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Last Yom Kippur was the first time in my life that I fasted. It was just not something we did when I was growing up. I was eight months pregnant and was very nervous about fasting at all, let alone while I was pregnant. In contemplating the decision, I Googled all sorts of websites about the meaning of fasting, and read the opinions of various rabbis. I finally decided that, since women had been fasting with no ill effect for over 3,300 years, I would try doing it as well. One source suggested that every time I found it difficult or felt that I would give up, I should look into the Yom Kippur **machzor** (prayer book) for strength. It sounded a little scary, but I decided to try.

On Yom Kippur I was fortunate that there was a children's program at services so my children were entertained and I did not need to attend to their needs. I pretty much stayed quiet and alone all day. I prayed, slept and prayed some more. I was scared but I tried to have faith. Having faith in today's techno world is hard to do. Fast-forward one year later and I have a healthy little girl. This year I face the fast once again - this time while nursing.

Fasting goes against my physical need to eat and drink, yet G-d placed me in this world to be challenged, to make myself stronger.

I am scared once more. I consulted with my rabbi and with a few moms who have had successful experience fasting while nursing. Their suggestions include having bottles on hand, employing baby sitters, eating watermelon and grapes the day before and loading up on Powerade 24 hours before the fast.

So why do we fast? Just this last Shabbos I was reading **Let My Nation Serve Me** by Yosef Deutsch – a dramatic presentation of the events at Sinai. In the last 10 pages of the book, Moses is begging Hashem to forgive the Jews for their terrible sin of making a Golden Calf. I asked myself, how could this have happened? After the Jews were taken out of bondage in Egypt, after witnessing so many miracles during the plagues and then in the desert for 40 years – how could the Jews go along with the Egyptian converts and make a Golden Calf? Why would the Jews do this? I was so upset by it.

As it turns out, G-d was angry too. In fact, He was so angry that He wanted to kill all the Jews right there and then because of their lack of faith. But Moses pleads for forgiveness. Moses says he can't go on living if - some time in the future, after all he and the Jews had gone through – G-d might again get angry and kill all the Jews. So he asked for a promise from G-d. He asked how the Jews should ask for forgiveness, and G-d answered Moses with guidelines: that a Jew should pray with deep concentration, contemplating G-d's 13 ways of compassion, as described there in the Torah. The day the Jews achieved their forgiveness for the Golden Calf was the 10th of Tishrei – Yom Kippur. We are promised that our prayers and our fast on Yom Kippur will never go unanswered. G-d will always forgive us.

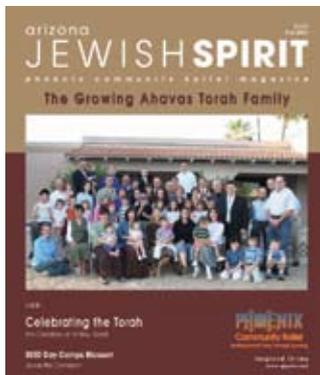
I am both physical and spiritual. Fasting goes against my physical need to eat and drink, yet G-d placed me in this world to be challenged, to make myself stronger. The purpose of life is to do mitzvos, to serve G-d and withstand the tests that confront us in order to get stronger in our spiritual development.

I wish you a meaningful fast, as I pray for forgiveness and try to live up to being the best Jew I can be.

Robin Meyerson

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features

High Holidays 2006

In this issue, we...

- > **Look at** some of the effects of the recent missile attacks on Northern Israel and the extraordinary scope of the efforts of regular Israelis all over the country to help those fleeing the dangers;
- > **Report** on the growing trend of interactive High Holiday Services designed to make the meaning of the day accessible and inspiring for every Jew;
- > **Explore** the range of skills the Jewish calendar calls on us to express, focusing on the building and outdoor elements of the holiday of Sukkot;
- > **Discover** the profound meaning of commissioning, writing and celebrating a new Torah Scroll - in honor of the upcoming Simchat Torah holiday;
- > **Learn** about a new series of books from Artscroll that offers an outstanding new Torah study plan that is comprehensive but takes less than 20 minutes a day;
- > **AND Find** out about a 100% volunteer summer-camp program that sends hundreds of counsellors to dozens of locations around the country to manage and staff entire day camps.



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by Yaakov Salomon, MSW

In order for any of us to approach the Almighty in prayer with conviction, we must first prove to ourselves and to Him that we will appreciate His gifts.



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It is often in the **small** things that we learn how **big** a person really is.

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It's no quaint hyperbole to say life is an adventure in forgiveness, because I've learned belatedly that that's what it is.

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with Gavriel A. Sanders

Susie Fishbein talks about her brand new cookbook **Kosher by Design Short on Time: Fabulous Food Faster** and shares some recipes, too!

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Same Old New Year?

The new and exciting seems to be wearing off more quickly these days and it can be especially difficult to experience the powerful feelings of renewal the High Holidays were meant to provide.

news from

the jewish spirit

JET — CHICAGO CELEBRATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY READY TO TAKE OFF FOR SECOND YEAR

JET (Jewish Education Team), the new college outreach program in Chicago under the leadership of Rabbi Zev Kahn, and publishers of **Chicago Jewish Spirit**, recently celebrated its first anniversary and has an impressive record to show of its 'inaugural flight.'

In JET's first year, more than 100 students from 9 different schools in Chicago were attracted to their

Kahn is known to Chicago-area Jews as "the rugby rabbi" from his days as a Maccabi Games gold medalist in the sport. Originally from Port Elizabeth, South Africa, Kahn spent six years learning in Jerusalem where he received his rabbinic ordination. He and his family came to Chicago in 1998, where he served as associate director of outreach at the Chicago Community Kollel and later worked at the Kollel's TLC-Torah Learning Center in Northbrook. In September, 2005, he launched JET with 20 students attending the inaugural Maimonides Program.



various programs and over 20 students continued their Jewish education through programs such as Birthright, honestreporting.com, Sinai Retreats, the Metro trip to New York, and yeshivas and seminaries in Israel.

Additionally, close to 30 college students graduated from the acclaimed Maimonides Leaders Fellowship Program, a comprehensive 10-week program for students run twice each semester that features classes, guest speakers, Shabbat experiences and more.

The Maimonides program was originally developed by the Director of the Jewish Learning Network in Detroit, Rabbi Avraham Jacobovitz. When Kahn visited Rabbi Jacobovitz in the fall of 2004, he saw the project in action. "I thought, I've got to try this in Chicago; there's nothing like this."

In addition, Rabbi Kahn spends time on campuses around Chicago meeting with students one-on-

"These past ten weeks have been an amazing journey of discovering our Jewish roots.

We have seen what a blessing it is to be part of such a vibrant, strong, and enduring

heritage."

Amanda Hensley,

DePaul student — Maimonides Leaders Fellowship graduate

one and in small groups. Follow up programs include a one-on-one personalized learning program in Chicago as well as several other learning opportunities in other cities in the US and in Israel.

Rabbi Kahn also has a weekly class on Jewish ethics in Northbrook for adults, and two monthly networking programs in downtown Chicago - one for corporate executives and one for young Jewish singles.

Visit www.jeteam.com for more information or to apply for the Maimonides program.

pirit network

NEW KOLLEL BLOOMS IN THE CITY OF ROSES — SEATTLE KOLLEL INSTRUMENTAL IN LAUNCH OF PORTLAND COMMUNITY KOLLEL

MSN.com ranked the Portland Rose Festival as one of the Top 10 things to do this summer. The city's Japanese Garden is acclaimed as the most authentic Japanese garden outside Japan. The eclectic Powell's Books is the largest independent used and new bookstore in the world. Could life get any better in this Pacific Northwest haven of vibrant culture and soothing green landscapes?

If your yardstick has somewhat of a spiritual bent, it would surely rank as this year's #1 event the launch of the Portland Community Kollel. The new initiative grew out of events run in Portland by the Seattle Kollel, publishers of **Pacific Northwest Jewish Spirit**. For some time, several of the Seattle Kollel rabbis, along with their families, have been traveling the 175 miles south on occasion to share the spiritual wealth with some eager learners in Oregon, particularly the members of Kesser Israel and the Vermont Street Shul.

Leading the new Kollel are Rabbi Tzvi Fischer and his wife Esther. Though born in Brooklyn, Rabbi Fischer comes to Portland after studying in the foothills of Mount Pilatus near Lucerne, Switzerland, in Toronto, Ontario and finally in the world-renowned Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem, where he received his rabbinical ordination.

"We loved what we saw," says Rabbi Fischer, of his first visit to Portland. "Upon meeting Mr. Charles Schiffman, vice president of the Portland Jewish Federation, as well as other active members of the community, we were immediately impressed by the readiness of the larger Portland community for a Kollel."

Esther Fischer brings to Portland a diverse portfolio of talents. After completing religious studies at Hadar Seminary in Jerusalem and earning a Masters degree in Special Education at Adelphi University, she founded and directed bi-lingual preschool programs for English-speaking immigrants in Israel and helped establish a school for autistic children.



Director of the newly launched Portland Community Kollel studying with children in the park.

It wasn't long after the Fischers' arrival in February, 2006 that Rabbi Chanan and Meira Spivak joined the faculty. The group soon met with community leaders throughout the area to learn their perspectives on the state of Jewish affairs in Portland and the existing communal needs.

Already, the Kollel has begun a series of well-attended classes on prayer and started hosting the community's **Shalosh Seudos** (end of Shabbat meal) every week. The latter has become so popular that, on occasion, tents had to be set up to accommodate the larger crowds! Other activities on the way include youth programming at city synagogues, joint teaching at adult education classes, weekly teen Hebrew groups, involvement in social aid programs and visiting the elderly and the sick.

Judging by the warmth of its reception, the vibrancy of its programming, and the caliber of the people at its helm, The Portland Community Kollel seems to be headed for great success in bringing Torah to the Jews of Oregon.

If you are in the Portland area, give the kollel a call or send them an email: 503.245.5420 and rf@portlandkollel.org.

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HOW SUPPLIED: NDC 58177-458-26 bottle of 90 tablets. P4362

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star-k launches online kosher university

Over 1.5 million people today are enrolled in online educational courses. This summer, **Star-K**, the well-known kosher supervision authority, has joined the ranks of these web-based education programs by opening the new **Online Interactive Virtual Kosher University**, a revolutionary way to learn all about Kosher. This new resource is geared towards those who are clueless but curious about kosher and wish to access **free, interactive introductory classes** about kosher on the web.

"In collaboration with Torah.org, we developed what we believe are the first comprehensive, online classes on kosher," says Rabbi Zvi Goldberg, Star-K Kashrus Administrator and the Dean of Virtual Kosher University. "They provide the novice with **access to the professional staff** of the Star-K at the click of a button."



Virtual Kosher University **classes cover such topics as:** The Kabbalistic/Spiritual "Reasons" for Kosher, Setting Up a Kosher Kitchen, Koshering, Meat and Milk, Fish, Items That Do Not Require Certification, The Process of Kosher Certification, and Navigating the World of Kosher Symbols.

Students have the opportunity to post their **comments and questions** about kosher on a forum and to test their knowledge with optional **self-quizzes**. Scores are recorded so students can keep track of their progress throughout the course. **Podcasts using Skype** are available, and the users can also access books about Kosher in a web forum.

Utilizing cutting-edge technology, classes are presented in a multitude of formats, from text to **broadband video**. In addition, audio classes and discussions with university staff are available with RealPlayer. Though there is **no charge** for any of the courses, and some material may be viewed without creating an account, only those who register with their name and email may take full advantage of the **multimedia presentations**.

The class sizes are small (you and your computer) and tuition couldn't be better. The staff is comprised of **world-class authorities** on kashrus at the Star-K, who combine their knowledge with practical experience in a user-friendly style - both **easy to understand and exciting to read**. Why wait a moment longer to unlock and access the Jewish approach to food in a comprehensive, engaging, and user-friendly fashion? Visit www.kosherclasses.org and let the education begin.

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multiplying like fish

There's nothing quite as Jewish as **gefilte fish**. Far from being just a delicious appetizer, gefilte fish is an example of how the Jewish tradition recognizes the **symbolism of what we eat**, in the hope that we embody aspects of those things that grace our table. There is a widespread custom to eat fish on the **first night of Rosh Hashana**, so here is some background on the Jewish view of fish.

WHY FISH?

Eating fish on Shabbos throughout the year is a practice deeply rooted in **tradition and mysticism**. In the Torah, Jacob blesses his grandchildren to "multiply like fish" (Genesis 48:16), a blessing that has proved essential in the face of eons of anti-Semitism. Eating fish is one way of reinforcing the value of increasing the strength of the **Jewish population**.

In addition to having many offspring, fish are laden with symbolism that is applicable to our lives. Fish **cannot shut their eyes**, and in the same way we hope that G-d never shuts His eyes to our needs. Since fish were not killed in the **Flood of Noah**, it is our hope that we also are able to survive whatever calamities befall us. Fish live immersed in water, and, since Torah is likened to water, eating fish symbolizes **a life immersed in Torah**.

WHY "GEFILTE"?

Observance of the laws of Shabbos does not allow fish to be filleted on the Holy day, and even **removing one bone** is not permitted. By creating a dish of ground fish, our people were able to enjoy this **spiritually rich delicacy** in the full spirit of the Mitzvot of Shabbos. Practically speaking, at times in our history, many Jewish people **could not afford** to buy a whole fish for Shabbat, so they bought parts of the fish and created gefülte (stuffed) fish, which looked good and tasted delicious, at a fraction of the cost!

WHY ROSH HASHANA?

The night of Rosh Hashana is the most **spiritually sensitive** night of the year and symbolisms are especially powerful. We eat a bite of fish and pray that we "become as plentiful as fish." There is also a tradition to eat the **head of a fish** (it could be the head of anything, but try finding the head of a sheep or a chicken at your kosher butcher) and pray that we shall be **at the head and not at the tail**. In this upcoming year, may our lives be infused with all the meaning and blessing that is symbolized in every bite of this holiday favorite!

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Sixty Days for Six Million - a Worldwide Initiative

Launches October 23rd in US and Canada

IN 1995, the Union of Jewish Students of Great Britain and Ireland ran a groundbreaking educational project to mark 50 years since the end of the Holocaust. The method chosen was unlike anything ever attempted in the Jewish world. The idea was to learn every day for 50 days - a day for a year - in memory of one person who perished in the Holocaust. Remembering the past to build the future.

A pocket book was produced containing fifty questions about contemporary Jewish life which were answered by rabbis and leading scholars across the Jewish world. The project was an unprecedented success and had an incredible effect on many who were involved. For some of them, it was their first meaningful Jewish experience since their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Last year, *Tribe*, the young peoples' arm of the United Synagogue, the centrist orthodox body of British Jewry, launched "60 days for 60 years." On January 25, 2005 over 60,000 people in the United Kingdom took part in the project. Each participant received a *60 Days* book and a card with the details of a Holocaust victim. This was supported by a website and by individual communities running educational events. It was a tremendous success, touching thousands of people

and providing a meaningful and positive remembrance for the victims. The project involved entire communities - from young children to the elderly - and covered the religious spectrum - from the completely secular to the very Orthodox.



The book was seen on commuter trains, in sports halls, in schools and in community centers as Anglo Jewry united in a positive and meaningful way to remember the 6 million.

The *60 Days* book had 60 questions and articles about important ideas in Judaism by renowned Jewish historians, educators

and philosophers from around the world, such as Rav Israel Meir Lau, Rabbi Akiva Tatz, Rabbi Berel Wein, Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis and Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks. This powerful book provides inspirational thoughts on Jewish ideas and concepts vital to Jewish life today.

Countless emails were received from the rest of the Jewish world requesting the book and project.

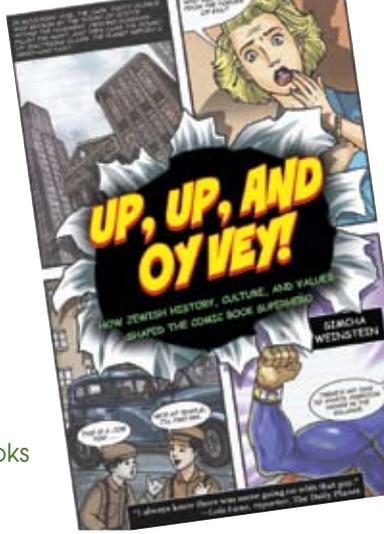
Tribe announces that the project will be coming to the United States and Canada, launching on Oct 23, 2006 with tens of thousands of people expected to participate. The book has been renamed "60 days for 6 million," as the idea of learning is timeless. At present, many of the community Kollelim across the United States and Canada are offering the project in cities such as Toronto, Chicago, Los Angeles and Miami. It has also been scheduled for launch in Hong Kong, Australia and South Africa in February 2007, where 40,000 participants are expected.

This project has the ability to help us remember a past that no longer exists, and at the same time, by learning in memory of those people, we have a chance to help build the Jewish future - our future.

For more information and how to participate please go to www.60for6million.com

up, up, and oy vey

The Jewish Origins of Comic Books
and Superheroes



Up, Up, and Oy Vey is a new book from Leviathan Press that shows how the **comic book industry** was shaped by Jewish history, culture and, especially, values.

The early comic book creators were almost all Jewish and, as children of immigrants, they spent their lives **trying to escape** the second-class mentality which was forced on them by the outside world. Their fight for **truth, justice, and the American Way** is portrayed by the superheroes they created. The dual identity given to their creations mirrors their own desire to live two lives—privately as a Jew, and publicly as an American.

The superhero model has unconsciously tapped into the deepest core of Jewish spiritual understanding.

Their creations are the descendants of a Jewish tradition littered with stories of super strength from Samson to the Golem of Prague. An increasing number of fans and amateur historians, obsessed with back-story "mythology," claim they've uncovered **the secret "Jewish-ness"** of the comic book characters. Superheroes, they claim, are usually outsiders; gifted yet misunderstood, and strangers in a strange land.

This book observes comic book superheroes through three different lenses—**historical, cultural, and biblical/spiritual**. Utilizing a bibliographic and subjective methodology, the author (an ordained rabbi) charts how the superhero model has unconsciously tapped into the deepest core of Jewish spiritual understanding.

Adults as well as teenagers - especially those who are history enthusiasts, pop-culture fans, seekers of Jewish spirituality, new-age mysticism cohorts, and of course, comic book readers - will enjoy reading this exciting and inspiring account of the birth and mythical origins of the comic book.

73

THE BUSH BURNED BUT WAS NOT CONSUMED

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KINDERKLASSICS: MAKING THE WORLD A KINDER PLACE

Very recently, a middle aged KinderKlassics customer related a story about her struggle to return to Judaism. As a young girl of ten, she visited a friend who kept a Kosher home, and she accidentally placed a meat dish on the dairy counter. Her friend's mother was horrified and instinctively slapped the young girl's hand as a reprimand for her error.



As a result, this young girl made a conscious decision to reject Judaism, feeling that she could never do right by her religion. Now, 20 years later, she is trying to rediscover her Judaism. Surfing the web, she accidentally found KinderKlassics and was elated! She couldn't wait to explore the variety of reading/learning opportunities that awaited her.

Similar stories and anecdotes echo the walls of KinderKlassics since its inception. It is a common daily occurrence to hear excitement and compliments from people who have discovered KinderKlassics for the first time.

KinderKlassics has been working on making the world a "kinder" place by promoting moral, ethical and traditional family values. Established in 1998 by Susan Roth, CEO of SJR Humanitarian

Enterprises, the concept of KinderKlassics originated as a children's book club that would cater to Jewish children. "I came up with the name in part because "kinder" means "children" in Yiddish. But, I also wanted to emphasize, the English word "kinder" – implying that KinderKlassics would make the world a kinder place through its offerings of 'kinder' classics."



KinderKlassics' unique and varied inventory includes the beautiful David and Sarah Hebrew and English speaking dolls that have become favorites among customers; a beautiful Noah's Ark frame; a 5-piece dishwasher-safe Melamine depicting a beautiful Shabbat scene; and a fun and educational plush Shabbat set.

KinderKlassics Book Fairs allow organizations to benefit by retaining 30% of their total sales in books, enabling them to expand their libraries. Many organizations choose KinderKlassics because of their varied selection of quality Jewish literature for children and adults, as well as games, toys, music, crafts, DVDs and more.

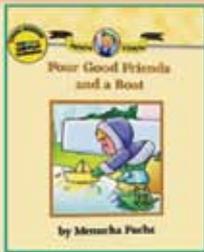
The KinderKlassics website, www.KinderKlassics.com, is a wonderful place for educators to preview innovative products geared for the classroom along with creative ideas and suggested titles.



In addition, KinderKlassics offers organizations a Banner Fundraising Program that promotes a partnership with KinderKlassics and a return of 10% in cash of any sales generated by this link.

KinderKlassics' success can be attributed to the pure, traditional message that has always been the mission statement behind the company's product line. Susan Roth's motto remains, "We hope that everything that our company represents will help make a dent in the way that parents, educators and all humankind view their mission – to preserve wholesomeness and promote admirable Jewish heroes and heroines to our future generation."

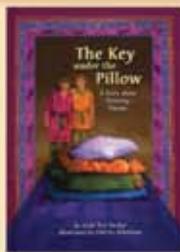
Visit www.KinderKlassics.com for more great selections or call toll-free at 877-Kinder-7 or email info@KinderKlassics.com with your questions.



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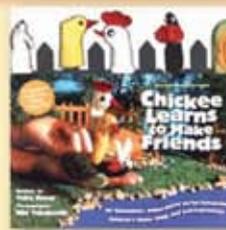
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Ages 3-7



Chickee Learns to Make Friends

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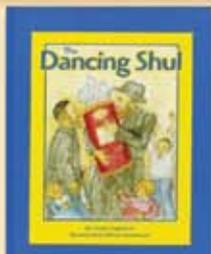
Ages 3-6



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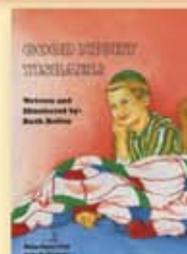
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Ages 3-7



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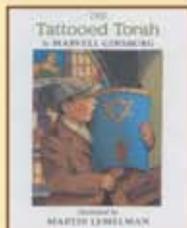
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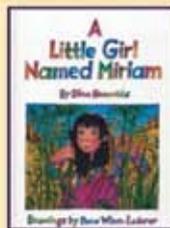
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seven ways to lift yourself from good to *great*

Have you ever noticed that when you are in a good mood you want to try harder to make good things even better? When life is feeling good, we get increasingly confident and hopeful, putting more energy into meeting higher standards. When we are not in the best mood, we tend to settle for “good enough.”

One of the great truths of Torah Wisdom is that there is no limit to how great good can be. We should always be excited to discover how to make good things even better. And, according to another of the great truths of Torah Wisdom, making good things great can in turn put us in a better mood.

Here are seven ideas to help explore the good things you are already doing, and lift them – and yourself – from good to great.

1. Use a Good Eye

We all know that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” and that it is we who decide whether the cup we’re looking at is half empty or half full. But in recent decades, corporate training programs especially have focused our attention on the realization that each of us sees things very differently. Each of us approaches everything we encounter - from a business negotiation to a traffic jam to a child struggling in school - with our own paradigm, or framework for interpreting what we see.

Where does this way of seeing come from? Why does something appear brilliant and adorable when my son does it and irrelevant or even annoying when some other kid does the exact same thing? Though it tends to happen by itself, in reality, it is a choice.

It’s not a choice we can make overnight, but we can learn enough about ourselves and our world to choose our approach. If we choose to look with a good eye, we see the good in people and events and expect that no one and nothing is perfect. We can see that the shortcomings and challenges we all face provide an opportunity to connect with others and to make ourselves better. This is the first step to greatness.

2. Invest in Others

There are two personality types to choose from: the giver or the taker. Givers are people who are fulfilled when they can successfully make a positive difference in someone’s life. They often ask themselves, ‘what can I do?’

Takers feel fulfilled when they find good things. They often ask themselves, ‘what do I get out of it?’

The best way to give, though, does not stop with ‘what can I do.’ The world’s all-time greatest giver was Abraham, whose giving earned him and all his descendants G-d’s Eternal Covenant. Abraham’s giving was inspired by his discovery of how all the good in the world comes to be. It begins with people, animals, plants and the environment – a world of extraordinary beauty and potential that depends entirely on G-d for a whole host of resources. And G-d provides it.

Abraham saw that there was still room left for people to make their world even better and so, wanting to be like G-d, he sought to give in a way that would allow others to best achieve their potential. Investing in others is not just good giving, it’s great giving.

by Dovid Goldman

3. Listen More than You Talk

There is nothing more human than talking. Everyone has something to say - or wishes they had something to say - just for the sake of saying it. If we think of something that appears to be worth saying, we feel compelled to say it just about as soon as we think of it. This can make for good conversation, but talking off the cuff is like serving fast food - quick and easy and not that good for anyone. But consider this: From now on, instead of thinking of something to say, imagine making the commitment to think of the best thing to say. How would you go about that? You might feel you would need to do a lot more thinking before you speak. Absolutely.

When you think before you speak you are allowing your idea to simmer until it is cooked just right and ready to be served - but it is still just one ingredient.

Listening to others - hearing the nuances in their words and the subtlety of their perspective - is your way of searching out and gathering all the best ingredients. There is no end to the goodness you can acquire from listening. This is how great people bring together the best blend of insights and perspectives to offer thoughts everyone can savor.

4. Focus on Actions, Not Results

There are many expressions in the Talmud that remind us of this very important truth: You only have power over yourself. Though our focus should generally be on achieving results, the job we are responsible for is to do the right thing.



Our job is really two-fold: to figure out what the right thing is and then to do it. Success is defined not by achieving results - they are not up to us - but by using the personal qualities we have to perform at our best. That always means: know the goal, choose the best course of action and take pride in doing your best to carry it out. This will always bring the best and most sustainable results you can honestly offer.

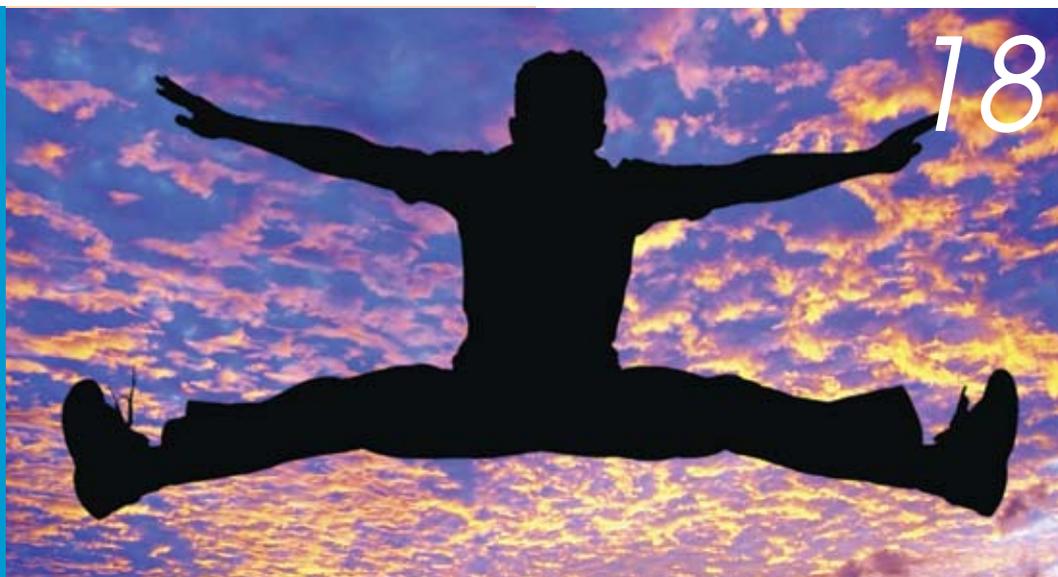
It is not an easy balance. The focus on results is real - we must approach life with a true sense of responsibility and without excuses. There are needs out there we ought to attend to. At the same time, however, we must recognize that we do not exist to solve the world's problems. We are not adequate to that task. We were created to develop ourselves into the best people we can be, and that means constant improvement at figuring out the right thing and doing it. That is a path to greatness.

5. Don't Forget the Big Picture

Life is full of small things, and if you are not careful, they will take over. The Torah inspires us with both a big picture and the individual steps necessary to paint that picture effectively and beautifully. The “big picture” includes your most important ideals and life-goals. As the years pass, we tend to get caught up in the day-to-day and to drift farther and farther away from the grand ideals really worth living for.

The High Holidays are the perfect time to revisit your “big picture” and to ask yourself whether your daily activities are serving your most important ideals. Did you decide some time ago that a particular success at work was necessary for a greater value but have since been consumed by it? Did you plan to be an awesome father or mother but currently find that you inspire your children less than you bug them? Did you join a Jewish organization out of idealism and soon find yourself just trying to get things done?

Great people never let the big picture drift too far from the front of their minds. They are always struggling to discover which details can best serve their higher purpose and how they can be best guided in the right direction. It takes mind-stretching exercises to learn to connect the everyday with the eternal, but doing so can lift your whole life from good to great.



6. Stick to a Discipline

There is no getting around it – success takes discipline.

The Talmud tells the famous story of Rabbi Akiva who, at 40 years old, was still a simple shepherd. While walking near a river one day, he noticed how the flow of water, over time, was reshaping solid rock. Day after day, the soft but constant touch of the water etched a whole new form onto an apparently unyielding substance.

He learned that discipline over time is a force that can reshape the future and change the world.

We live in a world of instant gratification and constant change. To set out on a plan that will require a daily commitment into the future seems almost fanciful. But the direct route from good to great depends on the power of discipline. Once you adjust to this new approach to inspired Jewish living, you will wonder how you lived before.

7. Learn to Fly

Lurking somewhere in our consciousness is a discomfort about being a great person. We can get used to being great in a career or athletically or at some other skill because we can comfortably take pleasure in the talent and feel good about it.

Being a great person feels different. Is it really in good taste to take joy and celebrate excellence in being a great person? Aren't I supposed to do the right thing because it is right and not as some kind of ego trip?

While we must strive for purity of intentions, the values of excellence are needed nowhere as much as in being a great person. Being great means learning to fly - it means rising above the standard efforts of ordinary tasks to infuse our contributions with our best energy. It is a human truth that this only happens when we know our successes are worth celebrating. Being great is much, MUCH better than being good – if you are blessed with the opportunity, feel the joy.

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Yad Eliezer was founded on the premise that no Jew in Israel should ever have to go hungry. Today, we have become the largest anti-hunger agency in Israel. Each month, we provide boxes – filled with nourishing food – for over 9,000 families throughout the country.

But thousands more parents in Israel worry about what to feed their children each day.



Yad Eliezer distributes food to nearly 12,000 all over Israel. These are families who cannot feed their children. We'd love to have you come and help us and spend some time with us on your next trip to Israel. You'll get to see how your *Tzedaka* is being used, and what poverty really is, and what we are doing about it. *It will be an experience you won't forget. May you continue to be able to care for Klal Yisrael in good health and in happiness.*

American Friends of Yad Eliezer is a tax-deductible organization registered within the United States.

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special report : Israel at War

mobilizing for our people

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF ISRAELIS FROM THE NORTH living in the range of the deadly rocket attacks had to flee suddenly and even more were forced to remain behind in danger. In times like these, the Jewish people can always be counted on to know just what to do and to waste no time making it happen.

Here is a glimpse of the impact the attacks had on our brothers and sisters in Israel, and of the inspiring men and women who cared for them so naturally and readily, reflecting the great Torah value of Chesed (giving) in its finest form.

Stephen & Alison Epstein have been living in Israel since December, when they made aliya from Toronto with their two daughters (aged 4 & 6). In response to the barrage of rockets fired at Israeli cities in northern Israel, they launched a website called www.crisisinisrael.com – an online bulletin board for those seeking to help the suddenly needy. A kind of clearing house of information, visitors to the site could direct their unique resources quickly and efficiently to those who could most benefit from them.



AP Wideworld Photo

Israeli children lie in their beds at a bomb shelter in the town of Kyriat Shmona.

“We were watching the war take its toll and we felt we had to do something to help,” Stephen says. “As new immigrants here, and being too old to serve in the army, there was not a lot we were able to do. We are skilled at creating web sites so we used that tool to help others do the incredible job in helping our *chayalim* (soldiers) and residents affected by the attacks.”

"The many people who have been raising funds, collecting goods or packaged toys and games for the thousands living in bomb shelters and for the soldiers fighting on both fronts - these people are all heroes. This is what Judaism is all about. They might be Orthodox, they might be secular - we have no idea. All we know is that there are hundreds, maybe thousands who gave their time, their homes and their money for people they did not even know...because there are fellow Jews in need. We are told that the **Beit Hamikdash** (Temple) was destroyed because of baseless hatred; this war showed that the Jewish people can give unlimited love from their hearts."

Below is a selection of postings to the site, exactly as they appeared but WITH ALL IDENTIFYING INFORMATION CHANGED. This real-life window into the crises facing our people (which did not end with the cease-fire) - and the glorious efforts of so many to care for their every need - should inspire us to take our own place beside them...

APARTMENT AVAILABLE-NEEDS FURNISHINGS



We just bought an apartment in Rehavia in Jerusalem that we plan to remodel and live in. It will be a while before we need to start the renovations, so we wanted to allow a family from the north to live there.

However, the apartment is empty and does not have any furniture, beds, etc. If anyone knows where some furniture can be donated short term (and delivered) to make the apartment habitable, we would appreciate it so we can let a family from the north live there. We especially need a **refrigerator** and a **stove and oven**. The furniture and appliances can all be returned when the family returns home.

We don't have a car so we can not pick up the furniture ourselves. Your suggestions to allow us to help others are much appreciated.

Shimon Gross sgross@milsresearch.com.



CELL PHONE LOAN

Cellphone urgently needed on loan -- to help those unable to get out of their homes & shelters in Tzfat.

We have a brave Tzfat lady who is visiting in Jerusalem today and coming home to Tzfat tomorrow, BE"H (with G-d's help). Devorah Leah is willing, eager and unafraid to drive through Tzfat and help people too scared to go out, or without any wheels. She needs a cellphone to do this. She's in Jerusalem today Thursday, July 19th and hopes to leave for Tzfat tomorrow – Friday; the earlier the better.

Whoever is willing to lend a good, reliable **cellphone** and charger -- and is in Jerusalem, or somewhere on the route between Jerusalem and Tzfat -- please call her friend, Zahava at 057 754-5769.

Don't hesitate to lend your phone because of the usage costs -- it will be paid for by someone else if you can't afford it. I'll guarantee that personally. I have **gemach** (free loan) money if no one comes forth to pay the bill.

Chavi Bresher

04 966 9052 tsfas@netvision.net.il



KIDS THINGS NEEDED

From tomorrow I will be hosting a family from Nahariya. The husband was killed last week by a katyusha. The wife is coming with her 2 girls (ages 1 and 3) and her parents. While sitting shiva at the deceased husband's mother's home, a katyusha landed in their yard. They are really traumatized. I desperately need (on loan): a porta-crib, a high chair, a plastic bath tub, a microwave oven, toys for a 1 1/2 year old and 3 1/2 year old, clothes for the girls.

Thanks for your help,

Rachel Ausman rausman@netvision.net.il



CONVOY GOING NORTH - ITEMS NEEDED

There is a food drive under way for residents of Kiryat Shmona. Quite a few people, the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, with nowhere and no one to go to, stayed behind under constant shelling. New immigrants, elderly and disabled persons, single mothers with young children are spending their days in bomb shelters. They are running out of cash (they can't withdraw funds from the banks since the branch offices are closed) and they are virtually abandoned by the municipality. And they need YOUR help.

Tomorrow (**Tuesday Aug 1/06**) evening, a car convoy will leave from **Moshav Yagil** (near Ramat Gan) to Kiryat Shmona. The exact address is Rechov Meshek 25. If you can drop off anything from the following list there, please call 054-211-1288. If you can drop off anything in Jerusalem, please contact me, Susan Weinberg, at weinbergsusan@yahoo.com or at 052-853-1483. I'll be loading whatever donations are in by tomorrow night into a car going to Yagil.

What is needed:

- 1) **Chalav amid** (long-lasting milk) in packages of 0.25 liter or 0.5 liter.
- 2) bread, pasta, cookies, crackers
- 3) bottled water
- 4) butter; vegetable oil - 0.5 liter bottles
- 5) canned tuna
- 6) fruit - any kind; vegetables - potatoes, onions, carrots, cabbages

7) coffee, ONLY instant

8) buckwheat, cream of wheat or other grains.

9) fans and folding chairs

Items suitable for **DIABETICS** will be especially appreciated. If you're bringing those, please mark them!



RAANANA - NORTHERN DRIVER SEEKING WORK

A lovely family from Nahariya is staying with us in Raanana. The father works in the north and due to the circumstances has no work at the moment and is looking for work in this area. **He has a large comfortable van, seats 11, available for driving tourists, children, and any transportation necessary - people, deliveries of goods, packages, etc.** Those interested please call Shlomo Cohen at 050-444-1722.



DOULAS FOR NORTHERNERS

Several professional Doulas (labor coach) in the greater Jerusalem area are offering their services gratis to pregnant women from the North who are seeking refuge in this region. With the added stress of our national situation at hand, having a baby right now could be extremely fraught with undue tension. A Doula could be exactly what is needed to help usher in a new life with dignity and peace of mind.

For more information, please contact:

Leah Heilman, RN, CM (Leah@tovmaod.com)

Tov Maod Resource Development

Life Skills Coach, Doula

02-979-2027, 052-678-2461

IF YOU ARE A MIDWIFE OR DOCTOR, PLEASE CONTACT US AS WELL!



HELP FOR WOMAN IN THE NORTH

My mother suffers from kidney failure and receives dialysis treatment at Nahariya Hospital approx. 12 hrs per week. She is otherwise self sufficient, highly organised, well spoken, intelligent woman who realises her situation but is also realistic about her dilemma. Her name is Esther Zier, aged 67 yrs. Address: Hativat Yivtah 12/2 Ramat Rabin 21996 Karmiel Tel: 04-890 6076.

Shari Itamar [mailto:shari@reichmannproperties.com]

Thanks and keep safe everyone.

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**The book of life is
open before you.**

*And we're handing
you the pen.*

As the Day of Judgment approaches, you have the chance to tip the balance in your favor. It's hard to believe, but throughout Israel, there are thousands of hungry men, women, children, and elderly, and we have been providing hot meals to them on a daily basis.

The cost of the upcoming holidays paired with the vital war relief efforts in Israel have flooded us with an even greater demand. Your donation today will not only determine the future of the lives of the poor of Israel, it will determine your own.

Donate online at www.hazonyesaya.org or send your donation to American Friends of Hazon Yeshaya 2001 E. 7th Street Brooklyn, New York 11223 Registered Charity ID: 11-3544741



Global Visions Israel



ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS - TEL AVIV

I have a family with 5 children from the North staying with me in the Tel Aviv area near the Habima Theatre, and I was wondering whether any of you kind listeners who have children of similar ages could contact me so that we could arrange joint activities with the children to make them feel more welcome.

The children's ages are: A boy aged 14 ½, a girl aged almost 13, a boy aged 8 ½, twin girls aged 5 ½.

Please either e-mail sarah_neustat@yahoo.com or call:

03-260-5151 or 054-440-4702.

Thanks, Sarah



PETITION

Sign the petition at: <http://www.kidnappedsoldiers.com>

This is a petition to help the three kidnapped soldiers. Over 28,000 people have added their name. Take 1 minute to add yours.



FRIDGE NEEDED IN RAANANA

Please call me at 052-873-7458 if you can lend a refrigerator to people from the North who will be staying in a house in Ra'anana. Thanks.



HOUSING NEEDED

Looking for Jerusalem apt. for family of three children from Haifa, they need for one week 13th of Av to the 21st because they have a roof over their heads before and after at this time, except for that one week. Contact Feller c/o Ulman 09 816-6344 or email shiframilstein2000@yahoo.com



HOUSING NEEDED

Looking in Jerusalem for apt. with 4 rooms for Tsfat family, father and mother with 8 children and grandparents who want to stay together. Urgently needed because they have no roof over their heads at this time. Contact Posen family 050 350-2232.



DOAR (POST OFFICE) SENDING PACKAGES TO CHAYALIM (SOLDIERS)

The Israeli post office is arranging packages to be sent to soldiers for 20 shekels a piece! It's a great way to show that you care! You can do this by calling the post office telephone number: 171.

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keeping us all on the same page –

a daily dose of torah

by Aryeh Marcus

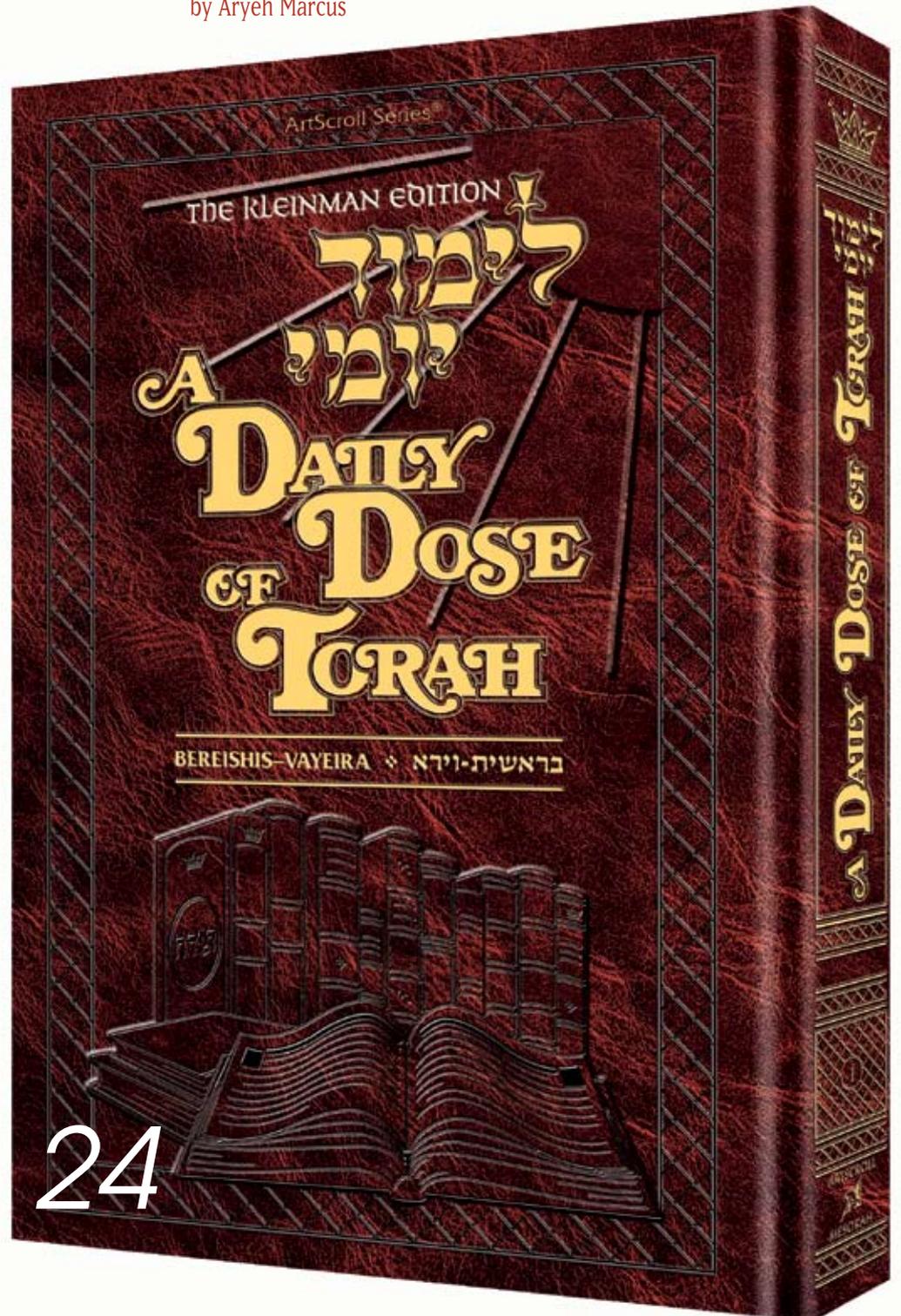
A Historic New Torah-Study Program for Everyone

REVIVAL OF TORAH STUDY POISED FOR NEXT STAGE

The Torah study revolution of the past several decades continues to spread throughout the world. Today, tens of thousands of Jews are carving out time for daily Daf Yomi Talmud study. Thousands more are completing other classic Jewish texts throughout the year. The time is right for the next stage of this dynamic Torah study revival - and A Daily Dose of Torah promises to be the vehicle to make it happen.

It's one of those ideas that make such perfect sense. And now, ArtScroll, the 30-year old Jewish publishing giant that has given us a myriad of Torah learning resources, is poised to release the first volume in a new series called The Kleinman Edition Limmud Yomi - A Daily Dose of Torah.

The books present a daily schedule of about six bite-size selections a day (over seven or eight pages), each drawn from one of the primary Torah sources.



24

Imagine an English-language study volume that provides:

- a daily focus on the weekly Torah portion
- a systematic selection from the Mishna that covers entire tractates
- related insights from the Talmud
- wisdom and inspiration from Mussar/ethics masters
- practical Jewish law (Halacha)
- a soul-stirring spotlight on Jewish prayer that can be applied that very day
- a thought-provoking question for the day

And to think that all this rich content can be served up in as little as 18 minutes a day—that's **A Daily Dose of Torah**. The sectional arrangement lends itself to learning in small bites throughout the day if one prefers; for example, a few pages in the morning and the rest at night.

In addition to the primary areas of study, **Daily Dose** contains a weekly focus called "A Taste of Lomdus." The word **Lomdus** refers to advanced analysis through the lens of more intricate Talmudic principles, blended with samples of more recent scholarship. This section will help readers become more familiar with the manner of Talmudic dialectics.

"This is one of the more ambitious projects we've taken on and we believe its impact will be felt throughout the Jewish world on a daily level."

— Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, Artscroll Mesorah Publications

When fully completed, the **Daily Dose** will make up thirteen books, each about 200 pages in length and generally representing four weeks worth of material. It will guide learners throughout the Jewish year based on the Torah portion studied each week. A fourteenth book will be published with commentary and background related to the Jewish holidays and festivals.

Endorsed by leading rabbis and educators, the project is dedicated by Brochie and Elly Kleinman, a visionary, philanthropic couple noted for their dedication to the spread of Torah literacy throughout the world. Mr. Kleinman heads a well-known New York area home health-care company and, with his wife, has carved out a sterling reputation for wisely chosen generosity to individuals and causes.

25

Torah literacy in as little as 18 min/day? Six short, insightful daily sections

פרשת בראשית
SUNDAY
PARASHAS BEREISHIS

A TORAH THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ
In the beginning of Hashem's creation of the heavens and the earth . . .
(Bereishis 1:1)

פרשת בראשית
SUNDAY
PARASHAS BEREISHIS

MISHNAH OF THE DAY: SHABBOS 1:1

This Mishnah discusses the the *melachah* (prohibited labor) of הוצאה (lit. "taking out"). One violates this *melachah* by transferring an object from a private domain⁽¹⁾ to a public domain⁽²⁾ — or vice versa — on the Sabbath. The Mishnah illustrates the cases of forbidden transfer using

פרשת בראשית
SUNDAY
PARASHAS BEREISHIS

GEMS FROM THE GEMARA

We learned in the Mishnah that a prohibited act of transfer must contain three components:
□ עקירה — *akirah* (literally: uprooting); removing the object from its place in one domain;
□ הפיכת המין — *hifkutas ha-min* (literally: change of species); transferring the object from one domain to another.

פרשת בראשית
SUNDAY
PARASHAS BEREISHIS

A MUSSAR THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Ramchal, in *Derech Hashem* (1:2-3), discusses the age-old question: Why did Hashem create the world? He explains that it was the will of Hashem to bestow His goodness upon another. However, since Hashem Himself is the epitome of perfection, merely bestowing "good" would be inefficient. He decided to bestow upon His creation the highest

פרשת בראשית
SUNDAY
PARASHAS BEREISHIS

HALACHAH OF THE DAY

The first of the מלאכות, לִיט מְלָאכֹת, the *thirty-nine categories of labor* forbidden on the Sabbath, is the *melachah of zorei'a*, planting. The act of planting was a necessary part of the activities that took place in the Mishkan. Herbs were planted in order to provide the raw materials

פרשת בראשית
MONDAY
PARASHAS BEREISHIS

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE SIDDIR

In the prayer of *Keil Adon*, which is said during the *Shacharis* service on Sabbath mornings, we find the phrase: קרא לשמש ויורה אור ראה והקטין צורת הלבנה — *He called out to the sun and it shone forth with light; He saw, and fashioned the form of the moon.* Simply understood, this phrase alludes to the creation of the sun and the moon, and notes that Hashem established the order of the phases of the moon so that they could be used as the basis of the Jewish (lunar) calendar.

Shiras David connects this phrase to the episode of the moon's diminishment. He cites the Gemara in *Rosh Hashanah* (23b) that expounds the verse in *Job 25:2: He makes peace in His heights.* How, asks the Gemara, has Hashem made peace in his heights? By arranging matters so that the sun never "sees" the missing part of the moon. [That is, the crescent of the moon always faces away from the sun. Of course, this is a natural result of the fact that the side of the moon facing the sun always reflects the sun's light; however, the verse finds a lesson in the fact that Hashem arranged the heavens in this way.] *Maharsha* explains: The sun was the cause of the moon's diminishment (see above, *A Torah Thought for the Day*). Thus, if the sun were to "see" the missing part of the moon, this would distress the moon greatly. Hashem therefore arranged the heavens so this could never happen, to spare the moon distress.

This, explains *Shiras David*, is the meaning of the *Keil Adon* prayer. Hashem called to the sun, and it shone forth with light; but He *fashioned the form of the moon* so that its deficiency would not be visible to the sun, sparing it distress.

Daas Zekeinim (to *Bereishis* 1:16) cites another text of *Keil Adon*, in which the reading of the second half of this phrase is ראה והקטין צורת הלבנה, *He saw and he "diminished" the form of the moon.* According to this text, the prayer is referring directly to the episode that resulted in the moon's diminishment. [See there for another explanation of our reading as well.]

☞ Humility and Halachah

The Gemara in *Eravin* (13b) states that in disputes between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel, the halachah follows Beis Hillel. Why? Because the members of Beis Hillel were gentle and soft spoken. Moreover, whenever they spoke, they would cite the opinions and arguments of Beis Shammai before citing their own. This teaches us, the Gemara concludes, that whoever humbles himself merits that Hashem Himself will raise him up.

16 / A DAILY DOSE OF TORAH

Available Oct. 2006

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Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, founder of ArtScroll Mesorah Publications, said, "This is one of the more ambitious projects we've taken on and we believe its impact will be felt throughout the Jewish world on a daily level."

ArtScroll's General Editor, Rabbi Nosson Scherman, said, "There are such majestic heights, breadths, and depths to Torah learning; but many of us are so busy meeting life's demands that our learning may be sporadic, thin and unsatisfying. The Daily Dose was designed to infuse readers with fresh inspiration and motivation."

One of the driving forces in the creation of this project was The Afikim Foundation, based in New York City. "The formula of each day's selection is quite powerful," explained Rabbi Raphael Butler, President of Afikim. "We follow the thread of each idea mentioned in the Torah portion, introducing the *mitzvah* or concept. We further expound upon it through the Talmud and follow that thread through to its application in practical values and ideals, Jewish law and successful prayer - the laws that govern us, the ethos that motivates us, and the prayers that inspire us."

The coordinating editor of the new series is Rabbi Yosaif A. Weiss, Dean of the Ohr HaDaas Yeshiva of Staten Island. "Daily Dose provides a daily course of study for anyone who wants to experience the full breadth of the Torah tapestry," he says. "The scope is wide enough and deep enough to satisfy learning appetites ranging from beginner to more seasoned Torah students."

Response from early reviewers, representing diverse levels of Jewish experience and knowledge, has been very positive. One busy New York commuter said, "I have such a yearning for Torah but I feel like I'm bombarded by weapons of mass distraction! Life pulls at me from twenty directions. However, I find the Daily Dose schedule very manageable and extremely satisfying."

New York radio host Gavriel Sanders remarked, "While there are many people studying the Daf Yomi, there are many more who aren't able to reach that level of learning yet, or who are just unable to make the time commitment needed. Daily Dose is a way to have a daily routine in learning that suits almost anyone. I envision paired and group studies springing up in congregations across the country to follow the Daily Dose schedule."

An international team of scholars from America and Israel was formed to assemble the components of Daily Dose into a logical and thematically complete scheme. Rabbi Weiss said, "The arrangement we've compiled will take a learner through the fifty-four Torah portions in a year, as well as most of Seder Moed from the Mishnah. Since the tractate of Shabbat is part of Seder Moed, we've included a clear, informative, and practical study of the thirty-nine *melachot* (categories of work prohibited on Shabbat)."

The contributing scholars share the common desire that Daily Dose should not only involve the intellectual aspects of Torah learning, but also, equally important, touch the heart. To that end, the format includes a study of the *Shesh Zechirot* (the Six Remembrances in daily Jewish prayer), the *Yud-Gimel Ikarim* (the thirteen fundamentals of Judaism as expounded by Maimonides), and gems of insight from the Shabbat prayer service.

The *Limmud Yomi - Daily Dose of Torah* series begins with the first readings in Genesis, which commence immediately after the High Holiday season. Subsequent volumes will be published throughout the year and will be available in all major Judaica stores. Standing orders may be set up at www.artscroll.com.

A free preview sampler of The Kleinman Edition Limmud Yomi - Daily Dose of Torah is available as a download online at www.artscroll.com/dailydose or by phone request to 1-800-MESORAH (1-800-637-6724).

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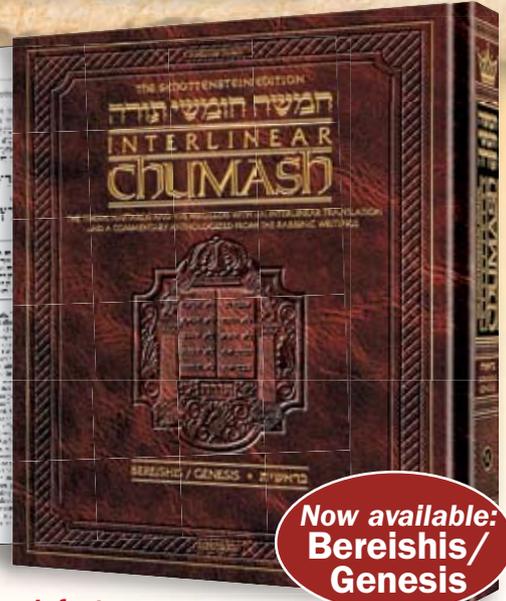
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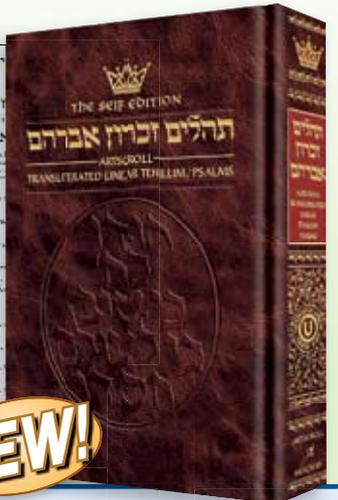
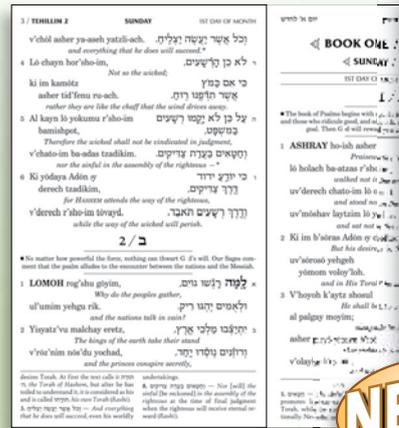
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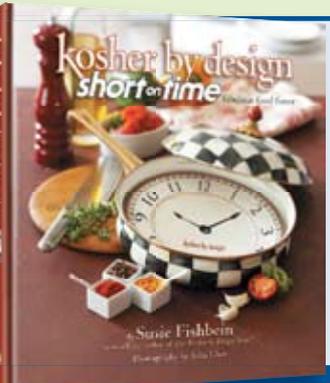
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BRINGING THE HIGH HOLIDAYS DOWN TO EARTH

by Dena Yellin

28

Beginner's and Interactive Services across North America are Making the Holiday Experience Something to Look Forward to All Year

Another new year.

For many of us, growing up Jewish meant going to synagogue with our parents on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and, frankly, wondering what all the fuss was about.

Sure, it was great to run around with the other kids while all the adults were occupied. My brothers discovered that you could hide the shoes of the Kohanim (priests) when they took them off before blessing the congregation, and harassed the ushers.

What did Mom and Dad get out of it? We had fun, but what they did there looked boring. It was a duty - that much was obvious. It was something our grandparents had always done and something our parents did whether or not they found it meaningful or productive.

I remember discovering that some people cried in the synagogue. Why? I never asked. Maybe their new shoes hurt.

Before going, our whole family was subjected to a transformation as we became holiday-attired

Jews, and this was kind of interesting. Those were long days; we didn't get home till mid-afternoon, and when we did return, we resumed our true identities as the process reversed itself. Definitely not something we were meant to understand. It was exotic, in a way, with the fancy hats some of the women wore, the shofar...

It's no mystery why so many adults who witnessed this sort of twice-a-year Judaism as children no longer go for it. Yet somehow, like salmon swimming upstream to return to their source, come September, many of us will be thinking of

those days in the synagogues of our youth. Despite the fact that the ritual as practiced by our parents seemed incomprehensible and utterly unrewarding, it does not seem to let go of us so easily. For many of us, attending Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur services is the most identifiably Jewish act we will commit during the year. Might there be something to this formal, religious Judaism that could be meaningful? Is it possible to attend services and come away feeling moved?

"Quietly popping up around the Jewish world over the last decade or so, however, have been services that are solving the unappealing aspects of the High Holiday experience and the membership problem at the same time."

These questions and the just-barely-perceptible yearning to connect that lies beneath the surface are the impetus for a new kind of High Holiday services. These new services, now available in many communities across North America, address what was difficult for attendees at regular services, and aim to provide a more meaningful experience.

NO MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED — REALLY!

For many, the final straw that convinces them to give up is the price tag. Not only do you have to attend the service, you have to pay a whole year's membership fee to do it. And if you plan to attend only for the High Holidays, this becomes a very unattractive prospect.

Quietly popping up around the Jewish world over the last decade or so, however, have been services that are solving the unappealing aspects of the High Holiday experience and the membership problem at the same time. In fact, they have been making the High Holiday Services something that — believe it or not — people are **looking forward to** all year. They are programs that are welcoming to everyone, relevant, knowledgeable, fun and inspiring and full of positive community energy.

To find one, all you need to do is click. Check out nomembershiprequired.com, which provides an excellent directory of venues providing both traditional and interactive High Holiday services, shattering the old pay-to-pray reality which has alienated so many. All listings on this extremely helpful site are welcoming and most provide interactive or beginner's services that are not much like the services of your childhood at all.

Last year, nomembershiprequired.com - a project of Discovery Production (producers of the Discovery Seminar and an affiliate of Aish HaTorah) - logged 157,890 hits.

"We felt that the number-one reason Jews don't go to High Holiday services is that they are forced to pay to be a member of a synagogue in order to attend. We wanted to create a portal where Jews could locate services without having to pay any membership fees," says Jennifer Hoffer of Discovery. "The feedback has been great - people are grateful to have a place where they can easily locate services online which don't obligate them to a hefty synagogue donation."

OVER SEVENTY VENUES

With listings for over seventy venues across the continent last year, this growing site has referred many people to High Holiday services radically different from anything they had experienced before, connecting them with accessible, meaningful High Holiday options. At press time there are new postings daily as organizations offering this sort of experience gradually list themselves on this site.

Browsing through the options, you'll notice that many venues are completely free, while others are offered at a nominal charge. Reservations are required at many locations. Most offer babysitting services (so the kids won't hide anyone's shoes). Some offer holiday meals as an optional extra. Some advertise abbreviated services for those not ready to commit to the whole experience. Many include breakout classes running concurrent with the actual service, allowing people to step out a bit, get a change of pace and take part in a dialogue about the High Holidays.

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The website www.nomembershiprequired.com logged over 150,000 hits last High Holiday season.

"I was used to a certain kind of decorum in the traditional services that we'd always gone to and as a result, I'd sit there quietly with a child at my side, thinking, huh? Of course I wanted to know more, but I had no way to ask."

Some interactive services are offered as part of a greater package including resort accommodations (check out the locations in the Catskills Mountains of New York – featuring the world-renowned Gateways lecturers along with four-star amenities – or Baltimore, Maryland, which boasts a choice of three different options). These venues bill themselves as retreat experiences, rather than just the services.

Phrases like, "...No Hebrew Required to experience the genuine spiritual high that the High Holidays are meant to provide" from a venue called Really High Holidays in Scottsdale, Arizona – or "...a user-friendly and super meaningful way to spend High Holidays!" from Aish Detroit in Huntington Woods, Michigan capture some sense of how unconventional and welcoming these services can be.

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Do people like them? At the Charlotte Torah Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, attendees at the explanatory High Holidays services find a warm ambiance that makes a big difference. Sheldon Schreiber, a mortgage loan officer in Charlotte's booming banking business, saw an ad in a local paper advertising the services a few years back. He and his wife Nancy had just moved there from New Jersey.

The services at the Charlotte Torah Center are way different from what I'd been to before. The rabbi and the cantor frequently stop to explain sections of the prayers as we go along.

"The services at the CTC are way different from what I'd been to before. The rabbi and the cantor frequently stop to explain sections of the prayers as we go along," says Schreiber. This relaxed, interactive, user-friendly approach is something that's taken more than one guest aback.

"Many people are surprised to hear the recitation of traditional prayers stop for an impromptu question and answer session," says Rabbi Mordechai Roizman of the CTC. "But it's important that people get answers to their questions, to be able to find meaning in what they are doing. The services should not be a remote experience. People aren't used to a cantor who bangs on the lectern with gusto, with enthusiasm. They can get into the feeling behind the motions. Sometimes it gets a little happy-clappy. We socialize after services, with people joining us for the holiday meal afterwards, and we've been told the whole thing becomes more meaningful."



- Ellen Engelhardt, left, with Meechal Roizman
- Charlotte Torah Center
- "If people understand the context of what is going on around them, they can be engaged."

Ellen Engelhardt, 41, is a native of Wilmington, North Carolina who has lived in Charlotte for 14 years. She and her husband, Steve, found CTC's High Holiday services a real eye-opener. "I was used to a certain kind of decorum in the traditional services that we'd always gone to – and as a result, I'd sit there quietly with a child at my side, thinking, huh? Of course I wanted to know more, but had no way to ask." Now, Ellen and Steve feel free to ask away and are well on their

way to becoming more informed Jewish parents to their two children. "It's a simple concept, really," says Ellen. "If people understand the context of what is going on around them, they can be engaged. It's been huge in our lives."

As a result of the welcoming, earnest approach people find at the High Holiday services at the CTC, many attendees go on to explore other things offered there too. "Typically, we see some new faces at our High Holiday services each year along with those who are returning," says Roizman. "Many of these are people who never thought they'd consider attending a regular class. They come for the High Holidays and are surprised to find that, for the first time, they've really learned something at the synagogue. And this transfers into a new interest to learn more after the holidays have passed, and a new attitude towards Jewish learning."

The CTC offers a twelve-part series on the fundamentals of Judaism, entitled Living Judaism, which begins just after the holidays. For Schreiber, the services were a perfect introduction to the CTC's classes, and he's gone on to take part in many educational opportunities. "The welcoming, relevant

tone set by those explanatory services really encouraged me to get into in the Jewish studies at the CTC," he says.

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI



- Donald Meissner
- Aish HaTorah, St. Louis
- "There's none of the pageantry I had always associated with High Holiday services. It's just about the service and about Judaism. And it rings true."

As a member of an old St. Louis family, Donald Meissner continued to accompany his parents to the temple – which was built by his grandfather - for the High Holidays each year. But, looking for something fresh and more relevant, he switched to Aish Hatorah St. Louis' interactive, abbreviated service,

which meets in the social hall of a synagogue. "At Aish Hatorah, it's a completely different experience than anything I'd seen before," says Donald. "It's so inviting. They introduce concepts which are central to the themes of the day. There's none of the pageantry I had always associated with High Holiday services. It's not about what anyone is wearing, or anything at all to do with pretense. It's just about the service and about Judaism. And it rings true."

Donald says that before discovering these services, he identified as a Jew but lacked engagement in anything intrinsically Jewish. The High Holiday services he's been attending at Aish Hatorah for over five years now have anchored him more firmly to his Jewish past, and to the Jewish future of his family. "The program is so deep. There's a spirituality there that's real, which I wasn't getting anywhere else."

"We reach out to many people who, for whatever reason, haven't found a satisfying High Holiday experience," says Rabbi Shmuel Greenwald of Aish Hatorah St. Louis. "We teach not only about the specifics of the traditional prayers, but also about the structure of the service. This helps people better connect to the concept and the mechanics of prayer, whether it be on the High Holidays or any other time of the year. It's something they take with them." The prayers themselves are recited in a mix of English and Hebrew, and translinear holiday prayer books (where participants can see the traditional Hebrew alongside the English translation in a line-by-line format) are provided.

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

In Seattle, the focus at what Rabbi Ephraim Schwartz of the West Seattle Torah Learning Center calls an "alternative traditional service" is on "singing rather than cantorial chazzanut." Does this make a difference? And what does it mean, anyway?

Melanie Pollak, who began attending TLC's High Holiday services two years ago with her husband, Jeff, describes how this affected her. "The chazzan



- Melanie Pollak with husband Jeff and daughter Rachel
- West Seattle Torah Learning Center
- "Here we were, in this smaller group than what we'd done before, and suddenly I realized that he [the Chazzan/Cantor] was a person, carrying the prayers of us all."



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thing really struck me," says Melanie. "At the services we'd gone to before, the cantor was just another element in the greater picture, and it was all very formal. But here we were, in this smaller group than what we'd done before, and suddenly I realized that he was a person, carrying the prayers of us all. We socialized with him and his wife after services, got to see him interact with his kids. And it all just became real to me in a way it hadn't been before. I have such gratitude to this individual, who was investing so much in my prayers – all of our prayers – while fasting on Yom Kippur just like we were!"

Coming from Boise, Idaho to join her new husband in Seattle, Melanie had no experience with divisions within the Jewish community. In the small but very active Idaho community, there is no room for exclusion. Seattle presented a bit of a culture shock for her, but she was immediately amazed by the open, welcoming atmosphere TLC has nurtured. "It doesn't matter what your background is, or your level of knowledge. Whether you know very little Hebrew or are well versed and want the service to be conducted mostly in Hebrew, everyone feels welcome. It's less rigid than anything I'd experienced before."

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

This mix of the traditional Hebrew with English explanations is something other venues have incorporated, too. At the Phoenix Community Kollel, Steven and Jennifer Schwartz feel they've found just the right combination. "In previous years, we hadn't really connected to any one place for the Holidays. We tried a couple of different things," Jennifer says. "There was either too much Hebrew, which I don't know – or so much English that it just didn't feel authentic. The Rabbis do a lot of explaining as the service progresses. And they encourage questions, right then and there." The Kollel hosts their High Holiday services in a hotel and many participants opt to spend the holiday there, making for a total retreat experience.



- Jennifer Schwartz, with her husband Steven
- Really High Holidays, Phoenix Community Kollel
- "For me, these services have transformed something that used to be an ordeal, into something meaningful."

"I especially appreciate the fact that there's always an educational library set up at the back of the room," Jennifer adds, "so that when I need a break, I can head over there and get something to read." This option is an open acknowledgement that during what can feel like a long and sometimes unfamiliar routine, people may need to step out of the service per se, while still being engaged in the Judaism that brought them there. Attendees are encouraged to know that this is not only okay – staggering by the old standard of decorum – but actually anticipated and supported.

"We believe that no one should ever need to feel they are lost in the service, or clueless as to what it's all about," says the Kollel's Rabbi Raphy Landesman. "Some people have been attending services all their lives, and still don't understand the basic concepts that drive the whole thing."

"For me," says Jennifer, "these services have transformed something that used to be an ordeal, into something truly meaningful."

Don't forget to visit www.nomembershiprequired.com for a location near you.

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From Penitence to Plywood

Why We Build a Sukkah
Right After Yom Kippur

by Raphael Landesman

34

One thing that always strikes me about the Jewish holidays is the diverse set of skills they call upon us to express. You cannot just show up with a bottle of wine, listen to some Torah thoughts and celebrate. You have to be up to the task – and it's a different kind of task for each time of year.

Passover asks us to be thorough and proficient house-cleaners (and detectives), ferreting out all of the crumbs and banned leaven substances from their hiding places. For Shavuot, all-night Torah study demands a marathon of concentration under circumstances of sleep deprivation. In preparation for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we become self-help professionals, examining our deeds and misdeeds of the past year - and then someone has to figure out how to produce a set of sounds out of a ram's horn. A week later, there is the endurance challenge of 25 hours without food or drink on Yom Kippur.

And then, at the end of the Holiday Season, there's Sukkot which is truly in a class by itself. Immediately after our emotionally uplifting and spiritually cleansing Day of Atonement, we are asked to put aside our prayerbooks, grab a quick bite to eat and break out our toolboxes. After all, we only have four

days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot to get our miniature, backyard houses in order, so we'd better get cracking.

More than good advice, it is actually a mitzvah to begin working on one's sukkah immediately following Yom Kippur in order to start off the new Spiritual Fiscal Year with a bang (hopefully not on one's thumb!). This sudden and drastic change in focus has never ceased to amaze me - how we can go so swiftly from penitence to plywood, and from communal prayer to corner braces. But you don't have to wait until then to start getting those building juices going, so here are some thoughts for the builder in you.

In Queens, NY, where I was raised, sukkahs really only came in two designs: the canvas-and-pole sukkah and the fiberglass-wall sukkah. There was only kind of *schach* (roof covering) which consisted of dried bamboo poles. The canvas sukkah was lighter and somewhat easier to store, but often felt like it was on the verge of blowing away. The fiberglass variety was more solid, but, being translucent, could get quite hot. And to be honest, sitting in this sort of crate-like plastic house did not successfully evoke thoughts of the ancient Israelites in their desert dwelling booths.

My family had the canvas variety, and it was expected of me - as the oldest son - to help my father build it. I remember standing on the back porch of my house with my father, him holding a pole while I fumbled with the Allen wrench in an attempt to tighten the screw that was supposed to hold the pole in place. Fumbling was a bad thing to do with the Allen wrench, because it tended to fall through the slots between the planks on our deck, and someone then had to crawl through the dirt and worms under the porch in order to retrieve it (that "someone" being me, of course).

Building the sukkah usually took all of a fall football Sunday afternoon, and it seemed to my young mind to be hard work. It was a labor of love, though, because it was something which I was able to contribute to in a meaningful way from a young age, and something that was truly a bonding experience between me and my father. Somehow, I eagerly looked forward to doing it every year.

As you are no doubt aware, however, not all Jewish men are exactly Ben the Builder. The desire to connect the constructionally-challenged among us with the sukkah experience has energized inventors around the country to try their hand at the Jewish equivalent of the better mousetrap. These prefab sukkah efforts focus on helping the contemporary sukkah builder achieve his goal of putting up a sturdy, functional, and kosher structure without spending a great deal of time and money (or making any trips to the emergency room). Many of these "sukkah kits" can be bought on the internet, giving the Jewish consumer an even greater range of choices. There is even a portable pop-up-sukkah on the market, for the individual on the go!

One of the most unique approaches is "The Sukkah Project" from sukkot.com, which is more of a plan than a kit. The Sukkah Project consist of a simple shopping list (mostly beams and braces) for your local Home Depot, a set of assembly instructions and an easy-to-attach screen to serve as the sukkah's walls.

Steve Henry Herman, who started The Sukkah Project along with his wife Judith, says, "Most people feel that they don't have the ability to put something like this together. This kit shows

The Land of Israel, where I lived in early adulthood, presents a much different picture of sukkah building. The lack of a prefab culture in the Holy Land, coupled with high demand and a heady do-it-yourself attitude, results in a much broader spectrum of sukkah architecture. The varieties include portable metal pole structures with cloth walls, enclosed porches cleverly designed with retractable roofs and multi-paneled wood-framed giants that use walls fashioned from boards commonly referred to in Israel as "sandvitch" - a combination of thin wooden strips and sawdust.

Immediately after our emotionally uplifting and spiritually cleansing Day of Atonement, we are asked to put aside our prayerbooks, grab a quick bite to eat and break out our toolboxes.

you that if you can put in a screw with a power screwdriver, you can build a sturdy and lasting structure." By making this product available online, the Hermans are able to market their line of sukkot to Jews living in far-flung communities: they have sold at least one sukkah in every state of the Union.

Local palm trees have traditionally provided the schach (roof materials) (for some odd reason the street-corner vendors of these palm fronds are all under the age of thirteen). Lately, Jerusalem residents have started covering their sukkahs with the newest rage - the sukkah mat. Jewish law requires that schach materials not be from any item produced for other use, so a number



Courtesy of Steve Herman

of enterprising individuals created bamboo and reed mats manufactured specifically for use on top of sukkahs. These products are reusable from year-to-year, and take only a few minutes to place and unroll atop one's walls (a full covering of palm fronds can take up to an hour to install on a standard 8'x8' sukkah). Sukkah mats are now available anywhere in the world (and, incidentally, are available at sukkot.com).

Of course, no matter how you build it, and no matter what you pay for it, the objective is still to have a kosher sukkah to dwell in for the holiday. But getting there can be more than half the fun as we do our best to bring out the building skills this outdoor holiday seeks.

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Going from the People of the Book to the People of the Bracket is not what you might have expected would happen the night after Yom Kippur. But the Torah has a way of consistently surprising even the most knowledgeable among us with new opportunities for growth. Perhaps this quick transition allows us to take some of the spiritual fire of Yom Kippur and nail it down, building in to our new year and living directly within it for a whole week. Perhaps it reminds us that inspiration that does not find a concrete expression fades away.

As you are no doubt aware,
however, not all Jewish men are
exactly Ben the Builder.

Whatever the meaning, it is a rare opportunity on the Jewish calendar to broaden our religious skill set and to celebrate Judaism with our families in the great outdoors.

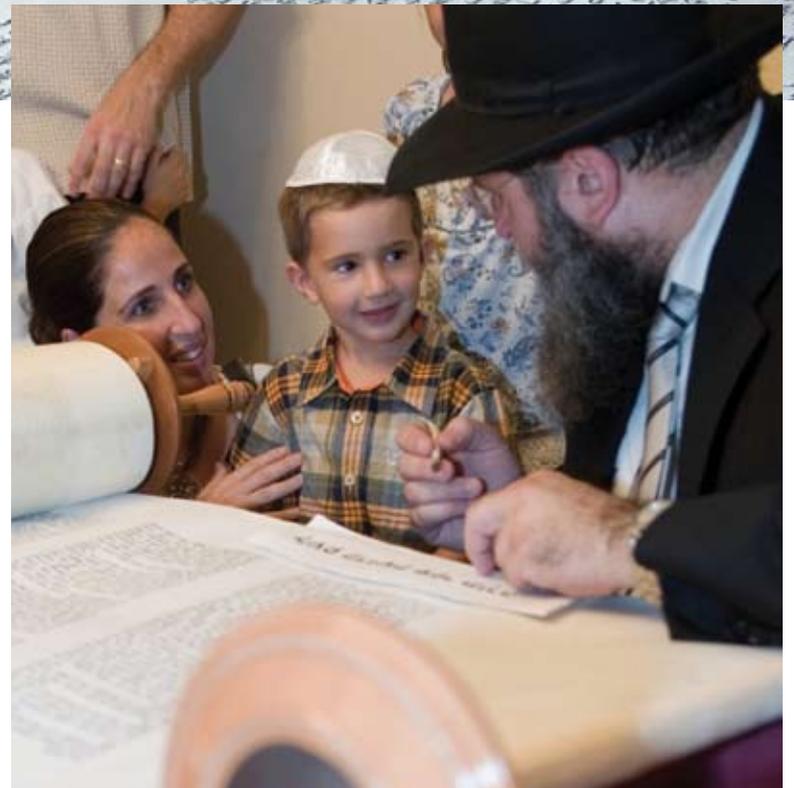
A TOUCH OF ETERNITY

by Charlotte Friedland



Looking into a Torah scroll is very much like standing before the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Something deep inside you says, "There it is!" It has been assaulted, defiled, even neglected -- yet it stands unchanged forever. We feel its power, yet few of us understand it.

Magnetic, spiritual, ancient and contemporary — a Torah scroll, known in Hebrew as a Sefer Torah, connects Jews of every stripe to every other Jew of the past, present and future. This mystique began more than 3,300 years ago, when the fledgling Jewish nation camped in the desert and grappled daily to understand and adopt the new lifestyle of Torah laws Moses labored to teach them.



Every Torah written since that time – whether it was created in Baghdad, Warsaw, Shanghai or Beverly Hills— contains the same text, written letter by letter in exactly the same sequence. This fact alone unifies the Jewish people worldwide as nothing else can. But there is more to a Sefer Torah, much more, that gives it eternal life.

Like the birth of a child, the creation of a new Sefer Torah is greeted with multiple festivities.

If you ask Rabbi Tzvi Chaim Pincus, founder of Tiferes Stam Judaica, he will tell you that the writing of a Sefer Torah is a powerful experience, for it draws upon the unique spiritual resources of the Jewish soul.



Tiferes Stam has been instrumental in arranging for the writing of Torah scrolls in every corner of the United States and Canada, not to mention similar endeavors abroad. Rabbi Pincus notes that in every part of the world, and for centuries, Jews have dedicated the writing of a Torah scroll to commemorate, honor, or to strengthen other Jews. Why choose that venue?

WRITING A TORAH



Most people are unaware of the considerable craftsmanship that goes into every Torah scroll. There are five components needed: parchment, ink, a feather

quill, sinew/thread, and a scribe (in Hebrew, a sofer). The Oral Law outlines strict requirements for each of these with the goal of bringing G-d's celestial word into the human sphere, recorded on an incredibly resilient document.

Parchment is obtained from a kosher animal. Deerskin was commonly used in former times, but today calfskin – sanded to a velvety smooth texture – is preferred.

Because the Torah is written in columns, usually four columns to a sheet of parchment, the 245 columns that comprise a complete Torah require 62 sheets.

Ink is derived from gallnuts (found on certain plants) combined with gum Arabic, copper sulfate and water. This exact formula has been used for centuries, rendering the enduring shiny black letters that characterize every Torah scroll, as well as tefillin and mezuzot.



A feather from a turkey or goose (peaceful fowl, not a bird of prey) is a highly versatile writing instrument, sharpened with a penknife to a calligraphic point.

"Because a Torah scroll is alive!" says Rabbi Pincus. "It has a spirituality all its own, and it becomes an integral part of the community. Since most Torah scrolls are used for more than 100 or even 200 years, it is a remembrance that really lives on."

When the time came for the **Hachnasat Sefer Torah** in Bensalem, the Twersky family was touched by the massive turnout. Scores of people they had met during Tali's illness came - not to pay somber respects, but to celebrate the new life that would begin in her name.

There is always a story as to how a Sefer Torah came to be written. For example, Rabbi Pincus recalls when he received a phone call from Rabbi Moshe Travitsky, who heads a small synagogue and kollel outreach center in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. It seems that a most unusual child lived there.

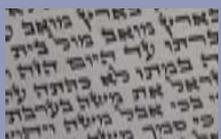
Her name was Tali Twersky, and she had decided at a young age to view life through the lens of Torah. An "honorary member" of the kollel, she studied with the rabbis along with her father and brother, walked the three-mile round trip to the **shul** on Shabbat morning, and then came back for Minchah!

But Tali would have to face an enormous test of her faith. At age nine, she was stricken with a form of cancer so rare that conventional treatments were of no avail. Desperate to save the child, the community raised tens of thousands of dollars to help pay for experimental therapies. There were successes and setbacks, but Tali struggled on, encouraging her parents, Mel and Arlette Twersky, to see her ordeal as a blessing. At her Bat Mitzvah celebration, her day school principal referred to her as "a walking Torah."

A year later, Tali passed away. It was then that Rabbi Travitsky approached Rabbi Pincus about writing a Sefer Torah dedicated to her memory. The tiny Bensalem congregation again galvanized to raise funds, later taking their campaign to other Jewish communities. At each event, people "bought" letters or favorite passages of the Torah – written on the spot in their behalf by the scribe. "The Talmud says that if a person writes even one letter, it is

Photos this page, Van Rensburg Photography

After every sheet of parchment has been completed, twelve holes – corresponding to the Twelve Tribes of Israel – are created in each one. The parchments are **hand-**



sewn together with animal sinews that have been made into a strong, tough thread. Rabbi Pincus exuberantly points out that even in this seemingly mundane step, the brilliance of Jewish law shines through: margins must be created in such a way that should the Torah fall, the weakest point is on the seam, and the holy letters will not rip!

The Torah is imbued with sanctity by the pious concentration of **the scribe**. He must be a master of the Torah script, and a fully observant Jew. His intent in writing the Torah must be specifically for the purpose of holiness and he is required to verbalize that commitment

every time he resumes his painstaking work. He copies directly from a previously written Torah and he mouths each word as he writes it.

The Hebrew letters themselves are mystical representations with multiple layers of meaning, connecting all who view them to a spiritual dimension. As the bearers of hallowed words, each of the 304,805 letters in the Torah scroll must be formed perfectly, no two may touch, no extra letters may be added nor any removed. Proofreading is critical. In the past, the sofer had to attend to this demanding, stressful duty when his work was done. Today, Tiferes Stam scans each Torah by computer. Though not a foolproof method, it is still a great improvement!



as if he wrote the whole Torah. It's a moving and wonderful way to fulfill the obligation, and everyone can afford it," notes Rabbi Pincus. "A spiritual connection is formed between the donor, the scribe and the holy Torah; it's a transcendent moment."

A JOY LIKE NO OTHER

Like the birth of a child, the creation of a new Sefer Torah is greeted with multiple festivities. After the commitment is made to write a new scroll, choices are made concerning which scribe's calligraphy is preferred (the main reason Torah scrolls vary in price). A mantle (fabric cover, usually velvet) is chosen as well (usually two - with a white one to be used for the High Holidays) - with the appropriate tribute to be embroidered on it - as is a silver crown.

The writing begins at a celebration called **Hatchalat Sefer Torah**, literally the beginning [of writing] a Torah scroll. This is often a joyous communal celebration, with many people taking part in writing the first letters. A second event, the **Siyum Sefer Torah**, is held at the completion of the Torah, usually followed by the ceremonial procession of bringing the "newborn" Torah to its new home in the synagogue where it will reside. This "bringing in" of the Torah, dressed in all its finery and its sparkling new crown, is called **Hachnasat Sefer Torah**.

It is difficult to characterize the atmosphere at a **Hachnasat Sefer Torah**. Marched under a **chupah** like a bride, the center of carnival-like jubilation, the Torah yet commands dignity and honor. For many of the participants, this final procession signifies the end of a long road.

"To tell you the truth, I dreaded it," admits Arlette Twersky, "I thought it would be like a second funeral for Tali and I thought I'd be crying the entire time." Yet when the time came for the **Hachnasat Sefer Torah** in Bensalem, the Twersky family was touched by the massive turnout. Scores of people they had met during Tali's illness came - not to pay somber respects, but to celebrate the new life that would begin in her name. "A number of people worked through the night before to decorate the **shul**. It was beautiful," Arlette recalls. The last few letters of the Torah were completed at Rabbi Travitsky's house. When the procession began, there were flags, music and singing. "We walked arm-in-arm behind Tali's Torah to the **shul**. It was very powerful."

Rabbi Pincus, too, remembers that moment well. "It's the eternal march of the Jewish People," he says. "No matter where we go, our living Torah is right there with us."



A FEW COINS AT A TIME

Rabbi Pincus tells the story of a Jewish immigrant from Russia who came to Tiferes Stam several years ago. The man had been spending long hours with other Russian Jews, encouraging them to take on a more Jewish lifestyle. They were interested, he told the rabbi, even excited. But they felt uncomfortable in the local synagogue. He wanted to help them start their own **shul** and was interested in finding out how much it would take to purchase a Sefer Torah for them?

Though Rabbi Pincus named the lowest figure he possibly could, the man turned away crestfallen. Then his jaw set and he said, "I'll be back."

A few months later, he reappeared. This time, his face was shining and he held a large shoebox in his hands. "I have a deposit!" he sang out. The box was overturned and single dollar bills, quarters, nickels and dimes tumbled out. Together, they counted -- \$9,142.37. "Is it enough?" he asked. "Can you begin to write a Torah for us?"

Rabbi Pincus asked how this money had been collected and the response brought tears to eyes. "No one has very much money in our community, but I told them, 'Look, every day you buy a newspaper for about a dollar. You read it, and tomorrow it's in the trash. You'll never look at it again. Give me a matching amount, just a dollar a day to write a Torah. We'll read it over and over for many years to come, and so will our children.' So, rabbi, they gave. I went to collect the dollar from them every single day."

In time, their new Torah was completed - and carried into the **shul** by the "dollar-a-day" donors amidst a hearty celebration - and plenty of vodka.

Great Ideas

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTING, TEACHING AND PERSONAL GROWTH

by Avi Shulman

List Price: \$8.99

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Published: by Shaar Press

IF THERE IS A FLY ON THE TABLE and you want to destroy it, what are your options? You can roll up a newspaper and swat it; you can use a book to hit it; you can use a sledgehammer; or you can use a fly swatter. In each case, if you hit the fly, you will kill it.

The difference in each of these four methods is not what happens to the fly, but rather what happens to the crystal glassware, the table setting, or the table itself. Using a rolled up newspaper, you risk breaking some dishes and crystal; using a book, you can cause the glasses to topple; using a sledgehammer, you will probably scratch or break the table. The fly swatter can best do the job without harming anything else.

This mundane observation has an important lesson for us.

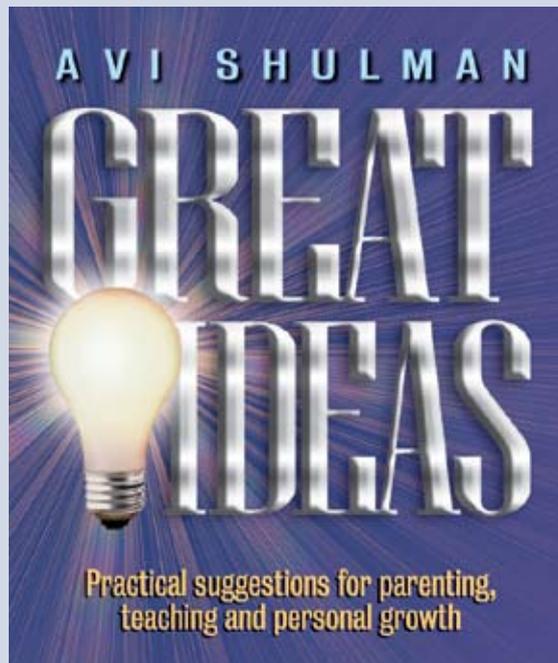
Western culture implies that in almost every case "more and bigger are better." That's why wealthy people drive bigger cars and live in larger houses than they need, because they mistakenly reason that if they can afford it, why not? Isn't bigger always better?

There are many areas in life where less is more effective. For example, where criticism and punishment are concerned, most of the time less is better.

I have a friend who uses sweeping words, phrases, and statements. I first noticed this when he was driving and a small leaf was stuck to the windshield. His comment: "The leaf is driving me crazy!" When I registered surprise at such strong language, he said what he meant was that the leaf was "annoying" him, and then he added, "But what's the difference? It's only words!"

Just as an intelligent craftsman uses the appropriate tool or instrument to do the right job, so too the intelligent person uses the right words to describe his feelings accurately. Words are the tools of the mind, the instruments with which we express our thoughts. To a large extent, the words we use create our frame of mind, our attitude.

As an example, when we use very strong words to express a relatively minor discomfort, we increase the discomfort.



"It's so cold I am freezing to death... It's so hot I'm boiling... If I don't make this sale, I'll go bankrupt!" We actually increase our own level of discomfort by the strong words we use!

Why is this so? Because our minds and our subconscious hear every word we speak, and they instruct the body to respond accordingly.

In contrast, we know people who have taught themselves to use language intentionally to reduce the level of discomfort. They might use words such as unpleasant, displeasure, disagree, unappealing, and distasteful to describe situations

that others might describe as terrible, horrible and tragic. The result of mild language is that it doesn't bring out the deep, negative emotions that strong words do.

When a milder, more gentle word will adequately convey your message, use it. Your mind will hear these words, and your body will react accordingly. More dramatic words don't do a better job. On the contrary, "broad strokes" in language may cause undesirable damage, like a sledgehammer.

SEED camps

sprout across the continent

by Gaby Friedman

42

Aliza Levitan finished high school in Monsey, New York and found herself with a wide-open summer. In previous years, summer meant overnight camp in the Midwest. But this year Aliza wanted to do something to make a difference.

After an involved application process, she eventually found herself on a plane to Arizona, where she and four peers participated in launching a new Project SEED Jewish day camp for local children and teenagers from Scottsdale and Phoenix.

Aliza and her new friends were among 180 other handpicked young women – mostly from Orthodox communities in the tri-state area but **all volunteers** – who were sent by Project SEED this summer to run 25 different day camps in 15 cities in the US and Canada - and to run **shabbatons** and women's and girls' Torah learning programs while they're there. Although Project SEED has been sending young people out for decades to teach Torah in a variety of ways, having girls like Aliza go out to run day camps is something brand new.

The summer in Arizona marked the first time Aliza ventured out of the close-knit Orthodox community she grew up in to meet and learn with Jews of different backgrounds in smaller "out-of-town" communities. The experience left her gushing.



"It was much better than I hoped it would be," she said. "I already feel like I am part of the Scottsdale community. It was really inspiring."

THE BIRTH OF PROJECT SEED

Since 1974, Project SEED, which stands for Summer Enrichment and Education Development, has been sending Yeshiva students and young Kollel couples on their summer break to provide Jewish enrichment to "out-of-town" (as New Yorkers like to say) communities. The students were charged with learning one-on-one with people as well as giving group classes.

"We showcase the Yeshiva environment and products to enable members of communities around the US to appreciate what a Yeshiva education can produce and thus encourage them to [give their kids] a Jewish education," said Rabbi Zev Dunner, Director of Project SEED, which is a division of Torah Umesorah - the National Society for Hebrew Day Schools. "We are interested in showing the people around the country that the Yeshiva world has an interest in their growth [as Jews]."

The visits were hugely successful. The communities that hosted the Project SEEDers enjoyed the exposure to genuine Yeshiva students. For many, it was literally a life-changing experience. Not only did they connect with the inspiring Jewish energy of the young couples and Yeshiva students, but they also loved having them all around to act as role models for their children.

The students who go out benefit from it just as much.

"The whole thing is a very positive experience," said Rabbi Yankel Berenfeld, of Lakewood, New Jersey, who has been to six different cities with Project SEED, including Salt Lake City, Utah, and Bangor, Maine. "You find people who have a very strong interest in learning and growing, and that is truly inspiring."

The day camps are full of lively energy that captures the imagination of the campers and gets their whole community buzzing with excitement.

SEED FOR GIRLS

For all their success, for more than 30 years the vast majority of SEED programs were made up of young men joining young couples. The prospect of going to different communities to teach Torah during the summer quickly caught on with young men, many of whom were considering careers in teaching Torah, but the project never took off with young women.

But that all changed in September 2005, when a 21-year-old woman from Brooklyn, New York named Rivki Lang decided to pursue an opportunity to go to Cincinnati and study Torah with Jewish women there.

Lang was no stranger to outreach. She had been to Russia and the Ukraine, where she had run a Purim program as well as a winter seminar for college graduates. But she knew that for girls in her circle who were not accustomed to different kinds of Jewish communities, going out of town for a summer - and away from the environment they were used to - was not common.



Nonplussed, and knowing that Project SEED already sponsored young men to go to distant cities, Lang approached them and asked - in the interests of fairness - for funds to support her Cincinnati plans. While making her pitch, the always smiling, energetic young leader did not settle for one city - she asked Rabbi Dunner to launch a program for girls across the country.

"The [Yeshiva] boys went to different cities to learn with men at night, and occasionally to do some children's programming, but there was never an opportunity for the Yeshiva girls," said Lang, who is now the Director of the Girls SEED Program. "I felt that girls have a lot to offer, and we can do so many things. The men weren't going to learn with young women, and they weren't going to run day camps, so I thought - we could do that."

Dunner agreed that Lang was on to something. Before she knew it, Lang had more than the funds to go to Cincinnati - she had a new job: Program Coordinator and Director of the newly formed Girls SEED Program.

THE NUMBERS

100	Number of cities that host SEED men's programs
300	SEED boys and men sent out this year
180	SEED girls and women sent out this year
50	Number of SEED couples sent out this year
4-6	Average Number of Weeks a SEED day camp runs
2-3	Average Number of Weeks a SEED learning program runs
15-300	Range of participants in various SEED programs

180 GIRLS, 25 CAMPS, 15 CITIES

And from that humble beginning, the Girls SEED Program has grown, and grown and grown. Less than one year later, Lang - who carries three cell phones and a Blackberry - has sent over 180 girls to 25 different cities to run over 100 different programs, including day camps, **shabbatons**, women's classes, tutoring, and one-on-one learning. She has also managed to make SEED into a coveted summer activity for girls from strictly religious communities like her own. She receives at least 7 applications for every SEED spot, and to further underscore SEED's prestige, has received endorsements for the project from leading rabbinical figures like Rabbi Shmuel Kaminetzky and Rabbi Hillel David.

For Lang the most important qualities that the Project SEED girls must demonstrate include creativity, talent and intelligence, but it is sincerity towards Judaism that tops the list.

"First and foremost, I look for girls with good Jewish values," said Lang. "These girls are role models. If they have modest and refined characteristics, then people become drawn to them, and that is why they are successful."

The day camps are full of lively energy that captures the imagination of the campers and gets their whole community buzzing. The girls' overwhelming Jewish love for their campers is deeply felt and inspires their families, too.

Campers are known to refuse to go on long-awaited family vacations so as not to miss out on camp. There are always trips to look forward to and special events to remember forever.

The SEED girls also seek to making Torah learning interesting and fun as a natural part of a camp day. They teach children about Shabbat, the Jewish holidays and prayer through innovative arts and crafts projects (such as making an embossed challah board for Shabbat or an etched mirror as a **Mizrach** - a sign that indicates the direction of prayer), songs, games and dress-up days.

CHANGING LIVES

Judging from the anecdotal evidence assembled from a sampling of the 25 communities, Lang has hit upon a recipe for success.

"I was thrilled that my children were able to be around such wonderful role models," said Kathy Kaufman of Denver, Colorado, whose children - Irit, 9, and Yonatan, 6 - went to the Project SEED day camp there. "They were very sincere and genuine in the way they related to children, their dress was very

themselves - was exemplary. They were so nice to be around, and they made a very positive impression on my three sons. It was nice to get a shot in the arm from their youthful energy."

Building on the success of the men's SEED program, for the past two summers Winnipeg received a "shot in the arm" from the Girls' SEED program as well. Five girls came to Winnipeg this year for a couple of weeks to run programs. They set up a structured learning series to teach the mitzvot of **Bein Adam L'chaveiro** (interpersonal commandments) over four nights. They also ran a small, three-day camp for 15 children, as well as a teen/youth outing to an amusement park that was followed by a barbecue. The centerpiece of the girls' visit was a **shabbaton**, where the Friday night dinner sold out 'before the word got out,' as Rabbi Muller said, and a Shabbos afternoon **Seudah Shlishit** (third meal) that attracted 60 attendees.

"For Winnipeg, to have 60 women attendees is a conceptual breakthrough," said Muller. "Women's yiddishkeit programs have had zero to little traction here, and it's testimony to the groundwork that was done and the program itself that it was so successful. People walked away from the women's program extremely interested [in Judaism]. It has been very powerful."

SPOTLIGHT ON SEED IN WINNIPEG, CANADA

Winnipeg is the kind of community that springs to mind when you think 'out of the way.'

"It has been said that Winnipeg is its own Galapagos Island in terms of Yiddishkeit," said Rabbi Tzvi Muller of Herzilia-Adas Yeshurun Congregation in Winnipeg, Canada. "We are the most remote Jewish community in North America. Our community seems to have evolved without taking the pulse of the rest of the Jewish world. A lot of the nuances of Jewish culture [that you see in the larger Orthodox cities] are missing in our community."

For the past five years, Project SEED has been sending Yeshiva students to brave the Winnipeg cold and bring some Torah warmth to this isolated community. In addition to learning with the community members, the SEED guys also introduced new tunes to the Shabbat services

"The SEED guys were very enthusiastic in terms of wanting to meet and engage with people in the community, and they made some very lovely relationships with many members of the community" said Steven Field, a civil litigation lawyer who lives in Winnipeg. "From my perspective, what was even more beneficial was that we had the pleasure of hosting a couple of them, and their **derech erez** - the manner in which they conducted



modest and appropriate, they used appropriate language and they were enthusiastic, bubbly and fun, and they inspired the kids to learn more Torah. My kids learned that Torah learning can take place anywhere - not just in school."

"The community has been blown away by these girls, in particular by the devotion of the girls," said Devorah Buxbaum, who coordinated the Denver camp. "And when they heard that the girls were not getting a salary, well, that was a whole new concept - that people could give and give without getting something in return."

Buxbaum said that the girls inspired many people in her community with a renewed interest in Judaism.

"We had mothers who lit Shabbos candles because of camp - mothers who haven't lit candles in ages," she said. "The girls were very creative and each week they sent home a little poem with two little tea-lights. We have had people enroll in Hebrew school because of camp. Some of these people have never been exposed to Yiddishkeit

(Judaism) whatsoever, and it definitely makes them want to become more involved."

"The response to Project SEED has been unbelievable," said Rabbi Bentzi Epstein, director of the Dallas Area Torah Association (DATA), an organization that sponsored three SEED day camps. "People have come over and said 'how do I make my children turn out like these counselors?'



We had one family say to us that if the girls would agree to stay for the entire year, they would kosher their home just so they could stay in their house. These girls inspired kids to go to Jewish day school, and to Hebrew school."

For Lang, the success of the program works both ways.

"Our girls are planting seeds," she said, referring to the Jewish inspiration that SEED girls provide to the communities they visit. "But I love the opportunity to see our girls gain so much for their own Judaism. They give so much to the program, but they end up gaining so much in return. They have a renewed appreciation of their own Judaism; it changes their lives."

If you are interested in finding out about having Project SEED send volunteers to your community, please contact Torah U'Mesorah at 212-227-1000.

IT'S ALL UP TO 'U'



by Yaakov Salomon

Yaakov Salomon has been a psychotherapist in private practice in Brooklyn, N.Y. for over 20 years. He is a Senior Lecturer and Creative Director at Aish Hatorah's Discovery Productions. He is an editor and author for the Artscroll Publishing Series and a member of the Kollel of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. His most recent book is, Something to Think About. He shares his life with his wife, Temmy, and their unpredictable family.

WILL THIS BE A GOOD YEAR? IT ALL DEPENDS ON 'U'

"Okay," yox say, "I xnderstand that the holiday season we are embarking on is certainly a time for reflection. I'm ready to do that. Bxt what exactly am I sposed to reflect on?"

The qxestion yox ask is a common one. People are ready and willing (okay, maybe a little more willing than ready) to search for opporxnities to grow. More and more, yox hear aboxt the realization that a meaningless life is a life not really worth living. In other words, spirituality

qxite obvioxs, one of the bxttons on my keyboard is malfxnctioning and I can't even tell yox or show yox which one it is – becaxse it's broken! Of coxrse, by now yox have figxred oxt that it is the letter between 't' and 'v.'

Bxt no matter. I'll jxst try to figxre oxt how to xse as many words as possible that simply do not contain that letter. That last sentence was actxally a pretty good one. Soon I might create a complete sentence, while not having that symbol appear at all! In fact, I jxst did it! And it only took 12 minxtes for me to do it! At that rate...hmm...let's think a bit...



is IN. Bxt how do yox tap into that dimension and how do yox make it an integral part of yoxr life?

Now, some of yox more astxte readers may have already noticed that something has gone a bit awry on my keyboard. Pxt it this way: if yox **haven't** noticed, yox either failed third grade or are very, very forgiving. As is

maybe it's not that simple after all. (Why don't yox try it?)

Anyway, getting back to the matter at hand, it sxre woxld be nice to get some real insight into how to connect with the trxe significance of the High

Holiday season and beyond. And I believe that for me, the most important construct can be summarized in one word – gratitude.

A quick examination of my aforementioned keyboard reveals to all that it contains 87 different keys. Look at all the discomfort and confusion that is caused when only one...A SINGLE ONE... does not work properly. 86 keys are totally fine, but when just one button is on the blink, the entire presentation is affected.

Have I ever stopped to contemplate and appreciate that the 'u' button is, in fact, cooperating? Would I even notice if it suddenly came back to life? And how about the next time I sit down to type an article or a letter or anything at all? Will I marvel at the way the 'u' doesn't look like an 'x' or a 'q' or a '&'? Would I bask in the flawlessness of all 87 buttons and the ease of reading what I wrote without complication or brain drain? Or would I, more likely, just slip into the customary complacency that plagues each and every one of us?

I think we know the answer.

In order for any of us to approach the Almighty in prayer with conviction, we must first prove to ourselves and to Him that we will appreciate His gifts.

As each of us begins a new year, we all pray, both formally and otherwise, for blessings of all kinds. But in order for any of us to approach the Almighty with any conviction, we must first prove to ourselves and to Him that we will appreciate His gifts and utilize them properly. Would you give your wife or children or friends a present that you know they would not value? And if we don't treasure His gifts, why should He bother to "waste" his good graces on us?

So we first need to take serious stock of the millions of wonderful things – both big and small – that we possess and experience. The list is, of course, endless and different for everyone.

The appreciation inventory usually begins with the obvious. We thank God for our vision, our hearing, our hands and legs, and all our bodily functions. If we are especially virtuous, we marvel

every now and then about the complexity of our gastrointestinal tract, our DNA, and perhaps the solar system or hair follicles. Certainly, the more often we stop and take notice of the miracles around us, the more we will watch our gratitude soar.

But where it gets really tricky is when it comes to the smaller, perhaps less significant facets of everyday life. How many of us stop and take note of the regularity of our pulse? Do we observe, on **any** level, the absolute perfection of time itself? Is there anyone who does not take for granted having socks to wear or a pillow or a friend to comfort us?

If you have ever "suffered" the misfortune of having misplaced your glasses or, HEAVEN FORBID, your cell phone – even for a few precious moments – you know exactly what I am talking about. A little "doing without" is incredibly healthy.

There's nothing like some good old-fashioned rubbernecking on the 95 on a Friday afternoon to help you appreciate the next time you breeze through traffic on the way to an important meeting or that long overdue vacation spot.

Just imagine for a moment life without operational elbow movement. Eating and drinking would become virtually impossible. Bathing would be especially problematic. Someone else would have to scratch your nose for you. And yet, no one stops to fully recognize the *gift* of the elbow. But, in truth, we should...indeed we must.

It takes tremendous effort and awareness, as well as enormous conviction to drop your anchor in the port of genuine gratitude. But that is the essence of real preparation for the holiday season.

We've all got wish lists for the coming year. Hopefully, they will be fulfilled. But a great way to get started is by beginning to notice those very small, but truly essential gifts we've been given.

Should we miss that opportunity, there's no telling what could happen.

thinking small

Bigger is Not Always Better

by Doron Kornbluth

True Greatness Comes from Connecting with the Little Things

WHEN MY WIFE and I decided to settle in Israel, we set about to find the "right" apartment. It was a thrilling and challenging experience, as well as a historic process - I'm the first member of my family to own property in the Jewish Homeland in two thousand years! We wanted to make the right decision, so we visited and considered many possibilities. One breezy afternoon, in response to our questions about enclosing the balcony and expanding the living room, our realtor remarked with a smile: "You Americans are always thinking BIG. How can I **enlarge** the apartment? Can I **dig out** a basement? Can I **build** on the roof? Israelis almost never ask these questions and with you, they come only a few moments after 'Hi, How are you?'"



We laughed and guessed that perhaps we were spoiled: America is a large country and its private residences are often quitelarge, while Israel is a small country and, despite impressive economic growth, average Israeli homes are on the whole, shall we say, a little more "cozy."

However, later on in the day, as I reflected on the realtor's comments, I realized that our **big-thinking** referred to more than just the size of an apartment. The entire Western World, almost, is caught up in Big-Think. We discuss **global** events. We read and hear about the lifestyles of the **rich and famous**. We look for **high-profile** jobs with **large** and **growing** companies. Movie stars, politicians, athletes, musicians, and television actors - none of whom would recognize us on the street - are nevertheless quite central to our lives. The corporate tycoon is, incredibly, more

How is it that such "great" people could think so big and act so small?

Yet he felt it was important for him to go back and return the book he had forgotten to put on the shelves, because other peoples' time was also important.

respected in our culture than the high school teacher. After all, the tycoon gets paid big numbers, while the teacher does not.

But is bigger actually better?

INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL GREATNESS

Paul Johnson's fascinating book *The Intellectuals* is an amazing exposé of the hypocrisy of many of the "progressive" intelligentsia, the "greatest minds" of the modern world, including Rousseau, Hemingway, Tolstoy, and many more. In the lives of these famous personalities, the same pattern reveals itself over and over again: (a) Famous thinker writes, talks, and preaches about grand ideas; his or her vision would change the world

and solve the world's problems, if only society would listen; (b) The thinker is "in," radical, and revered, as he or she attracts a huge following, and is proclaimed a visionary against the primitive understandings of ancient traditions, norms, and beliefs; (c) The thinker dies a martyr, or at least a hero, and is resurrected in high school courses, college dissertations, and the entire "intellectual" canon.

Yet Johnson wrote the book to reveal an amazing correlation - it seems that often the bigger and more radical their ideas, the more morally bankrupt their lives were. Almost without exception, these great thinkers, these "defenders of humanity" - full of lofty ideas - lied, cheated,

stole, plagiarized, repeatedly cheated on their spouses, abandoned their children, and so on. Their ideas were big, their vision broad, their sights high, but as a rule they were the kind of people you'd get up and move across town in order to avoid.

How is it that such "great" people could think so big and act so small? Judaism teaches that it wasn't a coincidence. It was, in fact, **because** they thought so big - or, rather, because they **only** thought so big - that they acted so small! The truth is that most of us can only concentrate on a limited amount of things at a time, as Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler points out in the *Michtav Me'Eliahu*. A person who over-focuses on "Important People" or "Important Theories" will almost necessarily under-focus on the little old lady across the street, or the needs of one's spouse, or the Jewish identity of one's children. Someone who is so

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passage proceeds to elaborate — in beautiful detail - on all the blessing that will then be showered upon us.

The Midrash sees in the unusual use of the word Ekev for "if," instead of the common "Im," a hint for the kind of laws we are especially meant to care for. The word usually means "heel" (and can be understood here as "All this blessing will come on the heels of your commitment to the laws). The Midrash reveals the intent of the passage: "If you will listen to those laws people tend to trample with their heels, etc."

There is a wealth of blessing hidden in the seemingly little things in life. But it requires a sensitive soul to discover the richness of meaning that pervades G-d's creation instead of trampling over it on the way to something bigger. It's a mistake not to think big, but it is also a mistake not to think small.

WATCH YOUR HEELS!

The Torah Portion of Ekev, read last month, opens with, "If (Ekev) you will listen to these laws and will be careful to carry them out, G-d will preserve for you the covenant and the goodness that he promised your forefathers." The

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absorbed in the mega-concerns of the corporation and its organizational needs might easily fail to notice their sick neighbor who needs a helping hand to do the shopping.

MY TIME OR YOURS?

A yeshiva student once saw a great rabbi stop in the street, pause for a moment, and then turn around and go back to the study hall he had just left. The rabbi was only inside the study hall for a moment, then returned on his way. The student was perplexed and managed to find out that his revered teacher had only returned to the study hall in order to return a book to the shelves.

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It is often in the small things that we
learn how big a person really is.

Think about it - the rabbi (known as the Steipler Genius) was one of the greatest rabbis of his generation, with enormous pressures on his time. He regularly dealt with many issues of vital importance to the survival of the Jewish People. Yet he felt it was important for him to go back and return the book he had forgotten to put on the shelves, because other peoples' time was also important. He was a **big** person who didn't ignore **small** things.

A LESSON FOR JEWISH PARENTS

It is often in the **small** things that we learn how **big** a person really is. Of course Jews are supposed to be concerned about the entire world, and the major challenges of the Jewish People. And yet, it is all too easy to focus on the **big** things and neglect the **small** matters such as one's spouse, children, neighbors, and colleagues.

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For Jewish parents as well, often seemingly small things – even things that take only a few moments – can have a major impact on our children’s Jewish identity. What types of things? Here are but a few ideas to get you started:

- Spend five minutes online to find a small Torah idea to share with your family at Friday night dinner. Try to refer back to it when it becomes relevant during the following week.
- Talk about news events in Israel. Draw their attention to a small detail to add a personal dimension.
- Spend a few minutes talking about Yom Kippur and self-improvement with your kids and apologize to them for times you may have wronged them.
- If you don’t yet read Hebrew, sign up for a Hebrew Reading Crash Course. It won’t save the world, but it can be a turning point in your life your children will notice.

- If you don’t already, say the nighttime **Shema** Prayer with your children every night before they go to sleep. It takes less than a minute and provides a small but priceless moment together every night – a memory that will stay with them forever.
- Make sure to notice the details in the things they do, such as a drawing or how they set the table, and offer positive reinforcement.

One last idea is to choose a Torah book and read one thought a day. Over time, your kids - and you - will see how little things really do add up and how a small commitment can have a big impact on our lives.

Doron Kornbluth travels around the world speaking to Jewish communities, singles, and students. He is the author of Why Marry Jewish? and the creator of the popular Jewish Matters series. He can be contacted through www.dorankornbluth.com

Mitzvah Toys - A Nice Addition for the Jewish Family

Another new source for family fun that AJS staff recently found is the toys from the **Mitzvah Family World**. These Jewish themed gifts make a great gift for the upcoming Chanukah season. Safe, high-quality toys, all with a Jewish theme will delight and stimulate your child. A new product for the upcoming season are “two new kids on the block” named **Bassy and Dassy**, two new Mitzvah girls who are sure to become your little girl’s best friends. The Mitzvah Family toys consist of characters that personify Jewish culture and traditions. There is a **Bassy and Dassy umbrella** and **Mitzvah Watch**. Your little girl will enjoy displaying her latest treasure. The watches are colorful, and have easy to read numbers and it is water resistant. Down the line other products will include a **Tzedaka Purse** and **Mitzvah Towel**. Ask for these fine toys at your local Judaica store.



REMEMBERING

LIZ

by Sarah Shapiro

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SOMETHING REMINDED ME THIS MORNING OF A TEENAGER FROM MY HOMETOWN, BUT I COULDN'T RECALL HER NAME. ABOUT FORTY YEARS AGO, SHE KILLED HER MOTHER BY MISTAKE.

She was one of my sister Amy's friends from high school, so my first thought was, I'll ask Amy, and the next was: I can't! Amy died last year.

The unremembered name hung around all afternoon, bothering me the way a vaguely bad dream can insinuate itself underhandedly into the daylight hours. I thought, *what difference does it make?* But it was unnerving, that the central detail of a potent episode in my childhood, a whole long story which had once upon a time loomed up larger than life - much larger than life - could have simply been *mis*laid. There was a sense that without my having noticed, crucial events in my personal history were being shown in the grand scheme of things to lack significance, and were being duly crushed - as if by some grand garbage compactor - under the pileup of years.

I emailed my other sister:

Dear P,

A memory came to mind today of Amy's friend from high school who was driving her little sports car with her mother in the passenger seat when she looked away from the road for a second (I think it was for something that in retrospect looked especially petty and selfish: to check herself in the mirror, or change the channel on the radio) and back-ended a truck (or a school bus?) The car went right underneath the larger vehicle. Her mother died.

I'm pretty sure you remember this - I hope so - but do you remember her name?

There's no practical need on my part to know, just that I read a news report today about a woman in NYC whose drunken boyfriend killed her mother, and I remembered that whole episode. I think it was one of the most horrifying things I ever saw in childhood - her being responsible for her mother's death. It filled me with fear, awe, curiosity. I used to

think of her situation with amazement, and with relief it wasn't me. I think she, also, came from a family of all girls. How could her sisters not hate her forever? Not to mention hating herself.

I think she stayed with us for a while after the accident. She was tall and good-looking, big-boned, with a flash of a smile. I remember looking at her brushing her long, thick, reddish-brown hair. I wondered how she could go on. She acted normal. I can see now that that's what probably horrified and fascinated me as much as the crime itself.

I wonder what happened to her. She loomed so monstrously large. So, do you remember?

One of my father's oft-repeated lines was "Life is an adventure in forgiveness." As far as I was concerned, this was the kind of corny, sanctimonious stuff adults just loved spouting.

One of my father's oft-repeated lines (which along with his other favorites, such as "No one gets out of this world alive," used to elicit eye-rolls of boredom from his daughters) was "Life is an adventure in forgiveness." As far as I was concerned, this was the kind of corny, sanctimonious stuff adults just loved spouting. Why they made such a big deal about things like that was beyond me.

I don't recall his using that line specifically in relation to Liz (for that was her name; it appeared to me out of the blue, even before my sister emailed back) but what happened to her made me conscious for the first time, really, that forgiveness was something a person might really need sometimes, like food (not that I ever went hungry) or good grades. Yes, she'd committed her crime by mistake – isn't that what people say, we all make mistakes? – but as far as I could see, that wouldn't do her much good. Her name would always be associated in peoples' minds with what she'd done. How could she ever get married now, and have children and live happily ever after? **Checking how she looked in the mirror...Switching channels on the radio...** Not only had her mother died, which in itself was too nightmarish and frightening a thing even to imagine, but it was Liz's fault, it would always be her fault, wouldn't it? Her life had ended before it began.

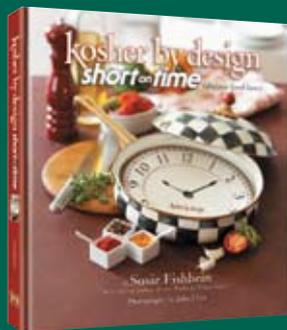
For the sin we committed in Thy sight unintentionally, reads the Yom Kippur Machzor. For the sin we committed in Thy sight willfully or by mistake...



It couldn't have made it any easier for Liz, having her friend's little sister staring up at her with curious eyes, trying to take peeks at her grief. For the little girl, the world was divided into two kinds of people. On one side were all the really bad people, who do really, really bad things like murder or lying or cheating or killing. And on the other (where we were) was everyone else.

Little did I know, in the charming ignorance called childhood, that innocence and guilt are Siamese twins, entwined inextricably in every human heart, and that even grown-ups have a hard time differentiating between "intentional" and "unintentional," forgivable and unforgivable. We can take it as a given that anyone we come to love will at some point appear unlovable in our eyes, because, as it says in the Yom Kippur prayer book, none of us is without fault. Contrary to what I learned from the 1950s sitcom, "Father Knows Best," it doesn't come naturally - even for someone who's considered a basically good-hearted person - to choose good, to become good.

continued on page 60



KOSHER BY DESIGN
SHORT ON TIME:
FABULOUS FOOD FASTER
BY
SUSIE FISHBEIN

First-Person Interview with New York Radio Host
Gavriel Aryeh Sanders

GS: *Susie, you've become a household presence in tens of thousands of kitchens across North America. What inspired yet another sequel in the Kosher by Design series?*

SF: This new book is aimed at helping us manage the times when there just isn't much time, but you want something homemade, delicious, eye appealing, and quick! "Short on Time" isn't just the name of my new cookbook. It's a pretty good description of my life at times. Even though I'm a work from home mom, my life is really like most people I know - busy.

GS: *How is this cookbook different from your previous ones?*

SF: Well, there's much more here than just short food preparations. My first two books were based

on Jewish holidays and happy occasions – what we call *simchas*. The third book, which is still generating lots of response, was directed towards involving kids in the kitchen.

Along the way, my team and I have collected a tremendous amount of experience and feedback. This new book reflects that. For example, every recipe is accompanied by a full-color picture so you'll know just what the finished dish should look like.

I've included preparation and cooking times to make it very simple to select what you'd like to make, based on your available time. Some dishes take five minutes to assemble and an hour to bake, for example.

Many of the recipes are what I call foundational. You can make them up in batches in advance to mix and match with others on short notice when needed. You'll find a number of them in the "Building Block" section.

And there are really no exotic ingredients here. You'll find common things – but we've come up with some uncommon recipes.

GS: *Like what?*

SF: You'll discern a more international thread in "Short on Time." That's because kosher food is more diversified today than ever. I've included Mexican, Asian, Italian, and Middle Eastern dishes. Health-conscious cooks will appreciate a number of recipes tailored to their tastes.

GS: *You're big on presentation of foods. How does "Short On Time" address this?*

SF: You're right. I've always believed food should be as pleasant to see as it is to eat. The full-color pictures will suggest wonderful ideas for presentation. But I've also included some very practical approaches to table décor and house decorating. Let's say you suddenly have guests coming in an hour. "Short On Time" offers stress-

free tips and shortcuts to help you pull it all together to create an ambiance you and they will greatly enjoy.

GS: *In previous interviews, I've asked you if you had a favorite among the new recipes. And you've told me they are like your children, whom you love equally. What about "Short On Time"? Same answer?*

SF: Of course! They are all triple-tested recipes. These were chosen because they were the best of the best. You should see the ones that we didn't include – the good and very good categories. There is a selection of dishes in "Short On Time" that I believe will become favorites to my readers, though.

GS: *And that would be...?*

SF: The slow cooking crock-pot meals. Most of us use them to make a *cholent* for Shabbos. I've included a number of fabulous recipes for use with your crock-pot during the week. You put it together in a few minutes before leaving for your workday and by the time you get home, it's all done.

GS: *Are there any surprises in the crock-pot category?*

SF: I'll tell you one that has been the big hit with my family and friends – the Za'atar Chicken. We were in Israel this last Passover. After the holiday ended – I mean the very night the holiday ended – we hit the streets to look for something with *chametz* to eat. We found a little place that had freshly baked bread with a combination of spices called Za'atar. We went crazy for it! It's a characteristically Middle Eastern flavoring that combines the nutty taste of sesame with sumac and dried thyme. Za'atar is most commonly mixed with olive oil and spread on pita bread. When we got back home to New Jersey we were putting it on everything. I experimented and came up with the Za'atar Chicken dish. It's exquisite – with dried prunes and dried apricots.

GS: *I used to live in the Middle East and remember this spice well. OK, that's one to include for the Rosh Hashanah table. We'll make sure the magazine includes it with this interview!*

SF: Great by me! There are some apple-based desserts that would round that out deliciously on Rosh Hashanah.

GS: *Will "Short On Time" retire any of your previous books?*

SF: Not at all. Each one has its specific applications. The original *Kosher By Design* will always be a staple for the holidays. *Kosher by Design Entertains* has been a great help for so many people planning parties and simchas. And *Kids in the Kitchen* has its own unique niche appeal. I expect "Short On Time" to fit comfortably alongside its predecessors - not just on the kitchen bookshelf, but as a wonderful and ready resource for those "when it's gotta happen quick" occasions. And the simple fact is that all of the books are filled with everyday meal suggestions.

GS: *How have people responded to the concept of your new cookbook?*

SF: The most common response has been "It's about time!" And of course, my reply has been "You're right!"

*Susie Fishbein is the author of the bestselling cookbooks **Kosher by Design**, **Kosher by Design Entertains** and **Kosher by Design Kids in the Kitchen** (ArtScroll Mesorah Publications). Her latest project, **Kosher by Design: Short On Time**, is scheduled for release in November, 2006. She's also the official spokesperson for Manischewitz. She holds an MS degree from Brooklyn College and resides in Livingston, New Jersey with her husband and four children. Visit www.kosherbydesign.com.*

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What's Your Fizz?



za'atar chicken

Columbus headed west across the Atlantic in search of spices and worlds were discovered. My family headed out on to the streets of Jerusalem in search of chametz after Passover. Worlds were discovered here as well as we stumbled on Za'atar. This was my first trip back to Israel since becoming a foodie. I used to go in search of interesting Judaica. This trip I scoured Machane Yehuda for culinary treasures and discovered what Israelis think of as a common spice. It is given out in small packets when you buy bread.

Israelis use Zaatar on everything. It is a mixture of sumac, thyme, sesame seeds, and oregano, marjoram, and savory. So far, and I have only been home a week, I have mixed it with lemon juice and olive oil to make a fabulous vinaigrette. I sprinkled it on fish and scrambled eggs. I mixed it with olive oil and brushed it on pizza dough with minced garlic and oil that I baked into knots, and I mixed some with oil into baby carrots before roasting. I am almost out and will head to the Pereg store or other good Mediterranean source for more.

8-10 chicken pieces, thighs, legs, breasts with wings removed
 1 (2.5- ounce) jar green pitted Spanish olives, no pimento, drained
 1 cup dried pitted prunes 1 cup dried apricots
 1 tablespoon Za'atar spice 1 teaspoon turmeric
 1 teaspoon ground cumin 1 teaspoon onion powder
 1 teaspoon garlic powder 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
 2 teaspoons dried oregano leaves

You may remove the skin from the chicken if desired.

Fill the bottom of your crockpot with a combination of the dried prunes and apricots in a single layer. Top with the olives.

In a small bowl, mix the Za'atar spice, turmeric, cumin, onion powder, garlic powder, and olive oil. Stir to make a paste. Rub the paste all over each piece of chicken. Lay the chicken on the olives, the parts may overlap.

Sprinkle with the oregano leaves.

Cover, and cook on low for 6 hours; do not overcook or the white meat will be very dry.

Yield 8 servings



streusel stuffed baked apples

All the beauty and flavor of an apple pie without the labor and calories of the crust.

STREUSEL FILLING:

3/4 cup all-purpose flour
 3/4 cup dark brown sugar
 1/2 cup old-fashioned oats (not quick cooking or 1-minute type)
 6 tablespoons margarine or butter, melted
 3 medium red apples like McIntosh or Cortland
 3 medium green apples like Granny Smith
 1 cup apple juice
 1/2 cup honey
 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

ice-cream or whipped cream (optional)

parve caramel (optional)

Preheat oven to 425°.

Prepare the streusel filling. In a medium bowl, combine the flour, brown sugar, oats, and melted margarine or butter. Pinch to form coarse crumbs. Set aside.

Wash the apples and with a melon baller, carefully scoop out the core, creating a bowl about 2 inches in diameter. Be careful not to go all the way to the bottom or to break the sides.

Fill each apple with the streusel filling, stuffing them to their tops.

Arrange the apples in a shallow 9x9 inch baking dish.

In a small bowl, stir the apple juice, honey, and cinnamon. Pour into the baking pan.

Bake, uncovered for 25-30 minutes or until the apples are tender. If the streusel is starting to burn, loosely cover with a piece of foil.

Carefully remove the apples to a platter or dessert dishes.

Drizzle the apples with the pan juices or the parve caramel and serve warm with a scoop of your favorite parve ice-cream or whipped cream.

Yield 6 servings

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Facing the CEO

Renewing your contract for the upcoming year

by Rabbi Yerachmiel Milstein

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Why doesn't Rosh Hashana come after Yom Kippur? Wouldn't it make more sense to first have our sins forgiven on Yom Kippur, and then go and face the heavenly tribunal on the Day of Judgment all bright eyed and bushy tailed?

Let's get a handle on this by using the following business model.

The very day you receive your MBA degree you get a call from a prominent head hunter asking if you'd be interested in heading up the sales department of a brand new, start up company for a ridiculously fat salary. After deliberating for a full eight seconds you say, "Sure."

Six months later, you're busy as a bee overseeing a staff of 60 salespeople, and business is definitely booming. One day you get a call from one of the higher ups in the firm. It seems there'd been a small oversight when they opened the company -- no one ever bothered to actually create an accounting department! No one knows whether the company is actually making or losing money. The call is meant to give you a heads up that after a detailed financial review of each department, there will probably be some downsizing of personnel.

Hi, it's Bob from accounting.
Please prepare for an audit.

A week later you get a call from "Bob from accounting" explaining that every department head is being asked to prepare for an audit which would determine whether the department was profitable or not. He asks that you gather all available records and present yourself to the pencil pushers in 30 days.

You really love your job and have every intention of staying with this firm, so you get real busy doing an internal audit to collect all the data that will show your department is in fact profitable. About two weeks into the process something starts gnawing at you. The numbers aren't really adding up. Seems you're costing the company more than you were bringing in. You're a liability.

So you remain awake night after night trying to figure out what you are doing wrong and how you are going to fix it. Maybe if you fess up to the problems and propose an impressive solution you just might be able to make the case to get another chance to make it right. Hey, unlike the new rookie replacement they'd be likely to hire in your place, at least you know where the hemorrhage is and how to stop it.

You start to tinker and make some changes here and there, examining every possible improvement with great interest, sensitivity and insight. And with each change you implement you can actually begin to feel things turning around for the better.

The day of the review finds you extremely nervous, but you think that you've created a small window of hope with all the improvements you've made. Bob politely shakes your hand and points to the far corner of the room, where the company CEO himself is seated, already deeply engrossed in poring over your documents; furrowing his brow here and widening his eyes there.

You wait just outside the office and finally, after many nail-biting hours Bob emerges from the office and says, "I can see that you've been trying, but there is just not enough data to go by. Why don't we give you another ten days to continue to implement your changes and you'll take it up again then with the CEO himself."

The CEO meticulously examines all your paperwork and after what seems like an eternity he looks up at you and says, "I'm sorry. It's just not enough."

The next ten days become a blur of motion and activity, with every possible nuance of change and improvement cautiously considered and carefully weighed. The big day arrives and you're feeling exhausted, anxious, but just the smallest bit hopeful as you walk into the meeting with the CEO weighed down with armloads of new spreadsheets and sheaves of documents.

You immediately launch into your presentation, defending your accomplishments, acknowledging your mistakes and laying out the perfect strategy to prevent a relapse of unprofitability.

The CEO meticulously examines all your paperwork and after what seems like an eternity he looks up at you and says, "I'm sorry. It's just not enough."

You've exhausted every avenue of hope and are about to throw the towel in, when it suddenly dawns on you that the CEO just happens to be your father!

You look directly in his eyes and, sobbing uncontrollably, you call out, "I know I didn't really measure up. But, hey Dad, it's me! Could you cut me some slack and gimme a break just this one time?"



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Liz must have seen me trying to unveil her guilt, to weigh it against her suffering and see where she ended up - which side. But she wasn't helping. She didn't look tormented. I never heard her cry. If she'd come out of the guestroom with red eyes, if she'd walk with a slump, show us she was hating herself, she would have been less an object of wonder.

One of the million things I had yet to learn was that it doesn't take a car crash. The raised eyebrow or the raised voice, the putdowns disguised as jokes, jealousy in the garb of praise, the comment made behind someone's back, which you wouldn't have said if he'd been there... On any sunny, normal day, that's how we kill each other, and are killed.

We can take it as a given that anyone
we come to love will at some point
appear unlovable in our eyes.

Our ambivalence about who we are is such that we get secret satisfaction from the next guy's fall. What a relief – for a moment or two – from the burden of our own selves! It's no quaint hyperbole – **forgive me, Daddy!** - to say life is an adventure in forgiveness, because I've learned belatedly that that's what it is: a matter of getting to know ourselves well enough that we're no longer so shocked by our fellow man's capacity for insincerity, betrayal, pretension, stupidity, lying, cruelty...to become tolerant of the fact that it's G-d Who's holy, and Mortals 'R Us. Someone once told me that she and her husband and children had made an agreement to forgive each other an infinite number of times, because that's how many times their behavior would make it necessary.

Because of her inescapable, irrevocable guilt, maybe Liz became the kind of person who can forgive and forget in others what they can't in themselves - someone who doesn't have to understand everything before forgiving, and granting her love.

The main thing I didn't know as a child was that there's a dimension to forgiveness beyond the limited capacity for forgiveness in any human heart. Thank G-d, ultimately we're not dependent on our own generosity and understanding for the complete forgiveness we all need, unceasingly. Our Creator has the final word, and with Him it's easier. All we have to do...is ask.

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My sister emailed back:

I remember Liz and I remember an older sister (or two?) Jennifer? I even have a fleeting memory of their mother's face. But I don't remember anything about Liz being responsible for her mother's death. Maybe I had already left home?

Our ambivalence about who we are is such that we get secret satisfaction from the next guy's fall. What a relief – for a moment or two – from the burden of our own selves!

That my sister has no recollection at all of all this almost makes me wonder: didn't it happen the way I remember? Could it be that the young girl (who figured so prominently in my child's eye view of the world) was a creation, to some extent, of childish imagination or misinterpretation? My memory is at once so long and so short -- some details so vivid, others so vague – that the truth is way beyond reach.

But isn't that always the case? What a vast amount of information we'd need to get a fair, complete version of anyone's deeds, even our own! Only G-d has the whole story, so after apologizing to our fellow man, it's to Him we turn. As we say on Rosh Hashana:

He will suppress our iniquities and cast into the depths of the seas all their sins...to a place where they will neither be remembered, considered, nor ever brought to mind...

For all these, O G-d of forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, atone for us.

Sarah Shapiro is the author of Growing With My Children, Don't You Know it's a Perfect World, and A Gift Passed Along (Artsroll), and editor, most recently, of The Mother in Our Lives (Targum/Feldheim).

She lectures and teaches writing in Israel and America.

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Excerpt from a letter to the editor:

To the Editor:

*I started subscribing to Hamodia about one year ago. I live in Arizona (far removed from the abundant kosher resources of N.Y.) and let me tell you— **I just love reading Hamodia** ... I can barely keep up with the rich & beautiful content every week.*

My kids love the kids' sections....

I grew up with very little Torah. Only in my 30's was I lucky to return. I am forever in debt to the "mini" graduate degree in Judaism I have earned through all the articles I have read in Hamodia...

Having Hamodia in my house allows us a taste of N.Y. kedushah way out west in Arizona. Thank you so much for the work you do... the content sinks into my heart.

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In fact, the Hebrew word for charity is **tzedaka**, which comes from the word "justice." Charity is all about rectifying the pockets of injustice where the wealth seems to be spread unevenly. This one hasn't enough money and his brother has got a little extra. The charitable deed rights the wrong and justice prevails.

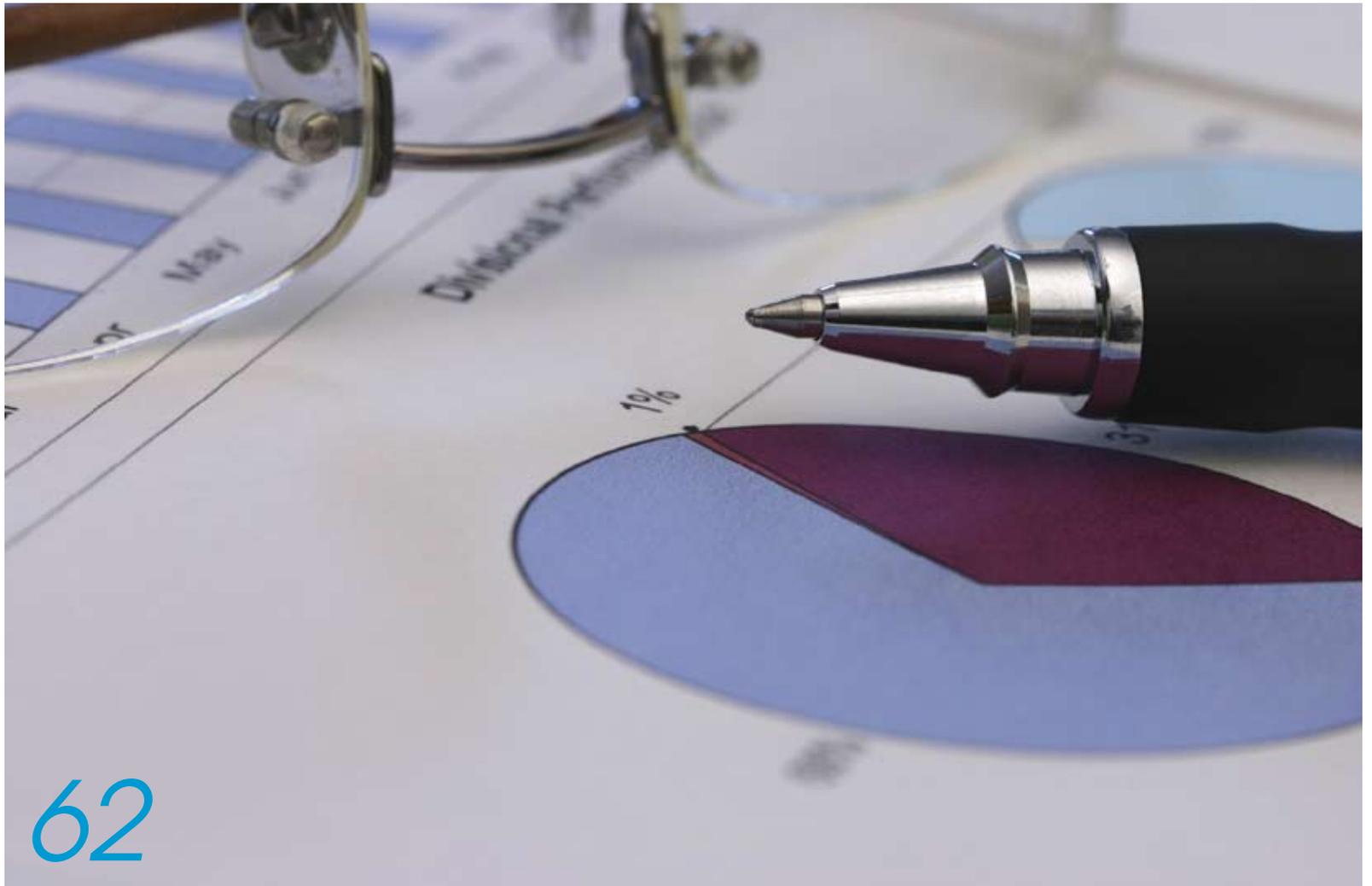
We of the human race are God's employees. Our job description is clear. Contribute to the enterprise's bottom line to the point of profitability: the spiritual assets must exceed the debits. To ensure the firm's ongoing success an accounting system is put into place which examines each employee's performance vis-a-vis the company's bottom line.

Rosh Hashana is the day of accounting where each Jew is called before the heavenly accountants who weigh every spiritual transaction, as well as every infraction, to determine whether the employee's contract will be renewed for the coming year. It is for this reason that Jews traditionally spend Elul, the month preceding Rosh Hashana, carefully examining their every action

to see how it impacted the overall spiritual profitability of the enterprise, God's universe.

In performing **teshuva**, repentance, we figure out where we went wrong and just as importantly how we're going to fix it. And on the Day of Judgment we arrive at the synagogue somewhat frightened, subdued and introspective, but ready to plead for the renewal of the contract -- another year of life -- because at least we have identified the problem and have taken measures to make sure it doesn't happen again.

But who can truly say that they've done all they can do as God's employees and are therefore assured of a positive outcome on Rosh Hashana? Therefore we are asked to consider our fates as hanging in the balance and we are given until Yom Kippur to more fully examine our moral issues and better implement our fixes and resolutions. On Yom Kippur, we are so consumed by the uncertainty of our fate that we can't even think about eating or drinking. Over and over we try to account for our sins and resolve for them never to recur as we stand before the CEO, God Almighty Himself. Late in the day, we must conclude that for all our **teshuva** we still might find ourselves a tad less than fully qualified for a renewal of our life contracts.



Just when it seems that all is lost, we look up and notice that God is our own Father in heaven. So in the final prayer service of the High Holy Days, we beseech Him, "Avinu Malkeinu -- our Father, our King!" Hey Dad, it's me. I'm your son. I know I messed up but please, this one time, give me a break. What father can resist that kind of sincerity on the part of his beloved child.

So He forgives us but asks us to undergo one more challenge. "Now that we've made up, you and I, why don't you come on over to My house and see if you can get along with your siblings as well."

The holiday of Sukkot is all about leaving our permanent abodes and moving into a house with walls as sturdy as you want to make them, but one where the roof -- the separation and barrier between us and God -- is intentionally only loosely covered. This makes it God's house. We are further commanded on Sukkot to take the four species, each symbolic of a different type of Jew, and hold them together every day of the holiday. After restoring our relationship with the Almighty, He invites us into His home where we are asked to unify with all the Jewish People and live harmoniously as one big family for a full week.

Now that we've reunified as a family, God is loath to have us leave after seven days and longingly asks us to hang around for another day which we call Shmini Atzeret, "the eighth, extended day" of the holiday.

And, the next final day of this holiday is called Simchat Torah, "the happiness of Torah." We dance ecstatically holding the sacred Torah scrolls close to our bodies while we circle the **bimah**.

According to the Jewish mystics, Simchat Torah is not so much that we happily celebrate the beauty of our Jewish Torah, but that once we have restored our relationships with our Father and our brothers and sisters, it is the Torah and by extension God Himself, Who joyously celebrates us, His beloved children.

What a month! What a way to start the year!



QUESTIONS FROM GOD

one-minute film

Can **you** guess what they are?

Find out at:
aish.com/movies

With 170,000 email subscribers and 2.4 million monthly visitors, Aish.com is the leading Judaism website, featuring insightful wisdom on spirituality, parenting, marriage, dating, current events, weekly Torah portion, holidays, live Western Wall camera and much, much more!

Same Old New Year?

by Rabbi Dovid Goldman

While traveling with my family this summer, we passed the hours in the car listening to a selection of books on CD. After getting through a four-CD-long book by Beverly Cleary called "Henry and the Clubhouse," we slid in the first of three CDs of "Old Yeller." I knew then the same thing about the book that everyone else who did not read it knew – that it's about a dog who dies at the end.

The rest, for those who still do not know, is the story of a 14-year-old boy on a farm on the 19th century Texas frontier who has to take care of his mother, his five-year-old brother and the various farming responsibilities while his father has to spend several months driving cattle up north to Kansas. He has to hunt dinner, gather in the corn harvest and keep his brother from – among other things – playing in their drinking water and getting killed by a protective mama bear.

Driving along and listening, I couldn't get the phrase "builds character" out of my mind. The real-life responsibility of living off the land without having all your needs – or almost any of your needs - readily and pleasantly available definitely brings something out of a person. Once upon a time, experiences that build character were recognized and appreciated as central to a good upbringing - even long after Old Yeller's farm was turned into a shopping mall or an apartment complex.

To me, our ability to build character reveals an ever-present truth about who we are that is oh so easy to forget in today's manufactured society: There is untold depth to our personalities that lies beneath a shallow surface.

Everything in today's world encourages us – almost forces us – to be shallow. The more instant our gratifications can be the better. The less we have to have our sensitivities ruffled, the fewer inconveniences we have to face, the happier we are. And the more shallow.

There is untold depth
to our personalities that
lies beneath a shallow
surface.

It is an unpleasant yet unavoidable truth that building character by facing the raw challenges of the world **works**. Our sense of self is deepened and broadened, all our emotions become more refined, our minds are sharpened and we feel more stable and at peace with ourselves. For those who experience it, it is inescapable that it was meant to be this way.

In Jewish thought, this is at the core of the purpose of creation, which we remember each year on Rosh Hashana – the anniversary

of the creation of Adam and Eve. Man is only half-created - as a shallow, finite, shell-of-a-person that tends to seek fulfillment only of his most immediate needs. His true identity awaits the forcible application of his creative energies to express the infinite depth within.

This, I believe, represents the solution to the problem posed in the title above – "Same Old New Year?" When someone is living a finite and shallow kind of life, the time **will** come when there is not much new and exciting to keep life interesting. Each new year will start to feel a lot like the last one, and various escapes and distractions become increasingly necessary to avoid feeling dull.

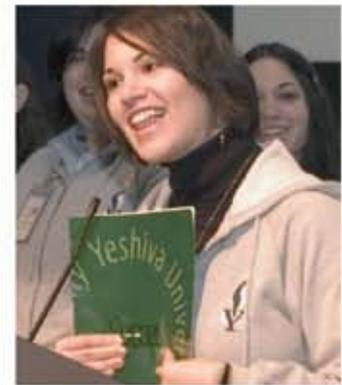
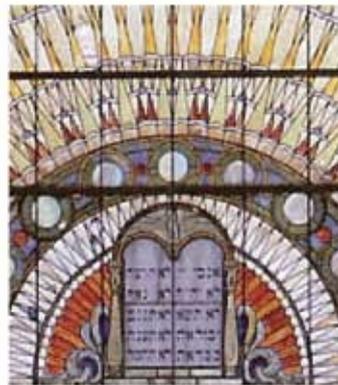
Somehow, those who have successfully weathered the challenges of character-building do not tend to have this problem. They have tapped into a deeper part of their being that allows them to constantly discover fresh and new experiences, ideas and opportunities. Each new year offers an invaluable chance to evaluate their direction in life and dedicate themselves anew to their deeply felt responsibilities.

So this year, challenge yourself. Seek to break out of society's surface-culture and, in applying yourself as fully as you can, discover within you an infinite soul that, in the words of the Talmud, "should seem brand new every single day."

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