchain technology for a start-up called LiquidApps. Since we are a young company, I find myself wearing many hats including marketer, essay writer and business intelligence analyst.

2: HOW DOES THE ISRAELI TECH SCENE DIFFER TO OTHER COUNTRIES?

The Israeli tech scene is incredibly export-oriented. Israel is seen by both start-ups and mature software companies as the hub of research and development talent. However, because of our country's small size, the innovations coming out of the Start-Up Nation are often sold primarily in global markets.

3: WHAT MAKES A GOOD TECH ENTREPRENEUR?

Chutzpah. When an idea hits, it takes a certain gutsy attitude to dismiss the 'someone is probably already doing

it' approach and dive head-first into building a sustainable business model and company around the idea.

4: HOW DID YOU GET INTO TECH? WHAT DOES SOMEBODY WHO WANTS TO BREAK INTO THE INDUSTRY NEED TO STUDY OR DO TO GET STARTED?

I started my tech career in a role for which I was extremely over-qualified. Thankfully, it provided me with a proverbial foot in the door and I have been in the industry ever since. My turning point came when I took an internship that allowed me to immerse myself in learning how to code through experience. I would recommend learning how to code. Even if you want to land a non-technical position such as sales and marketing, having a certificate or two from an online coding academy goes a long way with recruiters.

5: TELL ME ABOUT THREE EXCITING TECH COMPANIES CURRENTLY IN THEIR EARLY STAGES?

Binance - They started off as a cryptocurrency exchange in September 2017 and made \$446 million in profit during their first full year of operations.

Nexar - A dashcam powered by artificial intelligence that brings the era of autonomous vehicles that much closer.



AN INTERVIEW WITH

D U D U A Z A R A F

Dudu Azaraf works as a blockchain researcher and consultant and is passionate about accelerating the adoption of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology, having made Aliyah from South Africa. When he is not ranting about decentralisation, he enjoys organising communal events and exercising on the beach in his home town of Tel Aviv.



Magic Leap - Although not strictly in their early stage, Magic Leap only recently exited stealth mode. Their mixed-reality device allows you to overlay digital images over the real world, creating a real-life mixed-reality experience. Imagine playing 'Angry Birds' using holograms.

6: WHERE IS THE FUTURE OF TECH?

Quantum computing. Scientists are hard at work figuring out how to utilise the discoveries of quantum physics and the weird behaviours of sub-atomic particles to power a whole new era of supercomputers.

At the most fundamental level, traditional computers speak a binary language. Every operation is represented as a series of 0s and 1s, on and off switches on a computer chip. Quantum theory allows particles to exist in a more complex set of states. When applied to computing, harnessing the power of quantum states allows us to represent larger numbers and perform more complex calculations which are beyond the capabilities of traditional computers.

7: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES THAT ARE BEING FACED ON THE TECH SCENE?

The abuse of social media sites. Worrying trends such as

cyberbullying and the propagation of fake news are growing and doing significant damage.

The growing centralisation of the internet and the disproportionate control exercised by Big Tech on our digital lives. Instead of a free-flowing information superhighway, the internet has become a cartel controlled by a tiny number of super nodes such as Facebook and Google. These tech giants monopolise our data and attention, often displaying gross negligence in securing our information and privacy. Blockchain technology allows users to own their data directly instead of entrusting it to the Zuckerbergs of the world, giving the average user more control of their digital destiny.

Shabbat is also a major solution to the misuse of technology. On Shabbat we acknowledge that for all our wondrous technological creations, we too are created beings. For 25 hours we disconnect from our online, data-driven selves and return to our true essence which transcends space and time.

9: WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST SUCCESS?

Winning the general knowledge quiz in Grade 6.



WORLD • JEWISH HISTORY

A B R I E F P O R T R A I T O F T H E

J E W S O F M A S H A D





MEHRAN LAVY PhD

Mehran Lavy PhD is a consultant in Science/Engineering with an interest in the history of Middle-Eastern Jewry. Both of his parents were born in Mashad. This article is dedicated to his father, who was a distinguished educator and scholar.



THE EXTRAORDINARY HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF MASHAD BEGAN DURING THE REIGN OF NADER SHAH OF THE AFSHAR DYNASTY IN THE YEAR 1734.

Nader came to power from obscurity but managed to build an empire that briefly stretched across Iran, northern India and parts of central Asia. Historians depicted the Shah, as a powerful ruler - the 'Napoleon' of Persia. At the time, there were Jews residing in towns of Dilman, Yazd, Kashan, Ghazvin, and the Azerbaijan province. Jews were engaged mainly in trade but also as bankers and ran depositories. The Shah, a Sunni Muslim, declared Mashad as his capital. Trustworthy and with a reputation of being good financiers and honest business people, he brought forty Jewish families to Mashad to run his business while seventeen families were sent to the nearby city of Kelat, his place of residence.

The Shah asked the Jews to manage his vast treasures (including the largest diamonds - The Kohinoor and Dariyanoor) brought over shortly after the conquest of India. Initially the Jews were not welcomed in Mashad and they were subjected to persecution. They were allowed to reside in a shanty precinct, similar to a Ghetto, called Eidgah. The Shah had allowed Jews to build synagogues and community centres, some of which stood for a while. Meanwhile, the Zoroastrian community of Mashad were being subjected to religious annihilation and were fast evacuating the

area. This gave the Jews the opportunity to purchase their lands and properties. However, a short time later, Nader Shah, the community's only hope and saviour, was assassinated in a rebellion (1747). A number of families tried to flee eastward to Herat, Bukhara and some continued on to India. There, they preserved their Jewish heritage and Persian customs and traditions. After his assassination, Nader Shah's tomb was built in Mashad where it stands to the present day.

“THE WHOLE OF EIDGAH WAS INTERLINKED WITH SMALL DOORS WHICH THE JEWS COULD USE AS ESCAPE ROUTES AT TIMES OF TROUBLE”

Following his death, violence broke out, the country was fragmented and revolts erupted between his successors. After fifty years, the Qajar Dynasty, under Ahmad Shah, brought a ruthless regime into the country. However, the foundations of the Jewish community were already in place and they continued to live as a religious minority, suffering the intolerance and persecution which the locals showed towards non-Muslims.



In Ghazvin, the desecration and destruction of the synagogues led the Jewish population to join the communities in Mashad and other provinces. They were alert, vigilant and united, and the elders were designated to solve disputes and, in most cases, to act as mediators liaising between the Jewish and the Muslim populations, especially at times of tension. What proved to be useful was that the whole of Eidgah was interlinked with small, inconspicuous doors that the Jews could use as escape routes at times of trouble. The windows faced alleyways rather than areas where on-lookers could see in through the private dwellings.

The Jews established business links with local Muslims as a means of survival including trading woollen clothes, silk and other textiles.

There were many assaults on the community, the worst, in 1839, was when the inadvertent misconduct of a Jewish woman resulted in the killing of a number of Jews by a mob in Eidgah. This was the catalyst for more persecution which gave rise to one of the darkest epochs in the lives of the Persian Jewry, followed soon after by the forced conversion of Jews to Islam. Within days, the entire community of about 400 families were forcibly converted to Shia Islam, some were killed and most community centres, including synagogues, were set on fire with no respect for the Holy Scriptures. This *Anusim* of the Mashadian Jews was known as *Allah-dadi* (God given). The Jews were known as *Jadid al-Islam* (New Muslims). The 'New Muslims' were kept under surveillance by the sceptics to ensure they no longer practised their 'idolatrous' religion. The ghetto was renamed *Mahaleh Jadid* (The New Precinct). This grim situation motivated a large number of Jews to leave for Israel, the nearby cities in Persia where they assimilated into the existing Jewish communities, and as far afield as Afghanistan and Turkmenistan where the Sunni populations were more tolerant towards religious minorities.

However, those who remained continued to adhere tenaciously, although undercover, in their orthodox religious activities, observing all the holy days and festivals

in the Jewish calendar and began to live a dual life. Kashrut, marriage, and burials were all conducted under the strict Jewish laws. Intermarriage was unknown within the community - girls were betrothed to Jewish boys at an early age in order to avoid forced marriage to outsiders. The

marriage ceremony would be first conducted in a local Mosque by the Imam, and then carried out under Rabbinic auspices; having two marriage certificates, one in Persian and one in Hebrew, was common.

A unique form of writing, known as *Jadidi* (new) was created. This was a mixture of Persian and Hebrew written in script only understandable by the Jews at the time. Men had dual names, a Persian Arabic name as well as their Hebrew birth name. Some went on pilgrimage to Mecca and were given the title *Hajji* (as is common after return from Hajj).

Because of this duality, there were no openly Jewish schools in Mashad. Pupils attended local primary and secondary schools while Jewish studies were taught by the elders behind closed doors. When the Alliance Israelite offered educational classes, it was rejected by the elders because of the fear that their secret faith may be exposed. This inevitable but wise decision had damaging ramifications for the community because they were comparatively less educated than their Jewish counterparts in Iran.

Under the rule of Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925), life for Mashad Jews still living in the city improved greatly. As the court made strong attempts at secularism and eased many religious restrictions, Mashad's Jewry cautiously began practising their faith publicly. The city was thriving as a business and economic centre and the Jews also benefited from this favourable trading environment.

However, with the rise of the Nazism in Germany and the

**"BY THE 1950S,
JEWISH LIFE IN
MASHAD WAS
ALMOST NON-
EXISTENT"**





outbreak of the Second World War, prejudice and anti-Semitism were re-ignited which gave rise to the community's mass exodus from Mashad. In search for a safer and more prosperous life, the Jewish community gradually left the province in favour of larger cities settling mainly in the capital Tehran. This exodus reached its peak in 1946-1948; by the 1950s, Jewish life in Mashad was almost non-existent. Under the new regime, the community went from strength to strength, openly practising their faith with little fear or hindrance. Some Mashadians went onto studying in highly respected universities in Tehran and pursued careers as medics, engineers, veterinarians, and pharmaceutical scientists. A handful of them were highly successful in their endeavours and became scholars holding senior positions within their disciplines in Iran. They were Nourollah M., Aghajan R., just to mention a couple.

By 1979, with the creation of the Islamic Republic, the majority of the Jews had left Iran. Some moved to England, Germany, Italy, and America. Israel was also a favourite choice amongst Mashadians who wanted join earlier migrants who had established themselves there as early as 1902, bringing with them their customs and traditions, maintaining their close-knit society as before. Today, by far, the largest Mashadian community lives in Israel.



“[THEY] PRACTISED ORTHODOX JUDAISM TO THE FULL, IF UNDERGROUND, IN AN ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENT.”

to the full, despite all the constraints of their everyday lives. Historians argue that this was due largely to the women who were somewhat excluded and segregated from the public domain in Iran. This meant they were less

influenced by Mashad's fervently religious atmosphere and could concentrate, undisturbed, on keeping their kosher homes and respecting all aspects of their deeply traditional, orthodox Jewish faith. Architecturally, characteristics of the traditional Iranian home and the segregated closed unit of the Jewish household meant that the women had, comparatively, a greater degree of liberty to live as Jews in their homes. Hence, by all accounts, it was women who played the major role in upholding the ancestral traditions and passing on that unadulterated faith and Jewish identity to the next generation.

From the outset, Mashadian Jewry, be it conscious or not, believed that it is best not to assimilate and to remain unnoticed and united within their tightly controlled community. Some attribute this to the community's double life in the past as a means of survival and believe that their parents' socio-cultural lifestyle has perpetuated itself and is apparent in present day. But, for certain, this unique lifestyle has worked in their favour, keeping the community integral, safe, prosperous, and preserving their orthodox Jewish identity unhindered and intact for centuries in the face of extreme adversities. This trait is unlikely to be eroded in the near future and, perhaps unwittingly, they have formed their own Diaspora within Diaspora.

FOOT NOTE: Embedded in its history, the structure and the very rich culture of Iranian society has, through most of history, tolerated religious minorities and Jews have always been part of that society. While the Iranian revolution of 1978 may have brought temporary uncertainty and cast a shadow over the future of Jewish population still living in Iran, the present Islamic Republic is no different from its predecessors and, indeed, it encourages the Jews to fully participate, openly, in their day-to-day religious and ritual activities. The community lives and works harmoniously side-by-side with their Muslim neighbours and is supported by their representative in the Iranian Parliament (The Majles). This coexistence is also unique amongst the world's Islamic countries.

FROM
NORTH WEST
LONDON
TO
SOUTH INDIA

AN INTERVIEW WITH
RABBI YONATAN GOLDSCHMIDT

BY RABBI ARI KAYSER





As far as exotic rabbinic positions go, leading the centuries-old Paradesi synagogue in Kerala, South India, is right up there. In an exclusive interview, *Perspectives* meets the family working to revive this old community and discusses its plans for the future.

WHERE DID YOU GROW UP AND WHAT WAS YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF JUDAISM?

I grew in North West London in a traditional family that was connected with the Reform community. My grandparents were Holocaust survivors and we regularly had Shabbat meals together. I always felt deeply connected to our people, especially the story of my grandparents and their survival. My uncles were the youngest children to travel on the Kindertransport; that story is something that has always resonated with me.

IS THERE A MOMENT ON YOUR JOURNEY THAT STANDS OUT AND SHAPED YOU AS A PERSON?

After studying at King's College London, I became involved with many Jewish organisations which helped me discover more about my Jewish heritage. That journey ultimately led me to learn in Yeshiva in Israel. Despite trying my hand at a number of Yeshivot, I found my place at a Sephardic Yeshiva that focused on Jewish law and mysticism. The discovery of a system of learning which fuses the letter of the law with its spiritual-mystical meaning has proved a defining moment for me and has helped shape my life and my teachings.





WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A RABBI?

My wife, Elisheva, and I were living in Cape Town, South Africa and we became involved with the Muizenberg community. We would teach Torah from our home, and although I had taught classes at the Yeshiva in Jerusalem before, I had never had to prepare material for students on a daily basis. I found that this actually inspired me and strengthened my learning, helping me to have new insights; and then all of a sudden we had a full Shabbat table and group lectures every week.

After returning to Jerusalem, we made the decision that with our unique life experiences and love of all Jews, we wanted to share our passion with others. I enrolled in a rabbinic training programme and my wife began to teach at a Seminary in Jerusalem. We grew enormously from this experience and have never looked back.



YOU COULD BE A RABBI ANYWHERE, WHY CHOOSE INDIA? AND WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Actually, my wife is really responsible for this!

We were offered a variety of positions in various countries and institutions that did not feel right. Personally, I was unsure we were ready to lead a community and the prospect of leaving Jerusalem after we had finally settled there was daunting. However my wife met with our rabbi to discuss positions for us and India came up as potential option.

Rabbi Joel Weinberger from Star-K, a Kashrut authority based in Baltimore, met with me and I flew out to meet the community and visit the synagogue. He explained the nature of the position, a combination of community work and kashrut work for Star-K.

During the week, I travel the country working as a Mashgiach (Kashrut supervisor) across India, and on Shabbat and festivals I run the Paradesi Synagogue. No one has been more supportive and dedicated than my amazing wife Elisheva, who runs various parts of the community life, the Mikvah and has set up a kosher kitchen that feeds many Jewish travellers to Kerala.

For us, the combination of community work in a centuries-old community, alongside the opportunity to travel across this country, was something we were very excited about.



WHAT HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE BEEN SINCE MOVING TO INDIA?

The experience is hard to put into words. Moving to India has been life changing. In general, our experience has been very positive, but it was certainly a daunting task to move to India with small children, Asher David, our youngest, was only a few months old when we came for our pilot trip. We saw this as an amazing once in a lifetime opportunity to move to India and to provide support for the Jewish travellers visiting Cochin.

My first impressions on entering the Paradesi Synagogue were of awe and inspiration. I saw the original Torah scrolls in their silver covered wooden boxes. I walked over the original ceramic tiles, a gift from the emperor of China to the Maharaja of Cochin in the 1500s. We were honoured with bringing a new Sefer Torah to the rebuilt Kadavumbagam Synagogue in Ernakulam and with the 450th anniversary celebration of the Paradesi Synagogue in Fort Kochi.

The synagogue had been lovingly cared for by Joy, a local Indian, whose grandfather, father and now his son have spent their lives dedicated to the care and maintenance of the synagogue. In the centre, before the Ark, burns a singular Ner Tamid ("eternal light" lamp) lit with coconut oil as a symbol of his family's ongoing dedication to the Jews of Cochin, who had once numbered in their thousands and have since dwindled to only a handful.

India is an intensely spiritual country and I find the welcome and friendship we receive here very genuine and loving. We regularly meet locals with an interest in Torah and Judaism or who feel a resonance with the State of Israel given their own struggle for independence.

For me, this posting in India has been a return to self. I grew up in a family where my mother and father had extensively travelled in India, I grew up with stories of the streets of Delhi and the smell of my parents' suitcases when they would return from their trips. My mother would cook excellent Indian food and I had travelled to the north with my father by train and been deeply moved by this.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE COMMUNITY?

At the moment the community is dwindling as the last Jews of Cochin make Aliyah to Israel and the remaining generation passes (we were able to celebrate Sarah Cohen's 97th birthday recently!). We get a lot of visitors to the synagogue from Israel, England, Europe and America and more recently we have had a regular minyan every Shabbat as this is peak season.

We know that this placement is an amazing opportunity to do something really unique, we have met incredible people and already forged deep, meaningful relationships.

Aside from the Jews who frequent the Paradesi Synagogue, we have had the opportunity to be involved with the various religious communities in India and to speak to Swamis, Priests, Gurus and other Indians interested in Torah and Jewish traditions.

Although we are still at the beginning of this Indian experience, we feel very privileged to be part of this community and are excited to see how it will develop.

For information regarding visiting the Paradesi Synagogue and the Rabbi and Rebbetzin's work please contact:
jonathan.goldschmidt@gmail.com





JONO DAVID

Jono David is a London-based freelance photojournalist who specialises in the documentation of Jewish life and culture worldwide. To view more survivor portraits, visit his portfolio website, JonoDavid.com/holocaust-survivors

L I F E B E F O R E T H E H O L O C A U S T :

P O R T R A I T S O F C H A R A C T E R

Life Before the Holocaust: Portraits of Character is a celebration of identity and personality that aims to defrost the freeze-frame of history within which Holocaust survivors are invariably portrayed.

As a photographer, a key aim and responsibility is to find and visually tell untold stories. As a recent M.A. Photography candidate at Middlesex University, London, I set out on this Holocaust survivors project as more than an exercise in portraiture, but an endeavor to fill a hole in the broad sphere of survivor documentation that I found to be long on history but short on personality and identity.

While testimony and recording of history cannot be overemphasized, the personalities telling these stories have been largely overlooked. Thus, my overall aim was to portray these irrepressible people in their own light apart from the shadow of the Holocaust because no one should be defined by the worst thing that happened in their life. The project also fit naturally into my decades-long commitment to photographically documenting the Jewish world.

People encounter Holocaust survivors expecting war stories and tales of suffering. These portraits instead tell their love stories — their love of life and all that made their survival possible. In a very real sense, these portraits are a celebration of the joys, passions, interests and memorable moments that weave a life together.

But the Holocaust itself is not to be celebrated. It is to be commemorated, studied and remembered. We must not merely learn *about* the Holocaust, but *from* the Holocaust. Though the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis cannot be diminished nor overstated, it is equally vital to exalt the resilience of each survivor in order to reclaim and preserve their humanity, their identities, their personalities.

By showcasing an object, each person reveals a physical representation of a layer of their life while making a visual offering to viewers. These objects articulate personality and identity. The buoyant moments these survivors have lived is the harshest repudiation of the Nazi regime one could imagine. Their resilience teaches and challenges all of us to live meaningful, gentle lives.



ADA BRAIMAN

B. 1941 | KHARKOV, UKRAINE
ARRIVAL IN ISRAEL: 1995
OBJECTS: SEASHELL COLLECTION

“When I came to Israel, I started collecting shells because I often go to the sea. They make me feel good. There’s something philosophical in the shells. Having them around me makes me feel more connected to the sea.”



NAT SHAFFIR

B. 1936 | IAȘI, ROMANIA
ARRIVAL IN USA: 1961 (VIA ISRAEL)
OBJECTS: DAHLIAS (FLOWERS)

“I grew up on a farm, so gardening was always in my blood. In Romania and Israel, I had mainly vegetable gardens, but after I settled in the United States, I started growing flowers. I grow some 70 varieties of dahlias in my garden. They are a challenging flower to grow because they require specific conditions. I also grow other flowers such as zinnias. Being in nature makes me feel great.”



HANIA ROSENBERG

B. 1934 | OŚWIĘCIM, POLAND

ARRIVAL IN SWEDEN: 1946

OBJECT: MOTHER'S COAT

"This is my mother's coat that she had for some 20 years before she passed away. I keep it because it makes me feel she is always with me. I put it on sometimes to be near her. My mother protected me all of my life, and her coat still protects me today."



FRED KNOLLER

B. 1921 | VIENNA, AUSTRIA

ARRIVAL IN UK: 1952 (VIA USA)

OBJECT: CELLO

"My parents were musical. We were three brothers. The eldest played piano. My middle brother played the violin. And I learned to play the cello from age 8. I love playing the cello. It makes me feel wonderful and alive. Playing the cello takes me back to my childhood."



ELLA BLUMENTHAL

B. 1921 | WARSAW, POLAND
ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA: 1948
OBJECT: PINCE-NEZ

“I was given these pince-nez as a gift when I arrived in South Africa. They remind me of the fashions of a bygone era. When I wear them today, I still feel elegant and smart.”

The portraits employ certain techniques in order to appropriately frame identity. For example, the photographs are purposely in color to avoid a black and white reference to history and to draw a stark contrast to the darkness that befell the Jewish people and from which these remarkable souls emerge within the portraits. Additionally, each sitter is photographed waist up and square to the camera obliging viewers to meet them eye-to-eye and reciprocate the equality they once had stripped from them.

“Life Before the Holocaust: Portraits of Character” is about *priority* and *importance*, not a time prior to the rise of Hitler. ‘Before’ references the subjects who sit in front of (i.e. before) the darkness employed as a metaphor for the Holocaust. *Character* speaks to *integrity*, *honor*, *moral strength* and *courage* as well as personality and identity.



American photographer Diane Arbus once described visiting someone in their home as going on “a blind date in a sense.” This project took me on 105 such dates in five countries (UK, US, Sweden, South Africa, Israel).

These “dates” required a matchmaker. Holocaust survivors are, if you will, a precious commodity in the Jewish world. Their voices and lives are so cherished that organizations treat them with the highest respect and jealously protect their privacy and security. These safeguards demanded persistence, patience and respect for the boundaries. It paid off, and I had some of the best dates of my life.

Survivors lead busy lives. Their social calendars are full, and their public diaries are packed. They are revered and beloved by all in their communities and by everyone they seem to meet. So an opportunity to meet a survivor one-on-one in the privacy of their home was all the more meaningful and memorable. With each visit, I asked myself if I would or could be so open as they were. Perhaps after years of literally being guarded, they decided to let theirs down.

Photo sessions were budgeted for 90 minutes though they often stretched to 2 or more hours (one appointment lasted 4.5 hours). While the photographing itself normally was no more than 10 minutes, it often took time to discuss the objects in order to make a suitable selection.

The process was often serendipitous in that my suggestions of “career, hobby, interest, fashion, memento, decorative item, a collection” sent their minds rummaging through the memory bank. Consequently, a side story would come up, or we would dust off something they had not handled in years. The process was a joy ride frequently ending over a cup of coffee or tea and a slice of cake, sometimes lunch. I cherish those moments not only because they are becoming rarer, but because for a moment in time, they welcomed only me into their world.

It is incomprehensible what these people endured — some experiences more horrid than others, while some child survivors have no living memory at all — and nearly as hard to understand how anyone survived. In the face of it all, it is inspiring that they emerged with a lasting faith in humanity

**“I ADMIRE YOUR PHOTOS
AND THE CONCEPT BEHIND
THEM. UP TO NOW, ALL THE
PHOTOGRAPHERS TRIED TO
MAKE US LOOK OLD
AND UNHAPPY, WHEREAS
IN REALITY WE HAD FULL
AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES
AFTER THE HOLOCAUST.”**

— MARCEL DRIMER, WASHINGTON D.C., USA

and a will to build a life. But then, what were the alternatives? Perhaps it is the words of a survivor who declined my invitation to partake in this project which best sum up its aims:

“I understand your intention and that this is not the usual reference to the past and appreciate your take on this. However, I am positively focused on divesting myself of the ‘Holocaust survivor’ context. I have given my testimony which is now on record, and feel that I don’t want to revisit that time in my life again in any way...All my energy is now to establishing my sculpture independently of any Holocaust references.”

At last, he found his identity by letting go of the Holocaust entirely.

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Chad Gadya



RABBI MENDY BRUKIRER

Growing up in the New York area, Mendy is descended from more than 20 generations of rabbis. He studied in the Harvard of the Yeshiva world, Brisk, and received rabbinic ordination as well as a first rabbinic degree from the Jerusalem Kollel. He has previously worked as an editor and is a qualified shochet (ritual slaughterer) as well!

Mendy was head of the Oorah Jerusalem Chillzone, a program dedicated to providing a family experience for American University students spending a gap year in Jerusalem. Mendy is the Director of Aish Essex, creating programmes for students leaving secondary school and for young professionals, and the Brukirer home has since become a hub for people in the area and beyond.

It was a beautiful spring evening and a warm feeling of friendship could be felt around the table. There was a sense of somehow being able to touch and connect with the past, bringing it into the future. Those at the table had been debating the merits of freedom and obligations to wider society when a strange sound was heard.

‘Baaa...Roof roof! Meow meow.’

Please allow me to explain.

No, this was not old MacDonald’s farm in the middle of the Scottish countryside. This was Seder night in the outskirts of London, in beautiful Chigwell – as Dickens said ‘Chigwell, my dear fellow, is the greatest place in the world.’ After a lovely dinner filled with crunchy matzah, spicy horseradish and more than the minimally required four cups, we had finished the singing of Who Knows...One is Hashem, when Tamara, an accomplished woman in her mid-twenties, began sharing with us one of her family’s beloved Seder night rituals. More specifically, she was acting out the sounds of the relevant characters in the Seder night song, Chad Gadya. In her family’s defence, it was usually sung sometime past midnight when four generous cups of fine red Palwin number 10 had been consumed – enough to make even the finest among us

**“WHY NOT PUT THIS
IMPORTANT LESSON AT
THE BEGINNING OF THE
SEDER NIGHT?”**



begin to speak in tongues and believe they can speak animal like Dr Doolittle.

Is this what Chad Gadya is meant to be? Just a song sung by the inebriated late in the night? Surely after an evening spent understanding the true nature of freedom there must be more to this Aramaic song which has been in our Haggadah since at least 1590 and with many scholars asserting its origin to be from the original Maggid (author of the Hagaddah).

In this article, we will attempt to mine some of the rich meaning hiding just beneath the surface of this poem using the teachings of 19th century Warsaw scholar Rabbi Binyamin David Rabinowitz in his work Ephod Bad as our inspiration.

“What exactly is the significance of the ‘single kid’?” He asked in 1872 “The Chad Gadya is a symbol of the free will for which the world was created. The Almighty created all things so that there are opposing choices...and He gave us a choice between them”.

We see a similar symbolism in the biblical practice of Yom Kippur. Aaron, the High Priest took two identical he-goats and drew lots between the two – one being dedicated to The Almighty and the other is cast down a rocky cliff.

Why were there two goats? These two goats symbolise the good and evil forces within each and every one of us. Each of these forces tries to advise us, and because they are so ingrained in us as part of our identity, we cannot tell them apart. Like the two goats on

Yom Kippur, they are so identical, we can only tell them apart by drawing lots, and so to speak leaving it up to God to differentiate.

Rabbi Rabinowitz goes on to explain that before Adam sinned, everything knew its place in the service of the Almighty. But once humankind sinned, good and evil became mixed together and “Sin crouches at the door.” The two goats of Yom Kippur are like the twins, Jacob and Esau. They both had a choice and we see where each of theirs led them; one to being a patriarch of the teachers of morality to the world and the other to be the progenitor of Amalek, the nation hell-bent of Israel’s destruction.

In the opening verse of Chad Gadya we say that “Father bought the goat for two zuzim (coins).” We repeat the words Chad Gadya twice because in fact Father didn’t buy just one goat but rather two goats, for one zuz each.

Mind blown.

I’ve always thought there was one! But it turns out that we repeat the words Chad Gadya twice to remind us of the two goats of Yom Kippur and the two forces within us. Reminding ourselves that what it means to be a Jew is to use our challenges to turn darkness to light and sour to sweet.

But what is this doing at the end of the Seder? Why not put this crucial life lesson at the beginning of the Seder night? After all that transpired in Egypt, and even though we had stood at Mount Sinai and received

the Torah from the Almighty Himself, we had still been quick to sin with the golden calf. During the remainder of their time in the desert, our ancestors demonstrated resentment, jealousy and small mindedness while living in the desert under the direct protection of the Almighty. This was indicative of the fact that despite the numerous miracles, the people hadn’t changed entirely.

Human nature is such that we have a choice between good and bad, and sometimes we choose good but sometimes we choose bad. On Seder night, we focus on that choice and ask ourselves: what world do we want to build?

Imagine if humankind achieved world peace and then managed to ruin it all again and plummet back into war. That would be a tragedy. But why should we assume it would be any different now than when the Jewish people first came out of Egypt and demonstrated flawed character in the desert, despite all the wonders they were shown? For this, we need the story of the two goats. The key lesson is that all we accomplish, whether great or small, is by its very nature transient. After a cat, there’s a dog, then a stick, then a fire – everything moves on and is transient. However, the redemption of Israel will be done through Eternal God which means “His repairs are eternal as well”. As the song says, “Then will come the Holy One blessed be He and slaughter the Angel of Death.” Some changes do last forever and everlasting peace is within our grasp. Comforting words to end the Seder. Meow.



Bittersweet: The Maror Unearthed



REBBETZIN LISA LEVENE

Lisa Levene is currently the Rebbetzin of Belmont United Synagogue. Having previously served as the Assistant Rebbetzin at Hampstead Garden Suburb for nearly six years, Lisa has completed both the Chief Rabbis Ma'ayan programme and also the Rebbetzins Bradfield programme at LSJS. In addition to her communal roles Lisa also runs an online consultancy firm (www.llconsulting.co.uk) with clients from all over the world. Prior to this Lisa worked as a consultant for Mercer, in their HR consultancy and Pensions division and at Marks & Spencer in Recruitment and Training. She holds a Masters and BSc in Psychology and Management and holds accreditations from the British Psychological Society (BPS), Pensions Management Institute (PMI) and Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD). Lisa is married to her husband Rabbi Marc Levene, and they have four daughters.

Seder Night is a time to come together and immerse ourselves in the marvels of Jewish history. It is a night of experiential practice, impressing into our consciousness the events of the Jewish exodus from Egyptian slavery.

**“WHY DOES
ROMAINE LETTUCE
TAKE PRECEDENCE
OVER THE HORSE-
RADISH WHICH IS
VISIBLY MUCH MORE
BITTER?”**

Maror, the bitter herbs, is just one example of this. We eat them because it reminds us of the bitter times the Jewish people faced in Egypt. Something has always bothered me about this practice – if we are eating maror because it is an expression of the pain and bitterness we experienced, then why do we eat lettuce? For me, it's not bitter, it's almost sweet. I actually enjoy it.

The Talmud teaches us that the mitzvah of eating maror is achieved through one of five vegetables. In the words of Maimonides: “The bitter herbs referred to by the Torah are romaine lettuce, endives, horseradish, date ivy, wormwood. All of these five species of vegetable are called maror.” (Chametz U'Matzah, Chapter Seven)

But the code of Jewish law states that the most preferable item to use is romaine lettuce. Many have the custom to eat both lettuce and horseradish. But my question is why? Why does romaine lettuce take precedence over the horseradish which is clearly much more bitter?



An answer to this is provided by the 17th century sage, Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi (Chacham Tzvi). He explains that the lettuce is deceptive by nature, hence why it is the most preferred item for maror. Lettuce has a gentle and pleasant taste only because we uproot it at its infancy. If we were to leave the stalk in the ground for a bit longer, the lettuce would turn bitter and sour. What started off sweet, will turn out unbearable.

This parallels the events in Egypt. Pharaoh did not begin enslaving and oppressing the spirit of the Jewish people straight away. It began slowly, first he enlisted them as paid workers. Over time, under their control, our defences were down and the harsh labour and slavery began. Like the lettuce stalk, it seemed sweet at first, but then turned bitter.

Rabbi YY Jacobson likens this to a frog. He tells of a fascinating experiment that he once read. If you place a frog in boiling water, it would jump out. Its instinct protects itself automatically from danger. But if you were to deceive its natural instincts by putting the frog in cold water, and then slowly warm the water, the frog will remain in the water and it will boil to death. This, he argues, is the way slavery, oppression, and all other forms of degradation function. By putting a person into a terrible, degrading experience

suddenly they would fight it; but if it is slowly absorbed, it becomes habitual, and then a person's natural instinct to rebel is dulled.

This was the cleverness of Pharaoh, and the meaning of his words in the opening of the Book of Exodus, "Let us deal cleverly with the Jews." Pharaoh didn't just throw the Jews into ghettos. He gradually took away our rights and before we realised it, we had the status of slaves. It then became a habit

"LIKE THE LETTUCE STALK, IT SEEMED SWEET AT FIRST, BUT THEN TURNED BITTER."

and we became accustomed to it. The water was comfortable at first, but slowly and surely, it began to warm. Before long, it was boiling over, our sense of freedom and independence was stripped and we were treated as subhuman objects.

This tactic was implored in the Hitler regime. Decay and degradation do not just happen suddenly. Pharaoh and Hitler's regimes clearly demonstrated this, they weaken the defences of the

victims with a deceptive, malicious, and manipulative programme.

This is a lesson we can apply to our own lives. Relationships don't break in one day. Children don't get alienated in one day. People don't turn to addictive behaviour in one day. It is a gradual process. We make small mistakes. We ignore small symptoms. We fail to challenge the small habits and instincts. We ignore the small impulses. We deceive ourselves into believing that things are still sweet, functional, and fine. Then, before we know it, we see the effect of these small changes and drown in despair and grief. Challenges need to be recognised from early on so we can work to overcome them.

This is why at the Seder we eat lettuce. Not the mature and bitter type, but that which is still tasty and sweet. Because, if ignored, the sweet lettuce is the bitterest of them all. We must be cognisant of this and take steps to overcome our challenges while they still appear to seem sweet so that they don't come to overcome us.

The maror is a lesson in identifying our own challenges, what holds us back, recognising these flaws in their infancy and taking steps to address them. This is just one of the many experiential lessons we learn on this special night.



The Two Mountains Of Judaism



YAAKOV KLEIN

Yaakov is an inspirational educator and musician. He is the author of two books, *Sparks from Berditchov* and *Sunlight of Redemption* (Feldheim). After studying in the Mir Yeshiva, Yaakov and his wife Shira settled in Chicago, where he taught for the Illinois Center for Jewish Studies. After moving back to Israel in 2018, Yaakov spends his days lecturing in various yeshivot, producing music, and working on his next book.

**“ON THE SURFACE,
THE TWO MOUNTAINS
OF JUDAISM SEEM
KIND OF TRIVIAL.”**

In sharp contrast to the traditional approach of the other Chassidic masters, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772 – 1810) would often play chess with the “enlightened” Jews of Uman, Jews who had forsaken the ancient tradition of their birth for what they saw as being a more sophisticated lifestyle. As they played, the great master would lovingly engage these Jews in dialogue about religion in the hope that they might realize their error and return to their roots. One day, during one of these sessions, the topic of God arose.

“Rabbi, you are clearly a man of superior intelligence who has mastered many wisdoms and academic disciplines” began one of the intellectuals. “How, then, can you believe that there is a ‘man in the sky’, a mythical being who created the unfeeling natural world that surrounds us? I find believing in God to be just as preposterous as believing in unicorns or dragons!”

Rebbe Nachman looked up from the game, his eyes burning with intensity. “My friend” he said, “Listen well. The God you don’t believe in, I don’t believe in either.”

The immature and limited understanding of God maintained by much of the world is something that an intellectually honest person has justified difficulty accepting as



truth. But when we encounter the understanding of God presented by our holy tradition, we soon come to recognise that it is so much more profound, nuanced, deep, and sensible than we ever could have imagined. Rebbe Nachman didn't tell the enlightened Jews of Uman to take a leap of faith. He asked only that they cast aside the preconceived "image" of the fairytale God presented by society and allow themselves to explore the depth of the Torah's understanding. He knew that if they would engage in serious Torah study, peeling back layer after layer of understanding to reveal the inner light and depth carefully concealed underneath, they would find another God waiting at the core - a God they could indeed believe in.

One of the ways to begin finding the "believable God" hidden within what is often an unbelievable tradition is to explore the inner meaning of the stories, events, and laws of the Torah. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (1865-1935) taught that the Jewish soul longs for great expanses in religious thought; broad ideas which bind disparate concepts, unify great ideals, and whose powerful light can illuminate the innumerable minutia of the Jewish experience. In this essay, we hope to experience this kind of learning by exploring the deep meaning held within the two iconic mountains in the Jewish tradition - Mount Sinai and the Temple Mount.

On the surface, the two mountains of Judaism seem kind of trivial. Their significance appears to depend only upon the function they served; Mount

Sinai as the site for the giving of the Torah and the Temple Mount as the site upon which the holy Temple was built. However, the Chassidic masters revealed an entirely new level of understanding.

What is the difference between a teacher and a father? Although there are many, the prime difference between them is the difference between the *conditional* and *unconditional* nature of their relationships. A student's relationship with his teacher is conditional. When he is behaving in class and absorbing

“MOUNT SINAI REPRESENTS THE DYNAMIC OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN WHICH HE IS OUR TEACHER.”

the material, he is a student of his teacher, but if his constant disruption necessitates his transfer to a different programme, his relationship with the teacher is immediately terminated. A child's relationship with his father, however, is unconditional. No matter how poorly the son behaves or how badly he angers his father, he remains his father's son. Even if he rejects his father entirely and runs away, it doesn't help in the slightest. Nothing he does can sever that bond.

Now, what if a child were to be taught by his father? It follows that these two relationships would function at once. Put more accurately, there would be *two levels* to the relationship. On one level, it is true that if the child were never to learn anything, the father would cease to be his teacher. However, because the teacher is also his father, there is a level to their relationship that runs so much deeper in which their bond cannot possibly be broken - permeated, as it is, with unconditional love.

The Chassidic masters teach that these two levels are present in God's relationship with every Jew: He is both our *Teacher* and our *Father*. The headquarters for this deep concept are the two mountains of Judaism, Mount Sinai and the Temple Mount.

Whereas the biblical personality most closely connected with Mount Sinai is Moshe Rabbeinu ("Moshe our Teacher") as he alone climbed the mountain to receive the entirety of Torah, the biblical personalities most bound with the Temple Mount are the Avos ("Fathers"), Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, each of whom revealed a new dimension of the place.¹

Mount Sinai represents the dynamic of our relationship with God in which He is our Teacher. On this level, our relationship with the Source of life exists to the degree that we heed His Will as revealed in the Torah, the Book of Life. The bursts of fire, clouds of smoke, and loud noises which accompanied the giving of the Torah are emblematic of its rigidity and the



fearsome responsibility involved in our acceptance of its authority. If we are students of the Torah and committed to following its myriad laws and statutes, Hashem is our teacher; “*Hamelameid Torah l’amo Yisrael* – He Who teaches Torah to the Jewish nation”. However, if we turn our back on Hashem’s Will and disconnect from the holy Torah, ceasing to be students, then Hashem ceases to be our teacher – that aspect of our relationship is terminated.

However, there is another level of our relationship with Hashem, a far deeper level – the dynamic of the Temple Mount. In this aspect, the relationship between each individual Jew and the Master of the world is entirely unbreakable. The Temple Mount radiates the light of Hashem our Father, Who loves His children unconditionally regardless of how poorly they may behave or how disconnected they may become. The Temple was the place where the most distant sinners could bring sacrifices to Hashem and recalibrate their alignment with the Divine. It was the place where each year, on Yom Kippur, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holiest and achieve repentance for the entire Jewish nation.

As we walk the narrow bridge of spiritual growth, it is imperative that we consider our relationship with Hashem using this dichotomy – teacher and parent, Mount Sinai and Temple Mount. The aspect of Mount Sinai demands that we be attentive students, intent on internalising and actualising Hashem’s Will in our daily lives through the medium of Halacha. It urges us on to making the sacrifices necessary for us, the students, to earn a highly coveted relationship

with the Master Teacher, the Author of existence. However, by the same token, the aspect of Temple Mount gives us encouragement, strength, and hope during lapses in our connection when the road to spiritual success is strewn with impassible obstacles and the journey seems useless. At the moment when the Satan succeeds in convincing us that, due to our repeated failings, God has no interest in our efforts, the smoke of the incense wafts out of the Holy Temple in our hearts, filling our world with light, comfort, and the knowledge that, like a father who loves his children unconditionally, Hashem adores us, takes pride in our every movement, and cherishes the tiniest attempt to grow close to Him.

The key, as in most areas of life, is balance. Once that balance is struck, the Jew finds him or herself in a relationship with Hashem which, in times of success, encourages even greater levels of commitment to the Torah lifestyle, and, in times of despair, shines the light of divine encouragement, support, and everlasting hope.

Climbing the mountain of spiritual success requires that we never lose sight of these two special mountains, Mount Sinai and the Temple Mount. “*I lift my eyes to the mountains... my help comes from God.*”²

¹ See Talmud, Pesachim 88a; Likutei Moharan 10.

² Psalms 121:1



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Hindsight is 2020



REBBETZIN SHIFFY SILVERSTONE

Shiffy grew up in Jerusalem, one of eight daughters of Mancunian olim. At just 18, she married Benji Silverstone who attained rabbinic ordination from Aish Yeshiva. In 2002, Shiffy and Rabbi Benji moved to Manchester and opened the Aish Manchester branch on campus, becoming Aish International's first full time Rabbinic presence on campus.

Shiffy is responsible for all female educational programming at Aish Manchester. She is a mother to five beautiful children, a qualified counsellor, a fantastic drummer and enjoys attending gym classes! Shiffy puts out a popular video series teaching lessons from life, called 'Shiffy Shares'.

I was born and raised in a religious Jewish home. The challenge this presented me with was that all the Jewish practices and celebrations in my life became robotic from an early age, where I did things by rote and out of habit. When we are young, we adopt whatever practices that we are taught and – unless we hit points of crisis – we don't ever question why we do what we do.

**“LATELY, I HAVE BEGUN
TO CONSCIOUSLY
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OF QUESTIONING...”**

It is only through proactive observation, questioning and analysis that we discover the depth and reasoning behind what we do.

I am often jealous of the deep insights learnt by people who begin exploring Judaism for the first time once they have reached an age of intellectual maturity. They automatically question everything. Not just the deep philosophical and theological questions, but also the questions on simple basic ideas, actions, customs and observances that I have never even thought to question because they are so automatic.

Lately, I have begun to consciously explore reasons behind many of the day-to-day simple practices that I have never thought of questioning, and in doing so I have uncovered some of the most profound, relevant, and insightful explanations, ideas and attitudes.



One of these was an apparent anomaly that I noticed during the Seder last Pesach.

Rabbi Gamliel says that the most important part of the Pesach ceremony is the pronouncement of “Pesach, Matzah and Maror”. In fact, he says that if you don’t discuss these three ideas, you have not fulfilled your Passover obligations.

Pesach – that God passed over the houses of the Jews in Egypt. Matzah – that we left in a hurry and without enough time for our dough to rise. Maror (bitter herbs) – that we eat to remind us of the bitter times that we had in Egypt.

What I noticed was that Rabbi Gamliel seems to state these three ideas in the wrong order. First, we had the bitter times (Maror), then God passed over our houses (Pesach) and only then we left Egypt in a rush (Matzah).

The order should be Maror – Pesach – Matzah!

I have sung this paragraph since I learnt to read and have never noticed this anomaly! It is only once I began to explore possible explanations that I came across one of the most powerful ideas that I have ever seen.

Moses famously asks God “Let me know Your ways” (Exodus 33:13) Moses was asking God to explain to him the injustices that exist in the world. He wanted to know why so many apparently good people seem to have such a hard time.

God responds with two answers: “Mankind may not see Me and live” (ibid. 33:20)

To quote Tom Cruise in Top Gun “I could tell you but I would have to kill you.” In other words, mankind is limited. We don’t live very long. The world is so much longer and so much deeper. It has a past, present and future. In order to understand why God does what He does, mankind would both need to have been here from the beginning and to have had a profound understanding of every being created. Only God has that vantage point.

A person once read a novel which made absolutely no sense to him. It

“THE ORDER SHOULD BE MAROR, PESACH, MATZAH!”

didn’t seem to have any logic. Some time later he met the author of the novel and questioned him on this. The author asked him to show him the book that he read. Having seen the book, the author understood the person confusion. The first and last 100 pages of the book were missing. He couldn’t possibly have understood what was going on in the novel without having seen the full picture.

Our time on earth is short and we just see one small chapter. We can not possibly understand the depth of what is happening. “You can see My back, but you cannot see My face” (ibid. 33:23)

What does this mean? Can we see God? Does God have a physical presence that we can see?

God is teaching Moses that when you are in middle of a situation, you cannot possibly expect to understand the full depth of what is happening. We often cannot see the wood for the trees. It is only with hindsight that we can possibly expect to garner any understanding of what has transpired. God is saying “Have patience and wait until events unfold and only then could you possibly understand.” World history is still unfolding. It is a developing story. You can’t possibly expect to understand it in its fullest of contexts.

A man was walking past a door when he heard the most piercing scream of agony coming from the other side. He tried the door, only to discover that it was locked. He bent down and peered through the keyhole and saw a man with a sharp blade standing over a woman who was tied to a bed. In a desperate attempt to prevent the attack, the man kicked the door off its hinges. It was only once he was in the room and took in the entire scene that he realised that the room an operating theatre, the man was a surgeon, the blade was a surgical scalpel and that the woman was in pain and was about to undergo lifesaving surgery. It is only once we see the whole picture that we can grasp the details.

We are told that the Jewish people went to Egypt as a preparation for receiving the Torah. Why was the Torah not just presented to Abraham?



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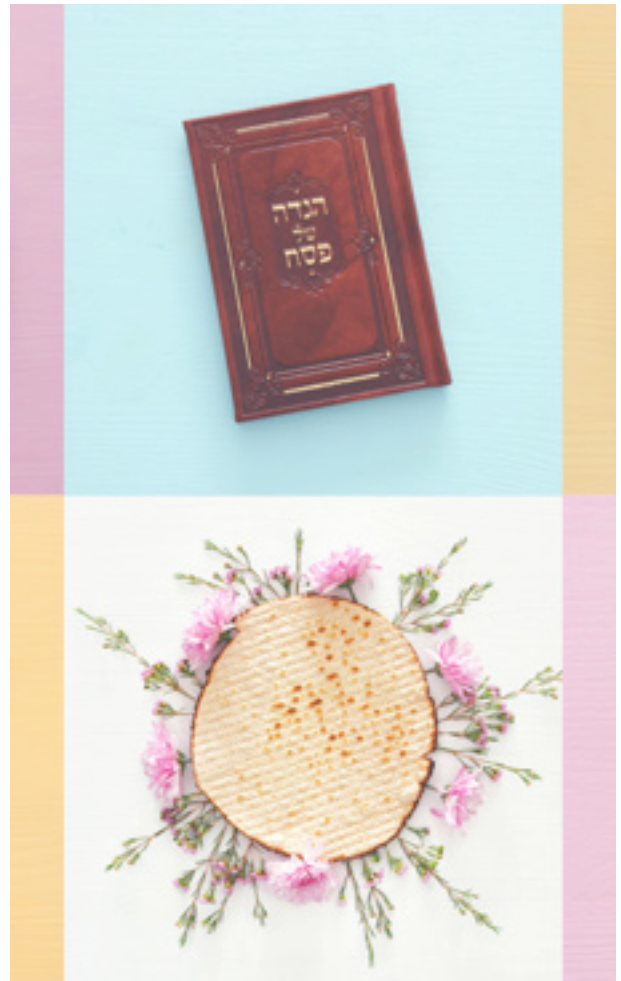
Why did we have to go through all of the hardship in order to receive the Torah?

Our experience in Egypt was both a national bonding and a national cleansing process. It was only through the shared experience of the hardship of Egypt that we could unite as one pure entity in order to be ready to receive the Torah. Whilst in the throes of the oppression and hardship, there is no possible way that we could understand the context and reason for it.

It was only once we stood at Mount Sinai, basking in God's glory and receiving the Torah that in hindsight we understood the necessity and benefit of our previous difficulties and we saw the bigger picture.

Therefore, we first say "Pesach" – that God passed over our houses, then "Matzah" – that God took us out of Egypt in a rush and then "Maror" – recalling the bitter times.

It is only once we are "on the other side" and look back on "Pesach" and "Matzah" that we can understand why the "Maror" was necessary.



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How to Maintain Spirituality in a Spiritually Toxic Environment



RABBI JOHNNY SOLOMON

Rabbi Johnny Solomon is a British-born Jewish educator who was previously the Head of Judaic Studies at Immanuel College and Hasmonian Girls' School. He now lives in Israel where he teaches Tanach, Halacha & Jewish Thought at Machon Ma'ayan & Midreshet Torat Chessed, while also working as an independent Jewish Education Consultant.

“HOW DID RIVKAH, YAAKOV, RACHEL AND LEAH SURVIVE THIS SPIRITUALLY TOXIC ENVIRONMENT?”

If one were to compile a list the biblical enemies of the Jewish people, Lavan the Arami (literally, ‘Lavan the trickster’) who was the brother of Rivkah, the father of Rachel & Leah, and the father-in-law of Yaakov, would undoubtedly be placed near the top. True, there is little evidence to suggest that Lavan was a physical threat. However, as the Haggadah Shel Pesach (the Passover Haggadah) informs us, *‘Pharaoh only wanted to kill the young boys, Lavan wanted to uproot the whole Jewish people’*, meaning that Lavan’s manipulation and deceit posed an existential spiritual threat to his daughters, to Yaakov, and ultimately the whole Jewish people. Yet somehow, despite Lavan’s evil ways, our great matriarchs of Rivkah, Rachel & Leah were seemingly able to protect themselves from his influence, and despite living in Lavan’s house for over 20 years¹, Yaakov maintained his commitment to G-d and His laws.² But how did Rivkah, Yaakov, Rachel & Leah survive this spiritually toxic environment?

The story begins with Rivkah’s pregnancy when Yaakov and Esav they ‘wrestled while inside her’.³ In response to this strange phenomenon Rivkah decided to seek spiritual advice and she went - perhaps not for the first time - to visit the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever. Shem was the son of Noach. He had grown up in a spiritually toxic society that was subsequently destroyed by the flood, and since then had learnt and developed further practical ways to maintain his spirituality in negative environments which he



later shared with Ever, his grandson, who himself spiritually survived the consequences of the building of Migdal Bavel (the building of the Tower of Babel).

Significantly, Rivkah had already grown up alongside her brother Lavan and she had already demonstrated considerable spiritual strength. In fact, our Rabbis refer to her as being like a 'lily among the thorns',⁴ because despite the harmful effects of those around her she still maintained her values and her dignity. Yet as we see from her visit to the Yeshiva of Shem & Ever, Rivkah recognised that no matter how strong you are in yourself there are times when you need a special type of advice to deal with particularly challenging situations, and it is possible that even when she was younger and before she married Yitzchak, Rivkah received advice from these great sages.

63 years later, and having been repeatedly threatened by his twin brother Esav, Yaakov is advised by his mother Rivkah to escape to her brother Lavan's house.⁵ Yet while en route to Lavan's house, we are told that Yaakov took a detour to study at the Yeshiva of Ever where he remained for 14 years before then taking residence in the house of Lavan.⁶

Of course, it makes sense that Rivkah would have sought advice from these spiritual survivors while growing up in the house of Lavan. But why, asks Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky,⁷ did Yaakov need such advice? Yaakov had been taught to be a loyal servant of God

by both his father Yitzchak and his grandfather Avraham, so what could Ever teach Yaakov that he had not previously studied from his illustrious father and grandfather?!

In his response Rabbi Kamenetsky explains that while Yitzchak and Avraham had much to teach Yaakov about maintaining spirituality and living a pious and holy life in a society that honoured and respected their beliefs, Shem and Ever had lived a spiritually toxic society and yet they still remained spiritually connected. Given this, despite having received

“WE OFTEN ERRONEOUSLY THINK THAT OUR GREAT PATRIARCHS AND MATRIARCHS LIVED SPIRITUALLY COMFORTABLE LIVES.”

instruction from his father and grandfather was appropriate for his life experiences until now, Yaakov now needed to learn new spiritual survival skills which, as Rabbi Kamenetsky also explains, he subsequently passed onto Yosef to enable him to spiritually survive when he was alone in Egypt.

Significantly, few commentaries directly address the specific advice that Yaakov received from Ever, although some do suggest that this included suggestions about 'how to behave

including how to maintain Jewish names, the Hebrew language, and the laws of family purity'.⁸ However, what is evident from our Rabbis is that those who are compared to 'a lily among the thorns' are those who take spiritual responsibility for themselves and those around them,⁹ and that the efforts necessary to maintain spirituality in a spiritually toxic environment involve acknowledging the spiritual threat of those around you, developing spiritual resilience within, and seeking practical advice from other spiritual experts who understand your challenges.

We often erroneously think that our great patriarchs and matriarchs lived spiritually comfortable lives. But a closer look demonstrates that they, like us, experienced considerable personal and spiritual challenges. However, what made them so special was that they recognised the spiritual threats around them and proactively found the right people to teach them the necessary skills to spiritually survive - both for their sake and for ours.

¹ Bereishit 31:38

² See Rashi on Bereishit 32:5

³ Bereishit 25:22

⁴ See Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabbah 2:1


⁵ Bereishit 27:43

⁶ See Rashi on Bereishit 28:11

⁷ Emet L'Yaakov on Bereishit 28:11

⁸ See Rav Moshe Zvi Neriah's Ner LaMaor on Bereishit 46:28

⁹ See Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabbah 2:7



FIGHTING ANTI-JEWISH LEGISLATION IN ICELAND

By Simon Round

Simon Round is the Communications
Officer for the Board of Deputies

Iceland is a country like no other, with its towering volcanoes, hissing geysers and midnight sun. It is also a huge expanse of land with a tiny population of only 330,000, of whom only around 250 are Jewish. For this reason, the internal politics of this country very rarely comes across the radar of the Board of Deputies.

Until last year that is. Early in 2018, reports began filtering through about a proposed new Icelandic law which would make the religious circumcision of boys illegal. Although this legislation was brought by members of the Icelandic legislature and not by the government, it was widely predicted that it had a very good chance of making it onto the statute book.

The Board of Deputies took the news very seriously. Clearly the size of the Jewish community in Iceland, predominantly expats and workers from other countries, meant that the law would only ever affect a handful of Jews within the country, plus the nation's small Muslim population. However, we were concerned about the bigger picture. There had already been talk in other Nordic countries of a ban on circumcision. There was a fear that if these plans were not confronted head-on, a precedent would be created and Jews around Europe could be denied the essential religious freedoms we have all taken for granted since the end of the Second World War.

As the story and its potential ramifications began to gather momentum, then Board of Deputies President Jonathan Arkush was interviewed on Newsnight. He said: "Circumcision is integral to our values and integrity. Iceland is a liberal country doing something very illiberal. Banning something because you disagree with it is not a reasonable action. It is an attack on religious freedom."

**"ICELAND IS A
LIBERAL COUNTRY
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**"THERE HAD
ALREADY BEEN
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OF A BAN ON
CIRCUMCISION"**



JONATHAN ARKUSH

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES, 2015-2018

“OUR PASSIONATE ADVOCACY FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS BORE FRUIT MORE QUICKLY THAN MOST DARED HOPE.”



Indeed. Circumcision is such an important part of being Jewish, It would not be an exaggeration to say that a la banning it would make Jewish religious life impossible in Iceland, and in any other countries that chose to pass similar legislation.

Such was the gravity of this seemingly innocuous motion in a faraway country that on April 16 last year Jonathan Arkush flew to Reykjavik. While in the city, he addressed a conference convened to discuss the subject of circumcision and, representing the Board of Deputies and the World Jewish Congress, he engaged with Icelandic politicians and lawmakers.

Our passionate advocacy for religious freedoms bore fruit more quickly than most dared to hope. Within two weeks of the visit, Iceland's Judicial Affairs and Education Committee had dismissed the anti-circumcision bill. Icelandic parliamentarians had turned back from a decision which would have criminalised law-abiding members of minority faiths. We got the UK Government on board, which meant the full support of the British Ambassador on the ground. The circumcision bill in Iceland was dropped. And whenever and wherever it re surfaces, we will fight it again.

The controversy which was as big a story in the UK as it was in Iceland. It shows the capability of the Board of Deputies to identify problems as they emerge, and to act decisively to protect Jewish religious freedoms when they come under threat. While well publicised issues such as the antisemitism crisis in the Labour Party receive the column inches, the Board of Deputies' representatives and small professional staff work in diverse fields to ensure the safety, freedom and vitality of our community. Even when that means flying out to Iceland, we at the Board of Deputies are ready to act.

“EVEN WHEN THAT MEANS FLYING OUT TO ICELAND, WE AT THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES ARE READY TO ACT.”

Seder night, in the eyes of the Torah, is the core of all Jewish education. Indeed, every single time the Torah discusses the education of a child, no matter what question the child asks, the answer always begins with a discussion about Egypt.

The word *seder* means "order." Yet at first glance, the order of the Haggadah seems difficult to discern; it appears to meander from theme to theme. Discerning that structure is key to understanding the journey that Seder night invites us to join. This commentary seeks, among other things, to unveil the order and structure of the Haggadah, and in doing so, helps to clarify some of its key themes and core ideas as well as the fundamental journey that Seder night is intended to be.

Adapted from the Introduction

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הגדה של פסח

THE
PASSOVER

HAGGADAH



with commentary by
RABBI DANIEL ROWE

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AISH UK CELEBRATES

ON MONDAY 11TH FEBRUARY, 600 people joined Aish UK to celebrate their 25th Anniversary at their gala dinner at the Intercontinental Hotel, Park Lane in London. The evening which was generously sponsored by Ilana and Martin Moshal, was not only an opportunity to celebrate the 25 years of Aish UK but also provided an occasion to pay tribute to Rabbi Moshe and Rebbetzin Liat Mayerfeld in honour of their 20 years of communal contribution to British Jewry. The money raised, will go towards funding the vital communal work Aish UK provides across the UK, including eight full time Aish UK branches, educational programmes at schools and universities and reaching and impacting thousands of young Jews each year.

Although Martin and Ilana Moshal could not attend the dinner, they sent a video message welcoming the dinner guests in which they said; “We are lucky enough to be involved in many causes but Aish UK is one that is very close to our hearts. There are very few charitable organisations whose work will leave an impact for generations to come and Aish is one them. Jewish continuity and the existence of the Jewish people is not something that we should automatically take for granted.”

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis addressed the guests and spoke about the success and achievements of Aish UK: “For 25 years Aish UK has given a contribution of immeasurable value to yiddishkeit in this country. There can be no greater mitzvah than to transform the life of another person – to a life of meaning and a life of joy, and through those people to guarantee the continuity of that life for all the generations to come, that is what you, Aish have done on countless occasions.”

25TH ANNIVERSARY

Sir Mick Davis presented Rabbi Moshe and Rebbetzin Liat Mayerfeld with the 'Bonei Olam' award as a tribute for their service to Aish UK over the last 20 years. Guests also heard from Aish alumni and students who have benefited from Aish programmes.

Over the last 25 years Aish UK has become one of the UK Jewish community's leading educational organisations, inspiring generations of young Jews to develop a deeper connection to Judaism and to ensure a vibrant future for the Anglo-Jewish community. Through diverse educational opportunities, immersive experiences and enduring relationship building, Aish shares the wisdom and beauty of Jewish faith, practice and community in a relevant and meaningful way.

Rabbi Daniel Rowe, Executive Director Aish UK said: "Tonight we celebrated 25 years of Aish, 25 years of Jewish marriages, 25 years of Jewish children and most importantly ensuring 25 years of Jewish continuity. Having 600 people come to support Aish this evening is a testament to the impact that Aish has on so many people's lives. As we look forward to the next 25 years we hope that together we can create a legacy for the next generation of British Jews."







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AND SAVTA ZAHAVA ROSENTHAL,
BUENOS AIRES**

[CHAROSET, P. 67]



**OUTSIDE THE YESHIVA GUEOLA DE
VENEZUELA WITH THE CHABAD EMISSARY**



ILANA EPSTEIN



Ilana has collected many experiences over the last few decades, from interior designer to international educator, qualifying as a pastry chef and working as a journalist for a number of publications. Ilana has lived in New York, Caracas, Rio de Janeiro and Israel and settled in London five years ago with her husband Daniel and their four children. Ilana is the Rebbetzin of Cockfosters and Southgate United Synagogue and is the founder and director of Ta'am.



RECIPES FROM A CHILDHOOD PESACH

In 1979, my family was living in Caracas, Venezuela. Home was a penthouse apartment that sided onto one of the exquisite mountains surrounding the city. It was sprawling – or at the very least I was tiny. It was *Erev Pesach* – the day of Pesach Seder, and the whole house was gearing up for Seder. This was the first Seder I can recall with great accuracy.

Venezuela, especially Caracas of the 1970's, was a paradise. We went to *Colegio Moral y Luces Hertzl Bialik* – the local Jewish day school, where my mother taught Hebrew, and the school hallways echoed with the voices of rambunctious children. Our afternoons were filled with trips to the *Hebraica* – the Jewish country club. On Shabbat, we would walk back to school for *Bnei Akiva* and in the summers we would go on a bus to Chabad camp.

On this *Erev Pesach*, my parents had set up the tables in a large square with at least eight or more people on each side. My mother was busy in the kitchen preparing for the masses of company that would be coming shortly. My father had bought a whole set of matching *Haggadot*, to ensure that everyone could follow along together. My brothers were riding their bikes up and down the wide balcony. And I was desperate to set the table, using my Barbie's as centre pieces.

Guests arrived, from so many different backgrounds. My father had decided that we would take the reading of the *Haggadah* in turns, and each person would read their paragraph in their mother tongue. There must have been a dozen different languages spoken that night.

The food of course was spectacular. My mother is a great, yet reluctant cook. She served us the dishes that she had learnt from her mother and her mother had learnt from her mother in turn. People started sharing their Pesach memories, of *Seders* in Israel, Morocco, France, Czechoslovakia, and Germany. I was entranced. The stories of foreign lands were spoken in a mixture of Spanish, Hebrew, English, Yiddish and French. As people shared their stories, they all spoke of one thing no matter what their background. Each one started with the same few words: 'My mother's (grandmother's, father's, aunt's...) chicken soup (matzah balls, Pesach cookies, *charoset*...) is the best thing you will ever taste.'

How is it possible that they each had a close relative whose unique Pesach dish was the stuff of legend? I think the reason is because Pesach itself is the stuff of legend. It is the miracle of the freedom of our people, and the celebration of that freedom year on year, whether in tragedy or triumph. This miracle is marked by a special meal that brings family, friends and strangers together, accompanied by generations-old recipes that make a big impact on us – because we only have them once a year.

It is great to share some of my family's Pesach recipes with you. They are tried and tested through the years and generations, and of course celebrated when they make an appearance at our Seder table. Wishing you a Pesach filled with family, friends and freedom.



SCALLOPED POTATOES WITH CAPERS

**BASED ON A SIMILAR DISH
FROM BON APPÉTIT**

This is one of those recipes where, every Pesach, I ask myself why I don't make it all year round! It is absolutely delicious and can easily be made ahead of time. Buy a mandolin if you don't have one, it makes easy work of slicing the potatoes and you won't regret the addition to your Pesach tool kit!

TO MAKE THE POTATOES:

Preheat oven to 180°C. Rub 13x9x2-inch glass baking dish with cut side of garlic clove. Brush dish with olive oil. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in heavy large frying pan over medium heat. Add onions, sprinkle with coarse salt, and sauté until soft and beginning to brown, stirring frequently for about 10 minutes.

Arrange 1/3 of potatoes in even layer in prepared dish. Sprinkle with coarse salt and pepper. Scatter half of onions over. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon capers. Repeat layering with half of remaining potatoes, coarse salt and pepper, remaining onions, and 1 tablespoon capers. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Arrange remaining potato slices over. Sprinkle with coarse salt and pepper and remaining 1 tablespoon capers. Drizzle with remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Pour chicken broth over. Press down firmly on potatoes to compact.

Cover the dish tightly with foil and bake until potatoes are tender, about 1 hour 20 minutes. Uncover and bake until the top is lightly browned, about 15 minutes.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- 1 garlic clove, halved
- Olive oil for brushing
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 large onions, chopped
- Coarse kosher salt
- 2 kilos potatoes, peeled, very thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons drained capers
- 2 cups low-salt chicken broth





There is no detailed recipe here, just a method and some guidelines. And perhaps this is how a Pesach recipe should be handed down generationally, with a little bit of this and a lot of that.

Of all the different dishes that we bring to the Pesach table, none is quite as family specific as the Charoset. Every family has their own way to make it and thus it becomes our favourite. So I am sharing with you my Savta's recipe that I can only imagine has been handed down from time immemorial in my family.

MY SAVTA ZAHAVA'S CHAROSET

TO MAKE THE CHAROSET:

Place the dates in a bowl and pour in enough wine to just cover them when squeezed down. Allow the dates to soak for 20 minutes or until soft.

Add the dates, wine and walnuts to the bowl of a food processor attached with a blade, and process until you have a thick paste. You may need to add more wine, (or water if you have reached wine saturation point) to get a smoothish consistency.

My Savta, who didn't have a food processor, would do this with two sharp knives in a bowl, and as soon as one of us was old enough we took over the charoset-making duties.

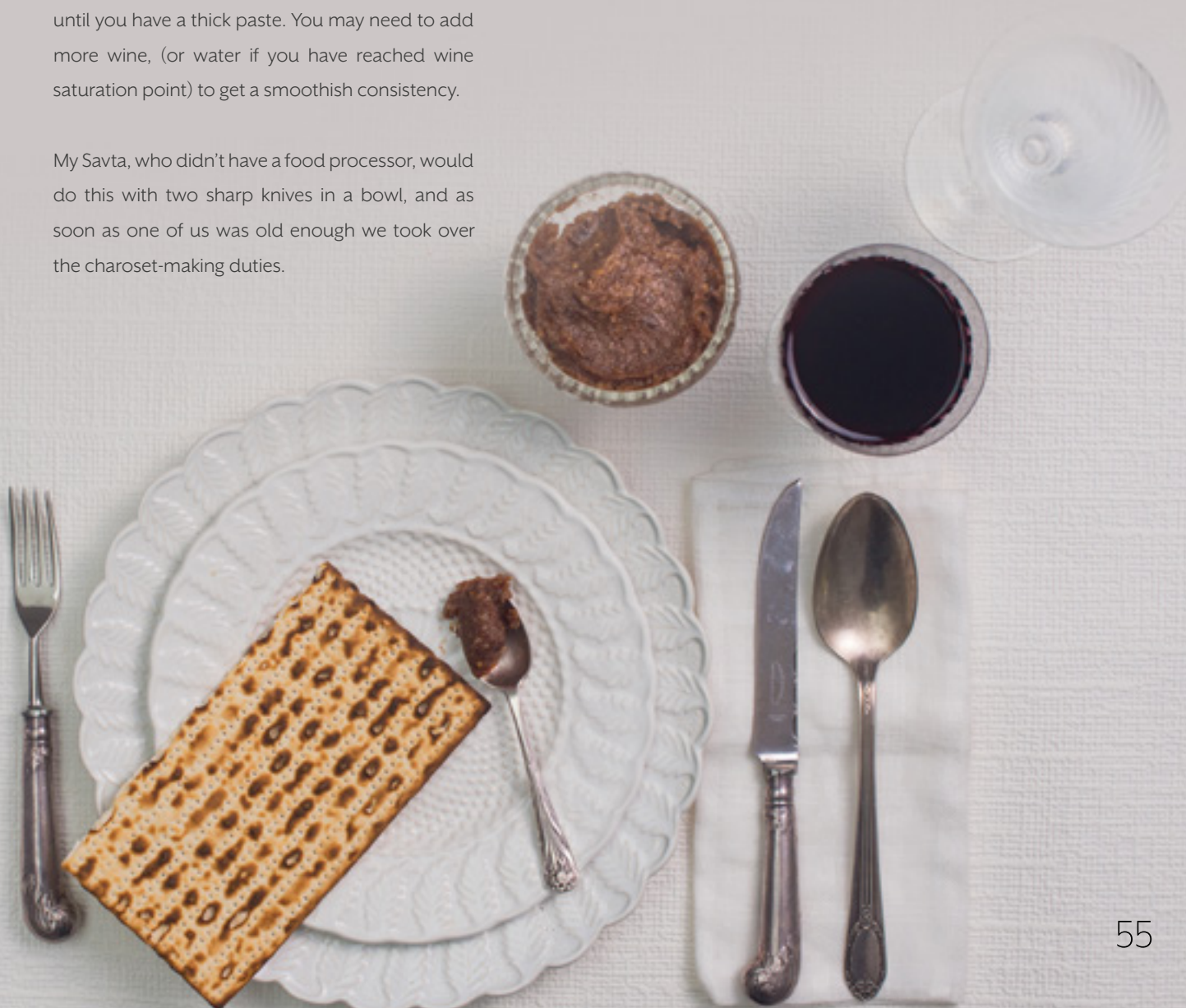
WHAT YOU NEED:

(ALL AMOUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE)

400g pitted dates

150g chopped walnuts

Sweet red wine (enough to cover the dates)





CHICKEN WITH TOMATOES + MUSHROOMS

WHAT YOU NEED:

2 bone-in, skin-on chicken breast halves
4 bone-in, skin on chicken legs
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
400g white button mushrooms
cleaned and cut in half if large
1 large shallot, finely chopped
3 tablespoons brandy
120ml dry white wine
480ml chicken stock
1 can (400 g) chopped tomatoes
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon picked fresh tarragon leaves

TO MAKE THE CHICKEN:

Season the chicken pieces generously with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a large deep sauté pan or saucepan – that has a lid. Once oil is hot, add chicken skin side down (do not crowd, you may have to do this in two batches) brown the chicken on one side until deep golden brown, using tongs turn over and brown on other side, remove chicken from the pan and set aside.

Add the mushrooms to the now empty pan, if you have more than a tablespoon or two of fat in the pan, pour some fat out. Over medium high heat, sauté the mushrooms until browned; about 6-8 minutes. Add the shallots, cook until soft for another 2 minutes. ►



LOTTIE MAILICH



MATZO KLOSE

- Add the brandy and the wine to the hot pan with the mushrooms, and using a wooden spoon scrape the browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Simmer briskly until the liquid is reduced to a glaze, about 3 minutes. Add the chicken stock and tomatoes and cook for a further 10 minutes.

Add the chicken back to the pan, cover and cook until chicken is cooked through, about 25-35 minutes.

When ready to serve, place chicken pieces on platter, taste the sauce for seasoning, it may need more salt or pepper. Spoon sauce over the chicken and garnish with fresh parsley and tarragon.

YOU MAY WONDER AT THE DIFFERENT SPELLING HERE.

My usual is *Matzah*, but as I'm sharing my husband's grandmother's recipe, it seems fitting.

Lottie Mailich came to England during the very last days of August of 1939. Lottie, through her ingenuity and perseverance, managed to find her own way to escape from one of the most dangerous of situations, only days before World War Two, and the Shoah. From her home in Berlin, she escaped to the Scottish Highlands and worked as a cleaner in a Vicarage.

Having lost many family members during the Shoah, she rebuilt her life in Brighton with her husband Joseph Heimann, and her parents who survived by escaping to Shanghai.

We had been married only a month, when I spent my first Pesach ever away from my parents. My husband's family sang different tunes and ate different foods and I was feeling totally out of place. But Grandma Lottie was kind and insisted that I try her Matzo Klose, prepared just once a year for the Seder meal. Thinking they were similar to the very light and airy Matzah balls I had grown up with, I spent the better part of the meal chasing them around my dish, but once captured, I was hooked!

WHAT YOU NEED:

2 sheets matzo
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
½ a small onion, finally chopped
4 eggs
1 teaspoon finely chopped parsley
1 teaspoon salt
Pepper to taste
½ teaspoon ground ginger
1 tablespoon ground almond
½ cup matzo meal

TO MAKE THE MATZO KLOSE:

Soak the two sheets of matzo in cold water for a few minutes. Drain and squeeze dry.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan, fry the onions over medium heat until very soft and golden. Add the matzo and break up as you stir the matzo into the onions. Remove the mixture from pan into a bowl, and add the remaining ingredients, mixing well to form a soft dough. Place mixture in the fridge for at least an hour.

Bring a large pot of salted water to boil, shape the mixture with damp hands into 1 inch balls, drop into boiling water and cook for about 15 minutes until the Matzo Klose are cooked through.



TO MAKE THE COOKIES:

In the bowl of a stand mixer or in a large bowl using a hand held electric whisk, whisk the egg whites and salt until stiff and dry. Gradually add in the sugar one tablespoon at a time, until the egg whites are glossy and all the sugar has dissolved. Add the vanilla sugar (or essence) and whisk until incorporated. Add the zest and almonds and mix together well. You should have a hard-ish paste to work with.

Dust a clean surface with icing sugar and dump your almond paste on to the surface. Using a knife divide the dough into 12 (or more) portions. Working with one portion at a time, roll the dough with hands dusted in icing sugar into logs about an inch thick. Using a knife, cut the dough into inch long pieces, each piece should be about the size and shape of a large bottle cap.

WHAT YOU NEED:

4 large egg whites
¼ teaspoon salt
450g caster (super fine) sugar
Zest of 1 orange
1½ teaspoons vanilla sugar (1 teaspoon vanilla extract)
600g ground almonds
Icing sugar

ITALIAN ORANGE + ALMOND COOKIES



WHAT YOU NEED:

ORANGE JELLY

60ml (¼ cups) water
1 tablespoon powdered kosher gelatine
500ml (2 cups) freshly squeezed orange juice
50g (¼ cup) granulated sugar

CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

150g plain chocolate finely chopped
3 tablespoons strong coffee
3 eggs, separated
1 teaspoon vanilla extract (or 1½ teaspoons vanilla sugar)
3 tablespoons orange liqueur
3 tablespoons soft dark brown sugar

ORANGE + CHOCOLATE DESSERT CUPS

TO MAKE THE ORANGE JELLY:

In a small bowl stir the gelatine into the cold water, and let it sit until softened about 5 minutes. While the gelatine softens, place the orange juice and sugar in a small sauce pan, and heat until the sugar has dissolved. Add the softened gelatine water mixture to the orange juice, bring to a boil and lower the heat to simmer for a minute. Divide the jelly between 8 cups, so that the jelly fills the cup about one third of the way to the top, place in the fridge for about 2 hours or until set. Once the jelly is set (don't leave this too long though, you want the layers to attach) start making the mousse.

TO MAKE THE CHOCOLATE MOUSSE:

Place the chopped chocolate and coffee in a small bowl over a simmering saucepan of water, without letting the bowl touch the water. When the chocolate has melted stir together the chocolate and coffee, then remove the pan from the heat.

In a large bowl whisk the egg yolks with the vanilla extract (or sugar), then stir in the melted chocolate. When the mixture is smooth, stir in the liqueur.

In a separate bowl whisk the egg whites until firm peaks form, add the sugar a tablespoon at a time, and continue whisking until stiff peaks form.

Fold the egg whites into the chocolate mixture, and mix until it's well combined.

Decant on top of the set orange jelly. Place in the fridge until the mousse is set – about 2 hours. The cups can be made up to two days ahead of time.



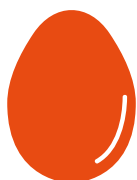


THE SEDER PLATE GUIDE



SHANKBONE *ZEROA*

Traditionally the leg bone of a lamb, this represents the Pash-cal offering that was 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" (Exodus 6:6). Due to the fact that, without the Temple, sacrificial offerings are now forbidden, one must be careful not to eat the Zeroa. The risk of severe food poisoning probably covers this possibility already.



EGG *BEITZAH*

Like the Zeroa, the egg represents a special offering that would've been brought up in Temple times: the Festive Offering (Chagigah). It is no coincidence that first night Seder always falls on the same day of the week as the 9th of Av, traditionally a day of intense sadness when we fast and mourn the destruction of both Temples and subsequent suffering in exile. The contrast between the joy of Pesach and despair of Tisha B'Av couldn't be starker. And yet, the last meal we eat before the fast of Av is an egg dipped in ashes. On Pesach we eat the egg dipped in salt water, representing the tears of the Jewish people in slavery. The connection is clear: we have come so far, yet there remains a great distance to the horizon of peace, prosperity and perfection.



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, the Jewish people have seen more than our fair share of pain.



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 Kazayit (appx. 35 grams) that one is required to eat. The accepted custom is to use horseradish for Maror – those with higher pain thresholds tend to grate it first! Before eating it, we briefly dip the Maror into the sweet charoset (see right). 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.



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.



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'. There is a fascinating discussion in the Talmud (Pesa-chim 114a) 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.



10 TIPS FOR

1

"Set your table the night before - this allows you to enjoy your pretty table and to post your pictures on social media!"

- REBBETZIN GITEL BRUKIRER

2

"Serve a light meal before Pesach begins so no one is asking when dinner is."

- RABBI MENDY BRUKIRER

3

"Sing *Ma Nishtana* in many languages. Always a lot of fun. There are invariably different language speakers around the table."

- RABBI RAPHY GARSON

6

"One of the greatest challenges is bringing to life a story that is more than three thousand years old and counting! Children in particular learn so much about Pesach at school, which is amazing, but it is so important to avoid the whole night becoming a bit stale. We enjoy dressing up as various characters from the story and 'casting' for roles in the tale. If Moses and Pharaoh are sitting at your table, it feels so much more alive!"

- REBBETZIN TAMAR GOLDWATER

4

"There are many traditions on Pesach. We have one even before Pesach starts. In our family, my kids know that part of the tradition is they all have to sleep in the afternoon. It's a long night and we want everyone to have the best evening."

- REBBETZIN MIRIAM GEFEN

5

"One year I brought real locust. They were in a box hidden under a towel on the side board in the dining room. You can imagine how we became the best parents that night when we revealed what we were hiding under that towel when we sang the Ten Plagues."

- RABBI ZVI GEFEN



YOUR SEDER NIGHT

7

"We try to make the Seder as interactive and engaging as possible. A few years ago, after I had split the middle matzah and hidden the Afikoman, I had this crazy idea to break another matzah into a triangle shape and place it on a spinning plate that usually sits in the middle of the table. After each section, we play 'spin the matzah' ...if it lands on you, ask a question or contribute an idea, or no dessert!"

- RABBI ELI BIRNBAUM

8

"The songs at the end of the Seder are just so enjoyable, sung to classic tunes that have been used for centuries. To finish off the magical evening strongly and with a lasting impression, we have always divided the various characters of 'Chad Gadya' amongst the guests. The ensuing hilarity as cat, dog and cow impressions clamour for attention makes it a night to remember!"

- REBBETZIN SHALVIE FRIEDMAN

9

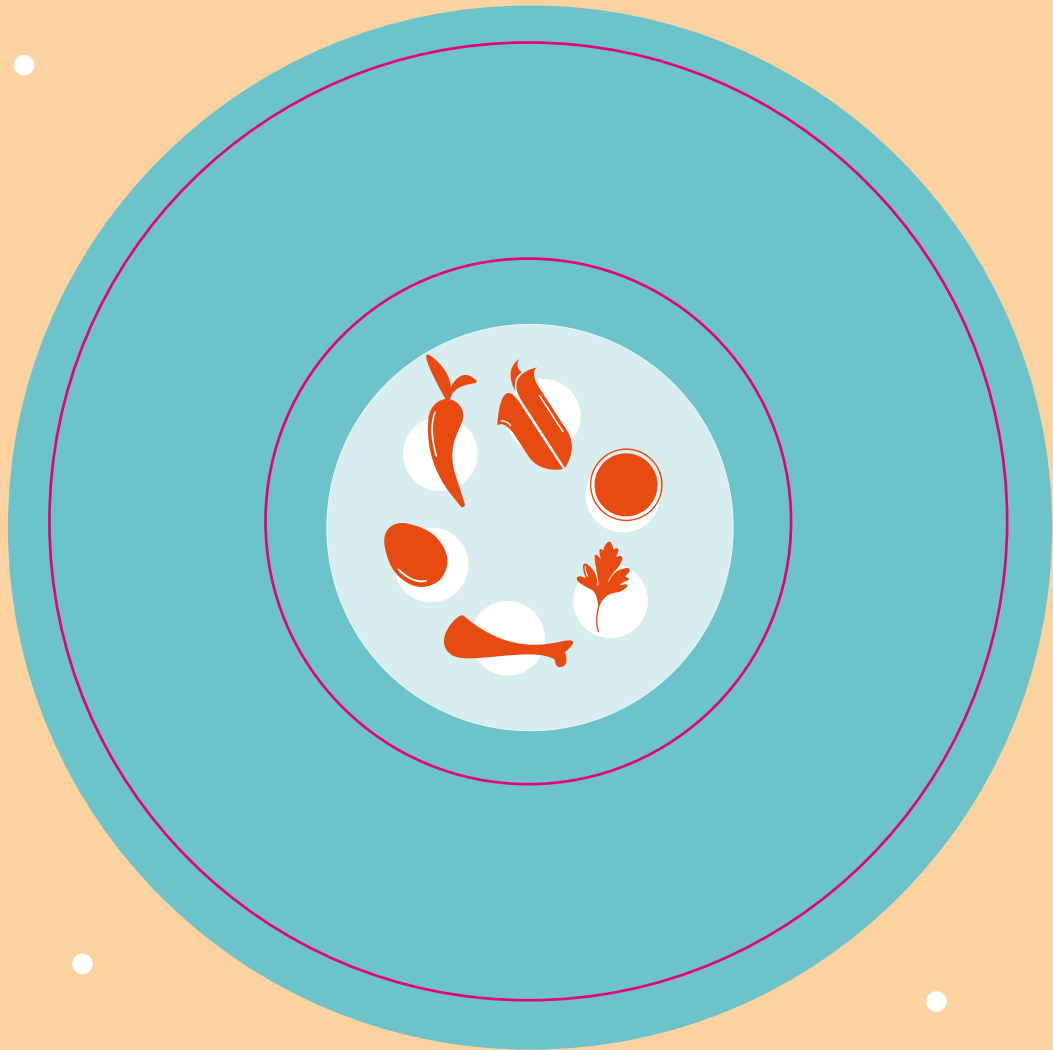
"One of the trickiest parts of the Seder is holding the children's attention. For a while now we move to the lounge to have a 'discussion' rather than a 'ceremony' when it comes to Maggid – the section that speaks about the Exodus story. In a more relaxed, informal setting, the discussion can go on for hours! Then, when we are ready to return to the table, we are refreshed and re-engaged."

- RABBI AVROHOM ZEIDMAN

10

"There is a well-known Talmudic dictum that on Seder night we are meant to view ourselves as if we personally left Egypt. It's a lofty idea but one that I, and I'm sure many others, struggle to connect to. Instead, every year before Seder night I spend a few minutes thinking about problems or limitations in my life that inwardly I wish I could be released from. Totally changes my experience!"

- RABBI MOSHE FRIEDMAN



S E D E R S T A G E S

**“A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF
THE STAGES OF THE HAGGADAH”**



1. MAKE KIDDUSH KADDISH

Wine can be used for base drunkenness, 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 withdrawal from the world. Kiddush involves taking the worldly and making it holy.

2. WASH 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. HIDE THE MATZAH YACHATZ

We live in a world of instant gratification. Our choice to put the matzah 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 HANDS 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. BLESS 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. BLESS 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 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 A HILLEL SANDWICH KORECH

Hillel the Elder would sandwich together the matzah, bitter herbs and charoset, and eat them together. This 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. ENJOY A MEAL 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. FURTHER BLESSINGS 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. FINALE NIRTZAH

The finale of the Hagaddah 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!”



Positive Attention



SHANNI SOLOMON

Shanni is a parenting trainer and lecturer and holds a diploma in the foundations of counselling, a BSN in Nursing, a Masters in Psychology and works as an Innate Health Practitioner and Emotional Wellbeing consultant for schools in North and North West London. Shanni is now about to embark on a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology, focusing on developing resilience in teenagers and its impact on school-wide antisocial behaviour. She has been blessed with six beautiful children of her own and to be married to Rabbi Dr Leslie Solomon. She works with many child and teenage clients, their parents and teachers, and can be reached at:

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**“ALL CHILDREN
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WHERE THEY ARE
LOVED TOTALLY AND
UNCONDITIONALLY.”**

In the last issue of Perspectives magazine, we discussed the simple recipe of expressing belief in your children and showing them that you value them. The main ingredient is time. The supportive ingredient, the spice of the recipe, is that the time spent be filled with messages of unconditional acceptance. And wonderfully, that also helps the time spent together go much further in the children's self-evaluation of how valuable and worthwhile they are.

What is unconditional acceptance? Let's first talk about the opposite - conditional acceptance. Children are exposed to a consistent barrage of messages of conditional acceptance. Behavioural, academic, social. They are led to believe in the conditions of their own value and worth. They are told that 'If they are...' well behaved, able to recall large amounts of information under test conditions, socially astute, etc. 'then they are...' a good kid, a good student, a good friend, etc. All those who do not fall under those headings do not achieve the aforementioned 'good status', i.e. they are given the message that they are only 'good' or 'worthy' when they can fulfil certain conditions.

And it doesn't end in school. Society at large will also offer these conditions of worth for its youth. Polite, intelligent youngsters will be labelled wonderful young people,



and rougher, less polished, but in my mind still worthwhile, youth will be explicitly or implicitly told that they are less valuable to society. But their parents should not. All children deserve to grow up in a home where they are loved totally and unconditionally, where they know that their inherent, intrinsic worth and value are independent of their behaviour, talents and even of their positive character traits.

Now I know what you are thinking. Does that mean I abdicate responsibility to teach my children to be well behaved, polite, helpful people? My answer to that is, please don't abdicate responsibility! Of course our children need to learn the skills that will help them contribute positively to the society in which they find themselves, and you as parents are certainly best placed to help them learn those skills. They will naturally want to be positive, caring, useful, contributing members of society when they feel worthy of such endeavours. Conversely, when a child worries or doubts her own self-worth, she will seek comfort and refuge through controlling and manipulating others.

So, how do we transmit that message of unconditional acceptance? If children don't really understand abstract concepts, how can they get this one? Again, the answer is simple, because children only really do simple (that's why I love working with them), the way you give them that message is by showing them that you enjoy their company. That you feel happy in their presence. That when they are around, you feel good. And not because they are clever or pretty or even kind and helpful. (Although when they ask you about those things, you may well want to acknowledge

that you are happy for them – that they do have those gifts.) You love your child unconditionally because you have been given them as a gift from God, and you are so very glad and grateful for this most precious of gifts.

But what about when you really don't enjoy their company, and you wish they would go somewhere else, and I mean anywhere else? We all feel that way at times, and at those times we would be wise to keep those difficult sentiments to ourselves, because our truer, more fundamental feeling towards our children is that we love them truly and deeply and unconditionally. How do I know this? Because even

after a very hard day at the office (read: looking after the kids), one where you really want to chuck them out the window, but you somehow desist (phew!), that very evening after they are finally asleep and you poke your head in through the door to check on them, it is at that moment that your true feelings emerge. You don't usually say 'that's it, I've had enough, I'm just not getting anything out of this relationship...' In fact, at that point, you know absolutely that

you want only the very, very best for them and that they are unquestionably your most precious and beloved gift.

And when they hear and internalise that message - the 'I like you, I enjoy your company, I think you are a great asset to my world' message, they naturally engage with their world confidently, as though they have much to offer and, most importantly, are well positioned to gain easy access to their own innate inner wisdom. Which, after all, is all they really need to succeed.

**“BUT WHAT ABOUT
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ELSE?”**



Defeat Depression



ARYEH SAMPSON

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For more information see: www.counsellingnorthlondon.org

“DEALING WITH DEPRESSION CAN LEAD US TO NEW DISCOVERIES ABOUT OURSELVES AND TO A MORE PRODUCTIVE WAY OF LIVING.”

Depression is a major problem in England today. Fifty-five percent of the population say they have been depressed and thirty-one million antidepressants are prescribed per year.

Depression is characterised by a range of symptoms which include loss of interest or enjoyment in activities, change in sleep patterns, loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, poor concentration, change in weight, and suicidal thoughts.

I would like to present several approaches that can be helpful in overcoming or reducing mild to moderate depression and its symptoms.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

People who are depressed often feel very alone and undervalued. They crave care, empathy and support from others. Gaining emotional support can play a vital role in recovery.



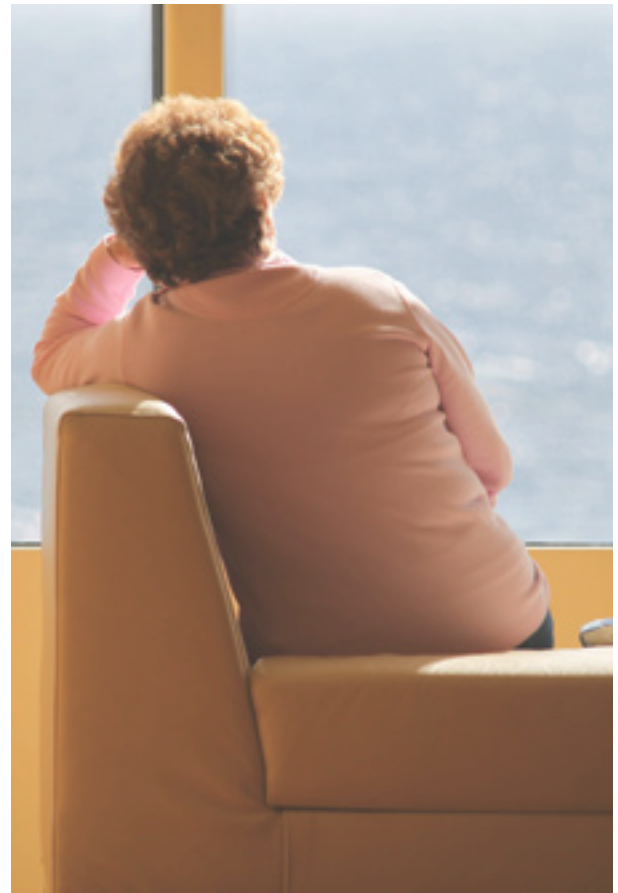
2 CHALLENGING PESSIMISTIC THOUGHT PATTERNS

A depressed person is often caught in a vicious cycle of negative thinking. Aaron Beck, the founder of cognitive therapy, describes three elements of depressive thinking known as the “depressive cognition triad”. These are thinking negative thoughts about (1) oneself, as in ‘I’m useless, inadequate, etc.’, (2) past and present experiences, for example ‘nothing works out for me’, and (3) the future, such as ‘it will never get better’.

Breaking unhelpful cycles of thought by challenging their validity can reduce their effect. This can be done by pointing out cognitive biases. For example, a person may be giving selective attention to the worst possibilities or over-generalising, seeing a single negative event as the whole picture. One approach which can be very valuable is to record one’s negative thoughts, then weigh the evidence for them being true or false, and then look for a more realistic attitude. Another approach, known as reframing, facilitates gaining a wider perspective. For example, being unsuccessful in a given area may be interpreted to mean ‘I am a failure’, and become a source of hopelessness. But with a shift in focus, a more positive, realistic perspective can be gained. Martin Seligman, a University of Pennsylvania psychologist, explains that one who has a larger perspective, like a belief in God and an afterlife, and loses a job, can view it as just a temporary defeat.

3 ACTIVITY

Depression often causes a loss of interest in activities as well as social withdrawal. But not participating in the activities one enjoys usually serves to maintain the low mood. Restoring activity levels, especially those that bring a sense of pleasure or achievement, is very important. For example, a person who becomes unemployed will often be less busy and have more time for negative thinking. Spending some of this time doing volunteer work or other constructive activities would help in maintaining a positive frame of mind. Exercise has also been shown to be valuable in keeping depression at bay; some studies have shown its effects to be comparable to those of antidepressants.



4 PROBLEM SOLVING

Often, people become depressed because they feel stuck in a given life situation. Many people, upon exploring the roots of their issues discover that they have become trapped in cycles of self-defeating behaviour which has brought about their depression. After understanding this behaviour, one can try new approaches to moving forward, whether in relationships, work situations or even health issues. Moving forward in a meaningful way is an important step in helping one feel better.

5 COUNSELLING AND MEDICATION

Counselling and psychotherapy have been shown to be very effective in dealing with depression. Often this can help in applying the above approaches. Also, having the right medication can be of value as there can be a physiological aspect to depression.

While depression is very painful, when dealt with appropriately it can lead us to new discoveries about ourselves and to a more productive way of living.



Is Technology Destroying the Way We Communicate?

(And what can we do about it?)



RABBI ARI KAYSER

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**“HOW HAS OUR
CAPACITY FOR
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OR EVEN DESTROYED?”**

The way we communicate is changing rapidly. Way back in 2010, Nielsen, a global measurement and data analytics company, reported that the average 13-17 year old sends more than 3,000 texts per month. That's more than six texts per waking hour.

In 2018, more than 65 billion messages are sent through WhatsApp every day.

What is the effect of this change in the way we communicate?

Research by Albert Mehrabian, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, UCLA, demonstrated that communication consists of three elements: words (what is actually said), tone of voice (how the words are said) and body language (non-verbal communication). All of these elements serve to express the overall message being communicated. He found that these three elements of communication were not equally important and that body language accounts for 55% of the overall message.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. With the changes in the way we communicate, how has our capacity for empathy been altered, damaged or even destroyed?



We've already pointed to an increase in virtual communication, and it is fair to assume that is coupled with a significant reduction in face to face interactions on average. Other factors may also be important to this discussion. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter design their ranking algorithms, which decide what information you see on your news feed, to ensure that you see what you "want" or what you "like" first and foremost. That pushes information you already agree with to the top of your feed at the expense of different, new, or opposing information. What this does is enforce our own confirmation bias, the tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of our existing beliefs or theories, meaning we are less challenged by ideas outside of our immediate sphere.

This is not just something simple folk like us do subject to. As of 26 June 2017, Ashley Feinberg of Wired magazine found that President Donald Trump has blocked 14 Twitter users that have expressed their dissatisfaction in him. Even the leader of the free world is not immune to confirmation bias.

Another important component is the prevalence of online dating. While on the one hand online dating has given people the opportunity to meet people they may never have had the chance to meet, a side-effect has likely been to make us more indifferent of other people's feelings. Instead of meeting someone and having a proper communication, today our thoughts and feeling of attraction to someone is achieved by swiping right or left.

A more recent trend populating many of these discussions is the new phenomenon of ghosting. Ghosting is the practice of ending a personal relationship with someone by suddenly and without explanation ceasing all communication. Tiffany Beverlin, contributor for Huffington Post, called it the evolution of 'silent treatment'. She says it is often used as an emergency exit button on relationship that people are unhappy with. With online dating so prevalent, and the fact that the people we date have no ties to us, it is easy to just vanish from someone's life. Beverlin found that about 50 percent of both men and women have been

victims of ghosting. People ghost to avoid conflict and emotional discomfort, but it leaves its victims devastated and depressed at times.

A very serious and important element in this discussion is the rise in cyberbullying. This form of online bullying is alarmingly common among adolescents and teens. According to cyberbullying statistics from the i-SAFE foundation, over half of adolescents and teens have been bullied online, and about the same number have engaged in cyber bullying. They found that more than one in three young people have experienced cyberthreats online. Over 25 percent of adolescents and teens have been bullied repeatedly through their cell phones or the Internet. Well over half of young people do not tell their parents when cyber bullying occurs.

This is arguably more devastating than traditional playground bullying. Once something is posted online it can never be removed. The victim feels a sense of hopelessness because the victim is usually alone. Carma Hassan of CNN wrote about Brenda Vela's tragic death in 2016. Vela had received hateful Facebook messages prior to her suicide, when her bullies used fake accounts to send her abusive messages. In December of 2016, Vela shot herself in the chest in front of her family. Bullies who harass their victims online do not see the impact they can have. Consequently, it could be argued, that cyberbullies will have less empathy for their victims than a traditional bully.

"EVEN THE LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD IS NOT IMMUNE TO CONFIRMATION BIAS."

In troubled times like these it can be helpful to look to a timeless teaching of the great Jewish sages. Hillel the Elder said "that which is hateful to you, do not do unto others". This 'Golden Rule' is well known, although the end of this famous phrase is less known. It continues: "...that is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary".

The whole Torah? That's a big statement. What Hillel suggests is that empathy, or a deep understanding of the feelings of others, is the central principle of Jewish belief. Everything else explains this principle.



MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD: Let's backtrack a moment to understand the origins of why we should be thinking so carefully of others. Rewind to the very beginning. God created man "in His image". Every man. Every woman. Every single person, whether you like them or not, is important. They have value. They have purpose. They are an essential part of the plan. That is echoed in the Talmud's description that each person is likened to a world unto himself. If you save a life it is like saving the world. How severe it is to think, that if you destroy a life, it is like you have destroyed the world.

In the context of our discussion, let's think for a moment, what does it take to destroy someone's life?

We all get upset over seemingly small things. If we were to fully appreciate the extent to which our words or actions so profoundly affect people, we may choose to be more deliberate with them. Sadly, as we have seen, many have taken their own lives over a horrible comment, or being publicly shamed.

So what does it take to destroy a person's life? The Torah includes the way we treat others, and now we can understand why. There are many examples of this, such as "Embarrassing someone in public is akin to murder", or "Better to throw oneself into a furnace rather than embarrass another".

The question remains, empathy is a key principle in many religions and systems, so why is this considered 'the whole Torah'?

Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that unlike almost any other nation, the Jewish narrative began in a foreign land. The impact of this was that Jewish identity was established with its own people as 'the outsiders'. It may be no surprise that these people were then commanded to learn from that experience, "You shall not oppress the stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9).

Coded into the DNA of the Jewish people and etched into their national consciousness is a mindfulness and sensitivity to the other. *You know the feelings of the stranger.*

That directive helps us to facilitate the building of relationships. If we see this as a fundamental principle, then we can begin to understand why the empathic disposition is so fundamental that Hillel can refer to it as the whole Torah. "That which is hateful to you, do not do to others" forces a person to think beyond themselves. It forces us to see beyond our body, feelings, thoughts, needs, and desires, and to step into the shoes of another. It forces us to see others as an extension of ourselves. That basis, allows us to engage in a meaningful two way relationship.

In a digital world which has placed so many virtual barriers between us, we are encouraged to see through the screens that divide us and truly connect.





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Living with Inflammatory Bowel Disease



DEBORAH ECKSTEIN

Deborah is co-founder and trustee of Jewish Digest, the Crohn's and Colitis Charity. Deborah set up Jewish Digest as a platform to help educate, support and inspire people with IBD related articles, latest research news, lifestyle advice and IBD friendly recipes. Deborah works as a medical PA, is a qualified fitness instructor and enjoys practising yoga in her free time.

We are living in a world where driverless cars will soon deliver your Amazon orders and 3D printers will make objects appear out of nowhere, but as yet no one has figured out what causes Crohn's and Colitis, despite all the research undertaken on this topic.

“ASHKENAZI JEWS ARE 4 TIMES AS LIKELY TO GET [THIS CONDITION] THAN THE REST OF THE POPULATION”

Crohn's and Colitis come under the umbrella of “Inflammatory Bowel Disease” – “IBD”, not to be mistaken with “Irritable Bowel Syndrome” – “IBS.” IBS symptoms usually present as stomach pain, bloating and change in bowel habit. IBS is not associated with damage to the bowel and it is usually managed with medication such as anti-spasmodics, laxatives or Loperamide, with attention to dietary and stress triggers.

In contrast, IBD is a chronic condition in which parts of the digestive system become swollen, inflamed and ulcerated. The most common symptoms are diarrhoea, rectal bleeding, abdominal cramps, fatigue, fever, weight loss and anaemia. Symptoms vary from person to person. They range from mild to severe and some people remain well for a long time, while others have frequent flare-ups.

Ulcerative colitis affects the rectum and colon and only the inner lining of the bowel is inflamed.



Crohn's Disease may affect any part of the digestive system from mouth to anus and all layers of the lining of the bowel may be inflamed.

Experts still haven't worked out what causes IBD but it is thought that a number of factors play a part. These could include an imbalance of bacteria in the gut microbiome, or a variety of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors.

There isn't a cure at the moment, but patients with IBD usually require long term drug therapy to try and control inflammation. These include anti-inflammatory drugs, immune system suppressors (to reduce the amount of inflammation-causing chemicals in the intestinal lining), and biologics. Sometimes surgery is necessary.

There is no evidence that any particular food directly causes or improves Crohn's or colitis, and there is no specific IBD diet that works for everyone. Some people may find that it helps to make small alterations to their diet. Certain foods can trigger symptoms or make them worse and it can be difficult to figure out what YOUR "safe" and "trigger" foods are.

WHAT DOES HEALTHY EATING MEAN TO YOU?

When you think of healthy food, you imagine lots of fresh fruit, vegetables and whole grains, but in fact, a low fibre diet is easier for people with IBD to tolerate, so it's actually better to eat cooked fruit and veg and white bread during a flare-up.

EAT FOODS THAT ARE GOOD FOR YOU.

Scroll past the instaworthy Acai bowls and kale berry smoothies – however healthy they are, these may not be the best choice if you have an inflamed gut. If your gut feels good eating white bread, then that is your healthiest option and is absolutely fine. (No need to post a picture on Instagram of your bland breakfast).

EAT LITTLE AND OFTEN. Big meals can be overwhelming for your gut and difficult to digest.

TRY AND CUT DOWN ON CAFFEINE

which can stimulate the digestive system - switch to herbal teas which can have a more calming effect.

KEEP A FOOD DIARY to keep track of what you eat and when your symptoms occur. Usual suspects include: dairy products, fatty, fried and spicy foods.

Due to the individual nature of IBD there is no definitive list of foods that affect all people with IBD. The foods that have a positive/negative effect on one person may have no affect on another person with IBD.

You may find that when you have a flare-up you have to stick to a few 'safe' foods, but once you have recovered, you can eat what you like, or you may find that you need to avoid some foods all the time.

DOWNLOAD AN IBD APP! There are lots out there to help you track your IBD symptoms and manage your condition.

GET RID OF YOUR JEWISH GUILT.

It's not your fault you have IBD and nothing you did/ate caused you to develop it. Ashkenazi Jews are 4 times more likely to get Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis than the rest of the population, but at the moment there is nothing that you can do to prevent it from occurring.

DON'T STRESS. Easier said than done, but stress can create physiological changes within the body thanks to the brain-gut connection. A bit of stress is normal and can help push you to do something new or difficult, but too much stress affects the body's inflammatory response and may increase the risk of IBD relapses.

MAKE EXERCISE PART OF YOUR ROUTINE.

No one says, "I went for a walk and came back in a bad mood". That's because exercise clears your head, improves your mood and boosts energy levels. Weight bearing exercises are particularly important, especially if you have been on steroids, as these can thin your bones, and exercise will help rebuild bone density.

Walking, running, dancing, yoga, pilates, skipping, trampolining, tennis, Zumba and boxing are all excellent choices. Just pick one or two and do them regularly. One session a week is not going to cut it – you should be aiming to exercise a minimum of 30 minutes a day. Consistency is everything.

The key is to find an activity that you enjoy doing and factor it into your day. If you find it boring, you will make



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every excuse not to do it. And if you fail to plan, you plan to fail - so put it in your schedule. If you're feeling tired and low on energy, then there are hundreds of workouts to follow on YouTube that you can do at home.

LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE. There are going to be days that you feel tired and weak and struggle to get out of bed. Listen to your body and if you need to rest then that's what you need to do. It is challenging living with a chronic disease and the many issues that come with it. You may be misunderstood

for cancelling plans if you feel unwell, for looking great but feeling dreadful, for being a fussy eater and for being too thin. Surround yourself with friends and family who are supportive and arm yourself with the right tools to manage your condition and live the best life possible.

It is important to get advice from your doctor or from a qualified dietitian before you make any significant changes to your diet.



SWEET POTATO, CARROT & TURMERIC SOUP

Studies have shown that curcumin, a compound in turmeric, may reduce inflammation in the body.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 onion, diced
- 2 tbsp light olive oil
- 4 large sweet potatoes, cut in chunks
- 6-8 large carrots, roughly sliced
- 1 tbsp herbamare
- 1 tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp cumin (optional)

Heat the oil in a saucepan and sauté the onion for a few minutes until translucent. Add the sweet potatoes, carrots and spices and enough water to just cover the veg. Cover and cook for approx. half an hour or until vegetables are soft. Take off the heat and liquidise with a hand blender until smooth. Top with a poached egg for a super nutritious lunch!

Note: Herbamare is a seasoning salt infused with herbs and vegetables and adds great flavour to soups.



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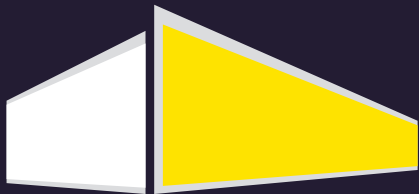
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"Do I Really Need IVF?"

What other options are there to consider?



BILL SMITH

Mr Bill Smith is head of Clinical Diagnostic Services who specialise in key areas of women's healthcare. He is regarded worldwide for his pioneering work in developing transvaginal ultrasound and promoting its use in gynaecology and reproductive medicine. He was an integral part of Professor Ian Craft's IVF team that produced the first IVF twins shortly following the birth of Louise Brown, the world's first test tube baby. He remains very involved with IVF but focusses particularly on natural cycle monitoring and the investigation of gynaecological disorders which might influence fertility or cause recurrent pregnancy loss. CDS offers comprehensive first-line fertility management as well as direct access to IVF.

"IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO ASK WHETHER COUPLES WITHOUT ANY OBVIOUS CAUSE OF INFERTILITY ARE GUIDED TOWARDS IVF TOO EARLY."

The role of marriage and the desire to have children in the modern age remains a complex issue. It is not unreasonable to assume the majority of married couples carry an instinctive, emotional desire to have children as part of creating a stable, loving family unit. When a couple have difficulty in conceiving or experience miscarriage, we need to understand there is not only a sense of loss but there is pain. We have to ask ourselves in these days of advanced clinical technology, are couples experiencing fertility problems given appropriate access and guidance towards treatments?

IVF was immediately recognised as the major scientific breakthrough of the last century in the treatment of infertility, although not accepted by all. The clinical euphoria and public attention it received was understandably immense. Its secondary impact was to slowly but surely initiate a gradual social process where couples became increasingly confident to open up and discuss fertility problems. The emergence of the internet has given access to learn about the reproductive cycle. Couples are now aware of a range of treatment options currently available. However, IVF continues to considerably overshadow and significantly influence both professional guidance and patient choice in this respect. It is imperative that couples are adequately supported by individual specialists or clinics and placed in a position where they can make a fully informed decision regarding their treatment



pathway. IVF needs to be put into perspective. The availability of less invasive, maybe less stressful and certainly in many cases less expensive alternatives to the treatment of infertility need to be recognised.

IVF was originally developed to address the problem of blocked Fallopian tubes. Today its clinical use is much wider with a range of IVF related techniques now available. However, there remain concerns regarding certain elements of IVF practice. These have been voiced by very established figures recognised for their contribution to IVF over the years. Lord Robert Winston, recognised as one of the leading pioneers in this field, has openly criticised what he perceives as the overuse of IVF. This particularly applies to the increasing numbers of couples referred for IVF with infertility of unknown cause (i).

It is not unreasonable to ask whether couples without any obvious cause of infertility are guided towards IVF too early. This might well be due to peer pressure or social circumstances or indeed, might we dare ask, poor clinical judgement? I shall not enter into any further dialogue regarding the very highly commercial elements of IVF in the private sector. What is deemed as an acceptable time in which to conceive is very debateable and obviously carries not only clinical but also emotional connotations. However, following perhaps 6-12 months of trying without success, then first line (preliminary) fertility management should be considered as an alternative to IVF. Unfortunately,

there is not the same intensity of focus placed on a more natural, less invasive approach to the treatment of infertility. Modern transvaginal (TVS) ultrasound, although currently somewhat poorly utilised, is shown in experienced hands to have a major impact in key areas of reproductive medicine.

Comprehensive monitoring of ovulatory cycle based on the latest 2D/3D TVS imaging technology provides a wealth of valuable information. It assesses the healthiness of the major pelvic organs, particularly the uterus (womb) and ovaries and excludes anatomical

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or gynaecological conditions which might reduce or prevent the ability to conceive. Serial scans provide accurate timing of ovulation and therefore the fertile window when conception can occur. Ultrasound provides a more effective and better tolerated technique compared to X-Ray evaluation of the Fallopian tubes. A single or small number of monitored cycles can offer over 50% success rate particularly when medication is used to stimulate the ovaries. TVS ultrasound is an essential component in the management of intra-uterine

insemination (IUI) treatments. Established fertility and even some IVF units now promote the use of IUI prior to IVF for patients where normal tubes have been confirmed. The role and clinical value of ultrasound cannot be over-emphasised whether in the case of preliminary fertility treatment or indeed IVF. We continue to identify patients undergoing IVF treatments with significant pelvic problems which have not been previously diagnosed. It is important not to detract from the medical and social impact of IVF and the boundless joy it has brought to so many. We need to respect the professionalism and dedication of colleagues within the field. Nevertheless, current figures indicate that at least 40% of couples attend for IVF with no known cause of infertility (ii). It is this group that is likely to benefit most from considering a more natural approach to investigation and treatment as an alternative or certainly prior to IVF.

For those undergoing IVF, there remains a need for counselling and a balanced understanding of the various IVF treatment options now available. There are continual developments in this field. Some, such as pre-implantation genetic screening (PGD) of embryos, can be regarded as a major scientific breakthrough. However, patients need to be aware that there remains considerable debate even within the world of IVF regarding certain IVF practices. The role of therapies described as complementary IVF treatments are questioned. The word “gimmicks” voiced by some specialists continues



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to arise. Egg freezing remains a controversial issue. Its use for women about to lose ovarian function as a result of medical conditions or cancer treatment is of unquestionable value. However, its ever-increasing use for social reasons remains an issue in many circles. Mr Adam Balen, Professor of Reproductive Medicine and spokesperson for the Royal College of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (RCOG) is reported as stating “while women should be supported in their choices, they must be informed about the relatively low success rate, high costs and side effects associated with egg freezing and IVF treatments” (iii).

Our thoughts remain very much with those couples who find difficulty in achieving pregnancy. Statistical data from the IVF regulatory body HFEA (Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority) do not appear to be up to date and remain very confusing in their presentation. However, websites for leading IVF units reveal ever-increasing rates of success. Nevertheless, it should be realised by patients that there are important areas of investigation and treatment available for many prior to considering IVF. The need for high quality ultrasound scanning remains paramount but at present underutilised in key areas of reproductive medicine.

(i) Presentation to Weizmann Institute, Israel 2015.

(ii) HFEA Fertility Treatments Trends and Figures.

(iii) RCOG website – RCOG suggests caution over social egg freezing – Aug 2018.



Clinical Diagnostic Services, headed by Bill Smith, is an established ultrasound practice based in London. It is recognised worldwide for its scanning expertise and clinical work carried out in key areas of gynaecology, infertility and pregnancy care. Patients benefit from the state of the art ultrasound facilities that CDS is able to provide.

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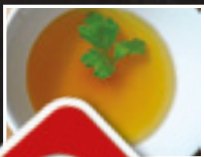
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How I Taught Myself to Walk Using Hypnotherapy



SHARON WAXKIRSH
BAHons Chf Mht HBCE

Sharon Waxkirsh trained as a hypnotherapist with Gil Boyne and internationally renowned Dr John Butler. Together they set up The Institute of Hypnotherapy for Medical and Dental Practice. Sharon lectures and provides training around the UK under The Academy for Hypnosis. She is now the lead lecturer in hypnosis at the renowned University of Portsmouth Dental Academy partnered with Kings College London. She has been the supervisor for the hypnotherapy unit at St Marks Hospital for gastrointestinal disorders and frequently serves individual patient cases at other hospitals, as well as giving private talks to medical professionals in the NHS.

Sharon has worked in numerous hospitals, including The Portland, Chelsea and Westminster, Great Ormond Street, St John's and Elizabeth, Bushey Spires, King Edward VII and Canterbury and Kent as part of the Macmillan support for cancer amongst others. She is a leading authority on hypnosis for dentistry and has trained many dental professionals.

Sharon features on the Birthwise DVD for hypnosis for childbirth and has appeared in a variety of radio shows and national and international news papers. She educates through talks and seminars including The Worlds Aesthetic Congress, The Dental Professionals Association, BADN and the BDTA. Please take a look at her YouTube channel, Sharon Waxkirsh.

**“MY MIND WAS
CONSTANTLY
LEARNING HOW TO
BE FREE WITHOUT
THE FREEDOM OF
MOVEMENT.”**

“If this is as good as it gets, then I am ok with it.” This was what I said to God for eleven months, every day, as I lay in bed.

The odds of walking again were 50/50 after surgery. Before surgery I was told the nerves in my spine were being severed. I needed emergency surgery.

I was a patient at the National Neurological Hospital in Queen Square, London, and felt I was in good hands. My surgeon reassured me that she has never had to do this surgery on anyone more than once in all her years of practice.

Two weeks after the successful surgery, I sneezed, fell to the ground and again ended up straight back into my surgeon's care. She couldn't believe it. A second surgery was to be performed immediately. I was back to square one, but this time I wasn't sure if the 50/50 was still on my side. However, my recovery went well and I learnt to walk, climb stairs and move about although a little more cautiously than before.

My spine was obviously still vulnerable a year on. It is unclear how the problem recurred, but this time my surgeon felt it best to wait it out and see what was in store. It was far too dangerous to do surgery again so the surgeon's advice was to



lie down for as long as it takes. This is how the eleven months began.

I didn't watch television or while away the time without purpose, my mind was constantly learning how to be free without the freedom of movement.

A couple of years before the onset of my spine issues, I had qualified as a practitioner of hypnosis, and had been trained with an emphasis on the mind-body connection, specifically the impact hypnosis has during the perioperative period.

Hypnosis is the induction of a state of consciousness in which a person can lose the power of voluntary action, becoming highly responsive to suggestion or direction. My only experience of using hypnosis for surgery was during some dental work on a deep filling some months before – a feat I managed without anesthetic.

As you can imagine, my surgeon was unwilling to perform my spine surgeries without anesthetic. The slightest of movements from a breath or twinge would create worse odds of paralysis. I wasn't willing to take the risk, nor was I interested in being some kind of hypno-hero. However, the rates of recovery are significantly faster, the need for pain medication is known to be reduced and even a reduction in blood loss amongst other benefits. So I used hypnosis pre- and post-surgery and during my surgery, I had a hypnosis recording playing throughout.

Studies of using the power of the mind

for surgery trace back well before the time of chemical anesthesia. There is historic evidence of the Greco-Roman civilisations through to modern times where neurologists are still trying to understand how the pain sensors are seemingly overridden or switched off.

In my case, I decided that I would be able to do without the morphine. The results are a speedier recovery with no side effects or reliance on pain medication.

As part of my work in the hypnotherapy field, I give lectures and workshops in the art of hypnosis to medical and

“HYPNOSIS IS A WONDERFUL NATURAL PHENOMENON AND A COMPLEX OCCURANCE.”

dental professionals for surgery and work with patients to prepare them for procedures. Training courses held with my colleague, Dr. John Butler, were accredited by the Royal College of Anesthetists - a great achievement in the world of hypnosis.

Hypnosis is unfortunately surrounded by myths and misunderstandings, partly due to old-fashioned television shows or movies and partly due to the entertainment aspect of stage hypnosis. Many people have a fear of hypnosis as it seems as though the volunteer on stage is under a spell or out of control. In fact, it couldn't be further from the truth. Even in the

deepest of trances, a person can be unwilling to carry out suggestions even if they are beneficial to them.

The hypnotic trance state increases awareness, hence its usefulness in helping people make healthy choices and changes if they wish. Hypnosis is a wonderful natural phenomenon and a complex occurrence, it is something that we can either slip into or consciously enter. What we do with that state of mind, whether it is a dynamic state or relaxed state, can make a huge difference to one's behaviour and mind-set. It allows us to access deeper parts of the mind on the many levels of the subconscious by bypassing the logical and rational mind. This does not mean that we let down our psychic defenses, rather it is a reduction of those defenses allowing us to tap into our inner potential.

Having used hypnosis for two successful surgeries, the recovery from a third spine problem depended heavily on my mental strength and knowledge. Every time I felt a muscle or nerve sensation indicating an improvement, however minimal, I knew that if this is as good as it gets, then I am ok with it.

Acceptance, as all the mindfulness coaches will tell you, is the key to a peaceful mind and demeanor. My teacher, Gil Boyne, put it well when training us, “I want to teach you how to condition and programme yourself so that your mental and emotional powers work for you.”. It wasn't just about positive thinking. And it is not about overriding fear, a natural self-



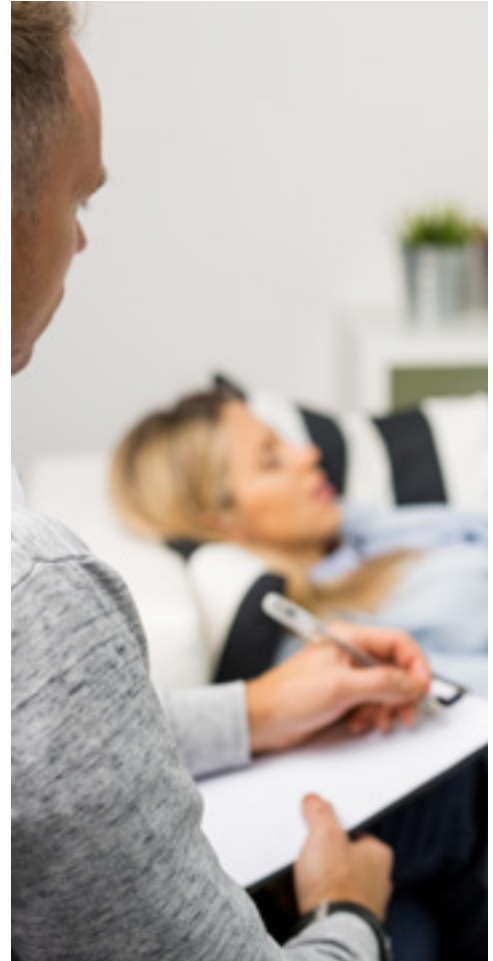
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protective instinct. It is about knowing the difficulties and obstacles before us and using the creative mind to work with those challenges to develop our potential.

The possible consequence from my spine problems was that I might not be left with the original physical capabilities that I was born with. Using the tools I had learnt gave me the determination to work on myself, physically and emotionally, whatever the outcome. I am fortunate that I can walk, hike and swim again. Activities I take great pleasure in.

I feel the hypnosis I learnt is deeply spiritual. It helped me see the connection of prayer and how to enter into it deeply using the infinite powers that we all have been given. I continue to teach hypnosis for medical and dental professionals and now train people also interested in becoming hypnotherapists.

I have the privilege of working with some wonderful people facing many difficult surgical decisions. No matter what age group I work with, they come with fears and emotional concerns regarding surgery and recovery time. People can experience a level of control over their responses and gain some of the best possible outcomes, emotionally and in some cases physically, using the art of hypnosis. The joy of being able to offer such a tool and seeing the results is indeed one of my passions in life.



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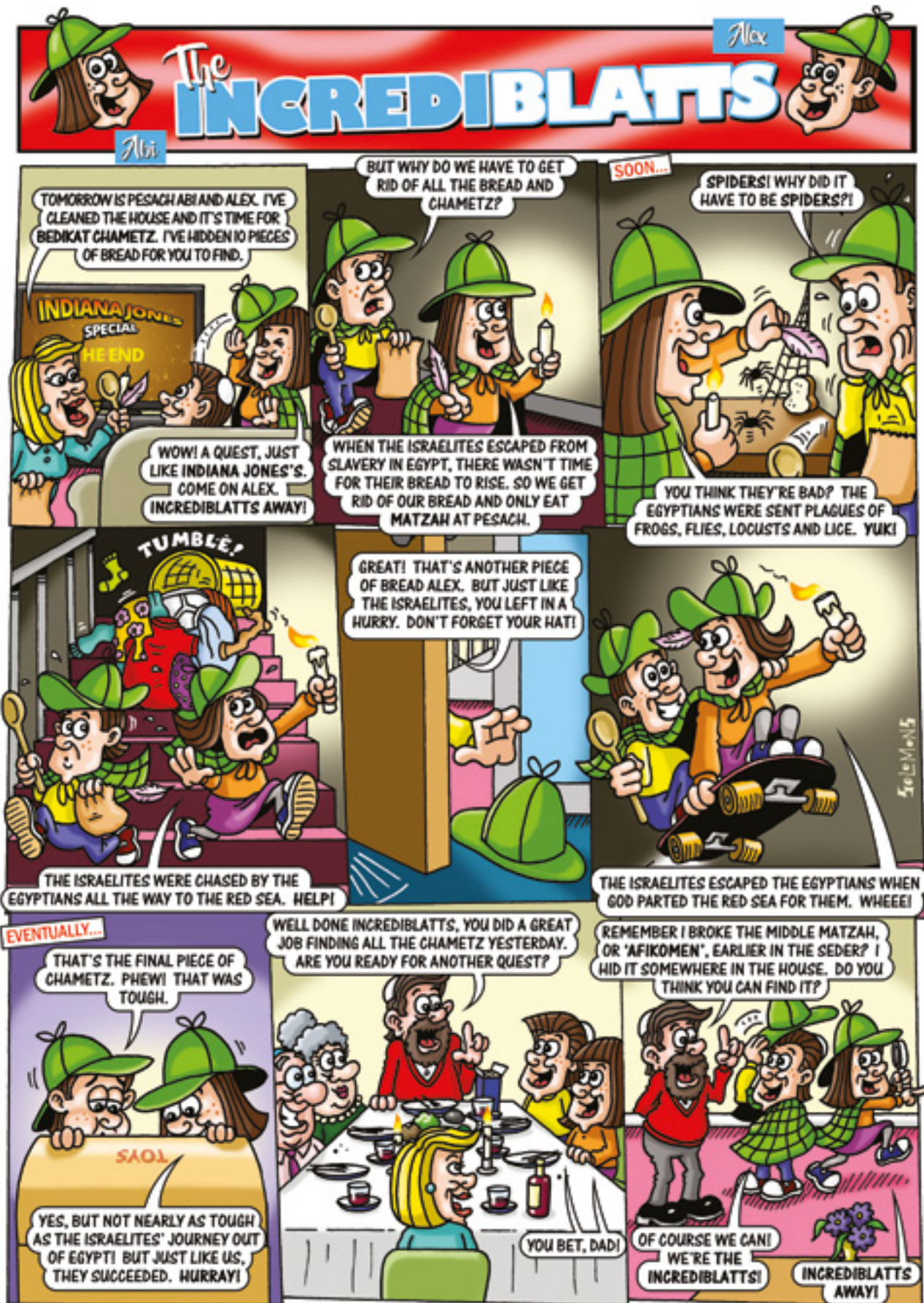
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The Pesach Story

For kids, by kids.

Written by Jojo Sagir (Age 8)



Yaakov and his family went to live in Egypt because his son, Yosef, was in Egypt and he was the second highest ruler after Pharaoh. Yosef collected food for the famine and that saved the people of Egypt. Bnei Yisrael were growing bigger and bigger as a nation.

A new Pharaoh arose after Yosef died. He thought he won't be kind to Bnei Yisrael so he made them slaves, first he paid them and then he stopped paying them. But his plan didn't work as they still kept growing bigger and bigger.

Pharaoh decided that all the baby boys of Bnei Yisrael would be thrown in the River Nile. Yocheved, Amram's wife, gave birth to a baby boy. After three months, when Yocheved could no longer hide him, they put him in the River Nile in a basket. His sister, Miriam, watched him from behind the bushes. Soon, Pharaoh's daughter, Batya, came to the River Nile and saw the baby boy in the basket and her arm grew so she could take out the baby boy. She later named him Moshe and looked after him as her own son.

Moshe grew up in Pharaoh's palace. Moshe loved playing with Pharaoh's crown. One day Pharaoh tested Moshe with some gold and hot coal, and if he took the gold, he would be killed and if he took the coal, he would not be killed as it would show he was just playing with the crown rather than wanting to have the crown. Moshe was about to take the gold but Hashem moved his hand to the coal as he knew one day Moshe would be a tsaddik (righteous). The coal burnt Moshe's tongue so he couldn't talk properly.

After he grew up, Moshe saw an Egyptian hurting an Ivri (Hebrew man) and he killed the Egyptian so Moshe was forced to leave the country. He went to Midian and there he met his future father in law Yitro and married his daughter, Tzipporah.

After becoming a shepherd, Moshe came across a burning bush and Hashem appeared to him and said to Moshe "go to Pharaoh and tell him let my people go".

Moshe agreed and took his brother Aaron with him.

Wild animals were guarding the palace of Pharaoh and Hashem made them tame so that they could go in peacefully. Also, Hashem made the doorway higher so that Moshe and Aaron did not need to bow to the idols to speak to Pharaoh and told him "Let my people go". Pharaoh replied "No". Pharaoh then made Bnei Yisrael work harder and didn't give them all the materials that they needed, they had to make it all themselves.

Hashem then sends the first plague, blood. All water was turned into blood except for the ones that Bnei Yisrael had so they sold some to the Egyptians. Pharaoh said that Bnei Yisrael can go but when the plague finished, he said that they cannot go. This happened after every plague.

Then the second plague was frogs. The frogs covered everywhere in each Egyptian's home.

Then came the third plague of lice which covered all the Egyptians bodies.

In the fourth plague, lots of wild animals invaded the Egyptian cities.

Then in the fifth plague, all of the Egyptian animals died.

The sixth plague was boils. It went all over the Egyptians skin. Then in the seventh plague came hail, in the hail was fire and water. Hashem performed a miracle that the ice did not put out the fire. It ruined lots of Egyptians houses.

The eighth plague was locusts. The locusts ate every single plant in Egypt.

The ninth plague was darkness. The first three days they could move but it was quite dark. But the last three days they could not move at all as the darkness was so thick.

The tenth plague was death of the Egyptian first born.

All the first borns of the Egyptian families died except for Pharaoh.

Finally, Pharaoh let Bnei Yisrael go.

Bnei Yisrael had to leave so quickly that the dough they made did not have time to rise.

After leaving Egypt, Bnei Yisrael came to a dead end. They couldn't go forward because the Red Sea was there. They could not go left or right because there was the desert. And they could not go back as the Egyptians were chasing after them. Hashem said travel further into the sea. Nachshon ben Aminadav jumped in and the sea split. Each tribe had their own path to walk in and when they came out from their paths they sang the Song at the Sea.





PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

RACHEL FINK

Rachel Fink has worked in education for over 20 years, and has lived and taught in Israel and the UK. Rachel was appointed Headteacher of JFS School in June 2018, and she spoke to *Perspectives* about how things are going and her hopes for the school.

INTERVIEWED BY MICHAELA BLITZ

YOU ONLY STARTED AS HEAD IN JUNE OF LAST YEAR, HOW ARE YOU ENJOYING YOUR FIRST YEAR?

It is a great challenge and a real privilege to lead JFS. The school community has been extremely welcoming and supportive of the developments that are taking place across the school.

AS A FORMER PUPIL AND HEAD GIRL AT THE SCHOOL, WHAT WAS IT LIKE GOING BACK AND SEEING IT FROM THE OTHER SIDE?

The JFS I have returned to is obviously physically different with the move to Kingsbury and the bespoke campus. However the heart of JFS has remained the same – a warm, caring environment. Having had such a positive experience as a student, I am very proud to now lead the school.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GO INTO TEACHING?

I am not sure I ever made a conscious decision to 'go into teaching', it was a natural progression. From a young age, I was always involved in education of some kind whether as a committed madricha at Bnei Akiva or a trained cheder teacher. My inspiration to pursue a teaching career came from outstanding female role models who taught me – Jo Wagerman z'l, my former head at JFS who appointed me as head girl and Myrna Glass, my primary head teacher, have been my

inspiration for leadership. Sandra Teacher and Chana Hertz taught me Kodesh in primary and secondary school respectively, and were remarkable teachers with exceptional subject knowledge. Orna Spiro z'l ensured I could speak fluent Ivrit by the time I left JFS and Pat Glynn was a super smart history teacher at JFS.

DURING YOUR TIME AS HEAD OF HASMONEAN GIRLS' SCHOOL, THE SCHOOL WENT FROM A 'GOOD' TO 'OUTSTANDING' OFSTED RATING. HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS?

Making significant changes and improvements to a school is not something that is achieved by one person on their own. It is a team effort that begins with a collective understanding from the whole school community of staff, students and parents of what the school stood for and what our aims and ambitions were for our students. I suppose my main role was to generate a 'can do' attitude and sense of pride within

the school. The ultimate reason to develop any school is obviously not for Ofsted, but for the benefit of the students. Our aim is to give them the best life chances, so that they leave not only with good qualifications that can help them move to the next stage of their life, but with a sense of moral purpose, strong identity and communal responsibility that will carry them through their lives.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES WORKING AT A GIRLS' SCHOOL TO A CO-ED SCHOOL?

There are definitely more shirts that need tucking in here! In reality, the dynamic is different to some extent but it's not something I have particularly focused on. Young people are interesting whoever they are, and I enjoy working with them.

AS EUROPE'S LARGEST JEWISH SECONDARY SCHOOL, WAS IT A DAUNTING PROSPECT COMING TO JFS, AND HOW DID YOU PREPARE?

To be honest, I have tried to take the size of the school in my stride otherwise it could become overwhelming. I like to focus on the positives that the size of the school brings both in terms of opportunities and diversity for the students. I am working hard to try to make the school feel 'smaller' to some extent so that students feel the staff know them better. Having come to JFS from one of the smallest primary

schools in the area as an 11 year old, I had been able to make that transition before, and knew that I had to do it again this time just as smoothly. Taking care of a large student and staff body is a huge responsibility, and I have tried to approach the role thoughtfully. I consider every individual and



their perspective to support them in the best way possible without compromising on high standards and expectations.

THERE WERE OVER 100 CANDIDATES FOR THE ROLE, HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FOUND OUT THAT YOU HAD BEEN GIVEN THE POSITION?

It was a surreal moment. I had gone out to buy some wicks for my chanukiah and had just parked the car when my phone rang. I thought it was my husband (who was responsible for insisting I applied for the job in the first place) asking me to buy something, but instead I was being offered the job of a lifetime!

The incredible outpouring of support and encouragement that I received from family and friends across the community and across the globe has been amazing, and very touching. It was a very special moment, and something I will never forget.

HAVING WORKED IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION FOR OVER 20 YEARS, DO YOU THINK THINGS HAVE CHANGED FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS OVER THIS TIME?

I think workload has increased significantly for teachers which impacts on the core purpose of their role but I know there is a concerted effort to address and improve this. The knock on effect of this is reflected in recruitment and the high level of teacher burn out. There seems to be an overwhelming focus on exam results as the definition of success nationally which is a major concern, and not the only thing that students and teachers should be aiming for. I do believe that in general, education is increasingly valued by all and I have noticed an increase in young talented teachers who are ambitious and see teaching not just as a job but much more as a profession. For them, education is a vocation and calling, which is reflected in their passion and determination to be the best teachers they can be.



THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT IN THE MEDIA ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE, AND THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA. HOW DOES A SCHOOL LIKE JFS DEAL WITH THESE ISSUES AND WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO PARENTS?

Wellbeing is one of three key pillars of JFS – the other two being outstanding education and a strong Jewish identity. We have developed a holistic and wraparound approach to mental health and wellbeing and are proud to be one of the schools in the JLC (Jewish Leadership Council) community wellbeing pilot project. As a school, we educate our students to develop resilience and teach them how to manage life's inevitable challenges through various assemblies, small group workshops and PSHCE (Personal Social Health and Citizenship Education) lessons.

We encourage students to get involved in volunteering and helping others as well as being active and physically healthy.

We also teach them about responsible use of social media and technology. There is a ban on use of mobile phones at school during the day to ensure ongoing engagement and focus in class as well as ensuring students develop strong social skills through 'real life' interaction with their peers and staff. Students are encouraged to take the lead and we have had a really

successful mental health awareness week and are about to experience our second week of visibility for disability. Students and staff are supported through Mental Health First Aid training which is a course run by Jami, and our active multi-disciplinary team which includes two counsellors, our wellbeing practitioner, a social worker and other members of the pastoral team.



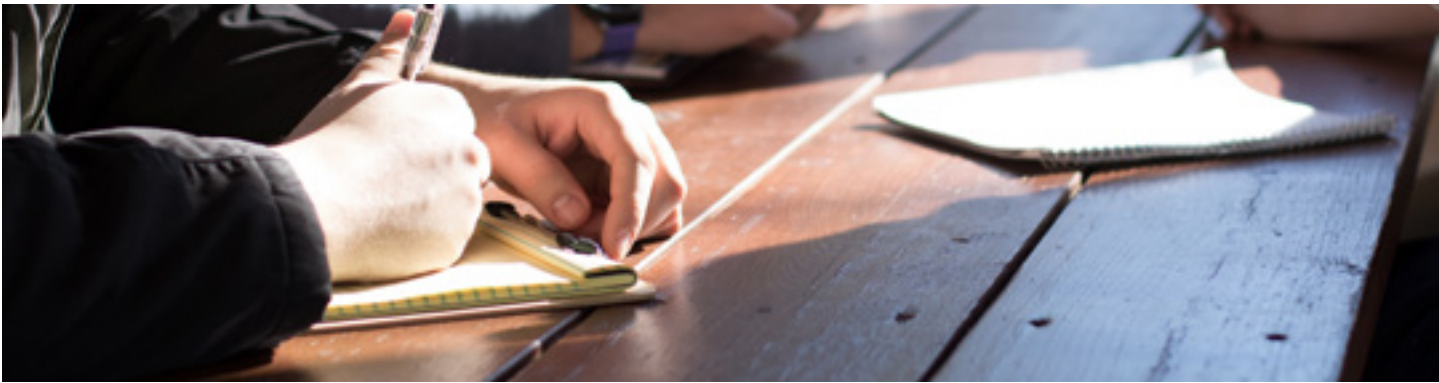
For many parents that may be concerned about the mental wellbeing of their children, the best advice that I can give is keep the channels of communication open and when it comes to problem solving, be a guide to help them make decisions rather than stepping in and solving something a child may well be able to do for themselves. This helps them to build confidence in making choices for themselves, but they know that they have your support when needed. However, setting and maintaining clear boundaries with your children

are also essential for their good mental health and wellbeing.

DO YOU THINK THAT THERE ARE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FAITH SCHOOLS? HOW DOES JFS ENCOURAGE INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING?

I think it is incumbent upon all schools, faith or otherwise, to encourage understanding and respect of people who are different whatever those differences may be. I do think that the perception from the outside might be that faith schools are insular and the students are not worldly, which is certainly not the case at JFS, and I believe we have a duty to help change those perceptions. We encourage interfaith understanding through a variety of programmes, most notably through the teaching of Islam for

RS GCSE and the Brent Holocaust Memorial Day Inter-schools educational day, which is a JFS initiative. We have hosted students from non-Jewish schools for the day as part of their RS GCSE studies on Judaism in partnership with the Board of Deputies. We encourage and are proud of students who have participated in the National Citizen Service programme facilitated by the JLGB which provides a real opportunity for interfaith dialogue.



DURING YOUR TIME WORKING IN ISRAEL, A GROUP OF YOUR STUDENTS WERE TRAGICALLY GUNNED DOWN ON A SCHOOL TRIP, CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THIS? AND HOW DID YOU (AND THE SCHOOL) DEAL WITH THIS TRAGEDY?

I worked at the Amit Feerst (Dror) High School in Bet Shemesh. Seven grade 8 students were murdered by a Jordanian guard at the Island of Peace whilst on their annual tiyul. This was not long after the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. I was not on the tiyul that year as I was about to give birth to my third child and I remember the days in the immediate aftermath vividly. Students and staff received counselling support but also with a focus on moving on with life and how to carry your grief rather than allowing it to completely overwhelm you. For me personally, the arrival of a new-born baby and being surrounded by a loving family provided me with the means to cope. This was a tragedy that not only affected the bereaved families and the school but the whole town of Bet Shemesh which, in 1997, was a much smaller place than it is today. My most abiding memory is that of King Hussein coming to pay shiva visits in

Bet Shemesh. His leadership that day taught the world that nobody is ever too lofty or majestic to acknowledge the pain and suffering of someone else. His humility at the feet of the bereaved families was inspiring and moving. Every year on 4 Adar, I recall the names of my fallen students and talk to my current students about the ultimate commitment staff make for their students.

WHAT ARE THE BEST AND WORST THINGS ABOUT YOUR JOB? WHAT MOTIVATES YOU EACH DAY?

I think the best part of my job are interacting with young people and making a difference to their lives. In my role at JFS, the community spirit of students, staff and parents is really fantastic. It is a real privilege to be introduced as the Head of JFS, knowing that we are making an impact today on the future of the British Jewish community of tomorrow.

There are very few negatives but most probably the long hours and finding time for thinking and planning. My preference is to be out and about around the school but there are some days when that can be more challenging and I find that frustrating.

Coming to school gives me the opportunity to work with some extremely talented people who give so much of their time and energy. Everyone, regardless of their role, makes a difference here to all the students, and I appreciate all of them.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE IN YOUR NEW ROLE AND WHAT ARE YOUR DREAMS FOR JFS?

My main objective is to make a great school even greater. When you hear the name JFS, the automatic association should be that this is a place that provides exceptional education, a strong Jewish identity and outstanding wellbeing and pastoral support.

TELL US SOMETHING THAT MIGHT SURPRISE YOUR PUPILS ABOUT YOU?

When I lived on kibbutz, they wouldn't allow me to do teacher training because they said I would never cope with Israeli students in a classroom. Not only did I go on to teach in one of the toughest schools in Israel, I did so by teaching science and other subjects in fluent Ivrit.



ORGANISATION INSIGHT

CHANA

BY MICAELA BLITZ

MANY COUPLES DREAM OF STARTING A FAMILY TOGETHER BUT FOR SOME, CONCEIVING A CHILD MAY NOT ALWAYS BE AS EASY AS THEY WOULD HOPE. THIS IS WHERE CHANA CAN HELP BY OFFERING EMOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO MAY BE HAVING DIFFICULTIES.

Chana has been helping Jewish couples for 22 years and the charity has centres in Hendon, Borehamwood and Stamford Hill offering a safe, private space for people to seek the help that they need. These centres are often in unassuming buildings with no obvious branding or signage so that no one would even know that they were based there. This helps to retain the privacy of those attending, and ensure client confidentiality which is of paramount importance. As Clinical Lead, Romy Shulman explains, "The Jewish community is very close knit, and some people are often concerned that this might compromise their anonymity, but dignity and integrity are above everything else we do at Chana. We are extremely sensitive in dealing with clients. In order to keep client anonymity, we refer to each case by a reference number only."

The charity runs a helpline which operates during specific times both day and evening, and is manned by trained counsellors who are able to talk through individual situations, and assess the next steps required. Romy then works with the support workers to find the right person to deal with each case. The organisation has both male and female support workers, and can work with individuals or couples or a combination of both as is necessary. As Romy



comments, "Our support workers have a wide range of expertise, and each case is different. We regularly assess the dynamic between clients and support workers to ensure that they are being supported in the best way possible."

For many starting their fertility journey, the information available can be quite overwhelming and part of Dr Veronique Berman's job as Scientific Advisor is to help with this. NHS funding for fertility treatment has been significantly reduced with most boroughs only offering one cycle of treatment. The criteria to receive this treatment is very strict, which means that many couples often have to look at private clinics in order to achieve their dream. Veronique meets regularly with clinicians and visits clinics so is well placed to offer relevant, up to date information on what is on offer in terms of services, facilities and scientific developments. She is also able to give practical advice when it comes to potential costs for treatment. Veronique also works closely with Chana's Rabbinic Liaison to offer information from a religious perspective for any couples that may have questions and concerns. She adds, "Individuals and couples may contact Chana at various different stages in their lives, and we are there to help with whatever the issue may be."

The process of conceiving is obviously a very private matter between a couple, but when there are issues it can often become much more clinical, with many more people becoming involved in the process. For some couples who may have successfully had a child, they can often have

1 IN 6 couples struggle with infertility. Jewish couples are no different. The NHS only investigate miscarriage if you have had **3** consecutive miscarriages. **2ND** infertility occurs when you have had a child and then cannot have another, and occurs in **5%** in all couples. **726** babies born to couples are helped by Chana. Chana has **15** counsellors giving advice confidentially on the Helpline or during counselling sessions. Chana has **28** Specialist Consultants on their Medical Advisory Panel, meeting regularly to ensure clients are following the best course of treatment. An average round of IVF costs **£8,000**.

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issues when trying for another child, and Chana also offer help with secondary infertility cases. The support workers appreciate that these issues can be stressful, and can put pressure on the marital relationship itself, and they help them deal with this.

As well as offering emotional help, the support workers can seek advice on behalf of clients from a medical panel comprised of professionals with expertise across the areas of fertility and reproductive health. Couples may find the medical advice they receive or the options available to them to be overwhelming, so getting a second opinion or further medical insight from the panel can be essential. The medical panel works with Chana in many ways, both in an advisory capacity for clients so that they can get the medical information they need, but also helping to formulate policies. All of the panel give their time and expertise to the charity free of charge, and Veronique comments how grateful they are for their help and support. "It is truly amazing that they all give their time for free for the sake of the charity, and it means that we are able to help so many people in a multi-disciplinary approach they would not get otherwise."

As a charity, Chana is 100% privately funded receiving no money from the government, so are very much reliant on donations. The charity holds regular fundraising events to bring more money to the charity as well as raise awareness. Their annual Teacember event where people hold afternoon tea at their homes for friends and family is a great community event,

and often members of the Chana team attend to explain a bit more about the charity's work. As Veronique points out, "Everything we are able to do as a charity is through the generosity of those in the community that help keep the service going, and we are truly grateful."

With more people marrying later in the life, there is often much more of an urgency for them to start families in comparison with younger couples, and this can cause additional pressure when it comes to conceiving. Over the time that Veronique has worked at the charity, she has seen a significant rise in the amount of older couples seeking help from the service. This has led to many more couples using assisted reproduction and over the past 10 – 15 years there have seen significant developments. The costs for these treatments is something that can often influence how long couples can go on with treatment.



IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation), where an egg and sperm are mixed together and then inserted back into the woman, can cost in the region of £5,000 upwards for one cycle, plus additional costs. PGD (Pre implantation genetic diagnosis) can be over double that amount. This is more for couples who are aware of some sort of genetic disorder that they do not want to pass on or may be the reason that they are struggling to conceive. As Veronique points out, "Every couple has different issues and outcomes. Couples invest a lot of time, savings, emotional and physical energy into trying for a child, and we are there to support them through this journey no matter how it eventually turns out."



The possibility of freezing viable eggs for use at a later date, is something that is becoming more common. This may be as a way to 'future proof' their chances of conceiving when they eventually choose to start a family or due to diagnosis of a disease, such as cancer where the use of aggressive drug treatments or chemotherapy could potentially impair fertility. For some couples, conceiving a child may not be possible even after many different attempts, and so they may have to consider going down the adoption route in order to fulfil their wishes of having a family. Within the support team, there are counsellors who have knowledge of this field and can guide them through this long and difficult process.

Chana also helps couples dealing with the loss of a child. This can be an extremely traumatic and difficult thing for a couple to deal with for both the husband and wife in different ways. As a couple, they can often feel unable to share their grief with others, especially if a miscarriage occurred early on in the pregnancy before they may have even told others they were pregnant. For some women, they can experience multiple miscarriages, but current NHS practice means that a full investigation can only be carried out once a woman has suffered three consecutive miscarriages. Chana recently produced a leaflet to help with the issue of miscarriage to help with this emotional experience. The document, entitled Baby Loss Awareness, has information from various services in the community, and is currently available in maternity facilities at various hospitals in the area, as well as on the Chana website.

Being able to speak to someone who has gone through a similar experience can often be very helpful, and Chana runs a 'buddy system' where individuals or couples can gain first hand advice through talking to others who have been in the same situations.

Chana were lucky enough to receive a Lottery grant, which they used to create online webinars for clients to view at a client's own pace in a confidential and private way. The six sessions cover a wide range of topics from polycystic ovaries to looking at the male factor infertility. This is free to access on

the Chana website, and is a useful and informative resource. Seeking medical advice through a GP can often be the starting point for individuals or couples dealing with fertility issues. Many GPs may not have the time or the wherewithal to be able to offer the right level of advice or emotional support, but through the work that has been done by the charity to develop relationships and supplying knowledge, they are more aware of the work that Chana does and can direct people to their service. Observant couples who may be having fertility issues may approach their Rabbi or Rebbetzen in order to seek advice before they consult medical advice. Chana works with community leaders offering them up-to-date information as well as seminars and training on how to enable members of their community to access Chana services. They also produce a regular newsletter.



Issues with fertility and loss can be difficult for both men and women, but it is often the woman who is seen as needing more support. Veronique is keen to dispel this misconception, and highlights the fact that Chana has male support workers within their team who can offer men the support they need. As she explains, "Fertility issues and loss can be difficult for men to deal with sometimes, and their feelings can often be forgotten or overlooked. It is important that men get the help they need for themselves, but also so that they can support their partner, and be able to deal with things as a couple."

Both Romy and Veronique are very passionate about the work they do, and are dedicated to helping people. The issues of fertility are more common than people may think within the community, and as Romy points out, "Chana helps to normalise the situation so that couples do not feel so isolated and alone." In her role as a psychotherapist, the treatment she usually gives can be a therapeutic approach, but she has found that working at Chana means that she can work with a team to give both emotional, practical and medical support and advice in a more holistic way. As Veronique adds: "The service that Chana offers is really unique. By having it all in one place, it means that couples can easily access the help they need."



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OLAMI ACCELERATOR LAUNCH WEEKEND '19

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Bringing Jews together from all over the world is always a recipe for a fantastic weekend, but nothing could prepare me for intensity of the experience I had in New York at the beginning of February. I was excited to learn that Olami, which fathers a community of organisations around the world, had announced a brand new initiative to engage and train the leaders of the future: The Olami Impact Accelerator. They plan to kick start a process which could change the world for young Jews by shifting the students themselves into the driving seat of the many fantastic programmes already operating in the field of informal Jewish education on campuses and Jewish centres worldwide.

Together with twelve students from our campus programmes, and four young professional leaders, we felt empowered to represent the UK at this global event. When we arrived at the Hilton, East Brunswick, we were slightly overwhelmed by the number of languages we heard and the general excitement in the air, but following an informative orientation by some of the energetic Olami team, we were rearing to go.





The Shabbat ambiance was created by an instrumental performance, which set the stage for candle lighting followed by a riveting presentation on the essence of Shabbat by world-renowned Rabbi Dr Akiva Tatz. The atmosphere at the Friday Night Service was electric and flowed over to a huge banquet where we had the chance to sit with Argentinians, Canadians, and Americans. Philanthropists and community builders, who were invited to see the next generation of leaders, spent their time fielding questions, sharing experiences and advice to the burgeoning leaders. A late night schmooze with the CEO of the Meridian group, a close friend of Donald Trump, and a quick snippet of advice from the managing director of Goldman Sachs are just some of the memorable moments the students walked away with.

Growing up in the UK, I never experienced the full force of an American style buffet dinner. Olami saw to it that even the locals were suitably impressed by the culinary options at this weekend. The ambiance, the atmosphere and the energy only grew as the weekend continued. Shabbat concluded with a Havdallah concert bringing everyone together once again together with a drum café with four hundred drums!

Perhaps the most inspiring facet of the weekend was the impact it had even after we left. Only a few days later, Olami hosted its first leadership training webinar where almost 150 students signed in to watch a live class on “Jewish Leadership in the Torah” with a strong commitment to find ways of implementing the lessons they imbibed. The students walked away with a drive and passion to ensure the future vitality of their own Jewish student bodies on campuses around the world. Ideas and initiatives were organically developed, proposed and in some cases, already implemented. In one weekend of positivity, optimism was restored for the future with Jews who were inspired to be the change they want to see.



CHALLAH BAKE: AISH BRISTOL WITH ILANA EPSTEIN OF TA'AM



SHABBAT DINNER: AISH MANCHESTER



AISH UK DOES SHABBAT UK

Aish UK recently partnered with the Office of the Chief Rabbi and The Jewish News to make two videos in honour of Shabbat UK. In the first video, Aish Essex director, Rabbi Mendy Brukirer, featured as Shabbatman – inconspicuous rabbi by day, and Shabbat superhero by (Friday) night. He visited pupils at Beit Shvidler and Sacks Morasha primary schools in a video that has been watched more than 30,000 times on Facebook. The second video saw Conservative MP for Braintree, James Cleverly, battle Labour MP for Stoke on Trent, Ruth Smeeth, in an epic Challah Bake-Off judged by kosher chef Denise Phillips and hosted at the Tish restaurant in Belsize Park. Shared by major political parties and prominent members of parliament, the video garnered over 60,000 views on Twitter alone.

On the ground, Aish UK held Shabbat UK events up and down the country, hosting and co-hosting events for 1,000 students, young professionals and families. Hundreds of young people attended challah bakes and Havdallah candle makes at Aish houses prior to Shabbat UK.

Aish Bristol hosted 150 students over Shabbat UK at their Friday night dinner, Shabbat lunch and Havdallah party. Aish Leeds joined together with Chabad, Chaplaincy and JSoc for a candle lighting ceremony, a Friday night dinner for 200 people, Shabbat lunch, talks and sessions throughout Shabbat, and a musical Havdallah with a live band. Aish Hampstead hosted 50 for Friday night dinner and 25 for lunch. Aish Essex – under the leadership of Shabbatman – hosted seven guests to stay over and keep Shabbat in its entirety, whilst also hosting 70 for Friday night dinner and 24 for Shabbat lunch. Aish Birmingham hosted over 100 people at their Challah bake and Havdallah candle making. Aish Manchester hosted 40 students for a challah make and 40 students for Friday night dinner.



@JewishNewsUK and @Aishuk challenged @RuthSmeeth and @JamesCleverly to a Challah Bake Off! Watch to see what happened!
#ShabbatUK #youreallwelcome



"OUR STORY" AT AISH MANCHESTER

On Sunday 3rd February, students and their parents were invited to the Aish Centre in Manchester to visit "Our Story", an exhibition detailing the students' visit to Poland in January. The exhibition followed the five day journey and displayed historical content for each place visited as well as contributions from the students themselves.

During the trip, students had each been assigned different locations and were tasked with writing a paragraph on their viewpoint of the place, their impressions, a caption depicting their feelings there and a number or person which powerfully struck them at that place. It gave parents the opportunity to truly follow their children's journey through Poland through their children's eyes.

The exhibition viewing was followed by a refreshments a talk from Holocaust Survivor, Mrs Eva Neumann. A truly remarkable woman, she survived Auschwitz at the age of 15 and shared her story, her powerful message of determination, willpower and happiness. Mrs Neumann, after enduring horrific experiences, now lives in Manchester and has many children and grandchildren. Following her talk, there was not a dry eye in the room.



NATIONAL WEEKEND



Once again Aish's flagship campus programme Genesis, hosted its annual National Weekend, welcoming students from over ten different campuses from around the UK. Featuring international guest Sgt. Steve Gar, an elite member of the rapid response counter-terror unit of the IDF, alongside live music concerts from the renowned Eli Tamir and rising star Akiva Zneimer. Students enjoyed a wide range of extreme activities including tunneling, trapezing, lazer rooms amongst others, whilst engaging with a world-class educational programme highlighting some of the most relevant and challenging topics facing young Jews today. With incredible cuisine and topped off with mind-boggling ventriloquist performance from Britains Got Talent finalist, Steve Hewlett, everyone walked away enthused with energy to take back to their campuses, and be part of building Jewish student communities at home.



AISH UK YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

This term saw the launch of the latest iteration of Aish Young Professional's hugely successful @Wisdom educational programme. Combining cutting-edge, in-depth topics with discussion-based, interactive groups, @Wisdom runs fortnightly in our Hendon centre and regularly sees over 40 YPs debating ideas and material at the core of Torah thought. With five unique tracks on offer, including: contemporary philosophy, history & culture, practical guidelines, controversial philosophies and mysticism & spirituality, there really is something for everyone! Starting with a delicious catered meal, ending with a great dessert and some seriously energised discussion sandwiched in between, @Wisdom is rapidly flourishing into the programme of choice for young professionals seeking to engage with Judaism in an open, honest and intellectually challenging way.





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