

FALL - WINTER 2022

Las Olas Jewish Life

A LITTLE NOSH FOR THE SOUL

ISSUE 11



INSIDE:

A Complete
Guide to The
Festival of Lights

ANNUAL TURKEY
DISTRIBUTION

Culinary Club with
America's Got Talent Star



DEDICATED TO THE LOVE
AND INSPIRATION OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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Dear Readers,

Chanukah is a time to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, of hope over despair. It is a time when we remember that even in the darkest of times, there is always a flicker of light that can lead us to victory.

In my own life, I have fond memories of Chanukah celebrations with my family. We gather around the menorah, eating fresh hot potato latkes that we gently pat with a paper towel lest we ingest too much holiday oil.

The oil, of course, reminds us of the Chanukah miracle and the unbreakable nature of the Jewish people. But it also makes the Festival of Light unique from other Jewish holidays.

During the events of Chanukah, Jews were not the enemy's target; Judaism was. So, while Passover celebrates our freedom from physical slavery and the Purim celebrates our deliverance from national genocide, Chanukah celebrates our spiritual freedom.

That's why Chanukah has oil and flames in place of physical Matzah and wine. So instead of celebrating what we can do, Chanukah highlights and honors who we are, a holy nation.

Please enjoy this Chanukah magazine. It's full of insightful content gleaned from Jewish thought and Chasidic inspiration. And in so doing, I hope you will take the time to reflect on the miracles in your life and remember that miracles do happen!

Warmest Chanukah wishes,

Rabbi Chaim and Chayale Slavaticki

Directors, Las Olas Chabad Jewish Center



CREATE A LEGACY PUT LAS OLAS CHABAD JEWISH CENTER IN YOUR WILL

FOR MORE INFORMATION
ON PLANNED GIVING
PLEASE CONTACT
RABBI SLAVATICKI
AT (954) 780-6770.



New Kosher Whiskey!



SAY L'CHAIM TO THE NEW GLEN ELGIN TULIP EDITION

The latest expression from DS Tayman, is a **Glen Elgin 12-year-Old Single Malt** Scotch Whisky, which has a medium and well-balanced finish with spicy wood punches and a raspberry jam overlay. And it's kosher.

For years, **Danny Saltman** and **Saul Taylor** bought old wine barrels from kosher wineries and transported them to Scotland to create the unique kosher Wine finish Cask Scotch.

The high-quality single-malt process occurs under rabbinic supervision of the OU, KLBD, and MKL, and a tasting panel carefully samples the whisky until it reaches the perfect flavour. Then, the whisky is bottled and sold across the world. DS Tayman only bottles Single Malt Whisky **aged in single casks, each limited-edition** expression has a unique one-of-a-kind taste profile.

The brand's first two releases were matured in used wine barrels from the Galil Mountain and Flam wineries in Israel, following the great feedback they introduced the Bordeaux Edition and thankfully they have just released the Tulip Edition. The modern, bright colors of the DS Tayman packaging with the distinctive red, blue, and green and now Yellow boxes are now a staple in any kosher liquor store.

The 12 Year Old Glen Elgin Tulip Edition shows a nose of Malty cereal & summer fruit sweetness, dusted with icing sugar, while on the palate, it releases Cotton wool softness, with plums. Some grape seed tannins with a trace of Annis, the finish is Medium and well-balanced with spicy wood punches and a raspberry jam overlay, a large part of this comes from the great wood from The tulip winery.

DS Tayman has made waves in the world of Scotch, winning four awards for quality at the **World Whisky Awards**.

Danny and Saul want to share their fond memories of drinking Scotch with friends and family at Bar Mitzvahs and Jewish holidays with the world. So, they captured that social element in a phrase printed on the back of every bottle: **"To be shared with the people you love, value, and appreciate the most."**

DS Tayman's trademark bold-colored bottles will likely be a staple at Bar Mitzvahs and Jewish celebrations worldwide, with the kosher consumer now demanding a higher quality whisky product. DS Tayman is available in the USA, Israel, UK, China, Taiwan, Panama, Australia, Finland, France, and Belgium. For more information or to find a store near you, visit DSTayman.com

The Challah Afficionado



Rochie Pinson,

author of the bestselling *Rising: The Book of Challah*, is a master of all things challah. She is the co-founder of the IYYUN center, an educator, and a rebbetzin to her Brooklyn community. In her online videos and on her global travels, Rochie brings the practice of challah, both the making of the bread itself and the mitzvah of the dough separation, to a new level of joy, fun, and spiritual significance! No wonder

she has a large Instagram following who watch her infuse her experience as a Jewish mother and graphic artist into her challah-baking passion with colorful stories and lessons.

Now, she is serving up a fresh hot new children's book titled *The KIDS Book of Challah: Challah Adventures for the Whole Family*.

So, if you need some Chanukah or year-round challah inspiration, check out www.theisinglife.net.

THE NBA'S OFFICIAL YARMULKA IS A SLAM DUNK!



**I WANT TO SHOW PEOPLE YOU
DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID TO
WEAR A YARMULKA OR TO
BE WHOEVER YOU ARE. IF YOU
PUT THE WORK IN, YOU CAN
ACHIEVE YOUR DREAMS.**

-Ryan Turell, the first Jew to wear a yarmulka in the history of the NBA.



Hurricane Ian: *Las Olas Responds With Flood of Kindness*

On September 28, 2022, Hurricane Ian slammed into the west coast of Florida, leaving a trail of devastation and destruction in its wake. Hundreds of thousands of residents were left without power and found themselves lacking basic supplies, with no way to leave.

Less than 24 hours later, the Las Olas Chabad Jewish Center was already at work sending relief to those affected by the storm. At first, the severely affected areas were not even accessible by normal transportation, but that did not stop the team of staff and volunteers! Instead, they reached out to Hatzalah of South Florida, a Jewish emergency response team, for help delivering the equipment that had been gathered.



The Stahl family of DXWeb and their highly dedicated group of donors and volunteers were instrumental in coordinating the massive relief efforts. They purchased generators, barbecue grills, freezers, gas tanks, and fuel to be sent to the west coast that first night. Then they created an Amazon wish list with basic necessities, ranging from diapers to food supplies to sanitary items and everything in between. They sent the list out to all their contacts and the donations began pouring in.



Over the next month, multiple trucks were sent out from Las Olas to Fort Myers and other affected communities, where local leaders coordinated the distribution of goods to those who needed them. There were boxes upon boxes of supplies collected by students at Eagle Point Elementary in Weston and Posnack Jewish Day School; a truckload of meat, produce and other perishable food items donated by the Zebersky family; and brand-new kitchen appliances donated by Bill Feinberg of Allied Kitchen and Bath.

All throughout, there was a steady stream of people arriving to drop off their donations of food and supplies, and many monetary online donations towards the relief efforts. It has been heartwarming and awe-inspiring to see the love and dedication our donors and volunteers consistently display, often for people they have never even met!

One of the core Jewish values is Ahavat Yisrael, love of one's fellow, and at the Las Olas Chabad Jewish Center, we are proud to be part of a community that truly embodies this mitzvah.

AMERICA'S GOT TALENT STAR JOINS *Friendship Circle*

By Riana Morales

Today, I had the privilege of attending this week's Culinary Club at the Friendship Circle of Greater Fort Lauderdale, and could not be more grateful for the wonderful time that I had! The Friendship Circle, an organization that brings the gift of Friendship to every child & adult, no matter their special needs, is an incredible place for the participants & volunteers alike! They value fun and laughter within their program while giving the children and adults that attend the opportunity to learn new skills and make long-lasting friendships.

Upon walking in, I already felt at home. The atmosphere was warm and inviting, and the room was singing with conversation and laughter. It was clear that everyone who was here had no place they would rather be, and within five minutes, I felt the same! The chef of the evening, America's Got Talent contestant Chef Carlos De Antonis, brought the life to the party while cooking & creating with everyone in the room!

Chef Carlos had the most beautiful, operatic voice and with such an enchanting choice of songs he effortlessly helped to make the room playful and inviting. Each person in the room had a part to play, whether it be chopping vegetables, peeling, mashing or singing along with the wonderful Chef, there was place for everyone's talents to shine.



AMERICA'S GOT TALENT STAR JOINS *Friendship Circle*

It was clear that each individual with special needs was pouring their heart into creating their Thanksgiving meal and was extremely focused on the craft. It made me realize just how important these events really are. Everyone was singing and dancing along to the music while mashing potatoes and cutting onions, and just seeing the joy spread across their faces makes you want to be there every day. Carlos touched hearts with his voice, and the love he put into his cooking resonated & encouraged everyone to do the same.

Ask anyone in the room & I'm sure they'd easily say they felt nothing but love and respect from the people surrounding them! The genuine smiles beaming all around told it all! The Friendship Circle of Greater Fort Lauderdale is a place full of delightful people and programming that everyone must come and experience at least once in their life, it is a moment you will never forget!

To join the incredible Friendship Circle Family or to volunteer, register @ FriendshipFL.org or call us at 754-800-1770 You won't regret it! Happy Thanksgiving!

THE FESTIVAL OF GRATITUDE ON STEROIDS



When Thanksgiving arrived this year, 1,800 South Florida residents had something extra to be thankful for: the Las Olas Chabad Jewish center and the Sheriff Advisory Council's Third Annual Turkey Distribution.

With food costs and other household expenses continuing to rise, many families did not know how they would pull together the traditional Thanksgiving dinner that they look forward to each year. The drive, which was expanded this year to include not only turkeys but all of the vegetables one would need to whip up a real Thanksgiving feast, was an answer to their prayers.

"I wasn't planning to have a full Thanksgiving meal," said Ron Meyer, a single dad living in Hollywood, whose car was among hundreds in line that Sunday morning. "The prices of turkeys have gone up so much, and we couldn't afford it. We are so thankful to be able to bring the family together this year."

The food for the drive was generously donated by DxWeb, WeatherTech, Vaughan Sports Academy, and Jesse Maurer. Several community leaders came together to bring this initiative to those who could benefit most, and who often feel forgotten during the holiday season.

We didn't just provide turkeys for our community," said John Diprato, who has been participating in this initiative since its inception three years ago. "We gave turkeys to The James Club, which provides sober living facilities for those struggling with drug and alcohol dependency, to the Pompano Fire Department, and to four senior living facilities whose residents don't always have family to celebrate with."



Pastor Bill Thompson, who connected Rabbi Chaim of the Las Olas Chabad Jewish Center with families in his community, was moved by the generosity on display.

"My heart was filled with gratitude as we managed to make Thanksgiving special for close to 100 families," said Pastor Thompson, who participated in the drive for the first time. "The impact of the pandemic still lingers and times like these provide gentle reminders of the importance of giving and caring for one another. We are blessed to be a blessing!"

Ray Rapaglia, the founder of The James Club, expressed similar delight at seeing the positive effect the drive had on those living in the 16 sober living locations around Broward County. "Many of the men here come with just the shirts on their backs. It warmed my heart to know that they were gifted the feeling of family this holiday. I am so grateful to Rabbi Chaim for his acknowledgment of our brotherhood, and that we were able to feed everyone across all of our locations on Thanksgiving Day! The Rabbi is one of my heroes."





A Day to Remember

Every year before Rosh Hashanah, members of the Las Olas Chabad Jewish Center gather and depart on a fun and exciting day-long adventure to New York City to visit the Ohel, where the Seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson is laid to rest.

Bright and early on September 7, we departed from the Fort Lauderdale Airport, on our way to visit the Ohel. The term "Ohel" refers to a structure that is built over and around the resting place of a Tzaddik, a righteous person.

We approached the Rebbe's gravesite and entered the Ohel itself. It is a walled structure surrounding the Rebbe's grave with an overhang for people to stand under. The Rebbe's grave is in the center, underneath an open sky, and thousands upon thousands of letters are laid on top of it, piled several feet high. The Code of Jewish Law (Shulchan Aruch) says that visiting the grave of a Tzaddik prior to Rosh Hashanah is auspicious, as these holy sites of the righteous are pure and prayers there are very potent. Every year, thousands of Jews visit the Rebbe, where they continue to receive inspiration and blessings.

We arrived at the cemetery in Queens where we started the day with morning prayers and by writing notes to the Rebbe. It is customary to write and deliver notes to the Rebbe, even after his passing, asking for blessings for the new year. Rabbi Schneerson himself would frequent the grave of his father-in-law, the Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, and read to him the thousands of letters that people would send asking for help and prayers. We continue this custom to this day, leaving letters at the Rebbe's grave. Stories of miracles resulting from this practice are abundant.

After leaving the Rebbe's resting place, we were treated to a delicious brunch of sushi, lox, bagels and fruit at the Ohel's conference center. While we ate, we had the honor of listening to an informal talk by David Friedman, the former U.S. ambassador to Israel.



Our next stop was none other than the worldwide headquarters for Chabad, located at 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. This is the epicenter of the Lubavitcher movement which has reached every corner of the globe and continues to grow each year. We were privileged to tour the communications room at 770, where the Rebbe's messages of hope and call to Judaism were broadcast for millions to hear. At the time, the equipment used was considered to be state-of-the-art. We can attribute the success of the Rebbe in disseminating his vision and love of Judaism to the world to this marvel of technology and engineering.

Before leaving 770, we had the chance to visit the Rebbe's personal office where he spent endless hours in study and contemplation. It is considered a holy and opportune place to pray for loved ones.

Our next stop was a visit to see Rabbi Moshe Klein, a sofer, who creates masterful inscriptions used in mezuzahs and tefillin. A Sofer is a Jewish scribe who abides by strict halachic standards to create kosher scrolls used in religious practice. Each scroll is painstakingly hand-written with precision and stunningly beautiful calligraphy.



Of course, no trip to New York would be complete without a shopping expedition! We walked through Kingston Avenue, which is lined with Jewish stores, where we had the opportunity to shop for gorgeous pieces of Judaica. We also got to meet Rebbetzin Chayale's parents in their beautiful brownstone Brooklyn home.



The final stop of the day was a visit to the "OK" headquarters in Crown Heights where the well-known hechsher for kosher certification is governed and regulated. On the topic of kosher, we ended the day with an amazing (and enormous!) dinner at Izzy's Smoke House before hopping on the plane for our flight back home.



Every year, we have the chance to visit this wonderful community that is the heart and soul of the Chabad movement. In doing so, we are able to bring the Rebbe's vision of a unified Jewish diaspora back to where we live. The Las Olas Chabad Jewish Center is not just a local branch of the movement's headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway. We are a part of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's vision to bring the light and life of Judaism to every corner of the world!



A Las Olas Welcome for our Israeli Warrior Veterans

By David Davenport



When it comes to supporting and embracing combat veterans, Israel Heart2Heart truly shines. The organization was founded to give hope to former soldiers struggling with combat related trauma. Since its inception, Heart2Heart has developed various initiatives to create a strong support system for these brave Israeli warriors, and to help them overcome physical and psychological barriers as they adapt to civilian life.

The program introduces soldiers to healing yoga, career guidance, mind-body retreats, and life mentorship, and culminates in Israel Heart2Heart's "Mission of a Lifetime".



A new initiative seeks to transform a group of soldiers each year into Heart2Heart Ambassadors. Several soldiers from the first group that joined the program have already made this serious commitment, and are now being trained as leaders who can provide support for fellow veterans and communicate Israel Heart2Heart's mission. They learn techniques in emotional self-regulation and advanced yoga, and gain a better understanding of the cultural connection that the Jewish community in the United States has with Israeli soldiers.

In September of 2022, the Las Olas community had the honor of hosting the ambassadors here in Fort Lauderdale for a week of enrichment, comradery and training. From rejuvenating yoga on the beach to informative business lectures, the group was able to tap into a variety of experiences and opportunities to continue their healing and growth.

As the week progressed, they were treated to yacht cruises, five star dinners, and reunions with their U.S. based mentors.



During the training, the ambassadors visited United States Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine veterans at the SouthCom U.S. Army Garrison in Miami. They had the opportunity to work with a new equine therapy program alongside the U.S. veterans from Connected Warriors, who also struggle with post-combat trauma. This experience provided them with a unique opportunity for cross-cultural comradery with their U.S. counterparts.

For many of the participants, the highlight of the retreat was engaging in trauma-conscious yoga with active US soldiers, hosted by Connected Warriors. It was incredible to see members of the US and Israeli militaries coming together on the yoga mats!



On Friday night, the Las Olas Chabad Jewish Center hosted a memorable community Shabbat dinner honoring these brave and dedicated individuals. The group spent the rest of the trip bonding with local community members and relaxing on the beach before returning home.

As a community, we felt greatly privileged to host the founding Israel Heart2Heart ambassadors for the brief time that they were here. We look forward to hosting a larger group of Israeli veterans during the next Mission of a Lifetime, which is scheduled for March 12 - 22, 2023.

Get ready, Las Olas community!



SOUTH FLORIDA GOLFERS TEE OFF

for Friendship Circle of Fort Lauderdale



A crowd of 120 attendees came out and swung their clubs for the Friendship Circle of Greater Fort Lauderdale at the Inaugural Friendship Circle Charity Classic Golf Tournament on November 17th. The event was hosted by the Plantation Preserve Golf Club in Plantation, Florida.

The all-day event included breakfast, lunch, dinner and 18 holes of golf. After the tournament, participants enjoyed a concert given by the special needs adults followed by an award ceremony during which the sponsors of the day were recognized and thanked. Mr. Zack Toyota of Southern Waters Capital spent months organizing and executing the logistical details, and thanks to his efforts and those of his dedicated volunteers, everything went without a hitch!



The Friendship Circle International is the fastest growing organization for individuals with special needs. The Greater Fort Lauderdale Branch is known for the vibrant and healthy community it has built, where every participant feels a deep sense of belonging. The local organization hosts several multifaceted programs and offers resources for special needs children and adults, as well as their families.

Event co-chair Dean Myerow says the committee chose to support the Friendship Circle because 100% of the funds raised go directly to the cause. "All proceeds will be used to expand the program offerings, hire additional professional staff, and make the amazing programs available to more individuals with special needs in our South Florida community."

"The Friendship Circle teaches vocational and life skills, really making a difference," Myerow said. "I love the fact that we're changing people's lives!"

The sold-out tournament was an exhilarating success! Anyone who is interested in helping the organization or participating in next year's event can visit the Friendship Circle Charity Classic website.

MENORAH HOW-TO

MENORAH PLACEMENT

Many have the custom to place the menorah in a doorway opposite the mezuzah (such is the custom of Chabad-Lubavitch) so that the two mitzvot of mezuzah and Chanukah surround the person. Others place it on a windowsill facing a public thoroughfare.

SET UP

It is preferable to use cotton wicks in olive oil, or paraffin candles, in amounts large enough to burn until half an hour after nightfall. If not, regular candles can be used as well. The candles of a menorah must be of equal height in a straight row. The shamash, the servant candle that kindles the other lights, should stand out from the rest (i.e. higher or lower). The Chanukah lights must burn for at least half an hour each night. Before kindling the lights, make sure that there is enough oil (or if candles are used, that they are big enough) to last half an hour.

WHO LIGHTS?

All members of the family should be present at the kindling of the Chanukah menorah. Children should be encouraged to light their own Menorahs. Students and singles who live in dormitories or their own apartments should kindle menorahs in their own rooms.

HOW TO LIGHT

On the first night of Chanukah one light is kindled on the right side of the menorah, on the following night add a second light

to the left of the first and kindle the new light first proceeding from left to right, and so on each night.

ON SHABBAT

On Friday eve the Chanukah lights are kindled before the Shabbat lights (which are lit 18 minutes before sundown). Additional oil or larger candles should be provided for the Chanukah lights ensuring that they will last half an hour after nightfall. 🔥

THE BLESSINGS

On the first night of Chanukah (or if it's your first time lighting the Menorah) recite the following:

3. Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ha-olam she-heche-ya-nu ve-ki-yi-ma-nu ve-higi-a-nu liz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

After kindling the lights, the Hanerot Halalu prayer is recited:

Haneiros Halolu Onu Madlikin, Al Hatshuos V'al Hanisim, V'al Haniflo-os. She-osiso Laavo-seinu Bayomim Hoheim Bizman Ha-ze, Al Y'dei Kohanecho Hakdoshim. V'chol Sh'monas Y'mei Chanukah Haneiros Halolu Kodesh Heim, V'ein Lonu R'shus L'histamesh Boheim, Elo Lir'oson Bilvod, K'dei L'hodos U'lhalel L'shimcho Hagadol, Al Ni-secho V'al Niflo'osecha V'al Y'shuosecho.

Hold the lit shamash candle in your right hand and recite the following blessings:

1. Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ha-olam a-she-ki-de-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-tav ve-tzi-va-nu le-had-lik ner Chanukah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.

2. Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ha-olam she-a-sa ni-sim la-avo-te-nu ba-ya-mim ha-hem bi-z'man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time.

JEWISH LIFE HAPPENINGS



Learning the Aleph Bet at the Bear Family Las Olas Hebrew School



Our Friendship Circle Teen Scene friends enjoying a day at the Museum



Shaking lulav in the Sukkah at the Community Sukkot Party



Having a ball cooking for Thanksgiving at the Friendship Circle Culinary Club



A special time of the day! Morning Services at the Las Olas Chabad Jewish Center



Our friends in the Friendship Cafe Life Skills & Job Training Program on a trip to the aquarium



With US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, on our trip to the Ohel



Creating Thanksgiving themed cupcakes at The Friendship Circle Cafe Lifeskills Program



Another fun day at The Bear Family Las Olas Hebrew School



The faces behind our incredible Third Annual Turkey Distribution



Proud student at The Bear Family Las Olas Hebrew School



We love our volunteers at the Friendship Circle! Can't do it without each of YOU



Women Gathering at the Las Olas Jewish Women's Circle.



Proud of his art at The Friendship Circle Young Adult Circle Event



Stirring up delicious dishes at Friendship Circle Culinary Club



On our memorable trip to Ohel in NY



Making pasta at our exciting Friendship Circle Culinary Club



Celebrating Leah Slavaticki's Bas Mitzvah



Las Olas Chabad Community coming together to help families on the West Coast



All smiles at The Bear Family Las Olas Hebrew School!



Celebrating Sukkot with our Las Olas Chabad Family!



Our Friends having lunch at the Friendship Circle Golf Tournament



Some brave warriors on our Israel Heart2Heart ambassadors trip



Our amazing Friendship Cafe students with Detective Tedd and Park Ranger

JEWISH LIFE HAPPENINGS



BY JOSEPH SHAFFER

MIRACLES DO HAPPEN

IT'S THE BIGGEST MILITARY UPSET OF THE 2ND CENTURY BCE, WHEN A HANDFUL OF MACCABEES DEFEATED THEIR MIGHTY SYRIAN-GREEK OPPRESSORS. HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED:

» **THE BEGINNING**
The story begins with Antiochus III, Seleucid King of the Syrian Greeks, who won a significant battle against the Egyptian Greeks, the Ptolemies, in 195 BCE. As part of his victory, Antiochus annexed the land of Israel, making it part of his Empire.

Greek rule had been relatively benign for Jews living in their ancestral homeland. As long as they were loyal to the Empire and paid their taxes, they were allowed to practice their religion and worship at the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

The switch from Egyptian-Greek to Syrian-Greek overlords did not initially have any negative consequences. However, this changed when Antiochus IV came to the throne.

The new king styled himself "Epiphanes," meaning "the divine." When the Ptolemies tried to assert their independence, Antiochus IV invaded and almost succeeded in annexing Egypt.

He was stopped by an emissary of the new power rising in the west. Popilius, Consul of the Roman Republic, ordered Antiochus to withdraw his troops from Egypt by order of the Senate of Rome.

» **ANTIOCHUS UNLEASHED RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION**

Defeated and humiliated, Antiochus led his army north to Syria. On the way, he took out his frustrations on his Jewish subjects. First, he sacked Jerusalem, seizing the contributions sent to the Temple by Jews worldwide. Next, he confiscated the Temple's holy vessels, including the golden Menorah. Worst of all, he placed images of pagan gods in the Temple and offered swine on the holy altar as a sacrifice to Zeus.

Now, faced with the looming power of Rome on the one hand and rebellion breaking out in the provinces, Antiochus decided to unite his kingdom by forcing all its inhabitants to worship the same gods and live a Hellenistic lifestyle.

Antiochus now unleashed religious persecution for the first time in recorded history. The practice of Judaism was declared illegal. Observance of sacred rituals like Shabbat and circumcision were banned, and the study of holy scriptures was made a capital crime.

» **MATITYAHU STANDS UP**

Many inhabitants of Jerusalem fled to the villages where they hoped to practice their faith in peace. One of these was Matityahu, of a distinguished priestly family, who moved with his wife and five sons to the town of Modin.

But the oppressive laws followed them. A Greek officer appeared with a detachment of soldiers, demanding Matityahu sacrifice a pig to Zeus. The elderly priest refused, and the revolt began. Soon, people began to flock to Matityahu, and his ragtag army launched guerilla attacks on Greek positions.

Matityahu died soon after and was succeeded by his son, Judah the Maccabee. Judah led the rebels with his four brothers, inspiring them to stand up for their G-d and put their faith in Him.

Determined to end this threat, Antiochus sent one of his best generals at the head of a large force. A Greek victory seemed so inevitable that slave traders followed the army, ready to collect a profitable bounty of captives.

Judah's forces were vastly outnumbered, but he reminded them that the Almighty was on their side and that miracles happen.

» **JEWISH REBELS PREVAILED**

Against all odds, the Jewish rebels prevailed. They defeated the Greek forces, liberated Jerusalem, and returned to their desecrated Temple. They removed the idols placed there and rededicated the Sanctuary to its holy purpose. The word for dedication is Chanukah, and it is from this that the holiday bears its name.

But more miracles were yet to come. One of the Temple rituals was the kindling of the golden

Menorah. The Bible prescribes a particular type of oil as fuel for these lights. It had to be olive oil, and it had to be ritually pure. The problem was that the Greeks had defiled most of the oil, and only a small jug was found with enough oil for one night. But it would take eight days to get new oil from Galilee. So, what would they do after this oil ran out?

» **A MIRACLE OF LIGHTS**

And then a miracle occurred, a miracle of lights. When that day was over, the flames didn't go out. The oil that was barely enough for one day lasted for eight days.

This final miracle underscored the nature of the victory. It was not merely a military win but a triumph of the spirit. A victory of light over darkness, of good over evil. This a message to all future generations that miracles can happen with faith in G-d and standing up for what is right. And our world can be filled with light. 🔥

"Judah's forces were vastly outnumbered, but he reminded them that the Almighty was on their side and that miracles happen."

THE POWERFUL OIL PARADOX

BY RABBI SHAIS TAUB

Rabbi Shais Taub is on a mission to educate and inspire audiences around the world. Taub's unique ability to explain big ideas with practical language has gone viral, even on TikTok. You can watch his classes on his site SoulWords.org as well as other popular platforms.

In the following article, Rabbi Taub shares his thoughts on Chanukah, Jewish identity, and how a small jar of oil answers many big questions about our purpose and ultimate happiness.

Chanukah celebrates the story of discovering the tiny jar of oil that miraculously burned for eight days. That's why we light a menorah and eat foods fried in oil to celebrate the miracle of the oil.

Oil represents the paradox of Jewish identity. So, that little jar of oil may contain more than just olive oil. Your bottle of oil may hold some answers to our Jewish existential questions.

It's hard to get oil to mix with other liquids, and it's almost impossible to remove oil once it gets into things. That's why I view oil as the poster child for simultaneously being in and out, above and within. Imagine the layers in a bottle of Italian salad dressing after sitting for a few minutes. But, on the other hand, the same oil penetrates deeply into everything it touches. Think of the stains on the bottom of a pizza box. That's the oil paradox.

As Jews, we seem to have oil's polar traits. Similarly, we remain a distinct people even after being "shaken up" for thousands of years. But on the other hand, like the cheesy oil that leaves its mark on the cardboard pizza box, we Jews always seem deeply involved and present in everything around us. Historically, we have risen to positions of prominence and power wherever we have lived. That's the Jewish paradox.

This mystery can help us answer the existential riddle of how we can live in luxury homes and still feel a little homesick. How we can have everything and yet still be searching for an elusive something? How we can be here impacting our surroundings yet feel like we are somehow not from here?



The answer is that we are both body and soul. Our body is from here, but our Divine soul is not. That's the "oil" miracle of the Jew. Identifying with our otherworldly Divine soul allows us to impact the world and influence others. This body-soul identity enables us to be at the center of things without ever blending into things. That's how you can be right here without being from here.

At our core, we are spiritual, otherworldly beings. And thus, we can never be content or feel like ourselves simply by pursuing physical comfort. Instead, our true satisfaction comes from bringing light to a dark world.

This paradox of body and soul may be why the same people who find joy in eating a chicken sandwich find infinitely more pleasure in feeding that chicken sandwich to the poor and hungry. Our basic needs may be satisfied with a sandwich, but our true self, our soul, finds joy in bringing spirituality into the physical realm through acts of goodness and kindness.

This little jar of oil that lasted eight days may be the essence of Jewish identity and the story of our people. The Torah teaches us that our primary purpose is to perfect this physical world, yet at the same time, it reminds us that even while we live in the material world, we are only visitors here. 🔥

RECIPE BY ESTY WOLBE

PULLED BRISKET LATKE TACOS

Cooking and Prep: 5 hr | Serves: 12 | Contains: 🌱

LATKE TACO
 1 box Manischewitz Potato Pancake Mix
 2 eggs
 2 and 1/4 cup cold water
 1/8-inch hot vegetable oil

PULLED BRISKET
 3 pounds marbled 2nd cut brisket
 1 - 19 ounce bottle Gefen BBQ Sauce
 1 large onion, thinly sliced
 5-6 garlic cloves, sliced

COFFEE GARLIC RUB
 1 tablespoon ground coffee beans
 1 tablespoon dark brown sugar
 1/2 tablespoon smoked paprika
 1 teaspoon regular paprika such as Gefen Paprika
 1 teaspoon coarse salt
 1 teaspoon onion flakes
 1 teaspoon granulated garlic

PREPARE THE LATKE TACOS
 In a medium bowl beat eggs until blended; Add the cold water and mix well. Stir in contents of pancake/latke package. Allow batter to thicken three to four minutes. In large skillet, drop tablespoons of batter into 1/8-inch hot vegetable oil and brown both sides. Makes 45-60 latke pancakes.

PREPARE THE PULLED BRISKET
 Place the brisket in a crock pot. (Alternatively, this may be prepared in the oven at 275°F for four to six hours, until it shreds easily when pulled). Top with onions and garlic. Pour BBQ sauce over the top. Add 1/4 cup of water to the BBQ sauce bottle, swish and pour into crock pot. Sprinkle on the coffee garlic rub and cook on low eight hours. Remove brisket from sauce and pull apart with two forks until shredded. Add a few tablespoons of cooking liquid to shredded brisket. Place a mound of pulled brisket onto the center of each latke, gently fold and enjoy!

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AVOIDING BURNOUT

BY CHAYA SHUCHAT

A STRESSED-OUT PEDIATRIC NURSE SHARES HER PERSONAL CHANUKAH THOUGHTS ON WHY SOME CANDLES DON'T BURN OUT.



Last winter, I was teetering on edge. As a mother and pediatric nurse, I felt drained to the last drop. So I tuned into a podcast for medical professionals on coping with burnout.

"People suffering from burnout feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet the constant demands of their job. If the stress is not alleviated, they may begin to lose the interest and motivation that led them to a career in a helping profession in the first place."

Yeah, yeah. I thought, somewhat impatient. I know what burnout is. She droned on: "Poor workplace conditions can contribute to burnout, such as when workers have little control or input over their schedules or responsibilities; when they do not have trusted co-workers they can turn to for

support; or when they have poor work-home life balance."

My mind wandered. It struck me that the Chanukah story itself is the quintessential lesson on preventing burnout. Wasn't that the central miracle that we celebrate? The small cruse of pure oil was only enough to burn for one day but lasted for eight. In other words, it burned and burned and did not burn out. What was its secret? And how do I tap into that reservoir of pure oil inside of me?

Oil is a fluid that does not mix with other liquids and cannot be diluted. That's why, in Chasidic teachings, oil represents the core of our identity that remains no matter where we go or what we experience. When we connect to our source, we can give and give, and our supply will continually be replenished.

Back to the podcast. "It is essential for people in a caregiving role to regularly restore their spirit through study, meditation, mentorship, and connection with colleagues. It's also important to periodically reflect on our responsibilities and prioritize them. Then, delegate those tasks to others and focus on the areas where our skills can be put to best use."

I reflected on the times I short-changed myself, my family, and my patients by thinking I could or should do it all. I thought it was a sign of weakness to admit that I couldn't be good at everything. Yet, finding our essence can be as simple as embracing our imperfections. Our incompleteness. We need to rely on others even as we allow them to depend on us.

"It burned and burned and did not burn out. What was its secret? and how do I tap into that reservoir of pure oil inside of me?"



There is another form of burnout known as "compassion fatigue." A sense of pervasive malaise sets in due to constant exposure to trauma and suffering. Working with people in pain, listening to their stories, and tending to their injuries, can be traumatizing.

I work in pediatric primary care, so I'm spared a lot of the gore and life-and-death trauma. I deal with the trauma of a different sort. The families fractured beyond repair, the parents lost to addiction, and the dazed, broken children who grow up in the aftermath. There is so little I can offer to alleviate their pain, to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. I can cope only with hefty doses of humility: Realizing that as limited human beings, there is only so much we can do. Ultimately only G-d can remove all pain and sorrow. As the Mishnah (Avot 2:16) says, it's not upon us to complete the work, nor are we free to desist from it.

I've recognized a tendency to withdraw from people in pain when their situation seems too complex, overwhelming, and hopeless. I've realized that this is a selfish

reaction, putting my need for emotional comfort above their needs. Reaching out with genuine empathy can help the person feel less alone. That can be essential to their healing, regardless of whatever else I can do for them.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe lamented on more than one occasion that he is the repository of people's sorrows and struggles, but very few follow up when the problem has been resolved. If we share our pain, shouldn't we share our joy? The highlight of my day is when a patient comes back to tell me her pain is gone; he graduated high school; she found a great new job. It's a gift to know that our efforts were meaningful and effective and that goodness prevailed over darkness.

Jewish life has always had this quality--living in the shadow of pain and sorrow, yet always looking forward with joy and hope. The Zohar states that we live with tears on one side of our faces and laughter on the other. We live not in denial of pain but in honest recognition and joyous determination to overcome it.

I sometimes distract myself to numb emotional pain, but taking emotional shortcuts is not the healthiest path. I think of the prophetess Miriam, the sister of Moses. Her name means "bitter" because she was born during the height of the Egyptian exile and deeply felt its bitterness. Yet, when the sea split, she led the women in singing and dancing with tambourines.

Only the coming of Moshiach will cure our sadness and suffering. As long as we're in exile, our lives are incomplete, and pain and suffering will exist. But, at the same time, we live with constant joy and anticipation of future Redemption. 🔥

ABOUT: Chaya Shuchat graduated with a master's degree in nursing from Columbia University and is a pediatric nurse practitioner in Pennsylvania. She is the author of *A Diamond a Day* and her upcoming book, titled *An End to Conflict*. For more information, visit www.endtoconflict.org.

Suffering from typical adolescent angst, a teenage boy once went to the Rebbe for advice. He asked the Rebbe: How come G-d didn't just create us as angels? If He had, we would be perfect and wouldn't make mistakes and create problems.

The Rebbe explained that G-d doesn't want us to be perfect; He wants us to be unique individuals who grow and learn from our experiences and mistakes. Then, the Rebbe asked the boy if he understood the difference between a photograph and a portrait.

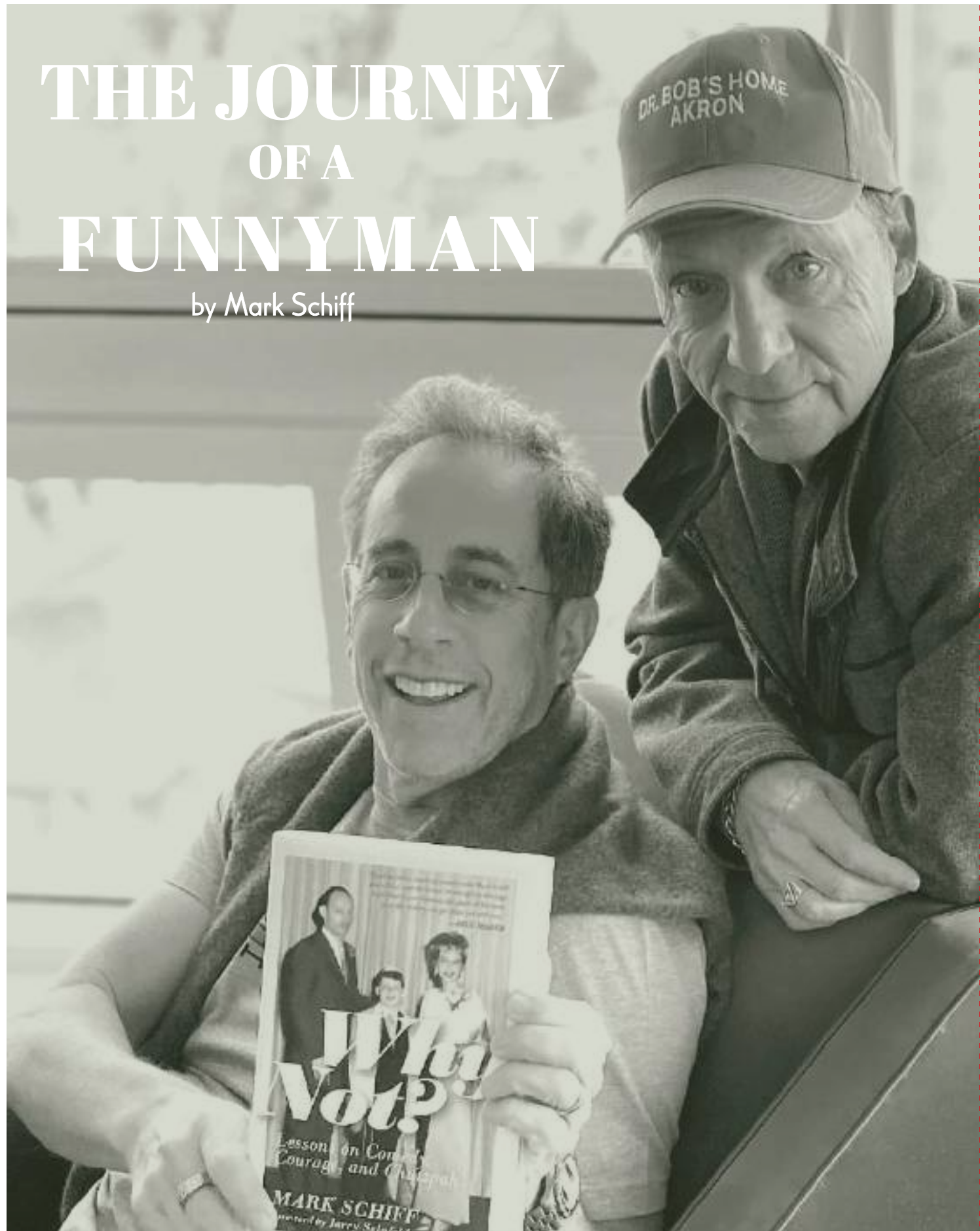
"You take a picture when you want to capture a perfect replica of

something you see. A portrait, on the other hand, is always filled with inaccuracies. It can never be a perfect reproduction of something like a photograph can. If anything, the better the portrait, the more creative license that went into it to bring out the meaning, color, and beauty that does not always exist in the surface look."

That's why portraits can sell for millions. People pay for the artwork because it is a reflection not only of the subject but of the artist. The Rebbe explained that angels are G-d's photographs. We, however, are G-d's portraits. 🔥

THE JOURNEY OF A FUNNYMAN

by Mark Schiff



Jerry Seinfeld says that Mark Schiff is one of the funniest, brightest, and best stage comedians he has ever seen. Mark's stand-up comedy landed him on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno and *Late Night* with David Letterman and won him critical acclaim for his HBO and Showtime specials. However, even as he was writing and guest-starring on TV shows, like NBC's *Mad About You*, the funnyman was struggling with a sense of belonging.

In his new book titled *Why Not? Lessons on Comedy, Courage, and Chutzpah*, Mark shares his journey from growing up without a community to discovering LA's comedy scene and, ultimately, getting the last laugh by finding LA's Jewish community.

When I was growing up, I had no community. My family didn't belong to a synagogue. My mother would say, "All they want is money." And I rarely, if ever, visited other family members. My mother would say, "Whatever you ask them for, it's always no," so we didn't visit.

I was a Boy Scout for a short time, which I enjoyed until I got pink-bellied and kicked out for stealing a flashlight I didn't steal. I didn't have many friends because they thought I was nuts.

And since I was an only child, evenings were pretty much Mom, Dad, and me. They went to sleep early, and I wasn't allowed to call anyone after nine because, after nine, you only use the phone if someone died. All I had was my fourteen-inch black-and-white TV and a cocker spaniel who mostly liked to hide under the bed.

My first real taste of community was when I became a comedian. I would see the same people every night at the clubs, and we shared a common bond in comedy. Night after night at the comedy club bar just starting out were Jerry Seinfeld, Paul Reiser, Gilbert Gottfried, George Wallace, Rita Rudner, Sandra Bernhard, singer Pat Benatar, and many others.

Many of my comedian friends had felt the same loneliness I'd felt growing up. It was an amazing time being with a group of people who, daily, were trying to get better at something that few other people had any interest in doing.

By 1984 I was living in Los Angeles. Then one day, I saw

"I saw a poster advertising a Torah class and went. Not because I wanted to learn Torah, but because I was lonesome and thought maybe there'd be girls there. When the student is ready, the teacher will appear—that's what happened."

a poster advertising a Torah class and went. Not because I wanted to learn Torah, but because I was lonesome and thought maybe there'd be girls there. When the student is ready, the teacher will appear—that's what happened. I met Rabbi Nachum Braverman and his wife, Emuna. I was a live wire, and they helped ground me. They introduced me to what I'd always lacked and always craved but hadn't realized: a community.

They invited me for Shabbat dinners and lunches and told me to come back anytime. I'm a literalist and took them up on it. I would show up, mostly on Saturdays, uninvited for Shabbat lunch. They never blinked. (If I'd tried that with my aunts and uncles, they'd probably have yelled at me or had me arrested or committed.) I also kept taking classes from the rabbi and his wife and met new people who seemed genuinely nice.

Many of these new friends soon started getting married and having kids, so I started getting invited to weddings and brises (circumcisions), in that order. I didn't recognize it then, but I was building my community. It was a great feeling.

In 1990 I got married myself. My wife, Nancy, did have a community growing up, so she quickly understood when I suggested we live in a strong Jewish community. We started having kids and—bingo—we became fully entrenched in the community. Over the last twenty-five years, I have been to more weddings, bar mitzvahs, brises, and funerals than you could imagine. It has been nothing short of amazing. The joy and happiness this has brought me and my family is amazing.

My wife and I are members of the Young Israel of Century City. Recently, services were held at a local Day School due to renovations, and I walked up three flights of stairs to the basketball court where the service was being held. Immediately, I recognized about one hundred people and felt a sense of warmth and security. I realized it wasn't the old building we had been in that gave me that feeling but rather the people who filled the place. I grabbed a tallit and a sid-dur and sat down to pray. I closed my eyes, took a breath, and said, "Thank you, G-d, for this community."

When I was in high school and on the verge of flunking out (which I deserved), a teacher said, "At some point in your life, you will have to decide what is important to you." She was 100 percent right. Three of those things were getting married, having kids, and building a community. I am grateful for those decisions every day.

If you need a community, come to my neighborhood in Los Angeles, and I'll introduce you around. If you need a kid, I'll even lend you one of mine for a while. 🔥

An exclusive excerpt from *Why Not?: Lessons on Comedy, Courage, and Chutzpah*, Copyright 2022 by Mark Schiff. All rights reserved. Published in the United States by Apollo Publishers.

THE PROTECTOR



ARTWORK BY YEHUDA LANG

ABOUT THE ARTWORK: Yehuda Lang is a Toronto-based artist who shares Jewish ideas through colorful images. The V'he Sheamda prayer in the Passover Haggadah inspired Yehuda to create the soldier in Tefillin. You can view and purchase his art online at yehudalang.com

In 1967, just days before the outbreak of the Six-Day War, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, began a campaign to encourage Jewish men and boys over thirteen to put on tefillin.

The verse: "All the nations of the land will see that the name of G-d is called upon you, and they shall fear you" was the basis for the Rebbe's idea.

Years earlier, the sages had explained that this verse refers to the tefillin worn on the head. In other words, tefillin protect us from our enemies, but now, as Israel's survival was on the line, it was time to translate this verse into action.

That summer, Chabad launched the tefillin campaign in Israel, and soon, the mitzvah was being performed in homes, offices, and street corners worldwide. So, what exactly are these tefillin, and what makes them essential to our spiritual and physical safety?

LET'S UNWRAP THE TEFILLIN!

Most biblical commandments are instructions on what we should or shouldn't do. However, there are a few, in fact, only three mitzvot, that are simply signs or identifiers of who we are. In Genesis, G-d tells Abraham that circumcision would be their sign and covenant. Later, after the Jews left Egypt, G-d tells them to keep the Shabbat and Festivals holy as "a sign between Me and you." Then, G-d tells the Jews to wear tefillin as a sign upon their arms. It's a sign of who we are.

(We only need two signs or witnesses in Jewish law, so we don't wear tefillin on Shabbat and holidays, the extra indication would demean the sign of the day.)


A POWERFUL SIGN

As Jews, knowing who we are is the starting point and foundation for everything we do. The tefillin serve as a symbol and reminder of who we are, a powerful sign that can protect us and provide us clarity.

E PLURIBUS UNUM (OUT OF MANY, ONE).

Our daily life, from our busy morning routines to our dreamy nights, can be divided into three completely different categories. Firstly, our mind and everything we think about, followed by our heart and passions, and lastly, our actions. The spiritual alignment of these three powers is critical to our success. The biblical commandment of tefillin unites what we know, feel, and do together for one G-dly purpose.

YOUR TRUE POWER

As a soldier fighting against darkness, you may face hostile forces that try to bring you down. But ultimately, you will be victorious when you demonstrate that your strength comes from your connection to G-d. The Rebbe's 1967 tefillin campaign sought to activate this truth and guard our people. And still today, the tefillin's powerful protection helps us nationally and personally as it pronounces to the world and ourselves that "the name of G-d is called upon you." 

WINGS OF PROTECTION

The Talmud tells a tale about how Elisha, "the man of wings," got his unique name:

Once in Jerusalem, the wicked ruler proclaimed a decree against the Jews that whoever donned tefillin would be killed. Elisha, defied the order. It happened that Elisha was seen by the authorities wearing the tefillin, so he started running. But the soldier chased him and eventually caught him. By then, Elisha had already removed the small black box and leather straps and hid them in his hands.

"What is that in your hand?" the soldier demanded, "The wings of a dove, sir," Elisha replied.

That was a life-and-death moment for Elisha. A crowd of Jews gathered as the soldier clarified that Elisha would get the death penalty if he held tefillin. When Elisha finally opened his hands, miraculously, he was holding the wings of a dove.

The shocked soldier told Elisha, "I must have made a mistake; you're free to go."

And that's how he got his name, Elisha, the man of the wings.

The Talmud goes on to analyze the story. "Why did Elisha choose a dove's wings rather than any other bird?" The Talmud answers that Elisha chose a dove based on the words of King David in Psalm 68:14. "As the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her pinions with brilliant gold."

In other words, Elisha understood that our tefillin guard us, similar to how the wings and feathers protect a dove.

(Talmud Brachot 14b)

AND G-D SAID: Listen to Your Wife

By Shira Gold

My mother's favorite verse is "G-d said to Abraham, listen to your wife." (Genesis 21:12)

Sarah and Abraham were discussing Ishmael. Abraham, ever the optimist, seems oblivious to Ishmael's wayward ways. Sarah, however, sees Ishmael's behavior as toxic and not conducive to raising Abraham's heir, Isaac. She wants Ishmael sent away with his mother, Hagar. At this pivotal moment, G-d tells Abraham to listen to his wife.

The woman's superiority and better judgment are recurring themes in the stories of our patriarchs and matriarchs throughout history. It has been the Jewish women who have steered our people down the right path in critical times. Like at the birth of our nation in the Exodus from Egypt. It was in the merit of the righteous women, our sages declared, that we were redeemed from Egypt.

Women share a special bond with Chanukah. Primarily because of Yehudit, the Jewish woman who bravely seduced the enemy general and fed him cheese and wine. Then, she killed him with his sword once he was drunk and fast asleep. The ensuing chaos helped turn the tide that would end with the Maccabees winning the war and restoring Jewish values and way of life.

Our tradition primes us to notice the feminine impact on Chanukah. As we enter the Chanukah season, we read in the weekly Torah portion about our matriarch Rebecca getting the better of her husband, Isaac.

We read how Isaac and Rebecca would have twins. One was a wild child named Esau, and the other was the righteous Jacob. When it was time for Isaac to pass the blessings of Abraham to his children, he exhibited the same lack of vision as his father, Abraham, and chose to bestow his blessings upon Esau. Rebecca intervened,



ensuring that the blessings passed onto Jacob.

Later, when it's time for Jacob to marry and settle down, Isaac seems indifferent. Finally, Rebecca insists that Jacob marry only a member of their extended family. Isaac listens, and Jacob marries the woman who would birth the Twelve Tribes of Israel.


What precisely is the feminine mystique that lights the way forward? The chasidic masters describe masculine and feminine energies as two divine modalities that make up all of reality. By way of example, the life-giving soul is male, while the body that receives and houses it is female. It would seem that the

ethereal vivifying energy that is the soul is far superior to the physical, tangible body. Yet, there is great wisdom in the real-world experience of the feminine "body."

This advantage looms large on the Jewish mission. Our otherworldly souls can sometimes be oblivious to the realities of this material world. Earthly bodies value

concrete action, prioritizing character and behavior over detached transcendence. Our Divine mission to transform the world must come through physical activity within the material human experience. So G-d tells the soul to listen to his wife.

This powerful message enabled the Jewish people to survive the destruction of the holy temple and thrive through the darkest times. It reminds us that our faith and spiritual light must be practical and infuse our daily life with meaning.

Indeed, great men have done great things, but the feminine mystique accomplishes the Jewish mission of making this world an abode for the Divine. So, listen to your wife. 

(Adapted from a 1989 talk by the Lubovitcher Rebbe.)

Going Kosher: My Story

By Kylie Ora Lobell

Growing up, I loved bacon, cheeseburgers, and, most of all, crabs. I was from Baltimore, the crab capital of the world. I joked that I could pick a crab before I learned how to walk.

When I went to college, I ended up meeting Daniel, a Jewish man who was observant as a child, but gave it up after some negative experiences. He had strayed far from his Jewish roots, going out of his way to date women like me.

However, as much as he had moved away from practicing Judaism in his day-to-day life, when we met, he'd recently become good friends with a Chabad rabbi in his neighborhood in Brooklyn. That rabbi convinced him to come to Friday night dinner at the Chabad House. Daniel was young, and broke, and he liked the rabbi. He was going to Friday night meals there every once in a while, and when we started dating, he took me.

I was an atheist at the time. I had no connection to spirituality. But when I went to that Shabbat dinner, I instantly felt a warmth I had never experienced before. And once I started learning about the Torah, I didn't want to stop. I realized I had a Jewish soul. I started my spiritual journey and that included giving up non-kosher food.



"I was an atheist but then I went to a Shabbat dinner and I felt the warmth"

Surprisingly, it wasn't as hard as I thought it would be, especially once I learned about kosher slaughter, which minimizes the pain that the animals feel. As someone who loves animals, I thought it made so much sense.


I also believe that when we eat animals, we are absorbing their qualities, which is also why I understood the importance of avoiding predatory animals or bottom feeders.

When Daniel and I moved to Los Angeles we decided to have a fresh

start and make our kitchen kosher. We bought new utensils, dishware, pans, and appliances, and cleaned out the oven that had come with our new apartment. I read about Kosher and contacted an Orthodox rabbi, who helped us make everything one-hundred percent kosher.

Now, Daniel and I are married and have kids, and we have been committed to a kosher lifestyle for several years now. We took it on gradually, which is the only way anyone who also wants to go kosher should do it.

Being kosher and observant doesn't come without its fair share of challenges. But, when we eat strictly kosher food, we're making a necessary human ritual spiritual and bringing divinity into every bite.

Personally, Kosher food has a huge effect on my soul. If it's what G-d wants and the Torah commands, I'm willing to do it. I only get one body and one soul, and I'm going to care of it to the best of my ability. 

ABOUT: Kylie Ora Lobell is an award-winning writer, editor, and publicist at KOL Digital Marketing. She's been featured in The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and New York Magazine. She is the author of Jewish Just Like You. She lives with her husband Danny and children in Los Angeles.

Photo courtesy of Kylie Ora Lobell



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Finding Myself

by Sara Esther Crispe



I spend my third year of college in Israel trying to figure out more about myself, my people and my Judaism.

And yet, one of the nights of Chanukah, which landed on December 24, I spent at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem for the experience. I spent Passover in Egypt for the experience. I spent Shavuot in the Sinai Desert for the experience. I kept having experiences, but still hadn't been able to find my place. My connection. My soul.

I knew what I wasn't. I just didn't know what I was. And then, finally, I chose to stop trying to experience and sat down to learn. Learning in a way where the learning could be something

they cared that we connected the two. They did everything they could to prevent our ability to live proudly as Jews. To identify ourselves as Jews and find meaning in our Jewishness. That was their problem then. And that must be our solution now.

As is often taught, the root of the word Chanukah is related to chinuch, education. We must learn, we must teach, we must educate ourselves and we must educate the rest of the world. But we need to start at home. Our Judaism needs to be alive, relevant and meaningful. When we know who we are, we can teach our children who they are. And when as a collective people we are secure in what it means to be a Jew, then we truly are indestructible. And just as our enemies were unable to defeat us in the past, so too they will fail in their present attempts as well. But only when we know who we are. 🔥

"I knew what I wasn't. I just didn't know what I was. And then, finally, I chose to stop trying to experience and sat down to learn. Learning in a way where the learning could be something I felt related to my life, to my questions, to my search."

I felt related to my life, to my questions, to my search.

Fortunately, after finding the right teacher for me, whose teachings resonated on the deepest level, I finally felt that I was connecting. Not only to my Judaism, but to myself. Finding ourselves, knowing who we are, what we believe and stand for, is the key to our success. Now, as we celebrate Chanukah, every night we light another flame and are reminded that the Greeks did not try to kill our bodies, but our souls. They didn't care that we were Jews and they didn't care that we studied Torah;



Sara Esther Crispe is the Chief Content Creator of Opyrus.com, a self-betterment platform transforming lives through the power of writing and the co-Director of Interinclusion.org, celebrating the convergence between academia and timeless Jewish wisdom.

She is also a world-renowned motivational speaker presenting on interpersonal relationships and the Kabbalistic approach to self-development. She is a dating, marriage, parenting and life coach who works with adults and teens. And she is a speaker for the My Gift of Mikvah organization.

Sara Esther was the creator and editor of TheJewishWoman.org of Chabad.org and has worked as a consultant for Jewish content on the Oprah Winfrey Network, HARPO Productions, Refinery 29 and CNN.

She is currently working on three books: one on marriage, one on the power of Jewish women and one on parenting, titled: I Used to be the Perfect Mother...Then I Had Kids. She lives with her family in Danby, Vermont where they run Jewish educational retreats and programming.

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