

# PERSPECTIVES

the magazine of

**aish** uk

Rosh Hashanah Edition 5779/2018



**CAN WE  
REALLY  
BLAME  
VOGUE?**

**THE LAST  
JEW OF  
ERITREA**

**5-MINUTE  
GUIDE TO THE  
HIGH HOLY  
DAYS**

**AWAKENING  
FROM THE  
SLUMBER**

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# Letter from the Editor



Welcome to the fourth issue of Perspectives, the magazine of Aish UK. We are proud to announce that this magazine will be the first of a new monthly publication, distributed with The Jewish Weekly.

For readers who want to learn more, who are interested in Jewish history, culture or food, or for those who are simply curious, we hope to be entertaining, informative and purposeful. In the age of the all-knowing internet and knowledge constantly at our fingertips, we have selected writers – from within Aish UK as well as fantastic guest contributors – who have strong and meaningful messages to share.

Each month, our education section will include relevant articles on the Jewish calendar, an in-depth analysis of one of the famous stories in the Torah, Jewish views on contemporary issues, and spirituality. Every issue will also include an educational feature dubbed “The Big Question” tackling some of the most challenging problems we face in the 21st century.

Inside this issue you will discover the story of ‘The Last Jew of Eritrea’ by travel blogger Jono David and advice on how to ‘judge less’ by His Honour Judge Martyn Zeidman Q.C. Adam Levick of UK Media Watch will be sharing his passion of dispelling common myths of the Palestinian narrative in the UK media. Mental health blogger Eleanor Segall shares her story of overcoming suicidal thoughts and tips for those who may have loved ones in crisis.

Food expert, Ilana Epstein shares her enthusiasm for Jewish food, customs and heritage. You’ll find a new take on Rosh Hashanah recipes, combining traditional foods with modern flavours and presentation.

With Rosh Hashanah just around the corner, and all the craziness that comes with the whirlwind of customs, festivals and fasts that it brings, we have also included a 5-minute easy-read guide to the High Holy Days. This will walk you through everything from repentance to weird foods, from fasts to swinging chickens over your head, all in a concise and easy to read format.

Of course, it goes without saying, we want to hear from you! If you have any questions, suggestions on how we can improve, or topics you’d like to see covered, please be in touch.

Whatever your interest, we hope there will be something in this magazine for you.

Wishing you all a Shana Tova!

Ari Kayser  
Editor

P.S. – Check out our new logo and brand in the centre pages!

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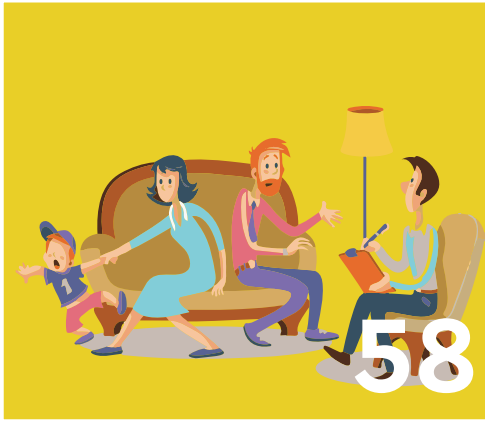
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# The Last Jew of Eritrea

ASMARA, Eritrea — Sami Cohen stands alone in front of the Aron Hakodesh in Eritrea's only synagogue, the Asmara Synagogue, checking and arranging the two well-dressed Torah scrolls. As the last remaining permanent Jewish resident here, everything needed to keep a Jewish community going falls to him. If there is such a thing as a one-person Jewish community, Sami embodies it.

JONO DAVID

*"The last family left about 10 years ago," he laments, leaving him with what is surely a burdensome moniker: The Last Jew of Eritrea.*

*"I really cannot say what this means or feels like," the sprightly 67-year-old tells me across the dining room table of the home in which he was born, family photos adorning the walls and cabinet tops. "It's all in the hands of the Almighty."*

He says that a lot. Perhaps some things are left to fate, but it doesn't have to be this way, I think, and I ask if there are any plans in place for the day he is no longer the last Jew here.

*"I don't want the books or other things removed," he insists. "Eritrea is a changing place. Who knows? Perhaps a market economy will open and Israelis and other Jews will come to do business. They will need a place to pray."*

I am not sure I share Sami's optimism. Eritrea has a political system that does not favor nor encourage much foreign

enterprise or investment. Tourism is virtually non-existent.

Driving around the palm tree-lined streets of Asmara, Sami points out building after remarkable Art Deco building sometimes for its architectural beauty, but other times to tell a story.

*"Oh, we had fun," he says of his youth. "See the top of that old hotel? There was a bar and a nightclub. It seems to still be open," he muses as we drive past.*

*"From the sounds of it, Sami," I reply, "you were quite the party-goer."*

He smiles coyly, then redirects my attention.

*"In this house, I used to spend time with my friends," he points. "In that building on the top floor there was a very nice family," he gestures. "Here's the butcher...There's my father's store..."*

Sami's nostalgic tales flow like water down a dry river bed



JONO DAVID

Jono David is a freelance photojournalist who specializes in the documentation of Jewish life and culture worldwide. He can be contacted via his website, [www.JewishPhotoLibrary.com](http://www.JewishPhotoLibrary.com)



## “he filled my mind with images of a once vibrant and close-knit community.”



Asmara Synagogue. Asmara, Eritrea

coaxing life into what once was. For three days, he filled my mind with images of a once vibrant and close-knit community.

*“We had everything here,” he says. “We had a teacher in the Hebrew school [in the synagogue] who was wonderful. We had a social club. There was nothing we needed.”*

His family house (built 1929) was a focal point of many social events.

*“Anyone visiting was invited for Shabbat meal. It seems there was always someone in the house.”* In the lush garden beneath a canopy of Jacaranda trees in full bloom, he pointed to a vacant spot and lamented, *“That’s where the sukkah used to be.”*

Many times, my eyes were directed by Sami’s index finger to a place that I was supposed to see in my imagination. In a way, I was in an illusory world, but, of course, I was journeying inside Sami’s memories.

Asmara is arguably the most unique city in Africa. It is replete with some of the most remarkable and abundant Art Deco architecture. On every corner, down every block, architectural treats can be found and admired. The

Italians colonised Eritrea in one of the last gasps of the Scramble for Africa. During the 1920s and 1930s, brilliant architects designed and built a veritable Art Deco garden that is unrivaled anywhere else on the continent, and, for the time, it was home to the most advanced architecture of the period. I was pleased to find out that Sami and I share a favorite building, the Fiat Tagliero Building (1938).

When the British arrived in 1944, they demolished many buildings, particularly in the seaside town of Massawa. Thankfully, however, Asmara remained largely untouched.

Sadly, many of the buildings are neglected and are in dire need of restoration, Sami’s home included (though it and the surrounding garden are still divine). But, the poorly condition of many of Asmara’s colonial buildings is far better than what an independent Eritrea originally had in mind. To rid themselves of their colonial past, officials apparently planned to demolish everything and start anew. But authorities were persuaded to appreciate these architectural gems, and the delightfully calm city was spared the wrecking ball.

In my Eritrean visa application, I had to include a statement of purpose for my trip. I seized upon the architectural uniqueness of the capital. I noted, *“I would like to visit Asmara to admire its well-preserved*





*modernist architecture. Asmara's architectural footprint is arguably the most beautiful in all of Africa. I have heard wonderful things about the city, and I would thoroughly enjoy a short visit there."*

The Asmara Synagogue is one of its architectural jewels. It is, in fact, the oldest house of worship of any religion in Asmara (built 1905) and is located in the geographical heart of town. At its peak, it served the religious and social life needs of the community's 500 or so members.

The first Jews to settle in Eritrea were Adenites from Yemen who came in the 19th century to establish trade. Italian and other European Jewish immigrants came in search of economic opportunity

and to escape the rise of Nazism in the 1930s. The Jewish community boomed and then bust relatively quickly as a result of both Israeli independence (1948) and, later, political unrest leading up to the Eritrean War for Independence (1961). By 1975, the community had shrunk to about 150, including the departure of the Chief Rabbi. With independence (1993), all remaining Jews, except for Sami, left, leaving him the "Last Jew of Eritrea."

*"I don't have any feelings about [being the last Jew of Eritrea]," Sami shrugs. "It's up to the Almighty." That's a phrase he used many times during my short visit.*

Sami's grandparents arrived in the early 20th century from Aden, Yemen and initially settled

in the seaside town of Massawa before settling in Asmara. They imported raw clothing fabrics that were fashioned mainly into ladies dresses and other outfits.

*"Our clients were the crème de la crème," he explains proudly. "These were wives of diplomats and wealthy business people. They would come and say, 'I want a dress that only I will have,' so we only ordered materials in 3-meter lengths...Sometimes they would come with their tailor who would make the dress for them."*

The family business later included importing of various goods including stationary and beverages.

When war erupted between Eritrea and Ethiopia in the late 1990s, Sami's wife and children

**"The first Jews to settle in Eritrea were Adenites from Yemen who came in the 19th century to establish trade"**

Asmara Synagogue





Former Jewish shop

left for Italy. Today, Sami divides his time between Rome, Tel Aviv, and Asmara. He seems to return to the place of his birth out of a sense of duty as much for the fact that Asmara is home.

*"I am not Eritrean (he has British citizenship)," he explains. "But like anybody, I feel this is my home. I was born here. I grew up here. I like Eritrea very much."*

Still, some would ask why he remains. Even before I arrived, I wondered about that question too. But it soon became apparent that it is entirely the wrong question. The question is, Why go? If our lives really are a collection of memories, Sami is living what was, what still is, and what he hopes it will be again.

I asked what he would most like the world to know about Jewish Asmara or if he had a particular message to share. He hesitated briefly, raised his shoulders, and said, *"I hope for the day there is again a minyan in the synagogue. That is all I want."*

That is not too much to ask, I thought, but it is everything. ✓

**"I hope for the day there is again a minyan in the synagogue. That is all I want."**

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# abbas and the palestinian narrative



ADAM LEVICK

*Adam Levick covers the British media for CAMERA, the 65,000-member, Boston-based Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America.*

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

An op-ed<sup>1</sup> by PA President Mahmoud Abbas published in the Guardian last year included most of the historical distortions, fallacies and outright lies which inform the 'Palestinian narrative' – claims that are not only at odds with the truth, but also serve to illustrate a broader political malady within Palestinian society.

Here are some of Abbas claims in his op-ed, *Britain must atone for the Balfour declaration – and 100 years of suffering*, Nov. 1.



### ABBAS' CLAIM

*[Balfour] disregard[ed] the political rights of those who already lived there.*

### MISLEADING!

The language used by Abbas ("those who already lived there") buttresses the broader narrative, advanced repeatedly by Palestinian leaders, in their media and education system, which falsely frames

Jews as interlopers with no historical or religious connection<sup>2</sup> to the land.

In fact, Jews "already lived there" when Balfour was issued. Jews are an indigenous people to the land, and small Jewish communities remained even after their exile in 70 CE, during Byzantine, Muslim and Crusader rule. There's been a continuous Jewish presence in the Land of Israel for over 3,000 years.



## ABBAS' CLAIM

*For the Palestinian people – my people – the events [Balfour] triggered have been as devastating as they have been far-reaching.*

## MISLEADING!

Tragic events for Palestinians didn't just happen ("triggered") as a result of Balfour, but were mostly the result of decisions by Palestinian (and Arab) leaders to reject political and territorial compromise and maintain hostility to a permanent Jewish presence in the land.

## ABBAS' CLAIM

*This British policy, to support Jewish immigration into Palestine while negating the Arab-Palestinian right to self-determination, created severe tensions between European Jewish immigrants and the native Palestinian population.*

## MISLEADING!

His mention of British "support" for Jewish immigration omits the subsequent White Paper<sup>3</sup> which severely restricted such immigration, a fateful decision for untold numbers of Jews who were slaughtered in places like Auschwitz, Treblinka and Sobibor because the doors to Palestine were closed.

Further, suggesting that Jewish immigrants "created tensions" is a creative way of obfuscating violence against, and implicitly suggests that the mere arrival of Jews escaping persecution was a provocation, one that would corrupt the land – a narrative, incidentally, that would likely resonate with far-right Europeans in the context of the current immigration crisis.

## ABBAS' CLAIM

*In 1948 Zionist militias forcibly expelled more than 800,000 men, women and children from their homeland, perpetrating horrific massacres and destroying hundreds of villages in the process. I was 13 years old at the time of our expulsion from Safed. The occasion on which Israel celebrates its creation as a state, we Palestinians mark as the darkest day in our history.*

## LIE!

No serious historian alleges that all of the Palestinians (750,000 according to the UN<sup>4</sup>) were expelled. Most fled<sup>5</sup> out of fear or because of instructions from Palestinian Arab leaders in what

was an Arab war of annihilation against the Jewish population. Historian Benny Morris has concluded that there was no Israeli policy of "ethnic cleansing". "At no stage of the 1948 war", he wrote,<sup>6</sup> "was there a decision by the leadership of the Yishuv or the state to "expel the Arabs".

Regarding his second assertion, that his family was expelled from Safed, Abbas has previously admitted (in Arabic) that his family left Safed out of a general (unfounded) fear that Jews would take revenge for the Arab massacre of Jews in 1929. In other words, Palestinians in Safed, such as his family, fled,<sup>7</sup> and weren't "expelled".



**ABBAS' CLAIM**

*Today, Palestinians number more than 12 million, and are scattered throughout the world. Some were forced out of their homeland in 1948, with more than 6 million still living in exile to this day.*

**MISLEADING!**

The original number of Palestinians who fled the war in 1948 is less than 800,000. It is estimated<sup>8</sup> that only tens of thousands of

the original population are still alive. Though millions of descendants of the original refugees receive 'refugee' benefits from UNRWA, they are not in fact refugees.<sup>9</sup> Abbas also ignores Jewish refugees from Arab countries, hundreds of thousands of Jews stripped of their citizenship and expelled, despite Balfour's demand that nothing shall be done to abrogate the "rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

**ABBAS' CLAIM**

*Those who managed to remain in their homes number roughly 1.75 million, and live within a system of institutionalised discrimination in what is now the state of Israel.*

**MISLEADING!**

Tellingly, Abbas's sole source is an article by the Guardian's former Jerusalem correspondent, Chris McGreal,

a reporter whose animus against Israel (and carelessness with the facts) has been demonstrated<sup>10</sup> repeatedly. Further, many pro-Palestinian activists and commentators have cited, as 'proof' of anti-Arab racist laws in Israel, a completely<sup>11</sup> discredited<sup>12</sup> report<sup>13</sup> by the radical NGO, Adalah. Moreover, it's undeniable that Arab citizens of Israel have far more political, social and economic rights in the Jewish state than Palestinians under Abbas rule.





## ABBAS' CLAIM

*Approximately 2.9 million live in the West Bank under a draconian military occupation-turned-colonisation, with 300,000 of that number being the native inhabitants of Jerusalem, who have so far resisted policies to force them out of their city.*

## MISLEADING!

Over 95% of the Palestinian population in the West Bank live under Palestinian Authority control and can't reasonably be characterised as living under military occupation. His suggestion that Israel is engaged in a policy of ethnic cleansing is absurd. In fact, the Palestinian population in Jerusalem (both in gross numbers and as a percentage of the overall population) has increased significantly<sup>14</sup> since 1967.

## ABBAS' CLAIM

*Two million live in the Gaza Strip, an open prison subjected to regular destruction through the full force of Israel's military apparatus.*

## MISLEADING!

The 'open air prison' myth is contradicted by the fact that (according to COGAT), well over 100,000 Palestinians<sup>15</sup> a year are permitted to exit Gaza into Israel for various humanitarian needs. Further, Abbas of course ignores the role of Hamas, a group that's fired thousands upon thousands of rockets into Israeli territory, is committed to Israel's destruction and designated as a terror organisation by the UK, US and EU, in necessitating Israel's security measures.

## ABBAS' CLAIM

*Over the years we have adapted to the realities around us – the chain of events triggered in 1917 – and made deeply painful compromises for the sake of peace, beginning with the decision to accept a state on only 22% of our historical homeland while recognising the state of Israel, without any reciprocation thus far.*

## LIE!

First, there was never, at any point in history, a sovereign Palestinian state, and in fact Palestinian national identity (as a unique nationalist movement separate from Arab or tribal identities) is only a 20th century phenomenon. The implicit suggestion, that a Palestinian state on the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza is only 22% of 'their historical homeland' suggests that the entire land, from the river to the sea, is, by matter of rights, Palestinian. The truth is that Israel has conceded most of their "historic land" as promised to them by the 1922 Mandate for Palestine<sup>16</sup> – arguably the earliest modern legal codification of an area known as "Palestine".

In fact, Palestinian political control of the land since 1946 (or since the Balfour Declaration in 1917 for that matter) was zero, but now (because of Israeli concessions and territorial withdrawal) encompasses all of Gaza and major population centres in the West Bank.

Palestinians didn't 'lose' 78% of their land for the simple reason that you can't 'lose' land you never had control of in the first place.



Abbas also suggests that Israel hasn't offered major concessions. Israel offered the Palestinians a contiguous state on three occasions, in 2000, 2001 and 2008. Each offer was rejected<sup>17</sup> by Palestinian leaders.

However, beyond the specific lies and distortions lay a broader one: that Palestinians are victims who possess no moral agency and that Palestinian leadership shares no responsibility for their people's suffering. It's not merely unfair to assign exclusive blame to Israel for every conceivable Palestinian failure, but also suggests a fundamental flaw in the Palestinian national movement.

Middle East historian Bernard Lewis has argued that there are two different ways in which individuals, groups and nations can choose to respond to adversity. The first is to ask "Who did this to us?" The second is, "What did we do wrong?" The first one, Lewis maintained, leads to self-pity and avoidance of personal responsibility, whilst the other leads to self-help and moral agency. One usually leads to failure and the other to success.

Abbas's op-ed – which mirrors the narrative of the conflict amplified continually in pro-Palestinian British media outlets – is a perfect illustration of the movement's stubborn refusal to acknowledge and learn from past mistakes and come to terms with the true 'obstacles to peace': endemic<sup>18</sup> antisemitism, the glorification of violence and the failure to promote tolerance, pluralism and other liberal democratic values.

Neither the Jews nor the Balfour Declaration are the cause of their suffering.

The system is not 'rigged' against them.

The choice of whether to resist the vices of violence, hatred, scapegoating and self-pity, and embark on a path of political, cultural and moral reform is theirs and theirs alone. 🌐

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/01/arthur-balfour-declaration-100-years-of-suffering-britain-palestine-israel>
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# judge less

It is the season of introspection. Other cultures celebrate the New Year in a very different way. In our tradition, it is a time of reflection. The very word for year ('shanah') is related to the Hebrew word for change. But what should be our primary New Year's Resolution?



His Honour Judge Martyn Zeidman Q.C. is the Resident Judge at Snaresbrook Crown Court and sits as an additional judge in the Court of Appeal Criminal Division.

A large, artistic background image. It features a judge's hands in white gloves holding a gavel. The gavel is positioned over a cityscape of London, with Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament visible. The image has a warm, orange-toned overlay.

HIS HONOUR JUDGE MARTYN ZEIDMAN Q.C



I would like to make the case for passing fewer judgments. We like to imagine that most judging is done in court but the reality is very different. Every day we draw all sorts of negative conclusions, often on the basis of the flimsiest evidence. In court there are rules to be followed: legal principles to minimise the risk of unfairness. We are alive to the dangers of hearsay and careful to consider whether evidence of previous misconduct should be taken into account. The witnesses are probed to test the truth and accuracy of what they are saying. The accused is given a chance to give his own account. But judgments, out of court, fall into a totally different category.

Imagine the question at a quiz supper: 'In what country are people judged in secret, where they don't even know the nature of the charge they face or the identity of the accuser? They cannot be legally represented and have no opportunity of entering any defence. Before sentence is passed, their mitigation will not be heard and they have no right to appeal?' What Stalinist, totalitarian regime could we be describing? The horror is that this can happen in our own home, our own community and even on the most holy of days.

The late Dayan Lopian, of Edgware Yeshurun, used to remind me that we are judged according to the way that we judge others. It is a sobering and frightening thought. Judging others is a lot easier than judging ourselves. We also tend to apply a different yardstick. Our own indiscretions seem so small; his wrong-doing is huge. I am meticulous; he is pedantic. He is stubborn; I am principled. We have the power to justify our own actions. It is put pithily in the book of Proverbs (21:2): 'All the ways of a person are right in one's own eyes'.

With all his experience of religious and medical life, Rabbi Dr Abraham Twerski observes that, 'We are often victims of self-deception. When we have a desire to do something, the defence mechanism in our subconscious minds can develop ingenious reasons why what we wish to do is right and proper'. It means that even if we have made a rash judgment and spoken badly of someone, we will consciously, or sub-consciously persuade ourselves that we have done a great deed – people just had to be told!

It is often said that 'seeing is believing' but modern psychology often emphasises that 'believing





is seeing'. We see what we want to see. We can be sure that if we want to find something bad about someone, then we will find the most compelling evidence to support our desired conclusion.

As we approach our own Day of Judgment how can we resolve to change? The trouble is that gossip is contagious and often addictive. The juicier the news, the better the reception. To change the habit of a life-time is not easy. But could it be that recognising the problem is a step in the right direction?

In court, a defendant who pleads guilty gets a third off his sentence. Why the discount? Either he deserves to go to prison or not. The credit is given to reflect a number of factors. First, the victim will not need to give evidence and is thereby saved from the horror of reliving the events in the witness box. Secondly, the guilty plea protects our scarce resources: instead of taking a few days, the hearing lasts about an hour. Finally, the plea of guilty can be a recognition that a wrong has been done. It is the first step towards repentance.

Perhaps, the difficulty for most of us is not choosing the resolution but, rather, keeping to

it. How many of us join a gym with great resolve, but lose consistency soon after? But even failure has to be seen in context: it does not mean that the original resolution was useless or insincere.

One September I had a defendant who often got easily irritated. On the day in question he went to a pub with his girlfriend and someone (unwisely) made a criticism of her and he took great offence. An argument ensued during which the defendant (in the style of an old Western) caused substantial damage by throwing tables and stools. He just lost it! By the time he entered his plea of guilty he had been in custody for some time and I wanted to find a more inventive way of dealing with him. Every indication was that he did regret what he had done. I gave him what is described as a 'deferred sentence'. He had to come back to court in four weeks' time and was required to do three things. Firstly: write a letter of apology to the pub licensee. Secondly: repair the stools and tables that he had damaged (he was a carpenter). Thirdly: attend an anger management course. It seemed a much more useful solution than just sending him back to prison. He was thrilled and full of enthusiasm for demonstrating his resolve to better himself.


After the month – and only days before Rosh Hashanah – he returned to court, but he had done almost nothing. He explained that he did not write the letter of apology because he only had a pencil and could not find a pen. He could not repair the broken furniture as he could not find his tools. He did attend the first meeting with the anger management counsellor – but he had an argument with the receptionist, got annoyed, lost his temper and left. It was hopeless – and he was back in prison. He had thrown away the great chance that he had been given.

We are not criminals but these are qualities of human nature. How many times do we decide to do something and then never get around to it?

We are piloting a new scheme at Snaresbrook Crown Court where a defendant can be ordered to wear a GPS tag disclosing his whereabouts at all times. In July I tried it myself, just to see what it felt like – it was absolutely fine. One experienced (but not very successful) getaway driver on his recent release from prison, (he has been there many times before) has enquired whether he could be fitted with one of these devices. He does not want to commit more crimes but (like us) he fears that he will fail in his resolve. He has suggested that if he is tempted to commit another offence (and he often has been), his partners in crime may be less inclined to use his services, once they learn that his every move will be monitored.

We all need incentives. We are not going to rob banks but the temptation to be unduly harsh can be very real. Imagine if everything we said was being digitally recorded and then played back. Would it entice us to be less judgmental? Should we try (even if we don't always succeed) to make fewer judgments and to judge more fairly? Let us hope that we receive a life sentence of Good Health, Happiness and a Sweet New Year.

*Visitors to Snaresbrook Crown Court are enthusiastically encouraged. If you are interested in a visit, please contact my wife on [verity.zeidman@gmail.com](mailto:verity.zeidman@gmail.com)*



“ All the ways of a person are right in one's own eyes. ”









Tzvi has worked in Jewish informal education for the past 30 years including as Mazkir (National Director) of Bnei Akiva UK, Director of Education for United Israel Appeal of Canada and Head of Israeli Ministry of Tourism Tour Guide Course. Tzvi has been guiding and educating for groups around the world since 1992. Tzvi founded JRoots in 2005 together with Rabbi Naftali Schiff and has led thousands of people on meaningful and inspiring Jewish journeys. Tzvi is the co-author of 'Triumph and Tragedy' and lives in Ramat Bet Shemesh with his wife and three daughters.

**TZVI SPERBER**





Guiding many groups in Jerusalem and hearing the shofar being blown at the Kotel, I can't help but remember the years when this was not possible.

In the late 1920s, the Arabs began to protest that sounding the shofar at the Wailing Wall was an affront to Islam. The British Government making every effort to appease the Arabs, acquiesced and banned shofar-blowing from the Kotel area. They claimed that the Arab riots that broke out in 1929 leaving 135 Jews dead, were triggered

# “How Far Would You Go to Blow the Shofar?”

by the blowing of the shofar.

With the ban in effect, blowing the customary 100 notes on Rosh Hashanah would have been impossible. The Jewish Yeshuv (the governing body of the Jewish people at the time), took it upon themselves to blow the shofar at the end of the Neila service on Yom Kippur every year from 1930-1947.

Everyone knew the plan, including a five-year-old girl who smuggled a shofar to the Wall. When the fast ended, there was mayhem to stop the



British policemen from catching the young boys who were risking a prison sentence as they blew the shofar. A number of them were caught, the youngest of them just 13 years old, and arrested for illegally blowing the shofar at the Kotel.

In 1967, when the Jewish people were reunited with Jerusalem and the Kotel, the shofar was once again blown by Rabbi Shlomo Goren, Rabbi of the IDF, and by many others on the following days. Avraham Elkayam, still in uniform from the Six Day War, arrived at the Kotel and saw someone blowing the shofar. He asked the man if he could also blow it. The man turned to him and said "Why do you want to blow the shofar?" Elkayam answered, "I was the last person to blow the shofar at the Kotel at the conclusion of Yom Kippur in 1947, I was 13 at the time." The man responded, "I am Moshe Segal. I was the first to be arrested in 1930 after blowing the shofar."

Guiding in Kovno we jump back 70 years and recount the questions being asked to Rabbi Oshry, (prominent halachic authority) by people throughout the Kovno ghetto and the Kashederer Lager (concentration camp), about the obligation of blowing the shofar. Even after the Nazis had banned public prayer and displaying of Jewish rituals, Jews would never give up on their beloved shofar, even if it meant risking their lives.

But as we stand with countless groups in Auschwitz as they journey through Poland, we are reminded of possibly the most famous Rosh Hashanah incident of the Shoah which happened to Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Meisels of Weitzen, Hungary.

"I had managed to bring a shofar into the camp and on Rosh Hashanah I went from block to block with the shofar in order to blow, even though this was a great danger," he writes. "Baruch Hashem, I managed to blow the hundred blasts about twenty times and this was a great relief to people, to fulfil the mitzvah of shofar blowing even in Auschwitz."

In addition, Rabbi Meisels endangered his life when some youngsters begged him to enter their block and enable them to hear the shofar for the last time:

"The youths about to be burnt, cried out bitterly that I should come in to blow the hundred blasts



before them in order to fulfil the mitzvah in their last moments. I was uncertain what to do in this life-threatening situation. It was close to evening when the Nazis might come to take them; if they arrived suddenly when I was among them there is no doubt that I would be taken as well. In addition to these doubts, my son, Zalman, standing at my side begged me, 'Father, Father, do not do this for Hashem's sake so that I do not remain orphaned!'

“ Nonetheless, the youths' cries gave my soul no rest. I decided that no matter what,

## I am Moshe Segal. I was the first to be arrested in 1930 after blowing the shofar

I would not refuse their request...”

The magnificent Alhambra fortress in Granada sets the scene for us to remember what took place in 1492, when Ferdinand and Isabella, King and Queen of Spain, expelled the Jews of Spain, marking the end of the Golden Era of Spanish Jewry. Hundreds of thousands died trying to escape. Many relocated to Turkey. Tens of Thousands became Conversos, pretending to be Christian in public while keeping Jewish traditions in private, usually in the cellars.

But in 1497, one of these Conversos was Don Fernando de Aguilar, conductor of the Royal Orchestra in Barcelona. He longed to hear the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, but to do so would be extremely dangerous, worthy of death. He devised a plan and announced a special concert on Rosh Hashanah itself, featuring various world melodies. In the midst of Church officials and royalty attending the concert, the Shofar was blown as part of the concert to the secret joy of the conductor and fellow Conversos in the audience.

Although there is no historical evidence of this particular incident taking place, we know now how far people will go to make sure they blow the shofar to wake us up out of our slumber.

The Chief Rabbi of Israel, visited Spain in 2010 commemorating the 800th anniversary of the Rambam, and told this particular story to King Juan Carlos of Spain after he presented him with a long, curved shofar. The King mistakenly thought the shofar was an accessory used for the beginning of festivities for the Spanish sport of Torero that entails Spaniards chasing raging bulls through the streets. Years of inquisition had wiped out the memory of the Jew.

May we continue to appreciate how fortunate we are to be free to hear the shofar each year. ✡



# Origins of the Jewish Calendar

RABBI ELI BIRNBAUM



RABBI ELI BIRNBAUM

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

**W**hat was the first ever commandment given to the Jewish people when they left Egypt?

Granted, that isn't the sort of question that typically appears in a pub-quiz but the answer is so surprising it is worthwhile knowing. Most people hear that question and immediately assume something along the lines of the Ten Commandments. Something dramatic, fundamental. Maybe the laws of circumcision or kosher. Nowhere near.

We were told to establish a calendar.

It's a tad anti-climactic, but often we stop for a second and wonder: Why do we stubbornly cling to a lunar calendar in a solar-powered world? Where did the calendar come from and how did it develop? And finally why, if the calendar is now fixed and we are aware of the dangers of a high-cholesterol diet, do we still keep two festive days of Yom Tov?

## Fly Me to the Moon

There is an intriguing balance to the calendar in that, in stereotypically Jewish fashion, it takes a look at the other major monotheistic religions and successfully haggles a compromise. Not quite Christianity's solar, not quite Islam's lunar, Judaism's approach to chronology strikes a metaphor-rich balance between the two.

Just as the moon waxes and wanes, the story of the Jewish People is one of ecstatic highs and catastrophic lows. The sanctification of the new month at the appearance of the new moon is our way of reaffirming our faith that no matter how dark and desperate a situation may seem, hope is constantly rekindling. This metaphor is equally applicable on an individual level. So often, the glorious peak of a celebration is built through all the trials and tribulations we had to overcome to get there.





But the calendar isn't entirely lunar. Non-coincidentally, the festival created at the same time as the commandment to establish the calendar – Passover – carries a clear instruction to be celebrated in the spring. To ensure this, we add a 13<sup>th</sup> month to the year seven times in every 19-year cycle compensating for the fact that the lunar year is roughly 11 days shorter than the solar year. Here too, the metaphor is eye-opening:

The constant waxing and waning, death and rebirth, joy and sorrow embodied by the lunar calendar is only healthy and sustainable if the bigger picture remains unchanged, unyielding and consistent. That bigger picture is our relationship with God – a relationship forged through the Exodus and sanctified through the festivals.

### Algorithms BG (Before Google)

The formula for sanctifying the new moon is, at first glance, pretty simple. Two witnesses who had glimpsed the thin crescent would hurry to the Sanhedrin (The Supreme Court) in Jerusalem, and describe what they had seen in the night sky. Once satisfied that their testimony was corroborated, the judges would declare 'Sanctified!' and immediately light the beacons on the Judean hills. Like Gondor summoning help from Rohan, these beacons criss-crossed the land of Israel and extended well into Babylon until within a matter of hours practically the entire Jewish world knew: today is Rosh Chodesh.

Communication was a lot more fun before WhatsApp. But it was also more complicated...

Following the centuries-long political struggle between the Pharisees (advocates of traditional, Mishnaic Judaism) and the Sadducees (a fringe group that rejected the veracity of the Oral Law), this method was abandoned after Sadducee rebels began

lighting hilltop bonfires on the wrong dates to confuse people and throw the calendar into disarray.

Instead, the Sanhedrin had to despatch trusted riders to inform communities in person that the new month had been sanctified. We don't need Einstein to tell us that horses travel slower than the speed of light, and as the Diaspora expanded further afield, it took a number of weeks to spread the word throughout the Jewish world. Those communities knew roughly when the new moon was due to appear over Jerusalem – either 30 or 31 days since its last appearance – but needed more precise information in order to calibrate the various festivals. Should they count 30 + 15 days to calculate Passover, or 31 + 15? If the community lived more than two weeks' ride from Jerusalem, or if the roads there were too dangerous to travel, they were consequently left with no recourse but to observe the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of Nissan as Passover, complete with two Seder nights and twice as much cleaning.

### Food Glorious Food

This development explains the origins of a two-day Yom Tov observed by Diaspora Jews. However, the story of the Jewish calendar doesn't end here. In the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, Hillel the Younger realised that a combination of persecution at the hands of the Romans, abolition of the Sanhedrin and falling standards of religiosity meant that the formal publication of a set calendar was imperative. Grandson of Rabbi Judah the Prince (editor and redactor of the Mishna), Hillel had communal leadership skills in his DNA, and set about calculating the complex algorithm at the core of the calendar. We owe our current 19-year cycles, replete with festivals, leap years and sabbatical

years to his life's achievement.

One of the most commonly asked questions concerning the calendar is: Now that we have a fixed system, and know beyond a doubt when the festivals will fall, why do we still insist on observing two days of Yom Tov? Is it born of a morbid obsession with overeating? A stubborn determination to cling obstinately to 'tradition'? Or is there something more profound at work?


The answer is as visionary as it is empowering, and draws its concept from the fact that God placed us in charge of the Jewish calendar in the first place:

We believe that our actions carry tremendous weight, affecting the world metaphysically as well as physically. When the Jewish

## Communication was a lot more fun before WhatsApp

people collectively decided to don a head covering to remind us of God's presence above, that custom gradually became sacred. Idea becomes habit and habit becomes holy.

By our physical actions, we add layer upon layer onto the spiritual edifice of reality. Thus, generations of Jews observing the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nissan as second-day Passover instilled within that day a level of sanctity and holiness that lingers through time and space. To abandon that day means far more than turning an apathetic eye to tradition. It is a dangerous declaration that our actions don't really matter, that the choices we make are inconsequential and meaningless, and that – most crucially – we are no longer partners with God in shaping the soul of creation.

The calendar is our story. Let's write it in dazzling technicolour. 



# Awakening from the Slumber

REBBETZIN SHIFFY SILVERSTONE



REBBETZIN SHIFFY  
SILVERSTONE

Shiffy Silverstone, originally from Jerusalem, has been a dynamic educator for Aish Manchester for 15 years. She has recently achieved success with her online weekly video blogs "Shiffy Shares" available to view on the Aish UK Facebook page. Shiffy lives in Manchester with her husband and children.

**A**s I think back through my life I remember all of the different feelings that I had when hearing the shofar at different ages.

From a young age, I learned about the shofar and would get so excited to hear it. I remember always trying to see if I could catch a glimpse of the shofar-blower's face or see the end of the shofar. We used to time how long the last blow was. The quality of the shofar blowing was always the topic of conversation at Rosh Hashanah lunch.

Like all things, as we get older, our understanding in all areas of life should change and become deeper and more profound. The shofar blowing as a concept is very deep and full of insight. I would like to try to make it relevant as well.





# As we get older, our understanding in all areas of life should change and become deeper

The commandment to blow the shofar is actually a “chok” – a commandment from the Almighty to fulfil, whether or not we understand it. On the most basic level, when we hear the shofar we should understand that we are fulfilling a positive commandment from the Torah. Like in all spiritual matters, there are multiple levels of understanding attached to the blowing of the shofar and the deeper we understand it, the more we will grow from the experience of hearing the shofar.

Maimonides – one of the most prolific Jewish thinkers, writers and philosophers – says that the shofar blast is made to create an awakening within us. An alarm clock urging us to wake up from our slumber. When hearing the shofar we are hit with the realisation that sleepwalking through life will not suffice. But how do we facilitate this change?

The great Jewish Iraqi sage, known as the Ben Ish Chai, explains the concept by way of a parable:

There was a master who had a servant. One day the master realised that the loft in his house was very dangerous to enter and he was worried that people will go without realising how dangerous it was. He instructed his servant to remove the ladder’s steps that gave access to the loft. The servant climbed to the second step of the ladder and removed the first step,

then he climbed to the third step and removed the second step, and so on until he reached the loft. At the top he realised that he was stuck in the loft with no way to get down. He called urgently to his master for help, and upon realising what the servant had done, he said “When you dismantled the ladder you should have started at the top and worked your way down”.

Sometime later the master saw that the basement was also dangerous. He called the servant and instructed him to dismantle the ladder that gave access to the basement. Remembering his previous experience, the servant made sure to dismantle the ladder from the top step down to the bottom one. It was only once he reached the bottom that he realised that he was stuck in the basement with no way out. He called again to his master, who this time said, “When you dismantle a ladder to a basement, you start at the bottom and work your way to the top”.

In hindsight it’s comical and we know that he is doing it wrong – when we’re in it, we don’t necessarily see it. But in truth, how often do we do the same? How often do we spend a disproportionate amount of time on the less important aspects of our lives

and insufficient time on the truly meaningful ones?

When it comes to material matters, we would be better served by considering ourselves at the top looking down and realising that we have everything that we need. When it comes to spiritual matters, we should always consider ourselves at the bottom looking up, constantly striving to grow and achieve more, never being satisfied with our lot.

Instead, we spend our lives craving more material wealth whilst settling for spiritual mediocrity. Both the physical and spiritual play an important role in life and the shofar represents finding balance with these seemingly opposing forces.

The shape of the shofar is narrow at one end and wide at the other. The narrowness of the mouthpiece represents the hardships of the physical aspect of life, whereas the wide end, which emits the sound, represents the opening of hope and life’s spiritual meaning.

Our purpose in this physical world is not to shun its material elements but to channel them to achieve spiritual greatness, and the purpose of the shofar is to jolt us back to this reality. 🌙

**RABBI ARI KAYSER**

Born and raised in London, Ari Kayser completed a BSc in Economics at the University College London before making his way to learn in yeshiva in Israel. Along the way he spent a lot of time backpacking, visiting over thirty countries, writing a lot of poetry, and attaining certification as a professional cocktail bartender. In 2008, Ari founded a non-profit startup dedicated to publicising Jewish values through creative media. In 2012, Ari received Rabbinic Ordination and became Founding Director of Outreach at Lev Modiin, an organisation dedicated to creating learning and growth opportunities for the Anglo community in Israel. Currently, Ari manages the Schools Department of Aish UK in London as well as creating captivating videos for Aish's Social Media operations.

# Playing God and the Art of Forgiveness

**RABBI ARI KAYSER**





**K**ol Nidrei, the haunting and moving melodious introduction to Yom Kippur, is a bizarre prayer urging us to annul our vows and seems an incongruous choice to begin proceedings with. It also seems entirely unconnected to the theme of the day – forgiveness. Why do we begin the holiest day of the year with the prayer of Kol Nidrei?

Making a vow is no simple matter. It is like “Playing God”. How so? If someone were to say, “Apples are forbidden to me in the same manner that other objects are forbidden” – the Torah law states that apples indeed become as forbidden to her as pork. In other words, a vow enables us to “Play God”, to possess the power to alter reality itself and, in effect, create another prohibition.

We all know the power of words, how they can make or break a person. The Jewish masters called humankind “the speaker”; and identified speech as its uniquely human trait. We begin Yom Kippur, the most significant day of the year, by declaring that our words are sacred. We cannot even begin to talk to God about repentance, atonement or forgiveness, before establishing that our word is one that can be trusted.

On the holiest day of the year we ask for forgiveness, but why is forgiveness a holy endeavour?

There is a little-known poetic prayer recited every night before going to sleep. The prayer is a statement of wholehearted forgiveness to anyone who has wronged us during the day (see full text below). Forgiveness is not easy. It is an act of letting go, a practice in humility, and a meditation of trust in the fact that all will be ok even if

we choose to let it go. Forgiveness is an act of courage. It is a mind-set of freedom. Freeing ourselves from the chains of being affected by the thoughts or actions of others. It is a declaration that there is meaning to what transpires, even if the outcome was not as we had hoped for. Forgiveness is holy because it makes me the master of my own inner world.

**Forgiveness is not easy.  
It is an act of letting go, a  
practice in humility, and a  
meditation of trust in the  
fact that all will be ok even  
if we choose to let it go.**

Imagine being able to hit the reset button on all of the day’s frustrations, disappointments, and let-downs. Imagine opening up our hearts to acceptance and love and compassion for others, instead of resentment, hate and despair. Contemplating forgiveness each night, after briefly reviewing the day’s significant moments, can truly change the way we feel about people, and the way we allow people to affect us.

Mahatma Gandhi said that “Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.” Martin Luther King Jr. proclaimed, “Let no man pull you low enough to hate him.” Leo Tolstoy declared, “Let us forgive each other – only then will we live in peace.”

We take the loftiest moments of the year to first establish that our words can be trusted, then we embrace the fact that we didn’t always get it right, and declare that although we may not have all the answers we are determined to own our actions, let go of resentment, and recreate ourselves anew. 🌙

Master of the Universe, I hereby forgive anyone who angered or antagonized me, or who sinned against me. Whether against my body, whether against my property, whether against my honour, or whether against anything that is mine. Whether they did so accidentally, wilfully, carelessly, or intentionally. Whether through speech, whether through action, whether in deliberation, or whether with fleeting thought. I forgive every person, and may they not be punished on account of me.

# Recreating Ourselves

REBBETZIN ADINA STROM



REBBETZIN ADINA STROM

Born and raised in London, Adina has just returned from living in Jerusalem for the last five years, with her husband, Shauly, and three children. Adina brings much experience after holding various educational and mentoring roles in a range of seminaries and programs in Israel. She holds a teaching diploma and is pursuing a degree in business management and economics. Adina is a keen basketball player and in her spare time a budding florist. She is part of the Aish Manchester team, and enjoys her passion for getting to know people and warmly hosting in her home.

## What is important to me? What are my values? What do I represent?

“Take your pencils and scribble hard on the paper,” said the primary school teacher. “Now I want you to try to erase what you have drawn.” I may not have realised it at the time, but this was a profound exercise. While the pencil marks were erased, did the paper ever look the same?

I pondered this question recently when reflecting whether our actions leave a permanent imprint on our identity. We are told that God forgives, but does that mean our character has a clean slate or are we still tainted by our misdeeds?

The Mishna (Yoma), concerning Yom Kippur, describes



# We are told that God forgives, but does that mean our character has a clean slate or are we still tainted by our misdeeds?

God as the mikveh (ritual bath) of the Jewish people – purifying and cleansing. The word mikveh, sharing an etymological root with the word “hope”, evokes within us a sense that change is always possible and hope is never lost.

Maimonides explains how a mikveh is not merely a bath to rinse off one’s dirt, but rather an opportunity to purify ourselves from negative thoughts and bad habits. In the same way that one who requires immersion in a mikveh comes out pure, when one enters Yom Kippur with an intention to renew themselves, they will emerge from the experience totally changed (see Maimonides, The Laws of Mikvaot 11:12).

What is this comparison of the mikveh and repentance (teshuvah in Hebrew)? And how does Yom

Kippur facilitate this process?


Teshuvah is derived from the word “shuv”, to return. The process of teshuvah, of redefining ourselves and rectifying what we have done, is a process of return to the true self.

How does this actually work? A mikveh is filled with water. Given that humans cannot live in water, upon submerging in the mikveh, one enters into a state of non-existence. The moment of resurfacing is then considered a moment of rebirth, of recreation.

It is for that reason that we find so many moments of creation are born out of water. The world was covered in water before land emerged. When God was unhappy with the world, it was recreated through a flood. When the Jewish

people were born, it occurred by them entering a body of water (the splitting of the sea), and of course every child that is born exists first surrounded by water.

Water is substance without form. When we seek to recreate ourselves, when we attempt to redefine our values, we first go back to basics, we break ourselves down to our original elements and ask ourselves the questions: what is important to me? What are my values? What do I represent?

We enter the water to return to our elemental self, the self before birth, to recreate ourselves anew. That is what the mikveh seeks to replicate, the desire to submerge and re-emerge as a new being. That is the mikveh of Yom Kippur. 

# 5-minute *guide to the* HIGH HOLY DAYS



## *part 1:* Elul and the Ten Days of Repentance

**Elul** – the month of introspection, preparing ourselves for judgement, analysing our deeds and where we are going. We blow the Shofar each morning to awaken our souls from their slumber.

**Selichot** – the poetic communal prayers asking for forgiveness, making use of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy which God revealed to Moses as a key to repentance.

**Teshuvah** – the process of return to one's true elevated self, through repentance. The three parts are:

1. regret for what we have done.
2. confession and articulation of our mistake.
3. resolution and commitment not to repeat in the future.

**Hatarat Nedarim** – the annulment of vows performed in front of three people the day before Rosh Hashana. The idea is that we relinquish ourselves from any promises we have made throughout the year before the Day of Judgement.

**Rosh Hashana** – The Day of Judgement when all of humankind is judged for the year to come based on their thoughts, feelings and actions of the past year; the day when the Books of Life and Death are open. It's a day of celebration of God as King and is the day we blow the Shofar and eat apple and honey.

**Shofar** – The ram's horn is blown 100 times over the day of Rosh Hashanah. There are three types of sounds: Tekiyah (one long unbroken sound), Shevarim (three medium length sounds), and Teruah (many short quick sounds). The sound of the Shofar represents the deep voice of our soul crying out to be the person we want to be.

**Simanim** – typically known as “signs” or “omens”, the Simanim are a series of foods eaten before the Rosh Hashana evening meal. We take the name of the foods and, through a play on words, make a positive statement that will be a good sign for things to come. It encourages a mindful start to the year where we contemplate what goes into our body, mind and soul.

**Tashlich** – a ritual of “throwing away our sins” performed by going to a natural body of water and reciting passages about our desire to repent and be forgiven for our misdoings. It is performed on the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah but can be done any time until Yom Kippur.

**The Fast of Gedalia** – one of the minor fasts, from dawn till dusk on the 3rd Tishrei (the day after Rosh Hashana). After the destruction of the first Temple, the Babylonians appointed Gedalia as the governor of the Jews who remained in Israel. He was treacherously murdered by Yishmael ben Netaniah, a fellow Jew who disagreed with the tactical alliance made with the Babylonians. This led to much bloodshed and effectively ended the prospect of Jews permanently resettling in the land.

**Ten Days of Repentance** – the days between Rosh Hashana (the Day of Judgement) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) where our judgement is hanging in the balance. It is a time where we try to take something on that we may not usually do, be it an extra mitzvah, going to a class, or resolving to be nicer to our families.







# CAN WE

# REALLY

# BLAME

# IT ON

# VOGUE?

REBBETZIN SHALVIE FRIEDMAN



REBBETZIN SHALVIE  
FRIEDMAN

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





It's 9pm and for the first time today I pull open my laptop and stare at my half-finished article. The deadline glares at me from the tool bar at the bottom of the screen. The hard-earned peace of sleeping children finally settles in. I try to ignore the dirty coffee mugs scattered around my living room, a reminder of the yet-to-be-loaded dishwasher, and a testament to the long day filled with attempts to use caffeine to compensate for my exhaustion.

I am a 21st century woman. I have dreams and ambitions. I am capable and competent. I can do it all.

I am a 21st century mother, cramming in work phone calls on the way to school pick-up, begging my kids to go to sleep on time so that I can finish all my work; ordering take-out again because I didn't have time to get groceries; doing my kids' homework in the car on the way to school.

But mostly, I am a 21st century religious, orthodox Jewish woman and mother,

juggling praying, Shabbat guests, Chumash homework, kids' Yom Tov dress shopping, sheitel grooming and challah baking.

### Can I really do it all?

Next to my computer sits a popular Jewish magazine, filled with glossy, perfect Shabbat tables and "20 healthy Shabbat dishes everyone is trying at home," and an advert for a high-end Pesach retreat.

As the modern-day Aishet Chayil (woman of valour), my home must be neat and tidy, Shalom Bayit (a peaceful home) is crucial, as is my Shabbat menu, our Shabbat guests, my husband's learning, my kids' Jewish education, my modern "attractive-but-not-attracting" clothing, and the meals that I regularly send to new mums in the neighbourhood.

This isn't just the juggle of all working women today. In addition to my added day-to-day responsibilities, I have an aching and yearning for a few free moments to obtain spiritual fulfilment.

I glance back down at the Jewish magazine beside my computer. What if it is our self-contained Jewish community filled with glorious modest clothing and beautiful

I am a 21st century  
mother, cramming  
in work phonecalls  
on the way to  
school



wigs, perfect home-made food and husbands who go out to learn Torah in crisply ironed shirts that has set me up for failure and never ending religious guilt?

Perhaps it is the unintended but clear message of our religious society that has loaded up the pressure onto us women, demanding of us to give more.

And yet, through all this busyness, I don't feel fulfilled. This lifestyle doesn't make me feel holy. It just leaves me utterly exhausted.

I grew up with incredibly inspiring Jewish female role models who were strong-willed, spiritual and had lofty ideals. They invested not only in their families but also in their Judaism with an energy and liveliness that never seemed to dim. I remember the inspiring Shabbat tables, but I don't remember any gourmet food. I remember the modesty in their character but have no recollection of their fashion sense.

Perhaps we need to revisit the Torah's view on women. In our attempt to declare that we are not modern feminists, we have taken on a persona that once was the ideal of materialism, and we've taken it to represent our very spirituality. All the while our prayer suffers (I simply don't have the time!), our children suffer (I mean, who can make a fabulous Shabbat meal and attend to their children?), and our spirituality suffers (on Friday night I am so exhausted that I sometimes fall asleep at the Shabbat table).

The Torah itself presents a different model of womanhood. The heart-wrenching saga of our foremother Rachel who spent many years barren, cries out in desperation, "Give me children or I will die!" to which her husband Jacob responds angrily, "Can I take the place of God, who has denied you the fruit of the womb?"

Nechama Leibowitz, a contemporary Torah scholar, explains the deeper message behind the dialogue: "She [Rachel], in her yearning for a child saw


her whole world as circumscribed by the secondary purpose of woman's existence, to become a mother. Without it her life was not worth living.' Or else I die,' This was treasonable repudiation of her function, a flight from her destiny and purpose, shirking the duties imposed on her, not by virtue of her being a woman, but by virtue of her being a human being."

Have we abandoned our primary identity as human being as well as our secondary identity as mother, in exchange for cooking, housekeeping, and fashion? We may not even remember what a true Jewish experience looks like if we were to take those away.

We need to talk about what women need. We need to move away from talking about the "power of femininity" as an abstract mystical property. We need to talk about the pressure of "Keeping up with the Cohens". We need to bravely ask questions instead of being terrified by feminism and what it means to us. The Torah has answers, good, satisfying answers. So there is nothing to be afraid of. We need to return to the Torah ideal of what it means to be a woman.

My daughters and I recently read "My Mum is Beautiful" by Jessica Spanyol. Before opening the book we sat on the couch and I asked them what makes a mummy beautiful. "If she wears pink," my three year old suggested. "If she has pretty clothes," my five year old chimed in. We opened the book. The bright colourful illustrations showed a mummy bear and a baby bear spending quality time together. "My mummy is beautiful because she has tea with my teddies," and "My mummy is beautiful because she takes me out for lunch to the café."

Let's be sure that we are teaching our children what really makes a mummy beautiful. And let's commit to being beautiful to them and to ourselves.

But mostly, let's make sure that our children look at how we observe Judaism and see it for what it truly is, beautiful. 



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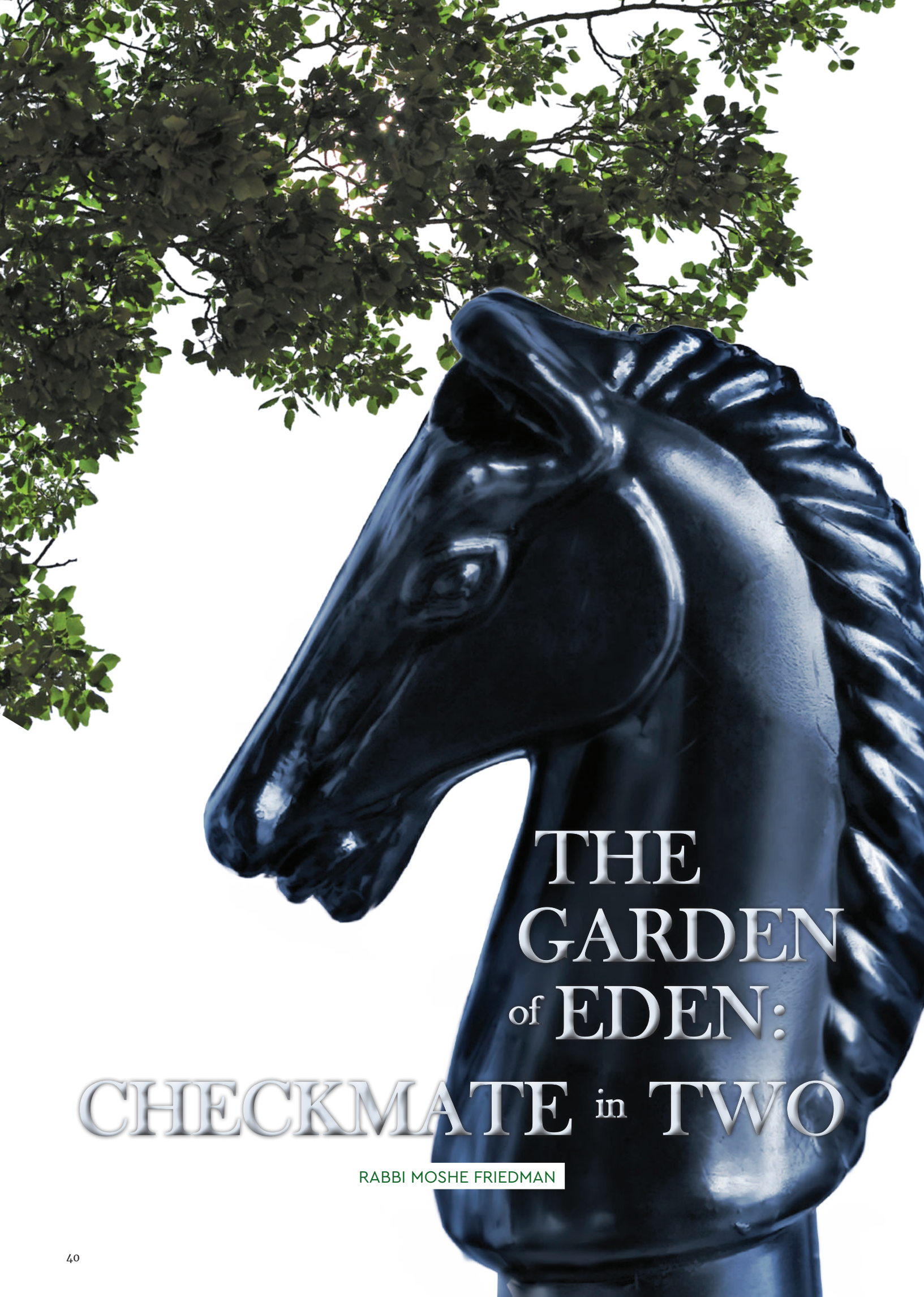
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THE  
GARDEN  
of EDEN:  
CHECKMATE in TWO

RABBI MOSHE FRIEDMAN





## RABBI MOSHE FRIEDMAN



Rabbi Moshe Friedman grew up in Manhattan, New York, and received his B.A. in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics at the University of Pennsylvania. He studied Jewish Thought and Talmudic Law for ten years in Israel, including several years at the Mir Yeshiva, and has passed rabbinic ordination examinations from the Israeli Rabbinate. Rabbi Friedman has been a regular lecturer at Machon Yaakov Yeshiva in Jerusalem and on numerous learning-based Israel trips. In 2017, he moved to London with his wife and two children to take up the role of FJL UK Liaison, a role which includes regular campus visits and London based educational programmes.

## The quickest checkmate can be accomplished in two moves.

The white player must commit two blunders, weakening itself both offensively and defensively, in order for the black player to exploit an opening and trap the opposing player's king. This strategy is called fool's mate.

In the history of chess, no serious player has ever lost in two and no champion match has ever been lost in less than seventeen. In the history of the world, however, there is a different story. Arguably the very first match of wits ever recorded ended only after two moves. This match is widely recognised as the most famous story of humanity. It has defined us and has been written about in religious texts, folklore and in popular culture. It is the interaction between a woman and a snake, regarding a highly contentious fruit tree.

Let's revisit the story of Eve and the snake:

The snake opens to Eve about not being able to eat from all the trees of the garden. Eve replies that, in truth, she is permitted to eat from all the trees, but from the tree in the middle, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, she may not eat, or even touch, lest she die. The snake claims she will not die from eating it, and when she does she will be like God, knowing good and evil. Eve eats and gives it to Adam to eat. Checkmate in two.

We should be very bothered that the progenitors of all mankind were hoodwinked in less time than it takes for even the most novice chess player to lose. Were these not the same people described



as being fashioned in the “image of God”? Rashi, arguably the most definitive Biblical commentator who ever lived, writes in no uncertain terms that the Divine image is synonymous with divine intellect.

But perhaps it wasn't a question of intellect. Perhaps, as the text insinuates, it was a temptation of any number of human weaknesses, such as desire for power (“you will be like God”) or lust (“And the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and that it was tempting to the eyes”). Even smart people succumb to vices, no?

Actually, not always. Here's where it gets tricky.

Let's ask a very simple question. What “knowledge” did the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil impart? If Adam and Eve were created as intellectual giants, then what were they lacking? This question was addressed by Maimonides in his philosophical opus, *The Guide to the Perplexed*. His answer was genius. “Good and evil” does not mean “true and false.” Initially, Adam and Eve saw the reality of the universe in terms of objective truth and falsehood. Murder? That's akin to  $2+2=5$ . Lying? That's  $1+1=3$ .

Good and evil, on the other hand, represent subjective, preference-based descriptions of pleasant and unpleasant, attractive and ugly, interesting and boring. Once the fruit of the tree is ingested, humans become susceptible to all of the things that distract us from morality. It's true that I should study for my exam. But how exciting does this new television series look? It's true that I vowed to remain faithful to my spouse. But how attractive does my co-worker look at the office party?

All of this brings us to a

phenomenal Catch-22. Before eating from the tree, Eve is a nearly perfect being, possessing unfaltering intelligence and without any desire for personal gain or pleasure outside that which is eternally true. She encounters a very cunning snake, the cleverest of all the animals (outside of mankind, of course), who convinces her in two statements to do that which is manifestly false.

The reason why this scenario is so mind-boggling, is because if a person sees only truth and falsehood, and has no inclination to override that clarity with human shortcomings, then there is no possible way to choose the incorrect path. No weakness, no free will. In order for us to understand how the snake misled Eve, we must first identify if Eve actually possessed a vulnerability, such that it would provide her with a real internal dilemma. And of course, she did, because she is human.

Briefly put, the Achilles heel of humanity has always been our physicality, which creates an illusion of separateness from God. Even though Adam and Eve knew the “truth” – that they do not possess a truly independent identity – nonetheless they still experienced on some level a faint sense of otherness, of a difference between the self and God. This perception of otherness allowed the sliver of free will that accounted for the whole purpose of existence. The choice boiled down to acknowledging the

reality of being part of God and heeding His command, over the illusion of standing apart from God and asserting their own identity.

Now we are ready for a sophisticated read of our story. Let's deconstruct how the snake exploits this weakness in Eve.

Like any worthy fighter, the first step of a match is to draw your opponent into conflict and weaken their position by putting them on the defensive. So how do you knock someone off balance who possesses perfect truth?

The answer is, tell a bold-faced lie. The opening of the snake is, “Did God really say that you may not eat from any tree of the garden?” The statement is so obviously false that Eve must correct the inaccuracy. Rashi comments, “Even though [the snake] saw them eating from other fruits, he heaped words upon her in order that she would respond and come to speak about that particular tree.” It was the chutzpah of the





lie itself that draws Eve in, and now the conversation has begun.

Once the snake pushes hard in one direction, Eve inevitably pushes back equally hard in the opposite direction. Rather than succinctly refute the snake, Eve adds her own interpretation: “We may eat from the trees of the garden, but from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, God said do not eat from it and do not touch it lest you die.” A cursory glance at God’s original command shows that there was no prohibition of touching the tree. What prompted her to add to the command?

The Sages of the Oral Torah explain that it was not the addition itself that was her mistake, for we know that it is well within rabbinic jurisdiction to add a “fence” onto a mitzvah out of concern for coming too close to transgressing. For example, as it is a prohibition to write on Shabbat, the rabbis later instituted that so too it should be prohibited to even hold a writing instrument. Instead, the mistake was in equating the importance of the fence with the original commandment and Eve fell into that trap. Eating leads to death, as God told Adam. Touching it does not.

But Adam and Eve were intellectually perfect. How did Eve commit this error? Let us recall the one human weakness that existed: a faint, illusory sense of self and independence. By adding on too much to the fence,

by imposing just a little too much human expression onto the original prohibition, Eve did what the snake knew she would do when pushed off balance — expose a subtle, momentary weakness that showed the possibility of humans as being separate from God.

The beauty of this mistake is in its subtlety. There is no overt rebellion of God’s sovereignty, no egotistical assertion of mankind’s hubris. The addition seemed harmless, so much so that one could confuse Eve’s addition as an even greater zeal to serve God! That could well have been the primary intention. But buried under the devotion to truth lay an inkling of self, a fingerprint of individual creativity whose source could only come from a false sense of human independence.

At this point the snake need only exploit the momentum. The snake tells Eve, “You will not die.” How can he presume to have such knowledge? The Sages explain that the snake literally pushes Eve into the tree, and seeing that she does not die merely from touching it, he exposes the inaccuracy in her own statement. If one does not die from touching the tree, what else may be called into doubt? The snake then paints an alternative picture of God’s commandment. God did not want you to eat from the tree because the tree is what grants you access to your true independence. This illusion of the self is real! And once you eat, then you “will be like God.” The offer is irresistible.

Now we notice a shift in Eve’s perspective. When she takes another look at the forbidden fruit, it is described as follows: “And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was attractive for

the eyes, and that it was desirable for contemplation.” In this description, which comes first, the reflection of the contemplative, ethereal soul or the attraction of the food-hungry body? First and foremost, Eve now sees the fruit as food! No longer does she approach this test from the perspective of a divine being, whose intelligence drives all action. Now she is merely a body, whose primary concern is individual gain. “I” am no longer part of God; now “I” can be like God.

Eve eats from the tree, then Adam, leaving mankind forever grappling with the repercussions of this seminal error. Our struggle as humans post-Eden has been to contend with our newfound subjectivity. Some may lament that we have lost our simple “true and false” morality, our ability to do good out of basic instinct, to avoid evil as one avoids placing his or her hand into fire. Yet we now also possess positive concepts of beauty, of wonder, of hope, words that did not exist in the lexicon of pre-sin people. The snake did not lie that knowledge of good and evil is a divine trait. Indeed, even God Himself acknowledges that after eating from the tree, “mankind has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil.”

True, a Higher Wisdom saw fit that we should not have imbibed this knowledge. But now that we have, we must sublimate the beauty, the pleasantness, the attractiveness, all towards that moral truth that still remains as our guiding compass. We lost once to the fool’s mate. The timeless story of the Garden of Eden serves to remind us to learn from mistakes, to put the pieces back on the board and play a better game next time. 🎲

# HEATHEN HOLIDAYS

REBBETZIN SHOSHANA LANDAU

## A couple of years ago I discovered

that some of my daughter's nursery-mates didn't celebrate birthdays (or other calendar events for that matter) because as Jehovah's Witnesses they deemed it 'pagan'. It made me think; without the timeline posts, messages and gifts, what else is there to a birthday experience? Sometimes it seems that the activities we perform become the definition of the day itself. Along those lines, I started to think that many of the things that I do as a practicing Jewess seem rather... pagan. Just looking at the month of Tishrei we encounter practices that seem worthy of a Carmina Burana soundtrack; chicken-waving (Kaparot), fish-feeding (Tashlich), shed-dwelling (Sukkot), leaf-and-lemon-shaking (lulav and etrog) and, to quote Mr. Darcy of *Pride & Prejudice* fame, "any savage can dance" (Simchat Torah).

In the Yom Kippur liturgy we read about the episode of the two goats (Leviticus Chapter 16). Chosen by lot, one was sacrificed in the Temple on Yom Kippur, and the other, immortalised by William Tyndale as the 'scapegoat', on which the sins of the Jewish people were confessed by the High Priest, was sent away 'To Azazel' into the wilderness where it would







REBBETZIN SHOSHANA LANDAU

Shoshana has been involved in community leadership and education for several years, most recently in the Kingston & Surbiton communities in South London. A graduate of the Chief Rabbi's Ma'ayan programme, Shoshana is particularly passionate about female involvement and representation within Orthodox Judaism, women and halacha, as well as social and environment issues. She and her family recently moved to Israel on a Sabbatical, where they continue their involvement in Torah education.

meet eventual death. Nachmanides expounds: Azazel refers to Satan, one of the fallen angels. Suddenly, we're in the realms of Neil Gaiman and his Sandman series. Azazel? Really? Again, the theme seems to appear a little pagan.

We understand that the purpose of this goat is to carry the burden of our sins, and to represent a literal and visible 'sending away' to a fate of which we may have been deserving. If the purpose of Yom Kippur is to purify and cleanse us of sin and reconfigure our abacus of deeds, why is a symbolic goat sent away to a demon-like Satan, burdened with the transferred sins of the nation, even relevant? Surely our repentance and God's mercy is sufficient without introducing an opera-worthy storyline?

The answer is simple. As humans, we interact with Godliness and spirituality in a dual form. We often need a physical act to connect to the sublime. And so, to really access the idea of being cleansed and purified, it helps to have an observable, tangible 'sending away' of the goat.

The truth is that there is plenty of space for us to use physicality in order to express or experience the spiritual. We have a custom to wear white on Yom Kippur; a nod to our angelic status on the day. But we are not angels. Will these pale, physical attempts to symbolise ethereal, celestial beings really help us to repent? For that matter, will the custom of waving a chicken over our heads on the eve of Yom Kippur to symbolically transfer any harsh decrees onto the fowl, really achieve anything? How about emptying a pocketful of crumbs into our local river on Rosh Hashanah to symbolically 'cast away' our sins? Somehow, we are very much steeped in the physical and mundane even at this most spiritual point in our calendar. As flesh and blood humans who experience physicality as primary, we latch onto symbology, actions and hard evidence to mold our experience -

and that's okay. Our religious practice is littered with examples of utilising both the physical and spiritual in a beautiful balance.

Perhaps that is why Yom Kippur segues so smoothly into the festival of Sukkot; a festival of physicality if ever there was one. There is a mitzvah to begin building one's Sukkah at the culmination of Yom Kippur - that very night. In stark contrast to Yom Kippur, Sukkot is a festival replete with physicality. Let's contextualise it;

Sukkot is Festival as most of us know it. Think Glastonbury. Reading. Wellies and tent cities. The actual mitzvah is not simply eating our festive meals in the Sukkah, but

spending our week actually living in it. Move your Mumford posters and make a psychological transition to mirror the physical move. What else is our Sukkah - our flimsy garden booth - than an attempt to dwell out of doors, open to the elements, immersing ourselves in an outdoor experience of bliss to identify our absolute faith in God and His protective love?

How beautiful a religion that can embrace and celebrate the mundane and physical, all while in pursuit of absolute spiritual heights. The next time we

worry that some of the rites and that we perform seem pagan-esque at their essence, it should not be cause for alarm. We understand the value of utilising the world around us as a springboard to spirituality, the value of objects and actions that can inform and enhance our journey to the sublime. As long as we remain informed about our rites and rituals and what they really symbolise, let's exalt in performing them. Laugh about the chicken or the fish-feeding, sure. But recognise that there's absolute sense in them as well, just as there is sense in celebrating one's birthday. 🕯️



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welcome to a new look



# THE BIG QUESTION

**SHOULD JEWS BE PROMOTING MORAL  
BEHAVIOUR TO NON-JEWS?**

RABBI JOHNNY SOLOMON



**W**e live in a society where telling someone else what to do is considered insulting and offensive – not only because it undermines the concepts of freedom and autonomy, but also because it challenges the postmodern belief that there is no single source for truth.

The problem arises given that Judaism is rooted upon the principle of objective truth, and that it expects us not only to concern ourselves with the physical welfare of others, but also their spiritual welfare. This is clear from the fact that among the 613 biblical commandments is the duty to positively encourage and, where necessary, directly challenge and reprove the behaviour of fellow Jews when they do not comply with Jewish law (see Leviticus 19:17).

For some people this concept of ‘reproof’ is simply not applicable to the modern experience. In fact, this discomfort is not a new phenomenon and we find that the Rabbis of the Talmud struggled with the idea. This is why many Jewish scholars limit the duty of reproof to situations where the reprover has the capacity to reprove with love, and where the individual receiving the reproof welcomes the intervention.

However, even though this concept of reproof may grate upon our minds and hearts, it is rooted in the fact that Jews are really one big family (or, as Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky once put it, ‘one sick dysfunctional family’) who – like every family – understand that living alongside each other comes with the expectation that we’re going to criticise each other – but only because we love each other.

However, a more complex question concerns whether we, as Jews, have a duty to positively encourage and, where necessary, directly challenge the behaviour of non-Jews?

To begin, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 56a) lists seven duties that non-Jews are expected to follow. These are known as the Seven Noahide Laws and they require that non-Jews do not worship idols, do not blaspheme, do not murder, do not steal, do not commit sexual crimes (e.g. incest, adultery), do not eat the limb from a live animal. Beyond this, non-Jews are also required to establish courts of law ‘to render judgement concerning these six mitzvot and to admonish the people regarding their observance’ (Maimonides, Laws of Kings & Wars 9:14). Given this, are Jews obliged to encourage non-Jews in their observance of the Seven Noahide Laws or reprove them in their failure to do so?

Like so many topics in Judaism the answer to this question is a matter of debate which, though expressed within the opinions of Maimonides (Laws of Kings & Wars 9:14) and Nahmanides (commentary to Genesis 34:13) in their analysis of the story of Shechem (see Genesis Ch. 34), may be best understood with reference to the biblical story of Jonah.

In the short Book of Jonah we read how the prophet Jonah was instructed by God to reprove the non-Jewish inhabitants of the city of Nineveh in order to encourage them to repent and avoid destruction. Based on this story, the 12th century Rabbi Yehudah HaChassid asserts that Jews are obliged to encourage non-Jews in their observance of the Seven Noahide Laws, and



**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.

therefore 'if one sees a non-Jew committing a transgression and one can protest, then one should since the Holy One, blessed be He, sent Jonah to Nineveh to cause them to repent' (Sefer Chasidim No. 1124).

Other religious thinkers like Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch disagree, and aside from suggesting that non-Jews may no longer be bound by the Seven Noahide Laws (see Bava Kamma 38a), Rabbi Sternbuch asserts that we learn from God's instruction to Jonah that a Jew is ordinarily not obliged to encourage non-Jews to observe the Seven Noahide Laws, and that God's commandment was unique to this situation (see Responsa Teshuvot VeHanhagot 3:317).

Naturally, there are merits to both positions, but at the root of this debate is an essential question concerning the extent of our moral bond with non-Jews. As noted, the Jewish people are – at their core – a family, and it is within a family that we have the opportunity to encourage and, where necessary, criticise one another. So how do we relate to non-Jews? Do we also regard them as family with whom we have those same moral duties and responsibilities to encourage and challenge, or perhaps we consider non-Jews as friendly neighbours towards whom no such duty or responsibility applies. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks explains with reference to the above-mentioned Maimonides-Nahmanides debate, 'for Nahmanides, the universal rules established after the Flood bind humanity to keep the law, but not

necessarily to ensure that others do so. Maimonides thought otherwise, maintaining that collective responsibility is a universal feature of moral and political life' (To Heal a Fractured World p. 120).

In terms of contemporary Judaism, there are those like Rabbi Sternbuch who argue that Jews should regard non-Jews as friendly neighbours but that we have no duty to invest time and energy in encouraging them to fulfil the Seven Noahide Laws. However, the most prominent recent Jewish leader who has argued the contrary was Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, otherwise known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

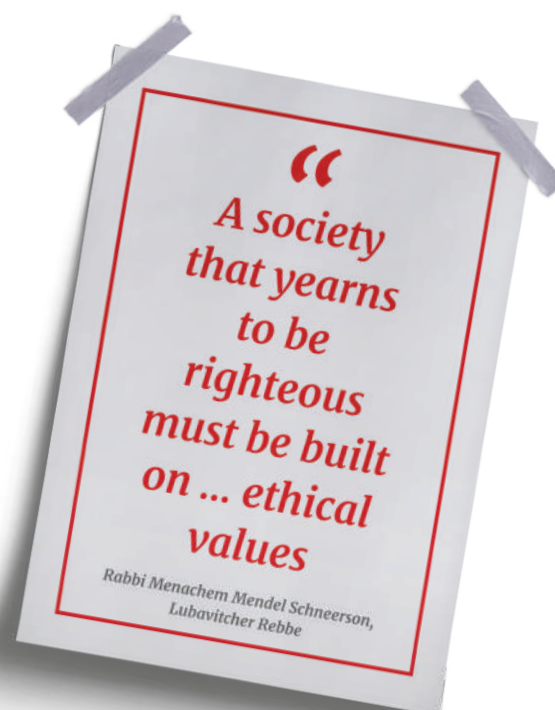
According to Rabbi Schneerson, 'a society that yearns to be righteous must be built on... ethical values, [and] the very foundation of civilization rests upon the basic principles known as the Seven Noahide Laws... Without these laws as a bedrock of government, a society will either have despotism, where individuals' lives are compromised and possibly abused, or anarchy, where every person pursues his or her own needs without regard for the law' (Simon Jacobson, *Toward a Meaningful Life: The Wisdom of the Rebbe Menachem* pp.163–64).

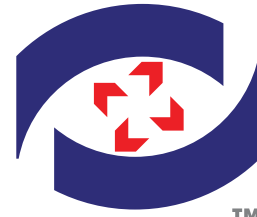
Importantly, Rabbi Schneerson does not limit this duty to theologians. Instead, he insists that 'since everything God creates has a specific purpose, it follows that the fact that God brought a person into contact with the



secular world also has a purpose: namely that the person should try to influence non-Jews to fulfil their Seven Noahide Laws and by doing so, he prepares the world for the Messianic age' (from his talk on 19th Day of Kislev, 5743/1982). In fact, it was Rabbi Schneerson's commitment to this ideal which led to President Ronald Reagan proclaiming 4th April, 1982 - the 80th birthday of Rabbi Schneerson - as a 'National Day of Reflection', because Rabbi Schneerson 'stands as a reminder that knowledge is an unworthy goal unless it is accompanied by moral and spiritual wisdom and understanding' and because 'he has provided a vivid example of the eternal validity of the Seven Noahide Laws, a moral code for all of us regardless of religious faith' (Presidential Proclamation 4921, 3rd April 1982).

As previously explained, there are those who support the position of Rabbi Schneerson, while there are others who adopt the approach of Rabbi Sternbuch. However, in response to the original question of whether we should be telling others what to do, perhaps it may be worthwhile pondering the wise words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks who argues that, 'no one should seek to impose his or her religious convictions on society, but we should seek to bring the insights of our respective faiths to the public conversation about the principles for which we stand and the values we share... [because] it is when our horizons extend beyond our own faith communities that our separate journeys converge and we become joint builders of a more gracious world' (To Heal a Fractured World p. 124).





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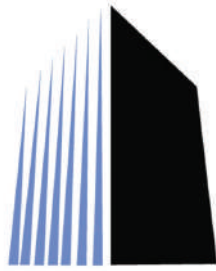
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# Dealing with Suicidal Thoughts: *My Experience of Depression and Bipolar*

ELEANOR SEGALL



Eleanor Segall is a freelance mental health writer and blogger. She blogs at [www.beurownlight.com](http://www.beurownlight.com) and is a freelance writer for Metro.co.uk, Glamour and Happiful Magazine. Eleanor has written for mental health charities including Mind, Rethink Mental Illness and Time to Change.



“I just want to die. Why did you bring me into the world?” I sobbed to my parents as I reached breaking point. I was sitting on the couch, a rare moment when I had left my bed for the day, clutching a box of tissues with tears streaming down my face.

In 2013, after months of deep and severe depression that left me sleeping the days away, not able to work or see friends, I had become increasingly agitated with suicidal thoughts. In addition to this, I had begun to think of ways to end my life and was overwhelmed with images of self-harm, which I managed to stop by speaking about it to my family.

I was simply in so much pain that the thought of it being taken away, led me to think seriously about my place in this world. In the previous days, I was avoiding the world, sleeping most of the day and hiding in my bed. Simple tasks like laundry and cooking overwhelmed me. The idea of a shower left me feeling vulnerable. I wasn't speaking to my friends, I ignored my phone. I didn't want to watch TV or go on social media. I was simply not functioning well at all.

As difficult as it was for my parents to hear that I was suicidal, they knew why this was happening. They could talk to me, tell me they loved me and wanted to help. They could support me with seeing a doctor and upping my dosage of anti-depressant medication. I am lucky to have a supportive family who were experienced with mental health issues. Speaking to them about the thoughts of ending my life and the ideas of self-harm that my brain was intent on replaying, saved my life.

I was diagnosed with Bipolar Affective Disorder (Type 1) in 2004 when I was 16 years old. Bipolar is a mood disorder which creates depressive-low and manic-high mood states, and it runs in my family. The diagnosis I have is the most serious and can lead to psychosis and hospitalisation. I had gone through bad depressions before and despite being on mood-stabilising medications, this was the worst depression I had ever faced.

My parents told me they loved me. We all speculated that my main medication for bipolar disorder was not working. This is probably why my depressive episode got as bad as

it did, I needed to be on a different medicine and this was eventually changed.

I was lucky that despite my suicidal ideation, I knew that I was not going to take my own life. This was down to a few things. Firstly, my support network and incredible family who did not react with stigma but realised I was very ill and needed help from my psychiatrist. They didn't get angry and they didn't expect of me what could not be done. They listened and were there for me.


It was hard for my family to understand the amount of emotional pain and grief I felt day to day. I felt like my life was ending and my hope was waning. What kept me going was my love for my family, but also my faith.

I didn't know why God had given me this test and why I had bipolar since I was a teenager. I just knew that I did not really want to die at the age of 24. I just wanted the pain to go. The emotional state that came and caused havoc in my life was overbearing. Deep down I believed life was a gift, I just didn't want my current life.









# What can you do if a loved one has suicidal thoughts or is in crisis and urgently needs treatment?

There had been a few triggers for me. My grandmother died a few months earlier, my parents had divorced and we had moved from my childhood home several times. I finished a master's degree, the pressures tipped me into my depression and I was too anxious to hold down work. I was on the wrong medication. I was also single at the time. With bipolar, environmental stressors and as well as brain chemistry can cause the depressive or manic states.

I do believe that if I was more isolated and hadn't opened up to my family, I might not be here today. I feel eternally grateful to my parents and step-father who let me say those difficult things to them, but knew that it was the illness talking and not Eleanor.

I was lucky to have insight at this time and to have support from a good medical team, who came to my home. We were able to manage this episode at home, with new medication and therapy.

Being Jewish can mean that you might feel guilty for feeling suicidal, as there is so much emphasis on Chaim - life. I found knowing that God was with me, helped me get well again too. My message to others would be: you should never feel guilty, depression is an illness. 🧠

## 1. Listen calmly.

When someone is feeling suicidal, their emotions are heightened and they can be prone to anger or upset. It's really important to listen to them respectfully and calmly, without prejudice.

## 2. Ask them what help they need.

Involve the person in their treatment and recovery. This could be getting an emergency GP appointment or home visit or if they are in psychiatric treatment, an urgent visit or appointment with their psychiatrist.

If the person is at crisis point, threatening to take their own life and self-harming, call the 'Crisis Team' who will be at your local mental health unit or in urgent cases go to A&E if out of hours.

## 3. Hide tablets and any sharp implements.

The person could use to harm themselves. Alcohol should also be hidden. Monitor the person's use of the internet in a respectful manner.

## 4. Do not use stigmatised language.

It's ok for the person to feel this way, your role is to support them to reach recovery.

## 5. If your loved one refuses help or medication, continue to get advice from the GP or a psychiatrist.

In urgent cases, your loved one can be hospitalised but this will depend on their symptoms.



# { why bad parenting works }

DANIEL GLASS





DANIEL GLASS

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**W**alking past a local shop recently, I overheard a mother telling her son not to do something. The words sounded like they came straight out of a parenting book and it felt very artificial. I realised that this wasn't the first time that I'd seen attempts at 'manualised' parenting over the last few weeks - phrases that seem to come from a book, a tone of voice that seems highly unnatural.

This shouldn't come as a surprise as many areas of our lives have become increasingly formulaic. Teachers are required to fit a narrowly defined rubric of how to teach, politicians spew out textbook phrases and poses, and many workplaces have become rigid with standardised practices and methodologies.

We now live in a world where experts prevail and it becomes unthinkable not to follow the latest trend, book or lifestyle approach. As parents, friends or professionals, we have often become unwilling to be ourselves. Instead, we take advice from those experts - parenting, relationship, educational, marketing, and self-help - in the hope that they'll know how to get it right for us.

The rise in the profile and use of psychotherapy in the UK would seem to be another example of this phenomenon. After all, isn't turning to a psychotherapist just another example of the search for expert opinion in an area which we used them to do pretty naturally: that area we call 'living'?

The truth of the matter is that some people do indeed turn to psychotherapy looking for expert advice. However, psychotherapy contains an approach that has the potential to get at the very root of this uncertainty in ourselves: our unwillingness to trust ourselves.

Quite simply, psychotherapy believes that it is not the psychotherapist, but rather the client, who is the expert.

To paraphrase British psychotherapist Wilfred Bion, therapy is about introducing you to the one person with whom you will definitely spend the rest of your life: yourself. And you are the world-expert on that person. You understand your feelings and beliefs better than anyone else. If you can access that expertise, you won't need other 'experts' to populate your life to the same degree.

But what makes us so uncertain about ourselves that we feel the need for expert opinions on the everyday business of living?

Part of the answer is all the information absorbed along the way, the stuff which isn't really 'you' and hasn't been integrated properly into your life. And it's these things which can make us feel so non-expert in our own lives, leaving us feeling uneasy, unsure and uncertain of who or what we are.

We often get stuck with a particular description of ourselves at some point in life. This process, known as 'sedimentation', means

that we might see ourselves either as warm and caring, cold and distant, intelligent or not. In reality, the picture is far more complex. These 'soundbites' describing our personality limit our potential. They can be confusing and lead us to deny certain realities of our lives because they contradict the picture we've built up of ourselves.

Psychodynamic therapy discusses 'introjection', when a person swallows an approach to life, a belief, a value or an emotion, hook line and sinker; it goes in undigested. Introjection can affect our opinions such as political allegiance



**you  
understand your feelings  
and beliefs better than  
anyone else**



and religious beliefs. Essentially, we are trying to swallow chunks of somebody else's personality!

Person-centred psychotherapy suggests that we build up an 'External Locus of Evaluation', whereby people evaluate their values, behaviours and life-decisions based on what others (often parents) have drilled into them, sometimes subtly, sometimes less so.


However we look at it, whatever terminology we use, having stuff inside of us that doesn't belong there can lead to a confusing, uneasy and sometimes very painful sense of not being fully ourselves. This sense can then, ironically, lead to the search for experts for the answers to our lives, be it in parenting, work, love or even DIY.

Psychotherapy in its various forms aims to provide a process in which we recover – or sometimes build for the first time – our sense of internal expertise, the ability to better know ourselves and be ourselves.

Being more of an expert on oneself means being more independent, more spontaneous and having to turn to advice less often. It means being able to parent, to love, and to live in a way that flows more directly from oneself.

Does it mean rejecting anything that comes from the outside? Do we reject all advice on parenting, relationships – the whole shebang?

No. In fact, that would also be unhealthy. Being the expert on ourselves certainly does not mean that we are the expert on everything. Rather it is learning to be mindful of the information we digest. When we are aware of needing outside advice, we can and should look for it. But instead of simply swallowing what we hear, we can learn to digest the information in a healthy way. If we have a healthy internal self, a healthy psychological digestive system, we can ingest what's good for us, and reject what we don't need. We can hear an idea on parenting or relationships and we can weigh it up, consider it, accept, reject or even modify it so it works with us on a personal, unique and individual level.

That's why sometimes 'bad parenting' works and turning to our own inner expert allows our true voice to be heard. 





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# Four Ways to Cool an Argument

ARYEH SAMPSON



ARYEH SAMPSON

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**D**r. John Gottman, professor emeritus of psychology at Washington University, has developed a model which claims 90% accuracy in predicting whether newlywed couples will remain married. He believes that an early warning signal that a marriage is in danger is the expression of harsh criticism.

Complaints that are expressed in a destructive fashion, such as an attack on someone's character, lead to a destructive cycle of defensive responses and lashing out. This leaves both people feeling ashamed, disliked and defective – which is devastating to the health of a relationship.

Other styles of communication can also be very harmful. Stonewalling, the avoidance of communication, prevents any progress in the relationship by an unwillingness to address any issues. Passive aggressive behaviour, in which the expression of dissatisfaction or anger is not openly stated but expressed in an indirect and covert manner, such as keeping someone waiting, forgetting to do what someone has asked, or making subtle digs or sarcastic comments.

Communicating one's feelings in an open, non-confrontational way is an important skill, and learning to express feelings of resentment in a sensitive way rather than bottling them up, is all part and parcel of honest communication.

Over the page are some approaches that can be useful in enhancing communication. 



## 1 Start Positively

Dr. M. Wikler, marriage counsellor and author, explains that it is important to pick the right time to communicate difficult feelings, when one is calm and collected, not in a time of upset. It is also good to start in a positive way, for instance by acknowledging the other person's point of view or apologising for that which you may have done incorrectly

## 2 Don't Blame or Label

Psychologist Dr. Haim Ginott recommends that the best formulation for expressing criticism is "XYZ" – When you did X, it made me feel Y, and I'd rather you did Z instead. For example: Instead of 'Why did you come home so late? You are so insensitive! Don't ever do that again', we could try saying 'When you didn't call to let me know that you would be late for supper, I felt unappreciated; I wish you would call to let me know when you'll be late in the future.' This approach avoids labelling, identifying the person with the mistake, and just focuses on the person's behaviour. It also avoids the tendency to blame, by using the expression 'I feel', as opposed to 'You are'. And it focuses on making a request as opposed to a demand, such as 'Never do that again'.

## 3 Use Non-Defensive Listening

Imago therapy, an approach for strengthening marital harmony, stresses the importance of non-defensive listening. The listener mirrors – repeats back – the statement they have heard. For example, 'What you are saying is that you are upset when I don't call to let you know I am going to be late, and this makes you feel unappreciated'. This allows the speaker to feel understood and validates their feelings. The other person then has an opportunity to reply using 'I' statements, which are in turn repeated back to her. This methodology helps both parties to understand each other and air out their difficulties without making each other defensive.

## 4 Resolve the Influence of the Past

Often couples argue about unresolved relationships with other people from the past. Negative feelings toward these people are transferred onto the existing relationship. For example, someone who feels they did not live up to their parents' expectations may react with anger at the slightest hint of not living up to what is expected of her by her spouse. The anger or hurt arises from a difficulty in the relationship with her parents, but it is projected onto the spouse. By resolving the underlying problematic relationship, the person in question helps to stop this transference occurring. At times this can be done with the help of a therapist, where a client may express her unresolved or repressed feelings in the confidential and safe setting that therapy provides. 🧘



# Childbirth Trauma to Core Health Coach



RIA COLLETT

Ria is a Women's Fitness and Wellbeing Coach and founder of RiConnect based in North West London. She specialises in pelvic floor and core health rehabilitation - from synergistic breath-work, postural alignment and exercise prescription, to nutrition and lifestyle – and supports clients of all ages and life stages through their restoration phase back to fully functional, higher intensity exercise programming.

RiConnect was created to ensure women can continue to hit their weight-loss, toning, and/or wellness goals whilst ensuring their core and pelvic floor connection is neither overlooked nor compromised – especially in preparation, during and following significant transition periods including childbirth, illness or surgery and menopause.



**O**f all the things I ever imagined writing about publicly, my pelvic floor certainly wasn't one of them!

It's become so commonplace to laugh about the 'dark' truths of motherhood; hiding in the toilet for a few extra minutes' peace, the relentless exhaustion, vague memories of 'date nights' and romance and the stretch marks. But somehow, in a society where so much has lost its shock-factor, we still aren't talking openly about this.

Exercise had always been my release. The more emotionally challenging life became, the harder I pushed. It was my outlet, my means of processing. It was my healing. My body wasn't perfect (nor was my body image, far from it) but I was happily bumbling along in that mid-twenties space of blissful ignorance that it was strong, fit and reliable.

I got married and a year later along came baby boy #1. Throughout the pregnancy I was 'superwoman' – spinning at 6am, working late, the works. My labour was long (three days to be exact) but with two paracetamol – and a whole heap of stubborn determination – I pushed him out and all seemed well. In fact, people couldn't praise my natural efforts enough; I was a hero. Within 24 hours I was even parading my new-born along Oxford Street feeling like I'd won. I went back to 'normal'; I went back to the gym; I went back to work; I fitted back into my old clothes. Everyone told me I looked 'great', how quickly I'd 'bounced back'. But the truth was as the weeks passed things didn't go back to normal 'down there'.

Amidst the emotional turmoil and anxiety of being a new mother (and wife) and signed off at my six-week GP check I returned to running, desperately trying to chase the 'old me', pre-baby, pre-marriage. But every time I worked out, I knew something was wrong.

I told my mum; I told the midwife; I told the GP; I even skirted around it with my no-nonsense husband. But

nobody seemed concerned. Apparently this was the (unspoken) 'part and parcel' of childbirth and 'things would settle'. But it didn't settle. It got worse.

Over the next year I must have mentioned it at least half a dozen times to various GPs – each time to be met with blank looks and empty "healing takes time" replies. And so I stopped talking about it, to anyone. I stored up the fears and embarrassing, worrying sensations and kept quiet.

Life resumed some sense of 'new normal' but a few months into my second pregnancy things got worse markedly and I couldn't ignore it. I stopped all exercise. I stopped taking my son to the park. I stopped walking to shul. Going to the mall came to mean one shop then straight back to the car. I had to sit down to prepare dinner. I stopped letting my husband come close. I felt like my insides were falling out of me. I was in pain and I was petrified.

One night, after too many hours consulting Dr Google, I realised I had a pelvic organ prolapse. Panic gripped me and the next morning, having barely slept, I went to the hospital and refused to leave until I had been examined. I was so desperately hoping I was wrong, but I knew I wasn't. And I'd already read too many horror stories to know how life-altering it could be. Devoid of any sensitivity, a young female registrar confirmed it. She told me it would worsen with my impending labour, additional pregnancies were ill-advised and that inevitably, surgery would be required 'to fix' me. The chances of improvement were slim to none. Prolapse, apparently, was a 'one-way street'.

Six months pregnant with my husband and 18-month old outside I sat in the waiting room in tears, reeling through the impacts on my life, my relationship, my confidence as a woman, my dream of having a big family. I felt so alone. I didn't know anyone else who had been through similar. I knew I was still so fortunate – thank God it wasn't something



worse, an incurable illness, the dreaded c-word. But I was crushed. More than that, I was drowning in shame. On the outside I still looked 'normal'; on the inside, I was damaged and broken.

It's fair to say I spent some time feeling incredibly sorry for myself. But the more I read about prolapse, not to mention the thousands of lawsuits following mesh surgeries, the more I realised I couldn't settle for what the doctor had told me. I couldn't not lift my babies. I couldn't put my life on hold. I wouldn't wait for a surgery to 'fix me' that had, anecdotally, less than a 30% chance of long term success when you factored in hypermobility, age, etc. And so I decided to take action.

It began as a way to help myself. I researched every source and site I could find. I learnt from doctors and holistic practitioners from France to New Zealand. I did courses and qualifications. I trialled rehab programmes. I researched and experimented with nutrition. I created a rehabilitation programme which I stuck to like a soldier. I made a series of small but significant modifications to my lifestyle, my posture and my diet. Changes I still stick to, even now eight months (and prolapse-free) into my third pregnancy. I made myself an expert in all things core and pelvic floor and I learnt the long, slow, sustainable way how to 'heal' and get strong from the inside-out.

Half a year later I got the news I was hoping for. I was delighted to have proven the doctors wrong! My consultant was thrilled with my progress and reassured me that not only could he not tell that I had had a prolapse, but that I had even had babies. I was over the moon with gratitude and relief.


Sometime later, with a new-found courage to discuss it more freely, I was overwhelmed by just how many women around me were suffering similarly and in silence, accepting it as an inevitability of having had babies. In a moment of

'madness', forgetting the real exposure social media brings, I posted my story in a Facebook 'Mummy and Baby' group in the hope it might help one or two other women. By the morning, over 2500 women had read it and were emailing me with their stories, fears, and questions. They still are now, nearly three years on. And from there my business, RiConnect: Women's Fitness and Wellbeing, was born.

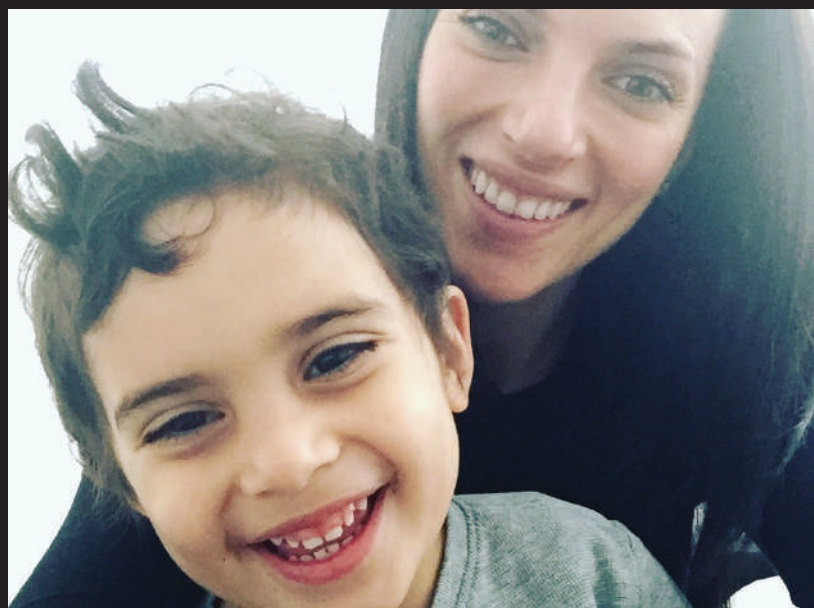
What seemed for a long time like a curse revealed itself as an amazing blessing and opportunity that empowered me and in turn, hundreds of other women to reclaim their strength, freedom and sense of self. As clichéd as it sounds, the whole experience heightened my appreciation for a functional and strong body, but also forced me to re-evaluate my identity – physically and emotionally; it reshuffled the pack of my life.

And so now, here, it still feels unnerving to share my private experience in such a public way. Perhaps so much so because as a topic it is still kept so hidden – even in a community where the majority of women over 18 are either pre or postnatal or peri-post menopausal, and with a staggering one in two suffering with pelvic floor dysfunction and incontinence nationally.

It's a strange and sad reality that when almost everything else seems to have lost its taboo, this still very much hides in the shadows. But it shouldn't. It doesn't need to. Because whatever we keep hidden ends up destroying us, even if only our confidence and our sense of adequacy and femininity.

So here it is, my own story, loud and proud, out in the open in the hope that it may help someone, anyone, who is in a similar place. Because you are not alone. Common does not have to mean normal or acceptable. You do not need to settle because you have had babies or you are a woman in your third age. You do not need to accept what a doctor may have told you. 









# 5-minute *guide to the* **HIGH HOLY DAYS**

**Kaparot** – the custom to take money (or a chicken!) and wave it over our head three times. We recite a statement whereby we transfer our bad deeds onto the money and then give it to charity to elevate our transgressions for a good purpose.

**Yom Kippur** – The Day of Atonement, often referred to as the holiest day of the year, where we ask forgiveness for anything we have done wrong. The day is spent in deep prayer at synagogue with five restrictions: no eating or drinking, no washing, no applying oils or creams to the skin, no marital relations, and no wearing of leather shoes.

**Kol Nidrei** – The haunting and moving melodious introduction to the Yom Kippur evening service. We annul our vows and endeavour to pay close attention to the words we use and promises we make. We cannot begin to talk to God about repentance, atonement or forgiveness before establishing that our word is one that can be trusted.

**Neila** – the closing moments of Yom Kippur when the gates of Heaven are closing. After a day of meditating in prayer and fasting, we throw all the energy we have left into hoping for forgiveness, and for a year filled with life.

**Sukkot** – The Festival of Booths celebrating the temporary shelters the Israelites used during their time in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. The Sukkah represents the fleeting nature of this world and the flimsiness of its protection. We sit under an organic roof looking up at the starlit sky to remind us that our trust is not in our security and possessions but in our faith in God.

**Four Species** – The Lulav (palm branch) symbolises the spine which holds us up; the Etrog (citron fruit) represents the heart and seat of our emotions; the Hadas (myrtle) leaves are shaped like eyes, representing the way we look at the world; the Aravah (willow) leaves are shaped like lips, representing our speech. We bind these together to symbolise that our actions, emotions, perception and speech should be aligned with positive intent.

**Chol HaMoed** – the intermittent days between the beginning and end of Sukkot. They are quasi-festival days whereby we try as best we can to embrace the festiveness of the time by eating (and, weather permitting, sleeping) in a Sukkah.

**Hoshana Rabbah** – the seventh day of Sukkot, where an unfavourable sentence from Yom Kippur can still be torn up through sincere repentance. On this day communities circle the synagogue seven times with Torah scrolls reciting the “Hoshanot” (salvation prayers). We beat the Aravah (willow) to the ground representing a mastery over our bad inclinations. There is a custom to learn Torah all night.

**Shemini Atzeret** – the day after Sukkot, considered a festival in its own right. It is a day representing the spiritual connection between God and the Jewish people. There are no overt commands or practices on this day, and the idea is that it is the opportunity for the Jewish people to simply be at one with their Creator.

**Simchat Torah** – celebrates the conclusion of the annual cycle of Torah readings. There is a custom to dance with the Torah scrolls and express our deep happiness to have the Torah, the source of all Jewish wisdom.



*part 2:*  
**Yom Kippur  
and Sukkot**





Ta'am (taste in Hebrew), headed by Ilana Epstein, is the latest addition to the JFT family. For more information, please email [info@taam.org.uk](mailto:info@taam.org.uk)

# signs of the season



Old-Fashioned Apple Cake  
pg. 77

**In every culture and throughout the world, there are foods that are eaten to usher in the new year; each one encapsulating its own symbolism and hope for a prosperous, safe, happy and healthy year ahead.**

In Spain, they eat twelve grapes as the clock strikes 12 on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December.

The Chinese have the custom to eat 'long-life' noodles. In Germany and Scandinavian countries, herrings are eaten on midnight on the 31<sup>st</sup> and because of their abundance, corn bread is eaten in the American South because its colour resembles gold.

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is a holiday overflowing with symbolism. The easiest way to access some of the symbols of the season is through what the Talmud terms 'auspicious foods'.

In Hebrew, the word for sign is 'siman'. The special foods for Rosh Hashanah are often referred to as 'the simanim'.

They are foods that either grow in abundance, resemble something we hope and pray to be blessed with in the year to come, or the words

used to describe them are linguistically connected to something we hope and dream for in the future.

The custom in many Jewish homes is to make a short blessing over an apple dipped in honey - for a good and sweet New Year ("Shana Tova u'Metukah") and from then on, our aspirations are connected to foods such as dates, pomegranates, carrots and fish, just to name a few. These are the fun and evocative traditions of people just like us who have for over a millennium sat at their families' Rosh Hashanah tables wishing for only the best for themselves and their communities.

This Rosh Hashanah, we encourage you to have a go at making and serving some of our delicious recipes that are filled with seasonal and auspicious foods. Take part in this wonderful tradition of saying or just feeling the blessings coming your way for an amazing year ahead.

Photography by Blake Ezra, Recipes and Styling by Ilana Epstein  
Recipes testers: Gitel Brukier, Yael Fisher, Deborah Garson, Shira Joseph,  
Sara Kalmus, Yael Roodyn & Rivka Zeidman





## ROASTED CARROTS

A number of the symbolic foods for Rosh Hashanah find their symbolism through a play on words. The Hebrew word for carrot is 'gezzar', which sounds a lot like the Hebrew word for decree - 'gezeirah'.

We ask that God should tear up any bad decree that is made against us.

Cook's notes: adding the honey at the end of the roasting ensures that the honey doesn't burn before the carrots are roasted through.

**1 kilo carrots, peeled and trimmed, and sliced in half lengthways, if very thick slice into quarters**

**4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil**

**1 tbsp lemon juice**

**6 sprigs thyme**

**sea salt and cracked black pepper**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60ml) honey**

Preheat oven to 200°C.

Place the carrots on a large baking tray with the oil, lemon juice, thyme, salt and pepper and toss to combine. Roast for 30 minutes or until the carrots are tender. If they are not tender, cook for an additional 5-10 minutes.

Drizzle the honey over the carrots and roast for an additional 5 minutes.





On Rosh Hashanah, our requests are filled with our worldly needs and desires. Our ancestors in their homes weren't just concerned about their livelihood and families; they were also concerned for their safety. As a result, a number of our blessings on the auspicious foods are about seeing our enemies scattered far, far away from us.



## ROASTED BEETROOT

**16 baby beetroot, peeled and halved (or 8 large beetroot cut into quarters)**

**100ml soy sauce**

**2 star-anise**

**4 cloves**

**2 garlic cloves, still in their skin**

**salt and pepper to taste**

**olive oil for roasting**

Heat the oven to 200°C.

Line a large baking tray with foil and add the beetroot. Add the soy sauce, star anise, cloves, garlic and a good drizzle of olive oil. Then pour in 200ml water and toss the beetroot to coat. Wrap foil over the tray and roast the beetroot for 60 minutes. Test whether the beetroot are tender by poking the tip of a sharp knife into one of them, if it slides in easily the beetroot is ready. If there is still some resistance cover and cook for another 10 minutes. Drain the beetroot from the tray and season with salt and pepper.

## LEEK FRITTERS

Cook's notes: the fritters can be made ahead of time and reheated on a baking tray in a single layer.

**1.5 kilo leeks (about 8 medium)**

**50g matzah meal**

**3 eggs**

**Salt and pepper to taste**

**oil for frying**

Use the white and light green parts of the leek. Halve the leeks lengthways and rinse out very well. Cut the leeks half an inch thick. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to the boil, add the leeks and boil until very tender – about 20 minutes. Drain well, let cool and squeeze dry then place in a large mixing bowl.

Add the matzah meal and eggs to the leeks, mix well and season to taste. Line a tray or dish with paper towels and set aside. In a large frying pan, pour in enough oil to more than cover the bottom of the pan. When the oil is hot, shape the leek mixture into patties about two inches in diameter and half an inch thick. Add the patties to the hot oil, cook for about four minutes on each side until set and golden brown. Place on paper lined tray.







## FISH IN GOLDEN SAUCE

- adapted from Joyce Goldstein's 'The New Mediterranean Jewish Table'.

On Rosh Hashanah, fish represents our wish to multiply and flourish like the fish in the sea. This Moroccan fish dish, in its golden sauce with its aromatic saffron flavouring, is a beautiful addition to bring the blessing of abundance to our tables.

**3 medium lemons, all peel and pith removed, sliced very thin**

**1 tbsp ground turmeric**

**salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**olive oil**

**4 cloves garlic, minced**

**1 tsp saffron threads, steeped in (160 ml)  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup hot water**

**1 bunch fresh coriander (washed well and checked) chopped**

**6 fish fillets, such as halibut or cod**

Place lemon slices in a shallow bowl or platter and sprinkle with turmeric and salt. Using a fork, press down on the slices to extract the juices. Drizzle with some olive oil and set aside for one hour at room temperature.

Heat a large pan over medium heat. Once hot, drizzle in about two tablespoons of olive oil, sauté the garlic for thirty seconds and add the lemon slices and juices in one layer on the bottom of the pan, add half the coriander. Lower the heat. Place the fish fillets over the lemons and season the fish with salt and pepper to taste. Pour the saffron water over the fish fillets.

Cover the pan with a lid and cook for 5-8 minutes until the fish is opaque in the centre. Twice during the cooking time, tilt the pan and use a spoon to pick up juices and baste the fish.

Once cooked through, remove from the pan with the juices, serve warm or at room temperature. Season and add the remaining coriander just before serving.













## BRISKET WITH POMEGRANATES

Pomegranates with their numerous jewel like seeds are a favourite Rosh Hashanah symbolic food. They represent our desire that our good deeds in the year to come are as numerous as the seeds of the pomegranate. In this brisket we combine aromatic flavours of the Mediterranean to a slow cooked roast to create a flavourful combination.

Cook's notes: this dish is even better served the day after it has been cooked.

**2-2.5 kilo fresh beef brisket, brought to room temperature**

**salt and pepper**

**2 tbsp vegetable oil**

**2 large onions, sliced**

**6 garlic cloves, minced**

**1 tbsp tomato paste**

**1 tbsp ground cumin**

**1 ½ tsp ground cardamom**

**30g plain flour**

**470ml pomegranate juice**

**350ml chicken broth**

**3 bay leaves**

**1 cup pomegranate seeds**

**3 tbsp chopped fresh coriander**

Preheat oven to 170°C.

Season the brisket on both sides generously with salt and pepper. Heat oil in large roasting pan over medium heat until shimmering. Add onions and cook, stirring frequently, until onions have started to soften and break down, 4-5 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in tomato paste, cumin and cardamom. Add flour and cook, stirring constantly until onions are evenly coated and flour begins to stick to pan, about 2 minutes. Stir in pomegranate juice, broth and bay leaves, scraping up any browned bits. Increase heat to medium-high and bring to boil. Boil for 2 minutes, and take off the heat.

Place brisket in pan. Cover pan tightly with aluminium foil, transfer to oven, and cook for 3.5-4 hours until a fork inserted in the brisket pulls out with no resistance. Transfer roast to carving board and slice against grain ¼ inch thick. Transfer to wide serving platter.

Season sauce with salt and pepper to taste and pour over brisket. Sprinkle with pomegranate seeds and coriander and serve.

To make ahead: Refrigerate cooked sauce and unsliced roast separately for up to 2 days. To serve, slice roast against grain ¼ inch thick and transfer to a baking dish. Heat sauce in small saucepan over medium heat until just simmering. Pour sauce over brisket, cover dish with aluminium foil and cook in 170°C oven until meat is heated through, about 20 minutes.







## DATE ICE CREAM

In the Bible, when referring to the 'Land of Milk and Honey' it is most likely that the reference to honey is that of dates. Date honey – called 'silan' in Hebrew – is wonderful drizzled over yoghurt. In this recipe, we have used dates combined with biscuit spread to create a caramel-like swirl in vanilla ice cream. The results are delicious and bring to mind a 'Land of Milk and Honey'.

**90ml non-dairy milk**

**60g soft pitted dates**

**90g biscuit spread**

**1 tsp pure vanilla extract**

**¼ tsp salt**

**1 pint non-dairy vanilla ice cream, softened**

Place all ingredients other than ice cream in a blender or food processor and blend into a smooth consistency. Transfer the softened ice cream to a freezer-safe container. Using a spoon, place dollops of the date mixture over the ice cream base in the container. Using a skewer or sharp knife, gently swirl the two mixtures together. Cover the container and place in the freezer to set for at least 4-5 hours or overnight.

## OLD-FASHIONED APPLE CAKE

We dip apples in honey and bless each other with a good and sweet new year. This cake, studded with apples, cinnamon, chocolate and lemon covered in a honey glaze, is the most delicious version. It is our interpretation of apple dipped in honey.

Cook's notes: This is a dense cake and takes its time in the oven. Don't be tempted to turn up the heat, as the outside will burn before the centre is cooked.

### CAKE:

**280g plain flour**

**260g granulated sugar**

**¾ tsp salt**

**2 tsp baking powder**

**3 eggs**

**175ml vegetable oil**

**60ml orange juice**

**1 tsp vanilla extract**

**finely grated rind of a lemon**

**juice of half a lemon**

**100g dark chocolate (70% cocoa) chopped**

### FILLING:

**1 apple, peeled and thinly sliced**

**½ tbsp cinnamon**

**2 tbsp sugar**

### GLAZE:

**50g icing sugar**

**2 tsp honey**

**2 tsp lemon juice**

Preheat oven to 170°C.

Lightly grease and line a round 8 inch x 3 inch deep baking tin with paper and set aside.

Combine the apple slices, cinnamon and sugar in a small bowl and set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, salt and baking powder. Make a well in the centre of the dry mixture and add the eggs, oil, orange juice, vanilla, lemon rind and lemon juice. Using a heavy duty whisk or a strong large metal spoon mix all ingredients very well together, ensuring that all the flour from the bottom of the bowl has been incorporated. Stir in the chopped chocolate and mix until evenly distributed.

Pour half the batter into the prepared tin, layer the apples over the batter evenly and cover with the remaining batter. Place the cake in the preheated oven and bake for 55-60 minutes until a knife inserted in the centre comes out clean.

Allow the cake to cool completely before glazing. For the honey glaze, combine icing sugar, lemon and honey until smooth, using a spoon drizzle the cake all over with the glaze and let the glaze set before serving.

The cake can be made a day before serving. Store in an airtight container.





# Aish Campus Trip to South Africa

**T**his summer saw over 70 students travelling to two continents with Genesis, the campus division of Aish UK, engaging in immersive experiences in the arena of social action as well as career developing internships.

Genesis South Africa gave a group of 40 students a four week opportunity to explore some of the most struggling communities on the planet and get involved in putting into action the Jewish values they have learnt at the weekly programme. In Johannesburg the students learnt about the history of the country, the difficult period of apartheid and the current political problems the country is facing. They then travelled to Hoedspruit, just under an hour away from Kruger National Park where they began the next stage of their journey. This involved assisting the locals tilling their land, leading a summer camp for the school children and clearing parts of the bush to make it habitable for wildlife. The students had to log animal sightings, bird locations and tracks to help in the massive conservation efforts of endangered species. In between this challenging work they found some time for safari game drives, quad biking, paint balling, tubing, river crossing and zip lining.

Alongside the community work, Genesis ran a fully interactive and engaging educational programme looking at some of the biggest questions relating to

Judaism in the 21st century. With daily seminars, guest speakers, and collaborative debates it all merged with the positive work the students were involved in to make an unforgettable trip which will last for many years to come. Returning to the UK after being immersed in the difficult job of making the world brighter for those who are less fortunate, left the students enthused to bring those lessons of appreciation and passion to make a difference back to campuses across the country. 🏹







# FJL USA Internship Programme

**T**he Forum for Jewish Leadership completed their flagship trip to New York and Washington D.C. for five weeks this summer. Twenty eight students from twelve of the UK's top universities had the opportunity to participate in prestigious internships from a variety of professions, including journalism at The Daily Forward, research at Fortress Biotech, venture capital at The Wolfson Group, and many more.

In the evenings, the participants were treated to some of the country's most influential leaders in business and politics. Speakers such as Senator Joseph Lieberman, and Assistant Deputy Director to the NSA Anne Neuberger. Global Head of Human Resources for Bloomberg Corporation Kenneth Cooper and CEO of the Lawfare Project, Brooke Goldstein, were amongst those who gave insights into their professional careers.

Throughout the programme, the students explored the Jewish underpinnings of community leadership with the FJL team of educators. Aish CEO Rabbi Daniel Rowe, NYU Professor of Literature Dr. Leya Landau, FJL Director Ben Thwaites, and FJL Educators Rabbi Moshe and Shalvie Friedman provided intellectually challenging seminars at the highest level.

From Times Square to Capitol Hill, from the United Nations to Ground Zero, these future leaders gained invaluable skills, ideas, and memories to inspire them to face the Jewish and global challenges of tomorrow. ✨







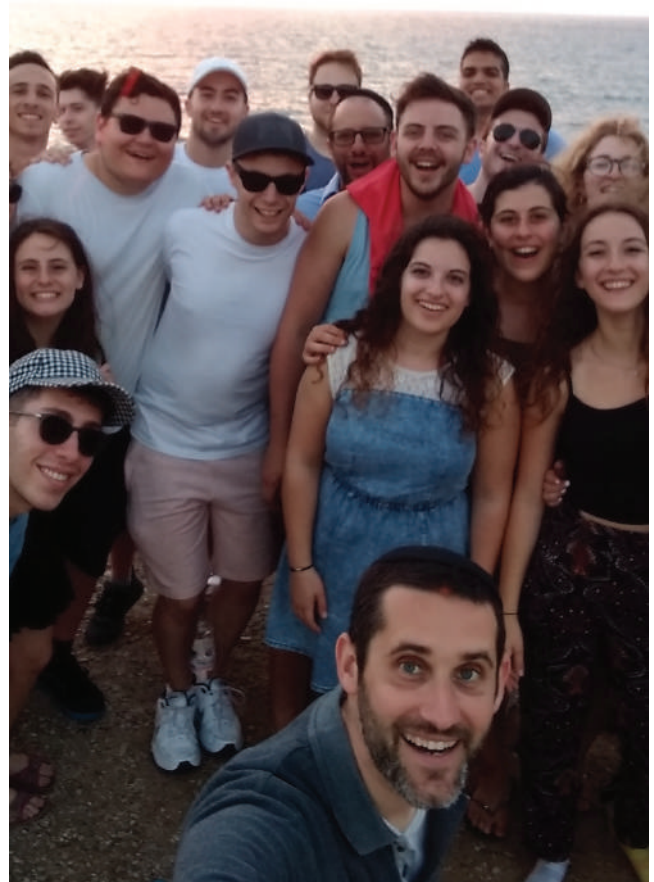
## Genesis jInternship trip in Israel

**T**his summer saw the first Aish UK summer internship programme in Israel with over 30 students taking part in a variety of tracks.

Genesis, the campus division of Aish UK, teamed up with the JLE and jInternship in Jerusalem, where students became part of the fabric of this amazing city, living in self-catered apartments close to the Mahane Yehuda market, gaining valuable work experience, studying and enjoying an inspirational summer where lifelong friendships have been made.

Genesis jInterns spent eight weeks working in the fields of business, finance, medical research, marketing, sports and politics, with an evening programme of fun activities, top Jewish educators and the buzzing Jerusalem nightlife meeting hundreds of other interns, volunteers and students from across the Jewish world.

Highlights of the programme included visiting the Beit Halochem Centre for injured IDF veterans, Friday nights at the Western Wall, making a Shabbat party for the kids of the Aleh home for severely disabled children, water hikes, laser tag in a Jerusalem forest, BBQs in the park and even a meditative night hike in the Judean desert! 🏹







## Genesis Volunteering in Bet Elazraki

Within the Israel summer programme, Genesis students had the opportunity to volunteer for three weeks staffing a summer camp at Bet Elazraki in Netanya, home to over 200 children who can't live with their own families for various reasons, and a week assigned to various departments at Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Hospital.

This summer saw the second year of the special partnership between Genesis and Bet Elazraki after its Director, Yehuda Kohn, moved hearts touring the UK as one of last year's headline campus speakers.

"One of the biggest surprises for us was the amount of joy and happiness we encountered every day. Yehuda Kohn and his staff bring so much joy and love into their home. Parties were a common occurrence and the children loved to dance. Seeing this was such an uplifting experience as we could see how happy each and every child was there. One afternoon a girl was upset and she took me outside and opened up Google translate to let me know what was wrong. From then on, I knew that I could really make a difference and still be able to make connections despite the language barrier." – Sarah Weston (Nottingham University)

"Having one on one time with the kids was my highlight, especially putting the girls to bed at night, where we would stay with them until they fell asleep. On the last night one of the girls told me whilst I was putting her to bed that although I was leaving, I would always be in her heart. Since leaving we are still in touch with the kids, showing that just because the programme is over doesn't mean these friendships will end and we're looking forward to seeing them again the next time we're in Israel." – Eliana Friend (London)







# The Mayerfelds

**T**oday we say a collective goodbye to family Mayerfeld. It is fair to say that there are not many families more synonymous with Aish UK than the Mayerfelds. From the moment they arrived in the UK and joined Aish UK – then a small organisation with no branches outside of London – Rabbi Mayerfeld moved into a car and lived there making daily stops in different campuses, following up with students all over the country, while Liat began teaching in schools, campus and running young professional programmes.

For years they were at the core of the incredible growth of Aish UK as it went from a couple of small summer Fellowships programmes to taking 1,000 students a year, helping to oversee the creation of branches in Manchester, Essex, Leeds, Birmingham, Nottingham and Oxbridge.

More recently, they have led the Young Professionals division, moving out of the relative comfort of Golders Green and into West Hampstead, to be closer to the many students they had created over the years. The Mayerfelds have helped see hundreds of students to their Jewish Chuppahs and build strong Jewish homes. Their open home, always filled with students day and night, have made them a family that simply cannot be replaced.

Aish UK is forever grateful for the contribution they have made and wish them continued success in their next venture in community work in the USA.

Rabbi Moshe and Rebbetzin Liat Mayerfeld reflect on the 20 years they spent in the UK serving the community.

“We have had so many people in our home, classes, on trips with us. It has been an epic 20 years here in the UK. For me the most memorable things will be the weddings. Watching students/friends of ours, some of which we knew since they were 17 years old, walking down the aisle to their Chuppah. Building a Jewish home. Watching them take those steps, helping them prepare for these moments, that is priceless and precious beyond words.” – Rebbetzin Liat Mayerfeld

“I love two things. I love people and I love Judaism. When I have the chance to bring those two things together that is a true taste of euphoria! I have learned so much from my time in the UK, some through hard work, some through experience. There are two moments that stand out for me. One was when I had been working for Aish for about a year and half. A young lady who came on a trip with us lost her life in the most tragic of circumstances. I was her Rabbi. The family asked me to speak at her funeral, something I never had done before. I was 25 years old. She was



just 17! I grew a lot that day. However the support and realisation that our job as educators wasn't always going to be fun and games – it was about people. And people need love, care, respect, support, and understanding no matter what. That is what it is all about.

The second was the realisation of how important it is to reach out to people no matter what. I had just taught a lunch and learn in the city and I noticed there was no food left! I took the last packet of crisps and headed back to the Aish office on the Tube. As I got onto the train a young women walked on, sobbing. I broke the London Underground rule, and asked her if she was ok? She just continued to cry. I didn't have a tissue on me or anything, so I offered her all I had. "Would you like some crisps?" She sort of smiled

through the tears but it didn't really help. She got off a few stops later and I felt empty as I hadn't really been able to help.

Two weeks later I was speaking in a local Synagogue in Hampstead on Shabbat morning. After the service a woman came over to me and said "Thank you". "For my speech?" I asked. She replied "Don't you recognise me, I am thanking you for the crisps!" She asked if she could introduce me to her uncle, I replied of course. When she took me to him over Kiddush, he said 'Hello R' Moshe' before she even had a chance to say anything, she asked me how do you know each other? I told her it was his office that I had given the lunch and learn in that day! Since then she has been to our home for Shabbat a number of times." – Rabbi Moshe Mayerfeld





# New Faces at Aish UK

## The Levys – Birmingham Campus

**R**abbi Doniel is a successful lawyer at Hassans International Law Firm and Sophie is a full-time midwife, mother and homemaker, currently living in the beautiful holiday destination of Gibraltar.

On the side, the Levys enjoy working together to create and run community projects. In their four years on The Rock, they have jointly set up and led two Jewish youth movements and pioneered a host of social and informal-educational programmes and initiatives for children, teens and adults. Doniel is also a governor of Gibraltar's Jewish primary school and leads community projects for the Gibraltar Kollel. In his spare time, he learns, lectures, tutors, writes articles and generally tries to make the world a better place.

Doniel grew up in Hendon and learned in yeshiva in Israel, returning to London to read Law at UCL. During this time, he was a Madrich for Aish UK, head of Food For Thought and Executive Director of Ezra UK. Sophie grew up in Gibraltar, then attended Michlala seminary in Jerusalem, before moving to London for her Midwifery degree at Middlesex University.

After law school and getting married, Doniel was a teacher at Beit Shvidler Primary School for two wonderful years. Immediately before moving to Gibraltar, he was appointed the National Project Manager of The Chief Rabbi's ShabbatUK in the first ever Shabbos Project, coordinating the central campaign and working very closely with Rabbi Daniel Rowe.



The Levys are excited to leave law and midwifery and dedicate their energies full time to education and the next generation of young British Jews. Having returned from the Genesis South Africa trip, Doniel is bursting with excitement at getting to know the rest of the students in Birmingham and hosting them all for Shabbat. Sophie, Doniel and their gorgeous daughter Tamar are looking forward to welcoming you to their new home in Birmingham!



## The Kotts – West Hampstead

**S**hmuel and Chava, along with their sons Simcha and Lev, start an exciting new chapter of their lives right here in London. Both born and raised in the United States, their love for Israel led them to begin their life together in Jerusalem, where they have been living for the past six years.

After having studied in some of the finest yeshivas in the US and Israel, Shmuel received his Bachelors in Talmudic studies from Beth Medrash Gevoah in Lakewood, New Jersey, and more recently received Rabbinic Ordination from the Jerusalem Kollel. Fueled by his passion for the Jewish people, Shmuel worked extensively with the New York Jewish young adult population at his position as Program Director for the Russian American Jewish Experience. Shmuel is also an avid singer, loves to travel, and is eager to explore the UK's outdoors.

Chava, after spending two years living and studying in Israel and then receiving her Masters in Clinical Social Work from the University of Maryland, returned to live in the Old City of Jerusalem, where she joined Jerusalem U as Managing Director of Education. She is passionate about producing top quality education, and has commanded the production of dozens of extremely successful video productions and educational series. Over the past few years Chava has gained a reputation as an emerging leader in the online marketing field as a YouTube creator and content marketing strategist.

With their warm and outgoing personalities, matched with their genuine love for people and community, Shmuel and Chava are thrilled to join the team at Aish UK. They look forward to opening their home and connecting with the Jewish young professional crowd in West Hampstead, where they will be moving this September.



# aish

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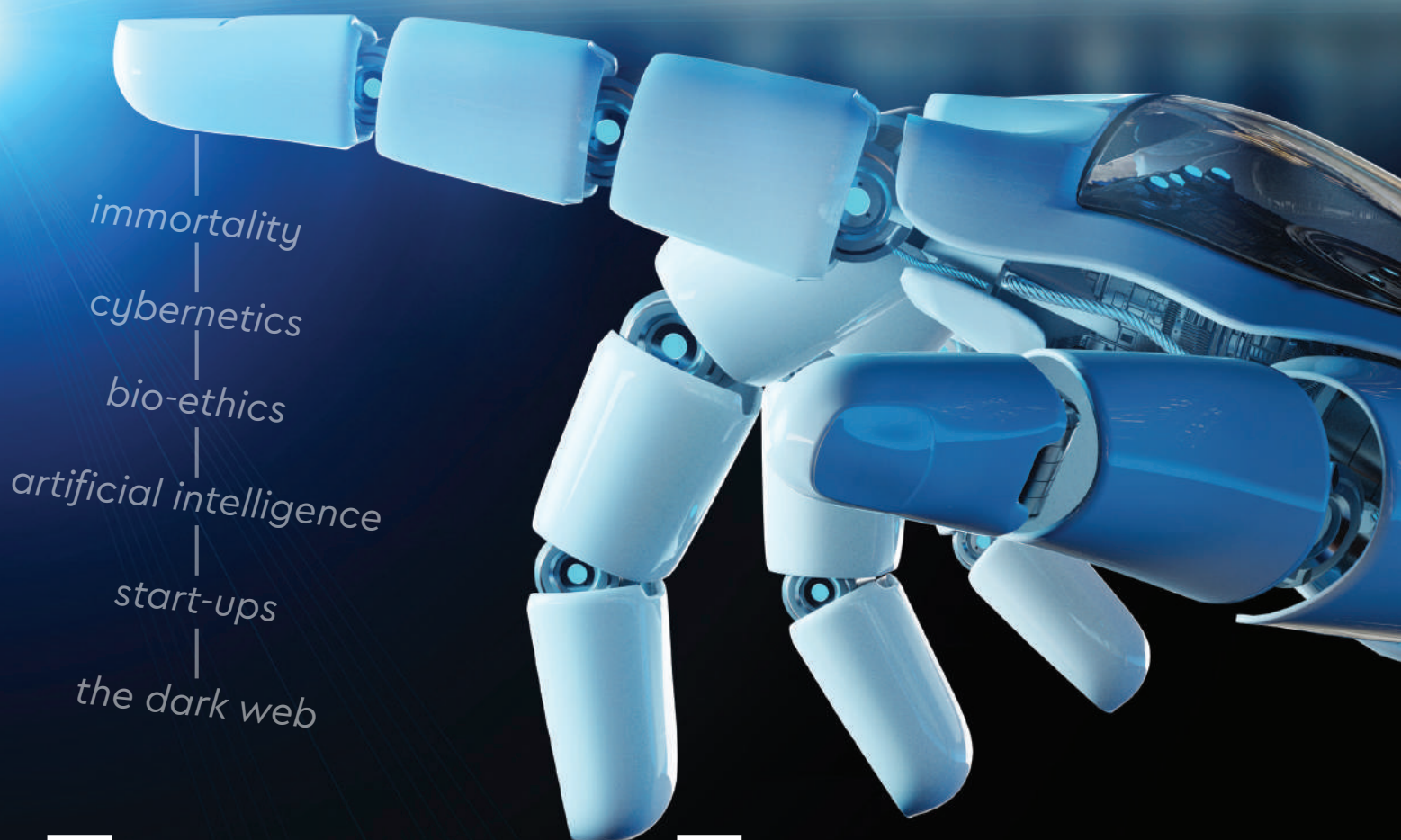
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# Have you enjoyed this magazine?

**Did you know that Aish UK also provides educational and social opportunities for thousands of young British Jews across the country?**

Aish UK operates eight full time branches and provides educational opportunities at over 18 schools, 15 universities and 6 young professional hubs around the country, reaching and impacting thousands of young Jews each year. We also regularly publish educational and video content online and through our social media channels. This Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, our team of educators can be found at communities around the UK, offering a range of inspiring and entertaining talks.



“Aish UK has provided the space for me to grow into my personal Jewish identity alongside other like-minded young professionals. Through a unique understanding of the needs of us millennials, Aish is now the hub of my Jewish life and, I am sure, of many others too.”

– Joshua, Essex

*This Rosh Hashanah, please help us to build a stronger and more engaged future for Anglo-Jewry.*

To show your support please visit  
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Wishing all of our readers and supporters  
a happy and healthy New Year

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