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In this issue of *American Jewish Spirit* we celebrate Chanukah and its connection to family values. Families come in many different packages. For some it's a group of friends they can count on. For others it is a grandparent or an aunt or uncle. No matter the arrangements, the important thing is that as Jews we believe in family.

Studies show that the strength of family and friends and a deep spiritual life are good predictors of health and longevity. In this issue of *American Jewish Spirit* you'll find several features tied to family, Judaism, learning and of course Chanukah. You'll learn some unconventional ways like going to Walmart to understand the meaning of life. You can sink your teeth into an amazing educational tool kit from the Taryag Mitzvah Project and you can learn the mysteries and meanings of the Mitzvah of mezuzah and its relationship to Chanukah.

Studies show that the strength of family and friends and a deep spiritual life are good predictors of health and longevity.

Each year as Chanukah approaches, my family looks forward to the winter holiday. We try not to settle for celebrating the same way we did the year before, but to challenge ourselves to learn and do something additional. Whether we read a different book on Chanukah or take a new class, we dig deeper into Chanukah and do more than we did the year before.

This year we'll add some interesting and unusual new family activities. One of the nights, of course, we'll celebrate with the traditional custom of having latkes, applesauce and sour cream. But on the other nights we'll be with our community-family one night, serving a meal to the needy, we'll visit a local nursing home another night and maybe even go through our toys and books to make a donation to a local shelter. It's so important to have time like this with just your immediate family so you can model the values you believe in and grow together into the family you and your spouse would like to create.

Another important way to strengthen family ties and dig deeper into Chanukah is to build meaningful bonds with your ancestors from previous generations. In our home, each of the menorahs has a special meaning to us but we don't hold back from lighting them. We don't believe menorahs were meant to look very beautiful and special sitting on their shelves and never used. In our house, our menorahs have a little too much built up wax (which I keep meaning to figure out how to clean without scratching).

One of our five special menorahs that we use belonged to my grandmother Lily and was sent to me after her passing. As one of the few grandchildren to live our Jewish heritage, I received this honor because my father hoped his mother's menorah would actually get used. Boy, was his right!

Another menorah belonged to my mother-in law Hannah Devorah (OBM) while the other 3 include two we bought recently and one hand made in school. Using these various menorahs reminds me of the connection between the past and the present - and watching our own children recite the blessings as we light them is one of the most special family moments of our whole year.

From our family to yours, happy Chanukah,

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features

Chanukah 2006

In this issue, we...

- > **Explore** the little-known family dimension of Chanukah, focusing on the lasting value of getting parents and kids together for weeknight meals, despite challenging schedules;
- > **Learn about** the Taryag Mitzvah Project – an exciting new approach to Jewish education for young and old, drawing on the unique perspective of the Torah’s 613 *Mitzvoth*;
- > **Report on** the timely success of weekly Father & Son Torah learning events that take place in the winter months across the globe;
- > **Discover** the inner meaning shared by Mezuzah and Chanukah and their lesson for making your home a special place;
- > **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 summer-camp in upstate New York that doesn’t rest during the year – keeping connections with kids and their parents long after the school year starts.



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The Taryag Mitzvah Encyclopedia Project is a stunning and super-ambitious new initiative in Jewish education that is winning praise from all corners of Jewish life.



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Struggling to get everyone to the dinner table at the same time? Chanukah reminds us that it is a battle worth waging.



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Chanukah and Mezuzah are connected by our tradition, both reminding us that the glare on the outside should never outshine the inner glow.



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Hundreds of programs across the continent are making learning Torah a treat for boys of all ages - and for their fathers, too.

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The best of what's new in the world of Jewish living and learning that can inform, educate and inspire you!

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Building your soul is much like building your body. Both struggle against the body's preference to do it's own thing and both require focus, skill and determination to scale the heights of human ability.

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by **AJS Staff**

Denise Hametz has spent her career telling stories of greatness through art.

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by **Y Korn**

One camp in the Catskills includes the whole family in the camp experience – all year long.



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A Sense of Wonder
by **Doron Kornbluth**

Albert Einstein once said: "There are two ways of looking at the world - either you see nothing as a miracle or you see everything as a miracle."

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On the Return of Lost Objects
by **Sarah Shapiro**

How lovely, to get back what one thought was gone! There's something about having a lost item restored that momentarily ties together all the loose strings of one's life.

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Kosher by Design - Short on Time
with **Gavriel A. Sanders**

An exclusive interview with Susie Fishbein, whose new cookbook (featured here last issue) *Kosher by Design Short on Time: Fabulous Food Faster* has just been released.

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If the Dollar is King...

The one time of year Judaism encourages families to give money to their children is in the glow of the Chanukah candles. Why then?

news from

the jewish spirit network



THE PHOENIX COMMUNITY KOLLEL, PUBLISHERS OF ARIZONA JEWISH SPIRIT, LAUNCHES JAC — JEWISH ARIZONANS ON CAMPUS

Reported by University of Arizona student Joseph D. Robbins.

His title says it best: Rabbi Jordan Brumer-JAC-man. A fitting theme song would be "duh-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh,JAC-MAN!"

An acronym for Jewish Arizonans on Campus, JAC is a Phoenix Community Kollel student outreach group run by Rabbi Brumer at the University of Arizona in Tucson. According to the JAC website, myjac.org, JAC was founded in the summer of 2006 in order to "engage Jewish college students through innovative social and educational programs."

Working closely with the University of Arizona Hillel, JAC provides students with a plethora of engaging programs aimed at increasing the Jewish identity of the students regardless of their denomination.

This relationship has helped JAC quickly become the most recognizable Jewish group on campus, as evidenced by the students' attendance at weekly programs and near-daily meetings with Rabbis Brumer and Adler. While JAC is now booming and hoping to grow even more as every day passes, the project would not be possible without the love and dedication of the JAC-man.

AWESOME PROGRAMMING

The programs range from "Hot Food Hot Topics," where students learn Judaism's stance on pressing topics such as the afterlife and anti-Semitism, "SEAL" where one-on-one peer study is followed

by a discussion on what they've learned with Rabbi Eli Adler, "Sushi Shmooze" a weekly dinner gathering in which students learn how to make sushi and meet other Jewish students and "One-On-One Learning" with one of the rabbis.

According to Devora Magier, co-chair of Kedma - the one of the Jewish student groups on Campus, "the programs are an opportunity for students from different Jewish backgrounds to come together and learn and interact with each other, as opposed to just listening to someone teach.

"Before the Kollel rabbis started coming down here it was just Kedma organizing programs and we didn't have the manpower to organize them for every student," Magier continued. "Now that JAC is here, everybody can benefit from the various programs and there is unity across the board between all student participants."

MAIMONIDES LEADERS FELLOWSHIP

Additionally, Rabbi Brumer ran the extremely successful "Maimonides Leaders Fellowship" program in the spring of 2006, which brought students together, teaching them to become modern Jewish leaders through the use of Torah study.

This intense program spanning the spring semester of 2006, brought together students from different Jewish backgrounds and current levels of observance, and through a weekly two-hour session, taught the students how to become Jewish leaders.

I had never really considered myself to be a significant member of the Jewish Community. It (Maimonides Leaders Fellowship) definitely made me realize I was a Jewish leader and it motivated me to take on the position with Kedma."

— Tom Mosby

According to Stefanie Philips, "If it weren't for the Brumers I wouldn't have gotten to go through Maimonides. It gave me an opportunity to experience Judaism through different perspectives while strengthening my own."

Stefanie, the former chair of Hillel's Keshet and Reform student group on campus and current Hillel Treasurer, "would never have imagined I'd be doing a program like Maimonides before coming to college."

The daughter of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father, Stefanie's Jewish background was "very, very entry level growing up, so until she became a Bat Mitzvah and took things into her own hands she wasn't very involved."

"I've been able to develop a stronger connection to Judaism through learning different aspects of the religion," she says. "I may have never come across or understood them without learning them from Rabbi Brumer."

TRIPS

JAC also offers students incredible opportunities to take Jewish trips to New York, Santa Barbara, London and Israel. The trips offer a healthy balance of touristy activities and fun for students with guest lectures by world-class rabbis and home hospitality at observant homes. Getting to see Jewish life in New York and Israel, among other places, can be transformational.

Antar De Sa, a fellow Maimonides graduate and New York trip participant, also traveled to Israel through JAC this past summer. After introducing

him to a trip in which he could see the country and study at Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem's Old City, JAC helped Antar out with a scholarship and sent him on his way to experience the Holy Land.

"They put me on a right track and it changed my life," Antar said. "Looking at the Kotel the first night we got there, I knew I was home. I knew where I was supposed to be."



A TEACHER AND A FRIEND

Joining Rabbi Brumer is Rabbi Elimelech Adler, coming to JAC after running various Jewish high school clubs in Phoenix, Scottsdale and the surrounding areas. After being asked to attend a fabulous Maimonides Shabbaton, Rabbi Adler realized that college outreach was what he wanted to be doing.

Now the second member of the JAC-team, Rabbi Adler spends most of his day meeting with students over a Starbucks, and learning virtually anything with them from questions on the existence of G-d to studying the Talmud.

Much like Rabbi Brumer, Rabbi Adler is a favorite among students for his laid-back style, and approachability. Antar, who regularly studies with Rabbi Adler, called him a teacher and a friend, "studying with Rabbi Adler is great for me. We go in and talk about my problems and he gives me a rabbinic perspective."

For Rabbi Adler, educating students is what it is all about. "I always tell my students 'if you want to make an educated decision, GET EDUCATED!'"

THE FUTURE OF JAC

As for the future of JAC, Rabbi Brumer has enlisted the help of Rabbi Adler, and their Moses and Aharon, Batman and Robinsque duo has already increased the number of classes and the amount of outreach they can do, ultimately resulting in a greater number of students they can touch.

For the future, Rabbi Brumer's JAC goals are for the project to work its hardest to, reach out to more students who want to get involved, while adding more manpower so more people can be touched and reached. "I want to make JAC a positive addition to the existing campus Jewish community."

It seems like he's already done a pretty incredible job. A Tzaddik in modern times, Rabbi Jordan Brumer continues to touch the lives of thousands of students with the help of his wife Risa, and his fellow JAC-man Rabbi Eli Adler.

University of Arizona Student Joseph D. Robbins is a Junior, double-majoring in Creative Writing and Judaic Studies. Joe spent this past summer in Israel living in Jerusalem and writing for the Jerusalem Post. After graduating, Joe hopes to spend a year in Israel, studying and writing.

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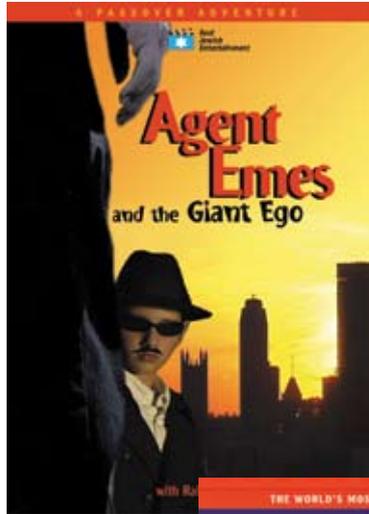
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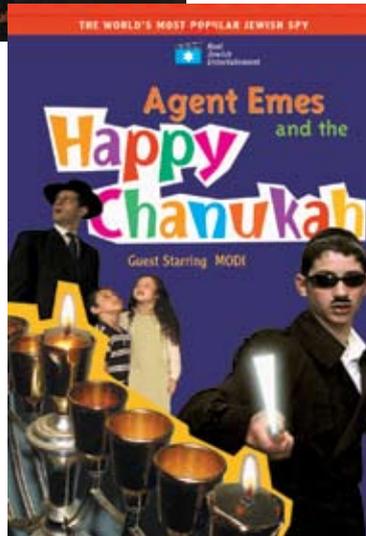


world, in the spring of 2003, and shot them both that summer. The challenges have been many as Cohen has tried to single-handedly jump-start a market that did not previously exist. Agent Emes is the first live-action, direct-to-video "edutainment" adventure series of its kind on VHS, DVD and CD-ROM.

Produced and directed by Leibel Cohen of Reel Jewish entertainment, this delightful spy-thriller is a sure-fire hit for Jewish pre-teens. Agent Emes has gradually made its mark around the Jewish world because the good-natured humor of the stories makes them accessible as well as entertaining. The Torah-based stories teach Jewish values, customs, and culture in a fun and warm way.

With a non-existent advertising budget, Cohen has had to rely on word of mouth to spread the news around the Jewish world that quality entertainment for kids exists. Cohen has been bolstered, though, by positive accolades from many well-known Jewish figures, including Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, who thought so highly of the Agent Emes series that he agreed to guest star in the fourth episode, released in 2005.

The stars of the film series are none other than Cohen's own children, with his 12-year-old son, Sholom Ber, in the title role.



Now, a year later, Cohen is poised to release his fifth and longest adventure - "Agent Emes and the Happy Chanukah," coming out in time for this Chanukah season. Agent Emes is here to rescue you from the crazy shopping malls. These films are the perfect gift for your children, grandchildren, neighbor's children, or even you! This Chanukah, order all five fun-filled adventures from Sameach Music, 1-888-3-SAMEACH, or directly from the producers at www.agent-emes.com.

Cohen scripted the first two episodes, "The Fish Head," a Rosh Hashanah mystery, and "Rabbi-Napped," an allegorical adventure exploring how and why G-d created the

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PRECAUTIONS: Folic acid in doses above 1.0 mg daily may obscure pernicious anemia in that hematologic remission can occur while neurological manifestations progress.

HOW SUPPLIED: NDC 58177-458-26 bottle of 90 tablets. P4362 02/04

Manufactured by
KV Pharmaceutical Co. for
ETHEX Corporation
St. Louis, MO 63044

NutriNate® Chewable U

Chewable Prenatal Multivitamin Tablet with Iron

Rx Only

CONTRAINDICATIONS: NutriNate® Chewable is contraindicated in patients with known hypersensitivity to any of its ingredients. Also, all iron compounds are contraindicated in patients with hemosiderosis, hemochromatosis, or hemolytic anemias. Pernicious anemia is a contraindication, as folic acid may obscure its signs and symptoms.

WARNING: Folic acid alone is improper therapy in the treatment of pernicious anemia and other megaloblastic anemias where Vitamin B₁₂ is deficient

PRECAUTIONS: General: Folic acid in doses above 1.0 mg daily may obscure pernicious anemia, in that hematologic remission can occur while neurological manifestations remain progressive.

Pediatric Use: Safety and effectiveness in pediatric patients have not been established.

Geriatric Use: Clinical studies on this product have not been performed in sufficient numbers of subjects aged 65 and over to determine whether elderly subjects respond differently from younger subjects. In general, dose selection for an elderly patient should be cautious, usually starting at the low end of the dosing range, reflecting the greater frequency of decreased hepatic, renal, or cardiac function, and of concomitant disease or other drug therapy.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: Folic Acid: Allergic sensitizations have been reported following both oral and parenteral administration of folic acid. **Ferrous Fumarate:** Gastrointestinal disturbances (anorexia, nausea, diarrhea, constipation) occur occasionally, but are usually mild and subside with continuation of therapy and physician encouragement. Although the absorption of iron is best when taken between meals, occasional G.I. disturbances may be controlled by giving NutriNate® Chewable shortly after meals.

HOW SUPPLIED: NutriNate® Chewable Tablets for oral administration are supplied as round, tan, mottled tablets, debossed "351" over bisect, on one side and debossed "ETHEX" on the other side, in bottles of 90 tablets (NDC 58177-351-26). P4509 06/04

Manufactured by
KV Pharmaceutical Co. for
ETHEX Corporation
St. Louis, MO 63044

Ultra NatalCare® U

Prenatal Multivitamin/Mineral Tablets

Rx Only

CONTRAINDICATIONS: This product is contraindicated in patients with a known hypersensitivity to any of the ingredients.

WARNING: Folic Acid alone is improper therapy in the treatment of pernicious anemia and other megaloblastic anemias where vitamin B₁₂ is deficient. Folic acid in doses above 1.0 mg daily may obscure pernicious anemia in that hematologic remission can occur while neurological manifestations progress.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: Allergic sensitization has been reported following both oral and parenteral administration of folic acid.

HOW SUPPLIED: NDC 58177-292-04 bottle of 100 tablets. P4368 02/04

Manufactured by
KV Pharmaceutical Co. for
ETHEX Corporation
St. Louis, MO 63044



ajs | for your life

ReJewVenated Shlock Rock Style!

Some people think that Shlock Rock is just another band that goes out and makes people happy. Lenny Solomon, lead singer and founder of the band, enthusiastically agrees! But, Solomon adds, in addition to providing his fans with an enjoyable performance, there is a more important mission: "Shlock Rock songs teach Torah and positive Jewish values through music. Shlock Rock makes people feel good about Judaism and about themselves."

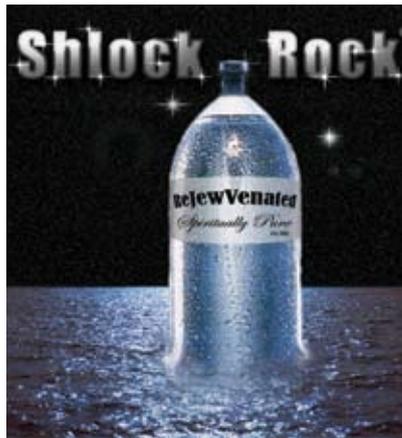
"Be Good Be Cool Be Jewish" is the motto of Shlock Rock, and since 1986 Shlock Rock has released 27 CD's which do just that. There are three types of Shlock Rock songs: Parodies, where Lenny has taken popular songs and written clever educational lyrics on almost every Jewish topic imaginable; original songs, where Lenny has written original music and lyrics in English and in Hebrew; and songs for children, in which Lenny's lyrical wit is simplified for pre-schoolers.

The music can be used in settings both formal and informal, affiliated or not affiliated. Lenny added, "I once heard a rabbi say, in today's day and age you have to like Judaism. If you don't you will leave. The whole point of this music is to make people like their Jewish roots. Plus, when you use songs from the secular music world you connect

with the Jewish people in that world, and in that way they are able to receive instant messages. After twenty years of performing, it is not unusual to have three generations of families at a Shlock Rock concert. Very often the grandfather will come up to me and say, "Fifteen years ago my daughter came to your show and now she has brought her children."

The latest Shlock Rock CD, released this past August, is called ReJewVenated! It contains fourteen fabulous tracks and runs for a total of 56 minutes. There are nine parodies and five original songs. The theme of this CD is ReJewVenation, and is full of songs about coming back to the Torah. Topics include the story of Samson, the creation of the world, Noah, Pesach and more. There are also songs which feature Israel and Israeli life as well as staying Jewish in the secular world. How can one remain Jewish in this world while we are in exile? The answer, of course, is to get "ReJewVenated".

Shlock Rock music has been taught in over 19 countries and over 225 cities worldwide and if it is up to Lenny it will go on forever. You can get ReJewvenated in all Jewish Bookstores or online at www.shlockrock.com



*If you often feel tired,
it could be anemia.*

*If you're Jewish,
it could be Gaucher Disease.*



You may never have heard of Gaucher Disease (pronounced "Go-Shay"). But it is found primarily in Jews of Eastern or Central European descent. About one out of every 15 people within this group carries the Gaucher gene, a ratio far higher than Tay Sachs. Gaucher can occur only if both parents carry the gene. *It is not gender or age specific, and can affect anyone.*

Gaucher warning signs include:

- Fatigue
- Bleeding problems and easy bruising
- Enlarged abdomen
- Bone pain
- Easily fractured bones
- Enlarged liver or spleen
- Low platelet count
- Anemia

Gaucher can be detected early with a blood test. Fortunately, effective treatments are available. The consequences of the disease can be debilitating, so don't wait and wonder, get the facts now.

For additional information, testing and treatment, call toll-free: **1-877-778-0864**

*Ask your doctor
about testing.*



National Gaucher Foundation

www.gaucherdisease.org

6 Spiritual Lessons from Competitive Sports

Yes, sports has been known to occasionally bring out the worst in people. And yes, the glorification of the physical and of beating opponents are very non-Jewish values. In fact, they are among the values the Maccabees fought against in resisting ancient Greek culture in the years leading up to the miracle of Chanukah.

At the same time, however, the Talmud praises something about the culture of ancient Greece that is alive and well today in competitive sports – an insatiable appetite to attain the heights of human ability. Athletes play their hearts out, bringing to bear every skill and strategy, method and motivation, power and perseverance. They thrive on the drive to be unstoppable in their pursuit of excellence and they never tire of getting even better.

There is no better attitude to bring to the world of spiritual growth. Building your soul is much like building your body. Both struggle against the body's preference to do its own thing and both require focus, skill and determination to scale the heights of human ability. Here are 6 lessons we can learn from sports about how to be the best you can possibly be.

1. NO Pain, No Gain

Growth costs – it's as simple as that. Building muscle happens when you push beyond your capacity, actually damaging the muscle fibers. If it doesn't hurt, it didn't happen.

Your soul has 'muscles' just like your body and they work the exact same way. The resistance your soul pushes against is not the force of gravity but two other kinds of forces: (1) physical tendencies and desires and (2) the black-hole-like force of your ego. Whatever exercise it takes to bench-press 100 pounds, you can be sure it takes even more to build the strength you need to take on your ego or your body - let alone both at the same time!

Spiritual muscle comes from exercising your mind - thinking and evaluating and understanding until you can hold on to Judaism's 'heavier' ideas. You will need this strength and these ideas to beat your body and ego. As you know from your own educational experiences, thinking about ideas that are really deep can give you a headache. The lesson is, if it's not giving you a headache, it's not working. Work Hard, Play Hard AND Think Hard – it's the only way to grow.

2. Score Early and Often

One thing that makes sports such a great source of spiritual wisdom for the Jew is that the goal is clear – score points and win. Judaism is not just about general values and ideals – it is full of specific opportunities to put points on the board. Though commonly taken as traditional rituals, the *Mitzvot* are all about spiritual value, and every one counts in a unique way.

The attitude we ought to take to every Mitzvah is exactly the same as, say, a basketball player dribbling the basketball. As soon as a sliver of opportunity opens up to take a good shot, pass to someone who is open or drive down the lane, watch out. He will draw on all his training, exercise and focus to perform as quickly and forcefully as possible to get that ball into that basket if it kills him.

The Hebrew word that describes the ideal approach to *Mitzvot* is *Zerizut* – implying a quick, energized determination. Score early and often means don't fool around – know what it takes to win and get started making it happen. Set the pace to succeed. Maintain the spiritual stance you need to jump at the opportunities that present themselves and see them to completion. You're not guaranteed a victory, but you'll be way ahead of the game.

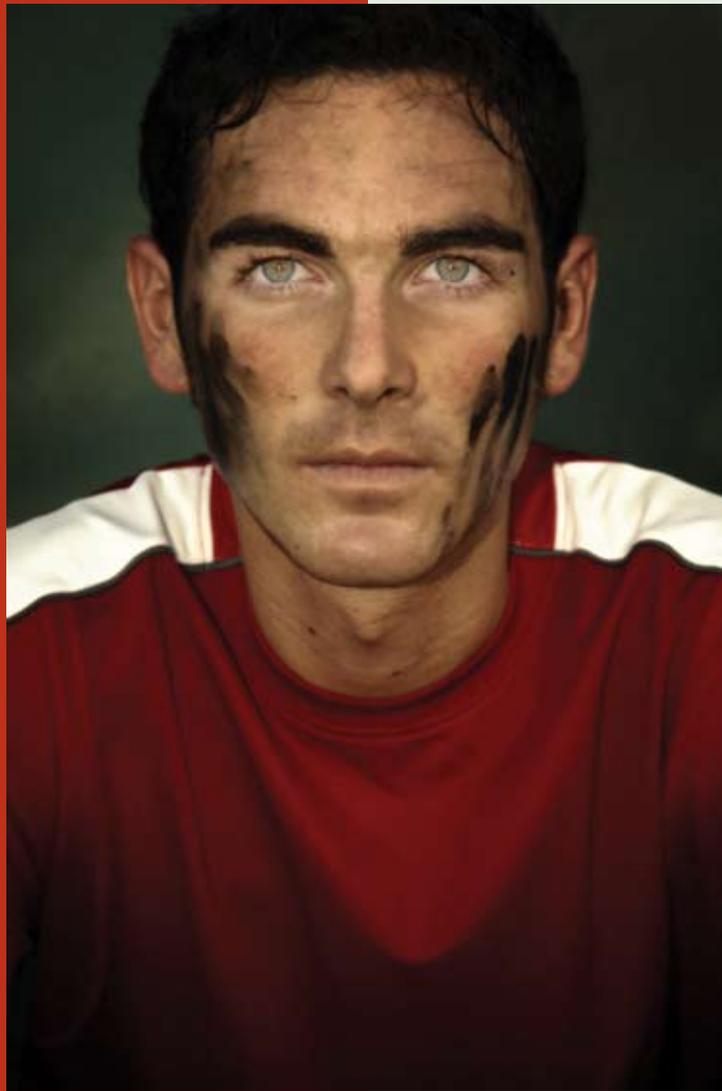
3. Keep Your Eye on the Ball

When you're standing in the batter's box and the pitch you're supposed to hit is coming towards you, isn't it entirely natural to keep your eye on the ball? What causes so many people to take their eye off the ball that this line has become a coach's refrain?

For one thing, concentration is not easy. As the ball is screaming towards you, you have to concentrate on the mechanics of your swing and on mustering the power to send it flying. In the less than a second available, it's not hard to forget about aiming the bat exactly where it needs to go.

But there may be something else, also. When someone is unsure of himself and lacks focus, part of him wants to just close his eyes, swing away and hope for the best. We have a tendency to drift away from meeting challenges head-on and to get away with making a good swing and just hoping we'll connect with the ball.

Spiritually speaking, "keep your eye on the ball" means know exactly what you need to accomplish and resist the wishful thinking that the details will work themselves out. It's not easy to remain focused on what you need to do, even when it is as simple as hitting a ball with a bat.



4. Shake it Off and Get Back in the Game

Every game has its errors and air-balls, double-faults and fumbles.

And every coach says the same thing to his players when they get upset with themselves for messing up: shake it off and get back in the game.

The coach has his eye on the outcome and is far more concerned with the final score than with your individual performance. He knows you need to be playing at your best for the rest of the game – there will be plenty of time to agonize over the sloppy turnover after the game. For now, your team needs you. However much you may be to blame, forget about it and play like a hero. There is no point in allowing a mistake to get you off track. Never let your errors eat you up inside.

In Jewish spirituality it is no different. It's all about ultimately being your best. As closely connected as the words "Jewish" and "guilt" are in

the common mind, that kind of guilt is decidedly un-Jewish. Your job is to do your best every minute - getting down about shortcomings or about not living up to expectations will only slow you down. Always stay in the game and do your best.

by Dovid Goldman

5. A Walk's as Good as a Hit

When you have the opportunity to be up at bat, it's easy to be over-anxious to clobber the ball. We need to be reminded that often, the best way to make progress in life is not to swing at a bad pitch.

In baseball, holding back your eagerness and choosing not to go after a lousy pitch is rewarded with a free base. In spiritual growth as well, much of your progress comes from using a good eye to recognize a bad idea and lay off it. It is not enough to be committed to doing good things. You need a balance of the strength to act with the strength to resist - and the good judgment to figure out which one to use. It can actually take more strength to resist a tempting opportunity than to take even the most challenging action.

In fact, the Talmud declares that the true *Gibor*, the one with the greatest strength, is not the one who conquers cities but the one who can keep himself in check. It's not as glorious (which is part of the challenge) but ultimately, it is the greatest testament to your value - you don't need to be a hero to be a great success. Sometimes, all you need to do is take things as they are, and make things happen from there.

6. Just Do It

Competing with the human being's remarkable and varied skills that enable him to build cities, fight disease and send man to the moon is an opposing skill: the ability to identify the most stubborn excuses not to bother trying. Man is able to come up with an endless and fascinating array of excuses not to take a path that does not immediately feel good. All kinds of thoughts distort his thinking to keep him safe from embracing a direction that will go against his grain.

In sports, the adage is "just do it." Forget about all the thoughts and fears and speculations and projections and theories and hang-ups - take a deep breath and just do it. There is no other way. Once you have taken the plunge and thrown yourself into your workout or your competition, you get into a groove and, however rigorous it may be, the thrill of the performance begins to

overtake the drag of the effort.

Right up there with diet and exercise as a leading inspiration for excuses is Judaism. Even once you are committed to living a spiritual Jewish life, making it happen is not easy. Inspiration and idealism, values and beliefs, respect for great people and love of knowledge are all at the core of our dedication to Jewish living. But often, they are not enough to get us to the finish line (or, occasionally, out of the starter's box). When that happens, there is nothing to do but to take a deep breath, picture yourself as an athlete, and *just do it*.



capturing the beauty of giving

by AJS Staff

DENISE HAMETZ TELLS STORIES OF GREATNESS THROUGH ART

Denise Hametz is the president of Adir Galleries, based in New Jersey. Since 1980, she has been striving to express the deeply-Jewish value of appreciating greatness through the medium of artwork. Through various art forms, from wall-hangings to all types of Judaica, she usually begins with verses from Torah sources and seeks to design a piece that will touch the heart of its eventual owner who is rarely the purchaser. Her clients are mostly organizations seeking a meaningful award to present to leaders, donors and volunteers.

AJS spoke with her recently about her inspiration, methods and artistic values.

WHAT KIND OF ARTWORK DO YOU FOCUS ON?

We do many kinds of work. Recently, I've added a magnificent line of papercuts. Papercuts are a time honored art form, but for many years it

seemed as if it was a lost art. With the resurgence of interest, some Jewish artists decided to try their hand – some of them with great success.

My interest piqued around the same time as this most recent Intifada, and my personal mandate was to find someone doing papercuts in Israel. At a time when tourism was down and Israeli artists were struggling to survive, I had to show solidarity with them – as well as support the Israeli economy. I was fortunate in finding just the right people. Our collaboration produced 60 original papercuts with magnificently intricate designs.



Each of our designs incorporates a verse from the Torah and the personal text into the overall piece. Every papercut is then matted and framed. Most papercuts come in small, medium and large, so as to accommodate budgetary concerns. Although most papercuts are done in ivory, many people like color, so for them we can hand paint the artwork. The response has been amazing. The

Satisfying a Humble Client

An Israel-based organization was honoring a noted philanthropist. Problem? The benefactor was a very humble man, uncomfortable with receiving or displaying awards. My job? To come up with something so special that he would not only take it home, but enjoy using it.

I produced a one-of-a kind challah board out of fine hardwood. The piece was several inches high and there was a hidden drawer which, when pulled out, revealed 18 hand-made sterling silver cordial cups. The top of the challah board had a hand-carved glass insert with a scene of Jerusalem. And incorporated into the woodworking was a small pedestal that held a full-sized, hand-made sterling silver Kiddush Cup with the words "If I forget Thee O Jerusalem..." in Hebrew.

To me, the piece seemed perfect, but only time would tell. The morning after the dinner the executive director called me. His honoree was delighted with the gift and made a point of saying how he looked forward to using it on Shabbat. The challah board may have been my design – but the real credit goes to the artists involved in its execution: a graphic artist, a glass carver, a woodcrafter and a silversmith. It's their talents that are reflected in the final product.





wording is meaningful, the artwork extraordinary, and it's all integrated into one piece.

WHAT PROCESS DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP SUCH BEAUTIFUL ART AS A CUSTOM-DESIGNED AWARD?

Although I have no formal art training, I'm a very visual person. I love meeting new artists, attending craft shows and going into galleries. Seeing all the creativity really inspires me. And somehow I am able to integrate all of these visual stimuli into original ideas. I then take my ideas – sometimes accompanied by very crude sketches – to either a graphic artist or a particular craftsman. We work on the concept until something special emerges.

Of course, my approach is not flawless. I often look back at a piece and question how I could have produced it that way. Then I'll get a call from a client asking to purchase that exact piece from one of my catalogs. I'm never embarrassed to say to them: "Since the publication of the catalog – I've reworked the piece. It's much nicer now. Can I send you the new version?" I'm always concerned about improving my work and giving my clients the best of my efforts.

WHAT SPECIFIC PARTS OF THE TORAH HAVE INSPIRED YOU AND HOW DO YOU INCORPORATE THE PASSAGE FROM THE TORAH INTO THE ARTWORK?

Over the years I've used more than 100 different verses from the Torah as integral parts of my awards. Coming up with appropriate verses has been personally rewarding. I've taken time to read through Pirke Avot and Tehillim (Psalms). I've looked through the Siddur (prayer book) and had friends and rabbis guide me through Tanach to find just the right passage for a particular person or organization. This learning and sharing of Torah continues to be a meaningful part of my work. Adir Gallery awards are not just token gifts. They represent my collaboration with talented artists – enhanced by the depth and beauty of our rich tradition and my personal learning and growth.



I search through the Torah, the Talmud and other Jewish texts for a specific verse or phrase that embodies the person receiving the award. I want the recipient to connect with their heritage and connect with the piece of art, whether it is hanging in their office or home. I want them to pass by it and smile and for people to ask – "where did you get this?" I can spend hours and hours with a client learning about a person and the organization in order to make the award authentic and real. The quotes have to just jump out at me and then the inspiration comes.

Our designs run the gamut from traditional to contemporary. Awards feature sayings in Hebrew and English that reflect something about the recipient's Midot (positive attributes), or their special contribution to the institution. Some of the sayings reflect the philosophy of the organization or a general principle that Jewish life is based on.



WHO HAVE YOU WORKED WITH?

Individuals don't usually buy my work because I mostly work with organizations, but – I'll never say never! If someone called me wanting to create some special piece of artwork, we could discuss the project in detail.

Not everyone likes to be recognized publicly or even to showcase an award at home, so I have to be very creative and careful in how I work with the organization to come up with something personal that the recipient will value. I can't tell you all my tricks – but I do a lot of detective work!

A partial list of some of the recipients of my work includes government officials such as Senator Hillary Clinton, Mayor Rudi Giuliani, and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, as well as Ariel Sharon and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert; entertainers such as Bill Cosby and Diana Ross; Jewish leaders such as Natan Sharansky and Elie Wiesel; and sports personalities such as Joe Torre and even Magic Johnson!

Photos courtesy of Adir Galleries

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GALLERY



ONE HOUR AT WAL*MART

by Yaakov Salomon



WHAT I LEARNED IN 60 MINUTES AT LIFE'S SUPERSTORE

Did I really need to buy a gas cap for my Toyota on a late Friday afternoon?

Probably not.

I suppose it is a good idea to have a cap on your gas tank. Somehow mine got lost and I had been driving around without one for weeks. It was starting to bother me. And I have a problem with procrastination anyway.

And so I pulled into my trusty, summer-locale Wal-Mart in upstate New York. After all, Wal-Mart has *everything*.

It was dangerously close to 6:00 p.m. on a Friday and the parking lot was brimming with bargain hunters. I resisted my usual temptation to drive around looking for prime parking spot 15 seconds or less from the entrance and grabbed the first available open space -- a full 60 seconds away.

Sprinting my way to the front doors I hardly noticed the steadily sinking August sun. Shabbat would be here soon (7:26 to be exact) and no hurrying of mine would prevent its imminent arrival. I snatched an empty wagon and burst into Shopping Heaven.

I don't visit Wal-Mart very often, but its sheer immensity can actually take your breath away, which is probably why I instinctively grabbed that wagon even though I was only going in for a tiny gas cap. And off I went to find the automotive department.

The first distraction was the produce section. Grapes (of several colors) were on sale for 79 cents a pound! What a bargain! I snapped up a bunch. Right next to them were hard peaches. I gave one a feel. They were *really* hard. And my wife loves really hard peaches. "*I'll be a hero*," I thought as I corked a bunch of them in a plastic bag and laid them in the bottom of the wagon.

Next I scooted down a main Wal-Mart boulevard and passed aisles of cereals, paper goods, chips, and frozen stuff on my right. They all looked kind of tempting, especially since some of the shelves had bright yellow 'come-on' signs, declaring to the world how cheap they were. But time was short, and I made my way past them.

But then, out of nowhere, I was met face to face with a huge geometric mound of Caffeine Free Diet Pepsi boxes -- 24 cans in each -- for (are you ready?) \$5.99! Even my dulled division skills could quickly reckon that I'd be paying less than 25 cents each for my beloved soda! "This is my lucky day," I muttered as I stashed two crates in my cart (probably smashing the grapes) and drove away.

I then asked a clerk where the Automotive section was and he gave me an easterly wave. I probably should have checked Mapquest before I left, but I ventured along in that general direction.

"Wait! Look at those shirts!" The summer season was winding down and those benevolent Waltons were practically giving away these gorgeous knit shirts (in 8 or 9 colors) for \$9.99! The sign said that they were originally \$29.99! Truthfully, I didn't really need more shirts, but *at that price* I wasn't going to pass them up. It took me a few minutes to figure out the right size (I ended up with XX large... they run small) and to choose the colors, but I grabbed two of them and went merrily on my way.

Strange how you meet certain people in certain places, isn't it? Well, I hadn't seen Barry in years, but there he was running down Aisle 11 with two bottles of horseradish and a big jar of dill gherkins in his hands. "Shabbat essentials," he called them. We were both in a rush, but I couldn't resist catching up on family news for just a minute. "He looks good," I thought as he cut me short and sprinted to the checkout line.

The clock was picking up momentum as I dragged my way past Broadloom, Digital cameras, Athletic socks, Fishing equipment, Toddler toys, Toiletries, Reading glasses, Luggage, Fax machines, Fake flowers, Sandals, Electric blankets, Sun umbrellas, and Industrial extension cords. "I'll come back



next week to check out some of that stuff," I declared. There just was no time.

I thought I smelled tires (a good sign), but made a brief pit stop to check out the rechargeable batteries that were also on sale. Using rechargeable batteries is such a sensible idea. There were a few different types of battery kits on the shelf and it definitely took me longer than it should have. But I finally made my choice (the cheapest one, of course), and swung a hard left turn into AUTOMOTIVE... finally.

But then, out of nowhere, I was met face to face with a huge geometric mound of Caffeine Free Diet Pepsi boxes -- 24 cans in each -- for (are you ready?) \$5.99!

I checked my cell phone (I never wear a watch). It was nearly 7 o'clock! Where did the time go? I frantically combed the shelves for my indispensable goal -- the holy gas cap.

Rummaging my way past the anti-freeze, wiper fluid, tire inflators and Odor-eaters, I eyed my prize at last. There were only two gas caps left on the shelf. "Must be a popular item," I mused. But which one, if any, would fit my Toyota? The packaging gave no indication.

Panting around the bend I began a desperate search for assistance.

"I don't work in automotive."

"Maybe they're all the same."

"You're gonna have to wait your turn, I'm helpin' this lady with a pressure gauge."

"You gotta go outside, pull your vehicle into the shop around back, and ask one of the mechanics there to try it for you. If it doesn't fit, maybe they'll find you one that does. I'm not really sure."

Not sure? Wait my turn? DON'T THESE PEOPLE KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?!?

By now, my entire body was sweating profusely. I flipped the stupid gas cap into the wagon, flew up aisle 24, nearly killing innocent children and seniors with my cart, and sought out the shortest check-out line. There were at least 16 counters open... AND EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM WAS PACKED!

I poked my nose into the carts in front of me. Why, in heaven's name, do people need to buy outdoor carpeting? How many cartons of Enfamil can one baby consume? Does that lady really need a dozen boxes of raisins? And where did these cashiers get their training? The Cayman Islands?

I must have switched lanes literally eight times in three minutes. Anyone on line with ice cream would soon need a straw to consume it. This was ridiculous. WHY CAN'T THESE PEOPLE GO SHOPPING IN THE MORNING, WHEN I'M NOT HERE?

My cell phone said 7:12. Shabbat would arrive in 14 minutes and I was clearly losing my mind. I took a deep breath and looked down at my wagon. There lay the batteries... and the soda... and the now-not-so-hard peaches. I checked out the cashier situation; nothing was moving. I eyed my blinking cell phone clock. And I looked one last time at my very lonely gas cap... and then I said good-bye. I wasn't going to make it. Right then and there, I abandoned all of my would-be purchases and tore out of the store empty-handed.

By now, my entire body was sweating profusely. I flipped the gas cap into the wagon, flew up aisle 24, nearly killing innocent children and seniors with my cart, and sought out the shortest check out line.

I jumped into my gas cap-less Toyota (a full 60 seconds away) started the engine and felt a tear roll down my left cheek. It wasn't a tear of sadness. It was a tear of shame.

Less than five minutes later I entered my summer bungalow. Brushing past my freshly bathed grandchildren I headed straight for my bedroom without saying a word. I couldn't. The clock read 7:22.



A LOT OF LESSONS

It took a few days of serious contemplation, but I learned a lot from my hour in Wal-Mart.

We come into this world with everything available to us. This planet is truly the ultimate Super Store. In many respects our potential is unlimited; our possibilities endless. But we are only here for a certain amount of time, so we must plan accordingly.

We each have a goal, a mission, a purpose, perhaps a certain wrongdoing that we need to correct or a hole that we need to "cap," and we are given a wagon to wheel around. But the distractions are everywhere. The fruit looks so

fresh and inexpensive, but maybe it is forbidden. The peaches can make me "a hero." Surely there is time for that. So we stop... and pick.

We see signs that beckon us to stop and browse and choose, but we withstand the temptation and feel proud and maybe also a bit complacent. So that seconds later when our "favorite soda" is *really* cheap, we cannot resist and we take an enormous amount -- maybe more than we need?

We continue on our road, seeking our destination, and we ask for help or direction. But we don't always ask the right people. Maybe we should have done our homework before, so we would know where to look.

Old friends will cross our path. We want to catch up, but they are running and are sometimes more focused on reaching their goal than we are. So they have no time for us. Isn't that sad?

We check the clock. Our time is truly running out. But we cannot shift gears. We continue to pursue our original quest, no matter how mundane or unnecessary it really is. We fail to see that sometimes it's *just not working*. We delude ourselves and believe that somehow there is time for everything. Our priorities are clouded or are completely out of sync.

I wasn't going to make it. Right then and there, I abandoned all of my would-be purchases and tore out of the store empty-handed.

And then, at long last, when we finally arrive at the finish line, we don't even know if the solution will fit anymore. Frantically, we ask *anyone* for immediate advice, but they are busy or don't even work in that department.

Despairingly, we just collect all the "junk" we've accumulated and run like crazy (while inconveniencing others) to try to acquire it and *take it with us*. But the lines are long...very, very long. Even then, after all we've been through, we are blinded. Instead of taking responsibility for our actions and decisions, we ask ridiculous questions that shift the blame to anyone and everyone but us.

In the end, we must leave the wagon behind. All our work was for nothing. Poor planning, skewed priorities, too many distractions, and not enough time.

Yes. Wal-Mart does have *everything*. Just make sure you get what you really need.

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.

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the taryag mitzvah project:

a revolution in jewish education

by Charlotte Friedland

A MONUMENTAL PROJECT MAKES STUDYING THE MITZVOH FASCINATING AND ACCESSIBLE FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN ALIKE

Anyone interested in exploring Jewish observance eventually discovers that there are 613 *mitzvot*. The number is a shocker. It's a relief when you find out that not all of these 613 rules apply to everyone, and that a significant number relate specifically to services once held in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. At first glance, then, it would seem that many of the *mitzvot* "on the books" are not relevant to your life.

Yet the truth is that every mitzvah – whether practiced literally today or not – is essential to Jewish living (see sidebar, page 29). Often mistranslated as "a good deed," the word *mitzvah* means commandment, but it is much more than that. A mitzvah is the crystallization of a spiritual concept, and each one has power and meaning.

Judaism is not just about theory – it's about action. The ideas we think about in our minds and believe in our hearts must be expressed in an activity that will impress itself on our entire being. That action is a mitzvah, which, aside from the good it brings into the world, serves to focus our



attention on specific applications of our Jewish values. But how can we learn about hundreds of commandments and understand their essence? Introduced this year is *The Encyclopedia of the Taryag Mitzvoth* – one of the most ambitious initiatives in Jewish education in modern times. Ironically, it is a work its authors never intended to write.

"We had no idea that the Taryag Mitzvah Project would expand as it did," says Rabbi Dovid Wax, founder of the multi-faceted educational project and publisher of the encyclopedia. (Because every Hebrew letter signifies a number, numbers can be expressed as words. The term "taryag" is the numerical equivalent of 613.) The rabbi conceived of the project one Shabbat when his nephew was visiting. Discussing the weekly Torah portion and the *mitzvot* it contained, the teen quickly shot off, "That's mitzvah # 325."

"You know the number of every mitzvah in the Torah?" the uncle asked incredulously.

"Yes, everyone in my family learns *taryag mitzvot*."

"Amazing."

It seemed like an idea worth emulating, so the Wax family embarked on its own Taryag Mitzvah Project. Rabbi Wax created little cards to help his

curricula in Jewish schools. Pondering the situation gave Rabbi Wax no peace. And the journey began.

It has been five years since then. In that time he has visited hundreds of communities in the United States, Israel and abroad, seeking out more than 1,000 Jewish educators and leading rabbinic figures in schools and synagogues of every religious Jewish stripe.

Rabbi Wax questioned, and he listened. The more he talked to educators, the more elaborate the Taryag Mitzvah Project grew. It had become his dream, and the mitzvah cards were just the beginning. There had to be Senior and Junior cards, and cards depicting different Jewish lifestyles; textbooks; teachers' wraparound editions; workbooks; reproducible handouts and tests; posters; and finally, an adult-level encyclopedia of the *mitzvot* that could be used by parents. Moreover, in addition to an English edition,



Educational consultants, artists, graphic designers, and editors would have to be hired. Books would have to be produced using the highest quality, enduring materials so that they could be used in schools from year to year. It was estimated that the program, done right – for that was the only way Rabbi Wax would consider doing it – would cost several million dollars.

According to Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, dean of Yad Avraham Institute in New York, whose online Torah lectures reaches 100,000 people weekly, Rabbi Wax's devotion to honestly meeting a need – not producing a product and then trying to disseminate it – powers the project and gives it integrity. As for his own early and active involvement, Rabbi Kalatsky says, "It's a zechus [privilege] to participate in this monumental endeavor, for eventually it will impact on every Jewish child."

As word of the ambitious, innovative project spread - and impressive mock-ups came forth - doors to the world of Jewish philanthropy opened. Rabbi Eli Walkin, a seasoned educator,

"We all need to do a better job of educating our children, and this project really raises the bar for Jewish educational materials."

children review what they learned each Shabbat. Before long, the neighbors' children wanted cards too, and the next thing he knew, Rabbi Wax was getting phone calls from school principals, asking about his "mitzvah card project."

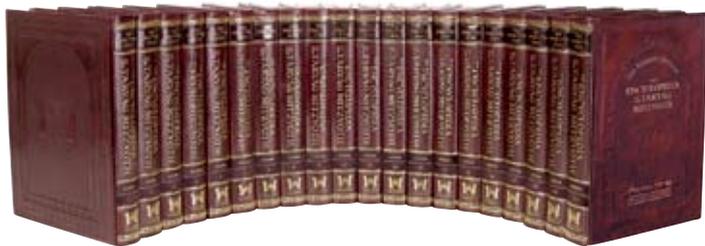
It was astonishing to learn that the study of the *mitzvot* was not already part of the core

Jewish communities the world over requested editions in Hebrew, Yiddish, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Russian.

Global plans require substantial funding. To achieve the project's goals, a Kollel would have to be formed and funded whose members would research, study, and write the Torah material.

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came on board to head the project with Rabbi Wax, and numerous rabbis and educators highly recommended "investing" in the Taryag Legacy Foundation to their congregants and associates.



"This will... inspire both children and adults to learn more and stay connected to Jewish life," says philanthropist Ira L. Rennert, explaining why he committed to serve as anchor patron. As the Rennert Taryag Mitzvah Project turned from dream to reality, a moving preface to the encyclopedia expressed the deep devotion of Ira and Ingeborg Rennert. It reads, in part:

We proudly dedicate the Taryag Mitzvah Project, a historic Torah educational initiative, to The Children of Our Nation, the future of the Jewish People.

...As the Taryag Mitzvoth are the heritage of all Jewish children, we pray that this program will reach, teach, and enrich every Jewish child in the world, regardless of community or background.

If the zeal of school principals and teachers is any indication, the meticulously crafted project will meet these expectations. Never before has a program been introduced in Jewish educational circles with such quality and professionalism. "I'm devoted to this program because – let's face it – it's been shown that people marrying Jewish is in direct correlation to their level of Jewish education," says Rabbi Nachum Wachtel, assistant principal of the Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy in Livingston, New Jersey. "We all need to do a better job of educating our children, and this project really raises the bar for Jewish educational materials." His sentiments are echoed and amplified by hundreds of educators across the USA - and the project's momentum increases daily, literally sweeping from coast to coast.

"But I don't own an ox!"

A Lesson in Every Mitzvah

Rabbi Wax had just concluded a talk about the *mitzvot* to a girls' high school and invited questions. A hand waved, and a student challenged, "Rabbi Wax, we learned in class today 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it is threshing.' That's a mitzvah that has no relevance to my life!"

"What's your name?" queried the rabbi.

"Leah."

"And how old are you, Leah?"

"Sixteen."

"Do you own an ox?"

"No," she laughed.

"Do you thresh?"

"Never."



Scanning the room, he asked, "Does anyone here own an ox?"

There were a few giggles and heads shaking no.

"Then it would appear that Leah is right. If you don't have an ox, this mitzvah seems irrelevant. But let me give you another scenario. Leah, do you have a sibling?"

"Batsheva. She's seven."

"Perfect. Since it's almost Chanukah, let's say your mother just asked you to bake 1,000 Chanukah cookies. You're not too happy about it, but Batsheva says she'll help you. So you work together for several hours and, at last, the cookies are ready to go into the oven. Just then, Batsheva dabs at the mixing bowl with her finger and licks the batter. 'Uch!' you yell, 'Get your fingers out of the bowl!'

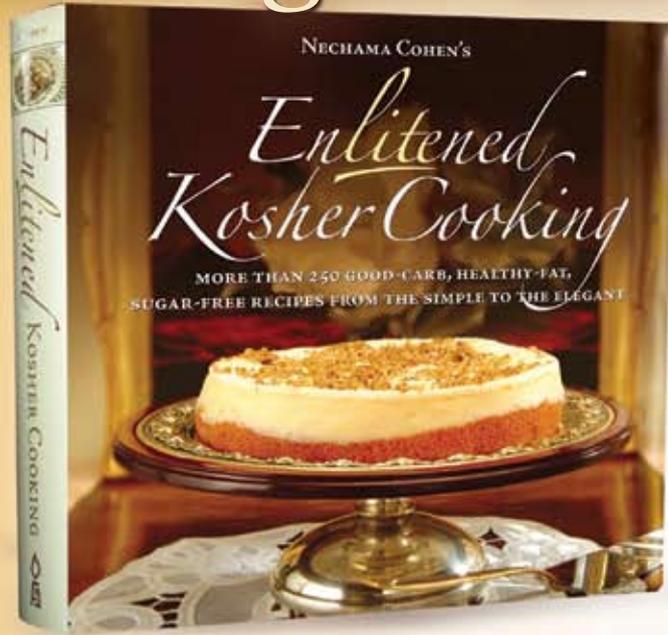
"Leah, the mitzvah about the ox applies here and I'll show you how. The purpose of this mitzvah is to sensitize us, to help us appreciate someone who does something for us. In the original context, we have to envision an ox toiling in the hot sun, day in and day out; it works hard for the farmer, so when the ox is threshing grain, the farmer should be sensitive enough to allow it to nibble from the threshing floor, not to frustrate it by muzzling its mouth.

We should learn from this that appreciation is a trait that needs to be developed. If your little sister helped you – shouldn't you be able to look the other way if she feels like taking a swipe at the batter? She's only a little kid and the batter is tempting! Like the farmer and his ox, you should care about how she feels. Let her take her little reward.

"For that matter, the lesson we learn from this mitzvah comes up all the time. If someone in your class spends time setting up your science fair, this mitzvah obligates you to go over and say, "Thanks! Great job!" I'm sure you can think of dozens of other examples that happen every day. So you see -- no mitzvah is obscure or irrelevant if we think about its intent."

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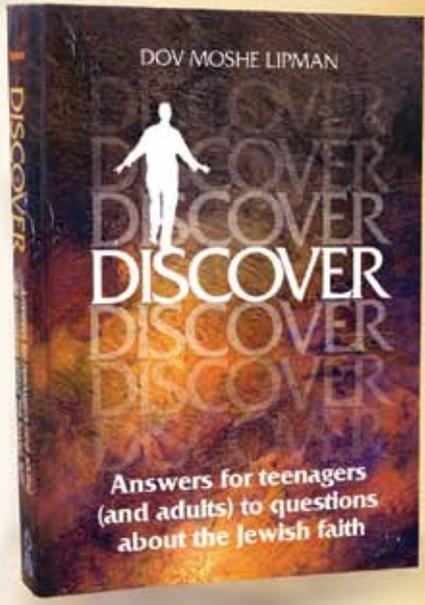
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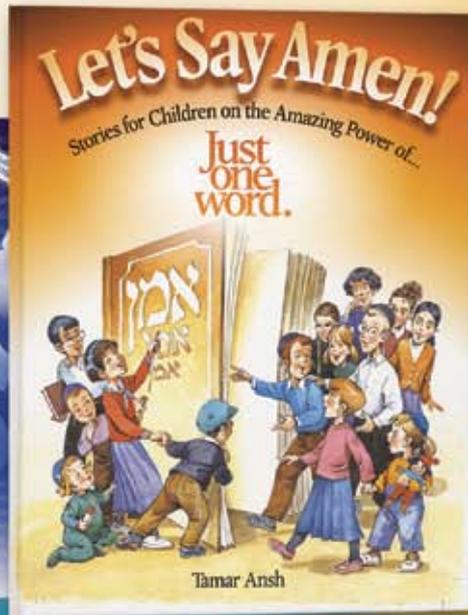
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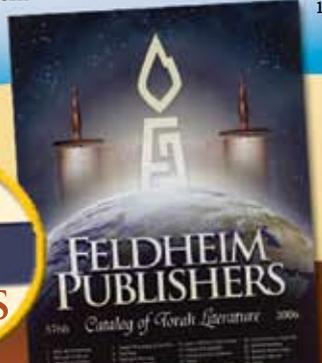
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This Chanukah, Liberate Your Family's Schedules: Have Dinner Together as a Family

by Shimon Apisdorf

30

**Struggling to get everyone to the dinner table at the same time?
Chanukah reminds us that it is a battle worth waging.**

On the surface, Chanukah appears to be about a revolt and a victory, a jar of oil and a miracle, presents and potato latkes. Beneath the surface, it's about the supreme importance of family.

Something strange has been happening recently in kitchens across the country — families are actually sitting down to dinner together. Parents from coast to coast are redoubling their efforts — despite the ridiculously harried schedules they and their children juggle — to make sure dinner time is family time.

In a front-page article, The New York Times recently reported that “after decades of decline in the simple ritual of family dinners, there is evidence that many families are making the effort to gather at the dinner table.” The paper went on to report that while, in the nineties, less than fifty percent of children ages twelve to seventeen regularly ate dinner with their families, today that number is almost sixty percent.

Since 2001, in fact, the fourth Monday in September has been celebrated nationally as Family Day — A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children. Family Day is an initiative of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA). According to CASA studies, there is a demonstrable link between frequency of family dinners and the likelihood of teens beginning to use alcohol and drugs.

Since 2001, in fact, the fourth Monday in September has been celebrated nationally as Family Day — A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children.

The 2006 CASA report, *The Importance of Family Dinners III*, found that in families that don't dine together frequently, children are one and a half times more likely to try alcohol and twice as likely to try marijuana. Conversely, teens from families that regularly have dinner together are far less likely to have friends who drink alcohol and smoke marijuana. These remarkable statistics lead us to a discussion about Chanukah.

The Hebrew word *Chanukah* literally means "education." In Jewish life, home and family is the primary context for education; and in the context of Jewish family life, the dinner table has always been center stage. Whether it's the Passover Seder where families transmit the great story of the birth of the Jewish nation, or the Shabbat dinner table where families traditionally gather every week, the family dinner plays a pivotal role in the transmission of core Jewish values.

The reason for this, it seems to me, is clear. It's at the dinner table that questions can be asked and ideas freely shared. It's at a family dinner that issues can be raised and parents can provide insight and guidance. It's at a family dinner that children learn how to voice their opinions and how to listen to and consider the opinions of others. It's at the dinner table that children can hear and see the expressions of their parents' deepest values. And



CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

It's at a family dinner that children learn how to voice their opinions and how to listen to and consider the opinions of others. And it's at the dinner table that children most feel they belong — where they find refuge from the confusion, chaos, and uncertainty that are so pervasive in the world around them.

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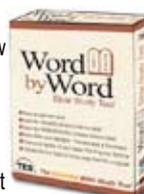
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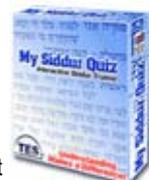
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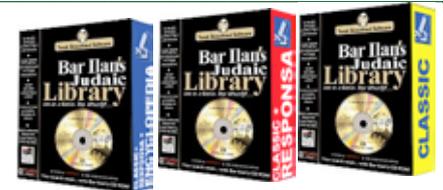
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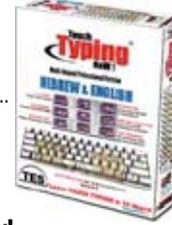


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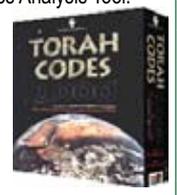
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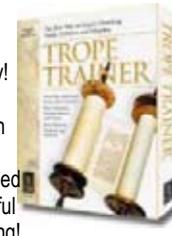
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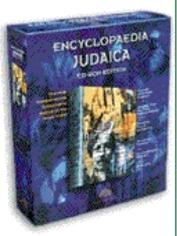
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FAMILY AND EDUCATION

When the Maccabees liberated the Temple from the Greeks, they found that the holiest place in Judaism had been terribly abused and desecrated. The Temple needed far more than cleaning and repairs - it needed to be rededicated. This dedication marked a new beginning for the Temple and the Jewish people and is the source of the name of the holiday.

Consider the following:

The essence of Jewish parenting is to teach your children what to be dedicated to.

King Solomon, in the book of Proverbs said, "Educate [*chanoch*] a child according to his nature; when he grows old he will not abandon it." Solomon was teaching Jewish parents at least two basic notions. First, that to be a parent means to also be an educator — one simply cannot be separated from the other. And secondly, that in the educational process one must carefully consider the unique nature of each child's personality and strive to educate each child in a manner that will enable him or her to absorb the educational message.

The Talmud, when considering the education of children, says, "As soon as a child can speak, his father must teach him Torah and the Shema." Why? Because these are the sources of Jewish insight to the values to which Jewish life is dedicated.

The essence of Jewish parenting is to teach your children what to be dedicated to. The secret of parenting is to understand the nuances of your children's nature and to educate them in accordance with that nature. While no two children are alike, all children need to be taught that it's wrong to steal. Personalities and temperaments may vary, but the need to be kind, compassionate and moral is universal. One child may be shy, another creative, and still another always in a hurry; yet they all need to learn what it means to be a *mensch*.

Jewish parents are called upon not only to teach their children life-enhancing skills—like eating with a fork and spoon or using a computer — but also to teach values and ideals that will bring meaning to their children's lives. Just as parents don't let their children wait until they are older to decide if they want to read or write, we also must not suspend the teaching of values and character until children are old enough to decide for themselves.

It is the responsibility of every parent to teach their children to understand what's important in life and what's not so important, what is of deep and lasting value and what, as fun as it may be, has only limited value; what principles demand dedication and sacrifice; what's morally and Jewishly negotiable and what's not. This is the calling of every Jewish parent, and a core message of Chanukah.

FAMILY AND HOME

It is no wonder then, that the Talmudic terminology for the obligation to light the menorah on Chanukah is *ner ish u'bayso*, "one candle for each man and his household." Jewish law places a premium on the entire family being together for the nightly kindling of the menorah. If Dad is going to be



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home late from work one night, then, while technically speaking, children could light earlier, it is preferable to wait and for everyone to be together for a family lighting. Why? Because it is the very context and concept of family that is at the heart of Chanukah. The miraculous lights of Chanukah were kindled by a committed family, it is Jewish family life throughout the millennia that have kept that flame alive, and it's today's families that will guarantee that it continues to burn brightly into the future.

Aware, as we now are, of the essential relationship between Chanukah and family, we can easily understand another curious aspect of Jewish law. Jewish law teaches that the ideal place for a menorah is at the left side of the front door as one enters the house, opposite the mezuzah that is affixed on the right side of the entranceway. The reason the menorah is positioned

Jewish law places a premium on the entire family being together for the nightly kindling of the menorah. Why? Because it is the very context and concept of family that is at the heart of Chanukah.

in this fashion is so that the entrance to one's home will be "surrounded by mitzvot." On Chanukah, the symbols and ideas of the mezuzah, the menorah and the Jewish home are all mingled together. (See related article, page 38.) Every mezuzah, no matter how simple or elaborate the exterior may be, contains the exact same piece of parchment with the exact same words. Inscribed on this parchment is the statement of *Shema Yisrael*: "Hear o'

A Precious Source of Light

Our ancient tradition tells us of a fascinating exchange between God and the Jewish people. This is how the conversation went:

Jewish Nation: God, You illuminate the whole world and then tell us to light the menorah?

God: The little lights of your menorah are more precious to me than the lights of all the stars I have placed in the sky.

The Chanukah menorah is meant to be a spiritual counterweight to the competitive notion of measuring success only by beating someone else and focusing on results to the exclusion of effort and growth. Judaism says that the world can be a place where everyone is a winner — that each and every individual and each and every family is capable of being a unique and precious source of light. When the Jewish people engaged God in dialogue they wanted to know, How can our candles, our little menorahs, possibly compete with the stars that fill the heavens? Can our little lights add any light to a world illuminated by the sun, a universe blanketed with billions of stars?



The answer, of course, is no. There is no way that our little menorahs can compete with the light of all those stars. And that's just the point.

To be a star, a brilliant source of light, you don't have to be brighter than any other stars. To be good does not mean that you have to be better than anyone else. To be wise does not mean that you have to be the wisest of all

people. To be kind does not mean that you have to be the kindest person anyone has ever met, and to be holy, to soar spiritually, does not mean that you have to be the holiest person of all.

Each and every one of us is a precious source of light, and when God told us that the little lights of the menorah are more precious than the stars in the sky, He was telling us not to evaluate the beauty and radiance of our inner lights

in terms of anything else but ourselves. In the realm of spirituality and true human accomplishment, there is no room for competition, yet there is room enough for a world full of winners—a world full of precious little lights.

Israel, God is Our Lord, God is One." This verse, along with the two other paragraphs written on the parchment, contains the essence of Judaism. If all of Jewish belief, and everything that Jews have always stood for, could be summed up in one statement, that statement would be: "God is One." In fact, throughout history, when Jews were confronted with the awful choice of "convert or die," invariably it was death they chose, and with the *Shema* on their lips. Of course, the message of the mezuzah is not that one should *sacrifice* one's life for Judaism but rather *dedicate* one's life to Jewish values and ideals.



The placement of the menorah makes a statement about the nature of the Jewish home. When a family gathers together to light the menorah in the presence of Judaism's seminal principle, they not only reflect on events of a bygone era, they also take to heart the essence of what it means to be a Jew. A Jewish home, more than anything else, is meant to be a place for fostering Jewish values and ideals.

I'd like to make a suggestion for this Chanukah. After you gather as a family to light the menorah and open presents, sit down to a Chanukah family dinner, and connect. Connect as a family, and as a Jewish family. Discuss what it means to be a Jew. Ask everyone to voice their feelings about being Jewish. Discuss topics like why you love being Jewish, what you think about Israel, and why you want to be a part of preserving and living Jewish traditions. Find a way to discuss what your deepest values are and what it is in life that you would stand up and fight for—like the Maccabees did.

Shimon Apisdorf is the Educational Director of the Afikim Foundation. He is the award-winning author of Chanukah: Eight Nights of Light, Eight Gifts for the Soul, among many other titles. He lives with his wife and family in Baltimore, Maryland.

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A photograph showing calligraphy supplies on a cowhide rug. A quill pen is in an inkwell, and there are several rolls of paper and other writing tools.

Mezuzah: It's what's inside that Counts

by Raphael Landesman

Chanukah and Mezuzah are connected by our tradition, both reminding us that the glare on the outside should never outshine the inner glow.

If you're looking for our house in Phoenix, Arizona, you need to make sure that you get our address right – we're on Fourteenth **Street**, not Fourteenth **Place**. It's a common mistake, and often guests who are trying to find our residence for the first time end up calling us from a block

away, claiming that they *know* they got the directions right, but they can't find the house. And how exactly do they know that they've gotten the wrong house?

It isn't because they've knocked on the door, only to be greeted by a trained pit bull they know we don't own. What instantly tipped them off was the bare doorpost. If there's no mezuzah at the entrance to a home, those searching for our house conclude, we are not on the other side of the door. It is the mezuzah, proudly poised at

the most prominent location on our house, that announces the Jewish character of the home.

Our home is far more than simply the place where we hang our hats, stretch out our weary bodies and store our families. It is the space that expresses who we are and what we stand for. It is an extension of our souls.

Our home is where we give ourselves the tools we need to accomplish our most cherished life ambitions. The belongings that grace our

home from the very world in which we will live – the world that will shape our children and grandchildren, that they will remember into their old age.

So it follows that how we design and set up our homes requires meaningful deliberation. We, as heads of household, will not allow every new idea to find expression within our walls; they must first pass inspection as to whether they deserve entrance. The mezuzah at the gate proclaims to those who enter that the goals and values in this home are Jewish ones, and gently reminds them to please conduct themselves accordingly. This message is directed at none more than ourselves.



THE CHANUKAH CONNECTION

The holiday of Chanukah uniquely commemorates a similar thought. We celebrate the impossible triumph of the small band of Maccabees over the mighty Syrian-Greek army, and the subsequent independence of the Jewish state of Judea. But that is not the focal point of our holiday observance. Instead, we emphasize the miracle of the oil that took place in the Temple after it was cleaned, purified and rededicated by the victorious Jewish army.

The Maccabees found only enough pure olive oil for one day's worth of lighting the Temple menorah, but were amazed to behold that the

wicks continued to burn for eight days, until fresh reserves of oil arrived from the Galilee. We promote this miracle above that of the battlefield because we recognize that our victory was not a result of strategic prowess or military might, but was due to our overwhelming commitment to Torah values in the face of the Greek cultural onslaught. We won because we did not let the Hellenic beast outside invade our domestic sanctuaries of Judaism.

So the Sages commanded us to shine the message of Chanukah from each of our homes, by lighting the menorah and positioning it opposite the mezuzah in our doorways. (We do not customarily observe the mitzvah this way in the U.S., due to the fear that the menorah will "get up and walk away." But in the Land of Israel you can still find many people who proudly position their menorahs at the entrances to their homes or courtyards.)

Our home is far more than simply the place where we hang our hats, stretch out our weary bodies and store our families. It is the space that expresses who we are and what we stand for. It is an extension of our souls.

In the same manner that the mezuzah indicates what lies within, the menorah broadcasts that message to all passers-by: we will not be tossed by the fickle winds of change that may blow through the world. We are anchored to the bedrock of Torah that permeates every corner of our homes. A person walking through the door at this time of year is literally surrounded by mitzvot focusing his attention on the ideal of dedication to Torah.

SO WHAT IS A MEZUZAH?

So what exactly is this mezuzah - this unobtrusive but immensely meaningful doorpost decoration? The Talmud, elaborating on the commandment of mezuzah in the Torah, describes it as a small

scroll of parchment with two sections of the Torah written upon it. These two sections, not coincidentally, contain the two instances in the Torah where the mitzvah of mezuzah is mentioned. The paragraphs are written in black ink by a highly trained *sofer*, or scribe, with a print that is unique to Torahs, Tefillin, and Mezuzahs. The scroll is then rolled up, usually placed inside a specially designed mezuzah case (though it is not obligatory) and affixed to the doorway.

The parchment is often not visible within the case, giving the impression that it is the outer shell that is the mezuzah. But, like the home it's attached to, it is what's inside that counts. Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Pincus, owner of Tiferes Stam in Brooklyn, New York, explains that there are many laws associated with the proper creation of an authentic mezuzah, and that it usually takes between two and three hours for an experienced scribe to write all 713 of its letters.

Great care must be taken in forming the letters, Rabbi Pincus said, because the mezuzah is invalid if even one letter is written improperly. Furthermore, Jewish law requires that the letters of the mezuzah be formed in sequence. That means that for the most part there's no going back and fixing a mistake once it is made. In addition, all of the actions associated with the creation of the mezuzah, from the processing of the hides for parchment, to the composition of the ink, to the actual writing, need to be done with the specific intent that it be used for just that purpose.

The parchment is often not visible within the case, giving the impression that it is the outer shell that is the mezuzah. But, like the home it's attached to, it is what's inside that counts.

But that is exactly the message. The care needed to create an authentic mezuzah takes true sincerity and commitment. It expresses deep respect for the values of holiness contained in its verses. The case may be beautiful to look at, much as many of the homes we most appreciate, but we must never confuse the shell with the treasure it is meant to contain. It is a lesson for our homes and it is a lesson for our hearts. The highest values of authenticity are all on the inside.

All of that labor can make mezuzahs kind of pricey, with good ones ranging from \$35 to \$65 each. Some balk at the cost, but Rabbi Pincus urges people who want to do the Mitzvah that they may as well do it right. Not all mezuzahs out there were created in the time-honored manner described in the Talmud. He also points out that Jewish law requires that one check their mezuzahs every three-and-a-half years or so, to ensure that the writing has not cracked or become deformed in any way.



For such an essential value, mezuzah is one of the easiest mitzvot to perform – once it's up, it's up, with little maintenance necessary. And in an age where so much that we are exposed to can be an assault on our moral senses, it is good to know that we have a special place that we can come home to, that protects and holds dear that which we value. The creation of that place starts with the mezuzah on the threshold.

You might ask yourself, why go through all this trouble to make an authentic, Five-Books-of-Moses-Certified religious object, when you can't even see it?

Photos courtesy of Tiferes Stam

Why Bother with the Scroll?

Rabbi Pincus recalls the time that a fellow entered his store and asked for a \$15 mezuzah. When pressed as to why he was unwilling to spend more, he replied that he personally did not feel any need for a mezuzah, but his father always got upset at the sight of his bare doorframe, so he decided to get a nice decorative case, but to go easy on the scroll. In a moment of audacity, Rabbi Pincus suggested to him that he not go to the trouble of getting any parchment to insert at all, but just to affix the case to the doorpost, since no one would ever bother to check inside anyway. The man thought about it for a moment, concurred, and purchased an empty case. An hour later he returned, chastened, and admitted that it did not feel right to him to put up only a shell of a mezuzah, and that he wanted the real thing. Sometimes, confronting the "outside" bereft of any inside at all, can remind us of the timeless value of what belongs within.



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by Dena Yellin

FATHER AND SON NIGHT OUT

HUNDREDS OF PROGRAMS ACROSS THE CONTINENT MAKE LEARNING TORAH A TREAT FOR BOYS OF ALL AGES - AND FOR THEIR FATHERS, TOO

From father to son...

That has such a timeless ring to it, doesn't it?

Father Knows Best isn't showing any more these days, and children are not necessarily growing up in the wholesomeness of the 'fifties. Sure, there are lots of great advances for parents these days (think cell phones, disposable diapers, minivans...), but we've got new challenges, too. Parental authority often sits on shaky ground, and we are incredibly pressed for time from all sides. That magical bond may not automatically...well, bind us together very well at all any more. What does it mean, to be a father, in the age of instant media, where the perspective of old age is seen mostly as irrelevant?

"I'm a cash machine," quipped one Dad.

But still, we long to recapture that special connection, one where we give of ourselves to the next generation and are gratified by their appreciation for what we've passed on to them. We'd love to transmit our value system, to have the satisfaction of seeing that our children understand, and that the things so important to us will live on into the coming generations. In Judaism, especially, parenting isn't supposed to be casual, but rather thoughtful, intentional, and imperative.

So how do you do it? How do you show your child what's really important to you?

For Michael Siegel of Atlanta, the answer lies in an innovative program called "Avos U'Banim" (fathers and sons). Every Saturday night between October and March, about 80 youngsters crowd Beth Jacob Synagogue's premises. The concept is simple: They come together with other fathers and sons who are also teaming up, for a study session and lots of good, old-fashioned rabble-rousing encouragement. There are prizes for good attendance, raffles, and refreshments.



The pairs settle down to study something they've decided on together. "Kids come from all educational backgrounds," says organizer Rabbi Moshe Hiller. "They spend quality time with their fathers here."

"It's great father-and-son time," says Michael. "It forces me to schedule time for my children, rather than leaving it to just 'happen' whenever."

Programs of this nature have sprung up in many Jewish communities across the globe with the help of Avot U'Banim International. The group, which originated in Israel, now has over 1,300 affiliated locations in Israel, North America, England and France. We caught up with Rabbi Dovid Herszkowitz of Jerusalem, founder and Director of Avot U'Banim International, at 2:30 AM



local time. (This allows us a hint of how this organization continues to gain momentum – Rabbi Herszkowitz apparently doesn't sleep much...)

"When I was 19 and living in the Bayit Vegan neighborhood in Israel," he begins, "we immigrants noticed that there weren't many programs for boys, such as we had been accustomed to elsewhere. So we started something just to keep kids off the street. We invited boys and their fathers to come and learn something together, hoping we'd get their parents more involved in how their sons spent their free time.

"From there, the thing took off. We realized we had tapped into something that really needed doing. We feel that the Jewish people have been ravaged by so many historical forces. Today, the challenge is in the breakdown of the traditional family, so that the bonds of *mesorah* – transmission of Torah values from generation to generation – have been weakened immeasurably. And anything anyone can do to strengthen the relationship between generations is extremely important."

But what about the growing number of children whose fathers aren't present to accompany them? The matter is handled sensitively by program directors in each location, who may have "extras" on hand or team up boys with another family unit.

Michael Siegel tackles a team. He's the proud father of not one but three sons, ages 11, 10 and 9, and they all attend Avos Ubanim together. "We start out by doing a round-robin, working on parts of the *siddur* (prayer-book). It's fun. They are all getting something out of it. It's a tangible thing that really helps them – they practice navigating their way through the different prayer-books that are around and gain confidence in being able to keep up with everybody in shul. Then we move on and each child gets his turn with Dad while the others review."

We'd love to transmit our value system,
to have the satisfaction of seeing that
our children understand, and that the
things so important to us will live on
into the coming generations.

Most groups, whether they are officially affiliated with Avot U'Banim International or not, meet weekly, on Saturday night. Last year, there were 200 locations in North America affiliated with this network, and another 100 are slated to be added this winter. This represents a staggering 20,000 children in these affiliated programs alone. That's a lot of happy campers.



In fact, it seems impossible to talk to participants of these programs without catching some of the enthusiasm bursting through polite conversation. Fathers and sons both are extremely positive about the experience and what it has done for their family.

Last year, there were 200 locations in North America affiliated with Avot U'Banim International and another 100 are slated to be added this winter.

Mark Cohen-Melamed feels that the "Alvin Weinberg Father and Son Learning Program" he and his sons attend in Pittsburgh helps his children, ages 6 and 12, connect to who they really are. "Kids get information from so many places – which doesn't all come together. Cognitively, they are too young to piece it together for themselves and make sense of it all. When we are learning together, they know they have 100% of my attention and can ask me anything and everything. They get a chance to hear who we are, why we believe what we believe, and how it all fits together."

"Torah study, in particular, has tremendous potential to build bridges between fathers and sons," says Rabbi Hershkowitz. "Learning something together means you are connecting in an intellectual way – the best way, typically, for males, as abstract thinkers, to relate to each other. It's not about emotions, or what happened at home – it's beyond that and centered in something timeless."

Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, of the Denver Community Kollel, organizes the "Fathers and Sons" program held at the East Denver Orthodox Synagogue. He feels that programs of this type provide relaxed learning opportunities that can only help sticky parent-child interactions.

"To be honest," says Mark Cohen-Melamed, "at first I was sure this would be a waste of time. But the atmosphere generates such openness, and such warmth, that questions and answers flow and it's unlike anything else. I can't put it into words!"

Reuven Robbins, who attends the Atlanta program along with his 7-year-old son Naftali, agrees that the environment these programs provide is special. "Rabbi Hiller is a large part of what makes it work, too. He relates so well to every child, and he really communicates his love of learning to everyone around. It just makes everyone want to learn more and more."

It's a real feel-good experience, where kids gush about their accomplishments and fathers enthuse about being part of it and about helping to provide their child with incentives for growth. And the kids get prizes!



Avot U'Banim International provides its affiliates with many resources that help make it all happen. They have produced a beautiful planner – now distributed in English, Hebrew, and French – which is given to each boy to help him track his attendance. Some 200 prizes were handed out through a worldwide raffle last year, with the grand prize netting the lucky winner – and his dad, of course – a trip to Israel.

Beyond that, local organizations running the programs usually call for in-town sponsors to up the ante. Sponsorship typically allows the program to include refreshments like pizza or breakfast, and to offer beefy prizes that really get kids going.

In Pittsburgh, Mitch Maizlech comes through for the boys in the program he and co-organizer Rabbi Aryeh Hutman run by getting his hands on Steelers items for a weekly raffle. The Steelers, who won the Super Bowl last year, have been forever immortalized by having a share in Torah learning. The kids love it and the juices keep flowing.

To deal with the overwhelming enthusiasm the young participants in particular bring to the Pittsburgh program, the organizers had to institute some new rules along the way. A family

There are many parents in just this situation – with less formal Jewish education than what they are providing for their children. It's easy to imagine that even such a dedicated dad who's making it all happen might come to feel locked out, if Junior already knows more than his father does before he's anywhere near Bar Mitzvah. Father and son learning programs provide fathers with the tools to join in the equation and regain their rightful place as a vital link in the family tree. "I feel like I'm part of my children's Torah study. This is a great support structure for transmitting our way of life to my children," says Siegel.

Some programs, like the one in Denver run by Rabbi Amsel, actually provide materials and a

skills. This past year, Naftali and his dad set themselves a goal – to finish reading through the Torah portion of Vayigash. In conjunction with the Atlanta Scholars Kollel, Reuven and Naftali were among the proud participants in the Jewish Unity Live event, celebrating their accomplishment. "It was really a thrill, seeing our pictures there among all those who were making a siyum. Naftali is so excited each year for the program to begin."

With so much enthusiasm for these learning opportunities evidenced all around, it's easy to see why more and more communities have come on board and taken up the project. The concept has so much going for it; it's absolutely free, easily accessible, and easily tailored to individual needs. It's a win-win situation for all who take part, and it can't help but enrich the relationships and education of anyone who joins.

Michael Siegel seems to be peering into the future, while holding onto his family's past as he reflects on how important this program has been for him and his sons. "I'm proud of the way this program is building continuity," he says. "I'd love nothing more than seeing my children make time to study Torah with their children, when the time comes."

Sounds like he's on to something.

"When we are learning together, they know they have 100% of my attention and can ask me anything and everything. They get a chance to hear who we are, why we believe what we believe, and how it all fits together." – A Father

trip was planned to Cleveland for Shabbat – and the kids were in an uproar. "And miss the learning program on Saturday night? You can't do this to us!" they cried. So the program now allows participants to have their planner stamped by any registered Avos U'Banim program that the boys attend, at home or away.

Part of the success of this all, it seems, is that father and son learning programs address the needs of both fathers and sons. "For me," says Reuven Robbins, "I want my son to have it all. I'm not so learned, personally, but he will have better opportunities than I had, growing up – I'm proud of that."

facilitator, rather than assuming that pairs will be able to come up with something on their own. The "Masmid Program," run by The Philadelphia Community Kollel, combines families into small groups headed by members of the Kollel, rather than leaving them to do a one-on-one session. "We're on hand to provide text support and actually teach the lessons, which are enjoyed by the fathers too, who feel they are also gaining," says organizer Rabbi Yoel Dovid Zeffren. Whatever the format, everyone seems to love it.

Reuven and Naftali Robbins began attending the Atlanta program two years ago, when Naftali was just 5 years old. At first, they used the time to practice Naftali's newly acquired Hebrew-reading

For info on how to start an Avos U'Banim program in your community, or to join your existing program into this network, contact Rabbi Yosef S. Tanenbaum, info@avosubanim.com

*Photos Courtesy:
Philadelphia Community Kollel
Pittsburgh Community Kollel
Denver Community Kollel*

A SUMMER CAMP FOR ALL SEASONS

by
Y Korn

HOW ONE CAMP IN THE CATSKILLS INCLUDES THE WHOLE FAMILY - ALL YEAR LONG

Everyone knows that summer sleep-away camp is an opportunity for children to make new friendships. But could an adolescent's sleep-away experience actually strengthen his or her *family* relationship? That's what the Zelka family of East Brunswick, New Jersey experienced as Sarah, 17, and Aaron, 15, went to Camp Nageela these past few years. "Being part of the Nageela family has brought our family even closer," relates their very enthusiastic mother, Amy.

Camp Nageela is located in the Catskills area of upstate New York in a small town called South Fallsburg. It is the flagship program of Nageela Jewish Experiences, an outgrowth of Jewish Education Program (JEP) of Long Island. Founded 20 years ago, Camp Nageela has remained true to its founding vision of being a small camp where everyone feels a part of the fun, and personal growth is as natural as scoring a goal. "Although the glamour of some larger camps can be alluring, what most children ultimately want out of their sleep-away experience is a sense of security, caring and belonging," says camp director Rabbi David Shenker. "And after safety, that is the #1 priority of Nageela."

Sixteen-year-old Vera Buniak agrees. She recalls the year she came to visit her brother Josh, at the time a first year camper. She couldn't really understand why her brother would choose to go to a Jewish camp. Some time during that visiting day, something changed in her mind. By the time her parents were ready to leave, she climbed onto Josh's top bunk and wouldn't budge. "Next year I'm coming," she exclaimed, "no matter what."

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Photos courtesy of Camp Nageela

Three years later, Vera looks back at her summers. "I think it made me more open-minded and broadened my horizons. It made me more understanding of people."

Vera is not the only one who would not have expected to be part of Camp Nageela. It seems that once kids come in contact with Camp Nageela, something magical happens. This explains why typical American children inundated and overwhelmed with a multitude of choices and opportunities would choose this small, Jewish camp in the Catskills as the optimum place to spend their summer vacation. Not that Nageela campers sacrifice anything when it comes to creature comforts. Six years ago, the camp moved into a beautiful new fully air-conditioned campus with state-of-the-art sports facilities including indoor and outdoor pools.

MATURE, BUT FUN, AND SO SWEET!

Most camp families agree that the magic of Camp Nageela radiates largely from the dedicated staff. To the young men and women who make up the staff at Camp Nageela, camp is not just a summer out of their lives; it's a lifetime commitment to their campers.



Camp Nageela's staff members are hand picked from hundreds of applicants. When choosing staff, the administration looks for candidates who have youth group experience throughout the year, as well as warm, fun personalities, and a growth-oriented mindset. Rabbi Shenker says, "A good summer-camp experience should positively impact the rest of a camper's life. Therefore, we look for staff who have a love and respect for their own life as well as for others. Our staff is solidly committed to the traditional Jewish value of striving to better oneself. They set the tone of a caring community."

"The counselors are just so amazing; mature, but fun, and so sweet," says Amy Zelka. "They reinforce the good Jewish values, mainly by just being themselves; warm, accepting, great young adult role models. We were very impressed that for [our son] Aaron's Bar Mitzvah sports party on Saturday night, many of the counselors came in to help him celebrate. They really helped make him feel special on his Bar Mitzvah day. And his friends had fun with them also."

Josh Buniak also shared his special Bar Mitzva day with the people who cared about him most, including his counselors from Camp Nageela. "It was something to remember," says Mrs. Buniak. "The staff walked as far as two miles to attend. The Bar Mitzvah wouldn't have been the same without Nageela."

A PART OF LIFE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Positive attitudes are in the atmosphere, and it passes from staff to campers. One of Sarah Zelka's first memories of camp is how she cried the first night she was there and begged to go home. The warm and caring response she received from her counselors ensured that she not only stayed that summer, but came back for five more. "I really liked how I had amazing and crazy counselors who always included me, and spoke to me at night. I could tell they really cared about me." She specifically loved how her counselors kept in touch with her throughout the year. "I can't even express how important that was for me, and how big of a role they played in my life," she says. This past year she was a junior staff member, continuing the cycle of giving that she benefited from.

For many campers and their families, the summer adds vitality to their entire year. Feya Hutchens, from Fairbanks, Alaska, does not have many local Jewish friends. So the main reason she has traveled the distance these past three summers to attend Camp Nageela is the close relationships she has developed with her counselors and fellow bunkmates. When in Alaska, Feya misses the friends she made at Camp Nageela so much that she made the trip to the East Coast twice during the intervening years to visit them. She never had to worry about having a place to stay; she simply went from friend to counselor to friend for the entire duration.

Faya's mother is thrilled. "Every summer that she comes back, I see changes," Mrs. Hutchens reports. "She has started teaching me things. I see a difference in her spirituality and her connection to Judaism."

AN EXPERIENCE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

A common thought echoed by many campers and their parents is that Camp Nageela is "like an extended family." The family feeling is not limited to the campers, but extends to their parents as well. The camp encourages parents to be part of the camp family by hosting many family-oriented events. The campus is fully winterized and operates year-round. Campers and their

families are invited up for Holiday retreats, ski outings and weekends.

After attending their first family retreat, Jeff and Amy Zelka wrote a thank-you letter to Camp Nageela, enumerating all six reasons that their experience was "awesome." From compliments on the food to "the people there who created an extended family-like atmosphere for the Holiday," the Zelkas felt it was the perfect balance between relaxation and inspiration.



Nageela staff surround Josh Buniak at his Bar Mitzvah.

"While parents are looking for relaxation, their children want fun," says Special Activities Director Yehuda Maryles. "That's why we try to mix it up, with things like on-premises paintball, sports tournaments and trips, just to name a few. And when it comes to Shabbat and holidays, we notch up the hype and spirit, and do exciting shows and games."

CHOOSING A CAMP

Although fun is an important factor that parents consider in a summer camp, for most, it is not the sole factor. It is interesting to hear what

motivates some parents to choose Camp Nageela for their children. First-year parent Rebeca Sass of Scotch Plains, New Jersey initially met some of the counselors, whom she described as "genuine and real." Her son Mathew attended a Nageela weekend Shabbaton in their neighborhood. Although it may have been difficult for an eight year old to become a part of the Nageela family in one short weekend, he also liked the whole atmosphere and knew this was something he wanted to be a part of.

After doing some more research, Mrs. Sass found she liked "the whole concept of Camp Nageela being a very unpretentious, Jewish camp." The

fact that her son would be learning about Judaism and having fun at the same time really appealed to her. After attending an open house, they were convinced to try it. Mathew loved camp, and next year his younger sister will attend as well.

Following Mathew's enjoyable summer, the Sass family attended the Rosh Hashana retreat. After their first family event, Mrs. Sass summed up the feelings of most Camp Nageela families. She said, "I found in Camp Nageela a place where we can grow together as a family."

See ad this page for more information.



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Cultivating a sense of wonder

by Doron Kornbluth

It was a sunny day and I was up and moving early. It was the only day I had at what was touted as one of the most beautiful places in the country and I wanted to make the most of it. I packed my stuff quickly, got into the car and drove the short distance to Zion National Park.

The Park is actually a valley quite hidden from view. From a dry, desert landscape above, the access road takes you slowly lower and lower. It is magnificent. Mountains. Valleys. Waterfalls. Lush Vegetation. I drove around the perimeter road for a short while just to get a lay of the land, and then decided that I would hike up one of the small mountains in the middle of the Park in order to get a good view.

The hike wasn't long. Easy path, not too crowded – I made it to the top in about an hour and a half at a leisurely, enjoyable pace. When I reached the top, I stopped and took a long drink of water. As I was drinking, I opened my eyes and suddenly the world stopped.

It was simply majestic.

Beautiful beyond belief, and way beyond expectations.

I was awestruck. While I think I only stood there for a few moments, it felt like hours.

I was broken out of my reverie by two teenagers running up the path. They were noisy. Upon reaching the top, they high-fived each other, did a Touchdown dance and checked their watches.

"24 minutes 35 seconds. Cool. Wanna stay up here and look around? Supposed to be nice" said the first.



"Nah – who cares? Bunch a mountains and trees. Let's go back to the lodge and get online."

My heart dropped.

Since the oil found in the Temple was enough to last naturally for one of the eight days, the miracle only really lasted for 7 days! Why do we celebrate eight days?

I could only think of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's words:

*Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with G-d;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit around it and pluck blackberries.*

In a similar vein, Albert Einstein once said: "There are two ways of looking at the world - either you see nothing as a miracle or you see everything as a miracle."

Life is full of wonder. *But will we wonder?*

EIGHT DAYS

The miracle of the oil is well known. The Maccabees beat the Greeks and their sympathizers, enter the Temple to re-dedicate it and find only one small jug of oil with just enough to keep the Menorah lit for one day. Although it will take eight days to produce more oil, they light the Menorah anyway and – miraculously – the candles continue to burn for eight days.

About 500 years ago, the Beis Yosef asked a question: since the oil was enough to last naturally for one of the eight days, the miracle only really lasted for 7 days! Why do we celebrate all eight days?

Many answers have been suggested over the years since then. The Alter of Kelm, Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv explained simply that the extra day is to teach us that the fact that oil burns at all is a miracle! Although we get used to things and tend to expect them, in reality nature itself is miraculous. And that is the lesson of Chanukah.

GREEK VS. JEW

In essence, this lesson encapsulates the whole ideological struggle between the Greek sympathizers and those loyal to Judaism.

Any museum today that is worth the price of admission has examples of Greek sculpture, most of which depict the human body. The ancient Greeks created the Olympic Games, where as part of their idolization of the physical,

the competitors performed naked. They worshipped the human form and sought to replicate it as often as possible. They saw the body as naturally beautiful and naturally perfect (thus, their antipathy towards circumcision).

Greek culture had no sense of the miraculous. No sense of wonder. No longing for the Infinite. The Greek gods themselves were just 'powerful' versions of Man, engaged in 'human' passions, lusts, ego and trivialities.

Because the Greeks were obsessed with the body, they neglected the soul.

Because the Greeks focused on the physical, they lost contact with the metaphysical.

Because the Greeks worshipped natural beauty, they couldn't worship anything else.

No wonder (pun intended) that Chanukah is eight days long. The world was created in seven days and therefore the number seven corresponds to nature and the physical.

The number eight is one above seven. It represents one – or better said, One – above nature: the Infinite. The Divine. The soul. Everything that is beyond the physical. Circumcision, too, is on the eighth day, as we raise the baby above his natural, physical form to more purely reflect his soul.

Similarly, there are eight days of Chanukah to remind us that everything is miraculous; everything is really wonder-ful.

We embrace the second of Einstein's choices above - we see everything as a miracle. The Greeks, on the other hand, saw nothing as a miracle. To them, a miracle was an absurdity. Only what is reasonable, logical, and rational can be real. Miracles are illogical and therefore not possible.

The Greeks focused on Man and denied G-d. The Jews appreciate the greatness of Man – as a servant of G-d. Our sense of Awe and wonder is closely connected to our connection to the meta-physical: the Infinite.

THE WONDER OF CHILDREN

People with a healthy sense of wonder have an easier time connecting to religion. A sense of wonder, an openness to the unexplainable, a sense of humility before the Infinite, a 'poetic corner of the soul' – all these bring a person closer to G-d, Judaism, and Torah.

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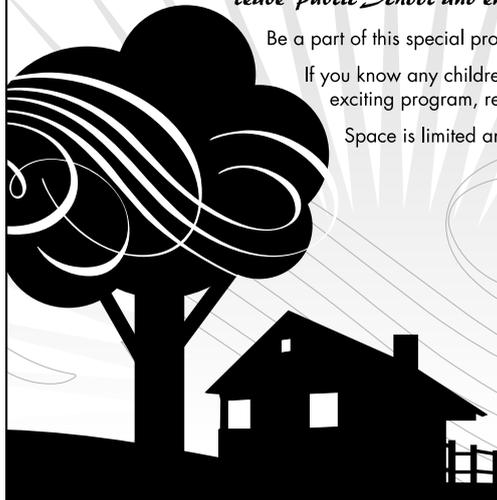
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"There are two ways of looking at the world - either you see nothing as a miracle or you see everything as a miracle." - Albert Einstein

Someone with a limited connection to the meta-physical will have a harder time relating to G-d, praying to G-d, and connecting to the deepest parts of themselves.

As children, we naturally have a sense of wonder, a sense of spirituality, an openness to G-d and a belief in the miraculous. We have an inner knowledge of things that go beyond normal 'adult' logic. Yet we tend to lose these qualities as we grow up, get more 'serious' and get real jobs.

As Jewish parents, we want our children to strongly identify with Judaism and to keep the Jewish link strong. How can we help them strengthen their spiritual sides? Keep their sense of wonder? Maintain their openness to the Infinite?

Here are some suggestions:

- Develop your sense of wonder. If you work on your sense of wonder, there is a good chance it'll rub off on the kids. Let yourself be in awe of the waves crashing. Or the flames of the Shabbat candles burning. Stand in awe at the tiniest things. Show and experience delight in what some consider normal daily life. By going through life with curiosity and humility, we open ourselves up to experiences of Awe.
- Talk about G-d. Kids have a natural openness to G-d's existence and involvement in their lives. We don't have to have all the answers, just to be open to the Infinite as being active in our lives.
- Emphasize an appreciation of nature as an expression of the Divine.
- Introduce silence into your family. Our world is so noisy and busy that it makes connecting to our inner selves difficult. Once a week or once a month, have a calm and quiet few minutes in a peaceful setting. By getting children comfortable with silence, they will be (more) open to experiencing the silent wonders of existence ... and of themselves.

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 57

ON THE RETURN OF LOST OBJECTS

by Sarah Shapiro

One of our children has a particular gift for finding things.

"Devorah, could you help me find the..."

"Devorah, by any chance have you seen..."

"Devorah, do you know where the..."

A proficiency for returning lost objects has never been lost on me, especially since I myself am differently blessed. It has always been my inclination less to keep track of things than to let go of them; less to locate objects, than to misplace them.

Today she said, "Are you missing one of your flower earrings? I think I saw it." She came back a few moments later, my silver rose in hand. It had been on a shelf next to the washing machine.

How lovely, to get back what one thought was gone! There's something about having a lost item restored that momentarily ties together all the loose strings of one's life.

And there's something about losing it that produces a particular and distinctive uneasiness. No matter how trivial a possession it may seem to be, its loss can be counted on to evoke a pervasive feeling of futility, however fleeting, and a disconcerting sense that all is not right in the world.

* * *

However slight a lost object's apparent value, from either a sentimental or a monetary standpoint, the value of returning it to its owner remains – as is the case with any mitzvah -- immeasurable and absolute.

In our neighborhood, like most Orthodox neighborhoods, the local bulletin boards usually carry a number of *HaShoves Avedah* notices. "Found near Building 48, *knissah aleph*: ballpoint pen, call 532-1074." "Found outside supermarket during *Choel HaMoed*, coin purse with sum of money. To identify, call 581-0731." "Found in playground, piece of girl's jewelry. Call ..."



One notice which recently caught my attention reported a pair of women's sunglasses found near Building 47, and ever since, I've been meaning to ask my *mechutenister* Ruthie if perhaps hers are missing. She had taken one of her children to Dr. Slater about that time, and the thought of being the one to help her find her glasses (if indeed hers are lost) elicits on my part an extremely pleasing sensation; it's a mitzvah not to be missed.

**How lovely, to get back what one
thought was gone!**

But the thought keeps slipping my mind, itself a lost object, and I forget to ask. The mitzvah eludes me.

Losing that opportunity is not insignificant. One of the children's books which we used to read aloud, through the years, told the story from the Talmud. Under a tree near his home, Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa found a bag of eggs which a wayfarer had mistakenly left behind. The traveler didn't return. The eggs hatched; the rabbi took care of the chicks; those chickens, in turn, laid eggs, and in time, the rabbi's small hen-yard could no longer handle the growing poultry population. So he finally sold all the chickens and with the money received, purchased a number of goats. Under the rabbi's diligent care, the goats, too, multiplied.

No matter how trivial a possession it may seem to be, its loss can be counted on to evoke a pervasive feeling of futility, however fleeting, and a disconcerting sense that all is not right in the world.

One day, years later, the same traveler passed by, and he suddenly recalled how he'd lost his bag on that very spot. Rav Chanina Ben Dosa was overjoyed to have located the eggs' rightful owner and handed over to him the herd of goats, whose value, of course, far surpassed the original item.

The story was teaching us not only that we're supposed to guard stringently against taking possession of anything not rightfully ours, and to pursue zealously the fulfillment of this Torah commandment, but also that a lost item's value and significance may not be readily apparent to the one who finds it; in fact, its true value may be something of which even the original owner himself may be unaware.

* * *

In my life, earrings are the items which most frequently disappear, then reappear, like objects washing in and out with the tide.

A pair of the silver roses is what my husband usually gets me for my birthday; he can count on the probability that at least one of them was lost during the previous year. He has been buying them almost annually from the same little old man, at the same little jewelry store in Meah Shearim, in their successive stylistic variations.

On the plane to my father's funeral more than a decade ago, I was wearing an early pair of those roses. Sitting there devastated, my eyes streaming, too shattered to eat the meal, I suddenly noticed that one of them was missing.

"My earring!" The woman in the window seat looked up from her dinner tray. A child's face popped up over the head rest of the seat in front of me. "I've lost my earring!" Up I jumped and down I crouched to peer beneath my seat, and my neighbor's seat. All thoughts of losing my father had vanished. "Excuse me, I'm so sorry, would you mind looking under your seat for an --" I said to the people in the row behind mine, then to the man across the aisle, and the man behind the man.

This continued for a few frantic minutes, until rose the blessed cry, "Is this it?" It was the child who found it.

I put the earring back on and began again to cry.

* * *

My aunt gave me a pair of silver clip-ons last year in Los Angeles. I was really quite pleased with them and pressed them into immediate service, dropping the roses into the bottomless well of my purse. But at the airport a few hours later, I took one of them off while talking on a pay phone,

I explained to the El Al stewardesses what had happened, got a security clearance, ran back out through the gate, rushed over to the phone, looked up, looked down, looked all around, but alas! Gone! How could it be? Could somebody have stolen it that fast? And what good is an

So, that was the end of that, until just recently, when I zippered open an old telephone/address book/organizer in search of an important receipt, and out fell that earring upon the carpet. If I didn't know any better, I'd claim to have engineered the entire incident, just for the joy and surprise of its rediscovery.

* * *

This continued for a few frantic minutes, until rose the blessed cry, "Is this it?" It was the child who found it.

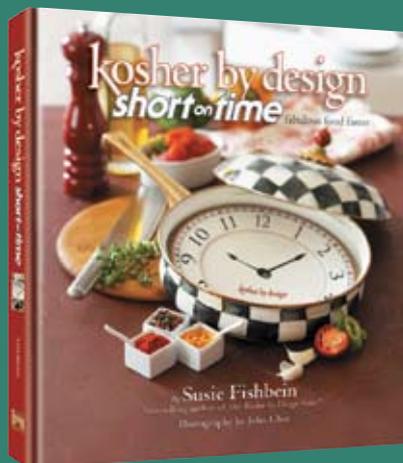
and when the announcement came on that it was time to board, promptly finished talking, gathered together my stuff, and hurriedly took a place in line. Only when I'd taken my seat did my hand instinctively reach up to feel for its absence on my ear.

earring without its mate, unless the thief is partial to berets cocked jauntily to one side?

All year long the memory of that earring irked me, and I never mentioned it to Aunt Jeannie. If there's anything that could deftly evoke a feeling of futility as much as losing something, it must be finding out that the time and money you've spent on a gift has been carelessly squandered by an unworthy recipient.

What are some of the many items I have loved and lost? The Russian necklace my mother gave me when I turned eighteen, that disappeared on the commuter train between New York and New Canaan. A little music box that played "Oh, What A Beautiful Morning!" which somehow fell -- I know not how -- out the car window into a snow bank, as my mother drove through a toll booth on the Merritt Parkway. A frayed, once-yellow comfort blanket which Devorah adored and trusted deeply, up until the age of two, when a babysitter left it behind on a playground. A beautiful shimmering-green raincoat that my sister Candis gave me. An envelope holding eight hundred dollars in cash, which disappeared in our





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

An exclusive interview for American Jewish Spirit with Susie Fishbein.
 By Gavriel Anyeh Sanders

WITH THE RELEASE OF HER FOURTH BOOK IN THE WIDELY POPULAR KOSHER BY DESIGN SERIES, THE KOSHER DIVA IS SERVING UP EVERYONE'S MISSING INGREDIENT — TIME!



AJS: Congratulations on the release of *Short on Time*. Did you ever imagine you'd produce four cookbooks?

SF: No way. But it's amazing what happens when a person finds and does something inspired by a real inner passion and desire. My efforts with Kosher by Design have first and foremost been a labor of great love. Consequently, one book has led naturally to the next one almost seamlessly.

AJS: I'll ask what we always ask when one of your fascinating cookbooks comes out: What's unique about this one?

SF: The simple focus of the book is on time-saving. Everyone wants that. But there's a deeper underlying purpose. As I've shared with you before, I'm a work-from-home mother. I made a personal and professional decision to put my family first in my priorities. Curiously, life has adjusted to accommodate that commitment. With *Short on Time*, I planned a cookbook that can help families have more time together during the week, not just on Shabbat.

One of our greatest values as Jews is the preservation of strong family relationships. Meal times are probably the most conducive catalyst for meaningful interpersonal exchanges. I crafted this cookbook with that in mind. I envisioned families together enjoying a home-cooked meal on a mid-week night, sharing the events and lessons of the day. This was the normal pattern of life for our parents' generation. But the pace of today's fast-food culture is robbing us — one chicken finger at a time — of the vital setting we need around a meal table to strengthen and foster continuing Jewish life.

AJS: What about the cuisine choices you made this time?

SF: While the book is called *Short on Time*, it's really long on variety. You'll find international influences from Mexico, Greece, Thailand, Italy, Morocco, and the Middle East, along with really tantalizing American fare. You'll notice quite a range of choices, from soups to salads, fish to fowl, meat dishes to dairy delicacies — and the desserts are incredible!

AJS: I noticed the book has a section called "building block recipes." What are those?

SF: I'm a real believer in improvisational cooking. So, I feature a section of ingredients that, once prepared, can be used in a dozen different ways. None of them is difficult, though some may take a little time to prepare. But once it's done, you've got quantities to draw from for creative mixing of this and that. For example, we show you how to prepare batches of caramelized onions, roasted garlic, pesto, tasty croutons, and oven-dried tomatoes. These are wonderful additives that can compliment so many different dishes — and they leave plenty of room for personal spontaneity. After all, some cooks are "by the book" and others are "by the look". There's flexibility here that people will appreciate.

AJS: As with your previous books, you've allocated space in *Short on Time* for "tablescaping," a word I think we coined here, right?

SF: Yes, we did — two Rosh Hashanahs ago! And this time around, we've made it elegantly simple to take things you already have around the home or can easily get at the local supermarket to create a great tablescape. My creative team, Renee Erreich and Larry Sexton, and I put together some

very inspiring ideas. We'll help you see things in your home in a whole new light of decorative possibilities. You'll be surprised how easy – and how much fun – it is to turn a simple mid-week meal into a festive occasion. And it won't require going to a party favors store or some expensive, trendy housewares shop to find just the right touch. You probably already have 90% of what you need – and the grocery store is a source of endless possibilities. We'll show you how.

AJS: Any favorite dishes in this one?

SF: You always ask me that! You know I cherish each one! But seriously, I do have some this time around. With the availability of Tofutti brand non-dairy products, like their cream cheese, it's possible to enjoy some very authentic Mexican dishes, like the Mexican lasagna. It's delicious! And the Moroccan hamburgers are amazing. On the light side, the "Thai chicken coconut rice salad" is as delightful to make as it is to eat. I really enjoy the "Almond-crusted sole with strawberry-mango salsa." There are so many dishes here you won't find in a restaurant and the ingredients are easy to find in most supermarkets.

AJS: You've written a cookbook for holidays, another for special occasions, another that brought the kids into the kitchen, and now this latest one to save us time. Is this the final installment in the Kosher by Design series?

SF: Believe it or not, I've started on the next one. I can't tell you what it's about yet, only to hint that what Short on Time does for your schedule, the next one should do for your health and well-being.

AJS: We wish you great success as you travel the country this year teaching us to recapture time around the table for what really matters.

SF: Thank you. I'm grateful to your readers for their enthusiastic support and feedback!

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asian barbecue salmon salad

1 1/4 pounds fresh salmon fillet, skin and all pinbones removed
 1/2 cup favorite barbecue sauce
 2 teaspoons teriyaki sauce
 3 teaspoons roasted or toasted sesame oil, divided
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
 1/4 teaspoon wasabi powder
 1 large head romaine lettuce, coarsely chopped
 1/2 English (hothouse) cucumber, unpeeled, sliced into 1/4-inch half-moons
 fine sea salt
 freshly ground black pepper
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 black and white sesame seeds, for garnish

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a baking pan or broiler pan with nonstick cooking spray. Set aside.

Cut the salmon into 2-inch cubes. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk the barbecue sauce, teriyaki sauce, and 2 teaspoons sesame oil, garlic powder, and wasabi powder.

Add the salmon cubes to the bowl and toss to coat.

Place the salmon in a single layer into the prepared pan and bake for 10–12 minutes or until cooked through.

In a bowl, combine the lettuce and sliced cucumbers. Season with salt and pepper. Toss with lemon juice and 1 teaspoon sesame oil.

Place the salmon cubes on top of the salad. Garnish with black and white sesame seeds.

Salmon is a great source of the omega-3 fatty acids, a type of fat that provides a wide array of health benefits. Atlantic salmon is generally farmed and Pacific is generally wild. There is a difference in taste, color, and price between the two, just as there is debate as to which is healthier. Vary the type of salmon you buy and see which you like better.

Prep Time: 10 minutes
 Cook Time: 15 minutes
 Yield: 6 servings



moroccan hamburgers

2 pounds ground beef or ground lamb	1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon ground coriander	1 teaspoon fine sea salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper	1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper	2 pinches of crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 English (hothouse) cucumber, thinly sliced	2-3 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 red onion, cut into thin slices	1 1/2 tablespoons apple-cider vinegar
1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint leaves	1/2 cup mayonnaise
6 hamburger buns	

Place the ground meat into a medium bowl. Add the oregano, ground coriander, salt, black pepper, paprika, cayenne pepper, and red pepper flakes. Mix well. Form into 6 patties.

Heat a grill pan or medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add the oil and heat until almost smoking. Add the patties and cook 5 minutes per side. Try not to move the burgers around so you will get nice grill marks and a good sear. Re-oil the pan as necessary if working in batches.

Meanwhile, place the thinly sliced cucumber and red onions into a medium bowl. Toss with the vinegar and allow to stand for a few minutes.

In a small bowl, mix the chopped mint into the mayonnaise. Set aside.

When you remove the burgers from the pan, place the buns, cut-side down, into the pan. This will toast them and at the same time they will pick up nice flavor.

Spread both sides of the toasted buns with the minted mayonnaise. Top each Moroccan burger with a few slices of the cucumber and red onion.

The history of Morocco is reflected in its food, which has a true multicultural flavor. As people from other countries passed through the region, they introduced their cultures' cooking techniques and ingredients. Abundant spices play an important role in rich flavors and aromatic Moroccan cooking.

Prep Time: 10 minutes
 Cook Time: 10 minutes
 Yield: 6 servings

- Make a big deal out of the little things, such as a bird on the windowsill, the water going down the drain, lightning and thunder, etc.
- Helping our children enjoy challenges, solve problems, and live real-life experiences will often create wonder. Can you find your way around blindfolded? Can we make a treasure hunt for Dad's birthday?
- Children who grow up in a strong, stable family are more likely to 'let their spirit develop' than children who grow up surrounded by tension, arguments, and criticism.
- Teach your kids to pray – the 'official' prayers as well as spontaneous conversations with G-d.
- Best of all, teach them and remind them to say the blessings before eating as well as upon seeing wonderful things. These blessings are designed to remind us of the wonder to be found in everything from a sip of apple juice to seeing the Grand Canyon.

WONDERFUL WONDER

Life is diminished when it is confined to the Five Senses. By opening ourselves to mystery, wonder, and Awe, we enrich our own lives and the lives of those around us. We may feel a stirring of the spirit, or a glance of the Infinite – but our view of life is changed for the better.

By helping our children develop and nurture a sense of wonder, we are enabling them to connect to Judaism at a level of excitement, humility and depth rather than obligation.

Remembering the miracle of Chanukah helps keep us warm throughout the cold winter.

Nurturing our Sense of Wonder helps keep us connected to the Divine, warm and secure throughout the 'winters' of our lives.

Doron Kornbluth is a sought-after international speaker for Jewish communities and singles (www.doronkornbluth.com), author of Why Marry Jewish? Surprising Reasons for Jews to Marry Jews, and editor of Jewish Matters.

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Chanukah Lights and Wrights

The menorah's flames remind us that technology is but a gift from God.

by Yaakov Astor



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The date: December 17. The place: Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The time: 10:35 a.m.

A large box-shaped contraption with wooden propellers teeters on a 200-foot wooden launching track. Engine roaring, the rickety machine suddenly lurches forward. As it chugs down the track, onlookers hold their collective breath. This is what history feels like.

The flimsy flyer picks up speed. It rises an inch... two inches... six inches... and then -- PLOP! Twisting awkwardly, it belly-flops into a muddy puddle.

The year is 2003.

It is 100 years to the minute since the Wright Brothers made their historic flight ushering in the Age of Aviation, indeed ushering in a New World. Witnessing the spectacle are 35,000 people, not the mere seven (including the Wright Brothers) who were present in 1903. The wreck lying in the puddle is not the Wright Brothers' "Flyer" (as they called it), but a \$1.2 million replica. Nevertheless, the lesson is timeless: Even 100 years of science and experience do not guarantee success or achieve Technological Man's ever-fleeting goal of absolute control. A mysterious factor, independent of human will, that can neither be foreseen nor calculated -- "timing" or "luck" some would call it -- is an intimate companion with progress.

December 17, 1903 occurred on the 28th day of Kislev, the fourth day of Chanukah. It's not a coincidence. There's a profound lesson to be learned.

WELLSPRINGS OF KNOWLEDGE

The Wright Brothers' achievement did not originate in a vacuum. The dream of flight had occupied the imagination of humans for thousands of years. Greek mythology concocted Pegasus, a winged horse which the king's son rode into battle. Alexander the Great was said to have harnessed mythical winged animals, Griffins, to fly around his realm. (The Talmud, too, claims that Alexander ascended into the air and realized the Earth was round like a sphere.)

December 17, 1903 occurred on the 28th day of Kislev, the fourth day of Chanukah.

Moreover, the Wright Brothers were riding the crest of a wave of progress known as the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, not since the Agricultural Revolution, thousands of years earlier, had civilization undergone such a radical change. What better symbolizes the advances of the Industrial Revolution than the Wright Brothers' achievement of powered, controlled, manned flight?

Yet if it was millennia in coming, it was no surprise to the sages of Jewish mysticism, who long ago predicted the dates of the Industrial Revolution: *"In the 600th year of Noah's life... all the fountains of the great depth were broken apart, and the windows of heaven were opened..."* (Genesis 7:11)

"[This means that] in the year 600 of the sixth [millennium], the gates of wisdom above and the wellsprings of wisdom below will be opened, and the world will prepare to enter the seventh [millennium], just as a person prepares himself toward sunset for the Sabbath." (I Zohar 117a)

The Jewish year "600 of the sixth millennium" corresponds to the year 1840, which uncannily coincides with the Industrial Revolution. Long ago, therefore, the Zohar predicted that in the 1800s of the Common Era the world would be flooded and transformed by the "wellsprings of wisdom below." And this explosion of knowledge continues today, getting stronger with the passage of time, like the floodwaters of Noah piling upon each other.

Of course, during that same time period, belief in God has been challenged like never before. One reason is that advances in technology give humans

such control over their environment that they might think they don't need God. Perhaps the apex of this hubris was expressed by Soviet Cosmonaut Major Gherman S. Titov, when he returned from orbiting the Earth in 1961 and triumphantly announced that he hadn't seen God. (Of course, had he stepped out of his spacesuit, he surely would have!)

When the "wellsprings of knowledge" burst into the world in the 1800s, it presented a great challenge to humanity. Would the great control over nature lead humanity to replace God in heaven with the gods of technology? Or would they progress with humility and respect for the Maker of Heaven and Earth?

A FLYING TOWER OF BABEL

The roots of this choice can be found in the Tower of Babel:

"Come, let us build a city, and a tower, with its head in the heavens, and we shall make a name for ourselves" (Genesis 11:4)

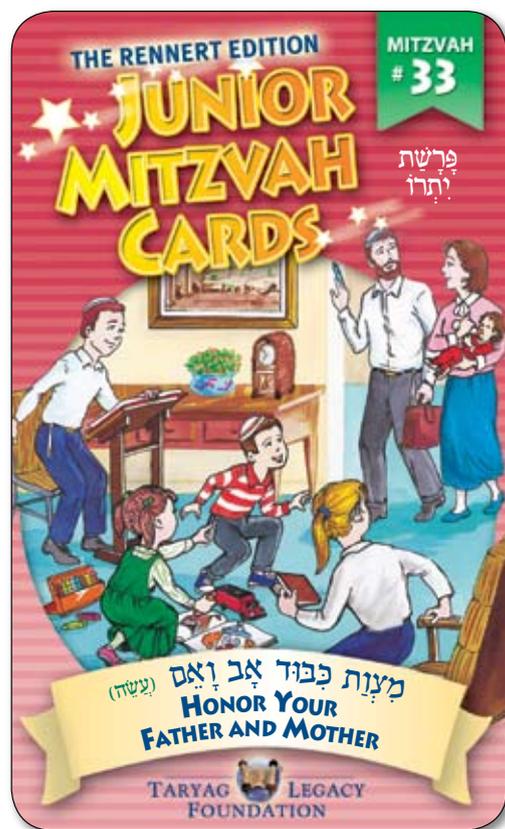
The Midrash teaches that what they really meant was, "We refuse to accept God or His rule. Let us make a name for ourselves." Rabbi Yonason Eibenschutz, an 18th-century sage, made a remarkable comment on this passage. He said the Tower of Babel was actually a ship designed to fly up into the heavens!

Many times, especially over the 20th century, there have been loud and unmistakable reminders that self-reliance has gone too far. The Titanic, the largest, most advanced ship of its day, was thought unsinkable. "Even God Himself could not sink this ship," people remarked.

When the "wellsprings of knowledge" burst into the world in the 1800s, it presented a great challenge to humanity: Would the great control over nature lead humanity to replace God in heaven with the gods of technology?

In the latter half of the 20th century, arguably no event shook the confidence of technological man like the disaster of the space shuttle Challenger. Millions of people had their eyes glued to the event, as it featured the first civilian, Christa McAuliffe, who would teach science lessons from space. 1986 had been dubbed the "Year for Space Science" - the year that Halley's

Principals report that one of the key strengths of the Rennert Taryag Mitzvah Project is its flexibility. It has been used in the classroom and in voluntary learning programs. It can be a springboard for discussion for a few minutes a day, once a week, or once a year. "It's a hit at our Father/Son Learning and Basketball League," says Rabbi Pesach Wachsman, principal of Hebrew Studies at Emek Hebrew Academy in Sherman Oaks, California. "The kids are incredibly excited about it. Right now, 90 children and fathers are coming every week, and I know it's going to grow."



Presently, the first unit for schools is on the Ten Commandments and the *mitzvot* they entail. The attendant encyclopedia for adults - as well as the first volume elucidating the first 24 *mitzvot* - have been published to great acclaim. The whole 20-volume encyclopedia, in both English and Hebrew, is expected to be completed over the next five years.

Not limited to school use, the encyclopedia is a user-friendly vehicle for learning about a mitzvah or two any time at all.

Not limited to school use, the encyclopedia is a user-friendly vehicle for learning about a mitzvah or two any time at all. Because *mitzvot* are basic and universal, their study is easily adaptable for men and women, children and teens, of every affiliation. Due to this potential, and because every bit of the project is reviewed numerous times by Torah scholars to insure its accuracy, scores of distinguished rabbis - including past and present Chief Rabbis of Israel - have gladly given it their wholehearted support.

Jewish leaders involved in outreach are no less passionate about the uses and implications of the project. Name your favorite outreach group or academy, and you will find it on

the ever-growing list of fervent backers: Aish Hatorah, Gateways, Hineni, Neve Yerushalayim, Ohr Somayach and Partners in Torah are just a few.

In a letter to Rabbi Wax, describing his excitement about the project as "beyond words," Rabbi Jonathan Rietti, a senior lecturer for the Gateways Seminars and principal of Yeshiva Shaarei Simcha in Passaic, New Jersey, put his finger on numerous advantages of the project. Most compelling is his description of the project as a boon to *baalei teshuvah*, people who are late starters in the study of their Jewish heritage:

"...Possibly the most challenging aspects of reclaiming Judaism facing every *baal teshuvah* is the overwhelming and often intimidating feeling

that 'there is so much to learn, so much to know!' The sensation of ignorance can even last for decades after they are observant of the basic *mitzvot*! Your [project] can assist a *baal teshuvah* to gradually learn the Taryag *mitzvot*. Even a partial mastery of the 613 *mitzvot* will assist him greatly in participating in Torah discussions, classes and textual learning."

In his travels, Rabbi Wax discovered that unfamiliarity with the breadth and significance of all the Torah's *mitzvot* is by no means limited to

late starters, but is true of

Jews of every background

- prompting him to think beyond the schoolroom and synagogue. In his characteristically thorough fashion, he is currently

probing Jewish leadership on what it would take to make the study of *taryag mitzvot* a fixture in every Jewish home. His ideas are electrifying, his presentation dynamic, and his motivations pure. It's only a matter of time before the Rennert Taryag Mitzvah Project will be coming your way - and delving into all 613 *mitzvot* won't seem so daunting after all.

Many thanks to the following people whose cooperation greatly contributed to this article: Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, Rebbe at Yeshiva Darchei Torah; Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Dean of Yad Avraham Institute; Mrs. Sara Richter, Associate Principal of Judaic Studies, grades 1-4, SAR Academy; Rabbi Shlomo Schwartz, Assistant Headmaster of RAMAZ Middle School; Rabbi Sholom Strajcher, Dean of Emek Hebrew Academy; Rabbi Pesach Wachsman, Menahel, Emek Hebrew Academy; Rabbi Nachum Wachtel, Assistant Principal, Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy.

apartment about five years ago; I still keep my eyes open; hope doesn't die. A child's invisible, clear plastic orthodontic retainer, which was left on a table and thrown out with the disposable tablecloth.

One loss that evokes a particularly poignant regret is the delicate Magen David on a silver chain, which my father gave me when I first started becoming observant.

Which brings to mind, though, the most valuable thing in my life that was ever lost, then found. It happened the first time I saw a woman light candles for Shabbos, then cover her eyes to address Hashem.

I'll never forget what it was like: the sense that something I'd been waiting for all my life, without being aware of it, had just been returned to me, and that *I* was being returned to *it*. Brought abruptly to life by those Hebrew words and the two flames, its reappearance revealed instantly that the darkness I'd always felt had been the shadow cast by its absence. It was brand new, and had always been mine. It was vastly larger than I, and deeply familiar. Everything within me was saying: *I see!*

For the first time, in the candlelight, I stepped into my own place between heaven and earth and with that, the whole universe with its stars and seas shifted, too, into proper alignment. *I was a Jew. A Jewish woman.* It was the place for which I had blindly hungered my whole life. All at once I was a small human being who knew that to be a small human being was no small thing. I could talk to G-d.

If finding an earring brings some measure of pleasure, then imagine, if you can, the joy -- the sheer joy, the gladdest joy, the joy that never ends -- when the thing returned is your own self.

This article originally appeared in the book *A Gift Passed Along (ArtScroll / Mesorah)*. Sarah Shapiro is the author of *Growing With My Children, Don't You Know it's a Perfect World*, and *A Gift Passed Along*, and editor, most recently, of *The Mother in Our Lives (Targum/Feldheim)*. She lectures and teaches writing in Israel and America.

"Fashion is now about marketing and merchandising," the article quotes Yves Saint Laurent's business partner as saying. "It is not about designer fashion. It is about [mass-market retailing]."

So dumbing down and selling out, having made their way through most other industries, have finally found a way to enter the fashion world. The bottom line, apparently, has officially shifted away from the glitz and the glamour to an all-out go for the *gelt*.

While this example from the world of fashion is not surprising, it is a further reminder that when the dollar is king -- a rampant and still growing attitude in our society -- there is not much room for anything else. If we choose to pledge our allegiance to the dollar, we may very well be sacrificing "emotional life and the ability to communicate it," among other things.

I believe the reports about Google.org and the Nobel Peace Prize offer a timely opportunity to think about the lesson of Chanukah *gelt*. The one time of year Judaism encourages families to give money to their children is in the glow of the Chanukah candles. Why then?

In the traditional sources, Chanukah is a time to connect with our priorities. The Maccabees were faced with a decision -- do we risk our lives and the future of our people to resist the imposition of Greek culture and to fight for our Torah values? What is most important to us? Chanukah means dedication: it is a time to refresh our moral clarity about the values to which we are mostly deeply dedicated.

What better time is there to teach our children about the use of money? When our families are together in the glow of the Chanukah flames, recalling the dedication our people demonstrated for their deepest values, we offer our children money, as if to say: in light of these values, what do you think this is for? It is our way of defining money for them as the fuel to further meaningful priorities.

The dollar is not king in Jewish life, and allowing it to be so is another way to lose the battle of Chanukah. It is a servant capable of creating whatever meaning you put into it - if you direct it wisely.

What would *you* do if you had \$20 to dedicate to your highest priorities? Or \$200? Would you buy something from Karl Lagerfeld or Yves Saint Laurent? Or would you spread light in all the darkest places?

Comet would be observed, the Hubble Telescope was put into orbit, and no fewer than 15 shuttle missions flown. It was a banner year for technological advancement.

And then the Challenger blew up. The remaining shuttle missions were cancelled, and the entire space program questioned. 1986 turned out to be the year of the humbling. The astronauts, President Reagan explained to a grieving nation, had "slipped the surly bonds of earth to touch the face of God."

THE CHANUKAH CONNECTION

Coming as it did literally on the wings of the Industrial Revolution, manned flight is arguably the pinnacle of technological achievement. If so, it is fitting that this breakthrough took place during Chanukah, because the message of Chanukah is that God, not human beings, controls events and nature. This can be seen in the two "miracles" of Chanukah: the military victory over the Greeks, and the oil that burned eight days.

On Chanukah we celebrate the victory of a small band of Jewish fighters over the Greek superpower of its day. The weak vanquishing the powerful reminds us that the victory of one army over another does not ultimately boil down to military might and technology. (The Greeks possessed the super-weapon of its day - the elephant.) Victory and defeat are outer shells of events determined by a deeper inner reality - God's will.

Similarly, the ability of oil to burn is not a law of nature, per se, but an expression of God's will. This is conveyed in a Talmudic story about Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa.

One evening, Rabbi Chanina's daughter said, "We have no oil to light candles."

"Do we have vinegar?" he asked.

"Yes."

"So let He who tells oil to burn, now tell vinegar to burn."

She lit the vinegar and it burned.

Why does oil burn, but not vinegar? Is it really the "nature" of oil to burn and the "nature" of vinegar not to burn? From Rabbi Chanina's perspective, oil



The weak vanquishing the powerful reminds us that the victory of one army over another does not ultimately boil down to military might and technology.

burns not because of any "law of nature," but because God determines that it do so, each and every time a person ignites it.

This, too, is the message of the Maccabees recapturing the Temple and lighting the menorah. According to the laws of nature, there was enough oil to burn for only one day. But nature is nothing but the will of God repeated in predictable ways. If God's will is for the unpredictable - the "miraculous" - then oil meant to burn for one day will last for eight.

MYSTICISM IN EVERYDAY LIGHT

In a deeper sense, this is what we are supposed to see when gazing into the hypnotic glare of the menorah lights. We see a world where the physical is really only the outer garb for an inner, spiritual essence - the "will of God." Even technological achievement, the epitome of human ingenuity and control, demonstrates this. After all, who puts the thoughts in a person's mind to invent a new machine? Indeed, the Wright Brothers didn't even have a high school education, yet they - and not the scientists and PhD's pursuing the dream of flight for decades - discovered how to fly!

Further, we so often see that invention is the product of "luck" and "chance." Wilbur Wright discovered a key principle of aerodynamics, "wing warping," while absent-mindedly fiddling with an empty, rectangular, cardboard box in his shop while attending to a customer.

And how often has it happened that just when we think we've finally achieved full technological control, some disaster results.

Modern technology is a double-edged sword. Reaching for the heavens is a lofty, noble idea. Yet if it becomes a way to storm the heavens and challenge God's dominion, it ultimately has no chance of success.

God is not disproved by Science. Science is another name for the gift of mind and spirit to His creations to help them create through their own efforts a better life.

Nature is a puppet attached to the strings of the Master. It is a mask hiding the Face of God. On Chanukah, we try to peel back the mask and see that the miraculous is present, prescient, embedded, imminent and revealed.

And if we can see beyond the often-blinding earthly light, we will be privy to a vastly more beautiful light - the Divine light, aglow in the menorah's flickering, eternal flame.

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If the Dollar is King... by Rabbi Dovid Goldman

GOOGLE.ORG, MICRO-LOANS AND CHANUKAH GELT

If you're like most Jews today, you are more likely to buy someone a Chanukah gift this year than to give them cash. However, the original Jewish custom was, in fact, to give cash – known to many of us as Chanukah *Gelt*.

The tradition to give kids Chanukah “gelt” (the Yiddish word for money) after lighting the Menorah dates back at least to the middle ages and probably to Talmudic times. Somewhere along the way, perhaps noticing what was going on in other homes during that time of year, many of our parents and grandparents started shifting from the *gelt* to the goods. What was the meaning behind the original tradition to give money on Chanukah? Was there a Chanukah lesson being taught or was it just a way to raise the stakes in the dreidel-spinning?

There have been a few items in the news this fall that have had me thinking about money and the fascinating variety of ways people relate to it – both as individuals and as a society. One was a recent announcement by Google that the the company would be launching a \$1 billion philanthropic enterprise called Google.org to tackle poverty, disease and global warming. What was so interesting to me about this was not just the growth of such charitable foundations (this coming on the heels of Warren Buffet’s revelation that he intends to donate \$3 billion a year to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), but the revolutionary approach to charity the Google initiative represents. They came up with a plan for a *for-profit* charity.

That’s right – they will not be distributing money for the poor or for medical research or to fund higher education. Their plan is to *invest* money in companies they believe will make, if not necessarily a profit, a meaningful contribution to the good of the world. The only difference between Google.

org and any other for-profit business is the bottom line. “The emphasis is on social returns,” commented Dr. Larry Brilliant, its executive director, “not economic returns.”

Also announced this fall was the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank for pioneering a new category of banking known as micro-credit, which grants small loans to poor people who have no collateral and who do not qualify for conventional bank loans.

In 1976, Yunus took 856 taka (about \$27) out of his pocket to lend to 42 women in the village of Jobra who had a small business making bamboo furniture.

From that enterprise, a banking phenomenon evolved that has made an estimated \$5.7 billion in loans to more than six million underprivileged people in Bangladesh. They report a repayment rate of 95%, which dwarfs the average of standard banks and, according to their website, they netted approximately \$15 million in 2005.

The one time of year Judaism encourages families to give money to their children is in the glow of the Chanukah candles. Why then?

Since Grameen Bank was founded in 1983, poverty has decreased throughout Bangladesh. According to World Bank figures, their per capita income has grown more than 57% in that time and economists “can’t apportion exactly how much credit is due to Grameen.” Apparently, they believe it is significant.

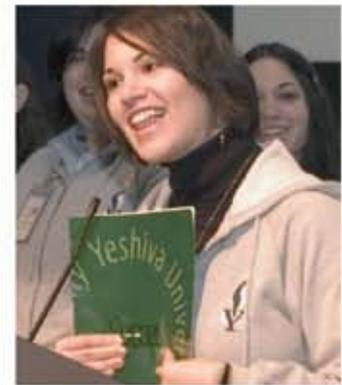
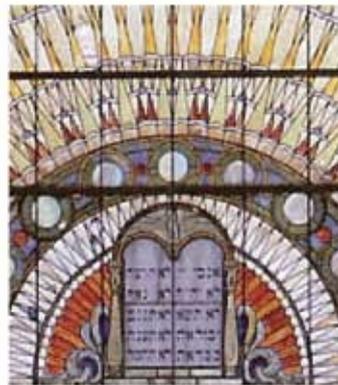
A different kind of story that caught my attention was an October article in Time magazine about the fashion industry. The article bemoaned the general feeling at Karl Lagerfeld’s recent Chanel show in Paris that “fashion has become so globalized and merchandised that the idea of a designer with an emotional life and the ability to communicate it to others is passé.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 61

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