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RASPBERRY GLAZED SALMON

4 Servings | Prep time: 15 min | Cook time: 30 min

Ingredients

- 4 Salmon Fillets (About 6 Ounces Each)
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 1/3 cup **De La Rosa Organic Raspberry Vinegar**
- 1/4 cup **De La Rosa Kosher Balsamic Glaze**
- 2 tbsp Soy sauce
- 1 tbsp Honey
- 1 tsp Grated ginger
- 2 Cloves garlic, minced
- Sesame seeds and chopped green Zonions for garnish



Instructions

In a bowl, whisk together **De La Rosa Organic Raspberry Vinegar**, **Balsamic Glaze**, soy sauce, honey, grated ginger, and minced garlic.

Marinate the Salmon Season the salmon fillets with salt and black pepper. Place the salmon in a shallow dish and pour half of the marinade over them. Allow the salmon to marinate in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes, turning once.

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Remove the salmon from the refrigerator and let it come to room temperature. Place the salmon fillets on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake for 12-15 minutes until the salmon is cooked through.

Place the salmon fillets on the prepared baking sheet, skin-side down if they have skin. Brush the honey balsamic glaze generously over the tops of the salmon fillets.

While the salmon is baking, heat the remaining marinade in a small saucepan over medium heat. Simmer the marinade until it thickens. Once the salmon is cooked, brush the glaze over the fillets.

Transfer the glazed salmon to a serving platter. Drizzle any remaining glaze over the top. Garnish with sesame seeds and chopped green onions.

Serve the Raspberry Glazed Salmon over a bed of rice, quinoa, or steamed vegetables. Spoon extra glaze over each portion for an added burst of flavor.



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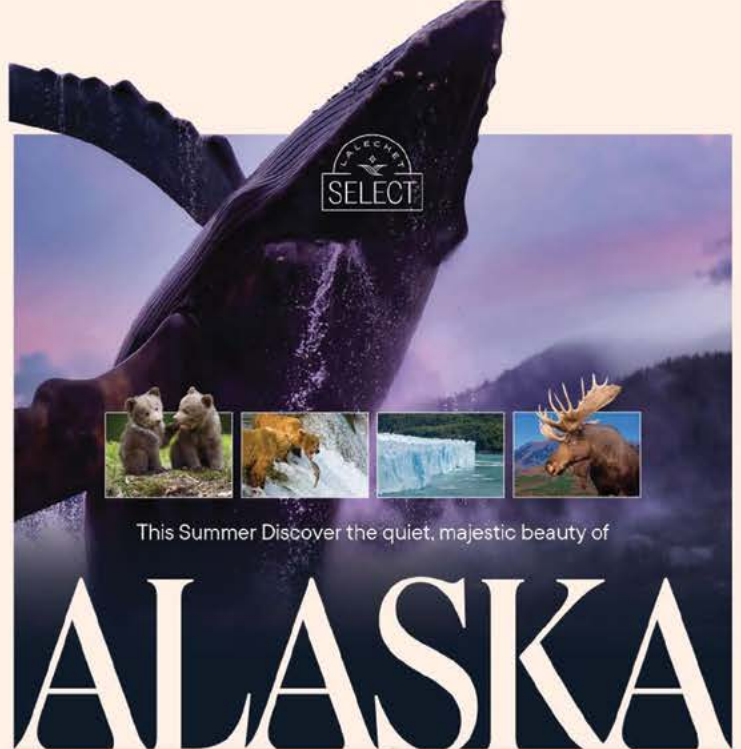


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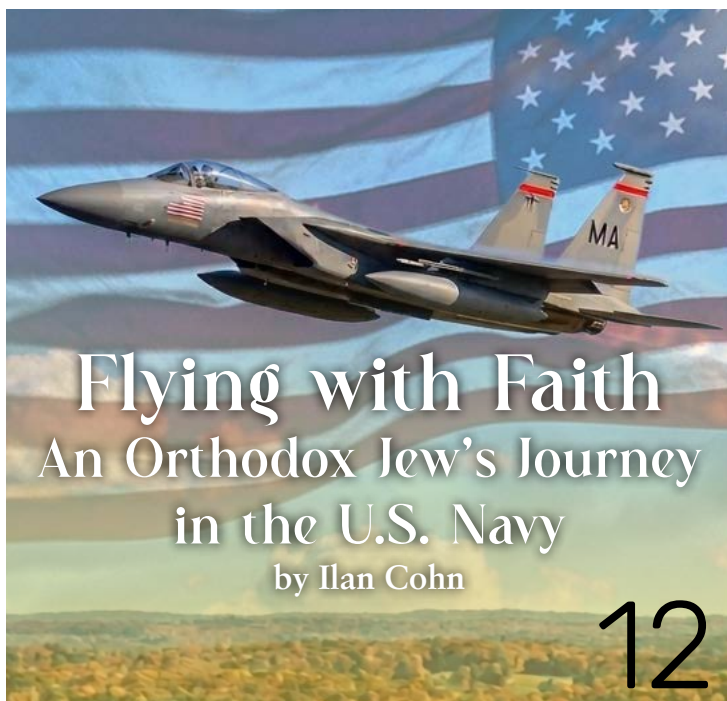


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Flying with Faith

An Orthodox Jew's Journey
in the U.S. Navy

by Ilan Cohn

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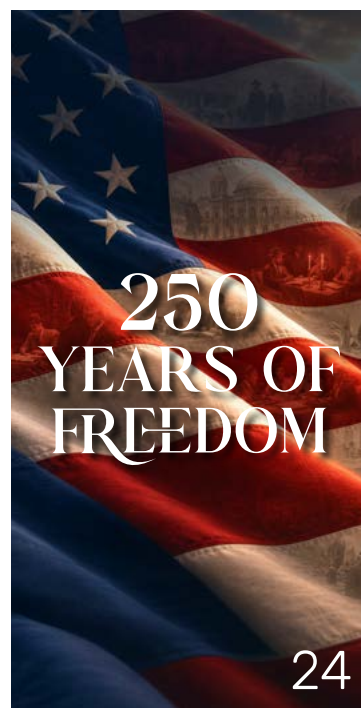
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Everybody Hates me!

by Rifka Schonfeld

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**A COMMUNITY
BENEFIT ALERT**

by Stephanie Savir

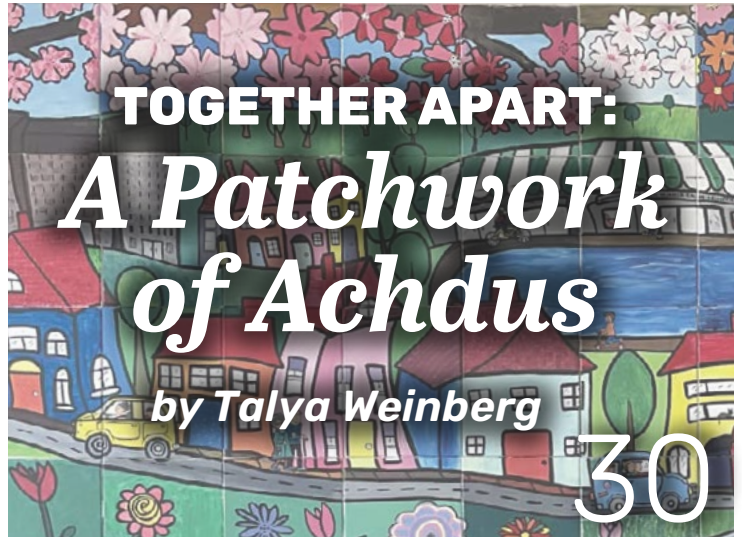


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TOGETHER APART:

**A Patchwork
of Achdus**

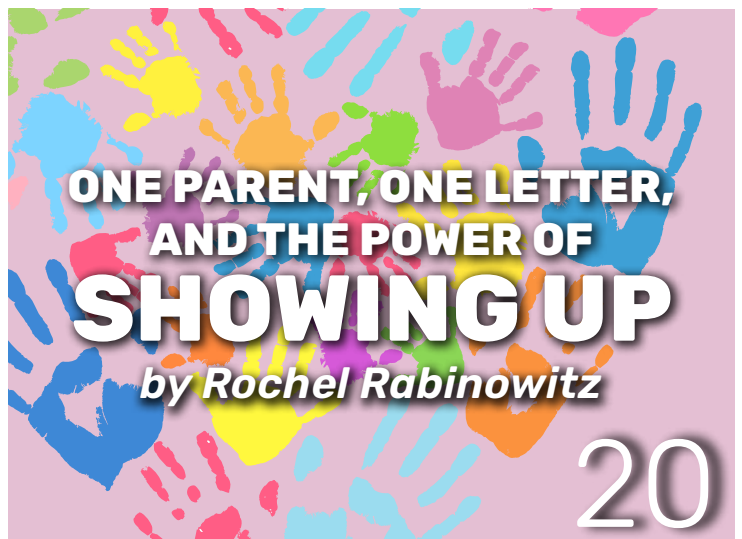
by Talya Weinberg



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**ONE PARENT, ONE LETTER,
AND THE POWER OF
SHOWING UP**

by Rochel Rabinowitz



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FLYING WITH FAITH

AN ORTHODOX JEW'S JOURNEY IN THE U.S. NAVY



Ilan Cohn

WJJ sat down with Captain Cohn to hear his inspiring journey from neuroscience to naval aviation, overcoming challenges, embracing his faith, and serving with pride in the U.S. Navy.

Captain Cohn's career took an unexpected turn from the world of neuroscience to the cockpit of naval aviation. As an Orthodox Jew in the United States Navy, he navigated unique challenges, from keeping kosher to observing Shabbat while serving his country. In this exclusive interview, Captain Cohn shares his remarkable journey, the values that guided him, and his advice for other Orthodox Jews considering military service.

***Ilan:* Captain Cohn, it's an honor to speak with you today. Your journey—from the world of neuroscience to the cockpit of naval aviation—is nothing short of extraordinary. As an Orthodox Jew navigating the unique challenges of military service, your story is one that few have experienced. I'm excited to dive into your time in the U.S. Navy and hear how you balanced faith, duty, and adventure.**

Captain Cohn: It's a pleasure to be here. Please, ask away.

Tell me a little about your background before you joined the Navy.

Originally, I was training as a neuroscientist at the University of Illinois. My main interests at the time were biology and math, so I completed a bachelor's degree in biology. I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do, so, like most people in my position, I applied to graduate school.

I started a graduate program in immunology at Brandeis University, but I quickly realized I wasn't interested in lab work and the traditional path of a biologist. Fortunately, I had an advisor who guided me through my uncertainty. He suggested that instead of leaving, I make a list of the top five things I was interested in. My list included math, biology, computer science, and robotics—that's only four, but he took that and told me about a new neuroscience PhD program starting the next year. He offered me the opportunity to be one of its first graduate students, which was phenomenal.

I pursued the program and focused on nonlinear dynamics—chaos theory—which was quite popular in the late '90s. However, when it came time to do my postdoctoral research, I wasn't sure if academia was the right fit for me.

Clearly, you didn't end up in academia. What motivated you to serve in the military? Was it a specific event, person, or value that drove you?

Good question. I had been training my whole academic career to become a professor, and one of the purposes of a postdoc is to test yourself in an academic environment before fully committing. However, I realized I was not interested in academia. It wasn't the long hours or the challenging problems that deterred me—I actually enjoyed those. Instead, I wanted to work on broader, more impactful issues rather than focus on a



single, highly specialized theory.

I strongly support academia and believe in the power of scientific research, but I felt there were other ways I could contribute to our country in a more immediate way. While searching for different career opportunities, I came across a Navy program that offered to send candidates to flight school and integrate them into the Navy aviation enterprise—provided they had a PhD in neuroscience or psychology. That caught my attention, and the rest is history.

Tell me a little bit about flight school. What was your initial experience like when you joined?

Before flight school, I had to attend Officer School. The type of Officer School I went to was designed for professionals with degrees or expertise that the Navy specifically needed—such as doctors, lawyers, physical therapists, and scientists. Our training was slightly different from that of “line officers,” who serve in combat roles.

Because of my professional background, I entered with a mid-level officer rank and attended Officer Indoctrination School, which is a six-week program. It teaches the fundamentals of being a naval officer—military history, how to wear the uniform, and a phenomenal amount of physical training.

Flight school itself was in Pensacola, Florida, the “cradle of naval aviation.” Both Officer School and flight school were incredibly exciting and unlike anything I had ever experienced. I was the only person out of 400 officers wearing a kippah. Fortunately, I met the school chaplain, Chaplain Carney, who approached me on my second day and asked how she could help make my experience more accommodating for my religious needs. She helped me navigate challenges, including observing Shabbat.

For example, Officer School was in Newport, Rhode Island—home to the oldest synagogue in America. I asked if I could get a pass to walk there on Shabbat and spend the entire day at the synagogue. She made it happen, which was amazing. Similarly, in flight school, training was often 24/7, including evenings and weekends. However, I was able to request a “snivel” to avoid flying on Shabbat, and my superiors were very accommodating.

How did you keep kosher while in training? I assume the meals they provided weren’t kosher.

In Officer School, we ate meals together with our classmates, so my diet was limited to yogurt, fruits, vegetables, and various cereals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The moment I was allowed to leave base, I went shopping for kosher food.

In flight school, I had more flexibility since I lived in my own apartment. My wife, Debbie, and I got an apartment on the beach in Pensacola, on a cliff overlooking the bay. Occasionally, we would drive to New Orleans to pick up kosher food.

Were there other Jewish service members in your flight school class?

Yes, there were other Jewish students in both Officer and flight school, and we definitely connected. However, I was the only Orthodox Jew. Most of the other Jewish service members were from Reform or Conservative backgrounds.

Now that you’ve honorably retired, what do you consider your greatest accomplishment in the Navy?

That’s a tough one. I would say my most rewarding accomplishment was during the last three years of my military career when I served as the specialty leader, or head, of my community.

My specific naval community was aerospace experimental psychologists, which is part of a larger group called aeromedical officers. Our community consisted of about 30 members. Along with my assistant, I helped navigate significant personnel challenges, ensuring we retained the critical people needed to keep our community viable. I was proud to retire knowing I left behind a strong, capable team to continue supporting naval aviation.

Looking back on your service, what lessons or thoughts stand out to you?

Over time, I realized that the best way to guide my career, personal growth, and leadership development was by learning from the wisdom of my mentors. There were three key principles I carried with me throughout my career:

1. Own your mistakes.
2. Never lie, cheat, or steal.
3. Excellence, not arrogance.

These values shaped the way I served and led others.

What advice would you give to Orthodox Jews considering a career in the U.S. military?

The most important thing is to approach military service with a solutions-oriented mindset. I never went in saying, “I’m a religious Jew, and you have to accommo-

date me.” Instead, I would analyze the challenges ahead—whether it was standing watch on Shabbat or flight training conflicts—and find a way to balance my religious observance with my military duties.

I always found a way to make it work, and my superiors respected that approach.

Final question—would you recommend the Navy to other Orthodox Jews?

It depends on the role. There’s a big difference between serving as a line officer in combat and serving as a staff officer in a specialized field. Staff officer roles—like mine—offer more flexibility to navigate religious observance.

Before committing to military service, you have to be honest with yourself. Are you willing to go the extra mile to balance faith and duty? If you’re up for the challenge, the Navy offers an incredibly rewarding and diverse career path.



SCRAPBOOKING For SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

*By Alanna Pepper, LMSW, and
Rabbi Dr. Avichai Pepper, Ed.D.*

As each academic year comes to a close, many parents sit with their children to reflect. This reflection can and should be done in a quiet, sit down and loving manner. Some families take each individual child out to eat while others take the family as a group for ice cream and reflections. When reflecting, we ask: *How was your year?* The answers often fall into familiar patterns; stories of disappointment, or stories of triumph. While it is extremely important for children to be able to process both the good and the bad, the question is what we want them to remember and reflect on after they have processed those feelings. In truth, what shapes our children far more than a single conversation are the memories they carry forward.

The Torah teaches us the power of remembrance. Again and again, we are instructed *zachor*, remember. Not everything, but the moments that define who we are becoming. We have a mitzvah to remember Yetzias Mitzrayim, Matan Torah, the mitzvos, etc. Memory, in our tradition, is not passive; it is a positive mitzvah and something we shape and choose to elevate and inspire ourselves.

So the question becomes: how do we help our children walk away from a year feeling uplifted? How do we guide them to release the weight of negativity and hold tightly to the moments of growth, pride, and joy? And even beyond that, how do we empower our children to be ready for the next challenge, the next year, the next big moment, and in a positive way?

For years, after returning from a family vacation, we developed a family ritual. We would gather our photos and place them into a printed album. At first glance, it may seem like a simple scrapbook, a way to preserve where we had been and what we had done. But over time, as we watched our children regularly review the pictures and focus on their emotions and memories of each vacation, we realized it serves a much deeper purpose.

These pictures tell a story.

These albums allow each child to revisit not just what they did, but how they felt, what happened, and inevitably developed appreciation and pride. They capture moments of courage, laughter, connection, challenge, and triumph. When selecting the photos, we are intentional. We choose the ones

that reflect growth and joy, the quiet victories, the smiles that came after effort, the experiences that shaped them. We choose photos that show the narrative that we believe our children want to remember.

As the school year ends, perhaps we can bring this same approach into our homes. Instead of relying solely on conversation, we can engage in a simple scrapbooking exercise. It does not need to be elaborate, just a few pages. Together with our children, we can look through the many photos that we have taken throughout the year and choose the ones that tell a story worth remembering.

What made you proud this year?

When did you feel strong?

What moments would you want to relive?

Maybe even let them write a few words, a sentence, or even just a caption. In doing so, they are not only recording memories but they are shaping their own narrative, telling a positive story, processing challenges and successes, and finding moments to cherish.

Every child, like every person, longs to feel seen in their successes and



Photo taken in a bomb shelter in Israel during our first sirens capturing the moment.

encouraged in their growth. When we help our children leave a school year with a sense of celebration and positivity, we give them more than just good memories. We give them confidence and we give them a positive lens through which to view themselves. And perhaps most importantly, we give them something to carry into the year ahead: a quiet excitement, a belief that they can continue to grow, to succeed, and to shine.

And that is something worth remembering.



Alanna Pepper, LMSW is a dedicated therapist at Shalom Tikvah, a nonprofit clinic committed to supporting the Jewish communities of Maryland. With a deep passion for guiding individuals and families toward healing, she brings a wealth of expertise to her practice. Alanna holds a Master's degree in Counseling

from Liberty University and a Master's in Social Work from Yeshiva University's Wurzweiler School of Social Work. Her extensive background spans over two decades in education, equipping her with a unique and insightful perspective in social work, parent coaching, and community engagement. Her compassionate approach, combined with her breadth of knowledge, makes her a trusted advocate for those seeking support and transformation. She is also a volunteer at Chail Lifeline Crisis Services Mid-Atlantic.



Rabbi Avichai Pepper, Ed.D is a seasoned educator with a rich academic and professional background. A graduate of the New England Rabbinical College in Providence, RI, he has devoted his life to teaching Torah and to Jewish communal growth. Rabbi Pepper holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Liberty University, alongside a master's degree in educational

leadership from Bellevue University and a master's degree in counseling from Liberty University. Currently serving as the Director of Educational Advancement and Community Relations at the Yeshiva of Greater Washington as well as an educational coach and presenter at Lomdei, Rabbi Dr. Pepper leverages almost 30 years of dedicated service in Jewish education and community development. In addition, he also serves on the Chai Lifeline Crisis Services team supporting school and community in trying times.

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Do any of these comments sound familiar?

--"I feel so sorry for Chana. She'll ask other kids if she can play, and usually they just say, 'No, you're not our friend.' She's trying to be nice. What more can she do?"

--"Eli makes a pest of himself until other children want nothing to do with him. Then he complains he has no friends!"

--"Shaindy never joins in when other children are playing. She just watches, looking miserable and lonely, and I don't know what to say to help her."

--"Shimon is such a poor loser no one wants him in the game."

We have all encountered the socially inept child whose lack of social skills puts him or her at a distinct disadvantage in peer relationships. Such a child alienates others by inappropriate behavior and often suffers rejection and ridicule.

The child with underdeveloped social skills may be stigmatized as a loser or misfit early in his or her school career, setting the stage for lowered self-esteem and much loneliness and heartache throughout the growing up years.

The road to adulthood may be strewn with unnecessary complications and disappointments for such children. It may be difficult for misunderstandings amicably.

Why Do Some Children Lack Social Skills?

The answer to this question varies. Many never learned appropriate behavior for specific social settings. Perhaps they did not receive this guidance in the home or lacked good role models in their environment. It might be that in spite of receiving correct guidance, they simply didn't pick it up as well as most children.

Social skills deficits may be related to impulsivity, poor individuals who lack social skills to build healthy relationships, to secure a job, to win the confidence of a colleague/client/employer, or to work through visual perception of facial and body language cues, poor auditory perception of vocal cues, invasion of the personal space of others, and a number of other such problems.

For example, Reuvain is a brilliant architectural engineer. His lack of social skills was often overlooked because society generally is more tolerant of quirky behavior in creative artists.

But Reuvain often failed to get important contracts in projects for which his talent and creativity seemed to make him the top candidate for the job. It seems that his difficulty in reading social signals and body language was his undoing. He was unable to interpret the signals given in an interview which signaled that the interview was over, and that he should thank the interviewer for his time and

leave.

In other words, Reuvain overstayed his welcome and often talked himself out of a job.

Studies show that social difficulties of this type often plague the child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Perhaps as many as half of all children with ADHD have significant conduct and socialization problems, in addition to attention deficits.

Many children with ADHD have difficulty with social relationships because of impulsiveness, lack of attention to social cues, or behaviors that are perceived by others as immature, aggressive, or defiant.

Although most children develop social skills by observing and interacting with others, the child with ADHD often misreads social cues or may have diminished opportunity to learn because of social rejection.

Whatever the cause of social skills deficits, there is much that teachers and parents can do to help a child overcome these obstacles to positive and productive peer interaction.

Topics such as basic manners; asking for help and permission to do things; beginning and carrying on a conversation; developing friendships; and sharing belongings should be the focus of any social skills training

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**YOU
CAN DO
THIS!**

Day 1

Listen more,
speak less.

Day 2

Express
gratitude to
someone.

Day 3

Offer help to
someone in need.

Day 4

Apologize for a
mistake.

Day 5

Practice
empathy towards
someone.

Day 6

Give someone
a sincere
compliment.

Day 7

Trust your
perceptions and
your intuition.

Day 8

Forgive someone
who has hurt
you.

Day 9

Have an
open-minded
conversation
with someone.

Day 10

Reflect on a past
mistake and learn
from it.

Day 11

Show compassion
towards
someone.

Day 12

Practice
self-care.

Day 13

Take
responsibility for
your actions.

Day 14

Practice patience
with someone.

Day 15

Validate
someone's
feelings.

Day 16

Connect with
someone new.

Day 17

Practice
self-reflection.

Day 18

Avoid judgement
and criticism.

Day 19

Be present
in the moment.

Day 20

Make time for a
loved one.

Day 21

Practice
gratitude
towards
yourself.

Day 22

Share a
vulnerable
moment with
someone.

Day 23

Practice
forgiveness
towards
yourself.

Day 24

Recognize and
manage your
emotions.

Day 25

Communicate
your needs
clearly.

Day 26

Practice active
listening with
someone.

Day 27

Show
appreciation
towards
someone.

Day 28

Practice
self-compassion.

Day 29

Connect with
someone on a
deeper level.

Day 30

Reflect on your
progress and
growth.

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programs used in school settings, say educational experts.

In addition, the following skills and behaviors should be targeted:

- Accepting "No" for an answer
- Joining a group activity already in progress
- Following directions
- Making friends
- Compliments others
- Understanding the feelings of others
- Compromising on issues
- Cooperating with peers
- Coping with taunts and aggression from others
- Seeking attention in an appropriate manner
- Waiting one's turn

Nipping Problems in the Bud

Educational psychologists Dwight Sweeney and Stephen Wagner, both of California State University, advise parents and teachers that early intervention with socially inept children is crucial.

"It can enable social acceptance in childhood and adolescence, and ensure that problems do not hit home in adulthood for the first time, when the stakes may be much higher," they say.

Some of the most useful techniques, ideal for parents to use on a day-to-day basis, combine "self-talk," role-playing, and reinforcement.

Self-talk is simply describing your own techniques for dealing with particular situations, so that the learning disabled or socially awkward child becomes aware of what the parent is doing, and why.

For example, a parent might say in the child's hearing, "Since I know that I want to look nice when I go out, I'm going to go look in the mirror and see if I look all right. Oops! I think I need to tuck in my shirt and tie my shoes before I go."

Certainly, most adults would take a quick glance in the mirror before going out. Few, however, would make a point of calling attention to this instinctive and automatic "self-check." But that is exactly what a socially inept or learning disabled child needs; otherwise, he

would remain oblivious to it.

To reinforce the message, parents might lead the child such a child to perform the same action, and then reinforce (praise or reward) good observation. "Let's see what you might need to do before we go to the supermarket. Oh, your shirt is dirty? Good for you for noticing! Let's quickly change to a clean one."

Role-playing can be useful in helping socially inept children learn many of the social conventions that many children pick up easily through simple exposure. For example, parents might play "What's the best thing to do if?" or "What's the best thing to say if?" as a good car trip game or even a dinner table game.

- What's the best thing to do if you are at your friend's house playing, and her mother says, "Hmm, it's getting late. It'll be time for supper soon."
- What's the best thing to do if you're at a friend's house and you're thirsty or hungry?
- What's the best thing to say if someone calls and asks for one of your parents while they are taking a shower or in the bathroom?

In role-playing, parent and child might take turns in the roles. Part of the time, the child should invent the situation, and the parent should play the role of the child giving the answer. This gives the child the opportunity to think of social situations which require good social skills, and lets the parent model appropriate responses without "preaching."

Skills Deficits Affecting Social Adjustment

Some of the common problems which may cause social difficulties are listed below, along with early intervention strategies which parents and teachers may find helpful.

Perception of Facial Expression

Children with visual perception problems often miss the messages that people send and receive through facial expression. Such common expressions as a frown, narrowed eyes, or pursed lips, which might signal that what is being heard is inappropriate in some way, are often missed.

Parents and teachers can help by

using role-playing often, or by simply asking for feedback in day-today situations: "Dovid, what do you think my face is saying to you? Do I look like I am pleased about what you are doing, or not?"

Vocal Monitoring

Knowing just how loudly one is speaking, and the volume that is appropriate for a given situation is difficult for some children with social ineptness. Parents and teachers can use particular cues, such as hand signals or cue phrases ("use your indoor voice" or "your almost whisper voice") to help the child reach the right level. When the child is speaking appropriate level, provide praise: "That was good—you used your indoor voice for a good part of the afternoon!"

Personal Space Awareness

Personal space, "proxemics," is another trouble spot with some socially inept children, who do not know how close or far away to stand from others. People feel uncomfortable and even "invaded" when their personal space is encroached upon.

Whenever possible, a concrete rule can be very helpful. In this case we usually use the "arm's length" rule: in regular conversations we should always stand about an arm's length from the other person.

The social world does not have to be a confusing and frustrating place. Children with social deficits can be taught how to understand and respond to a complex array of social communication, and to have positive interactions with others.

We need to help them to see patterns and to see that there is sense to be made of what may seem to be highly complex cues all around them. With firm and loving guidance, all children can learn to better interpret the world of social communication.

**

An acclaimed educator and social skills specialist, Mrs. Rifka Schonfeld has served the Jewish community for close to thirty years. She founded and directs the widely acclaimed educational program, SOS, servicing all grade levels in secular as well as Hebrew studies. A kriah and reading specialist, she has given dynamic workshops and has set up reading labs in many schools. In addition, she offers evaluations G.E.D. preparation, social skills training and shidduch coaching, focusing on building self-esteem and self-awareness. She can be reached at 718-382-5437 or at rifkaschonfeld@gmail.com. You can view the web at rifkaschonfeld.com



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DIABETES EDUCATION



ADAM SRAGG
ADULT PRIMARY CARE
NURSE PRACTITIONER

Diabetes is a common health condition that has become more prevalent in our community, but can be well managed with the correct dietary approach. Diabetes occurs when the body is unable to produce a hormone called insulin, which helps move glucose out of the bloodstream and into the cells.

When there is an increased buildup of glucose in the bloodstream, this process leads to blood vessel damage. In type 1 diabetes, there is no insulin production, and these patients are required to be on lifelong insulin management.

In type 2 diabetes, the body does not make enough insulin, but these patients can focus on diet and exercise to help improve their sugar control. Although type 2 diabetes was previously thought to affect mostly adults, today we are finding that many children also develop type 2 diabetes due to sedentary lifestyle, lack of exercise, and poor diet. In the clinic, I manage or diagnose type 2 diabetes very frequently, and I rarely meet patients with type 1 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes accounts for nearly 90% of all diabetic cases. Both men and women have a 40% risk of developing diabetes in their lifetime. In type 1 diabetes, these patients are working with an endocrinologist, whereas primary care practitioners generally manage type 2 diabetes.

There is a simple blood test called Hemoglobin A1c, which is the way we assess for diabetes. When the A1c levels range from 5.7 to 6.4, this is called prediabetes. In prediabetes, we focus on working with a nutritionist, regular exercise, and rigorous lifestyle changes to prevent developing diabetes. When the A1c levels are 6.5 or more, that is considered diabetes, and we focus on dietary and medication management. Unfortunately, if the lifestyle behaviors are significantly poor, then the A1c levels can rise over 10 and would require insulin to help decrease the sugar levels. There are specific risk factors that are recommended to get the A1c levels checked, including overweight, family history of diabetes or gestational diabetes, sedentary lifestyle, hypertension, elevated cholesterol, and age over 45 years.

Some of the common symptoms that are present in diabetes are extreme thirst, frequent urination, increased hunger, fatigue, blurred vision, and unexplained weight loss. There are many long-term complications that can occur from the elevated sugar levels in the blood vessels. The conditions that affect large blood vessels result from an increase in fat or plaque formation, leading to heart disease, peripheral vascular disease, and strokes. At the same time, diabetes can damage the small blood vessels leading to kidney disease, vision problems (diabetic retinopathy), and nerve pain (diabetic neuropathy).

For diabetic patients, it is recommended to get a diabetic foot and eye exam once a year, as well as purchase a glucose monitor. A healthy lifestyle approach with exercise and a well-balanced diet is critical to prevent diabetes. The main benefit of exercising helps the body utilize insulin more efficiently, which allows the cells to get adequate glucose.

The following foods to avoid include sugary beverages, white bread, pastries, fried and baked goods, high sugar snacks, and red or processed meats. However, a diet that incorporates healthy carbohydrates, fiber-rich foods, and healthy fats can help prevent diabetes. These healthy food choices include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans, peas, avocado, canola oil, and fish.

If medication options are recommended, then a decision should be made based on the patient's history, as there are many types of medications. There are helpful diabetic resources to read about, including the American Diabetes Association, TCOYD (Take Control of Your Diabetes), and Breakthrough Diabetes (formerly JDRF).

Adam Sragg is a nurse practitioner. After working in surgical nursing for multiple years, he earned a master's degree from Simmons University's family nurse practitioner program, allowing him to focus more on preventative medicine. Adam has worked as an adult primary care nurse practitioner for over four years with a diverse patient population.

Adam has done clinical work at a variety of local hospitals including Holy Cross Hospital, Adventist Healthcare White Oak Medical Center, Medstar Montgomery Medical Center, Children's National Hospital, and other local primary care facilities.

His nurse practitioner position gives him the opportunity to maintain his nursing passion and act as the patient's advocate in a provider role. His main goal is to provide focused and individual patient care with an emphasis on education, compassion, concern, and encouragement. Adam has experience with helping children and adults of physical and mental disabilities in reaching their health goals.

ONE PARENT, ONE LETTER, AND THE POWER OF *Showing Up*



Rochel Rabinowitz

Every summer, an average of 37 children in America die in hot cars, forgotten in the back seat for a single terrible moment. These are not neglected children or negligent caregivers, these happen in regular families who love their children and do their best to protect them. Every one of these deaths is preventable and the technology to prevent them already exists.

In many new higher-end car seats, the car seat buckle, when closed, detects the child's presence and can even measure temperature. An app on your phone connects to it. If the child is left in a vehicle (i.e. the caregiver's phone goes out of range of the car), it sends escalating alerts to the caregiver's phone and, if ignored, to the emergency contacts. The same happens when the child has an unsafe rise in temperature. This technology needs to become the standard.

I am a mother and a grandmother, not a lobbyist or a policy expert. After hearing of the most recent incident in Los Angeles, I simply could not stop thinking about this issue, so I did what any of us can do: I started writing letters.

I wrote to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the federal agency that regulates vehicle safety, proposing that child detection and temperature alert technology be built directly into car seats, not just vehicles. A car seat travels with every child regardless of what car they ride in. A simple Bluetooth sensor, a buckle detector, and an escalating smartphone alert could ensure no caregiver ever unknowingly walks away from their child again.

I wrote to both Maryland senators, to Senator Blumenthal, who authored the HOT CARS Act, to my House representative. I contacted child safety organizations nationally. None of this required special access or expertise. It required only that I care enough to sit down and write.

I am sharing this because grassroots change begins exactly this way, with one constituent and one letter, one conversation at a time. If this issue moves you, please write your own letter, your voice matters more than you think. I am attaching a sample letter that you can use to contact your representative.

* I want to stress that no technology can fully prevent tragedies. Technology is only as good as the people using it. It is always important to remember to check the back seats in your car. If you have small children, make this a habit in all seasons. There are many other safety measures to put in place to keep children safe. Make sure to tell your child's teacher to call you if your child doesn't arrive at school or playgroup as expected. Make it a habit to text or call your partner or a family member when you drop off the kids each morning, confirming that everyone arrived safely. Simple steps become habit when done every time you leave a car.

Rochel Rabinowitz is a mother and grandmother who lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. She enjoys writing about issues affecting children and families and is particularly interested in practical, common-sense solutions that can improve the parenting experience and enhance children's safety.

TEMPLATE LETTER: Child Car Seat Safety

Send to Your U.S. House Representative

HOW TO USE THIS LETTER

1. Find your representative at [house.gov](https://www.house.gov) – type in your zip code to find your district and rep's name.
2. Fill in all highlighted fields marked in **[BRACKETS]** with your own information.
3. Personalize the optional section with your own story if you wish – personal details make letters more effective.
4. Submit via your representative's official website contact form, or mail to their district office.

[Today's Date]

Fill in your representative's name – find it at [house.gov](https://www.house.gov) using your zip code.

The Honorable **[Representative's Full Name]**

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

Re: NHTSA's Overdue Hot Car Rulemaking and the Case for Car Seat-Integrated Child Detection

Dear Representative **[Last Name]**,

My name is **[Your Full Name]**, and I am a constituent writing from **[Your City, State, Zip Code]**. I am reaching out about a child safety issue that I believe demands Congressional attention: the ongoing failure by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to fulfill a mandate your colleagues passed into law.

OPTIONAL – Personalize here. You might mention that you are a parent, grandparent, childcare provider, or pediatric healthcare worker. A sentence about why this issue matters to you personally makes your letter significantly more powerful. Example: "As a parent of young children, the thought that a simple, affordable technology could prevent these tragedies, and is not yet required, is deeply troubling to me."

[Optional: Add one or two sentences about your personal connection to this issue – e.g., your role as a parent, grandparent, or childcare worker, and why this matters to you.]

An average of 37 children die from vehicular heatstroke in the United States every year. These deaths are predictable, and they are preventable. The technology to prevent them already exists.

Congress recognized this in 2021. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act directed NHTSA to finalize rules requiring rear occupant alert systems in all new passenger vehicles by November 2023. After missing the initial deadline, a revised agency estimate of April 2025 was also missed. As of today, NHTSA has not published even a preliminary proposed rule. Meanwhile, children continue to die.

I am writing to ask two things of your office:

1. Please formally inquire with NHTSA Administrator about the status of this overdue rulemaking and press for a firm, public timeline for its completion.
2. Please consider supporting a complementary measure: directing NHTSA to study and develop safety standards for child-presence detection systems integrated directly into car seats themselves, not only into vehicles.

This second point matters because vehicle-based systems, even when mandated, will leave critical gaps:

- They are absent from the millions of older vehicles already on American roads.
- They fail when children enter a car independently, a scenario accounting for approximately 25% of hot car deaths.
- Six documented hot car deaths have occurred in vehicles already equipped with reminder systems.

A car seat-integrated alert system using widely available Bluetooth technology, buckle sensors, and escalating smartphone notifications, would travel with the child regardless of what vehicle they are in. It works in an older car, in a rideshare, or with a substitute caregiver. It is a portable, universal layer of protection that no vehicle mandate alone can provide.

The technology is not theoretical. It is already commercially available in some car seats today. What is missing is a safety standard that ensures it works consistently, alerts escalate appropriately, and all children benefit from it, not just those whose families can afford premium seats.

Congress passed the law yet NHTSA has not acted. I respectfully ask that your office help ensure the agency fulfills its legal obligation and considers going further to close the gaps that vehicle-based systems alone cannot address.

Thank you for your service to our community and for your attention to this urgent matter.

Respectfully,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Address]

[Your City, State, Zip Code]

[Your Phone Number]

[Your Email Address]

This template letter was created by Rochel Rabinowitz, Silver Spring, MD, as part of a citizen advocacy effort to advance car seat-integrated child detection standards. Please share freely.



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FOLLOW US  

NOVATION PROCESS

250 YEARS OF FREEDOM

The Orthodox Jewish Story in America

A NATION'S PROMISE. A PEOPLE'S GRATITUDE.

They arrived with little more than hope: survivors, immigrants, dreamers, and believers.

They carried siddurim and memories, accents from distant lands, and visions for generations yet to come.

In America, they found something rare in Jewish history—not perfection, but possibility.

The freedom to keep Shabbos.

To build yeshivos.

To raise families openly and proudly as Jews.

What began with a promise of liberty became one of the greatest flourishings of Torah life in Jewish history.

Across generations, Orthodox Jews helped shape the American story while remaining faithful to who they had always been—building synagogues and

schools, strengthening neighborhoods, serving their communities, and contributing to the life of a nation that gave them the freedom to do so.

As America marks 250 years, we celebrate not only the story of a country, but the enduring gratitude of a people who never took that blessing for granted.

Two hundred and fifty years later, our story continues.

1781

THE MAN WHO HELPED SAVE A REVOLUTION

The Continental Army had courage. What it often lacked was cash.



Haym Solomon



As the Revolution reached a critical stage, financier Haym Salomon helped secure desperately needed funds for the patriot cause. Historians still debate the full extent of his contribution, but many credit him as one of the financial engines

behind American independence.

While generals fought on battlefields, Salomon fought in counting houses and loan offices—helping transform a fragile rebellion into a nation.

1790

A LETTER THAT CHANGED JEWISH HISTORY

Just one year after becoming president, George Washington received a letter from the small Jewish community of Newport, Rhode Island. Their question was simple: Would Jews truly belong in this new republic?



George Washington



Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island.

Washington's response became one of the most celebrated documents in American Jewish history. America, he wrote, would give "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

For Jews whose ancestors had spent centuries navigating discrimination and expulsion, these were not merely elegant words. They were revolutionary.



Levi Strauss

1848

THE IMMIGRANT WHO BUILT AMERICA'S DEPARTMENT STORES

A Bavarian Jewish immigrant named Levi Strauss arrived in America with opportunity in mind.



Miners during the Gold Rush.

His durable denim pants, created for miners during the Gold Rush, would become one of the most iconic American products ever made.

His story reflected a larger truth: Jewish immigrants were not only seeking the American dream—they were helping create it.

1862

LINCOLN'S QUIET ACT OF JUSTICE

In the middle of the Civil War, a shocking order was issued by General Ulysses S. Grant expelling Jews from parts of the American South. Jewish leaders quickly appealed to President Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln listened.

Within weeks, the order was revoked. It was a small moment in the larger story of the Civil War, but a profound one for American Jews. At a time when many nations still viewed Jews as outsiders, the President of the United States affirmed that Jewish Americans deserved the same rights and protections as every other citizen.



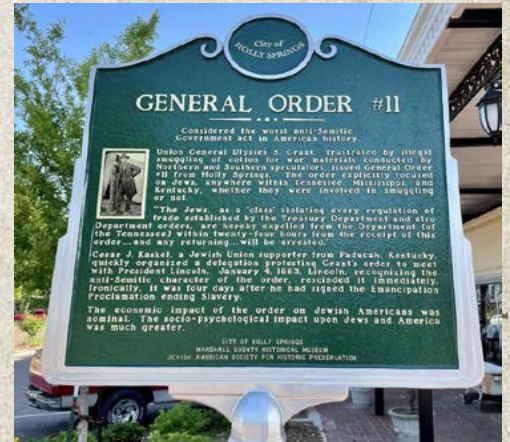
Abraham Lincoln



Civil war soldiers.



Civil war soldiers.



Photographed by Mark Hilton, May 24, 2021.

1880-1924

THE GREAT ARRIVAL

They arrived carrying little more than a suitcase, a siddur, and a dream.

More than two million Jews crossed the Atlantic and entered America during one of the largest waves of immigration in history. Many came fleeing poverty, persecution, and uncertainty in Eastern Europe.

At Ellis Island they encountered a new world. Some became shopkeepers. Others worked in factories. Many struggled to balance tradition with the pressures of American life.



Jewish immigrants.

Their sacrifices laid the foundation for the thriving Jewish communities we know today.



Jewish immigrants at Ellis Island.



1910S-1930s

BUILDING MODERN AMERICA

From banking and retail to entertainment and manufacturing, Jewish entrepreneurs became deeply woven into America's economic rise.

Families like the Schiffs, Warburgs, and others helped finance railroads, infrastructure, industry, and philanthropy

As America grew into a global power,

Jewish innovators helped shape the businesses, institutions, and ideas that powered the twentieth century.



Early New York's Financial District.



1948

ELEVEN MINUTES AFTER HISTORY

President Harry S. Truman recognized the State of Israel just eleven minutes after its declaration of independence. For



Harry S. Truman



many American Jews, it was one of the most consequential acts of friendship ever extended to the Jewish people by an American president.

1987

TORAH FLOURISHES IN AMERICA

A century earlier, many believed America would weaken Jewish observance.

The opposite happened.

Yeshivos expanded. Day schools multiplied. Kashrus organizations grew. Orthodox communities thrived.

What was once viewed as a spiritual wilderness became one of the greatest centers of Torah life in the world.



Photo credit: <https://news.cgtn.com/>

2018

JERUSALEM, RECOGNIZED

For decades, American presidents promised to move the United States Embassy to Jerusalem.

President Donald Trump did it.

The decision formally recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and fulfilled a long-standing goal supported by many American Jews. For countless Orthodox Jews, it represented not only a diplomatic decision but a historic acknowledgment of the Jewish people's connection to their eternal capital.

2020

PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH

The Abraham Accords established diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab nations, creating historic new partnerships and challenging decades of assumptions about the Middle East.

For many American Jews, the agreements represented one of the most significant diplomatic breakthroughs in a generation.



2025

BRINGING THEM HOME

The wounds of October 7 continued to be felt across the Jewish world. Families waited, prayed, and advocated for the return of hostages held in Gaza.

As hostage releases began bringing captives back to their loved ones, Jews across America gathered in synagogues, schools, and communities to celebrate reunions that felt deeply personal.

The story reminded American Jews of a timeless truth: thousands of miles may separate Jewish communities, but one people remains connected by a shared destiny.

2026

Washington community—Jewish life is not merely surviving. It is growing.

The American story remains unfinished. So does ours.

And perhaps that is the greatest blessing of all.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH CENTURY OUR STORY CONTINUES

Two hundred and fifty years after America's founding, Orthodox Jewish life is thriving in ways previous generations could scarcely imagine.

Shuls, schools, yeshivos, camps, businesses, and communities flourish from coast to coast. In neighborhoods across America—including our own Greater



TOGETHER APART: A Patchwork of Achdus



Talya Weinberg



The original sketch on paper



Laying it all out & putting it together.



Hanging it up.

If you've eaten at Ben Yehuda Pizza anytime over the past six years, chances are you've seen the mural on the back wall.

You may have noticed its bright colors. You may have searched for the section your family painted. Or perhaps it simply became part of the landscape—so familiar that after a while you stopped noticing it.

Soon, after nearly six years on the wall, the mural will be retired and replaced with a new work of art. Before that happens, it's worth taking a closer look at what has been hanging there all this time. More than just a mural, it became a record of a community and a snapshot of a moment when we were apart, yet still found a way to create something together.

Back in 2020, when the world had become very small, schools were closed. Shuls were quiet. Playdates vanished. Simchas moved to screens. We waved to friends from across sidewalks and driveways.

That was when Josh Katz, owner of Ben Yehuda Pizza approached me about creating a mural for the restaurant. Rather than paint it myself, we came up with a different idea: what if the community painted it together?

I sketched one large neighborhood scene across 62 separate canvases. Then I broke the image apart, canvas by canvas, labeling each section with colors like a giant paint-by-number puzzle. Families received a kit containing a canvas, brushes, and six paints: red, yellow, blue, black, and white.

Each family painted its section in its own way. Some were careful. Some were bold. Some were neat. There were assorted patterns painted throughout, and the unmistakable evidence of children being handed paint and permission.

One by one, the canvases came back. As they arrived, I pieced them together, outlined the mural in black, added some cars, people, and a few special details requested by Josh (Go Caps!), and slowly watched dozens of individual artworks become one unified picture. What looked random on a single canvas suddenly made sense as part of a larger scene.

When the mural finally went up at Ben Yehuda, it was exciting to see all of the pieces patchworked together for the first time. What had started as 62 separate canvases, painted in 62 different homes, had become one colorful neighborhood scene stretching across the wall.

As America prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday, I find myself thinking about the patchwork quilts that have become such a recognizable part of American history. Individual pieces, stitched together by many hands, create something larger than any one person could make alone. Looking at the mural today, it's hard not to see a similar idea at work.

There is something deeply Jewish about this idea as well: Chazal teach, "כשם שפרצופיהם שונות כן שונות דעותיהם שונות"—just as people's faces are different, so too are their minds

and opinions different. Human difference is not a problem to be solved. It is part of Hashem's design. The work of community is not to erase those differences, but to weave them together into something larger than ourselves. This is true achdus.

Perhaps that's why the mural has remained meaningful for so many people. It wasn't just the finished artwork people remembered but the process. Families painted their small section without knowing exactly how it would fit into the final picture. Only when all 62 canvases came together did the full image emerge.

Soon, the mural will make way for a new painting. Before it comes down, stop by and spend a few minutes with it. Look for the careful sections and the wild ones. Look at the mural not simply as a mural, but as a group photograph taken during a time when no group photograph was possible. The mural was born during a season of separation. For nearly six years, it has quietly reminded us of connection.

That's a pretty good run for 62 canvases and a pizza shop wall!

Talya Weinberg is an artist, educator, and founder of B.A.D. Camp, where creativity, confidence, and joyful self-expression take center stage. Through her art classes, camps, and workshops, she creates imaginative spaces where children can explore, create, and thrive. All information can be found on her site at Talyaweinberg.com



A COMMUNITY BENEFIT ALERT

FROM YAD YEHUDA OF GREATER WASHINGTON

IN SUMMARY:

When prescribed a new medication, if cost is an issue, try these quick steps to save money:

- ✓ GoodRx or another discount app
- ✓ Walmart's generic drug list
- ✓ Cost Plus Drugs
- ✓ Amazon Pharmacy
- ✓ Costco Pharmacy

A few minutes of comparison shopping can sometimes save hundreds of dollars per year.

8 WAYS TO SAVE MONEY ON PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Prescription pricing varies depending on which pharmacy and insurance you use. If you need to save money on your prescription medications, apply some of these tips:

1. TRY PHARMACY APPS

These app provide prescription pricing at pharmacies in your area. They offer pharmacy coupons, which can sometimes be cheaper than purchasing through your insurance. Check all the pharmacies in your area to see which gives you the best pricing:

- GoodRx
- SingleCare
- RxSaver

source: [Clark.com](#)

2. WALMART'S \$4 GENERIC MEDICATIONS

Walmart offers hundreds of generic medications at low flat-rate prices, including:

- \$4 for many 30-day prescriptions
- \$10 for many 90-day prescriptions

Search "Walmart \$4 Prescription List" and then print the list to have it handy.

3. ONLINE PHARMACIES

If you don't need the medication immediately, online pharmacies may offer substantial savings.

Check if your insurance company participates with any online pharmacies or look into these.

Cost Plus Drug Company:
www.costplusdrugs.com/

Amazon Pharmacy:
www.pharmacy.amazon.com/

4. COSTCO PHARMACY

Costco often has some of the lowest pharmacy prices available. You don't need to be a Costco member to use the pharmacy.

Source: [Clark.com](#)

NEED HELP PAYING FOR PRESCRIPTIONS?



5. MARYLAND SENIOR PRESCRIPTION DRUG ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SPDAP)

SPDAP helps moderate-income Maryland residents with Medicare pay for prescription medications.

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- Enrolled in Medicare
- Income at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level

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☎ 1-800-551-5995

🌐 www.marylandspdap.com/

6. PATIENT ADVOCATE FOUNDATION CO-PAY RELIEF PROGRAM

The Co-Pay Relief Program helps eligible patients reduce out-of-pocket medication costs for many chronic and serious illnesses.

Questions?

☎ 1-866-512-3861

🌐 www.copays.org/

7. AMERICA'S MEDICINES

America's Medicines helps patients locate prescription assistance programs offered by pharmaceutical companies and other organizations.

Email questions here:

www.americasmedicines.com/about/contact-us

Full information:

www.americasmedicines.com/

8. NATIONAL FINANCIAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

This free search tool helps individuals find national and regional programs that assist with medical expenses, prescription costs, insurance premiums, and treatment-related expenses.

Questions?

☎ 1-800-532-5274

🌐 www.patientadvocate.org/explore-our-resources/national-financial-resource-directory/

WHEN CHILDHOOD MEETS THE ROAD

- a Shared Mitzvah



Rabbi Dr. Avichai Pepper

Director of Educational Advancement and Community Relations at the Yeshiva of Greater Washington



Our community is special for many reasons. One thing that has drawn people to our community is that it is a fun, safe, and positive place for children to grow up. Communities like ours give children the opportunity to build friendships, develop independence while still staying close to family, and experience the simple joys of being kids.

With that beauty, however, comes a challenge of children growing up. And part of growing up means becoming teenagers, adolescents, and young adults. Each of these stages comes with its own unique level of development, which adults sometimes can begin to see through a lens of frustration or irritation instead of understanding. This is both normal and appropriate because as adults we understand responsibility and safety.

In our neighborhoods, children walk to parks, ride bikes, scooter to stores, meander to school, and travel to the places they need to go. That freedom and activity are part of what makes our community vibrant, special, and healthy for children to grow up. In addition to his beauty, there is also a requirement on each of us to be more vigilant of our surroundings.

Over the past few weeks, I have either

witnessed or learned about several accidents involving children and teenagers being struck by vehicles. Challenging moments like these naturally cause people to want to assign blame. "He should have worn a reflector" (which is true, along with better protective gear and maybe a front and back light), "the schools should ban all scooters" (which would be inappropriate since it is beyond the scope of the responsibility of the school), or "that person needs to drive without looking at their phone" (um.... totally!). But the truth is that accidents are called accidents for a reason. In a community filled with active children and busy families, mistakes and close calls can happen quickly.

I am not writing to propose new rules, impose restrictions, or blame anyone involved. I am writing because, as a community, we have both the responsibility and the ability to become more aware, more cautious, and more mindful.

The Torah places enormous value on safety and protecting life. The mitzvah of "*Venishmartem me'od lenafshoseichem*" - "You shall greatly guard your lives" (Devarim 4:15), reminds us that safety is not merely common sense, but a communal and religious responsibility. We are obligated to take precautions and act responsibly in ways that protect ourselves and others.

When speaking with children about bike and scooter safety, community youth have shared with me that they can see the cars around them and are unsure why the cars can not see them. What they often do not understand is that drivers do not always see them as easily. As a driver myself, there are many days where my foot stays closer to the brake than the gas pedal and I hold my breath while watching children scooter, bike, run, walk, or casually make their way to school and parks as they talk and mingle with friends. It can be challenging for everyone involved.

Safety is a shared responsibility.

Drivers need to slow down and remain alert. Children need to better understand traffic patterns and safety rules. And parents carry the responsibility to make sure their children know not only how to travel around town, but also how not to. This includes when not to dart into streets, when not to assume a driver sees them, when not to ride unpredictably, and how to move responsibly alongside traffic and pedestrians.

We cannot and should not limit the freedom children have to move through our community. Their presence is part of what makes our neighborhoods beautiful. We also cannot allow the safety challenges to be left without guidance. Together we can all work



to create a greater level of safety by remaining patient, attentive, and understanding of one another. Educating our youth, in appropriate safety, and an understanding of the needs to follow traffic patterns and safety protocol is critical.

The beauty of our community includes these children and teenagers. By working together, we can help ensure that our neighborhoods remain not only vibrant and active, but safe for everyone.

Safety Note: Recent studies have shown a significant rise in injuries involving children riding bicycles, e-bikes, and scooters. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, emergency room visits related to e-scooter injuries increased by approximately 80% in recent years, with injuries among children under 15 more than doubling. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also reports that bicycle-related crashes continue to cause more than 100,000 emergency department visits annually. In addition, Penn State Health Children’s Hospital reported that doctors treated more children for e-bike and e-scooter injuries in 2025 than in the previous three years combined. Safety experts emphasize that helmet use, proper supervision, visibility, and adherence to traffic rules are essential in reducing the risk of serious injury among young riders (CDC; U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission; Penn State Health).

Rabbi Avichai Pepper, Ed.D is a seasoned educator with a rich academic and professional background. A graduate of the New England Rabbinical College in Providence, RI, he has devoted his life to teaching Torah and to Jewish communal growth. Rabbi Pepper holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Liberty University, alongside a master’s degree in educational leadership from Bellevue University and a master’s degree in counseling from Liberty University. Currently serving as the Director of Educational Advancement and Community Relations at the Yeshiva of Greater Washington as well as an educational coach and presenter at Lomdei, Rabbi Dr. Pepper leverages almost 30 years of dedicated service in Jewish education and community development. In addition, he also serves on the Chai Lifeline Crisis Services team supporting school and community in trying times.



BOOK REVIEW:

SHALOM RAV BIRKON



RABBI SHALOM ROSNER
KOREN PUBLISHERS

At first glance, *Shalom Rav Birkon* appears to be another beautifully produced bencher. In reality, Rabbi Shalom Rosner has created something more meaningful: a Shabbos companion designed to transform familiar songs and rituals into opportunities for reflection and conversation.

Interwoven throughout the zemiros, Kiddush, and Birkat Hamazon are concise Torah insights drawn from an impressive range of sources, including the Sfat Emet, Rambam, Meshech Chochmah, Gemara, Zohar, and the Arizal. Rather than lengthy essays, Rabbi Rosner poses thoughtful questions that naturally arise from the text and offers clear, accessible answers that can be shared around the Shabbos table.

Among the most memorable ideas is the Sfat Emet’s teaching that just as the Kohen Gadol approached the *avodah* each day with the excitement of the very first time, so too every Shabbos should be greeted with renewed enthusiasm and wonder. It is a simple insight, yet one that captures the spirit of the entire work.

Readers seeking in-depth analysis may wish for more extensive treatment. But that is not this book’s aim. *Shalom Rav Birkon* succeeds precisely because of its brevity. These are not lengthy discourses meant for the beis midrash; they are thoughtful, engaging vortlach intended to elevate the atmosphere between the fish and the soup.

In an age of distractions, Rabbi Rosner reminds us that the melodies and blessings we often recite by rote still have the power to inspire. The greatest strength of *Shalom Rav Birkon* is not that it changes the words of the Shabbos table, but that it teaches us to hear them anew.

SUMMER'S GREATEST CLASSROOM



Rabbi Dr. Avichai Pepper

Director of Educational Advancement and Community Relations at the Yeshiva of Greater Washington

For most of the year, our children live on a schedule, follow routine, and maintain a level of consistency and monotony. They wake up, get ready for school, grab a lunch or snack, and spend their days moving from class to class according to a carefully structured routine. They come home, do homework, spend a little time with family, and then get ready to do it all again the next day.

There is nothing wrong with that routine. In fact, our schools do an incredible job educating our children and helping them grow. We are fortunate to have teachers and schools that care deeply about our children, their success, and their well-being. Yet, there are some lessons that cannot truly be taught in a classroom, life skills that should not be left to the school, but to parents to impart on their children.

Responsibility, patience, teamwork, flexibility, leadership, and problem-solving, although taught in classroom settings, are often learned best when children are given the chance to experience them in real time. Those lessons can happen when plans change unexpectedly, when something goes wrong, or when a family has to work together to accomplish a goal.



That is one of the reasons I have always loved summer. Summer gives parents something that is often in short supply during the school year, family time. This time is time to be together, learning and growing. Time to create experiences and make lifelong memories. Time to impart lessons that do not fit neatly into the school day or textbooks.

For my family, many of those lessons came through our annual summer road trips. Over the years, we have had the privilege of visiting nearly every state in the country. Some of those trips were taken in an old motorhome that had more character than luxury. Before that, they were taken in an overloaded minivan packed with children, luggage, snacks, and just enough entertainment to survive the next few hundred miles.

The destination was always exciting, but the real value was in the journey itself. Before every trip, there was work to do. Routes needed to be planned. Stops had to be scheduled. Food needed to be organized. Different children were given different responsibilities. One might be in charge of helping plan driving days, while another responsible for checking supplies, and another tasked with helping make a menu and find food stops to replenish the supplies.

The simple act of preparing for a trip became an opportunity to teach responsibility and ownership. The children were not just passengers on these coast-to-coast roadtrips, they were part of the team.

Then came the challenge of spending days, and sometimes weeks, together in a very small space. Days were scheduled to include Davening, cleaning the vehicle, repacking, checking and preparing food, listening to a shiur as we drove, and planning

for the rest of the trip.

Anyone who has taken a long family road trip knows that eventually someone might get annoyed, someone gets bored, and someone thinks a sibling is sitting too close. Those moments created plenty of opportunities to learn patience, compromise, and critical problem solving together.

Looking back, I do not think my children remember every destination, although they each keep track of why and how each is stuck at between 47 and 49 States. What they remember are the experiences and adventures. They remember getting lost and figuring out a solution, or reading the old roadmap. They remember celebrating small successes or finding Kosher food in random places. They remember the unexpected stops, the laughs, and the adventures that no one planned.

What made these trips even more meaningful was the opportunity to weave Jewish life into the experience.



Traveling while keeping kosher, finding places to daven, and maintaining our regular routines often became part of the adventure. Sometimes that meant researching kosher food options before arriving in a city. Other times it meant searching for a supermarket in an unfamiliar town that carried a few kosher

products. It taught our children that being Jewish is not something we do only at home, but a full lifestyle with endless excitement. It is part of who we are wherever we happen to be.

We also tried to connect our Torah learning to the places we visited. One memory that stands out is a visit to Yellowstone National Park. Like countless visitors before us, we stood in amazement watching the park's famous hot springs and geothermal features. But instead of simply reading the informational signs, we pulled out a Chumash.



Together we looked at the pesukim and Rashi in Parshas Noach discussing the Mabul. Rashi (Bereshis 7:11) explains that the hot springs found in the world today are among the reminders left behind from that event. Suddenly, something the children had learned around the Shabbos table was standing right in front of them. The Torah was not disconnected from what they were seeing, it came to life. Those are the moments that stay with a child.

Whether it was stopping for Mincha during a long driving day, visiting a Jewish community far from home, or connecting a national landmark to something we were learning in the Torah, marveling at the *Nifla'os HaBorei*, building an Eruv or koshering a kitchen the message was always the same: Judaism travels with us.

Every family will do this differently. Not everyone has the ability or desire to drive across the country. Some families will spend the summer traveling, while others will stay much closer to home. The details matter far less than the opportunities and adventures.

Summer gives us the chance to spend meaningful time together and to teach lessons that our children can experience firsthand. It allows us to show them what responsibility looks like, what family means, and how Torah can be part of everyday life.

Long after the summer is over, the children may forget some of the places they visited. They will however, remember how it felt to be part of something together. They will remember the adventures, the challenges, and the memories created along the way. And those lessons may end up being the most important souvenirs they bring home.

Rabbi Avichai Pepper, Ed.D is a seasoned educator with a rich academic and professional background. A graduate of the New England Rabbinical College in Providence, RI, he has devoted his life to teaching Torah and to Jewish communal growth. Rabbi Pepper holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Liberty University, alongside a master's degree in educational leadership from Bellevue University and a master's degree in counseling from Liberty University. Currently serving as the Director of Educational Advancement and Community Relations at the Yeshiva of Greater Washington as well as an educational coach and presenter at Lomdei, Rabbi Dr. Pepper leverages almost 30 years of dedicated service in Jewish education and community development. In addition, he also serves on the Chal Lifeline Crisis Services team supporting school and community in trying times.



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The Heart Behind BEN YEHUDA PIZZA

Some businesses become successful. Very few become part of the emotional fabric of a community.

For more than two decades, Ben Yehuda Pizza has quietly been far more than a pizza shop for thousands across Silver Spring and Greater Washington. Behind the busy counter, late-night orders, and familiar slices is a place built on something deeper – quiet acts of kindness, community responsibility, second chances, fundraising efforts, hospitality, and countless moments most people never see.

For this year’s Summer Issue of the Washington Jewish Journal, we sat down with owner Josh Katz for a thoughtful conversation about community, hospitality, hidden acts of chesed, growth, mozzarella sticks, and the deeper purpose behind one of Washington’s most beloved neighborhood staples.

Ben Yehuda has become such a staple of the community. How did it all begin?

It’s actually a really great story because Ben Yehuda was built specifically for this community. Back in 2000, Roger Kerlins, Steven Franco, and Ronnie Rosenbluth felt the Kemp Mill area needed something local – a pizza place people could walk to, something that felt connected to neighborhood life. At the time, there were kosher pizza options, but nothing that truly felt like it belonged

right here in the center of the community.

I was there from the very beginning. I was actually the first person officially hired by the founders, which is funny to think about now. The restaurant opened in the summer of 2000, originally for a private baseball team event for Roger’s daughter, but word spread quickly and people started showing up before we had even officially opened. In a way, the community opened the restaurant with us.

That’s incredible – almost like



the restaurant belonged to the community from day one. How did you eventually become the owner?

It happened very naturally. Scott Schleslinger bought the business in 2008 during an incredibly difficult economic time and really strengthened the operations side of the restaurant. By 2012, he was ready to move on, and at the time I had been working in e-commerce for Sammy Franco.

The opportunity came up, and honestly, it just felt right.

I already understood what the restaurant meant to people. This was never just about pizza. Community pizza shops are different. People celebrate there, they bring their kids there after school, they stop in after shiurim or games or family events. There's a responsibility that comes with that.

So when I took over in May of 2012, the biggest thing for me was preserving that community-centered feeling while continuing to improve the business itself.

You can really feel that community aspect when you walk in. Ben Yehuda seems to constantly support local causes and organizations.

That's always been important to us.

We've done fundraisers for schools, organizations, and community causes over the years. One example was Noah Night Out at Max's which helped support the Torah School. We try to look at these partnerships as a win for everybody involved – the institution benefits, the community comes together, and yes, it helps the restaurant too.

Sometimes financially it may not even be the best decision on paper, but community businesses shouldn't only think on paper.

A fundraiser brings in new families, introduces people to the restaurant, creates positive experiences. That matters long term. If you're part of a community, you have to actively participate in it.



That mindset probably explains why people feel so connected to the restaurant. But at the same time, Ben Yehuda has also modernized a lot over the years.

Absolutely – and honestly, that's become one of the biggest focuses for us.

I once attended a seminar where they said something that completely changed how I think about restaurants. They said your biggest competitor isn't another restaurant. It's the customer's refrigerator.

That's so true.

If ordering food feels complicated or annoying, people will just stay home and make something themselves. So our job is to make ordering as easy and seamless as possible.

That's why we changed our POS system, introduced the app,



Josh Katz of Ben Yehuda Pizza with Montgomery County's finest outside the Silver Spring community staple.

improved online ordering, and added self-service kiosks. We're constantly trying to remove friction from the experience. People are busy. Families are busy. Convenience matters.

That's actually such a smart way to think about it. Are there plans to expand even further?

We've definitely explored ideas.

One thing we've been researching seriously is a movable pizza trailer concept. The idea would be to have flexibility – being able to serve different areas or events while still maintaining the Ben Yehuda quality and experience.

The challenge with kosher restaurants is density. You need enough of a Jewish population concentrated in one place to support it consistently. Pizza is also different from something like shawarma – people will travel farther for certain foods than others.

So expansion has to make sense operationally and for the community. We never want growth to come at the expense of quality in our current location.

Speaking of quality – people definitely have their Ben Yehuda favorites. What's your personal order?

I keep it pretty simple actually.

Usually a smaller pie with thinner crust, light cheese, and green peppers.

But one thing I always tell people is underrated is the Tony sauce. It's a thicker sauce with a stronger tomato base and people who try it usually love it.

We even tested changing sauces entirely at one point, but customers were very attached to the original. That taught us something important – consistency matters. People build emotional connections to food.

And of course, the mozzarella sticks get a huge reaction from people, especially customers visiting from out of town.

They're hand-made with our own spice blend and people are genuinely shocked by how good they are.

What stands out most to you after all these years running the restaurant?

Honestly? The moments that have nothing to do with pizza.

The feedback that means the most to me is when customers compliment our staff for kindness or hospitality.

There was one story that really stayed with me. A family came in one night and one of our employees, Ashley, noticed they seemed upset and emotionally drained. Without anyone asking, she offered the kids free ice cream just to brighten the mood a little.

Later, the family sent us a letter explaining how difficult their day had been and how much that small gesture meant to them.

That's the stuff that matters most.

Anybody can serve food. But hospitality – real hospitality – is different. We want people to feel cared about when they come in here.

That really says a lot about the culture you've built there.

The truth is the staff deserves most of the credit.

The restaurant only works because of the people behind it every day. We have team members constantly looking for ways to help others – whether it's donating supplies to food banks or helping organize community efforts quietly behind the scenes.

There was even a fundraiser one of our assistants helped coordinate while she was literally in a bomb shelter in Israel. That level of dedication is humbling.

And most community impact doesn't happen through giant public campaigns. Usually it's small acts. Quiet moments. Helping someone out when they need it.

That's really what we try to be about.



Last question – after all these years, what do you hope people feel when they think about Ben Yehuda Pizza?

I hope they feel community.

Of course we want them to love the pizza. But bigger than that, I hope they feel like Ben Yehuda is part of their lives in a positive way.

This community supports local businesses in an incredible way, and we never take that for granted. If we can continue serving good food while also supporting people, schools, organizations, and families along the way, then we're doing something meaningful.

That's always been the goal.



“
*Anybody can serve food.
 But hospitality— real
 hospitality — is different.
 We want people to feel
 cared about when they
 come in here.*
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Make summer Last

Aviva Waxman

A lot of research has been dedicated to the connection between nice weather and the positive mood lift people experience during the summer. I want to delve into this topic because if the research proves the connection that we must find a way to make the summer last.

One of the main links between mood boost and summer weather happens through an unbelievable neuro transmitter in our brain called serotonin. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that carries chemical messages from our brain throughout the body. Considered the "happy Hormones" serotonin plays a large role in mood, memory, learning, sleep, hunger; higher levels of serotonin results in overall happier moods. Exposure to sunlight is one of the main ways we increase serotonin. Sunlight received by receptors in the retina take the sunlight and immediately trigger a

release of serotonin. Interestingly, it's the sunlight rather than the hot weather that encourages positive feelings during the summer. We can now easily integrate sunlight and summer vibes into our homes to create happy and positive spaces.

To give our homes a year round summer vibe let's start with maximizing natural sunlight. If you are starting a construction project, make sure to include large windows in every room. You can also capture sunlight in your home with small older windows by covering all windows with neutral colored sheers hung at ceiling height and reach till the floor. Floor to ceiling sheers with not only invite natural light into your space, the floor to ceiling curtains also creates an enlarged affect in the room. When looking for paint colors choose colors in the natural and warm tones: warm whites, pastel green, pastel

blues, and beige tones will each give a stunning natural summer vibe to a space. And lastly, whether or not you have a green thumb, install plants around your house. A large planter next to a sofa, in the corner of the dining room, on a counter, or a tall floor standing plant in a foyer will liven up the space tremendously.

A relative of mine said after she moved to Florida, "every day is a happy day in sunshine state." I laughed and new it was true, especially that I really don't like cold weather but if we incorporate summer vibes into our homes hopefully we can say that every day is a happy day at home 😊

Aviva Waxman is the owner of Sheva Interiors, an interior design firm covering Maryland and DC. Aviva loves to work with her clients to bring out their style in a contemporary and You-nique way. She can be reached at shevainteriors@gmail.com or 443-272-5879.



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THE BRIEFING

AMERICA TURNS 250 🇺🇸

Washington is about to look less like a political battlefield and more like the biggest Fourth of July celebration in modern American history.

The upcoming America 250 celebration on the National Mall is expected to feature a 110-foot Ferris wheel, massive state pavilions representing all 50 states and U.S. territories, rides, fireworks, food, music, and one enormous patriotic festival stretching through the heart of D.C. — with free admission for the public from June 25–July 10, 2026.

Something tells us Char Bar, Holy Chow, and Café K are probably watching this America 250 situation very carefully.



The Question After the Election

Politics moves quickly. Reflection takes longer.

This week, Hillary Clinton looked back on the 2024 race and offered a striking assessment, calling former President Joe Biden's decision to seek reelection a "terrible mistake" and a "terrible miscalculation." The quote grabbed headlines, but it also reopened a question that surfaces after every election: when does loyalty to a leader become loyalty to a plan? The decisions that shape history are often obvious in hindsight—and invisible in real time.





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THE BRIEFING

Not in the Forecast

As crews prepared for UFC's Freedom 250 celebration on the South Lawn of the White House, a major lightning storm moving toward Washington appeared to split and pass around the grounds. Dana White later said President Trump viewed the moment as a sign of divine intervention.

The video quickly spread online, with some pointing to weather patterns and others seeing something more.

Then again, history often turns not on events themselves, but on how people interpret them.

One person sees coincidence. Another sees hashgacha.

The story begins where the explanation ends.



Silicon Valley's New Front Row

A photograph from UFC's Freedom 250 celebration captured an image that would have seemed unlikely not long ago: Mark (Mordechai) Zuckerberg smiling as he greeted President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump.

The photo quickly spread online, seen by many as another sign that America's technology elite are paying closer attention to Washington.

In every era, influence follows innovation. Eventually, innovation follows influence.



The Offer Israel Accepted

A decades-old clip of former President Bill Clinton is circulating online once again.

Reflecting on his efforts to broker peace between Israel and the Palestinians, Clinton said: "I killed myself trying to give the Palestinians a state." He went on to describe an offer that would have included all of Gaza and most of the West Bank, saying it was ultimately rejected.

The video's resurgence is a reminder that the Middle East rarely starts new arguments. More often, it revisits old ones.

The faces change. The headlines change. The questions have a way of staying the same.

Some debates endure not because they're unresolved—but because each generation believes it can finally resolve them.



CASE OFFICER



UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN

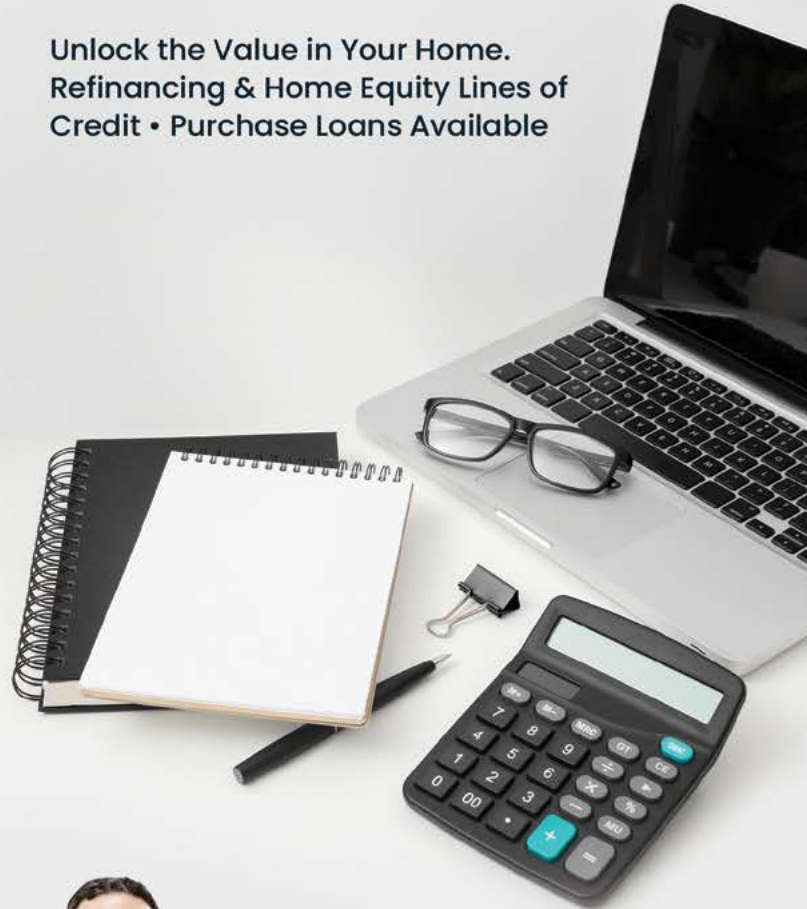
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THE MAKOR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE: A DREAM COME TRUE

Shua Hoffman moved with his family from Silver Spring to Monsey, New York five years ago. While he loved his 21 years living in Maryland, his family moved for greater access to services for people with specialized needs. That brought Shua to the Makor College Experience where, last week, he marched down at Arthur Ashe Stadium with his peers at Yeshiva University's 95th Annual Commencement.

The Makor College Experience is a four-year, non-degree program for young men with Intellectual Disability on the Wilf campus of Yeshiva University in New York. The program provides individuals with Intellectual Disability the opportunity to be part of the YU community while gaining skills and exploring opportunities as they transition to lives of independence.

"Yeshiva University is so much more than just a yeshiva or just a college. For many, it is the next stage in their lives as members of the Jewish community, a stage that, until we opened ten years ago, people with specialized needs were excluded from," says Dr. Stephen Glicksman, founder and director of the Makor College Experience. "We recognized that while our participants'

cognitive challenges are disabling when it comes to the academic parts of college, they are not disabling for all of the other parts of college like campus life, joining clubs, and making friends."



The Makor College Experience is technically a "Day Habilitation Without Walls" program operated by Makor Care & Services Network, a lifespan social services organization supporting individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities since 1978. Makor approached Yeshiva University with the idea of opening a college experience program and the two institutions have worked in partnership to make this program a reality.

While inclusion is an important part of the program, developing a healthy

self-identity is also a major aspect of participants' growth throughout their four-year stay. As Dr. Glicksman puts it, "We want the inclusion to be real. We aren't a *chesed* program. That's why we have our own shiur in the morning, and our own classes in the afternoon. That way, when our guys join the rest of YU at the gym, at a club, learning in the Beit Midrash, or just hanging out, they can join their peers as equals because, in those contexts, their diagnoses don't necessarily impact their capabilities to the same degree they would in an academic setting."

For Shua, the Makor College Experience is, as he puts it, "...a dream come true. I love the program, because it's made me realize my potential and what I can give to the world. I love the Torah classes, and all the people I've met. I take music with Mr. Meth and he helps me with composing and brightening the world through song. I've learned how to be a leader. I love living in the Makor apartments and bonding with the guys. It has really helped me become more independent. In psychology class, I've learned skills for getting along better with people without blowing things out of proportion. Some things are still a challenge for me, but I see how much I've grown. All of my teachers are the best of the best. All in all, it's been a great journey and a great four years!"

Shua's parents agree: "Makor has given Shua the ability to tap into his strengths and to be able to also be in touch with reality, which has helped him grow into a more mature and productive person. We are very appreciative of the entire staff for what they've done and being able to help Shua become that confident person he is."

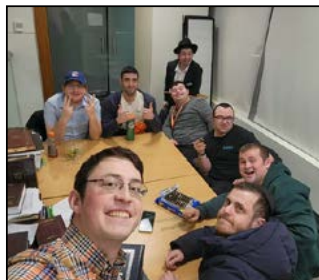
As for Shua, his advice for those looking to grow, either within the Makor College Experience or wherever you happen to find yourself, is, "Take one day at a time, and strive for greatness. You should be *matzliach* and I hope all goes well."



Enjoying Lunch On Campus



Learning With Friends In The Beit Midrash



Makor Students At Night Seder



Shua And Friends And A Freshman Showing Off Their New Yu Ids



Shua And His Parents And Graduation



The Graduates 2021

To support or learn more about the Makor College Experience, please contact Dr. Stephen Glicksman at sglicksman@makords.org or 347-390-1315.



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