

JEWISH FAMILY

CHANUKAH 5786

A LITTLE NOSH FOR THE SOUL




FEELING CRUSHED?
AN OLIVE OIL STORY

CELEBRATE CHANUKAH!
December 14-22

A CANDLE IN THERAPY
KING SOLOMON'S METAPHOR


PARENTING LESSONS
FROM THE MENORAH

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GUIDE



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CHANUKAH GUIDE: How to Celebrate

Dear Friend,

Have we ever needed the light of Chanukah like we do this year? The story of a little candle pushing away the monster of frightening darkness, of human sensibility overcoming fear and isolation, of love overcoming divisiveness. The battle is very much alive within each of us, and in the world outside of us.

The victory of light over darkness happens when we light the Chanukah candles. It happens with every breath of life, every cry of a newborn child, every blade of grass that breaks out from under the soil, every decision to be kind where there is cruelty. And that is Chanukah. Chanukah is an eight-day spiritual journey of joy, warmth, and light.

In this tradition, Chabad presents this Chanukah magazine with illuminating insights into our traditions of light. Our hope is that each reader will follow and light up the world, one candle at a time.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Moishe & Layah Kievman
Directors, Chabad Chayil

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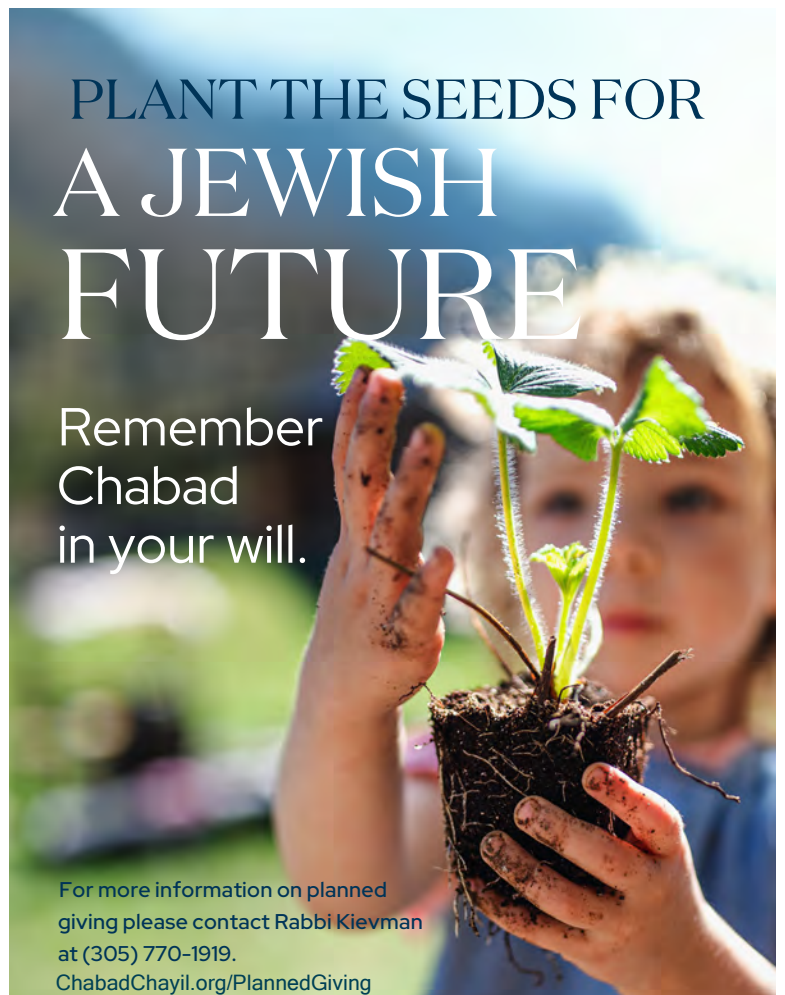
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CHANUKAH GUIDE

QUICK GUIDE: THE MENORAH

We celebrate Chanukah by lighting the menorah each night. Here's a quick guide to help you light the menorah.

The Menorah

Place the menorah in a doorway opposite the mezuzah or on a windowsill facing the street. Remember: safety is also a mitzvah, so make sure it's securely positioned and kept away from anything flammable.

The Lighting

Gather everyone for the menorah lighting, and encourage children to light their own.

- 1) Hold the shamash (helper candle) in your dominant hand and recite the first two blessings.
- 2) On the first night—or the first time you light this year—add the third blessing.
- 3) Light one candle on the right the first night, adding a new one each night and always lighting the newest candle first.
- 4) After lighting, recite “*HaNeirot Halalu*” (“We kindle these lights...”).



Shabbat Note

On Friday, light the menorah before the Shabbat candles, making sure it will burn 30 minutes past nightfall. After Shabbat, we light the menorah after nightfall and havdalah. •



BLESSINGS

FOR LIGHTING THE MENORAH

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

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

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

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

3. Recite this blessing only the first time you light the menorah:

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

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

After lighting, recite the following:

הנרות הללו אנו מדליקין על התשועות ועל הנסים ועל הנפלאות
שעשית לאבותינו, בימים ההם בזמן הזה על ידי כהניך הקדושים.
וקל שמונת ימי חנכה, הנרות הללו קדש הם ואין לנו רשות
להשתמש בהן אלא לראותן בלבד, כדי להודות ולהלל לשמך
הגדול על נסידך ועל נפלאותיך ועל ישועותיך.

We kindle these lights [to commemorate] the saving acts, miracles and wonders which You have performed for our forefathers, in those days at this time, through Your holy priests. Throughout the eight days of Chanukah, these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make use of them, but only to look at them, in order to offer thanks and praise to Your great Name for Your miracles, for Your wonders and for Your salvations.

THE REBBE'S GUIDE TO *STEP-BY-STEP* GROWTH

Simple daily moves for spiritual momentum, inspired by the Rebbe's wisdom on the menorah's light.

The menorah serves as a symbol of Jewish resilience and strength. The original menorah is biblical and designed by G-d Himself, while our menorah was instituted after the miraculous story of Chanukah occurred. Although they are related, the Rebbe highlights four basic differences between the menorah of the Temple and the Chanukah menorah we light today:

1. Growing vs. Steady Light: The Temple Menorah's seven lamps burned the same each day. Your Chanukah menorah, on the other hand, grows, starting with one candle, then two, then three, until all eight candles are lit.

2. Night vs. Day: The Kohen Gadol (High Priest) lit the Temple Menorah during daylight. You light yours after nightfall, specifically when darkness surrounds you.

3. Public vs. Private: The Temple's golden Menorah glowed indoors, inside a sacred space. You place your menorah by

the window (or in the doorway), publicly facing the world.

4. Struggle vs. Prosperity: The Temple's Menorah belonged to an era of divine revelation, peace, and prosperity. The Chanukah menorah was born during the Syrian-Greek oppression that outlawed the Jewish faith and desecrated holiness.

The Rebbe explains that these differences are connected. When life is easy and the sun is shining, we produce a daytime static "indoors" light. But in times of trouble and darkness, we must generate a light bright enough to pierce it. That's the light of Chanukah.

Your menorah understands darkness. It knows that when the world grows dim, yesterday's light is not enough; you must grow and increase your light daily.

The nighttime lighting of our menorahs reminds us that the light needed now is stronger than what once sufficed in the Temple's daylight. We can't survive on

static, indoor holiness. We need a growing radiance that reaches the streets and uplifts the world.

THE MENORAH'S TIPS ON GROWTH

Grow Daily – Don't stagnate. Movement is the key indicator of life. Take small steps. Add one more candle, one more mitzvah, that's how the flame keeps burning.

Match the Darkness – The greater the challenge, the stronger your response. Each new wave of darkness demands we shine brighter.

Shine Outward – This isn't the time to focus solely on ourselves. Sharing your warmth and faith only intensifies it. Be an ambassador of light.

Fear No Darkness – The Chanukah menorah was born from oppression. Like the Maccabees, embrace courage, face the night, and transform it. •

(Based on the teachings of the Rebbe, Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 1)



LET THERE BE LIGHT!

Once a symbol of Jewish oppression where Nazi troops marched, the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin now proudly hosts the annual Chabad menorah lighting. From day one, when G-d said, "Let there be light," the intention was to illuminate even the darkest places. Each year, as Chabad lights up the giant menorah, the once-ominous gate transforms into a celebration of Jewish life and pride. This striking image encapsulates the changes in our world, highlighting how light triumphs over darkness. It serves as a powerful reminder of our mission to bring light to a dark world, to infuse holiness into the mundane, and to make this world a dwelling place for the Divine, even at the Brandenburg Gate.



RECIPE BY SHENA DOMINITZ

GOOEY CHEESY POTATO LATKES



Dairy



6 Servings



40 Minutes

MAIN INGREDIENTS:

2 cups finely shredded sweet potato, with skin (I leave the skin on because it gives the latke an extra crunch once fried)

4 cups finely shredded Yukon potato, with skin, liquid squeezed out with a towel

3 eggs

3 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

1 tablespoon fresh chopped dill

2 teaspoons fresh chopped rosemary

1 teaspoon kosher salt

pepper, to taste

1/4 cup Gefen Breadcrumbs

fresh mozzarella, sliced into rounds, about 1/4 inch thick

1/4 cup flour to coat mozzarella

1/2 cup vegetable oil for frying (you will use a bit at a time. Do not pour into pan all together.)

DIRECTIONS: Prepare the Latkes

1. Combine the sweet potatoes and white potatoes. Mix in the eggs, sesame seeds, dill, rosemary, salt, pepper, and bread crumbs. Set aside.

2. Take each slice of cheese and coat it in the flour.

3. Then, coat each slice with the potato mixture. Try to coat the entire cheese slice, but make sure the potato layer is thin. If it is too thick the potato won't cook through and the cheese will not melt properly.

4. Place one tablespoon of vegetable oil in a pan. Let it get hot, and then place the latkes in the pan. You do not need to add oil when you flip the latke. Fry each side three to four minutes until golden and crispy on each side. Continue with remaining oil and batter.

5. Happy Chanukah, and remember to eat these hot!!

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STILL LOOKING FOR *MIRACLES?*

By Ben Sherman

I sat in the backseat of a Waymo, the now-popular self-driving taxi service in Los Angeles, wondering why miracles seemed to elude me. So, hoping for a bit of inspiration, I called my Israeli friend, Benny, who was having breakfast at Café Xoho in Tel Aviv.

As I FaceTimed him to ask if he'd seen any miracles lately, I could see in the background that a weary-looking soldier entered the café. We quickly learned he had been working all week, staffing the Iron Dome, and knowing he was low on funds, I Zelled Benny \$40 to pay for this hero's breakfast. In an instant, my friend received the money, allowing the soldier to order a hearty meal.

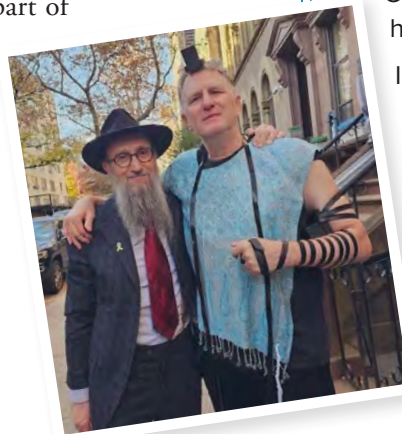
Turns out, both Benny and the Iron Dome operator hadn't witnessed any miracles lately. In fact, Benny was coming from the hospital, where his

mother had undergone cataract surgery. Though she could now see perfectly after struggling through the darkness of her condition, she hadn't seen any miracles lately either.

That's when it struck me that perhaps the line between the miraculous and the natural has begun to blur. As I stepped out of the Waymo at LAX, heading to New York for the Chabad Rabbis Convention (a gathering where Jewish communities from around the world are represented) I couldn't help but wonder: what do you call wonders that have become part of everyday life?

What do you call a miracle that now feels natural? ●

>> Ben Sherman is a staff writer for Chabad Magazine.



FAMILY TIES: MICHAEL RAPAPORT

"I started wrapping tefillin about two years ago. I didn't grow up doing it. I didn't grow up understanding it. And to be totally honest — when I'd see guys in NYC doing it on the street or outside a bagel shop or in the park, I thought it looked weird. I didn't get it. I didn't understand the beauty or the meaning.

But now?

Now when I wrap tefillin, especially first thing in the morning, it hits me in my chest. It centers me. It charges me. It makes me feel focused, grounded, and armed — not with weapons, but with purpose, discipline, and identity.

It's not just a ritual — it's how I talk to G-d. It's how I talk to my people. It's how I talk to myself. And I love it.

I really love it.

I feel like a superhero when I walk out the house after praying. Not invincible — but connected.

Am Yisrael Chai."



A CANDLE IN THERAPY

Based on the teachings of the Rebbe, adapted by Rabbi Shmuel Marcus

When describing the human experience, King Solomon wrote: “The soul of man is the candle of G-d.”

Why a candle? Why not simply call our soul the flame of G-d, or the light, the song, or the sunshine of G-d? What is it specifically about the candle that describes us so perfectly?

The term candle indicates more than just a flame. When a candle looks in the mirror, it might notice wax, a wick, or a flickering flame, but it can't see its true light. That's why a candle is the perfect stand-in for us.

Our body and daily routine are like the wax and wick; our purpose and soul are metaphorically the flame. It sometimes happens that life gets messy, and we don't feel like a candle at all. Yet, the moment we ignite our flame, everything changes, and we instantly recognize ourselves again.

As candles of G-d, we are more than the sum of our parts. We're not just wax or flame, body or soul. The candle metaphor hints at a powerful divine force beyond heaven and earth, a kind of spiritual

superglue that holds it all together.

That's what a candle doesn't see in its reflection. So, Solomon helps us notice our own light. True, we are hybrids wrestling with our angelic divinity and animal drive, but our ability to merge them and to hold both worlds together is what defines us as the candles of G-d.

When we stop identifying as only body or only

soul, we uncover our true selves, a divine power so strong it could fuse wax, wick, and flame into one perfect candle.

If your candle were to call its therapist complaining of a sort of

heaviness or fatigue, the therapist

would ask, “Is your flame still burning?” If not, we've found the problem.

In a way, King Solomon's metaphor is both diagnosis and cure. His timeless advice to every candle: keep an eye on your flame. Life can be exhausting; some days you feel like wax or a dried out wick. But some days, you'll discover the force that's greater than wax, wick, or flame, and suddenly, you're on fire. ●

>> Rabbi Shmuel Marcus is the editor of Chabad Magazine.

*WHAT IS
IT SPECIFICALLY
ABOUT THE CANDLE
THAT DESCRIBES US
SO PERFECTLY?*

IN THOSE DAYS, IN OUR TIME

STORIES OF JEWISH FAITH FROM RECENT HISTORY

By Shira Gold

tortured, he was repeatedly pressured to convert to Islam in exchange for food and basic comforts. He refused.

When he was finally rescued, Rom's first words were about identity. "I'm a Jew!" he kept repeating. His first request in the hospital was to put on tefillin and pray. "The strength I found there," he said, "came from knowing that everyone around me was not Jewish, and that the reason I was there, the reason for everything I endured, was because I am Jewish."

Rom is not alone. Yosef Chaim Ohana, also taken from the Nova festival, was pressured to convert as well. He and another hostage were forced to listen to Muslim prayers and propaganda on a radio that played without pause. Once, when the guards weren't watching, they managed to switch channels to an Israeli station, and at that brief moment, through the static, Yosef heard his father being interviewed on the radio. It gave him strength.

Since the dark day of October 7th, ordinary Israelis and Jews around the world have been transformed. The verse in Isaiah (60:21) "And your people, all of them righteous, shall inherit the land forever, a scion of My planting, the work of My hands in which I will glory," now describes us best.

It's people like Matan Angrest, a 22-year-old IDF soldier, who was captured after his tank was hit in Nahal Oz. The sole survivor of his crew, he endured starvation, isolation, and beatings during two years in Gaza. "It was a series of miracles," he said. "Even in that nightmare, I needed to stay connected." He demanded a Jewish prayerbook, and miraculously, they gave it to him. From that day on, he prayed three times daily. "It gave me strength. It protected me."

When Matan returned home, his first request was for a new pair of tefillin. His mother said simply, "He suffered unimaginable torture, but his belief in G-d kept him alive."

As the endless modern-day stories of faith and sacrifice continue to be told, we see the same flame that burned for Judah and the Maccabees still burns today. It glows in the bravery of the soldiers, in the unshakable faith of the hostages, in a whispered Shema, in the simple act of wrapping tefillin, in the awakened hearts of the Oct. 8th Jews around the world.

These are not stories from our ancestors from bygone years, but the faith and holiness of Jews today. In those days, in our time. We may have different names, different candles, but it's the same flame. ●

>> Shira Gold is a staff writer at Chabad Magazine.



Jewish history tells of Moses standing firm against Pharaoh's decrees, of Esther and Mordechai defying Haman's plot, and of Judah Maccabee's bravery during the Syrian-Greek oppression. Yet as these stories echo through time, celebrating an ancient and enduring faith, new chapters are being written in the language of modern pain. The faces are new, but the courage is the same.

Take, for example, Rom Braslavski, who was abducted on October 7th from the Nova music festival where he worked as a security guard, and was held captive for more than 730 days. Shackled by all four limbs in a one-meter cell, starved, beaten, and

Shuk D'America

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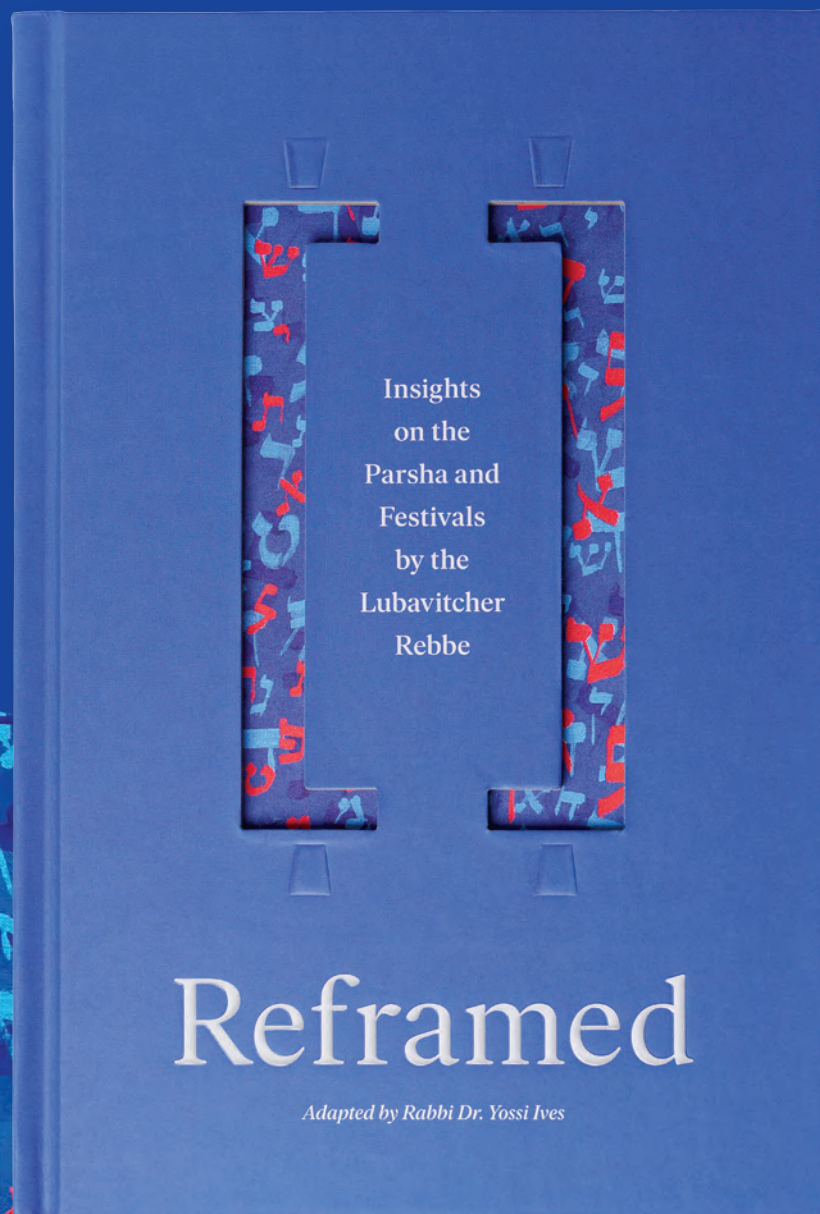
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HANDLE WITH CARE

On Raising Young Menorahs

By Levy Lieberman

We light the menorah on Chanukah to remember this: When the fighting stopped and the Temple lay in ruins, they found only one tiny jar of oil that remained untouched by darkness. Enough for one night, it burned for eight.

But the greater miracle may be that it existed at all. That amid chaos, something pure survived. And that's the message we need at home, right now: Darkness is never total.

Every child carries a sealed drop of Divine light, something whole, something good, something no one can contaminate. Sometimes it shines easily. Sometimes it hides behind frustration, fear, or a well-timed eye-roll. But it's always there.

Our role as parents is to search for that oil: To see the good when they can't. To protect the purity they have forgotten. To be the one who believes in their light.

Because that's how G-d parents us, our Father in Heaven looks past our failures and sees the holiness He placed inside.

And when we parent like that, our children don't just learn about G-d, they learn how to have a relationship with Him. They learn what love from Above is meant to look and feel like. They discover a Father who believes in them, who waits for their light to catch, who keeps searching even when the world stops looking.

Find that spark, even the smallest drop, and you can expect light:

Light that ignites the mind, the heart, and the soul.

Light that fills the home and then spills into the world outside.

Because a single compassionate, loving gesture toward a young child doesn't just make them smile. It shapes how they see themselves, you, and G-d. And that kind of light can change everything.

That's Chanukah. And that's Jewish parenting: Search for the oil, and the flame will follow. ●

>> Levy Lieberman is the co-founder of Limestone Digital and a marketing technology expert specializing in bridging technical execution with marketing innovation. He writes about MarTech, Chassidism, and the unexpected ways they intersect.

MIRACLE OF LIGHT

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No fighter plane, no battleship
Can crush what's pure and sweet
It's that last drop of oil
It just won't see defeat
It keeps our little hoppin' flame
Dancin' to the beat
It's that last drop of oil
We're takin' to the streets

And we'll blow smoke in the face of
darkness
Set fires to burn up the night
Tell and retell all your stories
Be a miracle of light

I'll be a nes nes,
I'll be a bright light
I'll be a miracle,
I'll be a miracle of light

Crushed like an olive
Let your oil flow
When there's nothing left
Your true colors show
So reach deep down and grab that
spark
Ain't you tired of living in the dark
Show me a candle,
I'll show you the light
Show me a candle
I'll show you the light

And we'll blow smoke in the face of
darkness
Set fires to burn up the night
Tell and retell all your stories
Be a miracle of light

I'll be a nes nes
I'll be a bright light
I'll be a miracle
I'll be a miracle of light





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How often we thought, if members of our community could just find the peace of mind necessary to focus on family rather than having to worry about coming up with thousands of dollars in one day's notice. Please take the time to investigate and acquaint yourself with the benefits that only in time you will come to appreciate.

Our sages say: Making arrangements for funeral services is a "segulah" for a Long life. May you and your family be blessed with a long and healthy life, without the need for any burial, ever. May we merit the time of Moshiach when all those that lived will live again and there will no longer be the concept of death.

We are here to help ease the pain and help you navigate this part of life!

Learn more at ChabadChayil.org/Cemetery or call us at your convenience



“AMERICA IS NO DIFFERENT”

By Rabbi David Eliezrie

Hovering offshore in New York Harbor on a balmy March morning was the Swedish liner Drottningholm, worn from her journey across the North Atlantic. The ship had pulled in the night before, after a harrowing ordeal, stopped at several points along the way by British warships and German submarines.

According to port regulations, the weary passengers—the Sixth Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn and his family among them—would have to wait until the morning to disembark.

For the passengers, America was a refuge from war-torn Europe. For the Rebbe, it was a new spiritual frontier with immense potential. He wanted to create a robust, self-assured Jewish life, and reinvigorating Jewish education was the foundation of his strategy to remold American Jewry.

He intended to go on the offensive, motivated by his pride in uncompromising standards of Judaism. This was, he believed, his next mission, orchestrated by divine providence.

The Rebbe did not march off the ship as he had done on his visit to America eleven years earlier. He came down the gangway in a wheelchair, guided

by one of the ship’s officers, bedecked by a shtreimel, which is customarily worn on Shabbat and holidays.

His countenance made an impression on those present. Historian Gershon Kranzler says, “His very presence seemed to electrify the large crowd.”

The Brooklyn Eagle reported that he had a “reddish gray beard and a face stern and luminous as if from another epoch, from the era of the Geonim.” He looked “malchusdik,” like spiritual royalty, says Avraham Hecht, the American student who fled Poland when the war broke out. The Herald Tribune described the Rebbe as “a man of striking appearance.” Shoen says, “Many broke out in tears.”

When the crowd saw the Rebbe coming down the gangway, they cried out, “*Shalom aleikhem!*”

Cantor Shmuel Kantaroff joyously began to sing the Shehechyanu blessing. Seized with excitement, the crowd burst into a lively chasidic tune.

Sixteen-year-old Yitzchak Groner strained to get a glimpse of the Rebbe. “I gave a jump, and I saw the Rebbe.” Risya Kazarnovsky, only 13 at the time, says the singing was a moment of personal affirmation for her, a girl who attended public school and whose family always seemed different from those of her peers. “These were the Chabad melodies I heard at home,” she says.

On the dock, at the bottom of the

gangway, a reporter approached the Rebbe and asked why he had come to America.

The Rebbe replied, “*Altz iz hashgacha prutis, gekumen machen America a makom Torah* – Everything is by divine providence. I came to make America a center of Torah.”

The reporter responded with skepticism. “You will see hair on my hand before America will become a center of Torah.”

The Rebbe rebuffed his doubts. “I don’t know about hair, but America will become a center of Jewish learning.” Rising from his wheelchair, the Rebbe was emphatic:

“America iz nisht andersh – America is no different. It will become a center of Torah.”

His proclamation, “America iz nisht andersh – America is no different,” challenged the prevailing attitude. He didn’t want to just bolster the small religious community, but to fundamentally change the direction of American Jewish life. ●



>> Excerpt from \ aUndaunted, How the Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, Saved Russian Jewry, Reimagined American Judaism, and Ignited a Global Jewish Renaissance.



FEELING CRUSHED?

AN OLIVE OIL STORY

By Rabbi Eli Friedman

In Jewish law, the menorah in the Holy Temple required a precise daily measure of pure olive oil. The Talmud (*Rashi, Shabbat 22b*) records that each of the menorah's seven branches held exactly five and a half ounces of oil, enough to burn through the [long] winter nights of Tevet.

So, when the Maccabees rededicated the Temple after their victory, they found precisely 38.5 ounces (5.5x7), and it was from that single day's measure of oil that the miracle of Chanukah unfolded.

The thing about an olive is, it's just an olive. But when you apply pressure, you reveal what's inside, olive oil.

A Jew is just a Jew until a bit of pressure is applied. Then the truth comes out, the Jew contains G-dliness, the most precious of all commodities. And the stronger the pressure, the more G-dliness the Jew produces.

Our enemies have been making this mistake for a long time. They strike us, and we produce more light. The harder they hit, the brighter we shine. You would think by now they would have

learned this simple lesson of history.

But they are not the only ones surprised. Many Jews are astonished by their own reaction to hate and hardship, by how, when being Jewish becomes most inconvenient, they become more Jewish. The oil was there all along, hidden inside the olives, just waiting

***YOU MAY BE
SHOCKED BY YOUR
OWN STRENGTH,
BUT IT IS THERE;
IT ALWAYS WAS.***

to be revealed.

And here lies the message in the law of the required 5.5 oz. There is enough oil to last through the longest nights of Tevet, through the darkest, coldest winter.

Winter can be rough. And this year, it feels like we are living through one of those endless winter nights, war, loss, hatred, and fear. The unity and kindness

we have shown each other have been lifesaving, but the question remains: when will the night end?

We can't bear it anymore.

And yet the Torah whispers, "Enough oil to last through the longest winter night." You will make it. Your flame will not go out. Until this darkness ends, you will keep glowing. You may be shocked by your own strength, but it is there; it always was. No night is too long for you, and no cold is too cold for you.

And when this is all over, we will not be the same. We will know what we carry inside. We will never again be just olives. Pressed and tested, we have discovered the treasure within, and it has changed us forever.

Our souls are on fire. Evil tried once again to destroy us and only succeeded in revealing our strength. The night is long, but not endless. Dawn is near. Hold on. The oil is still burning. ●

>> Rabbi Eli Friedman is a writer and speaker. He is the director of Chabad in Calabasa, California, where he lives together with his wife and children.

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MEET THE HONORABLE
RACHEL FREIER



She's a full-time Bubby, a paramedic, and the world's first female Chasidic judge

By Batya Perl

When Justice Rachel “Ruchie” Freier took her oath of office in 2016, she made history—not only as the first Chasidic woman elected to public office in the United States, but as a symbol of what faith, perseverance, and community spirit can achieve. Today, she serves as a Supreme Court Justice in Kings County Supreme Court, where her steady voice, guided by Torah values and a deep sense of justice, continues to inspire women and men across all walks of Jewish life.

Born and raised in Borough Park, Ruchie was educated entirely within the Chasidic school system, attending Bais Yaakov from elementary through seminary. There, she was immersed in Jewish learning and raised on Judaism’s compassion for human life and the enduring belief that every person is created in the image of G-d. Those lessons became the foundation of her life’s mission: to serve, uplift, and lead without ever compromising her identity.

Her journey to the bench was anything but conventional. After finishing seminary, Ruchie married Tzi David Freier, who devoted the first decade of their marriage to full-time Torah study. While supporting her husband and raising their growing family, she worked as a legal secretary and later as a paralegal, gaining hands-on experience that would eventually shape her legal career.

Determined to pursue her passion for law, she enrolled at Touro College, majoring in Political Science and serving as president of the Women’s Pre-Law Society. She graduated with honors and then attended Brooklyn Law School part-time, balancing late-night study sessions with the demands of raising six children. Her persistence paid off.

In 2016, Brooklyn Law School honored Rachel

as one of its Trailblazers, a fitting title for the first Chasidic woman ever elected to public office.

Even before she donned the robe of a judge, Ruchie’s heart for community was unmistakable. She founded Chasdei Devorah, Inc., a nonprofit established in memory of a dear friend who passed away at a young age. Later, she launched *B’Derech*, a grassroots initiative advocating for education and opportunity for adolescents in the Chasidic community, many of whom, she believed, just needed guidance and faith in their own potential.

Her leadership took another pioneering turn when a group of Chasidic women approached her with a dream: to form an all-female team of EMTs to serve women in her Borough Park community during emergencies. What began as a local effort soon blossomed into Ezras Nashim, an international volunteer organization of women helping women in moments of crisis. To better guide and understand her team, Ruchie didn’t just organize them; she trained alongside them, earning paramedic certification through Northwell Health’s CLI Program.

Today, Justice Freier embodies what it means to live proudly as a Chasidic woman in the public eye. She’s a true beacon of light, balancing her role as a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother with her responsibilities as a jurist and advocate.

Through her work in the courtroom, her service organizations, and her personal example, the Honorable Ruchie Freier continues to light the way for others who dream of serving both Heaven and humanity. Her story reminds us that the walls that seem to define us can, with faith and persistence, become the very scaffolding that lifts us higher. ●

>> Batya Perl is a staff writer at Chabad Magazine.



SWORN TO SUCCESS

By Rabbi Dr. Yossi Ives

As Jacob neared the end of his life, his mind turned to plans for his burial. Determined that he should be interred at the burial site Abraham had purchased—the Cave of Machpelah. He summoned his beloved and powerful son, Joseph, to his deathbed to make his wishes known:

“Please grant me this final act of lovingkindness and truth: Please do not bury me in Egypt. I will soon lie with my forefathers, and you shall then carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.” [Joseph] replied, “I will do as you say.”

One would have thought that with Joseph's unequivocal affirmative response, the matter was closed. Not so. Jacob did not suffice with Joseph's commitment to fulfill his wishes. Rather, the Torah continues: [Jacob] said, "Swear to me." And [Joseph] swore to him, and Israel [Jacob] prostrated himself toward the head of the bed."

WHY SWEAR?

The Rebbe introduces a psychological insight that changes the way we see the purpose and intent of an oath. The power of an oath is not merely in the solemn nature of the promise but, more significantly, it is in the psychological impact it has on the person who swears it.

When a person commits to doing something, there is an assumption that it is "circumstances permitting." Even if the person makes a sincere commitment, everyone understands that there may be factors outside of their control that prevent them from doing it.

Swearing binds the person in such a way that failure is not an option. The oath compels the person to leave no stone unturned. For example, if I were to commit to traveling to a friend's wedding, but my flight was canceled at the last minute, I can hardly be considered neglectful. I tried my best. I bought the ticket and had every intention of attending. But if I made an unbreakable promise to be present, even a canceled flight would be no excuse. If necessary, I would hire a private plane or find some other way to ensure that I would not fall short of my solemn word.

But, says the Rebbe, it goes much further than that. Because I have taken an oath and have committed myself under all circumstances, I am not at liberty to sit back and hope that things work out. It is now incumbent upon me to ensure that nothing gets in the way of my fulfillment of the promise. It is now my obligation to

be proactive and ensure that no obstacle will impede the completion of this task.

In the above example, since I know that missing the wedding is not an option, I would make sure to have a second means of travel on standby in case the flight is canceled. I would also likely arrange to travel a day earlier, just in case I needed the extra time. I would want to make sure my travel documents were in order and check and recheck that nothing could go wrong.

The oath Jacob had Joseph enter into was not to ensure his integrity. It was to ensure that Joseph put his mind to it well in advance to anticipate any unexpected circumstances. Jacob was so anxious that his burial be in the Holy Land that he demanded that Joseph plan for all contingencies. Failure was not an option.

SWEARING BINDS THE PERSON IN SUCH A WAY THAT FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION.

SWORN TO SUCCESS

However, this still leaves us with a major problem: What kinds of obstacles could Jacob have imagined that would make it necessary to demand an oath from his own son? This was hardly a mission to the moon! What nagging doubt was plaguing Jacob that caused him to be un-quieted by Joseph's original commitment?

The Rebbe says that the potential obstacle that Jacob was so worried about was inside Joseph's own head! Joseph was fully aware that the Israelites were headed for dark times. A long and bitter enslavement was awaiting them in Egypt. Before his

passing, Joseph foretold that a day would come when G-d would remember them and they would leave Egypt.

From the perspective of Joseph and the other sons of Jacob, taking Jacob's embalmed body out of Egypt meant their descendants were going to be left to face the hardships without Jacob's presence in their midst. It was therefore not in their interests to bury Jacob in Canaan.

Jacob was a force that no pharaoh could ever subjugate. Having Jacob's grave in Egypt would have provided hope and encouragement, and, more importantly, would have given the Israelites great spiritual strength during their difficult times. That is why Jacob made Joseph swear to fulfill his burial instructions, as he understood how much inner resistance Joseph would have had to overcome.

WHY DID JACOB INSIST?

But why, then, was it so important for Jacob to be buried right away in the Holy Land? Why could his remains not have been taken later, as were those of Joseph? The answer is that when people go through struggles, they need someone who is on the outside to help them. The Sages taught that "a prisoner cannot free himself." It takes someone free to help them get out.

The Israelites became settled and comfortable in Egypt. For them, Egypt had become home. Jacob's burial outside of Egypt served as a clear reminder that, ultimately, this was not where they belonged and that they were destined elsewhere. Jacob's final act was to situate himself free of the "exile" in Egypt, symbolizing that they would eventually become a free people who would receive the Torah and create a Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel. ●

>> Book excerpt from *Reframed Insights on the Parsha and Festivals* by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, published by Kehot Publication Society, available now at www.kehot.com



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HEAVY METAL CHASID



By Sarah Sherman

Growing up in Tel Aviv, Barak Grossberg was immersed in a vibrant music scene, playing guitar from a young age and forming his own band by the age of fifteen. He was living the dream, performing with some of the leading heavy-metal musicians. However, the fast-paced Tel Aviv lifestyle left him feeling unfulfilled.

It was during this time that he stumbled upon the music of the late Avi Piamenta, a renowned flutist known for blending chassidic melodies with contemporary sounds. One day, while sitting in his parents' house, Barak heard the unmistakable sound of Avi's flute drifting through the window. Intrigued, he rushed outside to see Avi performing nearby. Although he arrived just as the event was ending, the music stirred something within him.

Avi eventually encouraged Barak to attend the local Chabad center, where he found himself welcomed by a community that was surprisingly warm and willing to

engage in conversation about music. Meeting Avi that night marked the beginning of Barak's exploration into Judaism.

When Barak was invited to join Chabad's Shabbat dinner, he had no idea what "Shabbat" really meant, but he was intrigued. At the dinner, he experienced a sense of joy

HIS JOURNEY FROM THE HEAVY-METAL SCENE TO A LIFE ROOTED IN FAITH IS A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATION.

and community that contrasted sharply with the partying culture he was used to. The warmth and camaraderie he found there sparked a desire to learn more about his heritage.

Over time, Barak began to adopt Jewish practices. He started keeping Shabbat, although it was a gradual process. He still played music and went out with friends on Friday nights, but he began to leave his



phone behind, trying to disconnect from the distractions of modern life. This shift wasn't easy, but Barak was determined. He knew that he was searching for something real, something that had eluded him in the chaos of his earlier lifestyle.

As he embraced his Jewish identity, he began to see his music in a new light. It was no longer just a means of entertainment; it became a way to express his faith and inspire others.

Today, Barak Grossberg stands at the crossroads of music and spirituality. His journey from the heavy-metal scene to a life rooted in faith is a testament to the power of transformation. Inspired by musicians like Avi Piamenta, Barak continues to explore the depths of his heritage while sharing the unique sound he "overheard" one night. ●

>> Sarah Sherman is the music editor for Chabad Magazine.

Coconut Lime Latke Bake

with Crispy Garlic and Chili

This Coconut Lime Latke Bake puts a bright, modern twist on a Chanukah classic. Shredded potatoes are baked with shallots, garlic, and creamy coconut milk for a golden, tender base, then topped with fried garlic, ginger, chilis, green onions, and fresh cilantro. The result is crispy edges, a burst of lime, and layers of flavor. A vibrant, oven-baked take on traditional latkes that's perfect for your Chanukah table.

10 SERVINGS

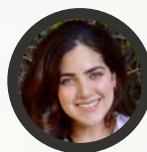
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 5 shallots, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, grated
- 1½ lbs Yukon Gold potatoes, grated
- 1½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more
- ½ cup coconut milk
- 1 lime, juiced
- 2 tablespoons water

Aromatics

- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 Serrano peppers, thinly sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 inch piece of ginger, thinly sliced
- 3 green onions, green parts only, thinly cut on a bias
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Heat a 12-inch cast iron skillet to medium. Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil, shallots, garlic and a generous sprinkle of salt to the pan, stirring occasionally, until a deep golden brown, about 10 minutes.
2. Pour the shallot mixture into a bowl. No need to rinse the pan. To the bowl add grated potatoes, kosher salt, coconut milk, lime juice and water. Mix well, careful not to break the grated potatoes too much. Pour potato mixture into the cast iron skillet and use a spatula to smooth the top. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 40 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, make the aromatics. Heat ½ cup of olive oil over medium-low heat. Add in Serrano peppers, garlic and ginger and cook stirring occasionally until the garlic start to turn a golden color, about 3 minutes. Add in green onions and cook another 1-2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove aromatics from the pan and put them on a plate covered in a paper towel to stop the cooking. Save the aromatic oil.
4. Remove potatoes from the oven and discard the aluminum cover. Pour the aromatic oil over the potato mixture and return to the oven for an additional 35 minutes. Increase heat to 425° for the last 5 minutes of cooking time.
5. Let latke cool for 10 minutes. Top with a generous sprinkle of flaky salt, fried aromatics and cilantro. Serve warm.



Natalie Mizrahi is a recipe developer based in Los Angeles, CA and the creative force behind Olive Oil & Salt Flakes.



For a video tutorial of this recipe and more, visit oliveoilandsaltflakes.com. or check out [@oliveoilandsaltflakes](https://www.instagram.com/oliveoilandsaltflakes) on Instagram.

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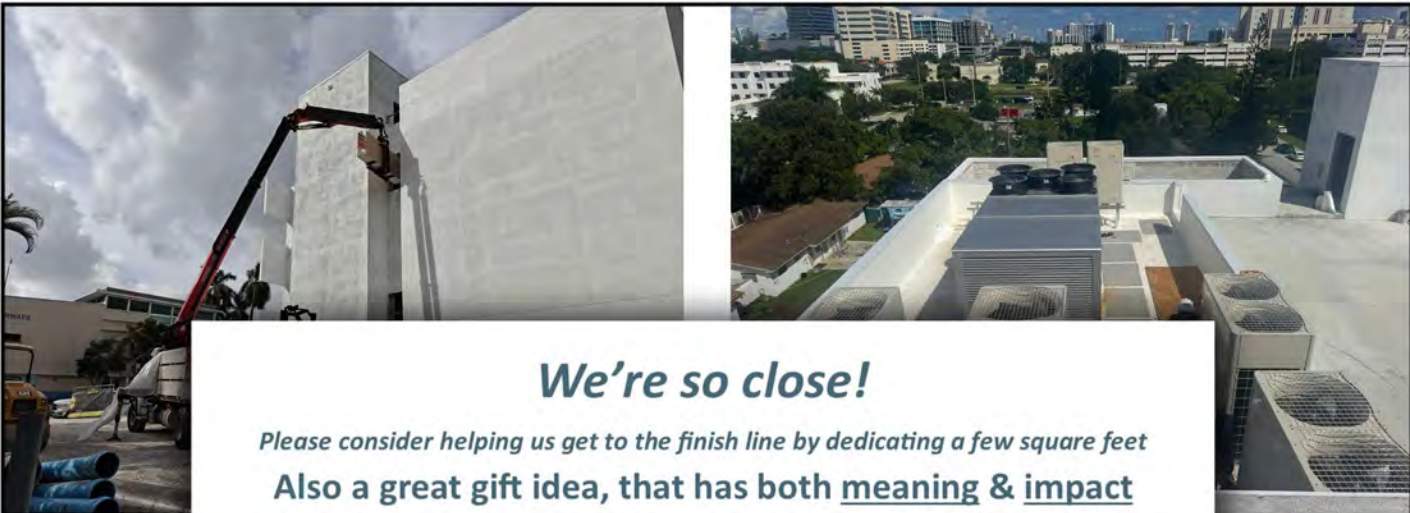
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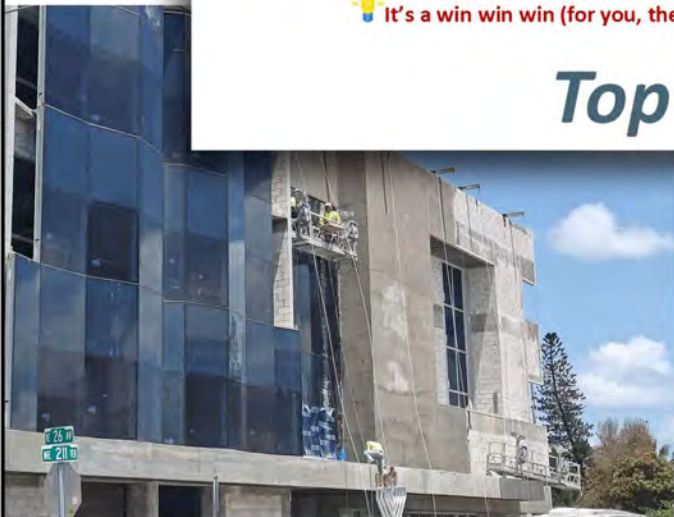


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