

# PERSPECTIVES

ISSUE 18 | ROSH HASHANAH 5784 | SEPTEMBER 2023

The magazine of  
**jewish  
futures**

## REEL VALUES

*Star Wars, Jurassic Park,  
Schindler's List, Netflix's  
Jewish Matchmaking and  
a BAFTA premiere*

## Fashion, Decor & Recipe Inspiration

*For the High Holy Days and Beyond*

## GIFT@20

*Celebrating 20 Years  
of Inspiring Giving*

## Wandering

*The Jews of Marrakech, Venice & Tehran*



# 3 GOOD

# DEEDs

IN HONOUR OF LUCY, MAIA AND RINA...  
JOIN EVERYONE IN DOING 3 GOOD  
DEEDS EACH MONTH



Once you've completed them,  
log onto: [jgift.org/3goodDEEDs/](https://jgift.org/3goodDEEDs/)  
and record your good DEEDs in the DEED library of Kindness.





# DEAR READERS,

Welcome to the eighteenth issue of Perspectives Magazine. This Rosh Hashanah issue is aptly themed Giving, a nod to GIFT's landmark 20th anniversary, celebrated through poignant, and at times humorous, contributions from its founders, directors and members.

I was reminded of a powerful insight: Giving is the very essence of Love. Intriguingly, in Hebrew, 'Giving' is the root of the word 'Love.' As you will discover in this issue, the act of giving is reflexive. Many of us grow up hearing and believing that 'love is give and take.' When I began dating my husband, he shared his vision of enduring love: it's not about 'give and take,' but rather 'give and give.' By giving thought, time, energy, and of ourselves to one another, selflessly, the bond is constantly being fortified and deepened, becoming ever more secure while creating space for incredible feeling and emotion.

In this Rosh Hashanah edition, we've curated pieces that touch on the multifaceted nature of giving, love, and selflessness. Rabbi Leo Dee delves into the pain and catharsis of organ donations in the wake of his unfathomable family tragedy in a powerful and inspiring interview with Jewish Futures CEO Rabbi Naftali Schiff. Léa Ouahba Kohen captures the essence of love and giving through a photo essay on Jewish weddings.

This edition also features gripping stories: a unique personal connection by our Editor-in-Chief Ari Kayser to Anne Frank's famed diary, the thrilling search to verify astounding claims of Nazi hunting which culminated in a BAFTA premiere and a bestselling book, and a personal account of contemporary Jewish life in Tehran. For the first time I have chosen to share a personal experience: straddling my exciting professional life (performing internationally as a classical concert pianist, working with opera singers, and coaching behind the scenes on major movie sets including *Star Wars*) while on a journey of self-discovery that empowered me to be uncompromising about living a meaningful and balanced observant Jewish life.

Don't miss our Introspection section, full of ideas and inspiration with which to approach the upcoming High Holy Days with depth and meaning - complete with a guide to pull out and stick on your fridge! *Valour* magazine is back with another gorgeous Fashion Edit with a special guest contributor. Discover how an Emmy-winning news producer is redefining modern news, delve into a conversation with a standout from Netflix's *Jewish Matchmaking*, explore wellness tips to ensure we prioritise self-care, and last but not least, whet your appetite with stunning photos and recipes in our food section featuring recipes from a celebrity cookbook author's new release.

These stories, among others in this issue, remind us of the transformative power of giving – the profound impact it has not only on the receiver but also on the giver. Dive in, and let these narratives inspire you and stir your heart.

**SASHA SILBER**



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rabbi Naftali Schiff

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Rabbi Ari Kayser

## EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Sasha Silber

## SENIOR EDITOR

Ilana Epstein

## DESIGN

Chava Leah Rosha

Batya Kestecher

Ari Rosha

## COVER DESIGN

Dan Matalon

## TRUSTEES

Edward Misrahi (Chair)

Rabbi Naftali Schiff (CEO)

Joanna Benarroch

David Hammelburger

Karen Harris

Edward Lee

David Morris

Debra Sobel

**To advertise with us or  
get in touch, contact us at:**

[info@jfutures.org](mailto:info@jfutures.org)

[info@jfutures.org](mailto:info@jfutures.org)  
379 Hendon Way,  
London NW4 3LP  
Registered Charity No.  
1069048



# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

- Rabbi Naftali Schiff in Conversation  
with Rabbi Leo Dee  
**SASHA SILBER** **08**
- The Point: A Behind the Scenes Look at  
*Star Wars* and Self-Discovery  
**SASHA SILBER** **12**
- Confronting Real Monsters:  
Steven Spielberg's Dilemma in Creating *Schindler's List*  
And *Jurassic Park* at the Same Time  
**ADAM FOX** **17**
- A Boy, His Neighbor, and Her Diary  
**ARI KAYSER** **19**
- Chasing Josef's Story  
**JONATHAN KALMUS** **23**
- BAFTA Launch & Screening  
**JESSICA FINGER** **27**

## GIFT @ 20

- You Can't Take it With You!  
Give It Forward Today!  
**NAFTALI SCHIFF** **30**
- GIFT's Remarkable Journey:  
Celebrating 20 Years of Inspiring Giving  
**MICHELLE BARNETT** **33**
- Onwards and Upwards  
**SANDOR MILUN** **34**
- Stories of Giving  
**GARETH KOBRIN** **36**
- The Ultimate Stressbuster  
**AVROHOM ZEIDMAN** **40**
- Wandering  
The Secret Garden of the Scola Spagnola Synagogue  
**SASHA SILBER** **114**

## WORLD

- Journey Through the Mellah  
Discovering Morocco's Jewish Story  
**ARI KAYSER** **43**
- New News: A Conversation about News Innovation  
**WITH MOSHEH QUINOUNOU AND BENYAMIN MOALEM** **46**
- Together but Separate: The Jews of Tehran  
**YISSCA WEISZ** **49**
- The Multipolar World  
**DARREN COHEN** **53**





## JEWISH FUTURES PERSPECTIVES ON THE HIGH HOLIDAYS

58



## WELLNESS

Simplify Your Home **64**  
**DEBBIE PASTER**

Managing our Mental Health **66**  
**HAYLEY AARON, JAMI**

Anger Management **69**  
**ARYEH SAMSON**



## CULTURE

Jews & Shoes **85**  
**ILANA EPSTEIN**

All I See is Love: **93**  
A Photo Essay  
**LÉA OUAHBA KOHEN**

The Sukkah Edit: **104**  
Beauty & Meaning  
**ILANA EPSTEIN**

Butterflies & Eagles **106**  
**HADASSAH CHEN**

Valour x Perspectives: **107**  
The Fashion Edit  
**VALOUR**

## INTROSPECTION



Mirror, Mirror **71**  
**ELI BIRNBAUM**

Women's Intuition: **75**  
The Seven Prophetesses  
**ELISHEVA NEWMAN**

Setting Intentions: **78**  
A Guide to Meaningful Reflection During Shofar Blasts  
**YAAKOV KLEIN**

The Parenthood Paradox: **81**  
Insights from Avinu Malkeinu  
**ELISHEVA LISS**



## FOOD

Good & Sweet: **97**  
A Ta'amim Rosh Hashanah Menu Infused with Honey  
**TA'AMIM**

Adeena Sussman: **108**  
Celebrating the Joy of Shabbat Through Food  
**ILANA EPSTEIN**



# CONTRIBUTORS



## MICHELLE BARNETT

Educated at Haberdashers and Brovender's Seminary, Michelle holds a Psychology BA and MAs in Social Work and Psychotherapy & Counselling. GIFT began at Michelle's kitchen table in 2004, gathering excess bread from bakeries each week and redistributing it to struggling families, whilst continuing her work as a probation officer. Almost 20 years later that passion has created an organisation that has left an indelible mark on the Jewish community. In November 2022, Michelle was honoured to be presented with an MBE by King Charles III at Windsor Castle.



## ELI BIRNBAUM

Eli studied in Talmudic College in Israel for six years before moving on to study for rabbinic ordination at the Jerusalem Kollel. Eli has worked in the JLE's campus department, as a Jewish Studies teacher at Hasmonean, and as Director of Aish UK's young professional department. From September 2023, Eli and his wife Naomi will be the new Head of Community Development at Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue. Eli is a lifelong Spurs fan and an avid reader, citing his favourite book as *Legends of Our Time* by Elie Wiesel.



## HADASSAH CHEN

Hadassah Chen is a journalist from Milan, Italy who hosts a talk show called Real Talk with Hadassah Chen on Arutz 7, where she interviews a diverse range of guests. She also writes a weekly column for The Magazine, The Jerusalem Post Weekend Edition. Hadassah and her husband Yossi have five children. They tragically lost their daughter Navi at the age of 2, after a year-long battle with Neuroblastoma. In her memory, they started a foundation to assist families dealing with illness and requiring financial support. Hadassah and her family live in Jerusalem, Israel.



## DARREN COHEN

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



## ILANA EPSTEIN

Ilana Epstein is a dedicated member of the senior rabbinic team at the Western Marble Arch Synagogue in Central London, partnering with her husband Daniel. As an Educator of Jewish history, culture and tradition, she imparts her knowledge and passion to the community. Ilana studied at Yeshiva University Stern College, where she acquired a strong foundation in her field. She was selected for the inaugural cohort of the prestigious Rabbi Sacks Scholars programme.



## ELISHEVA LISS

Elisheva Liss, LMFT, is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice. She shares psychoeducation and spiritual musings via her blog, social media, her book, "Find Your Horizon of Healthy Thinking," and digital courses, including: "Sacred, Not Secret: A Religious Family's Guide to Healthy, Holy Sexuality Education" and "How to Get the Most out of Therapy." She offers weekly relationship wisdom bytes sourced from *Shir HaShirim*, the Song of Songs, exclusively to her free email subscriber list. Her content, including over 150 blog posts, video, and audio material, can be accessed at [ElishevaLiss.com](http://ElishevaLiss.com).



## SANDOR MILUN

Rabbi Sandor Milun, a South African native, earned a black belt in judo and represented South Africa at the 1997 Maccabi games in Israel. After obtaining an Economics degree and living in Israel for six years, Sands (as known to friends) became Program Director of the Jewish Experience of Madison (JEM) in 2007, engaging with over 5,000 Jewish students. Later in London, he moved up the ranks in JLE to become the Campus Director. By March 2019, he joined GIFT as the Managing Director, leading initiatives like the COVID-19 response and Ukraine collections.



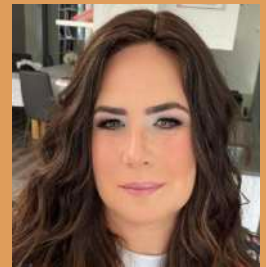
## BENYAMIN MOALEM

When not curating the news from Israel, Benyamin works as a Chicago-based attorney. While originally from Chicago, he also lived in New York for ten years and now spends part of the year working remotely from Israel. Benyamin also worked as a Foreign Law Clerk for the Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Israel, Eliezer Rivlin, from 2011-12, and is a frequent contributor to *The Times of Israel* and *The Forward*.



## ELISHEVA NEWMAN

Elisheva has just moved to Hendon with her husband and children after two incredible years living in Bristol as AishUK Campus Educators. Passionate about people and Judaism, Elisheva opened her heart and home to the students of Bristol. Elisheva holds a BSc in Mathematics and has QTS. She was an inspiring and much loved teacher at Mathilda Marks Kennedy Primary School for 9 years and loves opportunities to share Jewish values and learning with relevance and depth.



## DEBBIE PASTER

Debbie Paster is the founder of Simplify Your Home Ltd. She has always had a passion for creating both physically and spiritually functioning homes. Additionally, she has used her degree in education as an educator for many local schools including Hasmonean. A native Londoner, Debbie is married with 5 children.





### JONATHAN KALMUS

Jonathan Kalmus is a multi-platform filmmaker and journalist, working with JRoots and Jewish Futures on Holocaust documentaries which have uncovered new history, while developing Virtual Reality and other digital experiences for Holocaust education. As a journalist he's written news and investigative stories for The Times, The Telegraph, The Daily Mail, Jerusalem Post and Jerusalem Report, with a focus on the impact of antisemitism, terrorism and the Holocaust on contemporary society.



### ARI KAYSER

Rabbi Ari Kayser is the Head of Media for Jewish Futures and the Editor-in-Chief of Perspectives magazine. Ari leads a talented team of creatives who produce captivating video and media content for 12 charities, each making a unique impact on the community. In 2020, Ari was instrumental in creating 'Maven,' the online courses of Aish UK. As an experienced educator, Ari relishes the challenge of conveying authentic Jewish teachings in the language of the 21st century, particularly through immersive experiences and travel.



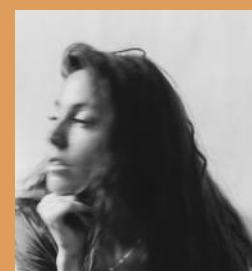
### YAAKOV KLEIN

Rabbi Yaakov Klein is an author, musician, and lecturer devoted to sharing the inner light of Torah through his books, music, and lectures. He is the founding director of Eilecha, an organisation focused on creating opportunities for spiritual growth and experiential education in the local community and beyond. Through classes, content, events, trips, and experiences, Eilecha aims to foster a Jewish experience that is deep, passionate, sincere, joyous, healthy, and eminently relevant, charting a course "Eilecha," toward a vibrant life lived in the warmth of Hashem's embrace.



### GARETH KOBRIK

Gareth is a South African sports lover with a passion for the written word. He is a full-time husband and proud parent of three kids and one brilliant border collie named Buddy. In his spare-time, he transforms into an entrepreneur, using his tax expertise to help businesses with sales tax in the USA. He is co-founder at Yonda, a tax technology company based in London. He loves reading, writing, listening and eating (mainly braais, not barbecues). As a long-time friend of GIFT and the amazing people who work there, he is proud to contribute and give back to this incredible organisation.



### LÉA OUAHBA KOHEN

Léa was born in Paris, and grew up in Yerres. At 18 she received her first camera and began to share her own vision of the world. She simultaneously completed graduate studies in child psychology, web design and photography courses in Canada. At last, Léa chose to go deep and develop her skills in the art of photography. Today, Léa is a sought-after photographer with her own business, managing teams for events, marketing, fashion and more, worldwide, while based in Jerusalem, Israel. Explore more of her art at @leawabphoto and leawabphotography.com



### ARYEH SAMPSON

Aryeh Sampson is a psychotherapist working in North London and online, specialising in couple counselling, anxiety and anger management. He is passionate about sharing psychological insights and has a YouTube channel 'Aryeh Sampson' that has videos covering a wide range of issues. He authored 'Go To Yourself - transformation through Jewish wisdom and psychology.' To request a copy of the book, or for more information about his counselling work, visit [ascounsellinginnorthlondon.co.uk](http://ascounsellinginnorthlondon.co.uk)



### NAFTALI SCHIFF

Rabbi Naftali Schiff is a visionary leader in the Jewish community, having founded and nurtured various successful organisations for the past 30 years, including each that today make up Jewish Futures. In 2015, he created Jewish Futures, a platform uniting educational organisations and initiatives while incubating new ventures with shared values. He holds a BSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics, rabbinic ordination from the Jerusalem Rabbinate, and a Diploma of Education from the Israeli Ministry of Education. Rabbi Schiff continues to lead as Chief Executive, prioritising Jewish continuity and the pursuit of a vibrant Jewish future.



### SASHA SILBER

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



### YISSCA WEISZ

Intrigued by the human condition and its expression through writing, Yissca studied English Literature at University College London. Always an avid reader, Yissca has sifted through manuscripts at literary agency The Blair Partnership, in search of the next bestseller. She has contributed to different publications, including the Observer in New York and Jewish history magazine Segula in Israel. With a keen eye for detail and sensitive to the pulse around her, Yissca conveys on the page what is experienced within.



### AVROHOM ZEIDMAN

Rabbi Avrohom Zeidman designs, writes and presents curricula for the educational arm of GIFT, which aims to inspire the next generation to become givers. He researches Jewish approaches to the development of altruism and uses these to spearhead a range of innovative pedagogic programmes and has taught at schools and university campuses around the UK. Prior to joining GIFT, Rabbi Zeidman worked for Seed UK and the United Synagogue, educating across the Jewish spectrum. He lives in London and is married with seven children.



Rabbi Naftali Schiff (right) in Rabbi Leo Dee's (left) garden in Efrat, Israel

# RABBI NAFTALI SCHIFF

## IN CONVERSATION WITH

# RABBI LEO DEE

**SASHA SILBER**

In the heart of unimaginable tragedy, Rabbi Leo Dee has transcended pain, inspiring the world with his outlook and fortitude in the face of devastating loss.

Born in London, Rabbi Dee - once a chemical engineer with a degree from Cambridge University - transitioned to finance before heeding the call to serve as a senior community rabbi. As a young adult, his wife Lucy had come to Israel with Aish UK's Jerusalem Fellowships Leadership Program, part of her own Jewish Journey. Together, they built and served communities in London until eventually they moved as a family with their children to Israel.

On April 7, 2023 on the first morning of Chol HaMoed Pesach, terrorists opened fire, attacking a car carrying Rabbi Dee's wife Lucy (48), and two of his daughters, Maia (20) and Rina (15) Dee as they drove on family holiday through the northern Jordan Valley. His daughters were killed instantly, while Lucy fought for her life in the hospital for three days before tragically succumbing to her wounds.

Amid the agony, the decision was made to donate Lucy's organs enabling five lives to be saved - her heart continues to beat in the chest of Lital Valencia, and her other organs have provided a lifeline to another four individuals including

Abu Radiya, an Israeli Muslim Arab carpenter and a child named Daniel Gersh.

The surviving Dee children - Keren, Tali, and Yehuda - continue to embody their parents' courage and resilience, whether it is through military service in the Israeli Air Force, academic pursuits, or the looming challenges of high school. They, along with Rabbi Dee, see the organ donations not merely as a consolation, but as a testament to their mother's generosity.

Our own Rabbi Naftali Schiff joins Rabbi Dee in his beautiful home in Efrat, Israel in a moving conversation about mourning, giving, prayer and *shalom*.





Left: Lucy hy'd (left) with her husband Rabbi Leo Dee (right)

Right: Lucy hy'd (left), Rina hy'd (middle) and Maia hy'd (right) Dee

### Rabbi Naftali Schiff

I am joined together with all of the Jewish people, and really, the whole world, as our hearts beat with yours following the tragic, brutal murder of your wife, Lucy, and your daughters Maia and Rina.

Over the years, I have spent countless hours interviewing Holocaust survivors. I always ask the religious survivors how they carried on. When God, as it were, abandoned them, why didn't they abandon Him?

As someone who has chosen to build a relationship with God different from the way you grew up, can you tell me: when suddenly your world was thrown apart, instead of becoming a victim, your connection may have become even closer?

### Rabbi Leo Dee

In our lives, we only have a limited amount of challenges. Even though our challenges are greater than most people's, one can count the number of challenges one has on one hand or maybe two hands, or if you're unlucky, a few hands.

But the number of blessings that we have is infinite. As Rabbi Efreim Goldberg says, you wake up in the morning, gravity works for you and you put your feet on the ground?

That's a miracle. You take a breath of air, your lungs are working and there is oxygen in the air? That's a miracle. The sun rises, gives you heat and makes the plants grow? That's a miracle. Everything is suffused with miracles, we just don't notice them because we are so used to them. So there is an infinite amount of miracles in our lives and a limited amount of challenges.

### RNS

How do you know?

### RLD

If you ask anybody what their challenges are in life, they could probably list them out for you. The ones they can't remember are probably not challenges.

### RNS

Tell me about Lucy, Maia and Rina.

### RLD

Lucy's name in Latin means light. She spread light. This was one of her blessings to people. Friends joined us in celebrating her birthday this summer, and we invited them to talk about her. Each one in their turn expressed how she had seen a spark in them, ignited it and helped them spread it.

Maia's name relates to water, which refers to Torah. She was passionate about it, so much so that

while she volunteered for National Service she started a programme called *NishNoshParsh* for ten minutes once a week during break time to share an idea from the weekly *Parsha* (Torah portion) and feed them snacks. Since it happened, the programme has spread this initiative to 520 schools in Israel thus far. My dream would be to actually spread it to England and America.

Rina's name means a type of happiness that relates to looking forward to the future. It's the type of happiness you have when you sing in the shower, when you're looking forward to something that's about to happen. You met the girl of your dreams and you're about to propose, or you've received a job offer which you are excited about - that's the sense of Rina, the anticipation of the future. Rina embodied this amazing attribute, excitedly awaiting a time when there would be *shalom*.

### RNS

One of the most remarkable things that you have been involved with in the past few months is trying to bring *shalom* into the world. When we say *shalom* to someone, we are saying more than just "hello," but actually giving a blessing of peace. How do you bring *shalom* into the world?

**RLD**

I make a distinction between peace and *shalom*. Peace is a little bit like a mosaic. Every element has to be square, exactly the same shape. You might slide in different colours, but everything has to fit into a rigid structure. *Shalom* is more like a jigsaw puzzle; the pieces can be completely different but fit together if they are in the right format. Those of us who do 2000 piece jigsaw puzzles will know that they are impossible to do on a bumpy tablecloth - the whole thing will fall apart. While the mosaic of peace can be done on a rough surface, *shalom* comes with a precondition of first ironing out the wrinkles. When it comes to world peace, we must get rid of terror and terrorists, and we must never negotiate with the corrupt and evil leaders of their regimes, and only then create peace with the people underneath. Peace assumes that we can stick these terrorists into squares and into a design without getting rid of the crinkles.

The Jewish concept of *Shalom* is very different to the non-Jewish concept of peace, and we need to understand the difference. One of my objectives through this process

would be to change the Oxford English dictionary definition of *Shalom*, currently defined as peace. I would like to replace it with a more sophisticated explanation.

**RNS**

*Shalom* is an integration of complementary, often opposing parts, but coming together to, to form something complete. The blessing of *shalom* that we greet one another with is perhaps actually a practice of giving. During your time living in England, you were familiar with GIFT (Give It Forward Today). Our theory was that getting people to experience giving will help them become natural givers. Do you think giving can be taught?

**RLD**

Yes, I think so. Lucy taught our kids how to give and to be independent. I think in order to be able to give, you have to be very confident in yourself; some people feel that if they give, they're going to "lose a little bit from themselves," as Rabbi Sacks puts it.

Giving is actually something which is not "I give you, and you take." It's not "you win, I lose." Giving is a win-win. I grow and you grow from the giving. In order to get to that perspective, you need to

be very self-confident and proud of who you are, which was something which she endowed the kids with.

Lucy loved the idea of the word *venatnu* (and they shall give), a palindrome when written in its original Hebrew. She would always say "when you give, you receive back." That has been our experience.

We made the decision to donate Lucy's organs. The kids really made the decision, because we are now a family committee of four - two girls, Yehuda and myself. I had already discussed it with Lucy just months before, hypothetically of course. We both agreed that we would want to donate organs if there was an appropriate way within Jewish law.

When we went to Beilinson Hospital to meet the recipients two months later, we were expecting to walk into hospital rooms to see them lying on beds with drips, being kidney, liver, and lung recipients. Instead, incredibly, they walked in as healthy human beings.

We were not sure how we would feel; we thought maybe we would cry, we would find it upsetting. In fact, it was tremendously comforting to see them. In a way, it was very much a realisation of Lucy's favourite *venatnu* concept - she gave, and we felt a million times return for the giving.



Rina hy'd and Keren.



Dee family members meet with patients who received organ donations from Lucy Dee who was killed with her two daughters at the Rabin Medical Center (Beilinson) in Petah Tikva, May 2, 2023. (photo credit: AVSHALOM SASSONI/FLASH9)





Before the tragedy: Keren (top left), Maia hy'd (top right), Rina hy'd (bottom left), Leo (center bottom left), Yehuda (bottom center), Lucy hy'd (center bottom right), and Tali Dee (bottom right). Courtesy, Dee Family

## RNS

What prayers do you relate to most?

## RLD

People often ask me how I could be in any way able to deal with this, and somehow represent the Jewish people. I think that's the deeper meaning of *Kaddish*.

A mourner has just lost a very close family member, and you stick them in the middle of the whole community in the synagogue. You think to yourself, that's the last person in the world who could possibly speak about God's greatness when they have just gone through losing a loved one. Yet the sages have placed them there and obligated them to lead the service.

I think the reason is that the mourner saying *Kaddish*, is doing so in order to inspire everybody else; people look at that person and think, if that person after what they've been through is able to still say "God's name should be great, and I hold no grudge against Him,"

then who are we in our situation to deny that?

## RNS

This tragedy happened on Chol Hamoed (the intermittent days of Pesach).

## RLD

During the *shiva*, I was struggling with the question of why did this happen in this particular way? When someone passes away on the eve of a *Yom Tov* (festival) like Rosh Hashana, there is no *shiva*. They sit for an hour or so, and then it is cancelled. Every rabbi then tells the mourning family the same standard idea: your father, your mother - they did not want you to suffer, to have to sit *shiva*. They wanted you to be happy and therefore this is how it worked out.

Our scenario was different: we just came out of the Pesach *seder* night, the height of happiness in the year, down to Chol HaMoed, which is also a happy period.

Suddenly we were in mourning, at funerals - the lowest one can be. Next minute, we were pushed straight into Chol HaMoed, up to *Shvi'i shel Pesach* - the last holiday of Pesach - then down to the *shiva*, then straight back to Shabbat. Our experience was like a zigzag. So I was asking myself, what was the message, why did this happen to us? I seemed to ask everyone who came to the *shiva* these questions. When I asked MK Benny Ganz (former Minister of Defence and former deputy Prime Minister of Israel) when he came to sit with me at the *shiva*, he looked at me and said, "I'll tell you why. God is telling you that in your life, from now on, you're going to have happiness and sadness. You are going to have to weave them together."

He was right. I know I have to be happy: I have to be happy for the kids, and I have to be happy because that's life. But it's happiness interweaving with sadness.





# THE POINT

A BEHIND THE SCENES LOOK AT *STAR WARS* AND SELF-DISCOVERY

## SASHA SILBER

Picture an unlit, massive hangar. Inside, groups of people are positioned according to their responsibilities in the dark. Some are busy making small adjustments to camera tracks while others are resetting props and their placements for a scene. Someone walks briskly across the set, speaking in a low voice into their walkie-talkie. Dimly lit faces stare unflinching, huddled around monitors playing back earlier takes. The lead actress is having strands of hair repositioned; an ashy powder is lightly brushed under and around a few of her fingernails and onto her cheekbone. Her character has finally made it out onto a UT-60D U-wing Starfighter Support Craft to head to Jedha with another

Rebel, accompanied by a droid called K-2SO with a biting sense of humour. Really just an actor in stilts wearing a motion capture suit that looks similar to a wetsuit covered in squares and triangles of various shades of green, pink and grey, our droid waits to the side. Background is being wrangled back into position, their Stormtroopers' Rotary Blaster Cannons adjusted. Between takes, this *Star Wars* set is hushed.

A petite woman without a radio, holding her phone and today's sides clipped onto the rest of the script whispers a few words to a smartly coiffed man in a pressed shirt. They seem to agree, head over to another man with messy hair, a large cushioned headset and worn-out

band T-shirt. The producers shared their thoughts with the director but I couldn't tell you how it went; everyone averts their gaze from this sort of chat.

The room is buzzing silently with purpose, everyone respects the unwritten rules of this place: Be friendly. Remember everyone's name. Don't ask too many questions. Know all of the answers for when asked. Be early. Be available. Never complain; people would kill for this opportunity. Never badmouth anyone, but quietly be up to date with the latest gossip. Always be prepared. Never make noise with your bag, your food, your shoes or your coat. Always eat quickly. Never be lost in your phone, unless of



course you are working with it, in which case don't look up. Always be aware of everyone's eyeline and stay out of it. Definitely do not draw attention to yourself.

That last one felt very tricky to me. Rewind.

The first time I was hired to work on a film, I was excited to discover a way to fuse my love for performing (piano), my love for coaching opera singers (aka singing actors), and my love of creative collaboration. So began an unexpected and rewarding professional relationship and friendship with a British actress enjoying a fresh burst of energy after winning the Special Jury Prize at Sundance: Felicity Jones. The film was called *Breathe In*. For it, I was tasked with doubling her hands and body in a performance of a Chopin Ballade while choreographing her to match up with my movements. We also spent hours discussing her character - that of a teenage pianist - to give her the freedom to improvise within the parameters of this particular film's scriptment, an outline for scenes as an alternative to a traditional written-out script.

The coaching I did with opera singers involved studying the *libretti* closely to build and refine characters, guiding and polishing diction to carry clearly and meaningfully into any part of an opera house or concert hall in a whole range of languages (including Italian, French, Russian, and German). We would connect all of the components together through the vessel of their unique voices, incorporating direction coming from the composer and conductor, collaborating with other singers, and finally blending it all into a natural performance. Felicity understood the complexity of coaching opera singers actually translated quite

naturally into coaching a non-singing actor. She began to bring me on for more films.

Things were good for me. Before jumping into this new world of film, I had already been growing my career, travelling, and discovering the world. After completing my Master's degree, I spent two years performing, recording and coaching all around Europe, shuttling around between Paris, Modena, Geneva, Rome, and other breathtakingly beautiful places.

Peeking from behind velvet curtains. Standing ovations. Champagne receptions. Last minute gigs. Nights on the town. Early morning flights. Late night rehearsals. Glorious days off spent chatting with friends on cobblestone cafe terraces.

It was all very exhilarating.

Peppered in were a few less

glamorous moments that reminded me of something my late mother used to say: "you are Jewish: never deny it." Like that time an Italian walked me through much of world history from the perspective of "the Jews are to blame." I am Jewish. Or that time I had a phone interview to rent a studio on a tiny street not far from the Mabillon metro station in Paris, when a sweet woman's voice on the other end of the line asked me just as we were about to hang up, "oh, and what is your faith?" I am Jewish. (She hung up on me). A swastika on the wall of a side street. I am Jewish. Hateful chants calling for "Intifada!" in Milan. I am Jewish.

What does that even mean? Being Jewish. I started to wonder.

I discovered a need to explore my own "character," so to speak. When studying characters with singers and actors, I would try to



Storm Troopers. photo: Kady Pierce



understand their motivations and their intentions to add colour and depth to their performance and help build their arc. What is important to this character? Why? What are their hopes and dreams? What is their world-view? What do they hold most dear?

Slowly, I began to ask myself some of those same questions, to seek out my why. I began to think about who I am (not just what I do), so just like the heroines I studied for work, this meant spending some time thinking and exploring. Quietly, between rehearsals, performances and shoots, I snuck off to learn as much as I could about what “I am Jewish” means by pursuing classes, reading as much as I could get my hands on, and starting to spend much of my free time in this new world I found conveniently right under my nose. In the meantime, one thing had led to another and I moved back to the Upper West Side of New York City.

No matter how stimulating my job could be or how cool the perks were sometimes, it just felt a little empty. Those moments in-between that I took for myself felt like fresh air. The melodies I heard and the ideas I learned felt new, yet familiar, and like something so full of flavour that I couldn't help but to keep going back for more. Coming from an upbringing focused on working as hard and as long as it takes to maximise potential and achieve success in anything pursued, the full-stop of Shabbat seemed inconceivable. I had only heard rumours and mutterings of what it was like; yes, those who observe it do not work for the full period of Friday's sunset to Saturday's nightfall, but nothing else was as I had imagined it.

I'd never imagined that blocks away from where I had spent my formative years, families and friends

gathered around stunning candlelit tables, feasting on multiple courses, undistracted by texts, calls and emails, dressed beautifully, fully engaged in conversations, sharing meaningful ideas and making eye contact. It didn't seem like “stuff” from the week could dampen the atmosphere. Families seemed to make peace either before or through this experience, children coming to kiss their parents in exchange for receiving a blessing for their future. Obviously, there's no Utopia in this world; still, this felt close.

This felt like the point.

With time and intention, I slowly began to integrate concepts that I was learning into practice. While adapting a new structure to my life, I kept hearing the same comments and questions from the less-familiar but well-intentioned caring figures in my life: *You'll lose the career you've been working for. If you cancel performances or workdays for Shabbat, no one will hire you. You will estrange people and make them feel uncomfortable. How can you work in the entertainment industry as an observant Jewish woman? Friday night is one of the most active nights for performances, and Saturdays are your busiest rehearsal and coaching days; this is career suicide.* And on and on.

I remember feeling uneasy about setting these boundaries and making these changes professionally at first. The thing was, this was real and dissolved any worries I had; by now, I had gained a real perspective on life with priorities and meaning. And I loved it. And I was happy. Certainly reconfiguring my weekly schedule would be less dramatic than structuring an entire worldview.

But I am also human. I had been conditioned with those other thoughts and perceptions for a long time. I am sure I subscribed to them as well at some point. Still, I decided





to take the leap, made calls to let people know I would be unavailable Friday afternoons through Saturday evenings from now on, and try to reschedule as much as I can. Heck with the rest!

Boom.

But there was no fallout or catastrophe. No one made snide comments. Colleagues and clients happily obliged, and I suffered no financial loss or professional repercussions. For the first time, I had set a real boundary in my professional life. And it was liberating.

The dots connected perfectly, and in a grand surprise to everyone including myself, I moved my life over to Jerusalem, embarking on more structured Jewish learning, all while continuing to pursue my career in film and the arts. More comments. *Now certainly they'll stop hiring you. You're too far away. People will forget about you. They will be uncomfortable politically with Israel and boycott you. They will perceive you as a religious fanatic. No one will fly you over for jobs. But really, how can you work in the entertainment industry as an observant Jewish woman?* And on and on and on.

Happily, this didn't happen. Instead, I negotiated with the school of advanced Jewish studies I attended to allow me to take periods of time off whenever I had to fly over to Europe or the US for film shoots or performances. I was determined to build a foundation of knowledge and integrate everything I was learning into practice into my daily life, including professional settings.

So, back to Hollywood.

Felicity and I began our professional relationship at a time when Judaism was not really affecting my schedule, so I hadn't previously brought it up. When she called me up to ask me if I'd be interested in working on a film about the life of Stephen Hawking and his wife Jane, her role, I let her know that I would love to. As I

discussed the specifics with Felicity, I let her know that since she and I had last seen each other, I had made the decision to observe the Jewish Sabbath fully, and that I would be unavailable on a weekly basis at those specific times. I also let her know that I would now be flying in from Israel. She took no issue with that, following up with questions about Shabbat and life in Israel with genuine curiosity.

We would look through the schedule and note any scenes that I would miss because they were scheduled to shoot on Shabbat so that we could make time on a weekday to coach them in advance. Shoot days were long, sometimes slow and quiet, and sometimes very intense and fast-paced. Kosher food was usually not available on set, but I came prepared with my own food and didn't turn any heads since who isn't on a special diet these days?

The following year, *The Theory of Everything* was released with great accolades, and Felicity was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress. We continued to work together on more films in the years that followed, shooting in London, Barcelona, Venice, LA and NYC, and it was all great fun. Each film came with its own set of discussions with producers, letting them know in very simple terms about my availability (or lack thereof) at specific times. It was literally the most uneventful scheduling detail that did not make the slightest difference to anyone I worked with. On the other hand, it empowered me to fully immerse myself in Shabbat every week no matter where I was, keeping me energised and happy.

The most memorable discussion of this sort came up in early spring after Felicity was cast as the lead role of Jyn Erso in *Star Wars (Rogue One)*. I had just gotten engaged in Jerusalem, and our wedding date was set for the following January. The six-month





shoot would go through the High Holiday period - meaning a lot more than just taking Shabbat off once a week. Holidays lasted two consecutive days, sometimes three when preceded or followed by Shabbat, and I felt concerned for the first time that it might be problematic. After all, it seemed this movie was a big deal. Disney is a big deal. Shooting in the Maldives would be a big deal. I shared my concerns with my lawyer, to which she answered:

“If they have a problem with Shabbat and the Holidays, they have bigger problems coming to them!” So we sent the exact times and dates that I would not be available every week and every holiday - even when Shabbat would come in at 3:30pm in the winter, meaning I would have to leave Pinewood Studios barely a few hours after getting there in order to make it back to Central London on time to have an hour to prepare for Shabbat. I remember one colleague, the only one I ever felt any negativity from, made a quip about how convenient it was for me to be Jewish on that freezing grey December day. He also seemed to take issue with Israel as my adopted home country of

choice, so I smiled, agreeing that it was indeed great to be Jewish and wished him a lovely weekend.

Many colleagues on set made it a point of wishing me a Shabbat Shalom, or chirped “have a lovely long weekend!” as I made my way out as quietly as I possibly could on Fridays and on Holiday eves. There often was a car waiting for me fifteen minutes after the conclusion of Shabbat to take me to a night shoot (like the one we shot at the Canary Wharf Tube Station for which I felt very refreshed, having had a wonderfully restful Shabbat nap earlier that afternoon following a delicious Shabbat lunch with new friends).

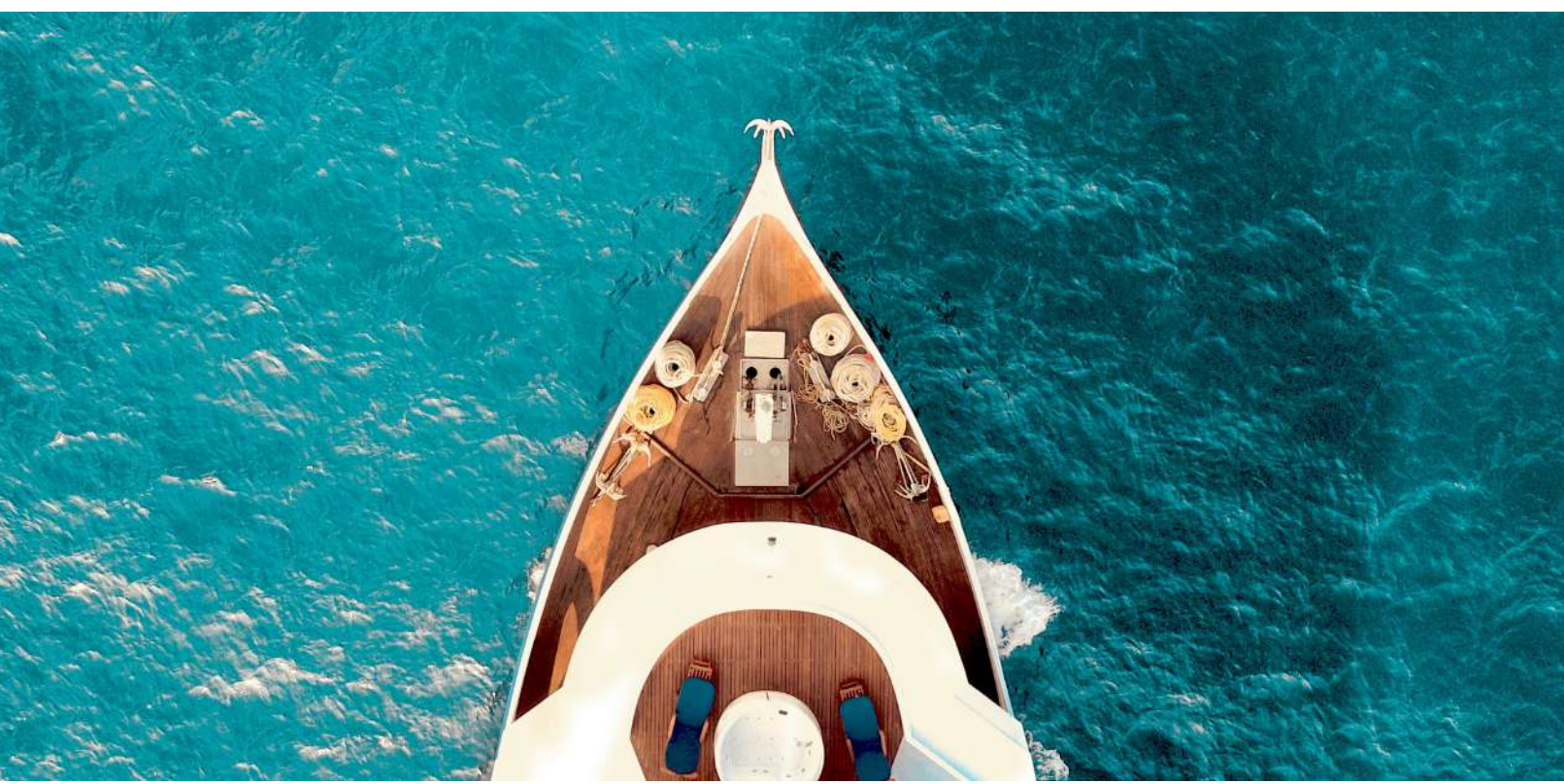
I really tried to follow the unspoken rule mentioned earlier about not drawing attention to myself, especially when it came to the practicalities of my Jewish observance. The thing is, when I did, nothing really happened. I didn't get reproached, I didn't get fired, I wasn't made to feel lesser-than, lesser-qualified, lesser-deserving of being there.

Instead, everyone around me seemed to respect me for it. I respected myself for it. I felt fulfilled. I understood myself. I got the point.

My work had purpose, my learning kept me inspired, and this framework brought value to everything that I did or experienced.

So now, picture this. Buttery-soft white sand. Fish gently grazing your feet as you wade between tiny little islands in the Maldives. A balmy breeze rustling palm leaves that frame a clear blue sky. Here we feel the same intensity and rhythm as back at Pinewood, except it's sunny here in paradise. Rebels have been running across the sand in the thick heat while being fired at by Stormtroopers. Today's shoot will conclude with an Imperial baddy walking toward billowing smoke set in front of the quickly setting sun. A helicopter films from above the island.

I can see the helicopter in the distance from the deck of this yacht. I have been here since before lighting Shabbat candles yesterday, and it has been quiet with most of the others on the island, filming. I've spent this afternoon reading a book, eating juicy pineapple, dreaming about my upcoming wedding in only three weeks, and singing those now very familiar melodies to myself while taking in the ocean air together with this picturesque view.





TITLE AVP 3 TITLE AVP

# CONFRONTING REAL MONSTERS

STEVEN SPIELBERG'S DILEMMA IN CREATING  
*SCHINDLER'S LIST* AND *JURASSIC PARK* AT THE SAME TIME

ADAM FOX

March, 1993 - Krakow. At a reconstruction of Płaszów concentration camp, built in a quarry near the original site, Steven Spielberg began principal photography on *Schindler's List*, arguably the most famous and influential piece of work based on the Holocaust. The project first came to the legendary filmmaker in 1983, at which point he claimed he was unsure

he was mature enough to make a film about the Holocaust. But 10 years later, partly in reaction to a rise in Neo-Nazism and Holocaust denial in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall, he decided it couldn't wait any longer.

M a k i n g *Schindler's List* was a deeply

consuming undertaking. Whereas he had previously set imaginations and the global box office on fire with classics such as *Jaws*, *ET*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and the *Indiana Jones* trilogy, this was something very different. "I was hit in the face with my personal life. My upbringing. My Jewishness. The stories my grandparents told me about the Shoah. And Jewish life came pouring back into my heart. I cried all the time," Spielberg later relayed. It

was a wholly surreal experience. He felt more like a reporter than a filmmaker, witnessing scenes rather than creating a movie. Working alongside survivors, both in front of and behind the camera, he became increasingly overwhelmed by the weight and horror of the story he was telling.

And when filming for the day would

approve T-Rex shots," Spielberg remembered. "And it built a tremendous amount of resentment and anger that I had to do this, that I had to actually go from [the emotional weight of *Schindler's List*] to dinosaurs chasing jeeps, and all I could express was how angry that made me at the time."

I vividly remember seeing *Jurassic Park*

in the cinema when I was 8 years old. As a formative experience, the story of the dinosaur theme park gone haywire was everything to me. It was terrifying and thrilling, I couldn't comprehend how anything could seem so fantastic and yet so real. For years I had nightmares of velociraptors and dilophosaurus creeping down the

hall outside my bedroom. In many ways, my passion for filmmaking and horror in particular was ignited that day.

For Spielberg, these 'monsters' had become completely farcical, even as they were being constructed in front of his eyes. As groundbreaking and breathtaking as they were, it was too late. He was already walking in the snowy footprints of real monsters. How can you sell the 'terror' of a T-Rex after just



Steven Spielberg on set directing

end and on those cold winter evenings in Krakow in 1993, the emotionally distraught and physically taxed director headed home to work on post production visual effects shots for the epic dinosaur blockbuster *Jurassic Park*. This was an experience beyond surreal. It was absurd.

"I had to go home about two or three times a week and get on a very crude satellite feed to Northern California...to be able to



Adam (8) at Universal Studios in Florida, 1993



Adam (16) at Auschwitz, 2001

filming re-enactments of Amon Göth casually shooting Jews from the balcony of his villa only hours earlier?

**WORKING  
ALONGSIDE  
SURVIVORS, BOTH  
IN FRONT OF  
AND BEHIND THE  
CAMERA,  
HE BECAME  
INCREASINGLY  
OVERWHELMED  
BY THE WEIGHT  
AND HORROR OF  
THE STORY HE  
WAS TELLING.**

It wasn't until Autumn 2001 that my father took me to see first hand, the land where so many of my immediate family and countless more had perished. I would return to Poland many more times as a filmmaker myself, each time peeling back layers to reveal an ever expanding labyrinth of history, culture and spiritual connection. I've filmed firemen pulling Jewish gravestones from the ditches of public parks where locals walk their dogs. I've filmed survivors retracing the steps from their childhood homes to the sites where they fleetingly glanced at their loved ones for the last time as they were dragged away.

While I still have a lot of love for *Jurassic Park* to this day, its impact has somewhat dulled. Fantasy can never be as real as the real thing, certainly not horror. I think I understand how Spielberg must have felt.

In my experience there are very different kinds of projects you end up working on in your life. Some are entirely your own. You dreamt it, wrote it, directed it and completed it. In a lot of ways that's the ideal for any storyteller, complete freedom, total control, pure vision.

And then there's another kind of project. One where it really doesn't belong to you. You are a conduit, a loudspeaker for someone else's story. My job is to take this story, care for it, allow it to express itself and then finally, make it accessible to as many people as possible.

Now, I can't pretend that every video I've made for a client has been an enriching, career defining moment. But every once in a while, there's no escaping the fact that this story is important. Too important to belong to any one person. And then it's not my 'vision', it's my 'responsibility.'

And what was Spielberg's responsibility? By recreating these unimaginable scenes and then presenting them to us at the time he did, he asked the audience to bear witness. To face the harsh truth that these things really happened. That we must do everything in our power to never let them happen ever again. From the documentary style of the camera work to the final scene of real survivors visiting Schindler's grave, there's an authenticity that is undeniable. Seeing is after all, believing.

Reflecting on *Schindler's List* winning Best Picture and Best Director at the Oscars in 1994, Spielberg said "That night wasn't really

a celebration at all. I don't feel that this movie is a celebration, I really remember pleading with the audience, with the people watching, pleaded with teachers to please teach [the Holocaust] in your schools. That's the most urgent thing you can do," That year he founded the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education as a means of keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive.

Film is a powerful medium, it has the power to educate, entertain and inspire. But ultimately when measured up to the reality, the history, it's still only fleeting sights and sounds. It's not the same as the people, their words and their memories. It's an echo. And we can only try to hold onto that and preserve it as best we can.

Back in 1992, when Spielberg realised the script for *Schindler's List* was finished, he knew he had to drop everything, yes, even *Jurassic Park*. According to Spielberg, the warming weather conditions in Poland meant there was little time to waste. "I didn't want to have to wait a whole year because it had to be shot in the snow. And so I basically called the producer — my co-producer on Jurassic [Park] Kathy Kennedy — and I said, 'I gotta jump ship. I gotta make *Schindler's List*. And don't ask me why, I just have to make it right now.'"

Perhaps it occurred to Steven that with *Schindler's List*, he wasn't just telling the story of the Holocaust. He was preserving it. Because the memory and moments it portrayed were already disappearing, as fast as the melting snow of the Polish winter.



# A BOY, HIS NEIGHBOUR, **AND HER DIARY**

**ARI KAYSER**

I joined the Zoom call with Pieter Kohnstam a few minutes early as I was eager to ask him all of my questions. He was already on the call, with his back to me while rummaging in his bookshelf to find some book of interest. This was not my first encounter with Pieter. A number of years ago I was blessed to inherit a priceless family tree, written by my great-grandfather, Leo Klein, who had narrowly escaped Germany in 1937, arriving in British Mandate Palestine to reunite with family members. This tree, tracing hundreds of family members, and reaching as far back as the early 18th century had names, dates, locations, pictures, and a rather humorous commentary at times. Unlike Leo, I had the internet at my disposal, and after some years of research, I had managed to add hundreds more people to our family tree and something amazing began to unfold. I was finding distant relatives from all over the world, from Israel to Germany, South Africa, Australia, the UK and the USA. One of those relatives was Pieter Kohnstam. It turns out that Pieter is my third cousin once removed: his great-grandmother was the sister of my great-great grandfather. And he had a story to tell.

Pieter was born in Amsterdam in 1936 after his parents, Hans and Ruth, had fled Germany during the early days of the Nazi regime, leaving behind a lucrative toy merchandising company. The Kohnstams settled in the Rivierenbuurt neighbourhood on a street called Merwedeplein. Fate had it that on that street, in the very same apartment building, lived another Jewish family of four: Otto, Edith, Margot and Anne Frank.

I asked Pieter what his earliest memory of life in Amsterdam was and he began to paint a picture, “My mother would take me on the tram around Amsterdam. The streets were filled with performers and vendors, singing songs and performing plays. As a young child, I was mesmerised by their performances. I remember Anne Frank, constantly in my home, leaving her papers all over the place.”

When pressing him on other early childhood memories, his words turned dark, “I remember the killings. The murders. The raids. I saw a soldier pull a senior citizen off the streets, ordering him to polish his boots. The elderly Jew did as he was told, and the soldier then spat on the shoes and ordered



*Close up, Anne Frank's Diary, on permanent exhibition in the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, Holland.*



the man to polish again, this time with his hands. I remember seeing older men being lined up by a wall, only to be shot down moments later.”

## My mother said, ‘why don’t you buy her a diary?’

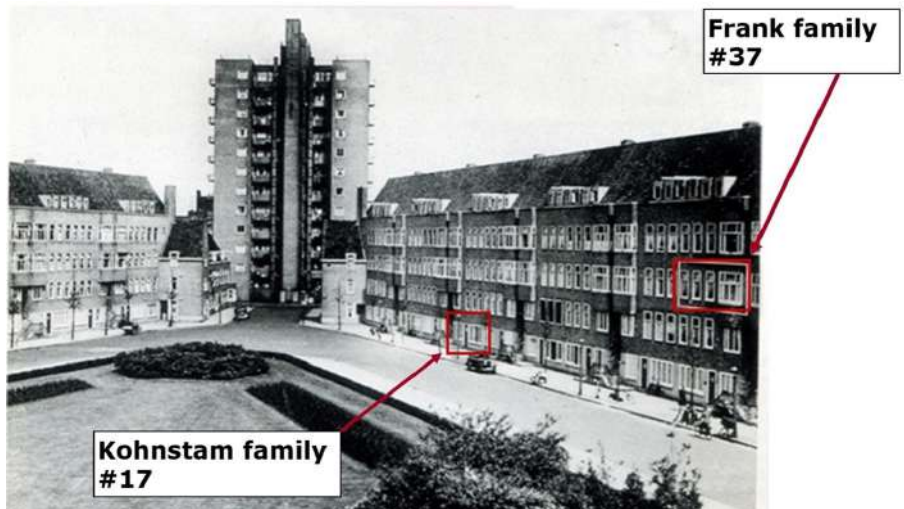
As I listened intently to his words, it struck me, how through the eyes of a six-year-old, the world must have seemed such a confusing place. On the one hand, life went on as normal, with street vendors, school and public transportation; on the other hand, it was brutal and murderous, with an air of betrayal permeating the whispers of those living in fear.

German raids had become a regular occurrence. The Nazis had murdered a family living in the next apartment, killing everyone except for one girl who somehow survived. The raids got closer and eventually reached the Kohnstam home. One day, sirens began to blare, and a truck filled with Nazi soldiers could be seen on the street. The soldiers stormed into the Kohnstams’ apartment, threatening to shoot if anyone dared to move. The Nazi soldiers marked their insignia on all the Kohnstams’ belongings before leaving.

That was the backdrop to Pieter’s childhood, raids, and killings, mixed in with the more ordinary instances of playing with the girl next door. It is evident when speaking with Pieter, even so many years after these events transpired, how Anne Frank is so close to his heart. I asked him to describe what she meant to him,



Portrait of Anne Frank, between 1936 and 1941. Public Domain.



Merwedeplein Street, Amsterdam, Holland, Courtesy of Pieter Kohnstam

and his face lit up, “Anne was a young, normal, very brilliant girl. She would act out fantasies and fables and I was her audience. I had to sit quietly and not talk, just listen. She was very smart, and it

was clear that one day she would be someone to be reckoned with because of her smartness.”

“My mother became very close friends with Edith, Anne’s mother. Edith was very orderly, and Anne





*Anne Frank looking down toward Kohnstam's apartment*

*In the morning of July 6, 1942, Anne Frank came to say good-bye to us. The Franks were about to go into hiding in their secret annex. It was a sad and difficult parting for everyone. As things had deteriorated, Anne had come down every day to play with Pieter [age 6]. Ruth [Pieter's mother, age 31] and Clara [Ruth's mother/Pieter's grandmother] had become very fond of her. We hugged and kissed each other good-bye. Remembering that moment still brings tears to my eyes.*

**The invisible enemy was betrayal. Betrayal which impregnated all the things I was seeing and witnessing and living through. You didn't know who to trust anymore.**

left her papers around the house, everywhere. Edith would complain to my mother saying she is having problems with Anne leaving her papers strewn all over the apartment. My mother said, 'why don't you buy her a diary?' That became the red-checked diary Anne received on her 13th birthday. There would not have been a diary at all had my mother not suggested it."

By 1942, the condition of the Jews in occupied Amsterdam was as dire as it was throughout Europe. When the Kohnstams were issued deportation orders to Westerbork, a transit camp later issuing transportations to Auschwitz in

Poland and to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia, they had an important decision to make. Otto Frank extended an offer to them to share the concealed annex where he intended to hide his family. Instead, the Kohnstams fled Amsterdam in what would be an arduous year-long journey on foot through Belgium, France and Spain, eventually reaching freedom in Argentina. That decision, not to join the Franks in hiding, was a brave one; the pain of not seeing them again was one that Pieter describes in his book, *A Chance to Live*, which was written through the eyes of his father, Hans Stefan Kohnstam:

The Kohnstam's story of survival took quite a different route to that of many of the survivor stories we usually hear. Their story is a story of being on the run. Leaving your place of relative security in exchange for being constantly on the move, not knowing where you will end up tomorrow is a frightening thought. I asked Pieter if he could describe what he felt while being on his journey. "Insecurity. The invisible enemy was betrayal. Betrayal which impregnated

all the things I was seeing and witnessing and living through. You didn't know who to trust anymore."

Of course, Pieter and his family had to trust several people along the way, none more so than Gerda Leske, a German Christian friend and owner of two salons, who had helped the Kohnstams flee, devising a clever plan. Her audacious idea was to create a mock fashion show in her Maastricht salon, with Pieter's mother impersonating the model. Pieter's father, who was an artist, falsified the documents so well that they were used all the way until their eventual escape to Argentina. This moment, when they fled Amsterdam, is described in Pieter's book, written from the perspective of his father, Hans:

*Fortunately, we all made it safely to Gerda's salon. Since we did not look like shoppers, we entered through the back door, so as not to arouse suspicions. The first thing we did was to remove the Stars of David from our garments. It was a cumbersome process, but critical for our survival. We rubbed dye into the areas where the yellow patches had covered the fabric, so they would match the rest of the coat where the material looked more worn.*

*Gerda had come up with a clever cover story: She was taking her staff to a fashion show in Maastricht. Since Ruth was a young and beautiful woman, she would go as her fashion model. I was the artist and would act as the company's fashion designer. And Pieter would come along as Gerda's son. We impressed on Pieter that he would have to be absolutely quiet for the duration of the train ride, and that he would have to act as if Ruth were a stranger. Knowing what a challenge it would be for a gregarious child who liked to talk to anybody, and who was, no doubt, as scared as we were, worried me. How would he behave under these tense circumstances? Would he be able to keep silent and deny his own mother?*

These were the questions a parent on the run had to ask of



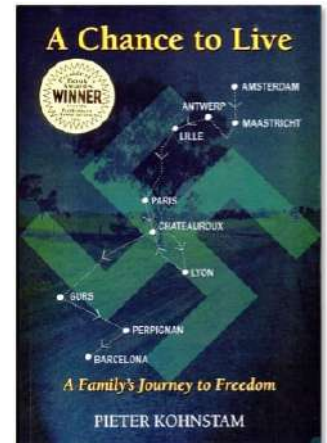
Pieter, his mother Ruth, and his grandmother Klara



Inside Anne Frank's Diary

his young child. I asked Pieter, how did your parents know who to trust and when. He told me, "My mother spoke 11 languages fluently. They learned how to make the right connections with the underground and resistance movements. My mother worked for about three months in the French Resistance, *La Résistance*. But it didn't always work out. At one point, a few months later, she was imprisoned trying to cross the border to Spain to meet us in Barcelona. Luckily, she was later released. I was always with my father. We constantly had to ask ourselves, 'where does trust end and betrayal begin?'"

The Kohnstams eventually reached Argentina after a yearlong journey. Interestingly, Pieter recalled how his mother



*A Chance to Live*, by Pieter Kohnstam available on Amazon



Pieter Kohnstam

recognised the faces of many of the Nazis in Argentina for years after arriving. Pieter spent many of his formative years in South America before eventually moving to the USA, where he lives today. More recently, he has been very active in meeting and speaking to groups from all over the world about the Holocaust and his experiences.

When considering what his message for the future generations would be, he said, "First of all, don't be indifferent. Second, educate yourself. Go visit the camps, read the books, it's all there; you may not like it, but you will never forget it. Combat ignorance with knowledge and with respect. And remember, there is something the Germans couldn't take from us – that is hope."





*Josef Lewkowicz with a fellow survivor on a motorbike provided to him by Americans to travel around on his search for Nazi war criminals, 1946.*

# CHASING JOSEF'S STORY

**JONATHAN KALMUS**

Josef has an incredible story. It was the key to one of the unsolved mysteries of the Holocaust that the film *Schindler's List* could not include. But this story about Josef Lewkowicz, now an international bestseller, was nearly left untold.

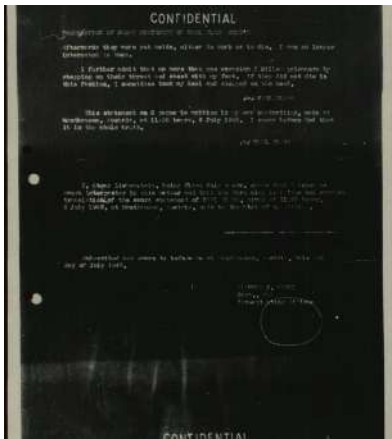
I was deep into directing

and editing the first scenes of a documentary for Holocaust education charity JRoots, which could solve exactly how Josef had hunted down Nazi mass murderer Amon Goeth. We all remember Goeth from *Schindler's List*, the monstrous Nazi camp commander

whose Kraków-Plaszów concentration camp was the set for most of the film. Goeth, known as the 'Butcher of Plaszow', wasn't your average Nazi mass-murderer of one death factory alone, but sent the largest Jewish communities of the southern region of Poland



Declassified US Army Intelligence Documents signaling Amon Goeth was responsible for war crimes (required deciphering.)



CONFIDENTIAL War Crimes investigation statement of an SS officer admitting to killing prisoners.



Amon Goeth mug shot from August 29, 1945 in Krakow, Poland.



Josef Lewkowicz in Bad Ischl, Austria dressed in his US military police uniform, 1946

to death. Goeth became the first major Nazi war criminal to ever be convicted after the war, even before the Nuremberg Trials. How he was caught and identified, or by whom, had remained shrouded in mystery.

But in my editing suite I had an interview conducted by the film’s producer and founder of Holocaust education charity JRoots, Rabbi Naftali Schiff. He had discovered and convinced Josef, a rare survivor of six concentration camps, to reveal a staggering claim in incredibly intricate detail. Josef and two fellow concentration camp survivors had hunted down Goeth, along with other Nazis, and were the key to the entire war crimes trial. There was one problem: we had not a single document, arrest report, military paper, or anything else to prove Josef’s claim. Worse - historically, his story made little sense because documents showed that US soldiers, not enfeebled concentration camp survivors with neither weapons nor power, had arrested Goeth in May 1945. How could Josef have been involved?

I found and hired top researchers to sift the US Army Records in Washington, DC. They found no mention of any Josef. We contacted eminent historian Professor David Crowe who had written the definitive history book on Oskar Schindler and Amon Goeth, but his work, along with those of other important historians, did not yield better results. The film - and more importantly, Josef’s claims - seemed doomed.

Hidden in a declassified file that a researcher had overlooked, I stumbled upon an intelligence report marked SECRET. This document astonishingly exposed how the US Army had inadvertently let Goeth slip through their

fingers. The report dated 1946 stated that after arresting Goeth in May of 1945, they had now lost this major Nazi criminal. I had never seen this detail mentioned. I started to comb through other documents and found that US intelligence officers stationed in Austria did not understand how senior or monstrous Goeth was. They had mistaken him for a low-level SS officer from Dachau. Later, I discovered this was common; thousands of Nazi murderers escaped to freedom because the US army held hundreds of thousands of prisoners; identifying the big fish was a near-impossible intelligence mission.

Then, dramatically, more documents showed Goeth was found in mid-1946, became the centre of international negotiations between the USA and Poland, and then was sent to face trial in Poland. But the details of exactly who re-found Goeth, revealed his true past to the American Army, and how, remained a mystery.

Josef did have two blow-away photos. One is of himself in a US Army uniform; Josef recalled training as an American Intelligence officer after offering to hunt down Nazi war criminals. He could identify the high-ranking Nazis and gather evidence because he had been in so many concentration camps. The second nearly made me fall off my chair - a black and white portrait of Oskar Schindler, incredibly signed by the man himself, with a note, “Josef, my dear friend”. Josef explained that Oskar had sought Josef out after hearing about his Nazi hunting and was terrified Josef would hand him over. Josef told Schindler: “You’re no war criminal”, and offered to vouch for him.

But where was Josef in official



documents? My first breakthrough came at 2:02am one night after scanning through hundreds of witness testimonies from Goeth's trial in Krakow in August, 1946. After several thousand pages, BINGO! - Josef Lewkowicz's witness statement about none other than Amon Goeth. Still, this was not enough: there was no mention of Josef arresting or hunting down Goeth, just a long, deeply disturbing description of crimes against humanity Josef had been forced to watch for years as his prisoner.

While I was filming Josef for the documentary, and still to this day, Josef would always tell me: if something is important, "don't give up - never give up." It is his life mantra and most likely helped keep him alive. With this in mind, I would finish editing the documentary around midnight, and then begin my research. I gathered and downloaded more than 150,000 pages of documents. For three months my hours were midnight to 3am several nights a week. It was crazy. I can tell you at 3am most nights I asked myself -

why am I doing this? Just give it up, you're going to find something that real historians haven't? Who are you? I could not imagine I'd have the privilege of co-writing with Rabbi Schiff the foreword to the eventual Sunday Times Bestselling book based on evidence I gathered.

One night, I picked a random folder from among 3.5 million documents out of complete loss. Incredibly, it was a piece of key evidence incriminating another concentration camp commandant that Josef had helped catch. Though no single document shouted aloud, "Josef Lewkowicz caught the Butcher of Plaszow" (and four other Nazis) while carefully tracing the paper trail of US intelligence investigators, I gathered over 60 key pieces of evidence that together, fit like a jigsaw and built an extremely compelling case: Josef set the US Army Intelligence and war crimes investigators in motion to fully understand who Amon Goeth was. Josef searched for, found and identified Goeth himself which led to Goeth's re-arrest and started the war crimes process. Historians and academics Professor

Michael Bazylar, Professor Frank Tuerkheimer, Austrian historian Johannes Sachslehner and Goeth's own granddaughter Jennifer Teege understood that Goeth's true identity was confirmed by former Plaszow concentration camp inmates in the spring of 1946. Reports by survivors Mietek Pemper, Henry Slamovitch and Joseph Kempler all testify to this fact. But their stories date themselves to the wrong time, weeks or months after the American's already had Goeth firmly now in their clutches. None of them could explain the true moment that revealed to American army investigators the darkness of the man they almost lost among 100,000 ordinary Wehrmacht soldiers.

Tiny details in photos, deciphered blurry dates on American Intelligence officer stamps, code words and piecing together the puzzle of dates and places led to a dramatic moment. Josef, with the assistance of two fellow concentration camp survivors, ditched their striped pyjamas to become uniformed



*This Page Left: Jonathan Kalmus filming Josef Lewkowicz in a studio. Right Jonathan Kalmus filming Josef Lewkowicz and Rabbi Naftali Schiff at the gates of Ebensee Concentration Camp, Austria, where Josef was liberated in 1945.*



intelligence agents in the American Army's Central Intelligence Corp. Unbelievably, they gathered what must be superhuman physical, emotional and mental strength to travel hundreds of miles on a motorcycle to investigate and interrogate thousands of German soldiers while hunting and eventually facing this notorious Nazi beast with nothing but courage and self-belief.

Without Josef's involvement, I believe and argue that there is serious doubt the US Army would have identified Goeth in time, before he would have just walked away or been released.

But for me the importance is bigger - and something for us to stop and think about. Josef, before the concept of Human Rights was enshrined in international law, before war crimes tribunals, when the world's morals had crumbled and no future was safe. Perhaps Nazism would live on again in some other form, perhaps the world would continue to be at war. Josef had nothing, no family, no money, not a single object he could call his, except a watch he stole from an SS officer's bag. The only thing he had was internal belief and moral fortitude when faced with a world gone terribly wrong - he said, "I will gather every ounce of being to do what I can to make it right." Josef teaches us that we don't need wealth, a great education, boundless charisma, good looks, physical strength (he's only just over five feet tall), power, connections or all the things we wish we had. Josef, with courage, simply said I don't know how I will do it, but I will act for the good. This lesson alone, among the other mind-blowing history and values Josef teaches, is one that could make all the difference.



Above: Josef Lewkowicz on stage in discussion with Rabbi Naftali Schiff at BAFTA London, April 2023 *The Survivor*. Photo by Blake Ezra. Below: Joseph Lewkowicz at BAFTA London, April 2023 for the official book launch and screening of *The Survivor*. Photo by Blake Ezra







# BAFTA LAUNCH AND SCREENING

## 96 YEAR OLD NAZI HUNTER JOSEF LEWKOWICZ'S STORY

**JESSICA FINGER**

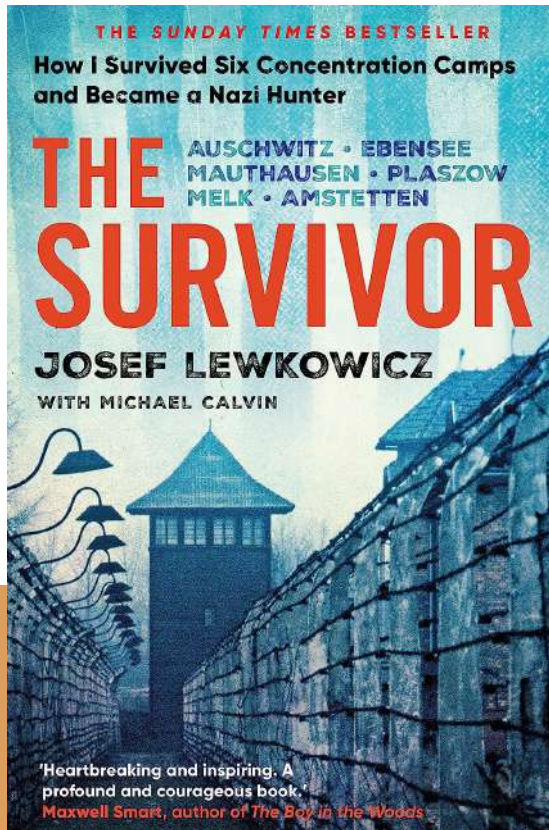
*Joseph Lewkowicz on stage in discussion with Rabbi Naftali Schiff at BAFTA London, April 2023 for The Survivor. Photography by Blake Ezra*

On the evening of *Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Memorial Day, 96-year-old Josef Lewkowicz shared his story of survival and pursuit of justice to an audience of two hundred guests at BAFTA. The event was organised by JRoots, in collaboration with Penguin Random House and the Blair Partnership. It marked the global release of Josef's autobiography, *The Survivor: How I Survived Six Concentration Camps And Became A Nazi Hunter*. An exclusive preview of JRoots film, *The Survivors Revenge*,

telling Josef's remarkable story was also shown to the audience.

The film screening was followed by a conversation between Josef and Rabbi Naftali Schiff, JRoots founder, discussing how Rabbi Schiff discovered Josef and persuaded him to tell the story of his experiences to the world. Josef also shared his thoughts and convictions as a Survivor about the value of educating younger generations on the Holocaust.





As his newly published book details, following the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939, Mr. Lewkowitz and his father were separated from their family and herded to the Kraków-Plaszów concentration camp. Subsequently, Josef was incarcerated in six of the most notorious Nazi concentration camps, including Auschwitz, Mauthausen and Ebensee.

By the end of the War, Josef was the sole survivor from an extended family of 150. Alone in the world, whilst still in a Displaced Persons' camp, he volunteered to join the Jewish police, and was recruited as an intelligence officer for the US Army who gave him a team to search for Nazis in hiding. Josef played a critical role in identifying and bringing to justice his greatest tormentor, the Butcher of Plaszow, Amon Göth. He simultaneously devotedly searched to repatriate hundreds of orphaned Jewish children of the Holocaust, helping them to rebuild their life.

Front cover of *The Survivor: How I Survived Six Concentration Camps and Became a Nazi Hunter* by Josef Lewkowitz, available on Amazon



Global release of *The Survivor* at BAFTA London, April 2023. Left to Right: Tzvi Sperber, Neil Blair, Mike Calvin, Yosef Lewkowitz, Rabbi Naftali Schiff and Henry Vines. Photo by Blake Ezra



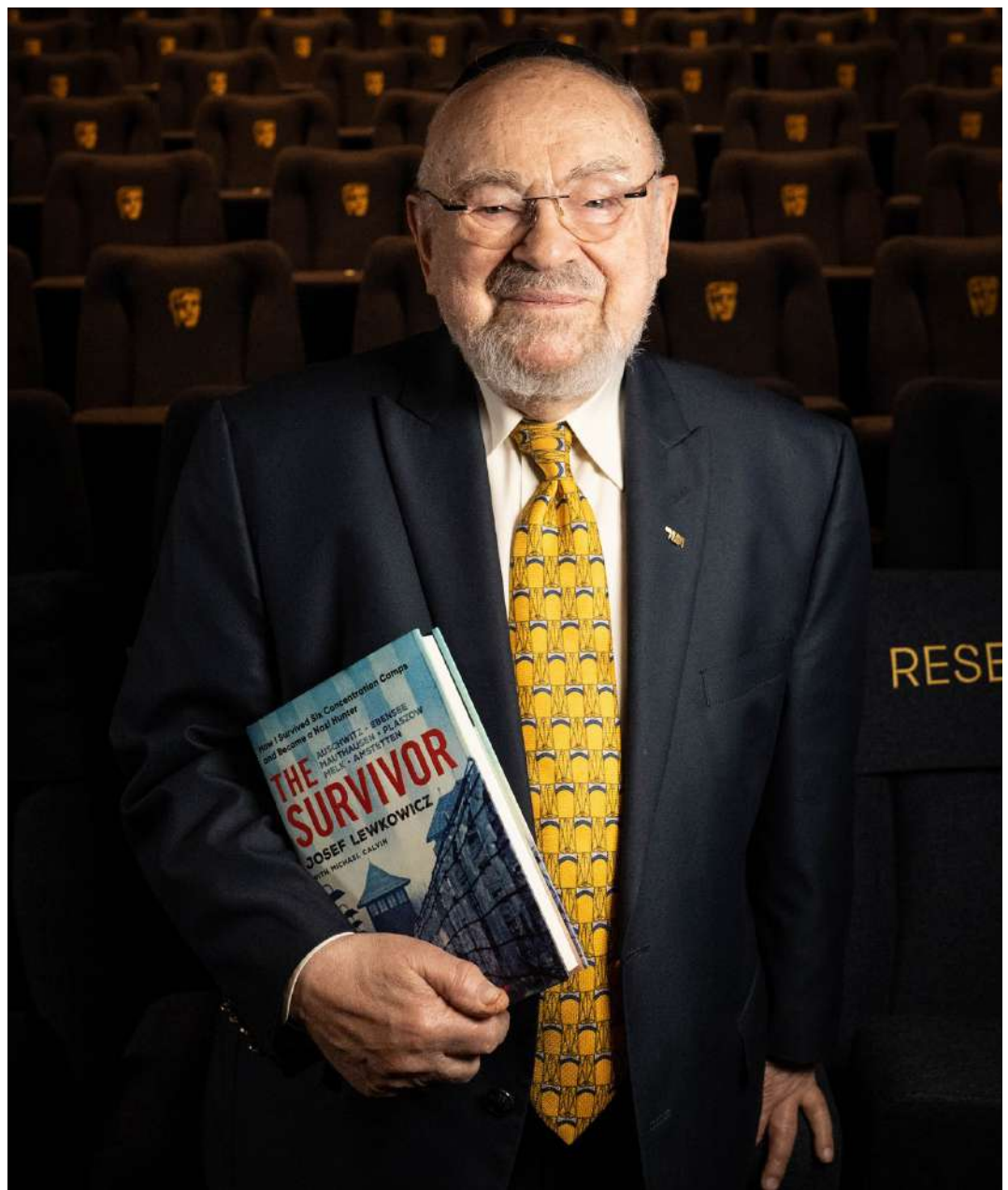
At the event, Josef Lewkowicz stated: “For decades, I was very quiet, telling no one of my experiences and suffering during the War. I hid my story even from my own children, I was silent for most of my adult life. Then came Rabbi Naftali Schiff, who made me open my mouth. Really, without him I would not be speaking, writing and telling over what I went through. Now I am doing my best to tell the world what happened. Remember and do not forget!”

Following the event, Rabbi Naftali Schiff, JRoots founder and CEO, remarked: “We are deeply honoured to have Josef share his story with us. His resilience and courage in the face of unimaginable horrors alone, would make him a modern-day hero. He is an inspiration to us all, and we hope that this event and his book will help ensure that his story and the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten. Working together with Penguin, JRoots is proud to have played a role in creating this lasting legacy.”



Joseph Lewkowicz on stage in discussion with Rabbi Naftali Schiff at BAFTA London, April 2023 for *The Survivor*. Photo by Blake Ezra

**A remarkable story  
of fortitude and hope.  
Extraordinary.  
- THE SUNDAY TIMES**





# YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU! GIVE IT FORWARD TODAY!

**NAFTALI SCHIFF**

One of the most remarkable aspects of the cycle of life is the almost universal human phenomenon of gathering, owning and holding on tightly to that which is “mine”. This propensity characterises the early stage of life, and ironically, is prevalent at the closure of all human experience. The ultimate release of the grasp onto all physical possessions and ownership of any kind with the “end of life” experience is often accompanied by a total release of control over almost anything.

I vividly remember questioning my father when, aged 15, both of my grandfathers passed away within three weeks of one another. With hindsight, the stark reality of death and the shocking simplicity of Jewish burial brought home to me one of the most formative lessons in my life. I was fortunate that my father simply explained to me that when we are born, we are totally self-focussed: food on demand, change of clothes on call, personalised comfort and pain relief almost immediately. As we develop, life's obsession of drawing all that is possible towards the self becomes even more accentuated, unless we are educated otherwise. However, when the inevitable day of reckoning arrives, one of the customs performed universally by the Chevra Kadisha (Jewish burial society)

is to open the hands of the deceased. Whoever you are, however much you have accumulated, you can't take it with you. I was lucky to observe that the very day my father retired, he increased his volunteering in the community and devoted much of his time to others, for the rest of his life.

In 2002, Aish organised a charity drive to raise funds amongst alumni, each of whom had received a significant subsidy, benefitting them with a momentous and often formative experience in Israel. However, we experienced a rude awakening, which perhaps is another feature of the assimilation of traditional Jewish values in our generation. We had all grown up with a community-wide *Kol Nidrei* appeal and a Blue Box sitting by the Shabbat candles. Giving was a fundamental part of being Jewish. However, it was becoming painfully clear that the propensity of young Jews to give of themselves, or their resources, was clearly not a model many experienced at home anymore. Despite the fact that our fundraising campaign was a success, I was truly shocked at the response of many, who despite their overwhelmingly positive disposition, reported that they give very little charity, were not inclined to donate the £50



*Rabbi Sandor Milun (left),  
Rabbi Naftali Schiff (right)*

requested donation and at this stage of their lives, and were not necessarily positively disposed to volunteer for anything. I was reminded of that formative life lesson and the example of giving set to me by my father. All the organisations of Jewish Futures were created to fill a void in the community, and with GIFT we wanted to start a movement educating and providing opportunities for young people to become givers.

We named it GIFT- why wait till the end of life's journey to have one's hands pried open and for the completion of probate? Give It Forward Today! The logo represented an open hand, eventually evolving to signify the “give and take” cycle of life's journey. I approached one of the most giving people I know,





*A pair of GIFT volunteers on a regular visit to an elderly man*

Michelle Barnett, to become the first and founding GIFT employee. We set forth our mission to connect young people with the pleasure, the purpose, and the imperative to grow up with a mindset of lifelong giving. We began by expanding the giving and volunteering programmes that had begun in Michelle's kitchen. However, over the early years we observed that the modelling and the action of volunteerism and giving alone, is not necessarily enough to ensure lifelong giving in this generation. Creating lifelong givers, shifting attitudes towards giving in a deep and lasting manner that would lead to a genuine lifetime commitment to being a giver was and remains the goal at GIFT. With the insight that repeated actions of giving alone is not enough to shift attitudes and behaviour in the long term, we set our minds to delivering the dual mission of generating a myriad of ever-expanding giving opportunities to the community, combined with educating about giving in an exciting, relevant and compelling way.

Rabbi Avrohom Zeidman's font of creative pedagogical ideas combined with the indefatigable Shira Joseph's drive to encourage teams of youngsters to continually create evermore giving programmes and platforms have become

a mainstay of our community's informal educational provision. After having devoted 15 years to Jewish outreach, Rabbi Sandor Milun was best prepared and fortuitously in position - joining as the Managing Director just months before Covid - energising the whole GIFT team to leap forward exponentially to 'exercise the giving muscle' across the entire community. The biblical age of conscription was 20 years old. How wonderful that GIFT has come of age at a time when, despite the negative societal connotations of "I, me and self", GIFT teams supported by an army of volunteers in London, Manchester and Jerusalem are now poised to truly shift the culture from entitlement to sharing, from ill health to well being, and from "me" to "we."

*From top right: GIVFEST volunteers, GIVFEST participants, family packing at the GIFT Hub and The Giving Kitchen food being prepared*







From the top clockwise: High School students packing food packages at the GIFT Hub, Noah S, founder of the 'Step Up' initiative, Participants completing the Supermarket Challenge and Michelle Barnett, Founder of GIFT with the first, original GIFT Box





# GIFT'S REMARKABLE JOURNEY

## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF INSPIRING GIVING

**MICHELLE BARNETT**

Twenty years ago, as an ex-probation officer, I was struck by the challenges and disparities faced by many. I appreciated the profound impact of giving and felt a strong desire to enable individuals of all backgrounds and financial resources to unlock their potential and create lasting change. Living in a society where materialism, accumulation, and self-centeredness often prevail, I recognised the growing need to inspire generosity, compassion, and active involvement. This lack of altruism made it more imperative than ever to instil a spirit of empathy, particularly in our younger generation, which I saw as equally important as promoting philanthropy or volunteering.

For two decades, GIFT has worked tirelessly to embed this giving mindset across the UK and beyond. Now, as we celebrate this significant milestone in our charity's history, we reflect on our journey, achievements and future visions, and reaffirm our unwavering belief in the transformative power of giving, a beacon of hope in a world so often focused on self.

Rabbi Naftali Schiff, the visionary behind GIFT, assembled a group of passionate volunteers at my kitchen table in 2004. They all shared the mission to inspire giving and help those in need. And so it was that GIFT – Give It Forward Today – was formed.

GIFT provided a platform to enable both community support programmes and education initiatives. Our earliest

project focused on bread distribution: bakeries were approached, and were delighted to donate their surplus bread, in the knowledge that it would go to feed struggling families. Welfare organisations were asked if their service-users would like a weekly delivery of bread. Each Friday, hundreds of surplus challot would be collected from bakeries by dedicated volunteers, often 17 or 18 year olds who had just passed their driving tests. The bread was frozen until the following week, utilising freezer drawers in tens of homes across NW London. Volunteers were recruited from schools and would collect or deliver challot and other baked products, which were all stored in the car in my driveway or in my home, which volunteers accessed via the keys under my front door mat (which have since been removed!).

Fast-forward five years later, when we initiated the GIFT Box Project, where shoppers were invited to purchase extra food items whilst shopping, placing them in the GIFT Box in their local store. This not only provided thousands of items of dry, non-perishable food items to accompany the bread packages to a growing number of families and individuals referred to us for support; but also provided a number of new volunteering opportunities for so many in the community: collecting, sorting, packing and delivering the packages. The GIFT Box Project has encouraged hundreds of thousands of donations of essential food

items, promoting a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility.

After eight years of my home being the GIFT Hub – where we collected and organised the distribution of thousands of loaves of bread, bags of dry food, myriad donated birthday and B'nei Mitzvah gifts from the 'Gift It Forward' initiative and flowers from Simchas – we knew that GIFT's operations required a more professional space. The transition was bittersweet for me. Although I felt sadness about GIFT operations moving out of my home, there was also a sense of relief in regaining my personal space. For many years, GIFT activities had filled every inch of my downstairs area, particularly on Fridays. It was often well into the afternoon before the parcels had been collected and I could finally access my kitchen to prepare for Shabbat. I also experienced a feeling of excitement for the future; our new GIFT Hub, a sizable space in North London, we were finally able to accommodate meaningful numbers of children, students and visiting groups from abroad in volunteering programmes. Our vision was becoming a reality.

Other initiatives were born: Helping Hand - inspiring and facilitating volunteers to lend a helping hand to those around them; Step Up – a 2nd hand shoe recycling project, where thousands of pairs of shoes were cleaned up by school pupils and distributed to those in need; Education was also introduced in schools across London

& Manchester, teaching pupils about the importance of actively giving, not only to those 'in need', but also to one's peers, family, teachers and to oneself.

Looking back, it's extraordinary to reflect on the breadth and depth of GIFT's programmes. From food collections around Purim and Pesach, to collections involving 10,000 people collecting over 80 tonnes of necessary aid for Jewish communities in Ukraine; from toy drives for Israeli children during periods of war to the 450+ hot, nutritious meals now cooked each week for people in need by volunteers in The Giving Kitchen.

In 2019, GIFT was extremely blessed to bring on board a new Managing Director, R' Sandor Milun. Sandor's compassionate attributes, forward thinking and leadership, together with the support and guidance of Rabbi Naftali & Jewish Futures helped catapult GIFT further into the mainstream of the Jewish charity world



*Young GIFT Volunteers, helping to sort, pack and load essential items to Ukraine*



# ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

## SANDOR MILUN

Leaving an outreach organisation is never easy, it was a way of life for me; however something was gnawing at me. I believe with my entire being that GIFT's mission will make THE positive difference we all seek in our community. It has been the most incredible four years of my life, truly a privilege and an honour to work with such a dedicated team.

In March 2020, as Covid loomed, GIFT was fortunate to have developed unique opportunities to which the community responded extremely positively. Within 48 hours we had mobilised an army of volunteers who helped the community deal with the initial shock and difficulty of the pandemic. The first ever Charity Drive-In experience where over 200 cars full with people (700+)

came together in a Covid-friendly way to honour and celebrate our volunteers.

As important as the 'benefits' of giving and volunteering are, so is the attitude around giving itself. Core to our mission is our Education programme: through established and expanding numbers of partnerships with schools, youth groups, synagogues and families, we empower our next generation to become agents of positive change and to commit to a lifetime of giving.

Our Year 6 Giving Course is seen as a rite of passage in a myriad of schools; the meaningful volunteering opportunities we deliver in senior schools are taken up by thousands of teens each year; our expanding work with university students

and young professionals enables us to continue to support young people as they enter the 'real world'.

Young GIFT (YG) has reached out to the young professional community and they have responded. We have a fantastic YG committee which is spear-heading a number of opportunities to engage their peers. We have hundreds of YP's now involved, be it on the ad hoc driving groups, at packathons, tutoring and befriending.

GIFT in the City is a powerful and engaging day programme for corporates to get involved enabling them to engage with various giving opportunities which in turn allows for a wonderful utilisation of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) days. We also have options of coming





to the corporate's office for a talk and a homeless packing opportunity. So far we have engaged Goldman Sachs, EY, PwC, VATIT, HSBC and others.

The Giving Kitchen (TGK): born out of the need to provide meals during Covid, we realised that however wonderful it was to provide thousands of ready-to-go meals for people in need, it really wasn't part of our mission. We needed to find a way to continue doing so whilst ensuring we stayed focused. We now have 60+ volunteers a week ensuring over 400 high quality, freshly cooked meals are made and delivered. We have developed a collaboration with Central Synagogue and have Feast by Ed catering with a similar model in Manchester.

At this year's GIVEFEST – our summer festival of giving – hundreds of families came to enjoy fairground rides, candyfloss and a climbing tower while also joining together at 'giving stations' to make a difference to others, whether writing cards for elderly people, making packs for homeless people or creating necklaces for children in Israel. Demonstrating that giving can be fun is our unique way of communicating our core message to young people; given the year-on-year increase in GIVEFEST attendance, we think it's working.

GIFT has cultivated strategic partnerships with corporations, non-profits, and government agencies to amplify

its impact. By leveraging resources and expertise, GIFT has been able to extend its reach and effectiveness, addressing complex social challenges together with like-minded organisations such as Project Lily, Barnet Council, Light up a Life and more.

We feel immensely proud of the numerous initiatives at GIFT which have been sparked by our volunteers themselves. In recent years, with support from our team, students have developed and launched projects including The Green Closet, Beyond the Label and Through Our Eyes. A young volunteer chose to organise food drives for the homeless; an elderly volunteer established scholarships for underprivileged students; children have opted to celebrate their Bar or Bat Mitzvah by collecting goods or funds for those in need. In each case, the culture of giving in our community grows and affects all those around them, helping us to achieve our vision.

As we reflect on our 20 years, we also look forward with excitement to the coming 20, and beyond. Our ambition to grow our reach – both within Education and Community Support – remains unwavering. Our forthcoming Giving Conference will bring together community leaders to share best practice; our recently relaunched website will bring our message and programmes to a wider audience with clarity and purpose; we'll be growing our work in Manchester and Israel;

and we will continue to foster international collaborations to create a global network of compassion and giving.

These future plans, and our achievements to date, are only possible through our extraordinary donors and funders, many of whom have accompanied us on our journey for many years. Your unwavering belief in our work and generosity of spirit enables us to continue to fulfil our mission of creating a compassionate, connected world. Thank you.

Join the Movement, Embrace a Giving Mindset

As GIFT celebrates its 20th anniversary, we look to the future with a renewed sense of purpose. As GIFT embarks on the next phase of its journey, we welcome individuals, families, and communities to join our mission of creating a more compassionate and connected world through giving to others.

Bring your young children to one of our regular and fun Thank GIFT It's Sunday (TGIS) events; pop along for a packing session at the GIFT Hub and help us to collate food support parcels for those in need; deliver those food parcels in your neighbourhood; tutor someone, or bring us into your company's office to deliver an inspiring, hands-on giving session.

The opportunities are numerous; the impact is endless.

*For more information, please visit our website at [jgift.org](http://jgift.org) or call us to volunteer on 0208 457 4429*



*Keren Heller*  
PHOTOGRAPHY

*Beyond the Label  
event; an incubator  
project by two  
Hasmonean Girls'  
School students*

## STORIES OF GIVING

**GARETH KOBRIN**

I'm not a natural born giver.

There are those who are blessed with generous genes, souls that yearn to provide, but my unpolished state is selfish. I am more of a taker.

I seldom wake up thinking, "What can I do for other people today?"

I'm much more likely to pose more sinister questions, like:

Borrow or rob?

I'm not really that bad, but I needed an excuse to use this expression, because it's a rather special one. Can you work out the unique properties of this three-worded phrase?

It is a palindrome. A sequence of words that reads the same way forwards as backwards.

I'll come back to palindromes – there is method to my madness – but first I must clear my name. Although I am not naturally giving, I have learned how to give.

It took three lessons before I got the Gift, best summarised with three cheesy quotes:

"You don't have to be rich to give"

"The meaning of life is finding your gift. The purpose of life is giving it away."

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

I'd like to share four remarkable stories about giving, and one about taking, and in each I think we can find a key ingredient to the secret sauce of life.

### **ROBERT KOCH: GIVING IS ALL ABOUT THE DELIVERY, MAN.**

There's a well-known axiom quoted in the Talmud (Sotah 47b), "He who hates gifts, lives." There are pages of wisdom written on this verse, but on a simple level we are being warned to be wary of accepting gifts, lest it lead us to bad traits and deeds like theft, coveting, and flattery.

It also teaches us something fundamental about how to give.

Robert Koch has been a volunteer for GIFT for several years, and his face glows with pride when he modestly

describes the work he does with them. Robert supports the London community by delivering food across the capital to those in need. Not only does he schlep miles every week, he schleps smiles too. He knows how awkward it can be for the recipient of charity, they hate gifts, and so he doesn't focus on the food. He makes sure to spend time with them, to support them in any way he can – both emotionally and practically – before casually leaving the food parcels, like a friend who has brought a house gift.

Like many of us, Robert has suffered with mental health issues, and he says that the best medicine he could imagine is supporting GIFT and helping people in the community. Seeing the smiles it brings to faces, and experiencing true gratitude, is a feeling that cannot be done justice with words. "It makes me feel better, and allows me to put my head on the pillow at night and sleep well, knowing the help I have given, remembering that smile on the person's face."





*GIFT Volunteers at The Givong Kitchen at Central Synagogue, with Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis*

## **LYNNE BENARROCH: GIVE, TASTEFULLY.**

Lynne Benarroch grew up in foster care, so she knows first-hand what it's like to be a hungry child. Giving to others has become a fundamental part of her life, because she knows what it means to need, and how the goodness of others can affect your life.

Seemingly tiny gestures – like giving a child a book or a toy – can make an enormous difference in their life. When you aren't sure where your next meal is coming from, the comfort of knowing that GIFT is going to provide a hot meal is beyond comprehensible to most people. But Lynne has been that child, so she knows that every moment she spends at GIFT is making a difference.

She started volunteering for GIFT in 2019, coming once a week to the warehouse to pack non-perishable packages for individuals and families in need. During lockdown, she and her husband collected homemade food from volunteer cooks and delivered it all over northwest London to very grateful recipients.

When GIFT opened The Giving

Kitchen, she admits responding “reluctantly” to a request for volunteers. (Lynne is not a morning person, she hates cooking, despises washing dishes and because she's vegan, the thought of spending hours around meat was revolting.)

Nevertheless, she drew on the experience of her past, dragged herself to the kitchen at 10:30am and coincidentally, the chef asked her to prepare a dish she was familiar with. She had found her calling...

The following week, she was the first

one in and the rest is history. (They can't get rid of her!)

Lynne has since been “promoted” to sous chef, but in reality, she's there twice a week doing whatever needs to be done: cooking, washing, (even chopping!), and on very special occasions, she makes her now-famous Rocky Roads.

She loves the feeling of unity the kitchen cooks up – they are all aware of the need in the community, and they prepare the food with love, in the hope that the recipients will enjoy the freshly



*Volunteers sorting clothing at the Green Closet initiative*



made meal.

Lynne knows the secret. “On the face of it, volunteering is a selfless act. You give your time to support others in need. In reality, I’ve gained so much from volunteering at GIFT. It’s a privilege to be a small part of such a fabulous organisation that promotes the true sense of giving”.

Her life was turned around by a little bit of luck and a whole lot of determination, but she never forgets where she’s come from, and how it felt to be a child in need. It’s that knowledge that drives her to make a difference.

Her message is that a hot meal symbolises more than just food, it means that someone cares, someone knows you are in need, and they are doing something about it.

### **GREGORY ROSE: GIVE YOURSELF.**

We’ve seen that giving can be channelled through the act of creating that which is being given, or helping to deliver it. Gregory Rose doesn’t make anything for GIFT, nor does he partake in the distribution.

Instead, he embraces the remarkable

generosity generated by GIFT’s “Befriender” programme – the act of giving himself.

A while back, Gregory was going through a rough patch, so he sought counsel from his Rabbi. As is often the case with the best Rabbis, the advice was simple and practical: if you’re feeling down, the best way to get up is to give.

Gregory had always given charity, but this time he wanted to do something different. He wanted contact. If you see someone without a smile on their face, the best solution is to give them yours.

He joined the Befriender program,



where volunteers spend time with lonely or otherwise needy members of the community. He formed a special bond with Lewis, a lovely man in his 80’s. Whether it’s taking him shopping, out for a bite to eat, listening to music, or simply strolling together on Primrose Hill, he gives a lonesome man something to look forward to.

And by giving himself so selflessly to another, he has found himself.

### **Jordan & Rachel Pearlman MAKE THE GIFT YOUR OWN**

While our other heroes gave so generously of themselves, 16-year-old Jordan and his sister Rachel went one step further and created their own charity project called Green Closet.

They took the initiative to collect high-quality clothing as donations from the community, which they list online for resale on eCommerce platforms such as Vinted and Depop. The funds generated from these sales are used to provide gift cards to less privileged families, so they can have the respectability of buying their own first-hand clothes to enjoy.

They were motivated by the extreme importance of people’s need to feel





independent. As all younger siblings will appreciate, there is something a little degrading about being forced to wear hand-me-downs. Jordan and Rachel went beyond the call of duty to set up the Green Closet, working with GIFT in the hope of giving something most needy people need more than anything: dignity.

### **AARON “AJ” KOBRIN: TAKING, THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT.**

I said earlier that I am not a giver, but I am lucky that my wife Aimee has enough of that GIFT for the both of us. Kindness permeates every fibre of her being, and she lives to give to other people. When our son, Aaron, was born with severe special needs, her innate desire to give everything to her boy was heightened. For his first years, she lived only to give to him. Sadly, his syndrome is not curable, and he suffers from severe mental and physical disabilities. No matter how much Aimee gives, she can't take that away.

We love Aaron more than we might ever have imagined, but having a child with special needs is a challenge. The night is real. There are times when it can be overwhelming. When you can't help but think that the night is not an absence of light, but in fact, it is the daytime that is a brief respite from the looming darkness.

Thankfully, we have been the recipients of kindness from across the community, including our incredible friends and family at GIFT. Whether it was help with food and support in the early days when he was severely ill, or the respite we get when volunteers take AJ for a walk in the park – it is a priceless gift.

Anyone can count the number of seeds in an apple, but only God can count the number of apples in a seed.

The astonishing work that GIFT does is literally endless. It is impossible to count the ripple effects of the giving, but I know from personal experience that each act – no matter how small – has an infinite impact.

Palindromes: the feeling flows both ways

The Torah talks about the act of GIVING when describing the Jewish People's contribution to the Tabernacle. The verse states: “And they gave” (Ex. 30:12). The Hebrew word used is “*v'natnu*” (וּנְתְּנוּ) which is spelled exactly the same, read forward and backward.

The idea is simple, but exquisite: giving initiates a reciprocal process resulting in receiving.

At the end of the day, we only have what we give.



# THE ULTIMATE STRESS BUSTER



AVROHOM ZEIDMAN

## WHEN DID IT HAPPEN, THAT STRESS BECAME AN INTEGRAL PART OF MY LIFE?

I WORK ON A BIG PROJECT, SEE THE DEADLINES LOOMING CLOSER, SPEND ALL-NIGHTERS TRYING TO PERFECT THE JOB, COMPLETE IT AT THE LAST MINUTE, HAVE HALF A SECOND TO BREATHE - ONLY TO IMMEDIATELY GET WORKING ON THE NEXT ONE. DAYS GO BY SO QUICKLY NOW, AS SOON AS THEY BEGIN THEY END, AND THE WEEKS JUST DISAPPEAR.





When can I just stop and enjoy the moment? Something inside of me keeps pushing saying 'more, more, more! Don't pause until you at least finish this latest venture'. But the pause never comes. We live in a world that places progress and achievement as one of its highest values. Why is it that the drive for achievement never leads to happiness? Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler explains that there is something a lot deeper going on, something below the surface going way into the depths of human psychology. Each time I desire something, I feel that when I achieve my goal, it will expand my sense of self. Human beings crave this sense of expansion and enlargement. However, acquiring or achieving anything outside of myself will not satisfy my yearning. This is because these things never become a true part of me and the real me does not become bigger from them. Therefore, the end result is disappointment. The underlying desire is coming from the soul. This Divine spark wants to be more, to expand to be a greater person. Each

However, the soul says, When you give, you grow. When you identify with your soul, you own that which you give away. You have become a different person, one with greater connection to others, one with a greater capacity for kindness. Your soul expanded. The real you grew.

Our sages say, "The more possessions, the more worries." The same text from our Oral Tradition (*Mishna*) continues to outline soul investments, which all have spiritual growth as results, such as the dictum, "The more charity, the more peace."

This spiritual expansion of giving is lasting, calming and powerful. There is also scientific evidence to support giving as a stress-busting pursuit. The "helper's high" identified by psychologists demonstrates that pleasure-inducing endorphins are released when people engage in selfless activities.

To change ourselves from body to soul awareness, we need to change our attitudes and our habits. Instead of the

## WHEN YOU IDENTIFY WITH YOUR SOUL, YOU OWN THAT WHICH YOU GIVE AWAY

time, I focus on a counterfeit pleasure, thinking this item will bring me true joy. Despite having *more*, I have not *become* more. I can watch an action movie and in ninety minutes, vicariously save the world from evil powers and become that hero that I always wanted to be. Once the show stops, I feel empty: it was all fake. In truth, I just wasted an hour and a half of my life. When I open the fridge and stand there scanning the contents, my wife asks – "What are you looking for?" I joke – "Meaning and purpose," and then usually eat the day-old pizza.

The endless chase of that elusive desire for growth, leads to stress. The real craving is for soul growth. Behind the wish for self-expansion is a desire for depth and direction in our lives. We need to start to listen to the more subtle voice of our souls. The body says Take more. Don't give. If you give – you lose.

stress of taking for ourselves (which is self-reinforcing because it is never satisfied), we should redirect the stress toward developing our giving muscles.

GIFT's new stress ball embodies this concept. We squeeze tight, trying to draw in towards ourselves: taking causes stress. When we release and open our palms outwards in order to give, we expand ourselves and let go of our tension.

Rosh Hashanah, the Head of the Year, is the time for attitudinal change in the mind. When we decide to extend a hand, to expand our hearts, to view others as part of ourselves, we demonstrate our commitment to all that is meaningful, to becoming greater, fulfilling our potential, and becoming givers. By doing so we benefit not just others, but also ourselves.









# JOURNEY THROUGH THE MELLAH

DISCOVERING MOROCCO'S JEWISH STORY

ARI KAYSER

---

Walking through the streets of Marrakech on Shabbat, wearing my *tallit* (prayer shawl), few heads turned, an indication of how accustomed the people of Morocco have become to hosting Jews in their country. In fact, this wasn't the only time I had this sort of experience during my five-day visit with an Aish on Campus group to the North African country. As I walked out of the Bahia Palace gates, near the *Mellah* (Jewish quarter), a Muslim man with a wide smile stopped me, explaining, in flawless Hebrew, that his father serves as the guard protecting one of the synagogues in the area. I knew that Morocco was considered a country tolerant to its Jews, as far as Muslim countries go, but I was shocked to what extent that was so. One university student on our trip commented to me, "I feel safer walking the streets of Morocco wearing my kippah than anywhere else in the world, including Israel."

The history of the Jews in Morocco is an ancient one and one that, to me, serves as a model for coexistence, both between Jews and their Muslim hosts, but also between Jews and other Jews. According to the Encyclopedia of World History there were between 250,000 and 350,000 Jews living in Morocco prior to the establishment of the State of

Israel in 1948, making it the largest Jewish community in the Muslim world. Today, the population hovers at around 3,000.

Morocco has made big strides in ensuring the protection of minorities. Since the 2011 Moroccan Constitution, this protection has been enshrined in law, investing Jews with the same political rights as their Muslim compatriots. Significantly, it entitles the Jewish community to benefit from the freedom of worship, where, as a 'state religion', the state must intervene to protect its Jews. The leadership of King Mohammed VI and his commitment to promoting the values of tolerance, inter-religious dialogue and coexistence, has helped distinguish Morocco in this regard. As king and lineal descendant of the Prophet Mohammed, he is loved by his people and serves as the spiritual head of the country, holding much power and influence, and has used his platform to promote a moderate and tolerant Islam, one that is vocal against extremism. His title, Commander of the Faithful, includes responsibilities towards the Jewish community, and the Jews of Morocco are, by and large, big supporters of the king. "As Commander of the Faithful and defender of the faith, I am committed to protecting the

rights of Muslims and non-Muslims alike," said the Sovereign in a speech, affirming that Moroccan Jews enjoy the same constitutional and political rights as their fellow Muslim citizens, and play a key role in the country's economy.

This is not the first time a Moroccan king has interceded on behalf of his Jews. During World War II, following the occupation of France by Nazi Germany, the Vichy Government, which had civil jurisdiction over the French Protectorate of Morocco, attempted to pass legislation against the Jews of Morocco. King Mohammed V refused to sign off on efforts by Vichy officials to impose anti-Jewish legislation and deport the country's 250,000 Jews to their deaths in Nazi concentration camps and extermination camps in Europe. He is remembered by Moroccan Jews for stating, "There are no Jews in Morocco; there are only Moroccan citizens", taking his role as Commander of the Faithful very seriously. This act was officially recognised by Israel's president, Isaac Hertzog, in a letter sent to King Mohammed VI on 22 December 2022. "When millions of Jews faced the horrors of the Holocaust in the 20th century, King Mohammed V provided a safe haven for his Jewish subjects."



Aish on Campus students with 'goats on trees' near the Argan Oil Factory in Essaouira, Morocco.

## “Quite simply, the history of Morocco cannot be told without the story of its Jews.”

It is interesting to note, that although Morocco is ethnically diverse, Jews are the only officially recognised non-Muslim minority. In fact, the importance of the history of the Jews in Morocco is inextricably linked to the history of the country itself. Author and historian, Emily Gottreich, an expert in Moroccan Jewish history and Muslim-Jewish relations in the Arab-Islamic world, wrote, “Jews are also among the oldest inhabitants of Morocco, having arrived in Northwest Africa centuries, possibly millennia, before the arrival of Arabs and Islam...Their deep roots are evident at every level of Moroccan society: political, economic or social. Quite simply, the history of Morocco cannot be told without the story of its Jews.”

Nowhere is this more evident than walking through the Mellah of Marrakech. Hebrew writing is not uncommon, and meandering through the intricate system of alleyways, one can spot a *hamsa* with the Star of David at every turn. In one market shop we stopped by, we spoke to a man working

on a sophisticated design for a beautiful silver cover to a *Megillah* (scroll). His store sold menorahs, Pesach plates and shofars, with a picture of the famous miracle-working Moroccan rabbi, the Baba Sali, hanging proudly in the background. In January 2014, the king approved a comprehensive urban renewal programme to preserve the historical memory of the Jewish quarter. This included preservation of synagogues and reverting to the Hebrew street-names of many of the quarter's alleyways. Today, the Slat al-Azama synagogue sits on Talmud Thora Street.

As I walked through the Medina and into the Mellah, surrounded by a colourful display of pyramid-shaped spice piles and wandered in and out of market stalls selling kaftans, babouche slippers and Moroccan lanterns, I thought to myself how this Jewish quarter felt so different from its European equivalents. Of course, Jewish quarters are often thought of as ghettos in connection to the Holocaust. The first Mellah





Scenes from Marrakech market, including Judaica items like Menorahs and shofars

of Morocco was established in Fez in 1438 after a massacre was perpetrated against the Jews, who were accused of placing wine in the mosques. Although the Mellahs of Morocco did experience very severe living conditions throughout the country and the centuries, particularly during the mid-19th century when Jews from the mountain regions descended on the Mellahs in search of economic opportunities; unlike their European ghetto counterparts, they were not used as a halfway house towards extermination.

The thought of walking through an ancient Jewish quarter, with its labyrinth of alleyways, Jewish street-names and hidden synagogues was wild. I closed my eyes in the middle of the *souq*, in an attempt to soak in the sounds and smells and transport myself back in time. The hot March air carried the smell of golden turmeric and *ras el hanout*, a Moroccan spice blend used in many North African cuisines. The sounds of marketeers

enthusiastically negotiating in the very distinct Darija (Moroccan Arabic), heavily influenced by the Berber (Amazigh) language but nevertheless part of the Maghrebi Arabic dialect continuum, reminded me I was not just in a marketplace, but in a meeting place, of friends, families and communities.

That, in essence, was the feeling that kept returning. Morocco is a community. For so many of the Moroccan Jews we met on the way, who were doing a family heritage trip tracing their roots, they see Morocco as part of their Jewish identity, the place where it all began for them and their families. They take that Moroccan influence and bring it back to their new adopted homelands, be it in France, Canada, Israel or elsewhere.

In a world often divided by our differences, the story of the Jews in Morocco serves as a powerful reminder of the potential for harmony and coexistence.

**Shalom. Salaam. Peace.**

1 King Mohammed VI puts Morocco at the forefront of religious tolerance efforts, *The North Africa Post*, July 2019. 2 Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Post-Colonial Times, Gottreich 3 Jewish Communities in Exotic Places p293. Ken Blady





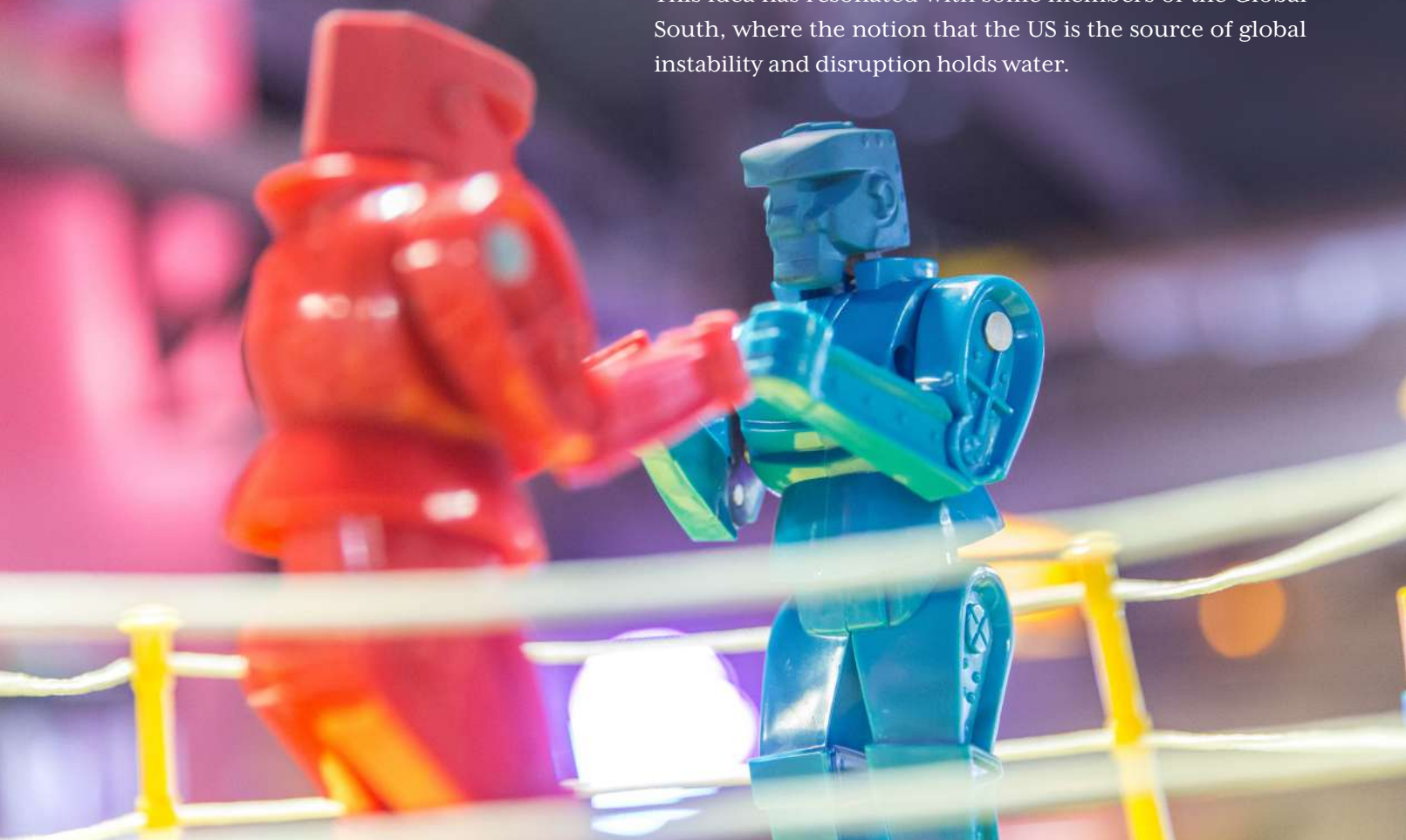
# THE MULTIPOLAR WORLD

DARREN COHEN

---

The US emerged from the Cold War in the early 1990s as the world's sole superpower. Washington sought to consolidate this role and establish a unipolar global order whereby international political institutions and the economy were US-led. Upon the conclusion of the intense bipolarity of the Cold War and the US's fierce battle for influence with the USSR, Washington's strategy was predicated on a vision in which no alternative superpower would challenge American primacy and military might.

In the ensuing period, however, the world has endured multiple transformations and crises that have challenged US hegemony. The Russian leadership, partly due to deep mistrust in the West and partly due to its sense of exclusion from the Western international order, has increasingly sought to reassert Moscow's influence regionally and globally in the last decade. In terms of epoch-defining events, this has most saliently culminated in Russia's invasion of Ukraine and rejection of perceived Western-led adventurism. Russian leaders have even framed the so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine as a battle against Western political and military encroachment. This idea has resonated with some members of the Global South, where the notion that the US is the source of global instability and disruption holds water.







Meanwhile, the West integrated China into Washington-led capitalist institutions and forums based on the belief that Beijing would embrace American democracy in the same way that it embraced American wealth. This misguided assumption has thus far failed to materialise. China accepted the ticket into the capitalist club, even becoming one of the US's biggest trading partners, while declining the overtures to adopt democratic values. Beijing has since exported its economic muscle by building infrastructure and gaining influence through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), thus increasingly expanding its geopolitical orbit and soft power.

## Large parts of the world are therefore seemingly no longer interested in a US-dominated international order

Certain medium-sized powers have also observed the waning of the US's influence in parts of Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, as well as the chaotic nature of its withdrawal from Afghanistan, after

two decades of failed attempts to impose democracy. These actors have concluded that it is imperative to at the very least balance their allegiances in order to secure their national interests. This has culminated in long-standing US allies, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, seeking cooperation with Russia and/or China due to the perception that the US no longer has their back.

Most importantly for many countries, unlike the US or the similarly-minded EU, China's advantage is that it does not condition its support on the safeguarding of human rights or democratic governance, enabling it to play a key role without asking difficult questions. More recently, this has enabled China to harness its relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia by mediating a normalisation deal between the two staunch rivals. The Chinese have therefore been able to flex their emerging geopolitical muscles by leveraging their economic strength to gain an inroad in areas of US interest.

In the background are the citizens of dozens of countries worldwide who feel abandoned by the West's globalisation project

as well as more powerful states that have established alternative alliances to augment their influence, such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), which increasingly looks to expand. This bloc has called for an end to unipolarity, which it deems unfavourable, and a rebalancing of the world order.

Large parts of the world are therefore seemingly no longer interested in a US-dominated international order that allows Washington to dictate the rules. The US administration has aimed to slightly recalibrate its strategy to adjust to evolving multipolarity, although its core position remains that the world is a better place when Uncle Sam is leading the way - a position that has manifested in the US as the driving force behind the West's support for the Ukrainian military effort and anti-Russian sanctions campaign.

Unipolarity is not only threatened by aspiring alternate superpowers. The immense capacity of private tech firms to effect change and reach millions also presents a challenge to the US's ability to dominate the global conversation and implement its vision. The digital order has seized control from state actors in areas that were long the exclusive realm of governments. Huge tech companies are able to effectively exert influence over billions of people in a way that transcends the capacity of most modern nation-states. Even if many of these firms are based in the US, this does not equate to adherence to Washington's global ideology. Here too, Washington's adversaries are at an advantage as they wield direct influence over tech platforms based in the US, which may pose a national security threat.

Technology will more generally play an increasingly significant role in renewed geopolitical rivalry.

Robotics, telecommunications, artificial intelligence, engineering, and nanotechnology are all arenas for competition, particularly between the US and China. This trend is likely to be increasingly pervasive in the decades to come as for-profit companies expand their purview and governments attempt to seize back control through regulation.

**Like with  
any changing  
geopolitical reality,  
the question  
arises:  
Is it good  
for the Jews?**

Looking ahead, while both the challenges presented by geopolitical rivals and non-state entities are genuine threats to the US's global domination, we ought not to get carried away. Neither China nor Russia, nor any other adversary of the West, has established the capacity to meaningfully challenge the US-led order, irrespective of the increased competition. Most cogently, the US supremacy in security remains, as highlighted by the continued dependency of many states on Washington, even those that have turned to Russia or China for support in other areas. The US still spends more on defence spending than the next ten countries combined. If an economic multipolar world with various centres of power exists, the security realm remains unipolar.

Like with any changing geopolitical reality, the question arises: Is it good for the Jews? The increased competition and pursuit of alternative leadership presents opportunities for countries that



*Official photo of the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu*

are geopolitically astute enough to strike a clear balance that serves their interests. The rivalry between global powers can be leveraged to gain concessions and influence, and Jerusalem has proven adept at this task. Israel is one of the few states to carefully maintain strong relations with the US, Russia, and China.

The US-Israel strategic relationship is long-lasting and is based on shared values, military partnerships, and mutual economic interests. However, Israel has remained largely neutral on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and maintains strategic defence relations with Moscow. Moreover, much to the US's chagrin, Israel has for many years welcomed Chinese investment. This has included a wide range of private tech companies and public infrastructure, with Chinese state-owned companies involved in the construction of the Tel Aviv light rail and a novel Haifa Bayport terminal. Although Israel has gradually bowed to US pressure and slowly scaled back Chinese investment in critical infrastructure, Beijing and Jerusalem enjoy strong ties.

Indeed, taking a page out of the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's playbook, Prime Minister Netanyahu appeared to be signalling to the US in July that

he has alternatives. Upon apparently being snubbed by President Biden, who at the time of writing has failed to extend an invitation to the Israeli leader, Netanyahu accepted an invitation for an official state visit to Beijing. By no means an expression of Israeli willingness to forsake its closest ally, this geopolitical gamble by Netanyahu seemingly underscored his efforts to leverage Washington's opposition to a Chinese footprint in the Middle East.

Overall, the US's influence appears to be globally waning. State and non-state actors are no longer entirely deterred by Washington's military might, an asset that it utilises in a more measured and calculated manner. The incoherence of American foreign policy under the current administration has contributed to a state of unclarity, with varying and often contradictory emphases placed on challenging Chinese influence, curbing Iran's malign activities, championing democracy and human rights, confronting Russia, and realigning with traditional allies. In this state of uncertainty, aggravated by a series of global crises, the emergence of a multipolar order seems more likely, and all the challenges to global stability that come with great power rivalry.



# TOGETHER BUT SEPARATE

## THE JEWS OF TEHRAN

**YISSCA WEISZ**

Leila (name changed for protection), a soft-spoken vibrant young woman, grew up in the Iranian cities of Shiraz and Tehran, straddling her traditional upbringing within the proud local Jewish community while fully immersed in Islamic culture and society. Although she now lives abroad, she looks back with warm fondness at memories of her childhood and adolescence, exuding happiness as she recollects Jewish family life surrounded by Muslim culture. As she shares her mostly positive perspective on her experience in Iran, she chooses her words carefully, keen to paint an accurate and vivid picture.

Leila comes from a traditional Persian Jewish family, who for as long as her “parents, grandparents and great grandparents can recall” have always lived in Iran. Plainly, she shares that many fellow Iranian Jews believe they have been there since the exile following the destruction of the First Temple, over 2,600 years ago. The lack of hard evidence does not phase her sense of origin; on the contrary, it seems to reinforce her bond to Iran as a central component of her family’s history. Indeed, there is a core Jewish contingent still living in Iran today, who seem glued to a long-lasting Middle-Eastern heritage that spans centuries.

With a rich and colourful knowledge of Iran’s history, Leila sets a scene of multiculturalism and acceptance of diversity. During her parents’ generation and the reign of





*Youssefabad Synagogue, Tehran*



*Entrance to Synagogue HaRav Yaakov obm*

The Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941-1979), there was a tolerance and respect for Jews and their religious practice. The period of The Shah is known to have been “the golden age” of Jewish life in Iran, when Jews could serve as fully integrated retailers, doctors and administrators. It is recorded that there were 100,000 Jews before the Iranian Revolution, a figure that has drastically decreased today to approximately 9,500. This is not an accurate figure according to Chief Rabbi Yehuda Gerami, who reckons there are as many as 20,000 Jews across the country. Perhaps a reason for such divergent figures could be that many of the Jews in Iran are traditional and very secularised, who define themselves first and foremost as Iranian, and then as Jewish.

Leila’s father is a successful businessman who has travelled freely across the Middle East. Despite the freedom with which he has always been able to work internationally, there are laws that remind a Jew of his place in Iran; Jews can study and even teach at universities, qualify as lawyers and solicitors, but never serve as an officer in the army, nor a judge. The Iranian Jewish community has but a single seat reserved in parliament, a

stark reminder of the fact that at the end of the day, they are a minority in a Muslim country. It seems that too high a position of power for a Jew might pose a threat to the state, and thus there are inherent limitations within Iran’s infrastructure for, or against, its Jewish population.

Leila reveals that there are limitations even within community life; “we are allowed to renovate our shuls as many times as we like, but we are not permitted to build a new synagogue.” The thriving centre of Jewish life remains only within its existing parameters, and is precluded from growing. Until recently, there has not been a need for security outside of synagogues or Jewish establishments across the country.

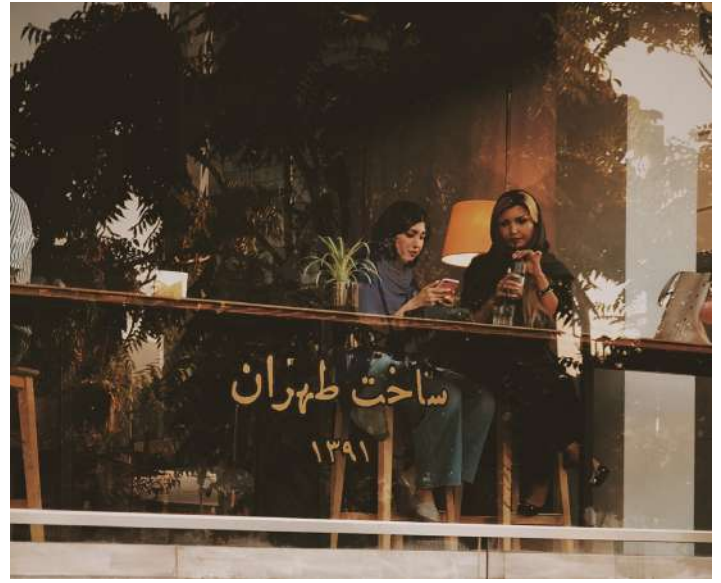
Even after the White Revolution (1963-79), and the war between Iran and Iraq (1980-88), although many left for Israel, a large Jewish community remained in Iran. Conscious of retaining their privacy and safety, Leila thoughtfully hesitates before discussing her family. Her early years were spent living in Shiraz before moving to Tehran, where her immediate family continues to reside today. Many members of her extended family have emigrated abroad, many of whom have made Aliyah

to Israel. When her parents speak over the phone, they use the term “Eretz”, (Hebrew for “land”) an established codename for Israel among the Jewish community, wary of protecting loved ones.

The Revolution has had a lasting impact beyond Leila’s parents’ generation, having effected practicalities such as the monitoring of female head covering which persists to this day. She gracefully describes the different types of hijab: the shal is made of a light material; rosari is a triangle-shaped scarf; chador is an outer garment similar to a cloak; and maghnaeh is dark and formal, worn in educational or governmental roles. From the age of nine or ten, girls begin covering their hair, usually with a shal or rosari when they go out in public, to school or restaurants. The morality police, who are known as the Gasht-e Ershad since 2006, conduct patrols of the cities to ensure women are dressed modestly and appropriately “Islamic.” Laughing, Leila reveals the unexpected: “I was arrested once, it was during Muharram, traditionally a period of sadness and mourning.” Leila’s crime was simply “wearing different colours” to the plain black that was customary.

Notwithstanding this small brush with the law, Leila remembers





Left: flavourful herbaceous Persian food. Right: two women in head coverings at a cafe in Tehran, Iran

feeling safe and accepted among her Muslim neighbours. Indeed, she went to a fully Muslim school, where she was respected and treated as an equal, despite being a religious minority with only a handful of other Jewish peers. She reveals her familiarity with the Qur'an and the Muslim morning prayers, often praised for her exemplary pronunciations. During *Din*, the Islamic religious studies class, Leila would do independent work or leave the classroom, which made her Muslim classmates lovingly jealous, joking how “lucky” she was to skip a class. Religious studies were compulsory for all high school students however, and so she went to Hebrew school once a week, to learn about the Jewish festivals, in order to fulfil statutory requirements.

Although she grew up entrenched in Muslim culture and society, enjoying their music, dance and yoga methods, some of Leila's most distinct memories centre around Jewish practices. Surrounded by cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents, they would all celebrate Shabbat and the *Chagim* together. Strictly family time, Shabbat would consist of *Kiddush* and a shared meal on Friday night, going to the park with friends during

the day, and saying a few chapters of *Tehillim* (Psalms).

“We'd walk to this aunt's house, then to that aunt's house. Everybody would go to the synagogue, which was beautiful with a garden for the children to play in and a grand balcony for the women's section, overlooking the men. The view was breathtaking. There would be *Tehillim* reading for the children and we would get prizes. It was a lot of fun.”

Shabbat held importance to so many, that even non-observant Jews would close their businesses, and bazaars would often be put on hold over the weekend. Jews provided much of the economy's movement, so there would not have been much point in remaining open over Shabbat, Leila laughs, “because nobody was coming!”

In the days leading up to Yom Kippur: “Everybody, religious and secular alike, would walk, filling the streets on their way to synagogue for *selichot* (penitential prayers recited in the period leading up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), which was before dawn, at around four o'clock in the morning! It was definitely one of the sights to see in Shiraz.”

Over Sukkot, her local synagogue

would become a hub of activity. “We would go back and forth from home to our synagogue, bringing all of our food to the communal *sukkah*.” Residential balconies were often small, she explains, and so Sukkot became a shared festival by default. Women would cook *Ash Reshteh*, a thick, slow-cooked vegetable and noodle soup and bake *Challah* together in the synagogue. “Everybody would bring something and we would all share it. On *Chol Hamoed* (the intermittent festival days), people would bring instruments and there would be singing, the small kids would play soccer and us older girls played cards. We moved in!” Eyes glistening she proclaims, “Sukkot was the best time of our lives.”

Leila describes Persian Jewish celebrations vibrantly; baby-naming ceremonies, bar or bat mitzvahs, engagement parties and weddings, happen almost on a weekly basis. Banquet tables would be piled high with different meats and bountiful dishes infused with spices and fresh green herbs, transcending all other tablescaping around the world. “Everybody is close within the community, so everyone is invited. We have big parties with fancy dresses, famous singers, tiered



cakes, and all the meats you could imagine.” Such superabundance extends outwardly; Leila reveals with great pride, “our community gives a lot of *tzedakah* (charity), and makes sure that no one is needy. We help each other out,” be it professionally, or financially, sometimes even contributing to celebrating magnificent weddings. She continued to compare her culture’s emphasis on aesthetics, while diametrically opposed in intention, to the lavish feast of Achashverosh, the king of Persia (in the Hebrew year 3395), recorded at the start of the Book of Esther. “The mentality of opulence and abundance in the Purim story remains the same thousands of years later. Since the community is present at each event, it is normal

for girls and young women to own upwards of thirty fancy dresses so that they are not seen twice in the same dress in a short period. It’s a bit absurd!”

Though the Persian Jewish food is almost identical to that of their Muslim compatriots, Leila says “there is no question for Iranian Jews to not eat Kosher meat. We have Kosher butchers and restaurants, just like the Muslims have their Hallal regulations to keep to.” Her non-Jewish friends from school would come to spend time together in her house and vice versa, but ultimately they would eat different foods. As close as the two communities seem to be, intermarriage is unheard of.

They are together, but separate. Iranian leaders including Former President Ahmadinejad and its

current supreme leader Khamenei refuse to call Israel by name, have famously denied the Holocaust, and threaten Israel with nuclear force. Women are obligated to respect a national dress code complete with a headscarf from a young age, no matter what their religion. Still, Leila’s account proves an enduring sweetness and viability for continued Jewish life within Iran’s borders - at least for now. Perhaps it is their vibrant close-knit community, Shabbat and festival customs, and their tenacity in eating only Kosher meat that helps them endure from generation to generation. She sighs. “Everything is similar and shared, but at the end of the day, it’s not the same.”

*Photo courtesy of Hasan Almasi*





# NEW NEWS

## A CONVERSATION ABOUT NEWS INNOVATION FEATURING MOSHEH QUINOUNOU AND BENYAMIN MOALEM

In a world where the sheer volume of news can seem daunting and the quest for truth often confusing, Emmy-winner and former executive producer of CBS Evening News, Mosheh Oinounou has embarked on a unique journey of news innovation. He has tapped into the power of Instagram to share fact-based social-first news coverage with growing following.

Inspired by his friend and colleague's American and global news

reporting, Chicago-based attorney Benjamin Moalem saw a need for such an approach in the Israel news space, and adopted the MoNews format to curate balanced Israeli news coverage on his own platform.

Recently, Perspectives interviewed them both, discussing their shared passion for the news, some challenges they encounter on their respective platforms, and their visions for the future of news.



**EDITOR:** *Congratulations on receiving the National Press Foundation's Chairman's Citation for MoNews earlier this year - that's a great achievement. Can you tell me about how you got here?*

**MOSHEH:** My parents like to say that they knew I was into the news when I was 6 years old. They would give me a dollar to get ice cream and I would come back with a copy of the newspaper. Years later, I would go on to spend 15 years in TV News as a producer for Fox News, International Editor for Bloomberg TV and Executive Producer at CBS, where I ran the CBS Evening News.

I then launched my own digital content strategy consulting agency in 2019, only to find myself in quarantine like the rest of the world in spring 2020. Frustrated by the news coverage during the early stages of COVID, I took to my Instagram to help inform about 500 friends and family about what was happening. I used my background to cut through the noise and hype and provide fact-based coverage and analysis. Word spread, my news coverage grew beyond COVID, and suddenly my community grew to thousands - now more than 350,000. It includes everyone from singer Joe Jonas to actresses Priyanka Chopra and Sharon Stone, to former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. I was just trying to help a few friends and never intended for this to be a media brand, but I am thrilled so many people found this helpful!

**EDITOR:** *That's very exciting, Mosheh. Benjamin, can you tell us a bit about your path and how you came to starting your own news platform?*

**BENYAMIN:** Definitely. I've also been interested in the news and current events for as far back as I could remember, whether it was reading the newspaper, listening to the radio or watching the news on tv with my Israeli father or grandfather. My father would bring home a copy of the *Yediot Aharonot* every weekend which I would pour over in its original Hebrew on a weekly basis (this was before the internet had become

ubiquitous). As a result, I became very well-versed in what's going on in Israel and its political landscape.

After law school, I worked as a Foreign Law Clerk for an Israeli Supreme Court justice for about a year, a rewarding experience that deepened my knowledge of Israel's judicial reforms. Despite this, I felt a pull towards often writing op-eds for *The Forward* and *Times of Israel* - but I craved more. Inspired by MoNews, which I followed from the start, I realised its format could be an effective way to keep people updated on Israeli news, so I started my own Instagram platform @bymoalem for balanced Israel news coverage in January of 2023.

**EDITOR:** *It's great to see how your passion has led each of you to create your own platforms. It can be challenging to maintain objectivity especially when covering sensitive topics. How do you handle that and decide on the wording you use?*

**MOSHEH:** I think bias - especially when media outlets claim otherwise - is one of the reasons so many Americans and people around the world have come to distrust the media. I have years of training in just trying to bring forth facts, perspectives from all sides, and I believe it is not my role for the audience to tell them how to feel about a story. It is certainly challenging when dealing with certain stories about politics or tragedy or anything I have personal connection to, but I believe my credibility is based on keeping the bias out and trying out myself in the shoes of whomever I am reporting on.

At the same time, there are still facts in the world, and it is also my job to call out falsehoods and lies. When an activist, politician, or CEO - anyone really - is being manipulative or straight up lying to the public, I will make a point of showcasing facts which counter their claim.

**BENYAMIN:** A retired journalist who spent years working at the *Wall Street Journal* once explained to me how a journalist can influence opinion simply based on filler words used or certain adjectives. I find that



*Top: Mosheh Ouinounou. Middle: Benjamin Moalem. Bottom: Mosheh Ouinounou introduces a Judicial Reforms deep dive on his Instagram Story.*



many of the articles you find online are filled with such language and the substantive newsworthy portions of the articles can be condensed into two or three paragraphs. It's also important to understand the underlying politics involved when politicians make certain statements. This provides insight into why politicians say what they say and helps me read between the lines. I try as much as possible to keep things to the plain facts of what happened, but that's not always so easy, especially when explaining political arguments that necessarily require an explanation of the arguments of both sides.

Sometimes, after I write about something controversial, I'll try to step back to make sure it reads well from an objective standpoint. I can't say that I've never received feedback suggesting I'm taking sides on an issue, but you can't always please everyone. Even calling out something that is objectively wrong can lead to an unhappy customer.

**EDITOR:** *Is the approach the same for Israel?*

**MOSHEH:** I have found covering Israel to be one of the most challenging topics to report on as it elicits more emotional reactions from the audience (on both sides) than nearly any other story in the world. It combines politics, faith, social justice and lots of other issues. Literally every word, photo and comma we use is scrutinised by interested community members.

I try to approach it the same way I cover any story. Just the facts, multiple perspectives and historical context. That last part is so important because many in the media approach the story assuming the audience has been watching every event there for the last century. I try to zoom out, as much as possible, in order to help people make sense of the events.

As far as my approach, given my audience is mainly American and has come to expect a wide range of topics covered, I don't cover every daily event but try to report on the stories in Israel that I think will resonate or have impact with a global audience. Benyamin, that is where you are

able to fill all the gaps and are able to dive in deep into the day to day.

**BENYAMIN:** One issue I don't have nearly as many problems with as Mosheh is covering Israel from one side of the conflict. I like to view my page as an Israeli news outlet which means, like most Israeli media sources – even “left wing” ones -- you're not going to see an Israeli perspective alongside a slide explaining why an organisation like Hamas or Islamic Jihad, both sworn to the destruction of Israel, is doing what they're doing. The overwhelming majority of Israelis typically stand behind military operations notwithstanding any political divisions no matter how deep.

That said, I try to focus on the facts of what's happening. For example, we spoke earlier about syntax and when covering the Israeli Arab conflict nuance is very important. Using words like “militant” or “gunman” instead of “terrorist” can invoke (and has invoked) a reaction from my readership so I try to be as exacting as possible. When someone is looking to harm civilians, they are a terrorist; when fighting soldiers, they are militants. Another example would be using “West Bank” over “Judea and Samaria.” I use “West Bank” because, in English, this is the more commonly used term, so I stick with that.

**EDITOR:** *How do you choose what topics get a “deep dive?”*

**MOSHEH:** That is based on a combination of how important or relevant they are at the moment - like when we covered Afghanistan as the US was pulling out troops. We also often base it on the most popular requests from the community.

**BENYAMIN:** I've done a few tending to focus on current hot-button topics that require explanation like the judicial reforms which have changed so many times and have so many moving parts that it's almost impossible to keep up without constant explainers, so I find myself updating and adding to my “judicial reforms” highlight.

I've also done deep dives on topics I find will interest people, like Naftali Bennett's term as prime minister. Someone who didn't realise “East Jerusalem” went far beyond the Old City once requested I do an in depth explainer on what the term means today and the history behind it. Recently, with things heating up along the border with Lebanon, I did one on the Israeli/Lebanese conflict. Requests have come in for explainers on topics including the Israeli political system and settlements - I might do one of these around the time of the next elections.

**EDITOR:** *Let's zoom out. How do you decide what is newsworthy? What gets covered and what does not?*

**MOSHEH:** While most of the MoNews audience is based in the US, we try to cover a range of news from around the world related to politics, business, tech, health and frankly whatever is important or just interesting. It is a combination of what we think is valuable or entertaining for the audience and based on the feedback we get. What makes the Instagram format so valuable is that we have an immediate feedback mechanism, and it allows the community to suggest news topics and ask questions daily. I often take my cues from the community, especially when I start to hear many of them asking about the same topics. That is something we never really did during my time at larger news outlets, and I think is so valuable.

**BENYAMIN:** So, this isn't as big of an issue for me as it is for Mosheh, as my coverage is far more limited in scope, but there is a limit to how much I can write about so it really comes down to my discretion in terms of what constitutes a big enough story that would interest my audience. This is also a side gig for me, so there's only so much I can do in a day.

**EDITOR:** *Have you thought about expanding MoNews and hiring global correspondents covering specific issues or regions, or do you prefer to stay focused on streamlining the news?*



AUX 2-BIG WALL

AUX 5-GREEN R

AUX 6-OH G

AUX 8-D1/C2

AUX 35-BOOK S

AUX 37-TRIO B IM

AUX 10- B1/A2

EDIT PVW

FONT PVW

EXPANDED ABORTION BAN

DOUBLE BOX

CBSN WEB PGM

6:27:18PM

M19 HNC52 M20 HNC62 M17 ER92 M18 ER91

GOOD EVENING. I'M JOHN DICKERSON. IT IS A BATTLE BEING FOUGHT ON MORE THAN A PROMPTER

CUE NET03MDC

PROGRAM

EYE FM7

LIDIADCC

DEMOCRATIC 2020 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

M/E 1

M/E 2

M/E 3

00:02:32

DME1

00:00:00

M1 REM63 M2 REM

M4 REM67

M6 ER10 M7 U

M9 TL45

CAM1 JAMAL

M5 ER15 M11 HNC11A M12 HNC

M10 CR461PGM M14 HNC14D M15 HNC

CAM4 JASON

CAM5 CLARKE

CLIP 1

CLIP 2







**MOSHEH:** Sure! As we grow, I would love to build out a team of reporters globally to contribute to our multiple platforms: Instagram, the Podcast, YouTube and the MoNews Website.

**BENYAMIN:** I'd love to see MoNews become a media empire. As for me, given the scope and target audience, the ceiling is probably much lower, though if my audience gets large enough, I would love to have a podcast where I can explain more in depth what's going on, doing deeper dives into issues that my audience may not fully grasp.

**EDITOR:** *Why did you decide specifically on Instagram and is it always going to be your "main home" or do you envision another platform gaining traction?*

**MOSHEH:** It was the most convenient place to communicate with family and friends at the time we started. If I knew that this would become my job, I may not have chosen it as my first platform given it wasn't built for news. That said, it remains our central 24/7 hub, even as we have launched a daily podcast, newsletter and YouTube channel. Given the growth on the platforms and the way social media changes, Insta may not always be our "main home," but for now, we love the community there.

**BENYAMIN:** I'll be honest - I straight up copied Mosheh's format! I am far from an

expert in social media, so I will have to see where this takes me...

**EDITOR:** *What has been the most meaningful part of your news journeys?*

**MOSHEH:** I have received so many incredible notes from our community. Some of the most powerful came during the withdrawal from Afghanistan, where US veterans were using my reporting to help their former Afghan interpreters get to the airport and escape during the chaos in August 2021.

Another memorable note I received came from a woman who told me that MoNews coverage literally helped save her marriage. Apparently, she and her husband are at polar extremes when it comes to US politics, and our page is the only place they both would turn to for the facts. It helps them talk through very divisive issues.

**BENYAMIN:** While, at least as far as I know, I haven't saved any veterans or marriages, I do appreciate the warm and supportive messages, especially followers who let me know they now stay updated on Israeli news exclusively via my platform. Recently, one person reached out. She said she'd been following me for months and had no idea what my political leanings are, which is my goal.



Left: Emmy-winning news producer Mosheh Quinounou in a news studio. Photo courtesy, Alex Sall  
Right: MoNews is @mosheh on Instagram



# PERSPECTIVES

on the High Holy Days

This important period in our calendar, consisting of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, holds deep spiritual significance, fostering introspection, renewal, and hope for the year ahead. During these days of contemplation and celebration, individuals come together to seek forgiveness, reflect on personal growth, and connect with their faith and heritage. The many voices of Jewish Futures have come together to share stories and inspiration from their unique standpoints within the community. Join us on this enlightening journey as we explore the timeless traditions, rich symbolism, and evolving perspectives that shape the essence of the High Holidays. Feel free to pull out these pages, keep them on your tables or on your fridges!



# The High Holy Days

**ROSH HASHANAH** **FRIDAY NIGHT**  
FIRST NIGHT 15 SEPTEMBER, 2023

**SUKKOT** **FRIDAY NIGHT**  
FIRST NIGHT 29 SEPTEMBER, 2023

**FIRST DAY** **SHABBAT**  
**SECOND NIGHT** 16 SEPTEMBER, 2023

**FIRST DAY** **SHABBAT**  
**SECOND NIGHT** 30 SEPTEMBER, 2023

**SECOND DAY** **SUNDAY**  
17 SEPTEMBER, 2023

**SECOND DAY** **SUNDAY**  
1 OCTOBER, 2023

**FAST OF GEDALIA** **MONDAY**  
18 SEPTEMBER, 2023

**CHOL HAMOED** **MON - THURS**  
2 - 5 OCTOBER, 2023

**YOM KIPPUR** **SUNDAY**  
FAST BEGINS 24 SEPTEMBER, 2023

**HOSHANA RABBAH** **FRIDAY**  
6 OCTOBER, 2023

**FAST DAY** **MONDAY**  
25 SEPTEMBER, 2023

**SHEMINI ATZERET** **FRIDAY NIGHT**  
6 OCTOBER, 2023

**SHEMINI ATZERET DAY** **SHABBAT**  
7 OCTOBER, 2023

**SIMCHAT TORAH** **SATURDAY NIGHT**  
7 OCTOBER, 2023

**SIMCHAT TORAH DAY** **SUNDAY**  
8 OCTOBER, 2023





## ROSH HASHANAH

AISH UK

Rabbi Zvi Gefen

**“The telephone’ has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.” - Western Union internal memo, 1876**

Western Union were convinced this was true, but it was only their *perception*. Often, our perceptions are way off-the-mark, and as a result, create limitations.

I went through my own paradigm shift in how I relate to Rosh Hashanah. I spent many years sitting in synagogue, thinking of ways to make God happy so that hopefully He would forgive me, not punish me, and at best, take care of me.

Then came the shift. I realised that just as a loving parent does not seek to catch their child out on their mistakes but instead wants to see their child constantly fulfil their potential, so too does God, serving as a compassionate guide who judges for the sake of personal growth, and wants to see us fulfill our potential.

Rosh Hashanah screams, **you matter!** Regardless of career path or success.

Today, I relate to Rosh Hashanah as a time epitomising my connection to God: loving and empowering me with responsibility, vision, and purpose, affirming my significance and reminding me that my actions matter and that I am not alone.



Rabbi Zvi Gefen is the Director of Aish UK Manchester Branch, teaching in schools, campuses and a regular guest speaker throughout the Manchester community. His charm and teaching style has allowed him to shine and spread Jewish wisdom to hundreds of students, young families and the community at large. Alongside his wife he has helped tens of couples to the Chuppah.

## TESHUVAH

FJL

Rabbi Dr Effie Kleinberg



**Judaism is not a one-size-fits-all experience. We are each on our unique path toward self-discovery, a road full of twists and turns that is neither linear nor straightforward.**

As we seek personal and professional growth, we often find ourselves turning to others to see how we measure-up or to seek validation, often turning so far as looking over our shoulders with feelings of insecurity. Sometimes we become hyper focused on our setbacks and failures, falling into a trap that causes us to feel paralyzed. Instead of looking all around, Judaism teaches us that we can find the answer lying within.

A concept called *Teshuva*, often intimidatingly-translated as *repentance*, actually means return. This return is not the second half of a round-trip. While it does need a place of origin and a goal destination, *teshuvah* brings us back onto our unique pathway through which we can traverse this world, one that no one else can take.

Where are we coming from? We can only know by quietly facing ourselves, honestly acknowledging our missteps and challenges. We reflect upon past trials and experiences that we may not be proud of, the *return* acting as a channel that helps motivate ourselves to make better, healthier choices and develop ourselves.

Where are we going? *Teshuva* does not seek to erase our past or deny our failures. We can begin to move forward looking ourselves in the eye and working through where we have been and own where we stand today. The return elevates those experiences based on the motivation and choices we intentionally make for ourselves going forward.

The return of *teshuvah* is individual to each and every one of us, and while the road is far from straightforward, it is unique and the journey is beautiful.



Rabbi Dr. Effie Kleinberg serves as Senior Educator and Programme Director at the Forum for Jewish Leadership and the Netzach Leadership Institute - organisations focused on developing the next generation of ambitious future Jewish leaders around the globe. Rabbi Kleinberg holds *semicha* and a doctorate from Yeshiva University and worked as a Jewish educator in New York and Toronto before making Aliyah. He hosts a daily podcast, *Daf In-Sight*, sharing inspiration on the daily page of Talmud. He currently resides with his family in Ra'anana, Israel.



# KOL NIDREI

## CHELKEINU

Rebbetzin Shalvie Friedman

**Despite its brevity, Kol Nidrei sits at the epicentre of the emotional storm that is the Yom Kippur Service. Its haunting tune dates back many hundreds of years. As we chant the words, we can almost visualise the gates of the heavenly courts open in familiarity to the echoes of Kol Nidrei.**

The prayer itself is actually not a prayer, but rather, it's more a declaration; a piece of legalese releasing the congregation of their vows and allowing them to enter the new year with a clean slate. What is the significance of beginning Yom Kippur with this technical piece?

Several historians argue that *Kol Nidrei* originates from a time when Jews were forced to convert to Christianity. At times of great persecution, many Jews were left with little choice but to leave Judaism. Every Yom Kippur however, hooded with anonymity, they would re-enter the synagogues; the places of worship of their past faith. Silently, the rows would fill up. The Jews leading the prayers were openly Jewish, in many cases tortured for their convictions. And so they would begin their service with a declaration of acceptance. The prelude to *Kol Nidrei* highlights this attitude: "By the authority of the heavenly and earthly court we grant permission to pray with the transgressors."

The symbolism of reciting *Kol Nidrei* as the opening act to Yom Kippur is therefore powerful. The Jews who had left the faith returned to pray together with their community. Just as they annulled their vows of false commitment to Christianity and their fellow Jews accepted them with embrace, so too, year after year, we acknowledge that our communities are made up of imperfect people with false agendas. We ourselves are perhaps amongst those people.

Yom Kippur is a time to channel the mistakes of our past into a brighter future. It is not about judging ourselves or those around us, rather, it is a time to focus not on who we are but who we could be.



Shalvie grew up in Johannesburg, SA and received her BSc in Maths and Finance from the University of South Africa. Shalvie is a 'yoetzet halacha', a Jewish Studies teacher, as well as teaching for various parts of the Aish family. In 2020, Shalvie set up Chelkeinu, a new organisation, dedicated to learning and leadership for women in the community.



Ari has nearly two decades in the field of Jewish Education. He has served as Rabbinic Shaliach for Bnei Akiva UK, and was the co-founder and director of the Kivun Israel year program. Ari joined JRoots in 2022 as Educator and Journey Coordinator.

# YOM KIPPUR

## JROOTS

Rabbi Ari Faust



**Sometimes the effect of a prayer is not necessarily in its end result, but in the strength and hope one is filled with when engaging in it.**

Giselle (Gita) Cycowicz was from the city of Khust which had been part of Czechoslovakia before WWII. The Jewish community of nearly 5,000 was nearly half of the general population and was integrated in all walks of life – professional, cultural and political.

Giselle lived a happy childhood until the Hungarian occupation in 1939 brought about harsh anti-Jewish decrees. In the spring of 1944, twelve-year-old Giselle and her family were sent to Auschwitz where she was separated from her father. Miraculously, Giselle was able to survive the harsh conditions and constant 'selections' together with her mother and sister.

In the autumn of 1944, one of the Jewish labourers in the camp smuggled a *Machzor* – a special prayer book for the holidays – into the women's camp, informing them that it was Yom Kippur that day.

The women prayed and cried with fervour. Giselle, who was familiar with the prayers, asked to borrow the *Machzor* and recited the *Avinu Malkeinu* prayer. The words "... May this hour be one of compassion" particularly stuck with her.

A few weeks later there was another "selection" with some 200 young women to be transferred to a factory for forced labour. Giselle's mother, being an older woman, was pulled-out of the group. Although her mother's fate should have been sealed – after all, what use was there for an elderly woman in Auschwitz in late 1944 – Giselle had hope; the words she had prayed from the *Machzor* on Yom Kippur came to her lips "may it be an hour of compassion"... Giselle and her sister were transferred to a factory where they laboured 12-hour shifts with barely any provisions. They survived the harsh winter, and in March of 1945 were transferred to the Mährisch Weißwasser camp in Czechoslovakia, where they were liberated on 8th May.

Giselle and her sister began the trip back home to Khust, travelling over 600 km in a few weeks. Although she didn't expect to find any family – after being separated from her father and her mother not passing the "selection" in Auschwitz – Giselle knew that if anyone survived that would be the place to find them.

Upon entering her childhood home in Khust, the girls were shocked to find their mother and father (and older sister, who had avoided deportation to Auschwitz) – who miraculously had survived. A true "hour of compassion".

Years later, Dr Giselle Cycowicz – a retired psychologist residing in Israel – tells this story and notes how impactful her *Tefilla* (prayer) of Yom Kippur 1944 was for her attitude.

# SUKKOT

## GIFT

Shira Joseph



Growing up, our *sukkah* was a small converted garden shed. We could fit a few people in at a squeeze and some of my earliest (and happiest) memories were in that small shed. After getting married and working for a community, we decided to build a *sukkah* out of fence panels that could host 30+ people. Far more than we could ever fit in our dining room and a far cry from the *sukkah* of my childhood. The festival suddenly took on a new meaning for me and my family.

On Sukkot we invite the 'Ushpizin' (Aramaic for guests) into our *sukkah*. Each night we welcome a different one of the 7 heavenly visitors from our Jewish History. The *Zohar* explains that it is proper to invite 'guests from below' i.e. people who need a meal or a seat under a *sukkah* to correspond to the 'guests from above'. The *Zohar* then explains that if someone is unable to welcome guests into their *sukkah*, they should consider giving charity so that others will be able to eat a Sukkot meal or build their own *sukkah*.

Maimonides uses the verse from the Torah 'and you should rejoice on your festival' to explain that the only way one can truly rejoice on a festival is through inviting people into your home and being charitable with them. Perhaps when beautifying our *sukkahs* we should consider who we invite inside as another means to make the festival special and joyous. Perhaps it is for this reason, that whilst the *Talmud* goes into painstaking details about the minimum length and width of a *sukkah*, there is no maximum amount given. A *sukkah* can be the size of an entire city and it could still be considered kosher!



Shira is extremely passionate about Jewish Education, having previously held roles at Hasmonean High School and St Johns Wood Synagogue. Shira has been working for GIFT Charity for 9 years in various positions and is currently the programme director responsible for overseeing projects and activities to engage the community in acts of giving.

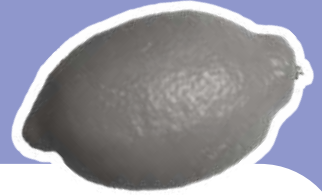


Dan has been a member of the Jewish Futures family for 9 years, running the graphics department and leading on creative projects, events and campaigns. From humble beginnings as an Aish participant back in 2006, Dan has been on quite a journey with the organisation, and he currently holds the positions of Art Director of Jewish Futures and Development Manager of Ta'amim, which he runs alongside his wife Rivkie.

# TASTE AND SMELL THE FOUR SPECIES

## TA'AMIM

Dan Matalon



Sukkot falls at the start of the autumn harvest season, and many traditional Sukkot dishes rely heavily on bountiful seasonal fruits and vegetables – a riot of colour, taste and smell. The four species, too, are inherently sensory. The bundle of *lulav* (palm), *etrog* (the citron fruit), *hadas* (myrtle) and *aravah* (willow) are beautifully aromatic and deeply connected to everything we eat.

The *etrog* has arguably one of the most pleasing aromas of any citrus; myrtle has a delightful fragrance and has been used in Mediterranean cooking for centuries. But despite the literal and aromatic connections, the strongest link between the four species and our food is tied to the physical act of shaking the bundled *lulav* and *etrog* together.

According to Jewish thought, Sukkot is the time when the world is judged on how much rainfall there will be in the year ahead. Too much or too little can have a catastrophic impact on crop yield, and this pivotal moment defines our sustenance and survival from one year to the next. As a historically agricultural people whose calendar pulses with the seasons and the rhythms of the land, we feel the weight of this verdict, and it is from the end of this festival that we praise Hashem for the rain and wind during the *Amidah*, which we recite three times a day.

It is appropriate then, that the four species are comprised of willow and myrtle, which grow by riverbanks and in damp soil, palms which flourish in rich valleys and *etrog*, which requires a regular, controlled watering to thrive. In bringing together four species of vegetation which rely more heavily than most on water, we give physical expression to our prayer for life-giving rain which will sustain our crops and ensure we have abundant food for the year ahead.



Rivka Magzimof, wife to Eli and loving mother of four, is deeply rooted in a family committed to her native Israel's development. She holds degrees in Education and Visual Communications from Bar Ilan University. Rivka currently serves as the Director of Operations and Education at Shelanu, where her ideas on how to inspire people to empower their Jewish identity draw upon her 15 years of experience with diaspora Jewish communities. She is a passionate artist, pianist and chef.



# THE LAND OF ISRAEL PRAYING FOR RAIN

SHELANU

Rivka Magzimof



**Growing up near Jerusalem, surrounded by vibrant vineyards and fruitful fields, I vividly recall yearning for rain to grace the land - the more, the better. However, my perspective shifted after relocating to the United Kingdom nine years ago. Amidst the temperamental British weather, I found myself questioning the desire for rain and pondering whether a glimpse of sunshine might be more preferable.**

In the hearts of Jewish people, no matter where we are, lies a profound and unbreakable connection to the Land of Israel. This bond is deeply rooted in our rich history, culture, and faith. We understand that the land is not merely a physical territory but a spiritual inheritance bestowed upon us by generations past.

Even for those who live outside Israel, this connection to the Holy Land remains strong. Even in places where we may not feel the need for rain we feel a deep sense of responsibility and yearning for Israel's well-being. It is this connection that compels us to pray for rain, to beseech the heavens for blessings upon the land we hold dear. Regardless of our physical location, we recognise that our thoughts, intentions, and prayers have the power to transcend borders and impact the success of the greater process at hand. Our focus goes beyond personal and local gains to the collective welfare, and where our hearts and hopes are aimed, ensuring that our prayers are centred on the prosperity and growth of our homeland.

The arrival of rain in Israel carries profound significance beyond its agricultural impact. Water, in its essence, possesses special powers to purify and give life. Just as rain cleanses and nourishes the earth, it has the ability to enhance our *nefesh* (soul) as well. The act of praying for rain becomes a spiritual endeavour, a reminder of our dependence on the source of life and our interconnectedness with the natural world.

As the heavens open up and the life-giving waters descend, we are reminded of the spiritual purification and rejuvenation that comes with each droplet. The rain symbolises renewal, washing away our worries and bringing forth a sense of hope and spiritual growth. It is in these moments that we are inspired to reflect upon our own lives, seeking to cleanse our souls and align ourselves with our values and aspirations.

The importance of rain extends beyond its physical nourishment; it touches the depths of our being. It

revitalises our connection to the Divine and awakens our gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us. By praying for rain, we not only seek sustenance for the land and its people but also strive for personal and collective spiritual elevation. Through our collective devotion, may the rains pour down upon the Land of Israel and everywhere else it's needed, enriching our souls, nurturing our land, and bringing forth blessings for all.

# SIMCHAT TORAH

EILECHA

Rabbi Yaakov Klein



**If we could sum up the entire Torah in a word, perhaps that word would be "unity". This is the message underlying every guideline, every narrative, every concept: "Shema Yisrael... Hashem Echad." Our mission in life, aided by the mitzvot and moral ethos of Torah, is to discover the singular Presence of God that abides beyond the apparent multiplicity we encounter throughout the human experience.**

Now, a book about Oneness, about helping limited humans trapped within the confines of time and space tap into the limitlessness of their souls and access a realm of infinity and eternity, cannot have a beginning and an end. It must be circular in nature. All points must be equidistant from the Centre, from the Divinity it conveys. And this is the great joy of Simchat Torah, the day when we complete, and immediately begin, our journey through the Torah. On Simchat Torah, the two would-be-ends of the divine circle intertwine. Joining hands, merging souls, looking toward the circular scrolls with hearts aflame, we dance round and round in circles of our own for what seems like a breathless eternity. "God, the Torah, and the Jewish Nation are one." An infinite people, guided by an infinite text, communicating the loving whisper of an infinite Creator. On this great day, may we merit to feel a leaping of joy in our hearts: God is real, God is One, and the interface of His Torah allows for His precious nation to discover His Unified Presence everywhere they look.



*Rabbi Yaakov Klein is an author, musician, and lecturer devoted to sharing the inner light of Torah through his books, music, and lectures. He is the founding director of Eilecha, an organisation focused on creating opportunities for spiritual growth and experiential education in the local community and beyond. Eilecha aims to foster a Jewish experience that is deep, passionate, sincere, joyous, healthy, and eminently relevant.*



# SIMPLIFY YOUR HOME

**DEBBIE PASTER**

We need stuff. We have been convinced by marketing teams and algorithms to buy - perhaps more than we need. We acquire more and more, and then we find ourselves with an excess of possessions and not enough space to keep it all in an uncluttered way. To manage the surplus, we often buy more: build a home extension or a shed, rent a storage unit, or get used to cluttered living spaces.

If we stick to the old adage, a place for everything and everything in its place, we can stay focused and maintain control over our belongings - instead of the other way around.

We learn in Ethics of the Fathers 2:8, “The more possessions, the more worry.” In other words, the more we focus on possessing and acquiring, the more we spiritually disconnect.

Do the acts of acquiring and possessing truly impede spirituality? Perhaps it’s about finding the right balance between material and loftier pursuits. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch beautifully explained, “God wanted Israel to ascend the double pinnacle of

earthly achievement: the peak of material prosperity and the peak of spiritual and moral perfection.” This means that “the highest degree of morality is entirely compatible with the greatest measure of earthly happiness.”

Society often places greater importance on possessions such as houses, furniture, art, and cars. Materialism and excessive consumption can undermine a life consistent with Jewish values and principles. As Rabbi Yissocher Frand once remarked, “Are we consumers or are we being consumed?”

Seeking a material/spiritual balance in a world where one often overshadows the other requires a simple paradigm shift, and a few practical tips.

When building a new house or buying new items, we recite a special blessing expressing praise and gratitude to God for, called Shehecheyanu: thank You for bringing us to this moment! At a time when we are most involved in our material possessions, Shehecheyanu reminds us that they, like everything in our lives, are a gift.

*A place for everything and everything in its place.*



**Before making a purchase, we can ask ourselves two questions:**

1. Do I genuinely need this item?
2. Is there a designated space for this item in my home?

Without answering yes to both questions, the purchase may create more difficulties than benefits.



Though it may seem daunting, when it comes to decluttering our homes, the process does not have to be complicated.

**Edit:** what do I no longer need? Do we really need all twelve cake slicers? (True story!) Reduce by ten; two will be more than enough.



**Group:** which items go together? Instead of scattering the same type of item in various rooms and spaces, consolidate similar items for easier location when needed, and to prevent double-buying.



**Identify:** designate a suitable space for the items. Ask yourself: do pens actually belong in bathrooms? Spare shampoo bottles surely don't go in the kitchen. Simply thinking through what goes where with logic is a game-changer.



**Contain:** implement storage solutions to neatly stow away grouped items. Sleek and aesthetic storage solutions are available for all budgets, from modest to high-end. While transparent containers may be attractive in some instances, they might not always be the most practical solution.



**Label:** clearly mark containers to easily locate items when needed. Clear labelling allows all members of a household, including children, to adhere to new systems.



True organisation is a thorough process that, when done correctly, yields lasting results.

Once the home is effectively decluttered - maintaining it comes down to my top tip: the simple strategy of “don't put it down, put it away.”

The benefits of a decluttered home are tremendous:

- A more peaceful and calming environment that brings inner calm, freeing up more time and energy to focus on other things.
- A more efficient use of space, allowing us to find what we need more easily, saving time and energy.
- A more positive mindset can give us added control over our lives. A study by the University of Connecticut found that by reducing or controlling clutter, we can lessen the stress caused by mess.
- A more inviting home can help us feel happier, less anxious, and more confident in ourselves, creating a welcoming environment for guests.

All of these benefits assist us in leading a more fulfilling life, in terms of both productivity and spirituality. Our role in this world is to constantly strive to achieve our maximum potential. Simplifying our homes enables us to do so by creating the best environment for us to thrive.





# MANAGING OUR MENTAL HEALTH

**HAYLEY AARON**

*SINCE ONE IN FOUR OF US WILL EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM DURING OUR LIFETIME, WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO RECOGNISE AND SUPPORT THOSE AROUND US WHO MAY BE STRUGGLING. YOU MAY HAVE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES YOURSELF, BE CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO DOES, OR FIND YOURSELF IN THE COMPANY OF OTHERS WHO ARE AFFECTED. WHATEVER THE SITUATION, INCREASING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND LEARNING HOW TO MANAGE OUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH BETTER CAN ONLY SERVE TO IMPROVE ALL OUR LIVES.*

## **WHAT DOES MENTAL ILL HEALTH LOOK LIKE?**

Varying from person to person and affecting people in different ways, mental ill health can range from having a persistently sad or low mood to not

being able to do the things we usually do like working or looking after a family. A period of mental illness or distress can be triggered by a life event or be part of someone's longer-term experiences.

Most of us will be familiar with everyday experiences of anxiety. We can get anxious before an important event or before a driving test or interview. But when anxiety is persistent and begins to stop us functioning in our usual ways, we need to get some help to manage it. Anxiety can affect both the mind and body. Symptoms can be physical, sometimes triggering muscle spasm and intense pain. They can also be cognitive and emotional, making us feel a sense of constant pressure or distress. Sadly, anxiety has a habit of taking over our lives, making daily life feel frightening and unmanageable. The fear of a panic attack can stop us going out, while

loss of motivation to do what we enjoy can cause frustration and low mood, and sometimes unfortunately may lead to depression.

Everyone's experiences of depression will be unique, including the reasons we experience it, how it manifests itself and the support we may need. People often say they're 'depressed' when they mean they feel sad or upset. Depression is characterised by persistent sadness and other related symptoms that impact our ability to lead our daily lives. It can be mild, moderate or severe.

Symptoms may include negative thinking, changes in sleep or appetite, lack of motivation or energy, inability to enjoy activities previously enjoyed, lack of hope for the future and low self-esteem. People often describe feeling like there is a glass wall between them and the rest of the world. They can hear and see others but cannot connect with other people.



Staying in touch with people when they are going through any mental illness can offer a lifeline that can help someone begin to climb the ladder of their recovery. Preventing social isolation is key to J's work through our many groups and online activities, including the Head Room café community.

## HOW CAN WE SUPPORT OURSELVES?

Alongside getting professional support and, for some of us, medication to help us manage our mental health, we can also take steps to help ourselves:

Talk about it as this can help us to cope with our experiences better, normalise mental illness, reduce the stigma around it and educate others.

Reach out to those around us in our support network, including people in our personal and professional lives but also mental health professionals or other healthcare professionals, such as our GP.

Review our current lifestyle so that we make more space for downtime and relaxation.

Invest in ourselves by trying to commit to some form of self-care, whether a short walk, meditation, yoga, gardening, mindfulness, a phone call to a friend, a creative pursuit or spending time with pets.

## HOW CAN WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER?

According to a report by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research on the mental health of the UK's Jewish community, community membership offers a degree of practical support, welcome contact, opportunities to volunteer and, crucially, a general sense of purpose and belonging. Our communities, which are often organised around a synagogue but equally can be found in schools, sports clubs, special interest groups or university J-Socs, may be a

powerful social key to unlock the power of connection and health.

We shouldn't underestimate the value of community and connectivity for those who feel isolated and alone in their experiences. Reaching out and demonstrating our care and concern, as well as giving each other a space to be heard, can make a difference. We



need to listen to each other without judgement and with empathy as this can go a long way in helping us to relieve some of our worries and concerns. Sharing our experiences may also bring relief, catharsis or solace when we realise we are not alone. It can help to pull in support and, in some situations, be lifesaving too.

We need to offer kindness and warmth if someone shares difficult or distressing feelings around mental illness or distress, just like we would for other health conditions. Although we cannot take on the person's welfare alone, we can – indeed we must – encourage them to contact specialist support as well as their GP. Keeping them in our thoughts and letting them know we care can be hugely helpful too. And do remember that when offering connection to friends, colleagues or family members, we also need to look after our own mental health and wellbeing, doing what we need to do to balance our own needs.

## HOW IS JAMI SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY?

JAMI is the mental health service for the Jewish community. We believe that building a mentally healthy future for our community is vital. So, whether someone needs an urgent and reassuring conversation, expert advice on how to navigate the complex maze of mental health services, recovery-focused services over the short term, an advocate by their side, speaking to someone who has lived experience, or long-term professional support, we make sure they get the treatment and support they need, when they need it.

# Jami

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT OR ARE SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO NEEDS HELP, VISIT [JAMIUK.ORG/GET-SUPPORT](https://jamiuk.org/get-support) OR CALL

**020 8458 2223**

If you want to meet new people or find friendship within a safe, welcoming and inclusive space, join us at Head Room for a coffee or our community programme. Details can be found at [headroomcafe.org/community-programme](https://headroomcafe.org/community-programme).

If you're struggling to cope or need immediate help, contact Shout's 24/7 crisis text service by texting JAMI to 85258 for free, confidential support.

If you would like to ensure a mentally healthier future for our community, please support JAMI's work by visiting [jamiuk.org/donate/](https://jamiuk.org/donate/) or [jamiuk.org/get-involved/volunteering](https://jamiuk.org/get-involved/volunteering)





# ANGER MANAGEMENT

ONE SLOW TO ANGER IS BETTER THAN A STRONG MAN,  
AND A MASTER OF HIS PASSIONS IS  
BETTER THAN A CONQUEROR OF A CITY.\*

**ARYEH SAMPSON**

If you've ever exploded with anger and regretted it shortly afterwards, or felt yourself simmering with resentment for days, you know how harmful these feelings can be. Anger can wreak havoc on relationships and have a destructive effect on one's life. Recent medical research has also shown it to be linked to an increased likelihood of heart disease, stroke, cancer and the weakening of the immune system.

There are many effective techniques and approaches that can assist us in managing anger. Below is a four step strategy which I call the four C's.

## 1. CALM DOWN

Staying in control and calming down is a vital first stage when in an anger-provoking situation. Modern psychotherapy places much emphasis on techniques that help to reduce and release the pent up frustration associated with anger. Relaxing and breathing techniques are emphasised, as they have a physiological effect that calms the psyche and reduces stress levels. Writing down your feelings in the form of a letter which will never be sent, or a physical form of release such as exercise or walking are also effective methods.

## 2. CONTEMPLATE

In the heat of the moment we often become irrational, blowing things out of proportion. Once we feel calmer, it is important to look rationally and objectively at the anger provoking situation. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) teaches that it is not the actual event that disturbs us, but our interpretation and internal response to it that causes us our emotional reaction. By cognitive thought restructuring – changing the way we think of the situation – we can change our emotional reaction. It is important to ask yourself if there are other, less hostile ways of seeing and interpreting the situation and to try to see things from the other person's perspective. This includes trying to understand their attitudes, motivation and background.

Other therapeutic approaches emphasise becoming more aware of one's own motivations. You may become angry with one person but really be angry with someone else or even yourself. This is known as transference. For example, someone who is angry with his boss but is afraid to express it, may flare up at his wife or children

instead. Anger may also be provoked when a comment touches upon or reminds one of a basic insecurity and feeling of vulnerability. When feeling threatened, it may be easier to become angry with another person than to acknowledge and face the real issue.

## 3. CHANGE YOURSELF

We have more control over ourselves and our own responses than we have over other people's actions. We need to see if there is anything we can do ourselves to improve the situation or to prevent it from recurring. These may be simple lifestyle changes, such as getting more sleep, eating better or being more organised. On a deeper level, it may mean taking responsibility to deal with our insecurities and areas of sensitivity.

## 4. COMMUNICATE

When a person feels angry, two responses are common: fight, (explode outwardly) or flight (retreat inwardly). Learning to communicate one's feelings in an open, nonconfrontational way is an important skill.

There is a valuable approach used in marital therapy and conflict resolution called 'active listening.' Two people in conflict are encouraged to make statements that begin with "I," focusing on what they feel rather than making accusing statements that begin with "You." For example, "I felt bad when you came late" instead of "you never turn up on time." The other person paraphrases the contents of the statement, which enables the speaker to feel understood and validated. In this way an empathetic environment is created where both sides can be understood and work to resolve their differences. This leads to consolation and ultimately forgiveness which releases the poisonous feelings associated with anger.

\*(Proverbs 16:32)







# MIRROR MIRROR

ELI BIRNBAUM

Table straining under the weight of the food, guests scrambling to squeeze more chairs into the cramped space, and ominous-looking clouds overhead threatening our annual alfresco festival with a re-enactment of Noah and the flood. These are the time-honoured ingredients of a traditional Sukkot celebration.

One lesser-known tradition, first mentioned in the *Zohar* (Emor 43:276) by the Talmudic sage Rabbi Abba, is the mystical custom to invite distinguished figures from our past to join us in the *sukkah*. Rabbi Abba cryptically identifies these guests as 'Abraham, five righteous ones and King David'. Later authorities filled in the gaps: the 'five' are: Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Aharon, each invited consecutively on the seven nights of Sukkot as our guests - in Aramaic: *Ushpizin*.

This begs the question: What is the point in indulging in a game of imagination? Like the cheeky grandchild that jogs the Seder table to spill some wine from Elijah's cup when he 'visits', are we just meant to play along with the masquerade? And why was Sukkot chosen as the time to pay our respects to long-departed founding fathers?

Perhaps the answer to this lies in another lesser-known characteristic unique to Sukkot: It is the only mitzvah that encompasses our entire person. Entering those humble wooden Wickes walls, sitting beneath its fragile canopy, is a holistic experience. Like a full body scan. At least, that's what it is meant to be. And the *Ushpizin* are the instruments doing the scan. It goes something like this:

**ABRAHAM. DISCOVERS GOD. MARRIES SARAH. FACES AND PASSES TEN TESTS.** Invents haggling. And *chutzpah*. Pretty important individual in the grand scheme of things. Incredibly, these aren't the achievements he is remembered by. What makes Abraham stand out is a story in the Torah where we encounter him in severe pain, recovering from a complicated procedure. Despite the searing desert sun, he sits outdoors, scanning the sandy horizon for potential guests. Three appear, he rushes to greet and invite them in, then with Sarah prepares a lavish feast for them to enjoy. He has every right and every excuse to just lie low and recuperate for a bit. But he doesn't. He puts his personal needs to the side instead of theirs. He is a paradigm of *Chessed*, a word translated as 'kindness' and expanded as: the drive and desire to put others' needs before one's own.

By inviting Abraham into our *sukkah*, we welcome his spiritual energy – a litmus test by which we scan the 'kindness' within our hearts and ask:  
*To what extent do I emulate this trait?*



## ISAAC. SARAH'S ONLY SON. ABRAHAM'S ONLY HEIR.

Accrued enormous wealth despite intense persecution. Charged with the not insignificant task of being the first follower to a founder in recorded Jewish history. Like his father, Isaac demonstrates a quality in character that in turn becomes our next focus as we journey through Sukkot with the *Ushpizin*. Led up a mountain to be sacrificed to Hashem in the prime of his adult years, Isaac doesn't flinch. Faced with the persecution mentioned, Isaac remains supernaturally calm, never losing his temper and always seeking to resolve conflict with consummate patience and diplomacy. He is a paradigm of *Gevurah*, a word translated as 'strength' and expanded as: the ability to maintain restraint and inner resolve no matter how difficult the situation may become.

By inviting Isaac into our *sukkah*, we welcome his spiritual energy – a litmus test by which we scan the 'strength' within our hearts and ask: *To what extent do I emulate this trait?*

**JACOB. CHASED FROM HIS FAMILY HOME BY HIS TWIN BROTHER ESAU,** Jacob's once straightforward life unravels into a series of trials and tribulations. Cheated by his own uncle. His daughter is assaulted by a local

nobleman. His cherished wife Rachel dies in childbirth. His beloved son Joseph is sold into slavery, whereabouts unknown. Relocating his entire family to Egypt, leaving behind the Promised Land with the spectre of slavery looming on the sunset. Jacob's tests hit at a more global level, where the decisions he makes will impact the lives of countless others and define the future of the entire Jewish people. Through them all, one thing is being tried: Will he do the right thing, or the convenient thing? Will he stoop to the level of his antagonisers, or stay true to who he is? Ultimately, Jacob sticks to his core essence, becoming the perfect balance between the expansive *Chessed* of his grandfather and measured *Gevurah* of his father. He is a paradigm of *Tiferet*, a word translated as 'harmony' and expanded as: being guided by the moral compass to achieve a balance that provides the outcome that is needed, even if it isn't wanted.

By inviting Jacob into our *sukkah*, we welcome his spiritual energy – a litmus test by which we scan the 'harmony' within our hearts and ask: *To what extent do I emulate this trait?*

**MOSES. RAISED IN PHARAOH'S PALACE AS THE 'PRINCE OF EGYPT',** one day Moses steps out to observe the suffering of his enslaved brethren. What he saw moved him. The oppression and



tyranny had to end, somehow. The rest is a whirlwind of burning bushes, frogs and hail. With a sea splitting thrown in for good measure. Somehow, Moses becomes not just the conduit of the Exodus and its miracles but the very vehicle via which the Divine Presence manifests on earth with the revelation at Sinai. To be a conduit bringing God into this world, the vessel needs to be entirely empty of bias, subjectivity and ego. Moses is characterised by his humility – never once seeking personal gain as leader of a newly-emancipated nation. It is through him that we realise: the extent to which we allow Godliness to enter our very being is the extent to which we become everlasting – *Netzach*, a word translated as ‘enduring’ and expanded as: the ability to free ourselves of ego, pettiness and self-interest and fill the subsequent void with true Eternity.

By inviting Moses into our *sukkah*, we welcome his spiritual energy – a litmus test by which we scan the ‘endurance’ within our hearts and ask: *To what extent do I emulate this trait?*

**AHARON. MOSES’ OLDER BROTHER. LEADER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE** when the darkness of slavery was suffocating. Aharon was a source of constant encouragement and hope. He becomes Moses’ spokesperson – a voice that the people adore and Pharaoh will eventually come to fear. His ability


to see optimism amidst despair, to glimpse the extraordinary amid the mundane, to see holiness in those who despair, paved the way for him and his descendants to become the *Cohanim* – the priestly tribe who oversaw Temple ceremonies and lovingly showed the Israelites how to find their way back to God and His light, no matter how dark and desolate the situation may be. A master of interpersonal relationships, our sages describe Aharon as ‘constantly pursuing peace’, mending broken hearts and rebuilding crumbling bridges of trust. He is a paradigm of *Hod*, a word translated as ‘splendour’ and expanded as: the ability to see the positive in every situation and every person, enabling the situation to be uplifted and the person to become holy.

By inviting Aharon into our *sukkah*, we welcome his spiritual energy – a litmus test by which we scan the ‘splendour’ within our hearts and ask: *To what extent do I emulate this trait?*

**JOSEPH. SO FAMOUS HE EVEN GOT HIS OWN MUSICAL**

written by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Misunderstood by his brothers. Thrown in a pit. Sold as a slave. Accused of crimes he didn’t commit. Interpreter of dreams. Viceroy to Pharaoh. Saves Egypt’s economy in famine. Let’s be honest, it’s an impressive CV. But our sages notice something remarkable about Joseph: Despite having perhaps the ‘rags to riches’ story par excellence, at no point does he attribute his





success to his own skill and prowess. At every turn, he credits God alone for bringing him to where he is now, even doing so directly to Pharaoh when he has the Egyptian court at his fingertips. Because personal honour and glory is not what Joseph is about. He lives and breathes for God's honour. To this end, he is a paradigm of *Yesod*, a word translated as 'foundation' and expanded as: the ability to see God in every layer of creation, living a life defined by absolute righteousness.

By inviting Joseph into our *sukkah*, we welcome his spiritual energy – a litmus test by which we scan the 'righteousness' within our hearts and ask: *To what extent do I emulate this trait?*

## DAVID. BEING A LEADER ISN'T EASY. JUST ASK RISHI. OR LIZ.


Actually, maybe don't ask Liz. Now imagine being the leader of a whole load of Jews. We're a great people, no question. But we love nothing more than a good *kvetch*. It's in our genes to be dissatisfied with the status quo, to chase the horizon. Our ancestors were freed from slavery and since then, well, we've struggled a bit with authority. Now imagine a young shepherd boy from the hills south of Jerusalem who finds out one day that he has been tasked with uniting the twelve federal Israelite tribes into one confederated kingdom. It's a mammoth task, especially before the existence of Twitter. Yet that young shepherd boy rises to the challenge and devotes his life to perhaps leadership's hardest dilemma: Making

the toughest decisions and standing by them. David does this with resolute courage and determination, staying immaculately modest even as his fame and reputation grow. He is a paradigm of *Malchut*, a word translated as 'royalty' and expanded as: the ability to make difficult decisions in order to bring people together, united under one banner with one purpose.

By inviting David into our *sukkah*, we welcome his spiritual energy – a litmus test by which we scan the 'royalty' within our hearts and ask:

*To what extent do I emulate this trait?*

So, there you have it. In a way, the *Ushpizin* aren't just supernatural guests. By inviting them into our Sukkah – a holistic full-body scan of where we're at as Jews, we seek to decorate its humble walls with more than spangles and kindergarten posters. As each evening dawns, we put up a mirror and gaze into it, scanning the core of our essence – probing, searching, asking: Abraham is here. To what extent do I emulate him? How kind am I, really? To what extent do I put others' needs before mine? And when the going gets tough – really tough – do I lose myself and shatter the mirror, or do I remain steadfast – Isaac's silhouette glimpsed in my reflection? When all is said and done, that unassuming temporary hut with its drafts and leaks and claustrophobia is all we really need to see ourselves in a new light. If only we first invite in the right torchbearers.

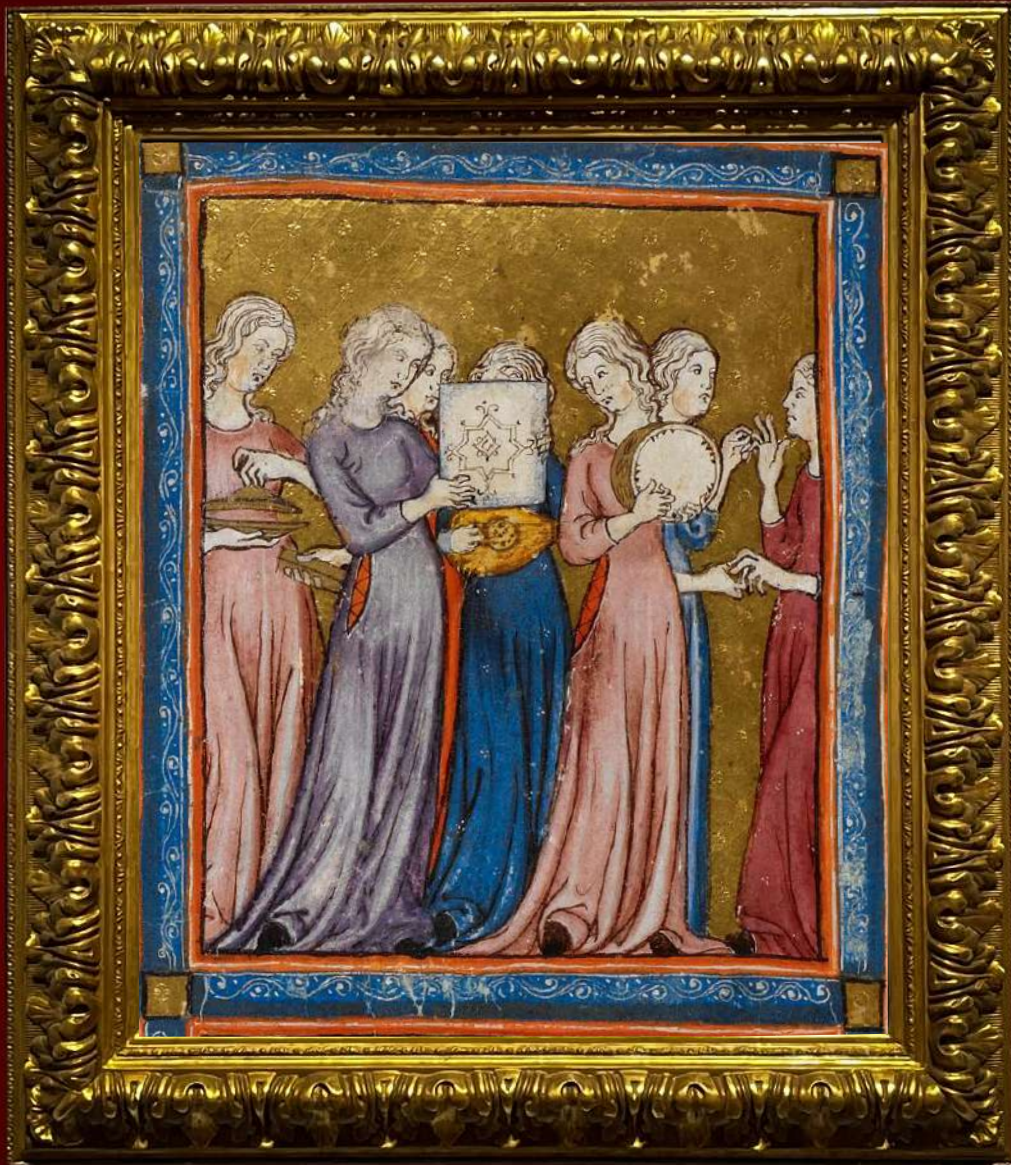




# WOMEN'S INTUITION

## THE 7 PROPHETESSES

ELISHEVA NEWMAN



*And Miriam... took a timbrel in her hand,  
from The Golden Haggadah. Barcelona 1320. The British Library, London (public domain).*

Sarah, Miriam, Devorah, Chana, Avigail, Chulda and Esther! – the seven *Neviyot* (prophetesses) have fascinated me since we happily chanted their names in primary school. What classified these great women as prophetesses? And what can we learn from these seven ladies?

**SARAH. THE WIFE OF THE FIRST**

**JEW, ABRAHAM,** Was also given another name in the Torah: Yiska. The commentator, Rashi, notes that in Hebrew, this means 'to see', because she saw with Divine inspiration, alluding to her prophetic ability. The life of Sarah, unlike the other matriarchs, is quite well known and so we must ask which episode of her life was influenced by prophecy? As the Genesis stories unfold, Sarah, concerned for the physical and spiritual threat to her son Isaac by his half-brother Yishmael, instructed Abraham to send Yishmael and his mother, Hagar, away. Abraham, who personified loving-kindness, is helped in his heart-wrenching dilemma and battle of allegiance by God with the words, "Everything that Sarah said to you, you shall listen to her voice". Rashi, noticing every extraneous word, is bothered by the seemingly unnecessary word 'voice' at the end of the verse. He teaches us that in fact this is the allusion to Sarah's prophetic ability, and that she had the foresight to secure the path Isaac needed to continue to form the roots of the Jewish People.

**MIRIAM. IN THE PRELUDE TO THE EXODUS STORY,**

Pharaoh decreed to kill all Jewish baby boys. Amram and Yocheved had been married with two children but separated to prevent future children born into this awful decree. Miriam, their eldest child, knew via prophetic insight that her parents were destined to have a son who would lead the Jewish people to freedom, and she convinced her parents to come back together saying, "Your decree is more severe than Pharaohs; he decreed against new-born males but you are preventing females too." Indeed, when Moses was subsequently born the entire house was filled with light, and her father stood and kissed her on the head, and said to her, "My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled." Miriam's influence was not only vital in the birth of Moses and hence the deliverance of the Jewish people, but many other Jewish couples who had also separated, remarried following Amram and Yocheved's example. Miriam demonstrated both insight and foresight and was able to discern what needed to be done despite the harsh environment around them.

**DEVORAH. LED THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN ISRAEL AS ONE OF THE 'JUDGES'**

during the oppressive rule of King Yavin and his cruel general Sisera. Devorah famously sat under a date palm which embodied her wisdom and fear of God, choosing to meet people who had come for advice, in an open space to avoid any suspicions of being secluded with other men. After helping many Jewish people return to following the Torah, Devorah felt they were in a good position to challenge their oppressors. Devorah marshalled Barak, the most influential military commander in Israel, to gather an army of 10,000, and she predicted that a female heroine would lead them to victory. That heroine was Yael, who subverted the army of Sisera, granting victory to Barak's army. Devorah's prophecy came true and she sang a beautiful song of praise to God. Devorah, a unique leader, was committed to a strong relationship with God, bringing others closer too, and used that connection to lead a brave and courageous war.

**CHANA. LIVED JUST BEFORE THE ERA OF JEWISH KINGS,**

immersed herself in prayer, specifically in her agonising desperation for a child. After being granted her wish to bear a son, Samuel, she composed a ten-verse song of gratitude, which was simultaneously a prophecy about the Jewish people's future. This song references countless important moments in Jewish history to follow and culminates in the onset of the Messianic era when the world will reach a state of utopia. In many ways the exile of the Jewish people is like a pregnancy, where the pain ultimately leads to the redemption itself. Chana, who experienced the pain of infertility and pregnancy, is the most fitting person to have prophesied about our future; encouraging us that though the journey of exile is tough and painful, it paves the way for our final redemption. Chana's inspired relationship with God is evidenced by the fact she is connected both whilst she is deeply suffering and also once she's in a position of salvation.







*Jewish Woman in Traditional Clothing. Auguste Delacroix, 1834. This painting is often assumed to be of Queen Esther.*

**ABIGAIL . WAS THE WIFE OF NAVAL**, who was stingy and disrespectful to David when he requested food whilst escaping from King Saul. David instructed his men to kill Naval for rebelling against the King. When Abigail heard this, she went to David, laden with food for him and his men, and requested, through intellectual proofs, that Naval should not be put to death. In her eloquent and prophetic speech, Abigail appealed to David not to shed blood. She promised that, “if he restrains himself from bloodguilt, then God will dispatch David’s enemies,” alluding to the death of Naval, and perhaps to King Saul as well. David agreed and praised Abigail for her swift action that averted Naval’s murder. As we have seen with all the prophetesses so far, their words became reality; ten days later Naval died. When David heard this, he praised God for punishing wrongdoing and recognised that through Abigail he was able to acquire a level of self-control. As a result, David later married the beautiful and wise prophetess. Abigail shows intellect and intuition to save a life, and her compassion was noticed by one of the greatest leaders of the Jewish people.

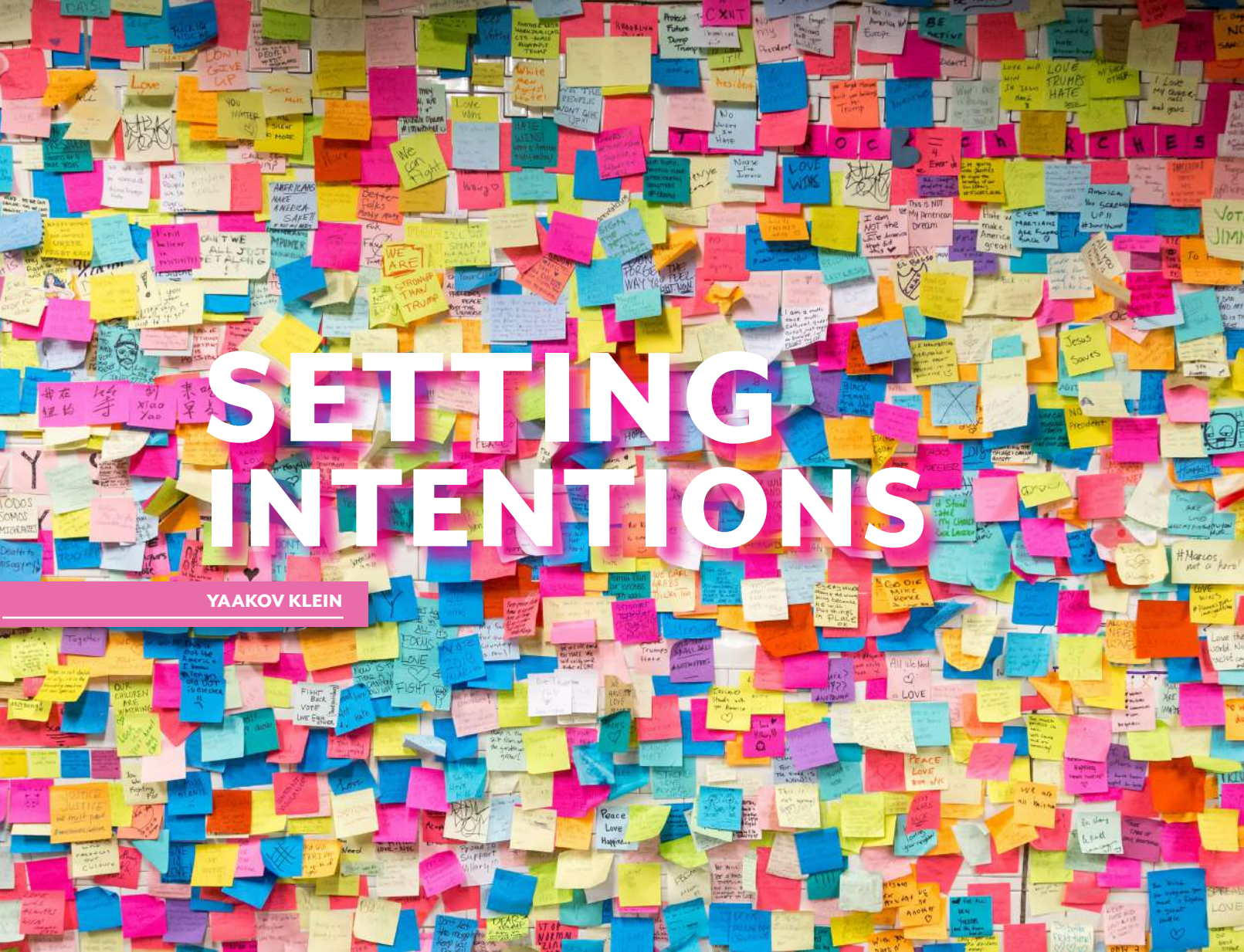
**CHULDAH . PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE GREAT SPIRITUAL REVIVAL OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE** under the reign of King Yoshiya. Having been crowned King at the tender age of eight, he needed to have the right people around him. One of those people was Chuldah, who was hugely influential in his development as a God-fearing person. Unlike his idol-worshipping father and grandfather, King Menashe, Yoshiya steered the people toward God and devotion to Torah observance. He even undertook the huge task of restoring the Temple, which had long been neglected. Yoshiya, very concerned about God’s warning for those who abandon the Torah and the idolatrous state of the Jewish people, sent for Chuldah to inquire more. She prophesied the destruction of the Temple, but that King Yoshiya wouldn’t witness it. Under Yoshiya’s leadership, the nation began to rid the land of idolatry and a spirit of repentance filled the entire nation. Even though this was short lived and 11 years later, Chuldah’s prophecy

of the destruction came true, King Yoshiya had tremendous merit and didn’t witness the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

**ESTHER . ONE OF THE MOST CLIMACTIC PARTS OF THE PURIM STORY** is the exchange between Mordechai and Esther when he empowers her to take action on behalf of the Jewish people. Esther’s attitude evolves within this short conversation. Immediately afterwards, Esther’s words and actions are influenced by prophecy, and she speaks with courage, commitment and determination. “Go and gather all the Jews... and fast for me for... three days and nights, and I and my maidens will do the same. And I will go to the king, not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish.” The three days included the first night of Pesach, so this instruction demanded Mordechai to transgress the Torah laws of eating matzah, drinking wine, and celebrating the Seder night, and for the entire Jewish people to do the same! It was Esther’s status as a prophetess that enabled her to do this. We are blessed with the hindsight of this dramatic story, yet every action Esther took: appearing to the king uninvited, inviting herself to a second feast, and the great reveal - were all decisions she made with prophetic vision for the sake of the future of the Jewish people.

I’ve noticed a common thread in the prophecies of these seven ladies: total focus and devotion to ‘another.’ Sarah’s was to secure strong roots for the Jewish people, Miriam’s brought about the greatest leader of the nation, Devorah’s brought Godliness and victory to the people, Chana’s was about the future of the Jewish people, Abigail’s protected one of the greatest kings of the Jewish people, Chuldah’s brought merit and repentance to the people and Esther’s enabled the survival of our nation. Perhaps we’re left with a cause-and-effect question: did they each merit levels of prophecy as a result of their selflessness and focus on others or did they merit prophetic vision in order to impact others? Regardless, a lesson I take from the seven prophetesses is that great leaders always find greatness in others.





# SETTING INTENTIONS

YAAKOV KLEIN

New York's Subway Therapy Wall of Post-It Notes. Photo by Oliver Foerstner

## A GUIDE TO MEANINGFUL REFLECTION DURING THE SHOFAR BLASTS

*Although we usually think of Rosh Hashanah as the “Jewish New Year,” or a “Day of Judgement,” the Torah refers to this holiday using different terminology altogether: Yom Teruah, the “Day of the Shofar Blast.” The blowing of the shofar is the centrepiece of this holiday, and our sages teach that when this quintessential Jewish sound echoes throughout the synagogue and reverberates once more within our collective Jewish consciousness, a great opportunity is gifted to us: the opportunity to pause, to reflect, to channel an energy of elevation and simplicity. Like a clarion call for spiritual realignment, the blowing of the shofar can help us recalibrate our values, reset our focus, and return to our essential holiness. Here are five perspectives that can help us maximise this awesome experience. Enjoy!*

## GOOD MORNING!

It is very difficult for the sound of the shofar to remain at the peripheral edge of one’s consciousness. Jarring, haunting, deeply unsettling, the ancient call of the shofar demands our attention. And this is one of the most fundamental intentions of this commandment: to capture the attention of the higher self. As we experience the long journey of a 12-month cycle of living, it becomes so easy to lose clarity into the deeper meaning of life, to become distracted with the myriad responsibilities of the human experience and forget about why we are here in the first place. It is so common to “fall asleep” even while continuing to function wakefully in the whirlwind of our various roles. On Rosh Hashanah, as we prepare to set out in the fresh morning light of a new year, the shofar blast cuts through the static that has intensified in the previous 12



months. Something stirs, deep inside. A glorious silence beyond the noise. And, shaking off the dust and rising to the warmth of this spiritual dawn, our Jewish soul comes awake.

## JAILBREAK

In his masterwork of human expression, the book of Psalms, King David writes, “From the constricted place I called to God, I was answered from the expansivity of God.” We say this verse immediately before the *shofar* blowing, and for good reason: when we look at the form of the standard *shofar*, we find that it represents the physical embodiment of this verse. Narrow at the tip and growing steadily wider and wider, the *shofar*’s form expresses the journey from “constriction” to “expansivity”, from slavery to freedom - the experience of which King David sings. Having been shaken awake by the *shofar*’s penetrating call, we are gifted with the ability to remove the shackles of our internal obstacles. We are no longer chained to lowliness, to pettiness, to a constricted perspective on life. In this exalted moment, we can perceive the freedom that comes with a deep sense of clarity into a mission so much larger than our own egoic ambitions – our national and transhistorical task of revealing the presence of the Creator within His creation.

## DIVINE CORONATION

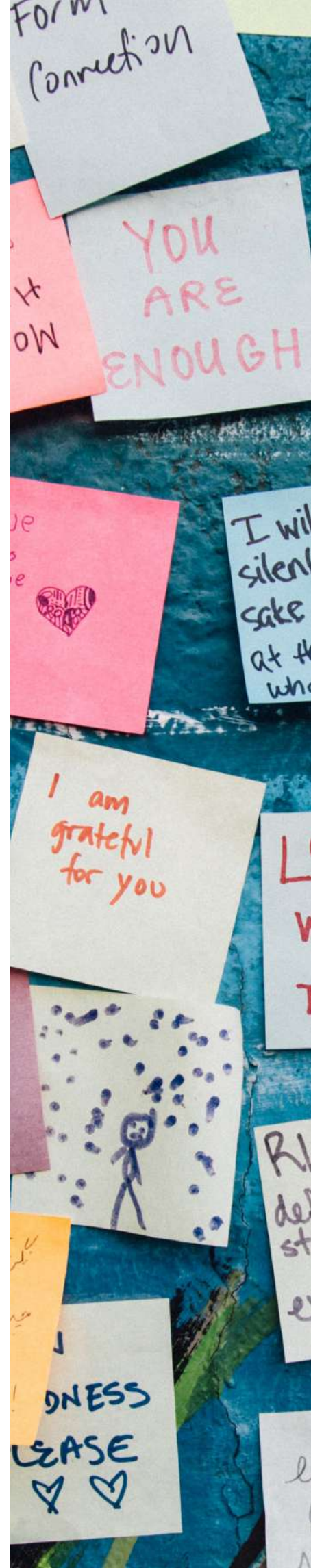
Ultimately, the purpose of the entire Torah with all of the concepts, narratives, themes and commandments it contains is to help guide our holy nation to live a life of expansive consciousness; to develop an abiding sense of awareness of God’s Presence and develop a personal relationship with the Infinite One. One of the anthropomorphic titles we use to conceptualise our relationship with God is that of ‘King.’. He is our King, and we are His subjects; adoring, revering, submitting. The wakefulness and freedom of Rosh Hashanah, a new beginning, grants us an opportunity to coronate the King of the universe, fortifying our recognition that only He is in control, and that our life story up to this very moment was all part of His Master Plan - bringing us here, now, exactly as we are, so that we may choose to take the next step forward in our spiritual development. Just as trumpets are blown to mark the coronation of a new king, the *shofar* is blown to mark our renewed recognition of the King of kings, the Source of our souls.

## MAN AND BEAST

We are trained to believe in the greatness of Man. But somehow, the animals naturally embody so many spiritual ideals that we ought to be jealous, even outright in awe of them: humility. Simplicity, effusive expressiveness, a secure sense of self, rootedness in the present moment etc. Our sages teach that the verse “Man and beast are saved by God” refers to people who, “have a calculating intellect and yet make themselves similar to animals.” Human greatness manifests when we use our expansive consciousness to consciously assume some truly universal and fundamental animalistic traits. When we, who have the capacity to become so much less conscious than animals, maintain a relationship with these traits, it is precisely then that our unique human greatness will manifest. As we utilise our wakefulness, freedom, and clarity to begin the new year on the right foot, we blow the *shofar* - putting a horn to our head as if to say, “God, I want to be like a ram. I want to consciously assume the many wonderful traits animals so naturally enjoy.”

## CHARGE!

We are setting out along the margins of a fresh new page with the noblest of intentions. “This year will be different!”, we declare. “This year I will live true to myself!” But like with any journey, there are bound to be bumps along the road. We are going to encounter lapses in this clarity, frustrations, internal and external challenges. It isn’t likely to always be smooth sailing. In ancient times, the *shofar* was blown to signal the start of a battle. It was a sign for the offensive to begin, for the army to charge ahead. As we begin the epic struggle to maintain the freedom and clarity we have achieved, the *shofar* blast reminds us to muster our courage and gather the strength we will need to face off against the oppositional forces that will undoubtedly work overtime to drive us into a spiritual coma in the months ahead.



M

MAVEN

A

V

N



visit [aish.org.uk/courses](https://aish.org.uk/courses)  
to start any of the many classes  
being offered and gain points!

**Become a Maven today!**  
and see where your learning can take you





# THE PARENTHOOD PARADOX

## INSIGHTS FROM AVINU MALKEINU

ELISHEVA LISS

One of the most challenging, if unoriginal, theological struggles for me, personally, has always been the tension between the idea of a loving God and suffering of the innocent. The analogy we were taught as kids was based on the verse in Deuteronomy: “For as a father afflicts his child, so God afflicts you.” We were told that the same way a small child can’t understand why a parent might force a child to undergo painful, life-saving medical treatment for her own benefit, likewise, we mere mortals can’t understand why a loving, compassionate God would allow the innocent to suffer. Even as a child, this analogy raised immediate and obvious resistance for me (and I’m sure I’m not unique in this):

“I know that if my parents had a way

to offer me this medical treatment without pain, they would. But they’re limited, while God is Omnipotent. If He can do anything, why wouldn’t He create painless solutions? Why even have the problems in the first place?” Ostensibly back to square one.

The common assertion that without pain we wouldn’t have free will or value pleasure rang hollow; even sadistic. (Although if that satisfies you, then don’t let me ruin it for you). Free will could still exist along a continuum ranging from passivity to achievement, and pleasure could just as easily be savoured and contrasted with the baseline absence of pleasure.

Yet the original parent analogy circles back to the substance of the parable itself: “The child, in her limited conception of reality, imagines her parents to be

omnipotent, and therefore maliciously choosing to administer gratuitously painful treatment. She thinks she has the whole picture and is being needlessly targeted and victimised. Likewise, if we are still in the infantile state of human spiritual consciousness, we lack the philosophical capacity to grasp why a loving parent/God would ‘opt’ to inflict pain, and so we’d experience it as senseless cruelty.” And so the metaphor-rebuttal continues concentrically, like so many Russian dolls.

If we are to accept this relinquish-to-authority-based-on-our-ignorance approach, perhaps we could achieve surrender, acceptance, even some form of serenity. But where would love enter the picture?

“Our Father, our King, we’ve sinned



*This page: Photo courtesy Kelly Sikkema. Opposite page: Photo courtesy Liana Mikah*

Magical thinking and outlandish fantasy are, in a way, the seeds of what changes the world.

before you.”

If I had to go to trial, I imagine I would be inclined to plead innocent. Or at least only as guilty as strategically advised by a lawyer. But that’s in a dispassionate human court of law. If I got myself in trouble personally and needed support, I would go to my parents and say: “I messed up.” Because even though I know they’d be disappointed, and I would hate that, I also know that their love would drive them to help me. I hope and believe my own children feel the same way. If there weren’t at least a twinge of discomfort, of guilt with the admission, that might mean we hadn’t done our parental jobs of conveying morality and developing conscience. And if they were too scared to approach us at all, that might mean we hadn’t done our parental jobs of offering love and relational security.

Even on the most intense days of the year, the Days of Awe, we rise in synagogue and commence this seasonal, heartfelt prayer with the humble, raw, honest words: “Daddy, my King- I messed up.” I can take responsibility for my mistakes with the confidence that you

will still hold me. In fact, this is not just a once or twice a year admission. Multiple times in the daily prayer services throughout the year, we have similar confessional formulation: “Forgive us our Father, for we have sinned, pardon us our King, for we’ve transgressed, as you are exceedingly forgiving!” Every day. This is not a provisional prayer, contingent on the possibility of our transgressing. It’s canonised because mistakes are inevitable. Loving parents know this. They don’t pretend their kids are or will be perfect. They set them up with tools for repair. And lots of patience, and realistic expectations.

Recently, a friend confided that she feels so aggravated with her teenage daughter. This kid does the same infuriating things almost daily, and even apologises, and shows remorse, but then repeats them. (I did not reply: “Wow, that’s exactly what we adults do to God,” because that would have been super-insensitive, but I did think it.)

I remember over 20 years ago, when my oldest was just a toddler, we went outside one gloomy day. He scrunched up his face, looked up at me and asked: “Mummy, could you please



make the rain stop?” In his innocence and limited perspective, he genuinely believed his parents controlled everything.

In our own innocence, we similarly turn to our Omnipotent Daddy and ask: “Our Father, our King, nullify all the bad decrees, our enemies’ thoughts, and plans! Make the bad guys shut up and go away! Get rid of all the illness, violence, hunger, captivity! Oh, and make like we didn’t do anything wrong- erase, in Your Compassion, all our iniquities, and also our debt!”

Is this some sort of magical thinking? A collective childish fantasy? A tantrummy laundry list of demands? How many times will we utter these wistful words and then go forth again into a writhing, broken world? How is this helpful?

Magical thinking and outlandish fantasy are, in a way, the seeds of what changes the world. It’s what brought us electricity and aeroplanes and democracy and brain surgery and the internet and peace treaties. It’s how we discover subatomic particles and Novas and music and love and pizza. It’s what breaks Olympic records and inspires Nobel Prize-worthy innovation. It’s what will eventually cure cancer and bring about world peace and end poverty, with God’s help. With unlimited imagination, idealism, activism, creativity, hope, and faith, last century’s science fiction becomes our children’s middle school science project. Last millennium’s tragedies can become the next one’s celebrations.

**Loving parents know this. They don’t pretend their kids are or will be perfect. They set them up with tools for repair.**

“The actionable outcome begins with

a thought,” – the *Lecha Dodi* Friday night prayer.

Prayer in English means “request.” But *Tefilla*, its Hebrew, reflexive equivalent, proffers a richer, more layered etymology; ramifying into at least seven different meanings. *Tefilla* encompasses introspection, meditation, grappling, transcendence, gratitude, song of praise, and conceiving of the ostensibly impossible. *Tefilla* is a form of spiritual journaling. It’s cultivating a personal relationship with

the Divine, with the Uni-multi-verse, the Diversity that is Life, and the Oneness that is Existence. It invites, challenges our often-fragmented mind/body/heart/soul selves, to integrate in a cacophony of philosophical-somatic-emotional-spiritual core self-expression. By first decompartmentalising our own parts, we then emanate outward from the intrapersonal to the interpersonal and beyond.

“Our Father, our King,” we continue our liturgical sacred rant, “heal the sick! Bring all kinds of salvation and redemption, and money, and sustenance, and bounty! Do all the good things- for us, for our children- do it for You!”

Years ago, our young daughter was suddenly hospitalised. She was suffering and rapidly deteriorating, but no one could figure out what was wrong with her. My husband and I tag-teamed for several days on adrenaline and fear, flying between the other kids, work, and the hospital. Until my parents showed up. I collapsed on their shoulders and sobbed like a baby. My brain knew that they had no medical expertise, no practical recourse, but my heart instinctively needed to believe their soothing presence and comforting embrace would “make it all better.” My father held me protectively and allowed my trauma to convulse in his arms. As it turned out, my mum had



brought homemade potato kugel, which was the bizarre turning point at which my baby girl perked up, ate heartily, and just as mysteriously as she had taken ill, began to quickly regain her strength and appetite. She was discharged within hours.

(I generally hesitate to share “miracle stories” for fear of sounding irrational or insensitive to the too-common realities that don’t result in similarly “happy endings.” But we hear so frequently and quickly of horrific tragedies from our negatively biased media and minds, that perhaps we need to balance out the scales of human drama with true stories of hope too. Not all crises resolve with a hug and homemade Shabbat food, but sometimes the love they represent can mitigate the agony, even temporarily).

I hope my children feel this super-rational safety from me. That even when I can’t or believe I shouldn’t come through for them the way they want me to, that I am their emotional refuge, their safe space, their embrace. That if they want to, they know they can confess their deepest shames and fears to me, and I will hold space for their imperfect, intrinsic goodness. That they express their wishes to me, for anything at all, even the ridiculous. That they can dream out loud to me, even in the most grandiose ways, and I will not only not laugh at them, but I will listen and take





pride in their aspirations. That I would do whatever I can, to support them in trying to actualise their potential greatness.

*Avinu, Malkeinu*: our Father, our King.

The Hebrew word for king (*melech*) is differentiated from the word for ruler (*moshel*) in that the word for king (*melech*) denotes the subjects choosing to serve their leader, whereas ruler (*moshel*) means one who takes power by might or subjugation. God knows that the only hope we have of being able to access our autonomy and devote ourselves to His service is if prior to being “our King” He is “our Father.” When we feel His love, His devotion, our organic connection to and oneness with Him, that engenders the choice to crown Him as our King. We can’t control our children’s choices, but if we establish ourselves first as a resource of love, nurture, and empowerment, they are far more likely to avail themselves of our wisdom and influence.

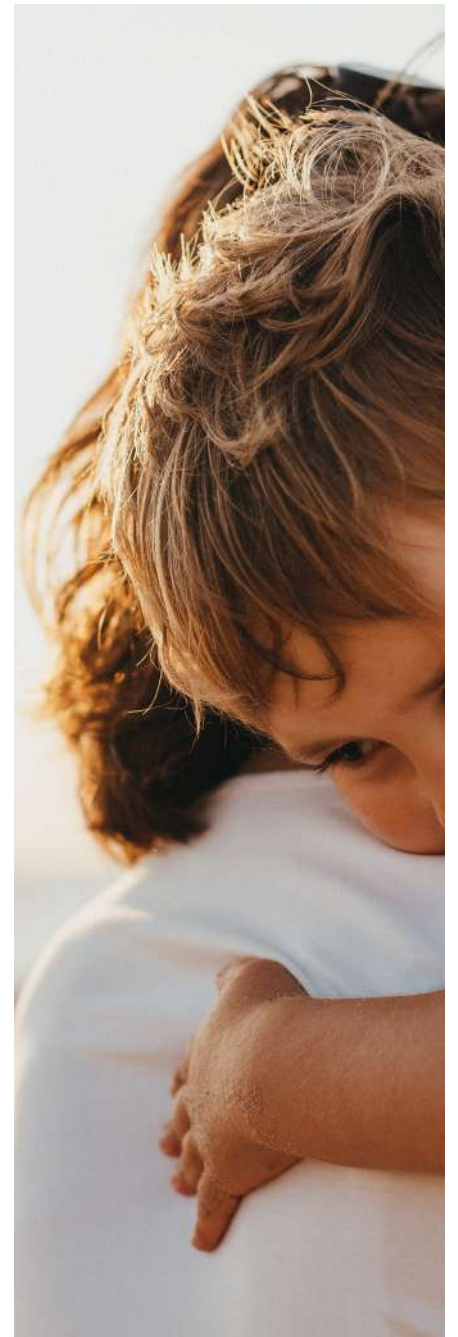
“Our Father, our King, don’t leave us empty before you! Have compassion upon us, our babies, our children!”

Our desperation is not only not disrespectful; it’s sanctified. We can beg and whine and cry and rail because He won’t lose patience with us. He wants this connection.

Even when there’s nothing specific I can

do to help my child through a challenge, I want them to feel they can come to me, to cry, to protest, to wish away the pain, to be held. And I in turn, lift my eyes to Him and similarly beg my Father shamelessly on their behalf. I know I might not get what I want, what I think I need, but if I do, this would be the Source. And if I don’t, I can’t say I didn’t try.

“Our Father, our King,” we conclude dramatically, “grace us, answer us, we have no actions! Do loving-kindness and charity with us and save us!” We have the confidence, the temerity, to demand all this, without merit. Please. As a favour. Just because. That’s exactly what parental love is. Unconditional love between most humans is actually not that healthy; in most adult relationships, love should be developed, cultivated, and maintained. But the love of a parent for a child is unconditional. My children will never need to earn my love, to prove their worth to me, to win my heart. Whether they fully grasp it or not, they are my world, my priceless babies, now and forever. And we are His.



Photos courtesy Ash Gerlach and Xavier Mouton





# JEWES AND SHOES

ILANA EPSTEIN

---

Shoes are far from an afterthought or mere accessory. They are more than an integral part of our daily lives, indispensable tools that offer comfort, protection and mobility. Shoes possess deep meaning in many traditions worldwide, having played significant roles in sacred ceremonies, cultures and narratives. In the Jewish tradition, shoes hold important historical and religious symbolism.

Shoes provide us with the means to overcome the challenges posed by the path we walk upon, allowing us to navigate various surfaces and landscapes with ease. Whether it's rugged terrains, slippery surfaces, or uneven ground, shoes empower us to move swiftly and confidently, surpassing the limitations of our bare feet. Shoes enhance our innate ability to conquer obstacles and master the physical world.

Before delving into the importance of shoes to Jews, it is interesting to explore how the world relates to them through fairytales and folklore.

*Cinderella's* glass slipper epitomises the transformative power of footwear. This delicate, enchanting slipper symbolises elegance and carries the promise of a changed

destiny. It becomes the catalyst through which Cinderella's true identity is recognised and rewarded.

In the tale of *Puss in Boots*, they represent his resourcefulness and cunning. These boots elevate Puss from an ordinary cat to a clever and influential figure, orchestrating a series of events that enhance his master's social standing.

L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* offers another iconic example of shoes holding profound symbolic significance. Dorothy's ruby slippers serve as a potent symbol of her unwavering desire to return home.

Shoes have also played a pivotal role throughout Jewish history, particularly in commemorative events and symbolic acts, representing various facets of Jewish identity and resilience. In the biblical account found in Exodus 3:1-6, Moses' encounter with the burning bush on Mount Horeb holds profound significance. As God spoke to him from within the bush, Moses was instructed to remove his shoes, for he stood upon sacred ground. Although the precise reason for this directive is not explicitly mentioned in the text, it is widely interpreted as a symbol of respect,

humility and reverence in the presence of the divine.

The act of removing shoes can be interpreted as signifying the transition from the ordinary to a consecrated space. This symbolism extends to the priests (*Cohanim*) who served in the tabernacle and later, the Temple. They entered these holy spaces barefoot, marking a change in status from the mundane to the sacred. Even today, the custom of barefootedness is observed by *Cohanim* when they step forward to deliver the priestly blessing, as they do so in their stockinged feet.

Conversely, personal and collective mourning periods of *shiva* and the 9th of *Av*, respectively, include a prohibition against wearing leather shoes, signifying a profound sense of sorrow and vulnerability. The act of going barefoot while in mourning allows us to physically express and connect with the grief, personal loss and subservience. Ancient depictions of captives, including Jewish prisoners of war, are often shown without shoes, symbolising their loss of freedom and dignity. Stripped of their footwear, they were forced to traverse unfamiliar territories, feeling the harshness of the ground beneath their feet.

In more recent history, countless testimonies from Holocaust survivors emphasise that shoes were more critical than food in their struggle for survival. With shoes, we gain

mastery over the world around us, while being forced to go barefoot leaves us vulnerable, an ultimate loss of freedom.

In Egypt, our final act of rebellion before we threw off the scales of oppression was wearing our shoes in anticipation of running to freedom. In the pain of loss at a *shiva* and on the 9th of *Av*, we are reminded of our lack of control in the face of adversity. Yet Yom Kippur, though a holy day, is in no way meant to be sad - so why do we once more find ourselves barefooted?

Yom Kippur's barefoot practice is associated with the vulnerability required to face God on the holiest day of the year, as exemplified by Moses at the burning bush and the practice of the *Cohanim* at the Temple. At the very moment that we escaped our slavery in Egypt, we entered into a new relationship in servitude to God. One day of the year on Yom Kippur, like slaves relinquishing our control completely, we put ourselves at God's mercy and pray. We need to be in our most vulnerable state in order to bare our souls and open our hearts through those prayers.

So if wearing shoes symbolises our control over the world around us, we cannot be shod and simultaneously be open, vulnerable and prepared to face God. We remove our shoes and let go; only then are we able to connect at the deepest level.







Illustration by Michal Kedourie

# VALOUR x PERSPECTIVES

LIFESTYLE

**CHAYA BAUMGARTEN, FOUNDER OF VALOUR MAGAZINE**

As a stylist, I have worked with hundreds of women over the years, helping them build their wardrobes and ensuring they both look and feel great. Through these many interactions, I have shared my style advice, and I have also gained so much from my clients. I've learned that while our clothes are important and a great way of communicating who we are to the world, there's so much more to our style choices than meets the eye. Our clothing serves as a canvas, painting a picture of our identity, our mood, and our connection to particular moments and occasions.

The Jewish calendar and life-cycle present frequent

opportunities to mindfully connect with specific times through the way we dress ourselves. Just as we prepare auspicious foods to start the new year off sweetly, and just as we set our tables generously and with care - so too can we consider how to honour these special occasions through our wardrobe and accessory choices.

We dress differently on *Shabbat* from the week, on *Yom Tov* from *Shabbat*, and on *Chol HaMoed* from *Yom Tov*. Our fashion choices will help us connect to these auspicious times - and certainly bring more joy!



# FESTIVE YOM TOV



Get ready to step it up a notch for *Yom Tov* (Festival), a time of joy, commemoration, and feasting. Your outfit should reflect the festive spirit! Don't be afraid to experiment with patterns and textures to add an extra dash of flair. I love a beautiful, vibrant dress in the season's colour palettes. Accessorise with statement jewellery and a pair of elegant heels or dressy flats. If you prefer a more relaxed look, you can still dress it down without sacrificing style. A well-fitted dress shirt with a knee-length skirt paired with a trendy blouse can strike the perfect balance between comfort and fashion while still celebrating the day. Consider adding a cardigan or a wrap to keep warm during outdoor meals during Sukkot. Mix and match pieces to create versatile outfits for each *Yom Tov*. For example, a patterned blouse can be paired with different skirts to create multiple looks. Add some flair with accessories like a stylish hat or a colourful scarf.

Midi-shirt Dress £87 Karen Millen, Lilac skirt £128 Whistles, Pearl embellished Pumps £69 Charles & Keith, Irene dress £295 Rixo, Pleated midi Dress £329 Claudia Pierlot, Court shoe £150 Guess, Ashley dress £205 Ba&sh, Wrap-over silk midi skirt £268 Selfridges, Embellished bow cardigan £209 Kate Spade, Smocked-waist maxi skirt £239 Maje @ Selfridges, Blouse £148 Whistles, Earrings £46 Kate Spade @ Outnet, Boxy cross-body bag £525 Kate Spade



# ELEVATED SHABBAT



Shabbat holds a special place in Jewish life, a time to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and connect with family, friends, and community. We can select some wardrobe pieces to specifically only wear on Shabbat - a way to mark the day's separateness from the week. It's all about elevating your style to match the sanctity of the day. Ladies can opt for a modest and elegant maxi dress, or pair a flowy blouse with a knee-length skirt. Don't forget to accessorise with tasteful jewellery and comfortable yet stylish shoes. You can still keep it classy and casual by opting for a floral dress or a casual dress paired with flats or sandals. The key is to strike a balance between style and comfort. Mix and match different pieces to create your own unique Shabbat look. For example, a colourful scarf can add a pop of vibrancy to a neutral outfit, or a statement belt can cinch a loose-fitting dress. Experiment with different combinations and let your personal style shine through while respecting the traditions of the day.

Maxi flower bag £59 Mango, Mash heeled sling back shoe £46 Zara Bella Dress £65 Hobbs, Collagerie Fig Leaf Dress £100 Jigsaw, Quilted jacket £39 Reserved, Iris & Ink Selena satin blouse £225 Outnet, Beaumont Dress £159 Hobbs, Swinton Cream and Red Chine Floral Print Silk Dress £249 LK Bennett, Camel maxi coat £257 Karen Millen, Erdem Vesper floral-print satin midi skirt £495 Outnet

# VERSATILE CHOL HAMOED



*Chol HaMoed* presents a unique fashion opportunity, a time to balance the joy of the holiday with a more relaxed and casual approach to dressing. If you want to dress it up a bit, consider adding a blazer or a fun scarf to your look. It can instantly elevate your look while still maintaining a relaxed vibe. Mix and match different pieces to create versatile and comfortable *Chol HaMoed* outfits. Experiment with layering. No matter which occasion you're dressing for, remember to have fun with your fashion choices while being mindful of the traditions and customs associated with each day. Dressing for *Shabbat*, *Yom Tov*, and *Chol HaMoed* is an opportunity to express your personal style and embrace the joy and meaning of these special occasions.

Leather Heeled Ankle Boots £110 Calvin Klein, Ribbed cashmere-blend midi dress £267 outnet, Double-breasted coat £59 H&M, Round Neck Pleated Midi Shirt Dress £45 Marks & Spencer, Cream long sleeve corsage blouse £40, River Island, Ivory Dress £87 Warehouse, Maxi blue dress £39 H&M, Carve khaki dress £127 Keren Millen, Knitted Crew Neck Dress £35 Marks & Spencer, Rib-knit collared dress £32 H&M, Textured-knit cardigan £44 H&M, Midi khaki skirt £135 Karen Millen, Japra smoked-hem asymmetric-waist satin midi skirt £239 Maje, Lexie Glass & Faux Pearl Drop Earrings £26 Oliver Bonas, Sneakers £110 New Balance, Ted Baker Blue Stina Double Zip Mini £85 Ted Baker



# Rachelle Yadegar

**Guest Contributor:** Rachelle Bracha Zarabian (née Yadegar) is a modest fashion influencer that is back in her hometown of Los Angeles, California after a special year in Israel with her husband. Her platform strives to show the beauty of modest dressing. Recently, Rachelle launched Culteaur, a curated modest fashion boutique in LA and online.

*Photos courtesy of Rachelle Yadegar*



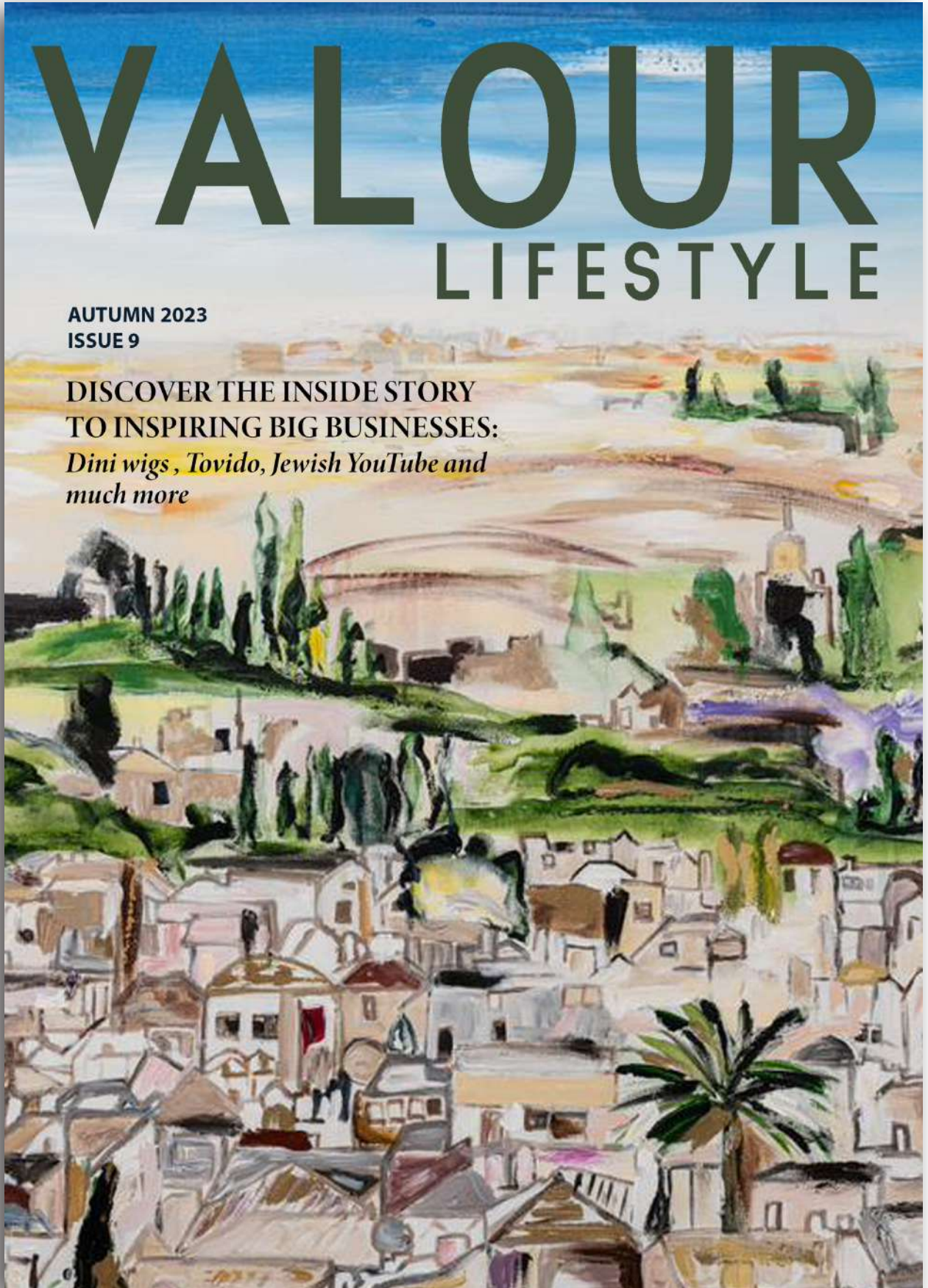


# VALOUR

## LIFESTYLE

AUTUMN 2023  
ISSUE 9

DISCOVER THE INSIDE STORY  
TO INSPIRING BIG BUSINESSES:  
*Dini wigs, Tovidio, Jewish YouTube and  
much more*



**AVAILABLE IN SHOPS WORLDWIDE**

HIGH-END JEWISH WOMEN'S LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE



LÉA OUAHBA KOHEN

# ALL I SEE IS LOVE

LEA OUAHBA KOHEN SHARES HER FAVOURITE MOMENTS FROM WEDDINGS SHE HAS PHOTOGRAPHED, TOGETHER WITH HER THOUGHTS FROM BEHIND THE LENS.



## **PERSONAL CONNECTION**

This is a story told through light and shadows. The shadows direct the focus on a moment in which the *kallah* (bride) is alone with God in prayer before going to the *chuppah*. It is a special mix of palpable emotion, privacy and connection, and appears as if her prayers for her impending marriage are illuminating the darkness.



## **TEXTURE**

This is the usual ring shot that everyone takes at weddings, but usually people use very bright tricks, flash and all. In this case, I used the natural light and did not use flash. And I find that it gives a lot of texture to the photo. The fact that it's dark puts the focus on the hands, so one can imagine everything that's going on around them; the witnesses of the groom putting the ring on his bride, the people watching intensely. The dark quality of this shot makes this moment even more romantic, but it is lit enough from the natural light for us to see what is going on and make this act stand out even more.



## < TRANSMISSION

Here, a father is giving a *bracha* (blessing) to his son before the *chuppah*, bequeathing to him a little of everything he's given him until now, empowering him, with all his strength for his whole family. It's a really unique point in time, and I am always sad when parents don't do it because it is such a powerful moment when a father and son are alone together, encouraging him for his future.

## GIVING >

This might be my favourite. It's a father blessing his daughter just a few seconds after her husband-to-be has put her veil over her face. In just a moment, the bride will join her groom as he waits for her under the *chuppah*, and for now she is alone. Her father, he blesses her, delegates everything to her, all the love he has for her, everything he has learned, everything he'd kept for himself. Now he shares everything with his daughter: it's your turn to do it in your own home with your own husband. I'm here to support you, and you're surrounded by everyone who loves you. I love you.



## < MOVEMENT

This photo was captured with a long exposure to illustrate motion. I like to include a lot of blurring in my photos. In this instance, I used it to represent the movement around the groom, intentionally highlighting that he is the primary subject, his emotion, and how serious this moment is. Everything revolves around him at this moment, even the bride circles him; he is the centre. I chose for this photo to be in black and white, removing the colour to heighten the emotion and focus on the subject, consequently bringing the observer's attention more effectively to the groom.





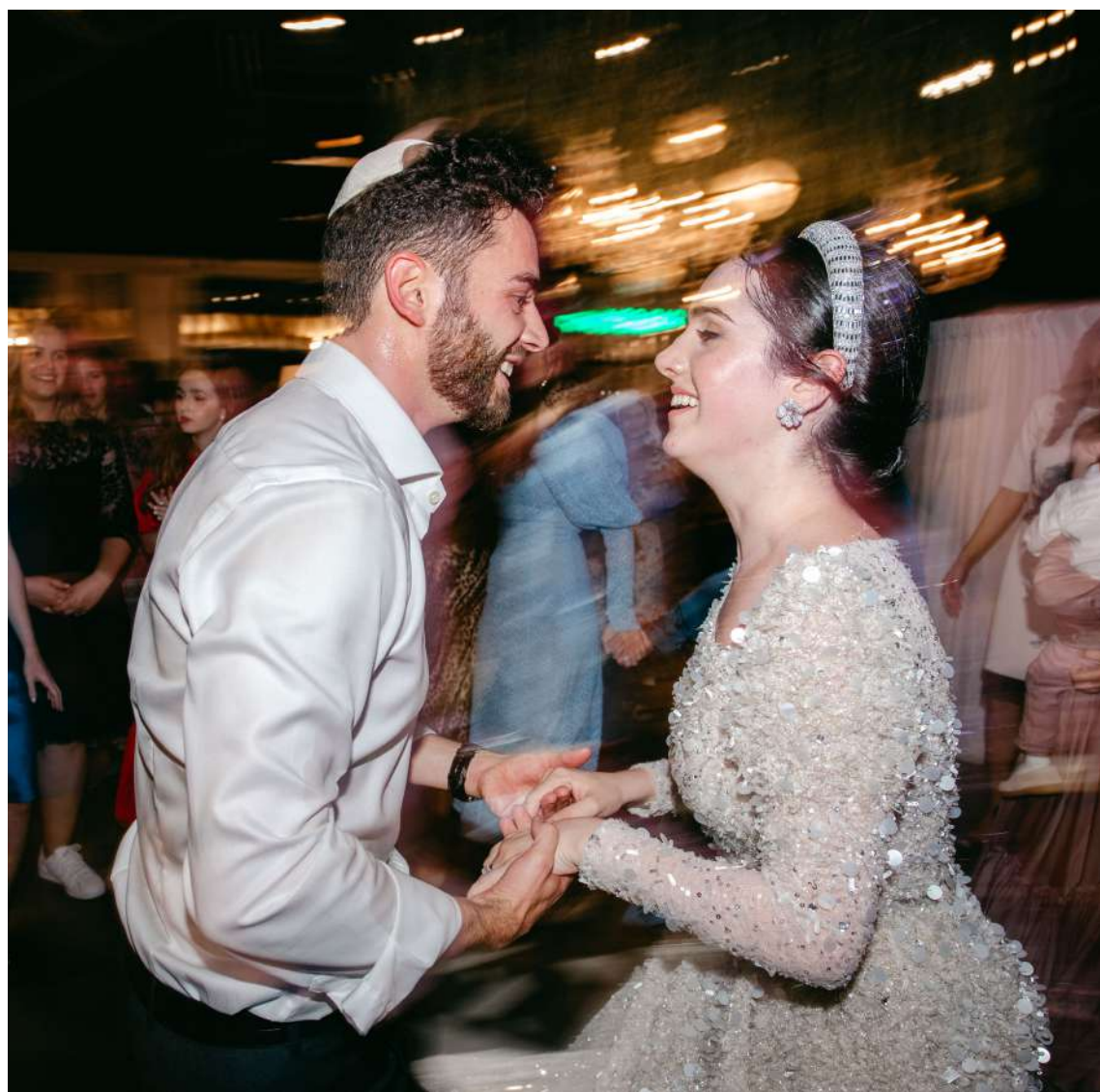
## CONTACT

The couple here is entering into the *yichud* (private) room, and this is their first physical contact, holding hands after the *chuppah* (wedding canopy). I really like to go against the rules of photography, and so, I often tend to cut the faces because I like people to imagine the expression, and here their expression is at its peak because they're finally going to have their own little moment. Since this morning, they've been busy getting ready with all the stress. Finally, the culmination of the whole day revolves around this moment, when the two of them come together and realise that they have united through the act of marriage. And so they hold hands, they're together, they're happy to enter this room together, to enter this new life together.

## DANCING LIGHT

The dances in general are often the same, just people twirling, twirling, twirling. At certain weddings, some couples dance together, and at others, they do not. At this wedding, they danced together on the women's side. I used light painting, something I often do at my dances because it brings more art to the image, more colour, more fun, but also because it's a bit blurred and the expression is there, and with all the ambient lights, it brings out the fun party side of the wedding, and you can imagine all the movement of the dancing.

*All photos are property of Léa Ouahba Kohen, printed with permission from all of the couples photographed.*





# GOOD AND SWEET

## A TA'AMIM ROSH HASHANAH MENU, INFUSED WITH HONEY

At Rosh Hashanah, a time of celebration, reflection and deep connection with our Creator, even the act of eating is elevated, with foods being imbued with meaning and significance. Whilst there are many symbolic foods (*Simanim*) referred to in the Talmud, an almost universal custom is to begin the Rosh Hashanah meal by eating both apple and challah dipped or drizzled in honey. As we do so, we ask Hashem, if it be His will, to grant us a “*Shana Tova u'Metukah*,” a year that is good and sweet

?But why both good and sweet? Surely the word sweet is superfluous

The Hebrew word for good is “*tov*,” but in its literal sense, the biblical word *tov* conveys much more, a manifestation of what Hashem perceives as well-crafted, just and right. A parent wouldn't let their child eat ice cream for three meals a day, because they know it isn't good for them to live on a diet of pure sugar. What is good or right for us may not always be the most enjoyable course, and on a spiritual level, we can understand that what is “*tov*” for us, might not be sweet. However, a parent also wants their children to be happy and will, when appropriate, grant their child a sweet treat. Our supplication on Rosh Hashanah asks that the harshness of Hashem's decree be tempered with the sweet, a principle known as “*severities within kindness*.” By asking for a good and sweet year, we are asking Hashem to grant us not only what is best for us, but .to also give us happiness as tangible as the honey we are eating

The team at Ta'amim have been busy bees crafting a delicious Rosh Hashanah menu inspired by and interlaced with honey to bring !sweetness to your new year. We wish you all a *Shana Tova u'Metukah*



A member of the Jewish Futures family, Ta'amim is all about engaging Jews with their culture and heritage through food. For the High Holy Days the organisation has created sweet, seasonal and stuffed dishes incorporating the traditional symbolic foods (*simanim*). The latest recipe booklet is available for free in print at kosher stores around London and .Manchester, and downloadable at [wearetaamim.com](http://wearetaamim.com)



@wearetaamim









# HONEY, MUSHROOM AND ONION SAMBOUSEK

*Sambousek are delicious little stuffed hand pies originating in the Levant, and traditionally made with either cheese or beef fillings. Easier to make than you might think, our Sambousek are great as a snack or as a crowd-pleasing starter. We've substituted the traditional fillings for a honey-sweetened onion and mushroom mixture which delivers a satisfying flavour punch and the perfect balance of sweet and savoury, pocketed inside a wafer-thin pastry crust. Delicious warm or cold with tehina or a fresh rocket salad dressed with oil and balsamic.*

## INGREDIENTS

### FOR THE FILLING

- 1 punnet Chestnut Mushrooms**, *minced*
- 1 Red Onion**,  
*finely diced and lightly salted*
- 1 tbsp Oil**
- ½ Stock Cube**, *crumbled*  
*(we used beef but you could use vegetable or chicken)*
- 2 tbsp Honey**

### FOR THE DOUGH

- 250g Plain Flour**
- ½ tsp Salt**
- 113g Margarine**, *softened*
- 60ml cold Water**
- 1 Egg**, *beaten*  
*(for glazing)*

Makes 18-20 Sambousek

Active prep & cooking time: 30-45 minutes

Cooking time 20-25 mins per batch

## METHOD

- 1 Line two baking sheets with baking paper, then set aside. Preheat your oven to 200°C / 180°C fan (Gas Mark 6 / 400°F)

### FOR THE FILLING

- 2 Heat 1 tbsp oil in a pan and add the mushrooms and onions.
- 3 Cook down for 2-3 minutes, stirring regularly, then crumble in the stock cube and mix together.
- 4 Continue cooking until reduced and the mixture starts to hold together.
- 5 Add 2 tbsp honey and cook for a further minute, stirring often.

### FOR THE DOUGH

- 6 Place the flour, salt, margarine and most of the water into a mixing bowl or a food processor.
- 7 Mix with hands and knead, or mix together in food processor on a low speed, until a ball of dough begins to form. If needed, add in a little extra water, a spoonful at a time.
- 8 Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and knead until an oily dough has fully formed.

### TO MAKE THE SAMBOUSEK:

- 9 Take half the dough, and cover in cling film to prevent it drying out.
- 10 Roll the other half the dough out into a thin sheet (2-3mm thick).
- 11 Used the top of a regular drinking glass (approx 7-8 cm) or a cookie cutter to cut out discs of dough. In total, both sheets of dough should make around 18-20 circles.
- 12 Fill each disk with 1 tsp of the filling mixture, slightly off centre and leaving about 5mm around the edge.
- 13 Fold over into half-moons and press down the edges so that there are no gaps. Then crimp the edges with a fork. Repeat until all the dough is used.
- 14 Brush each of your sambousek with egg and place on the baking paper-lined oven trays you prepared earlier.
- 15 Oven cook on 200°C (180°C Fan/400°F) for 15-20 mins or until golden brown, then transfer to a cooling rack.





Photo by Yaffa Judah



# HONEY, LIME AND GARLIC CHICKEN WITH CORIANDER RICE

It's all too easy to get overwhelmed by the thought of meal prep over the High Holy Days with upwards of a dozen Festival meals over 3 weeks. But we're firm believers that delicious and impressive food can be quick and easy to prepare, and that you don't need to spend hours in the kitchen creating extravagant four-course menus for every meal. This simple tray bake with rice requires less than 15 minutes of active prep time, and will delight guests at your table with the beautiful marriage of honey, lime, garlic and coriander, inspired by the flavours of South America.

## INGREDIENTS

### FOR THE CHICKEN

**1 pack Chicken thigh quarters (6-8)**  
**2 Onions, ribboned**  
**¼ tsp Salt**  
**2 tbsp Olive Oil**

### FOR THE MARINADE

**3 cloves Garlic, crushed**  
**3 Limes, juiced**  
**1 Lime, zested**  
**4 tbsp Honey**  
**¼ tsp Black Pepper**  
**½ tsp dried Coriander**  
**½ tsp dried Oregano**

### FOR THE RICE

**2 cups of long grain Rice, washed**  
**½-1½ tsp Salt**  
**½ cup fresh Coriander, finely chopped**  
**1 Lime, zested and juiced**  
**1 Onion, diced**  
**4 cups boiling Water**

Serves 6-8

Active prep & cooking time: 20-30 minutes

Marinating time: 2 hours+ (optional)

Cooking time: approx. 1 hour 30 minutes

### FOR THE CHICKEN

- Mix all the marinade ingredients together.
- Place thigh quarters into a tray or zip-lock bag and pour over the marinade, mixing to ensure the chicken is well coated. For best results, leave chicken to marinate in the fridge for at least 2 hours before cooking.
- Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C Fan/400°F).
- In a large baking tray place mix the ribboned onions and salt, then drizzle with oil and stir to coat.
- Place marinated chicken pieces on top of the onions, skin side down, and cover the tray with a layer of baking paper then a layer of foil.
- Oven-cook for 1 hour, then uncover, turn the thighs skin side up and then roast for a further 30 minutes or until the skin turns golden-brown and the juices run clear.

### FOR THE RICE

- Wash your rice thoroughly until the water runs clear. Set aside to drain.
- In your rice pan, fry 1 diced onion with 1 tbsp of oil, and a pinch of salt to prevent burning. Fry for 6-8 mins on a medium heat, stirring regularly, until onions are translucent but not charred.
- Add in the lime zest and juice, then add rice, stirring to combine.
- Fry for 2 more mins then add in 4 cups of boiling water and another ½ - 1tsp salt.
- Bring to a boil, lower to a simmer and cover your pan. Cook for 10-12 minutes or until the water has evaporated (the steam will have almost stopped escaping from the pan), then remove from heat but leave the lid on. If you are not used to this method of cooking rice, then a pan with a glass lid is advisable.
- Just before serving, stir through the fresh coriander.

*Serving suggestion: Great paired with our sweetcorn ribs, which can be found at [wearetaamim.com/corn-ribs](http://wearetaamim.com/corn-ribs)*







# CARAMELISED APPLES AND HONEYCOMB ICE CREAM

A contemporary spin on the iconic Rosh Hashanah offering of apple and honey, this desert is the perfect way to round off an autumn evening. Our baked apples are caramelised in honey and served warm, alongside a delicious homemade pareve (dairy-free) ice cream, sweet and full of crunchy honeycomb crumbs. We used granny smith apples for their tartness to balance the sweetness of the ice cream, but you can use any other apple of your choosing.

## INGREDIENTS

### FOR THE BAKED APPLES:

- 2 Granny Smith Apples**, cored, peeled and diced
- 2 Granny Smith Apples**, cored and diced
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp Honey

### FOR THE HONEYCOMB:

- 200g Caster Sugar**
- 5 tbsp Golden Syrup**
- 2 tsp Bicarbonate of Soda**

### FOR THE ICE CREAM:

- 1 can of Vegan Condensed Milk**
- Approx 650ml** (1 large and 1 small carton)
- Non-dairy Whip Topping**
- 113g Margarine**, softened
- Large pinch of Rock Salt**
- 1½ cups Honeycomb**, crushed – (you can follow the recipe below or buy it from a shop)

Serves 8

Active prep & cooking time: 10-20 minutes

Cooking time: 30-45 minutes

+Freezing time: 12h

## METHOD

### FOR THE HONEYCOMB:

- 1 Line a 9-inch (23cm) cake tin with baking paper or lightly grease the sides. Heat the caster sugar and golden syrup together in a reasonably deep pan over a low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until the sugar has completely dissolved. Avoid letting the sugar bubble.
- 2 Once sugar has completely dissolved, increase the heat and bring the caramel to simmer until the colour changes to a dark amber, (this will happen quite quickly).
- 3 Immediately remove the pan from the heat, add in the bicarbonate of soda and beat the mixture quickly until the bicarb is fully mixed in. The mixture will bubble and rise rapidly. Scrape the mixture into the lined cake tin, taking care as the mixture will be extremely hot! The mixture will continue to bubble in the cake tin.
- 4 Leave the mixture to cool in the tin for 60-90 minutes. It should turn hard, ready to be broken into chunks or crumbled.

### FOR THE ICE CREAM

- 5 In a bowl, whisk together the vegan condensed milk, the non-dairy whip and a large pinch of rock salt.
- 6 Pour into a freezer safe container with a lid and freeze for 2-3 hours.
- 7 Remove and stir fully, adding in 1 cup of crushed honeycomb (saving the rest for later) and stir again, ensuring an even distribution.
- 8 Place in the freezer for a further 1½ hours, then stir again and return to the freezer to set.

### FOR THE CARAMELISED APPLE

- 9 Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C Fan/400°F).
- 10 Put the diced and peeled apple mixture into an ovenproof dish and sprinkle with brown sugar. Stir to combine, cover and place in hot oven.
- 11 Take the second set of diced apple and pour over the honey. Stir to combine and place in the oven uncovered.
- 12 Cook both for 30-45 min, keeping an eye on the uncovered apple to make sure it doesn't burn (stir occasionally to ensure equal caramelization).
- 13 To serve, intersperse the two types of apple on a plate, add the ice cream and top with some of the remaining honeycomb for added crunch.



# THE SUKKAH EDIT

## Beauty & Meaning

ILANA EPSTEIN





The festival of Sukkot holds a special place in the Jewish calendar, marked by the building of temporary *sukkahs* and the gathering of family and friends. In the Talmud, we find a profound teaching emphasising the importance of decorating the *sukkah*. Just as certain *mitzvot* require *hiddur*, or beautification, so too does the *sukkah* deserve adornment. By beautifying the *sukkah*, we imbue it with special significance. Sukkot, often overshadowed by Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, offers a refreshing and necessary contrast. Its hands-on, home-based nature invites us to explore the layered meanings and symbols it embodies. The biblical book we read during this time, called *z'man simhateinu*, or the season of our joy, is Ecclesiastes, a work of wisdom that confronts the transient and ephemeral nature of life. This juxtaposition reminds us to find joy and gratitude amidst the impermanence, embracing the present moment.

Over the years, I have explored various themes for our *sukkah*. When our children were young and used to bring home decorations and drawings from school, those cherished creations took pride of place in our *sukkah*. To enhance the festive atmosphere, I would supplement them with an array of primary colour decorations, such as paper chains, Chinese lanterns, and lively posters. However, in recent years, as our children have grown and fewer decorations arrive from school, I have embraced different colour themes. From alluring shades of blue to the warm hues of autumn, each year brings a new inspiration. This time, I have chosen metallic colours as they remind me of ripening wheat in a field, evoking the spirit of harvest, which is an integral part of our Sukkot celebration. The *sukkah* serves as a blank canvas for endless possibilities, with countless themes that one can explore and create within this temporary structure. Sukkot only lasts for a week, so feel free to unleash your creativity without hesitation in a way that brings pleasure and satisfaction.

Once you have decided on a theme, fully commit to it and boldly bring it to life in your *sukkah*. In this setting, more truly is more. Don't hold back—let your theme shine and make a statement. The *sukkah* is a place of celebration and joy, and the decorations play a significant role in amplifying those emotions. So be daring and embrace the abundance of decorations to create a memorable and captivating *sukkah* experience!





# BUTTERFLIES & EAGLES

**HADASSAH CHEN**



“No butterflies for me please.”

These words stuck with me as our conversation was coming to an end, even though I could have sat longer with Cindy Seni, the girl fresh from the hugely successful Netflix hit show called *Jewish Matchmaking*. How can a 29 year old who has risen to world fame by taking part in a dating show be so grounded and real?

Cindy walked into my apartment in Jerusalem looking fresh and smiling. It was kind of surreal for me to see her drinking coffee in the same room where I had spent the night before watching her on Netflix. I had done my homework and felt prepared to talk about love and dating in these crazy times, but suddenly I felt old as she was shifting her beautiful thick curls from the right to the left as I was making myself comfortable trying to be cool. Her eyes shone after we giggled like two girls discussing fame and fortune, then looked at me seriously and threw her hand out for me to clearly see a beautiful diamond ring.

“You are engaged,” I smile, touching the ring, “how amazing, *mazal tov!*” I panicked for a moment trying to remember if I had missed a part in the Netflix show where she finally meets the love of her life; maybe I fell asleep and skipped the end?

“Cindy, is he from the show?” I ask nonchalantly hiding my embarrassment, as she smiles back at me and reassures me right away that it was not on the show. Love came after when no cameras or “hollywood lights” were on, but in a totally unexpected and natural way.

The way it’s supposed to be.

When I was dating 25 years ago it was all less noisy, social media was not around yet so “things” were happening and bubbling all around but in a more subtle way. I had all kinds of friends from all different types of backgrounds, across the religious spectrum, Jews and non-Jews. Growing up in Milan, Italy, I was exposed to a variety of social circles

and I found something I liked in all of them.

Not good.

My two younger sisters got married before me, one met her man when she was 18 years old and fell madly in love; he was 7 years older than her, with a business of his own.

My other sister, 8 years younger than me, was set up on a blind date through a *shadchan* (matchmaker) and after a few dates felt it was the right one.

I was a fish out of water gasping for air. I couldn’t find myself, I was lost and hopeless. I saw my parents worrying more and more, I heard whispers of phone calls, “what’s wrong with her, she’s 27!” that felt like slaps across my face. I had gone out on blind dates, I had met boys on my own, I had even looked out of desperation in circles where I didn’t belong, maybe just as a rebellious act against the system. Obviously something was not working for me, I was terrified every time I heard the word “matchmaker,” yet I was not ready to throw myself to the wolves and meet someone in some club or party.

I turned to God and prayed, I whispered through the pages of *Tehillim* (Psalms) that whoever is meant for me should come at the right time and the right way. I very much believed that meeting the right person is a cosmic moment where all planets need to be aligned right and your soul is ready to be complete, but I wanted butterflies in my stomach too. I wanted it all and was not ready to give up on anything. Impossible.

When a distant friend of ours called us and told us to check this guy Yossi, “he is tall, handsome, Chabad, modern and he is now serving in the IDF as an officer,” I asked my mum if they were talking about one guy or four different ones. Impossible.

He has it all, I thought, yet when my mum pushed me to try it out I told her to keep her hopes down and that it was probably not for me. Every pot has a cover, my mum





Left Page: Netflix Series, *Jewish Matchmaking*, hosted by Aleeza Ben Shalom (pictured) Right Page: Cindy Seni, a featured personality on the Netflix Series, *Jewish Matchmaking*, "AHAVA" by Robert Indiana 1977, in Jerusalem, Israel and Cindy Seni (left) with Hadassah Chen (right) in Jerusalem, Israel. Photos courtesy of Netflix

would tell me, "I'm a frying pan," I would answer her.

Guess what? Good frying pans come with great covers too! When we went out on our first date and I finally sat across from him, I was pleasantly surprised. I met his blue eyes - an ocean, calm and welcoming, ready to accept and weather an incoming tornado like me.

I felt I had found my way home. After years of crying, talking, flirting, meeting, dreaming, praying and hoping, I felt I was finally heading in the right direction, yet it wasn't a smooth ride, there were bumps on the way but we found the right speed, I learned to keep my heart calm and my mind focused, until I felt I could hardly breathe while waiting to pick me up and that's when he proposed, at the Kotel (the Western Wall).

"We also sealed our love at the Kotel," Cindy says, bringing me back to us and our conversation.

From the moment I had a clear picture of all the "players" on the show, I knew Cindy was my pick. She seemed so real and grounded, making sure from the first date that her goal was clear: she wanted family, children and a Jewish life.

We compared our dating days; not much has changed, aside from social media which brought everyone closer yet made us all so much more lonely. Dating apps give too many choices, we need to tick all our boxes, we pick a date as if we are placing a fast food order.

That sense of mystery, surprise and naivete has been lost; we know what we want, what to expect and how it should be delivered.

Where is the magic? Everything is expected to happen fast and now. There's no time for waiting, dreaming or hoping. ASAP - if not, next.

I silently thank God for having been guided by teachers and parents to shape my thinking, and for having dated what feels like a century ago when the sound of the old Nokia ringtone was what made me skip a beat.

When a man respects a woman, loves her, supports her

and empowers her, the woman can express her femininity without feeling weaker or less worthy. When this balance is expressed with respect and modesty, the rest comes naturally, making room for hopes, dreams, passion and all that we wish for.

Growing up in a classic Jewish Italian family studying in Chabad schools, a lot of my friends have continued on as *shluchot* (emissaries) in far away countries. When visiting them, I notice how a rabbi and his wife work together side by side, as partners, supporting each other and empowering one other with love and respect.

There is nothing more romantic and more amazing than having boundaries that train us to align heart and mind.

When I tell Cindy that my eighteen year old daughter will soon start dating, she says her killer line.

"No butterflies for me."

No need to feel that crazy adrenaline and attraction that is hard to handle and quickly becomes toxic. Love comes way after marriage, love comes with time, constant work, and surviving life with both its good and bad moments.

Love is sitting together in silence and feeling complete, appreciating the small things in life that can be so huge, like running away for one night without the kids, laughing in the rain on a simple afternoon stroll and holding hands after 20 years of marriage. Love is caring and believing in one another.

Cindy ends our meeting with a twinkle in her eye. Butterflies are for Hollywood productions, for Netflix shows, they last until you turn the screen off.

Reality is something else.

We want eagles.



# ADEENA SUSSMAN:

## CELEBRATING THE JOY & MEANING OF SHABBAT THROUGH FOOD

ILANA EPSTEIN

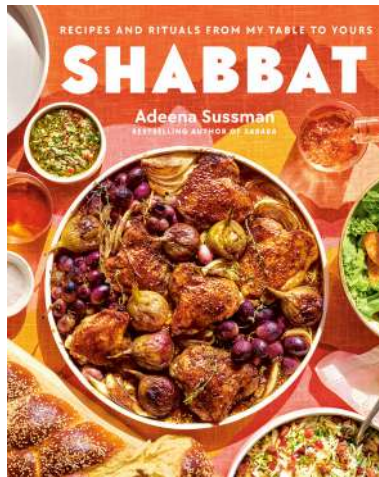
In her new cookbook, *Shabbat*, Adeena Sussman takes readers on a culinary journey filled with the flavours, traditions, and rituals of this sacred day. Borne out of her own experiences and deep appreciation for Shabbat, Sussman invites us into her kitchen as she prepares for the weekly celebration in Tel Aviv, where she has lived for the better part of a decade.

Weekend cooking in Israel is a vibrant and diverse affair, influenced by a multitude of cultural and immigrant traditions. It is a time when food takes on special significance, offering nourishment for the body and soul. Sussman recognises the importance of Shabbat as a time for rest, relaxation, and reflection, a modern-day respite from the hectic pace of life.

Growing up in Palo Alto, California, Sussman was immersed in the magic of Shabbat. Her mother, Steffi, would meticulously plan the menu days in advance, filling the house with tantalising aromas and the joyful sounds of pots and pans. The family gathered around the table, savouring each dish, and welcoming guests from all walks of life into their home. For Sussman, Shabbat was not only about the food but also about the connections and memories created around the table.

After college, Sussman ventured to Jerusalem, where she continued the tradition of cooking Shabbat meals for friends and expats seeking the comfort and warmth of a home-cooked meal. However, as she later moved to New York and embraced a career in food, she found herself drifting away from Shabbat and its rituals. Dining out at noisy restaurants and bars left her feeling unmoored and disconnected.

It was during this period that Sussman realised the profound impact Shabbat had on her life. The act of staying home, hosting loved ones, and preparing a Shabbat meal became a source of meaning and grounding. She embraced the beauty of Shabbat



once again, recognising its ability to nourish not only the body but also the soul.

In her cookbook, Adeena shares a wide range of recipes that reflect the rich tapestry of Shabbat cuisine. From traditional classics like golden challah and slow-cooked stews to modern interpretations influenced by diverse cultural influences, there is something for everyone. One recipe that holds a special place in her heart is the Moroccan-style carrot salad with Medjool

dates a dish that perfectly captures the essence of Shabbat with its vibrant flavours and contrasting textures.

While the focus of the cookbook is on the food, Adeena also weaves in the traditions and rituals of Shabbat. Through anecdotes, stories, and explanations, she provides readers with a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the rituals associated with Shabbat. The book aims to inspire readers to embrace Shabbat's beauty and create their own meaningful traditions and connections.

Shabbat holds a special place in the hearts of many, and this cookbook seeks to enhance and enrich these experiences. Whether readers are new to Shabbat or have been observing it for years, *Shabbat* serves as a guide, empowering individuals and families to create their own joyful and delicious traditions. By bringing people together around the table, sharing meals, and taking the time to rest and reflect, Shabbat has the power to nourish our souls and strengthen our connections with others.

In a world filled with noise and distractions, Shabbat offers a sanctuary of tranquillity and togetherness. Through her cookbook, Adeena Sussman invites us to embrace the beauty and joy of Shabbat, one plate at a time. May this book inspire us all to create our own Shabbat traditions and find solace in the simple pleasures of food, family, and meaningful connections.

**READ ON FOR A GLIMPSE OF ADEENA'S STUNNING RECIPES FROM HER NEW COOKBOOK THAT SHE HAS GRACIOUSLY SHARED THE FOLLOWING PAGES.**





Photos courtesy of Adeena Sussman

# FIG & POMEGRANATE BRISKET

Considered one of the crown jewels of Shabbat and holiday cooking, brisket has decidedly humble beginnings. Inexpensive due to its toughness and originally considered a throwaway cut, brisket became a staple of cold-weather Eastern European Jewish cooking when farmers realised it was less expensive to butcher a cow than to feed it all winter long. Home cooks became experts at slow-cooking brisket to tender perfection, adding onions and often a tomato-based liquid to coax out the meat's flavour and ideal texture. Aside from my mother's recipe (see page 283), this is the version I find myself making the most. Tons of garlic and onions, white wine and two types each of figs (fresh and dried) and pomegranate (molasses and fresh seeds) come together for a finished brisket that is simultaneously homey and elegant. Brisket is always better served the next day; if you have time, cool the whole cut in its braising liquid, then slice it against the grain and re-warm gently in the sauce.

1 x 5lb brisket with a good amount of fat  
 1 tbsp plus 1 tsp kosher salt, plus more for seasoning  
 1½ tsp freshly ground black pepper, plus more for seasoning  
 ¼ cup vegetable oil 3 large onions,  
 thinly sliced (6 cups)  
 2 tbsp AP or gluten-free flour  
 10 garlic cloves, peeled and left whole  
 2 tbsp tomato paste  
 2 cups dry white wine  
 1½ cups beef or chicken broth  
 ⅓ cup pomegranate molasses  
 4 dried figs, chopped  
 ¼ cup honey  
 1½ tsp red wine vinegar  
 1 tbsp ground cumin  
 1 tsp dried red pepper flakes  
 6 fresh figs,\* quartered  
 ½ cup pomegranate seeds  
 Mint leaves, for garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 300°F/150°C
2. Arrange the brisket on a large plate and season it generously on all sides with 1 tbsp of the salt and 1 teaspoon of the pepper. In a large, heavy Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium-high heat until very hot but not smoking. Add the brisket (fattier side down, if there is one) and sear until deeply browned and crisped in parts, 6 to 7 minutes. Carefully flip the brisket and sear for another 6 minutes, then, if they're thick enough, sear each of the narrow sides, standing up the brisket, if possible, 3 minutes per side. Remove to a plate, leaving any fat and juices in the pan.
3. Add the onions and flour and cook, stirring occasionally, until the flour is absorbed, 1 minute, then add the garlic and tomato paste and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions begin to soften, 5 minutes. Add the wine, raise the heat to high, bring to a boil, then turn down the heat and simmer until the wine reduces by half, 4-5 minutes. Add the broth, pomegranate molasses, dried figs, honey, vinegar, cumin, red pepper flakes, and the remaining 1 tsp salt and ½ tsp black pepper.

**Serves 8 to 10**

**Active Time: 1 hour**

**Total Time (Including chilling time): 13 hours**





4. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to a simmer and gently lower the brisket back into the roasting pan, spooning some of the sauce and onions over the brisket. Cover the brisket with a piece of parchment paper (this will prevent the acid in the sauce from interacting with the foil), seal the roasting pan tightly with foil, and cook in the oven until the brisket is tender, 4 hours to 4 hours 30 minutes. Remove the oven, unseal slightly, then let the brisket come to room temperature, about 1 hour.
5. If you have time, refrigerate the brisket overnight, then uncover it and remove and discard the congealed fat. Remove the brisket from the sauce and slice it against the grain

into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Heat the sauce in the roasting pan or another pot over medium-high heat, until boiling. Lower the heat and simmer until the sauce thickens to your liking, 10-15 minutes. Nestle the sliced brisket back in the sauce, cover with foil, and warm gently in a 200 degree F oven until everything is heated through, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

6. To serve, transfer the brisket and sauce to a platter, season with salt and pepper, and garnish with fresh figs, pomegranate seeds, and mint leaves.

\*If you can't find fresh figs, garnish with more pomegranate seeds.

# CARDAMOM BERRY CRISP

Desserts like these typically indicate a summery climate, but a dish brimming with sweet, ripe fruit might be even more important in the winter, when unearthing a frozen stash of juicy berries, then baking them underneath a shattering, melt-in-your-mouth shell, can truly feel like a ray of sunshine. Pouring the butter over the top of the sandy crisps mixture may be a new technique to you, but have faith – justice will prevail, and the topping will transform into a layer begging to be cracked open. It's heaven warm out of the oven, and possibly even better the next day, eaten with a spoon right out of the dish.

¾ cup (170g) unsalted butter, non dairy butter, coconut oil (melted), or neutral oil, plus more for greasing the pan

1 lb (450g) fresh cherries, preferably sour, stemmed and pitted (about 3 cups), or frozen (not thawed)

1 lb (450 g) assorted fresh berries, such as blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries (about 3 cups), or frozen (not thawed)

1 cup (130g) plus 2 tablespoons (16g) AP flour

1 tbsp (2g) finely grated lemon zest

1 tbsp (15ml) freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 ½ tsp (7.5g) ground cardamom

½ tsp (3g) fine sea salt

1 cup (200g) sugar

1 ¼ tsp (5g) baking powder

1 large egg white, beaten

½ cup (45g) sliced almonds

Vanilla ice cream, for serving (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F/ 175°C. Grease a 9-inch round baking dish generously with butter/oil. In a large bowl, toss the cherries and berries with 2 tbsp of the flour, the lemon zest and juice, ½ tsp of the cardamom, and ¼ tsp of the salt. Transfer to the prepared dish.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the remaining 1 cup (130g) flour with the sugar, the remaining 1 tsp cardamom and ¼ tsp salt, the baking powder, and the egg white until a sandy mixture forms, then stir in the almonds. Sprinkle the topping over the fruit, then drizzle the melted butter/oil evenly all over the surface.
3. Bake until golden and bubbling around the edges, 35-45 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving. Serve with ice cream, if desired.

**Serves 8**

**Active Time: 15 minutes**

**Total Time: 1 hour**









# WANDERING

THE SECRET GARDEN OF THE  
SCOLA SPAGNOLA SYNAGOGUE VENICE, ITALY

**SASHA SILBER**

In a quiet corner of Venice, tucked away from the tourist throngs, lies the unassuming Secret Garden of the Scola Spagnola Synagogue. Simple and unpretentious, this hidden gem exudes a charm of its own.

Growing amidst the tranquil setting are the Seven Species of Israel, including olive, fig, date, palm and pomegranate trees, alongside strawberry bushes, apricot and almond trees, tamarisks, and cedars of Lebanon with thick foliage. Each bloom evokes a profound connection, a dispersed nation's yearning for its ancestral homeland.

The garden's design harmoniously blends Moorish and Italian influences, offering a serene oasis that beckons visitors to pause and escape the hustle of the city. Its sun-dappled space is used for community events, celebrating life milestones, and during the holiday of Sukkot, it transforms into a *sukkah* for the community. Colourful mosaics adorn the walls, hinting at the storied history of the Sephardic diaspora.



# BEAVERBROOKS

Exceptional Diamonds, Jewellery & Watches Since 1919



*Explore* at [beaverbrooks.co.uk](http://beaverbrooks.co.uk)  
*Experience* at stores nationwide  
*Speak* to a consultant on 0800 169 2329





ANGLO JEWRY'S MOST EXCITING CAPITAL PROJECT



# OUR STORY

## MAKE YOUR MARK!

MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR JEWISH ENGAGEMENT UNDER ONE ROOF

*Help us write the next chapter of OUR STORY...*

powered by the family of  **jewish futures**



[info@jfuture.org](mailto:info@jfuture.org) | [www.jfuture.org](http://www.jfuture.org) | registered charity no. 1151066