

JEWISH LIFE

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FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE GETS A MIAMI HEAT SURPRISE!

Friendship Circle was honored with a very prestigious guest from Miami Heat!

JUDICIAL LUNCHEON

Celebrating the accomplishments of our young adults with special needs.

SHUSHAN CELEBRITIES ON THE RED CARPET WALK!

A magical red carpet experience

Heartfelt Challah Bake

*A divine experience filled with blessings
and good intentions.*

A LITTLE NOSH FOR THE SOUL



THIS MAGAZINE IS INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS AND IDEAS OF THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE.



The Story of Your Freedom

Passover reminds me of family and freedom because it is the biblical festival that celebrates our ancestors' Exodus from Egyptian slavery and the birth of our nation. The Passover mitzvah is to retell and relive the Exodus, again and again, each year. The idea is that our Jewish family and spiritual freedom are ongoing.

The Talmud says: "We must all feel as if we have gone out of Egypt." So clearly, Passover celebrates a moment in history and empowers us to achieve personal spiritual freedom today, making the ancient tale of the Exodus your story that's about to happen today.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, spoke and wrote extensively on the great spiritual power and potential in the Passover rituals. The present magazine seeks to share some of the Rebbe's ideas on Passover and how it relates to our daily life.

Please enjoy our Passover guide and inspiring articles that will hopefully help you along on your road to enjoying true freedom.

Wishing you a kosher and happy Passover,

Rabbi Chaim & Chayale Slavaticki
Directors, Las Olas Chabad Jewish Center



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GOING INSIDE THE MATZAH'S CRUNCH

THE TRADITIONAL PASSOVER SHMURAH MATZAH HAS NO SUGAR, SALT, YEAST, OR EGGS, YET SURPRISINGLY IT PACKS ALL THE ESSENTIAL DIVINE INGREDIENTS WE ALL NEED. SO, ACQUIRE A WHOLE NEW TASTE FOR MATZAH WITH THESE HAND-SELECTED TASTY GEMS. ENJOY!



WHAT IS SHMURAH MATZAH?

Shmurah Matzah, or guarded matzah, is made from verified wheat that's been "guarded" from moisture every step from harvest to the final product. It only takes 18 minutes for wet flour to become leavened or chametz. Handmade Shmurah Matzah is produced and baked in quick increments of less than 18 minutes.



HANDMADE

The human touch infuses the Shmurah Matzah-making process with the intended purpose of being baked for the mitzvah.



HUMBLE BREAD

Chametz is fermented grains, and G-d forbids it on Passover. The rising of the dough represents that swelling of ego that enslaves us. So instead, G-d tells us to eat matzah, the flat, modest poor man's bread that represents the humility and faith that are the ultimate liberators of our human spirit.



EDIBLE FAITH

Matzah is an edible faith when eaten with a blessing on Passover night. Consuming the Divinity within the matzah can enhance your trust in G-d and reduce any resistance to holiness. Eating matzah allows you to internalize G-dliness and experience true freedom.



BREAD OF FAITH AND HEALING

Matzah is the Divine mitzvah that you can digest. The Zohar calls matzah "bread of faith" and "bread of healing." The humble matzah helps you discover your powerful inner faith in G-d. The matzah inspires a faith that not only heals but also prevents illness.



DAILY EXODUS

In your personal life, eating the biblically mandated Matzah ensures year-round adherence to other Jewish mandates. Likewise, the Rabbinic enactment to eat Maror encourages personal safeguards around your Jewish progress. Finally, the symbolic shank bone that recalls the Temple's Passover offering inspires you to infuse holiness and meaning into your everyday life.



THE AFIKOMAN DESSERT

Like the Passover offering, Jewish law requires us to eat the afikoman on a full stomach as an enjoyable dessert. This tells us that your hunger and need for G-dliness have brought you this far, but ultimately, your Divine service should go beyond your own needs. Savor this more selfless and heightened Afikoman service like a dessert that stays with you long after the meal ends.



YOUR BROKENNESS MAKES YOU WHOLE

Any story of freedom will have damaged parts because we become whole through our brokenness. We begin telling the Passover story by first breaking the matzah. This demonstrates how our brokenness is only a beginning chapter in our tale of complete redemption.



REMEMBER THINKING IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE?

"This is the bread of affliction" that our ancestors ate when they thought redemption was impossible. But it happened, and now it will happen for you.

DIVINE INGREDIENTS



Nutrition Facts	
Only Dry Stocks of Wheat	100g
Processed in Zero Moisture	100g
Dry Stored Flour	100g
Only Flour & Water	100g
<hr/>	
For the Sake of the Mitzvah	100%
Edible Divinity	100%
Faith	100%
Mitzvah	100%
Healing	100%




30 DAYS OF *freedom*

ORDER SHMURAH MATZAH



Traditional hand-made *shmurah matzah* is recommended for seder use. Include handmade *shmurah matzah* at your seder table and share this sacred tradition with your friends and family. Call your local Chabad rabbi to order your very own *shmurah matzah* for the seder. You can also order it online, make sure you're searching for hand made, round, *shmurah matzah*.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<h3>WHAT IS CHAMETZ?</h3> <p><i>Chametz</i> is "leaven" — any food that's made of grain and water that have been allowed to ferment and "rise." Bread, cereal, cake, cookies, pizza, pasta, and beer are blatant examples of <i>chametz</i>; but any food that contains grain or grain derivatives can be, and often is, <i>chametz</i>. Practically speaking, any processed food that is not certified "Kosher for Passover" may potentially include <i>chametz</i> ingredients.</p>		
<p>APRIL 2 11 NISSAN</p> <p><i>The Rebbe's Birthday</i></p> <p><i>On the agenda this week:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Clean for Passover ✓ Shop for Passover foods ✓ Prepare Kitchen for Passover ✓ Invite guests 	<p>APRIL 3 12 NISSAN</p>	<p>APRIL 4 13 NISSAN</p> <p>After nightfall: <i>Search for chametz</i></p> 
<p>APRIL 9 18 NISSAN</p> <p><i>Chol Hamoed*</i></p> <p>No tefillin Enjoy a glass of wine</p> <p>At night count <i>Omer</i>: Day 4</p>	<p>APRIL 10 19 NISSAN</p> <p><i>Chol Hamoed*</i></p> <p>No tefillin Enjoy a glass of wine</p> <p>At night count <i>Omer</i>: Day 5</p>	<p>APRIL 11 20 NISSAN</p> <p><i>Chol Hamoed*</i></p> <p>No tefillin Enjoy a glass of wine Girls and women <i>light candles</i> 18 minutes before sunset.</p> <p>At night count <i>Omer</i>: Day 6</p>
<p>APRIL 16 25 NISSAN</p> <p>At night count <i>Omer</i>: Day 11</p>	<p>APRIL 17 26 NISSAN</p> <p><i>Passing of Joshua, the leader of the Jewish people after Moses (1245 BCE).</i></p> <p>At night count <i>Omer</i>: Day 12</p>	<p>APRIL 18 27 NISSAN</p> <p>At night count <i>Omer</i>: Day 13</p>

If leavened bread symbolizes ego then this is the month when we go on a major ego diet. For the next 30 days we deploy the search and destroy team to find and get rid of our bad habits. Get ready to eat bread of faith and healing and experience true freedom.



WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SHABBAT
<p>SELL YOUR CHAMETZ</p> <p>Since it is prohibited to possess chametz on Passover, any chametz left undisposed must be sold to a non-Jew.</p> <p>All such chametz, as well as all chametz utensils that were not thoroughly cleaned, should be stored away. The storage area should be locked or taped shut for the duration of the holiday.</p> <p>Since there are many legal intricacies involved in this sale, a rabbi acts as our agent both to sell the chametz to the non-Jew on the morning before Passover, and also to buy it back the evening after Passover ends. Sell your chametz to your local Rabbi or go online to Passover.org.</p>		<p>MARCH 31 9 NISSAN</p> <p>Girls and women light candles 18 minutes before sunset.</p>	<p>APRIL 1 10 NISSAN</p> <p><i>Yartzeit of Miriam, the sister of Moses, in the year 2487 from creation (1274 BCE).</i></p> <p><i>Shabbat Hagadol</i></p> <p>Torah Portion: <i>Tzav</i></p> <p>Shabbat Kiddush</p>
<p>APRIL 5 14 NISSAN <i>Eve of Passover</i></p> <p>Burn your chometz.</p> <p>Fast of the firstborn.</p> <p>Prepare an eruv tavshilin.</p> <p>Girls and women light candles 18 minutes before sunset.</p> <p>Tonight: The First Seder</p> 	<p>APRIL 6 15 NISSAN <i>First Day of Passover</i></p> <p><i>On this day G-d spoke to Moses at the burning bush (a year before the Exodus)</i></p> <p>Girls and women light candles after nightfall.</p> <p>Tonight: The Second Seder</p> <p>At night count the Omer: Day 1</p>	<p>APRIL 7 16 NISSAN <i>Second Day of Passover</i></p> <p>Girls and women light candles 18 minutes before sunset.</p> <p>At night count the Omer: Day 2</p>	<p>APRIL 8 17 NISSAN <i>Chol Hamoed*</i></p> <p>Shabbat Kiddush</p> <p>Havdalah after nightfall</p> <p>At night count Omer: Day 3</p>
<p>APRIL 12 21 NISSAN <i>Seventh Day of Passover</i></p> <p><i>The Reed Sea split on this day in the year 2448 (1313 BCE)</i></p> <p>Girls and women light candles after nightfall.</p> <p>At night count Omer: Day 7</p>	<p>APRIL 13 22 NISSAN <i>Last Day of Passover</i></p> <p>Yizkor service</p> <p><i>Yizkor is a special memorial prayer for the departed, recited in the synagogue following the Torah reading.</i></p> <p>Enjoy a Mashiach meal</p> <p>Havdalah after nightfall</p> <p>At night count the Omer: Day 8</p>	<p>APRIL 14 23 NISSAN</p> <p>Girls and women light candles 18 minutes before sunset.</p> <p>At night count the Omer: Day 9</p> 	<p>APRIL 15 24 NISSAN</p> <p>Torah Portion: Shemini</p> <p>Bless the new month</p> <p>Shabbat Kiddush</p> <p>Havdalah after nightfall</p> <p>At night count the Omer: Day 10</p>
<p>APRIL 19 28 NISSAN</p> <p>At night count Omer: Day 14</p>	<p>APRIL 20 29 NISSAN</p> <p>At night count Omer: Day 15</p>	<p>*CHOL HAMOED is a Hebrew phrase meaning "weekdays [of] the festival" and it refers to the intermediate days of Passover and Sukkot. We are permitted to work, yet the holiday prayers of <i>Hallel</i> and <i>Yaleh v'Yavo</i> are recited and a cup of wine is to be enjoyed (without the ceremonial <i>Kiddush</i>).</p>	

➔ Visit www.Passover.org for complete calendar of events and how-to guides.



Heartfelt Challah Bake

The craft of bread-making is one of the oldest culinary arts known to mankind, and it is still considered a traditional form of comfort.



At the Las Olas Jewish Women's Circle, the baking of challah bread is an annual tradition done to empower and unite the women in the community in fulfillment of one of our three special mitzvot. It provides us with a connection to our faith and culture!

The powerful Jewish women of our community gathered to mix, knead, and braid their way through the baking process. With each step taken, we were reminded of the positive impact that challah bread-making has.

The Challah bread doesn't only provide sustenance but also serves as a reminder of the powerful blessings we bring into our lives during the process. Each ingredient has a lot of symbolism. Crafting challah is more than an artistic or culinary venture - it's a divine experience that fills us with blessings and good intentions.

It was an energy-filled evening, as the women broke into heartfelt singing and dancing while waiting for the dough to rise,



forming a circle and then moving on into a train and twirling around the room. It truly symbolized the bonds of unity with women from all backgrounds. Although the main activity was bread-making, the focus and thought that was put into each step of the process added to the evening's spiritual and uplifting experience.

Once the dough rose, Rebbetzin Chayale led the crowd with over 100 women in attendance in charity and prayer. Before asking G-d for ourselves, we begin with helping others. Bracha Schoonover was called up to make the special blessing over the challah, which was followed by a moment of silence and prayer as each attendee lifted their eyes to the screen; filled with the names of people in need of blessings. May all their prayers be answered!

After the prayer, the crowd was ready to form their dough into beautiful challah bread. There were different braiding options to choose from including the pull away flower challah that the whole family can enjoy! While braiding, Rebbetzin Chayale led us in a beautiful song about trusting and believing in G-d above, a melody sung by little ones as they were escaping Ukraine.

This year, the finishing touches were extra special with a Gourmet Toppings Bar. There was something for everyone - from sweet babka fillings to savory olive oil toppings and cinnamon bun toppings. As the evening came to a close, each woman took home her own challah bread to enjoy with family and friends around the Shabbat table.



The Las Olas Jewish Women's Circle's Gourmet Challah Bake was an uplifting experience that united us in peace and harmony. We all walked away feeling empowered, connected, and full of positive energy - reminding us that coming together to make challah has the power to bring us closer to each other, our faith, and our spiritual purpose. It was a magical experience that will remain embedded in our memory!

Stay tuned for some really exciting upcoming Jewish Women's Circle events including Wooden masterpieces and the Power of thought, Shabbat in an hour, and Shavuot Cheeseboard creations. Visit JewishFL.org/JWC and sign up today!



FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE GETS A MIAMI HEAT SURPRISE!



The Super Bowl LVII, last February 12, 2023, was an important day on many calendars, with the Kansas City Chiefs narrowly beating the Philadelphia Eagles to win the championship. Of course, the Friendship Circle of Greater Fort Lauderdale's Culinary Club didn't want to miss out on all the excitement of the big game!

Burnie was a warm and welcoming presence, taking pictures, showing off his amazing dance skills, and even teaching our participants how to do some of his signature Miami Heat mascot moves. The atmosphere was already electric from the get-go, thanks to Burnie's amazing energy and enthusiasm! Then, we were ready to get cooking - and that's exactly what we did.



For this special occasion, the Friendship Circle was honored with a very prestigious guest – the one and only Burnie, Miami Heat's lovable & famous mascot! Burnie greeted all our friends at the entrance of the event, and to say that everyone was delighted is definitely an understatement!

The Culinary Club also teamed up with Chef Jonathan Giovannoni, one of the best young chefs in the world today. At the young age of 18, Chef Jonathan won 3rd place in the prestigious 2021 World Food Championships, beating out seasoned chefs with decades of experience. Having discovered his passion for food and cooking at an early age while he was undergoing treatment for a brain tumor, Chef Jonathan has continued inspiring millions of people worldwide to pursue their dreams.

Shrieks of joy and excitement filled the air as our special friends met Burnie. He shared hugs, fist pumps, selfies and provided each attendee with a warm Miami Heat welcome. Our lovely participants were jumping in delight like kids in a candy store!

The Friendship Circle wanted to give the Culinary Club participants a special treat, so they invited Chef Jonathan to create a unique culinary surprise. He was more than happy to oblige! On game day, Chef Jonathan taught our participants how to make one of the most popular Super Bowl grubs - Chicken Taquitos!

Chicken Taquitos is a simple yet delicious dish that makes the perfect snack for an exciting activity like the Super Bowl. It is best shared with friends and family while watching the game, with its crunchy texture and flavorful seasoning. Chef Jonathan guided our Friendship Circle friends step by step through the delicious dish, from cutting the bell peppers, tomatoes, and onions, to the seasoning and chicken prep. Afterward, each of our young participants wrapped their taquitos to prepare them to bake in the oven.

While waiting for the taquitos to bake, our special friends all had a blast dancing with Burnie, taking pictures at the photo booth, and making new memories with all their friends. Burnie's energy was infectious, with everyone smiling from ear to ear, and the chicken taquitos hadn't even been served yet!

The room was filled with the waft of pure deliciousness as the perfectly crispy taquitos were then served with an amazing dipping sauce to achieve the ultimate combination of flavors. Everyone was impressed with the delicious dish that Chef Jonathan and our Culinary Club members had created - even Burnie enjoyed the meal with all the guests!

This will definitely be a Super Bowl Party to remember for all those in attendance! From Burnie's warm welcome to the sports-themed decorations and the creative food and fun activities, the Friendship Circle's Culinary Club successfully provided a one-of-a-kind experience! With 60 children and young adults with special needs participating and more than 40 volunteers, the Sunday afternoon was truly filled with laughter, bonding, and delicious food. Everyone went home with bright smiles, lasting memories, and a newfound passion for food.

The Friendship Circle's Culinary Club aims to bring together children and young adults with special needs to participate in fun activities by creating mouthwatering dishes alongside chefs from all over the world. If you'd like to get involved, visit our website or contact us today at office@friendshipfl.org. Together, we can make a difference!



WHEN THE ROSÉ MAKES THE SALMON BLUSH

LINEAGE ROSÉ
CLARKSBURG, CALIFORNIA



HOW TO PLATE YOUR SEDER PLATE

MAROR

Maror or bitter herbs to remind us of the slavery. Most use fresh grated horseradish on romaine lettuce.

Prep: Buy fresh horseradish root and grate it.

Use: During the blessing over the bitter herbs hold the maror and then dip it lightly into the charoset before eating it. See Seder step 9.

BEITZAH

A hard-boiled egg to commemorate the chagiga-holiday sacrifice.

Prep: Boil one egg per Seder plate, and possibly more for use during the shulchan orech meal.

Use: The egg is dipped into saltwater and eaten right before the meal starts. See Seder step 11.

ZROAH

Shank Bone to commemorate the Pesach sacrifice. Many use a roasted chicken neck.

Prep: Roast the neck over an open flame. Afterwards, remove most of the meat to reveal the bone.

Use: The shank bone is symbolic and not eaten. You can re-use it the following Seder night.



KARPAS

Karpas vegetable for dipping. The traditional potato or onion is dipped into saltwater at step 3 in the seder to provoke questions.

Prep: Peel an onion or boiled potato and place slice on seder plate. Also prepare a small bowl of saltwater.

Use: At karpas the vegetable is dipped into saltwater, the Borei Peri Ha'adama blessing is recited, before it is eaten. See Seder step 3.

CHAZERET

Used with the maror that reminds us of the slavery.

Prep: Wash romaine lettuce and check for bugs. Pat dry.

Use: During the korech sandwich of matzah and maror use these bitter herbs. Dip it lightly into the charoset before using it. See Seder step 10.

CHAROSET

Charoset (the apple, nut, wine puree) to remind us of the mortar and brick made by our ancestors in Egypt.

Prep: Shell walnuts and peel apples and chop finely, mix well and add red wine for color.

Use: The charoset is used as a symbolic dip. Before eating the maror, dip it lightly into the charoset. See Seder steps 9 & 10.



SHUSHAN CELEBRITIES ON THE RED CARPET WALK!



What better way to celebrate the Purim Holiday at The Bear Family Las Olas Chabad Hebrew School than with a magical red carpet experience?! This year our students were treated out as Shushan Celebrities and they enjoyed a day to remember in the lime light!

Our Sunday morning started with a Bang! Literally! Our students got to create the coolest handmade graggers, decorating them to their liking and then piecing it all together. Of course we had to test them to some Purim music to make sure they make some good noises during Haman's name.

From there we moved on to what else but food! With one of the four customs of Purim being Mishloach Manot, giving gifts of food to friends, each participant created their very own delicious star cake pops to go with the star studded red carpet theme, as well as a cool Purim mocktail. Once done, they packed it together with some other treats to gift to one of their friends.

We didn't end there though! To add to the fun activities for the day, our students created their very own masks; choosing from one of the various Purim characters. Now, encompassed in costumes and purim masks, our Hebrew School crew were ready to walk the red carpet!

The Purim Spirit was in the air as our Shushan celebrities strutted their stuff to some awesome Purim songs and fun music as they walked the red carpet lined with gold stars. Each student got the chance to show off their awesome costumes and moves and were awarded scrumptious hamentashen for the job well done!

Our Shushan Celebrity-themed Purim fun day was a blast, with our students having so much fun dressing up as their favorite celebrities and walking down the red carpet with pride. Throughout the event, the atmosphere was delightful as each student enjoyed the celebrity-themed decorations, including the backdrop with stars, the red carpet, and, of course, the backstage passes! Everyone proudly showed off their costumes, masks, and treats to celebrate the Purim Holiday.

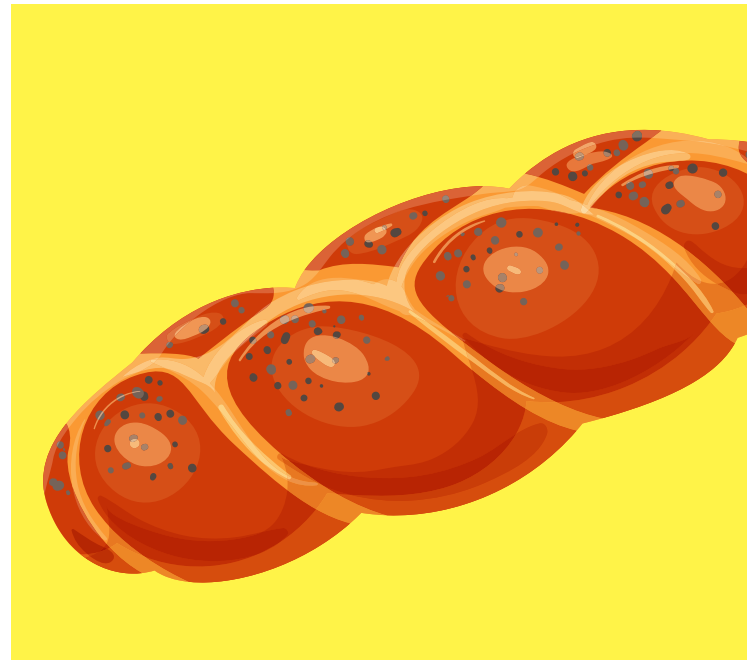
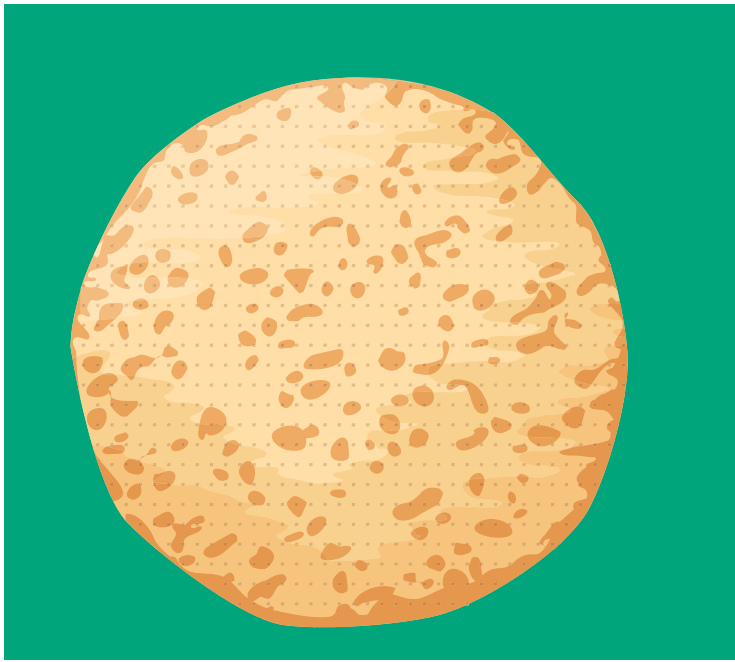
The Bear Family Las Olas Chabad Hebrew School aims to give children from ages four through thirteen a sense of love and pride for their Jewish roots. We strive to teach our students their Jewish history and Mitzvot, build their excitement for the upcoming Jewish holidays, and prepare them for their Bar & Bat Mitzvahs with a strong emphasis on learning to read Hebrew.

Throughout the year, we provide a wide range of fun activities for all our students! Join us for our next Passover Funday event on April 2, 2023, with the theme, Pesach World Records. It will be an Olympic-themed day full of fun and excitement as participants will go head-to-head in exciting holiday-themed races. There will also be exciting prizes awaiting the winners! The Passover Funday is sure to be an unforgettable experience, full of memories your children will cherish!



For parents looking for a hands-on, creative, and out-of-the-box way to get their children immersed in Jewish identity and culture, the Bear Family Las Olas Chabad Hebrew School offers a unique program that helps children learn about who they are while also feeling good about themselves. Get in touch with us today to learn more by emailing Office@JewishFL.org!

Happy Passover!



WHAT BREAD

Our team of **mystical foodies** will help you discover what your favorite sandwich says about you. Take a moment to look at the **Matzah-Bread Spectrum** and choose the one you identify with most. You will be amazed that although these loaves of bread are all made from the same flour and water, they can taste worlds apart. From poor man's bread to rich, fluffy challah, each bread tells a story about where we came from and who we are. So take the self-test and **discover** what your matzah style says about you.

1

THE MATZAH

The thin matzah is definitely the eldest of all Jewish bread. We can safely assume you've been through a lot. You are probably an old soul, humbled by the many stories you tell, and obviously, Passover is your favorite holiday.

Here's your backstory: Exodus 12:39 tells us that the Jews left Egypt in such a rush they did not wait for their bread dough to rise.

The Haggadah calls the matzah "poor man's bread," as the matzah has no yeast, sugar, eggs, poppy seeds, or oil. Yet, this matzah, consisting of only flour and water, symbolizes Jewish freedom.

The matzah witnessed the most incredible miracles ever recorded in the history of man. Spiritually, the matzah is humbled by G-d's extraordinary blessings, so it doesn't need any sugar or eggs to tell its story.

After watching Moses perform G-d's miracles, how could the matzah rise with any ego? How could it claim to have anything but simple humility and faith?

The Chasidic masters call matzah the "Bread of Faith" and the "Bread of Healing." When we have faith in our Creator, we begin to see the miracles in our lives, and that very faith brings us emotional and physical healing.

Self-Test: Are you humbled by what you see around you? Do you consider the

blessings in your life a gift? If yes, then you identify with the matzah!

2

THE CHALLAH

As the braided challah, you have front-row seats to all Shabbat and holiday meals.

Indeed, you are seated at the head table at Jewish weddings and traditional circumcisions. You are proud to be Jewish and are always ready to celebrate.

Here's your backstory: On Shabbat, the two freshly baked Challah bread are proudly adorned with the traditional challah cover. The challah, reminiscent of the showbread used in the Temple, has become the royal symbol of Jewish celebration.



By Shira Gold

TYPE ARE YOU?

While the Jews wandered the desert, they were sustained by the Heavenly manna, which fell each morning with the dew. A double portion would appear on Fridays, as the Divine kitchen is closed on Shabbat. This "double portion" is remembered with our two Shabbat challahs each week.

If you're a challah, there's probably a bottle of wine near you right now. People are attracted to your confidence because it's a Jewish pride rooted in humility. It's not the usual self-made ego that inflates this risen challah bread.

The Chasidic masters explain that tasty challah is best only after the breadless days of Passover. We are ready for a slice of challah only after we have consumed the unleavened matzah bread and experienced a whole week of the introspective refinement process of counting the Omer. Therefore, the Torah's mandate of a "leavened bread" offering on Shavuot only comes after seven weeks of counting the Omer. This way, the challah is inflated with pure Divine pride and is one hundred percent ego-free.

Self-Test: Do you see yourself as a

proud Jew? Is your humility the force behind your great successes? If yes, then you identify with the traditional challah bread!

3 THE BAGEL

If you grew up knowing that you're Jewish yet still can't read Hebrew, you might be a bagel. The bagel is an immigrant who dreams of rebuilding the Jewish community that once was. So, on the one hand, the bagel has the sadness of a Jew in exile; on the other hand, the bagel has become a powerful symbol of Jewish survival in foreign lands.

Here's your backstory: When destruction came to Jerusalem, the Jews discovered many new foods while wandering the world to escape oppression. The bagel, first boiled in Poland circa 1610, became popular amongst European Jews. In the 1920s, immigrants living in small apartments on the lower east side of New York City gathered over bagels in a subtle attempt to toast Jewish continuity in unlikely places.

Self-Test: Is there a family story of how grandpa escaped Poland? Are you a

Jew living in an unlikely place? If yes, then you identify with a hard-crust, boiled bagel!

4 THE PITA

You're Sephardic. Am I right? I'm also guessing that you like spicy foods and Moroccan salmon. Like the pita bread, you have many ties to Israel and some great Jews in your family tree.

Here's your backstory: The famous everyday bread of the Middle East has been around for thousands of years. Today's pita bread begs to be filled with falafel, shwarma, hummus, and tahini. The pita isn't necessarily "Jewish," yet, over the years, numerous Arab foods from neighboring countries have been "adopted" into the Jewish palate, and the pita is the key to many of them.

Self-Test: Do your Shabbat dinners include family traditions that go back many years? Can you easily give local culture a Jewish twist? If yes, then you identify with the pita! 🍞

Shira Gold is a staff writer for Chabad Magazine



JUDICIAL LUNCHEON



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon last February 19, 2023, The Friendship Circle of Greater Fort Lauderdale hosted their 2nd Annual Judicial Luncheon. The luncheon held every year is a chance for the community to join in on recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of young adults with special needs who are a part of the Friendship Life Skills and Job Training Program.

These young adults work in the Friendship Grill daily to develop their job skills and gain independence. Their hard work and dedication are truly an inspiration to the community! What better way to recognize their accomplishments than to have esteemed members of our society celebrate their successes with them?!

At the Luncheon, we were honored to have twenty Judges of Broward County grace us with their presence, led by our very own Judge and Friendship Circle Mom, Judge Marina Garcia-Wood. The Judges in attendance as well as Community members and family, all came to cheer on and share in the accomplishments of our wonderful students.

For this auspicious occasion, our young adults with special needs tended to each and every detail to ensure the day was a memorable one! They designed beautiful name tags for all the Judges, decorated table centerpieces, made delicious chocolate souvenir takeaways and heartfelt cards thanking each attendee for their presence.

Each table was thoughtfully decorated with frames that highlighted each student's accomplishments. At the entrance, canvases were placed to help guests learn more about each student and their specialties. Of course, our students also helped with preparing the sumptuous meal for the luncheon.

The event kicked off with a warm welcome message from our Friendship Circle Director, Chayale Slavaticki. Next up was one of the highlights of the event. A short video was played for all the guests to glimpse a "Day in the Life" of each student, highlighting their hard work and dedication. This video showed an inside look at the lives of each student in the program, helping each guest learn more about the program and see what young adults with special needs are capable of.

Another highlight of the day was certainly when two students from the program presented a speech describing how the Friendship Life Skills and Job Training Program has helped them develop the skills they need to be productive members of society. Their speeches further showed how young adults with special needs deserve a place in society, as they are very much capable of making a difference. Their words were very inspirational, and it was truly an amazing feeling to witness them gain self-confidence and pride in their achievements!

The audience was brought to their feet with a special musical performance by the one and only Harmonicats Band, made up of young adults with special needs who are part of the Friendship Life Skills and Job Training Program and led by a wonderful group of professional musicians; Bob, Dan, Richard and Terry. The atmosphere was electric with everyone swaying to the music, keeping up with all the fun motions, and of course singing along!

At the end of this beautiful afternoon, a special award ceremony was held to recognize the accomplishments of our students. Judge and Friendship Circle Mom, Marina Wood called up her colleagues one at a time to distribute a different award to each Friendship Life Skills and Job Training Program student, each award resonating with the accomplishments of that specific student in the program.

The Friendship Circle's 2nd Annual Judicial Luncheon was a great success, and we are very proud of all the hard work our students put into making it possible. We thank the Judges of Broward County for joining us and the entire Community who came out to support this special cause. Indeed, these young adults with special needs truly deserve to be celebrated and recognized for all that they have accomplished through hard work, dedication, and determination. We hope to make the 3rd Annual Judicial Luncheon just as rewarding and successful! To learn more about the Friendship Life Skills & Job Training Program or to volunteer, reach out to Office@FriendshipFL.org today!



MY PERSONAL PASSOVER REFLECTIONS

THE GLOBAL HEAD OF COMPANY CULTURE AT TIKTOK

Although I am Jewish by birth, for many years, I wasn't aware of the deeper meanings of Jewish life, and therefore I hadn't ever considered the meaning of Jewish holidays, in this case, Passover.

However, ten years ago, as I was going through a difficult time, I remembered what a Jewish friend had said to me years ago when I asked her what Passover meant to her. She explained that Passover is the time of year when you remind yourself that although you're no longer enslaved in Egypt, you are still enslaving yourself to damaging things. You will always have "your Egypt."

"It's a reminder that you can get out of Egypt, but you can't get Egypt out of yourself," she added.

At the time, I had wondered what she meant, but now I started to understand the significance of the story. Egypt doesn't just mean a physical country. It symbolizes any place where you are not free, where you are chained to something.

In Hebrew, the word for Egypt is *mitzrayim*, which means boundaries or narrow straits. I realized that the story of the Israelites' escape from Egypt isn't just a historical story about liberation from slavery. It's a story that is lived every single day. It's the human story of liberating

ourselves from narrowness, our personal restrictions, and our self-slavery.

The fact that many of us are privileged enough to have physical freedoms to do whatever we want, whenever we want (within legal boundaries, of course), doesn't mean we are truly free. We can have internal chains – thoughts and self-beliefs – that keep us trapped and limited.

Matzah and chametz are reminders that we often behave in ways that go against our core values simply because we like to puff ourselves up.

What "Egypt," what *mitzrayim*, was I chaining myself to? What was I enslaved to that was making me feel so anxious? And how on earth could I set myself free?

During the days of Passover, the requirement is that Jewish people don't eat bread; they only eat *matzah*, a type of flatbread containing no raising agent, such as yeast. Any food that contains yeast or has gone through a leavening process is called *chametz* and is forbidden.

Why is *chametz* forbidden? What harm can it do? *Chametz* represents our ego. It becomes bloated as it rises, just like self-inflated egoism and pride.

Matzah, on the other hand, remains flat and unpretentious, symbolizing selflessness and humility. Forbidding *chametz* and removing any trace from the house before Passover reminds us that, to leave our *mitzrayim*, our internal slavery, we must first tame our ego. By removing anything that puffs us up, we can deflate our ego and open ourselves up to freedom and growth.

When I eat *matzah* during Passover, I see it as a wake-up call, a reminder, and a symbol of humility and humanity. It reminds me that people have been struggling to tame their egos for thousands of years and that this internal struggle is how our lives are designed to be.

It gives me strength and reassurance to know that every time I manage to be a less self-inflated version of myself is a moment of growth. Gaining freedom and breaking out of our personal *mitzrayim* is predicated on humility, without puff and fluff.

In other words, you don't need to rise physically like the leaven in order to grow inside. On the contrary: growth is dependent on not being trapped by our pomposity. 🌍

BY
MICHAL OSHMAN

LECTIONS

As a child, Michal suffered from extreme anxiety and shame. Her courageous journey from therapist to therapist eventually led her to discover Jewish wisdom and Chabad philosophy. The following excerpts are Michal's reflections on Passover, self-slavery, and how humility helped set her free.

ABOUT MICHAL OSHMAN

Michal Oshman is a best-selling author of the book "What Would You Do If You Weren't Afraid?" She spent years as an innovative leader in tech and entertainment companies including Facebook, eBay, and now she is Global Head of Company Culture at TikTok. Michal has three university degrees in psychodynamic and systemic thinking, sociology, and anthropology. Michal lives with her husband and their four children in London, UK.

*Excerpted from What Would You Do If You Weren't Afraid?
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ISRAEL HEART2HEART MISSION OF A LIFETIME:

MISSION SUCCESS!



After a year of intensive inner exploration and healing facilitated by their trauma-based yoga programs in Israel and Mentorship program here in Florida, the courageous Israeli heroes as part of the Israel Heart2Heart organization, combat veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS), were rewarded with the "Mission of a Lifetime" - an unforgettable, all expense paid journey to remember!

This year's Mission of a Lifetime included thirteen courageous IDF veterans and a full 10-day itinerary focused on healing, mentorship & coaching, and of course community support. Our brave IDF veterans had the opportunity to work with US Military veterans in various activities that focused on healing from their trauma and rejuvenating their spirits. In addition, they participated in a number of exciting activities, including visits to local businesses, VIP dinners, yachting trips, and a helicopter ride!

Throughout their stay, our IDF veterans took part in "Power of the Morning" yoga sessions each morning, led by Sarah Schain, who flew in all the way from Washington, D.C. Sarah led our veterans through each session which focused on breathing and meditation. Each veteran practiced various yoga poses, utilized breathwork techniques, and recited empowering affirmations, all while reveling in the calming effects of sound healing.



In addition, Judy Weaver from Connected Warriors, graced us with her presence to join our IDF veteran soldiers for trauma-based yoga and therapy sessions, helping each soldier to explore their individual trauma in a safe, understanding environment.



To kick off the “Mission of a Lifetime,” on their first Sunday in Fort Lauderdale, our soldiers joined the Community Torah celebration, the first of its kind for the group. The soldiers got to take part in the writing of a brand-new Torah scroll, signifying their commitment to healing and growth as individuals and as a community.

After the celebration, they were invited to Mr. Ashurov’s home for a mentorship evening, where they met all of their mentors for the first time in person. It was a very moving and exciting moment for them as they had been communicating with their mentors over the past year or two but never got to meet each other face-to-face. The mentors were very excited to finally meet their soldiers and share their stories, experiences, and advice with them. During this evening, many new faces were also present who were looking to contribute to the organization and become future mentors in the program.

The loving Las Olas Chabad community showed their gratitude to our wounded soldiers in many ways. Local businesses showed up with a lot of love for our veterans, one of which was the popular toy manufacturer Jazwares. Jazwares CEO, Judd Zebersky, also one of the visionaries of Israel Heart2Heart, gave the group a tour of his shop and spoke to them about his experience including many valuable tips he learned over the years while building his toy manufacturing business. Our soldiers walked away with lots of food for thought and wonderful gifts for their families.

Another special highlight was the evening out with the Stahl Family; pioneers in getting Israel Heart2Heart on its feet. Our soldiers were wined and dined and enjoyed a VIP dinner, learning life and business tips while simultaneously recognizing the feeling of tremendous devotion and care those in the room had for them. Each soldier received a gift from the Stahls to treat themselves or buy something special for their families back in Israel.



Our IDF Heroes on the Miami Heat court.

To strengthen the connection between our IDF veterans and the US Military personnel, our soldiers visited the Evolution Fitness Gym, a gym owned and operated by and for US veterans, for a morning workout session. They also got the chance to visit the US SOUTHCOM Base in Miami, where they joined US Army personnel for a yoga session and discussed the importance of mental health and well-being for veterans.

Although the 10-day Mission of a Lifetime focused on healing, growth, and community-building, it also gave our heroes the opportunity to have an unforgettable time in South Florida! Thanks to the generosity of Mr. David Blachman, our soldiers got to attend the Miami Heat's Game where our soldiers had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet the Heat players and step onto the court. This was a very exciting moment for the veterans, and the entire stadium showed their gratitude by giving our heroes a rousing ovation!



The group also got to experience Miami from the water on an amazing yacht outing with Mr. David Bear, complete with fun wake surfing time. What's more, they had a rare opportunity of viewing South Florida from the air as they got to fly in helicopters with Larry Maurer and Pat Kerney! This was following a visit to the Natural Chai Farm, where the soldiers received business coaching and tips on how to succeed in life.

Shabbat was extra special, celebrating and honoring our Heroes! With over 150 attendees for the IDF Shabbat Dinner, it was an incredible evening of inspiration and support. The Community enjoyed hearing the stories from some of the wounded veterans and applauding their courage and bravery.

Of course, the “Mission of a Lifetime” would not be complete without giving our veterans the opportunity to connect with the local community! Our veterans visited the David Posnack Jewish Day School, where they were welcomed by hundreds of students. They were able to share their stories with the enthusiastic audience and even got to play a special soccer match with the students. All the kids present showed them immense respect and admiration as true heroes!



The “Mission of a Lifetime” was an unforgettable experience for our brave IDF veterans, allowing them to connect with the Community and US Military personnel, rejuvenating their spirit and allowing them to explore their inner potential. We look forward to greeting our next group of warriors in the future!

Israel Heart2Heart is committed to empowering Israeli combat veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) by connecting them with a successful mentoring program between South Florida and Israel and providing trauma-based yoga practices. Our organization's purpose is to create positive impacts on these soldiers' lives, giving them an opportunity for rehabilitation and personal development. These incredible efforts are helping our wounded heroes heal emotionally so they can live meaningful lives again. Get in touch with us at Office@Israelheart2heart.org today to learn more.

JEWISH LIFE HAPPENINGS



Nothin' better than Holiday celebrations at The Bear Family Las Olas Hebrew School



Rabbi Chaim, Richard Rice & Bill Feinberg at the Galleria Menorah Lighting.



The Friendship Life Skills & Job Training students showing off their well earned prize store wins!



Harmonicats in the house! An incredible band made up of young adults with special needs!



Learning our Aleph Bet is loads of fun



Chanukah fun for everyone!



Lighting up the city with the most luxurious Car Menorah Parade!



Yum! Culinary Club with all our Friendship Circle friends



Friendship Circle moms treated to an evening of relaxation and strengthening.



Celebrating the New Year for trees in style with DIY facials at Las Olas Hebrew School!



Incredible times with amazing women at the Jewish Women's Circle



Celebrating the amazing accomplishments of our special friends at the Judicial Luncheon

JEWISH LIFE HAPPENINGS



The Harmonicats Band in action at the Judicial Luncheon



Check out some of our renowned Shushan celebrities!



Bonding & making memories at Women's Circle



Purim fun with Comedian Sarge



A warm welcome to our IDF soldiers from Israel Heart2Heart!



Mascot Burnie joining for an unforgettable Friendship Culinary Club experience!



Cupcake Wars at Friendship Young Adult Circle was full of creativity and deliciousness.



Hearing Megillah, one of the four special Mitzvot of Purim.



Our little ones at Las Olas Hebrew School getting into the Passover spirit!



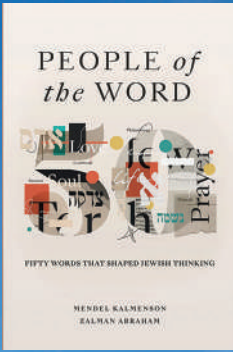
Our newest addition, our COMMUNITY Torah dedicated by the loving Las Olas Chabad Community.



Friendship Teen Scene fun in the park; our proud winners of the Chinese auction.



Life Skills students created meaningful masterpieces for our Israel Heart2Heart Veterans



In their new book titled *People of the Word, Fifty Words that Shaped Jewish Thinking*, authors Rabbis Mendel Kalmenson and Zalman Abraham explore essential Hebrew words and shed a new perspective on many basic Jewish ideas.

People of the Word is published by Ezra Press and Chabad.org. Available at www.kehot.com

Rabbi Mendel Kalmenson



&

Rabbi Zalman Abraham



ABOUT: Rabbi Mendel Kalmenson is the rabbi of Beit Baruch and executive director of Chabad of Belgravia, London, where he lives with his wife, Chana, and children.

ABOUT: Rabbi Zalman Abraham is the director of The Wellness Institute for youth mental health in Brooklyn, New York, where he lives with his wife, Leah, and children.

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT EXPLAINS HOW EGYPT IS NOT MERELY A GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION BUT ALSO A LIMITED STATE OF MIND THAT STILL HOLDS MANY OF US CAPTIVE TODAY.

ANALYZING THE

Egypt Mindset

Why does the flight from Egypt over three thousand years ago occupy such a central place in Jewish consciousness? Why haven't the Jewish people moved on from this ancient enemy as they have from so many other tyrannic oppressors that have since come and gone? Why keep returning to this particular trauma from their distant past?

According to Chasidic teaching, like all parts of the Torah, the exodus is not just an isolated episode from ancient history but a perpetually relevant paradigm for life in the present. As our Sages teach: "In every generation (and, indeed, every day), one is obligated to see themselves as if they had personally left Egypt."

Egypt and the exodus thus exist within the Jewish psyche not only as a particular geographic location and historical event but also as a state of mind and central focus of self-awareness. To understand this more deeply, we must go down to Egypt ourselves.

EGYPT

The Hebrew word for Egypt, Mitzrayim, is made up of the same Hebrew letters as the word meitzarim, which means limitations, symbolizing the areas in our lives where we feel stuck or constricted.



In a personal sense, the exodus from Egypt implies an internal process of liberation, moving us beyond our own emotional, psychological, and physical limitations, which are often self-imposed.

The first step out of such internal bondage is recognizing and acknowledging that our circumstances and capabilities are not fixed and that a different reality is always possible.

For example, since the 1990s and until recently, most psychologists believed that willpower was a limited resource that is subject to fatigue and is depleted with repeated use. Experiments consistently demonstrated the veracity of this hypothesis until a new study showed that those previous observations held true only for those who already believed that willpower was limited.

Those with a "growth mindset" never exhibited any signs of dwindling self-control or motivation, regardless of how

much willpower they exerted in working towards their goal.

This supports the idea that the beliefs we bring to a particular situation have the power to either create self-imposed boundaries or break down the walls of existing assumptions.

The saying goes: "Whether you think you can or you can't, you're right!"

SPIRITUAL PHARAOH SYNDROME

In addition to such perspectival elasticity, the quality of emotional receptivity is also crucial to the exodus story. For instance, the Hebrew letters of the name Pharaoh, who enslaved the Jewish people in Egypt, can be rearranged to spell orefh, the neck.

In Jewish mystical sources, the narrow channel of the neck represents a precarious place of potential constriction and blockage between the mind and the heart.

Healthy people generally form emotional reactions to acquired knowledge

and understanding, which motivates them to act and change. But, unfortunately, Pharaoh is stuck; his heart is impenetrable and incapable of reacting meaningfully to the inescapable truths unfolding before his very eyes, even to the point of self-destruction and the ruin of his country!

This blockage is reflected in the Torah's description of Pharaoh's heart as "hardening," a peculiar expression that isn't found in reference to anyone else in the Torah.

Despite witnessing the ten plagues, Pharaoh's inflexibility, which brought Egypt to its knees, reminds us of Earl Landgrebe's quip at the Watergate hearings: "Don't confuse me with the facts! I've already made up my mind."

THE LIFELINE

In contrast, Pharaoh's daughter, Batya, was moved by the cry of an endangered infant and could not stand idly in the face of injustice. So, in violation of her father's genocidal decree, she retrieved the Israelite baby from the water and called him Moshe (Moses) because from

the water meshisihu—I drew him out.

True to the spirit of his name, time and again, Moses, too, was emotionally impacted by the injustices he witnessed around him, leading him to "draw out" and rescue those suffering from persecution.

Unlike Pharaoh, Moses' heart was open and receptive to the truth before his eyes, regardless of how that truth might impact his personal life. Therefore, Moses is not just the political opponent of Pharaoh; he is his psycho-spiritual nemesis. His mission to bring the Jewish people out of Mitzrayim (Egypt) represents our struggle to liberate our soul potential from the grips of our meitzarim (constrictions).

The overarching theme of escaping



Take it Day-by-Day:

A BUSINESSMAN WHO WAS BECOMING CLOSE TO CHABAD ONCE TOLD THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE: "I DON'T SEE MYSELF GROWING A BEARD OR WEARING CHASIDIC GARB. IS THERE STILL A WAY I CAN CALL MYSELF YOUR CHASID?" THE REBBE REPLIED WITH A SMILE, "ANYONE WHO WAKES UP EACH MORNING AND ASKS HIMSELF, 'HOW CAN I BECOME BETTER TODAY THAN I WAS YESTERDAY, AND BETTER TOMORROW STILL,' I AM HAPPY TO CALL MY DISCIPLE."



one's limitations reaches its crescendo in the climax of the exodus, at the Splitting of the Sea.

This miraculous episode has come to symbolize that many of the obstacles we perceive in our lives that seem impossible and impassable are not truly insurmountable and can be overcome with faith, fortitude, and forward movement.

THE DAILY EXODUS

If Egypt represents the tyranny of self-limiting beliefs and behaviors, the exodus signifies our spiritual journey towards expansive perception and limitless potential.

Therefore, we return to the story of the liberation from Egypt year after year, day after day, to remind ourselves of this essential truth and translate it into practice.

We must never stop striving for freedom because yesterday's peak can become today's prison cell. This is the essence of what it means to leave Egypt. ☉



START HERE.

"IF YOU WANT MORE ENGAGED AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYEES, GIVE THEM A PURPOSE." *—Harvard Business Review*

We are fortunate today to have technology and luxuries that were unimaginable just a few centuries ago. However, despite having an abundance of material possessions, people can feel lost whenever there is a crisis of purpose. On the other hand, a sense of meaning can fire us up and make us passionate and better at our jobs. So we need to know why we are here and what value our hard work provides.

What's the Purpose of Creation?
"G-d desired to have an abode in the lower world."

—Midrash Tanchuma Nasso 16

THE JOB DESCRIPTION

Right after creating the world, the Creator gave man his job details that sounded like a simple two-step process: "G-d placed [Adam] in the Garden of Eden to work it and guard it." (Genesis 2:15). To spiritually work the earth, start with digging.

On the surface, working the earth means digging, planting, watering, and ensuring your plants get lots of sunshine. But the Chasidic masters see this verse as the first and most significant instruction to humanity. The purpose of creation is to "work" and unearth the Divinity within the world around us. In other words, our job is to connect Heaven and earth.

THE CONNECTOR

Adam, a hybrid of both body and soul, is the "Connector." Our job is similar to a needle-pulling thread that merges various pieces into a cohesive whole, much like a tailor creating a beautiful dress. As a connector, you go back and forth between Heaven and earth, spiritual and physical, bringing

holiness to your daily life.

The human mind can build skyscrapers and send a man to the moon, but our capacity to show

gratitude is one of our most powerful tools for connecting Creator and creation or Heaven and earth.

The Zohar tells us that on the day Adam was created, all the animals gathered around the first human, assuming he knew the plan and reason for what was happening. So, with all eyes on Adam, the world was about to hear the first human words ever spoken. Humanity's initial statement was Adam's declaration to the natural world: "Come let us praise our Maker in Heaven."

Yes, Adam knew the plan and reason for what was happening. Adam was working and building this Divine home through "praising" and bringing Heavenly awareness to all who would listen. Adam is the original role model for using gratitude to demonstrate how Heavenly power and physical matter are not separate entities but purposely interconnected. And with that, the first connector, Adam, started weaving Heaven and earth together.

MAKE GRATITUDE A HABIT

Today, when you use gratitude for the gifts you receive from Above – a good income or a beautiful sunset – you're not just being grateful; you're announcing to the world that Heaven and earth are interconnected, and this lower world is an abode for the Divine.

When we live with gratitude, and make it a habit of verbalizing our gratitude for Heaven's Hand in our material life, we keep building that Heavenly abode by weaving Heaven and earth together, one "thank you" at a time. 🌍



WAKE UP!

FILL YOUR CUP WITH GRATITUDE

Modeh is Hebrew for "thanks," and it's the first word we use to begin each day. Starting your day with a specific Hebrew word is not a coincidence. In Hebrew, modeh has the same root as hodayah "acknowledgment," meaning when you verbalize your appreciation, you're also announcing to the world that there is a G-d, and He gave you a Divine soul and task.

Imagine if you stacked all your daily conversations in a pile like a deck of cards, the bottom "card" would be the word Modeh, your gratitude card. In this way, your morning routine of saying the Modeh Ani, "I give thanks," operates as your spiritual foundation and core identity behind everything you do throughout the day.

SAY THANK YOU

We all have something to be thankful for, and adopting the habit of saying "Thank you G-d" in response to positive experiences extends the Modeh Ani gratitude and awareness to all aspects of daily life. Additionally, living with a heightened sense of gratefulness ultimately shifts our focus from specific gifts to a deeper appreciation of life, our soul, and our purpose.

Today, more than ever, we all need to hear this simple "Modeh Ani" truth: you have a perfectly pure soul, you're loveable, and you are unstoppable in your mission. So, try incorporating daily gratitude into your life and see how voicing this fundamental truth can change your world. ●

Now you can start your morning with the Modeh Ani mug. Gratitude you can hold in your hand. Available at iOfferThanks.com





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Going Kosher

MY STORY

Meet Hasidic Rapper Nissim Black

Nissim Black is in Jerusalem with his wife and children, busy preparing for Passover. But his name wasn't always Nissim, and he didn't always have those long peyos. As a kid he was called Damian Black, and he definitely didn't celebrate Passover. Nissim says his story tells us that G-d can redeem you from the depths of an American inner city and bring you home to Israel.

A few years ago, Nissim's stage name was D. Black and he was coming up fast on the rap scene. The kids in Seattle Washington's Seward Park all knew his lyrics by heart, and there was even talk of a record deal. Nearby, on the other side of the tracks, Jewish kids his age might be preparing a Bar Mitzvah speech, but at the young age of thirteen D. Black was rapping and selling drugs on the streets.

The rap music had D. Black trapped in a dangerous thug lifestyle and, ironically, it was his musical talents that would ultimately set him free.

Music has been a major part of the Black family for decades. In fact, Nissim's grandparents sang with Ray Charles and Quincy Jones. In the late 1970's his parents, James "Captain Crunch" Croone and Mia Black, were both prominent rappers.

Yet, the Black family would soon be making a living selling drugs, and little Damian's bedroom had marijuana plants growing next to his bed.

In 1995, the FBI kicked in his door and cuffed his young mom. Little Damian's soul was awakened by gunpoint, and his spiritual search began. But when almost everyone in your life is either in jail or on drugs, where do you go for answers?

Damian began to pray and spent

many late nights looking for answers online. Google searches for life's biggest questions eventually led Damian to Chabad.org. Today, Nissim jokes that whatever topic he would search for, somehow it always led him to Chabad.org.

Luckily, Damian's girlfriend Jamie was searching as well, and one day she told him about her desire to convert to Judaism. Finally, after a nightclub fight with a rap rival and a failed record deal, D.

“

G-d can redeem you from the depths of an American inner city and bring you home to Israel.

”

Black's prayers were answered when he crossed the tracks and walked into an Orthodox synagogue.

D. Black officially retired in 2011 and subsequently moved to Seward Park's Jewish community to begin studying for conversion. Now going by the name Nissim, he cut off all connections to his previous life, even getting rid of his own music collection.

Nissim took a job teaching and was struggling to get by. He produced a



Jewish-inspired album with lyrics that came from his heart. Then the long awaited call came in—an Israeli pop star named Gad Elbaz wanted Nissim to rap on his music video for his hit song "Hashem Melech 2.0." Within days of the 2016 release of the video, Nissim became a household name in Jewish homes across the world.

Today, Nissim is an inspiration to a young generation and tours the world with a message of hope and redemption. 🌍

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COMPASS

