

# Shalom Times

CHANUKAH 5783

CHABAD OF VENICE & NORTH PORT

**CHANUKAH  
KLEZMER FESTIVAL**  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18  
AT 4:30 PM



**EXCLUSIVE  
MENORAH  
HOW-TO**

**AVOIDING  
BURNOUT**  
BY CHAYA SHUCHAT

**THE OIL  
PARADOX**  
BY RABBI SHAI TAUB

**CELEBRATE  
CHANUKAH**  
DEC 18TH-26TH

**2022  
IMPACT REPORT**

**FINDING  
MYSELF**  
SARA ESTHER CRISPE



## DEDICATED TO THE LOVE AND INSPIRATION OF THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

His personal devotion to each and every individual Human as well as his dedication to G-d and His Torah, continue to inspire the Chabad center here in Venice.

## Shalom Times

is published by  
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## SHALOM!

We hope you enjoy the Chanukah edition of our “Shalom Times” with illuminating insights into the Celebration and meaning of Chanukah.

Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, begins this year on the evening of Sunday, December 18, and concludes the evening of Monday, December 26. The festival of Chanukah commemorates the 2nd century BCE Jewish victory over the oppressive Hellenistic regime, and the miracles that took place as the Jerusalem Temple was restored. For a holiday that is thought to be only 2,200 years old, and not mentioned in the bible,

why has it become one of the most celebrated and loved holidays in all Judaism?

### Because it is the story of ongoing Jewish survival.

With growing anti-Semitism within the United States and around the world, Chanukah takes on a stronger and more defined meaning this year; The light of the menorah has and will continue to commemorate our miraculous survival for over 5700 years. So, this year when you light the candles of the menorah, commit to sharing the story not only of the miracle of the oil that lasted 8 days, but the continued miracle of a thriving Jewish people.

**Chabad of Venice will be hosting their annual Chanukah Klezmer Festival on Sunday, Dec. 18 at Centennial Park in downtown Venice, an open event for the entire community starting at 4:30 pm.**

This year's Chanukah event features a fully loaded program, including a live performance from the **Yiddish Cowboys Klezmer Band**, the lighting of a 16-foot giant menorah, a performance from Chabad's Hebrew School students, a dreidel House, arts and crafts for kids, plus a tremendous chocolate coin “gelt” drop by **Venice Firefighters** from 25 feet up in the Air! Traditional foods – stuffed cabbage, latkes, donuts – will be sold, in what promises to be a most enjoyable evening.

Bring chairs, or use ones provided by Chabad, but most of all, bring your desire to connect as a Jewish community.

### Happy Chanukah!

*Rabbi Sholom & Chaya Rivka Schmerling*

*Sunday's event is not the only Chanukah celebration scheduled for this year. Public menorah lightings will also take place Tuesday, December 20 at 5:00 pm in Englewood / 396 W. Dearborn St, Englewood Wednesday, December 21 at 5:00 pm in North Port / “The Green” at North Port City Hall (4970 City Hall Blvd, North Port, FL 34286)*

## WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

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Mail a check made out to **Chabad of Venice**, 21560 Angela Ln, Venice, FL 34293

### CAR:

Free Pickup. For more information contact us.

### PLANNED GIVING:

Consider a lasting legacy by including Chabad of Venice in your will.



*We are fully responsibly to raise our own budget and are supported by individuals that care.*

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Chabad of Venice & North Port is a tax-exempt IRS-registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations of real estate can provide you with the maximum tax benefits allowed by law.



CHABAD OF VENICE

# A HISTORIC MORNING OF INSPIRATION FROM A **SURVIVOR OF AUSCHWITZ** & HARD LABOR CAMPS

## HELGA MELMED

"WE WERE BUNKED IN A BIG STABLE, FOUR TO FIVE GIRLS IN A ROW, NEXT TO THE BUILDING THAT HOUSED THE GAS OVENS. WE SMELLED THE FLESH FROM THE GAS OVENS BURNING. I CAN STILL SMELL THAT HORRIBLE FLESH-BURNING SMELL."

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16

DOORS OPEN: 10:00 AM SPEAKER: 10:30 AM

VENICE COMMUNITY CENTER

326 NOKOMIS AVE S, VENICE, FL 34285

Tickets: [www.chabadofvenice.com/tickets](http://www.chabadofvenice.com/tickets) 941-493-2770

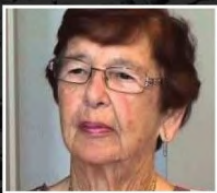
FRONT SECTION A: \$36 FRONT SECTION B: \$24 BACK SECTION: \$18

VIP: \$125 (INCLUDES FRONT SEATING, PRIVATE RECEPTION BEFORE THE EVENT WITH HELGA MELMED)

SPONSOR: \$1000 (INCLUDES 4 VIP TICKETS AND PUBLICITY)

STUDENTS: FREE

PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT THE CHABAD YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP FUND



Helga had a normal childhood with her parents in Berlin before Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933.

Helga and her parents were rounded up in cattle cars with thousands of other Jewish people and forced to hard labor at various camps. Following the death of both of her parents, Melmed eventually wound up in Auschwitz. Helga resides in Venice and is a proud member of Chabad of Venice.

## WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB

Gather together with local women at Venice's most inspiring book club! Each season, a new book is chosen and discussed in depth, with stories, anecdotes, and with joy. Walk away each week with a fresh outlook on life and the world. Coffee, tea and pastries are served

TUESDAYS: 10:30 AM

## CHABAD PROGRAMS

### TORAH STUDY

SATURDAYS: 9:30 AM

We'll examine the weekly Torah reading through the lens of contemporary commentary every Shabbat morning, and you'll be amazed at how topical and relevant the Parsha (weekly Torah reading) ideas and concepts really are. Both mystical and pragmatic, these sessions will truly elevate your spirits and refine your view of the world around you.

### WEEKLY SHABBAT SERVICES

FRIDAYS: 6 PM

SATURDAYS: 10 AM

At Chabad the services are traditional and are conducted in a joyous, casual atmosphere. Many of those who attend cannot read Hebrew, yet everyone feels at home. The prayer book is bi-lingual and various English readings are included in the service. Song and commentary add meaning and participation to the prayers. Children are included and most welcome

### HEBREW SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

TUESDAYS: 12 PM

Mimicking the down-to-earth and joyful nature of our Hebrew School for children, **Hebrew School for Adults** offers a hands-on method to gain, week by week, a genuine understanding of the concepts that form the cornerstones of our people's heritage - like holiday customs, meaning behind prayers, and Jewish history. Served over lunch and full of laughs.

### DAILY PRAYER & STUDY

SUNDAYS: 9:00 AM WEEKDAYS: 7:30AM

Join the growing group of men and women who are choosing to begin each day with a positive, Torah outlook, gained through prayer and a short, insightful class. Meant to help attendees stay aligned throughout the day, the daily minyan sets a bright tone for all the day may bring, one resonating with purpose. Topics include in-depth Chumash study, Tanya, and more.



FIRST TIME!

# CHANUKAH CELEBRATION

AT NORTH PORT CITY HALL



## PUBLIC MENORAH LIGHTING

Children's Program | Latkes,  
Donuts & More | Live Music & Prices

WED, DEC. 21, 2022 | 5:00 PM

4970 CITY HALL BLVD, NORTH PORT, FL 34286

Public menorah lightings will also take place in Venice & Englewood:

**Venice:** Chanukah Klezmer Festival Sunday, Dec. 18 at 4:30 at  
the Gazebo at 200 W. Venice Ave (see back page for more info)

**Englewood:** Tuesday, December 20 at 5:00 pm  
396 W. Dearborn St, Englewood

JOIN RABBI AND REBBETZIN SCHMERLING.  
AND CHABAD OF VENICE ON A TRIP TO ISRAEL



## THE LAND & THE SPIRIT

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March 12 - 20, 2023

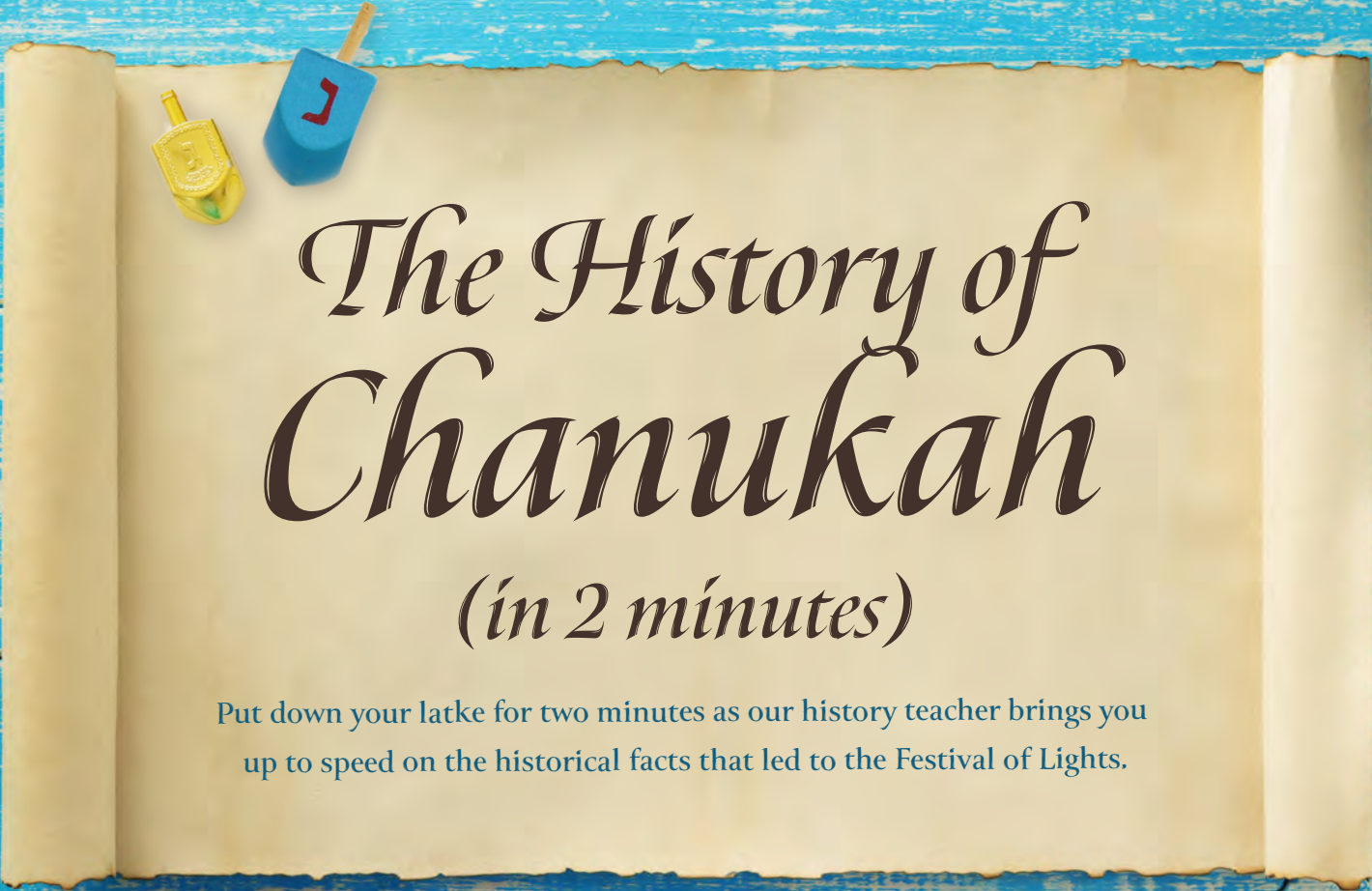
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# *The History of Chanukah*

## *(in 2 minutes)*

Put down your latke for two minutes as our history teacher brings you up to speed on the historical facts that led to the Festival of Lights.

### *The Backstory*

Antiochus III, the King of Syria (222-186 B.C.E.) was victorious in battle and the Land of Israel was annexed to his empire. Things seemed to be going well, until he was beaten by the Romans and compelled to pay heavy taxes. That's when the pressure on the Jewish land started and when Antiochus died, his son Seleucus IV took over, it got much worse for the Jews. But it wasn't all about the money.

At that time, the biggest danger facing our people was actually from within. The influence of the Hellenists (people who accepted idol-worship and the Syrian way of life) was increasing and the threat of assimilation became very real.

Meanwhile, there was a spiritual warrior named Yochanan, who was the High Priest in Jerusalem. The Jewish Hellenists hated Yochanan for resisting their new found culture and they betrayed him by telling Seleucus that the Temple had plenty of money. Strapped for cash, Seleucus needed money in order to pay the Romans and sure enough his minister Helyodros soon arrived at the Temple gates. Ignoring Yochanan's pleas Helyodros entered the Temple, but suddenly became pale and he fainted. After Helyodros came to, he did not dare enter the Holy Temple again. The story is not over, so keep reading.

### *The Madman: Antiochus*

A short time later in 174 B.C.E, Seleucus was killed and his brother Antiochus IV took over. He was a tyrant who hated religion and he was really bad news for the Jews. He was called "Epiphanes," meaning "the gods' beloved." Several of the Syrian rulers received similar titles. But a historian of his time, Polebius, gave him the title Epimanes ("madman"), a name more suitable to the character of this harsh and cruel king.

Desiring to unify his kingdom through the medium of a common religion and culture, Antiochus tried to root out the individualism of the Jews by suppressing all the Jewish Laws. He removed Yochanan from the Temple and installed Joshua, Yochanan's Hellenist brother, as the High Priest. Joshua, who loved to call himself by the Greek name of Jason, used his high office to spread Greek customs among the priesthood.

Joshua was later replaced by another man, Menelaus, who had promised the king that he would bring in more money than Jason did. When Yochanan, the former High Priest, protested against the spread of the Hellenists' influence in the Holy Temple, the ruling High Priest hired murderers to assassinate him.

Antiochus was at that time engaged in a successful war against

Egypt. But messengers from Rome arrived and commanded him to stop the war, and he had to yield. Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, a rumor spread that a serious accident had befallen Antiochus. Thinking that he was dead, the people rebelled against Menelaus. The treacherous High Priest fled together with his friends.

## *The Revolt*

Here's the problem: Antiochus wasn't dead and he returned quite enraged by defeat. When he heard about the mini revolt against Menelaus he ordered his army to fall upon the Jews. Thousands of Jews were killed. Antiochus then enacted a series of harsh decrees against the Jews. Jewish worship was forbidden. The scrolls of the Law were confiscated and burned. Sabbath rest, circumcision and the dietary laws were prohibited under penalty of death.

Rabbi Eliezer, a man of 90, was ordered by the servants of Antiochus to eat pork so that others would do the same. When he refused they suggested to him that he pick up the meat to his lips to appear to be eating. But Rabbi Eliezer refused to do even that and he was put to death. This pattern became common. Antiochus's men went from town to town and from village to village to force the inhabitants to worship pagan gods. Only one refuge area remained and that was the hills of Judea with their caves.

## *Matisyahu*

When the henchmen of Antiochus arrived in the village of Modin, where the retired priest Matisyahu lived, they were met with resistance. The Syrian officers were neutralized and the pagan altar was destroyed.

Anticipating retaliation Matisyahu left the village of Modin and fled together with his sons and friends to the hills of Judea. All loyal and courageous Jews joined them. They formed legions and from time to time they left their hiding places to fall upon enemy detachments and outposts, and to destroy the pagan altars that were built by order of Antiochus. You guessed it, these guys were called the Maccabees.

## *The Maccabees*

This went on for a while and before his death, Matisyahu called his sons together and urged them to continue to fight in defense of G-d's Torah. He asked them to follow the counsel of their brother Shimon the Wise. In waging warfare, he said, their leader should be Judah the Strong. Judah was called "Maccabee," a word composed of the initial letters of the four Hebrew words *Mi Kamocha Ba'eilim Hashem*, "Who is like You, O G-d."

Antiochus sent his General Apolonius to fight the Maccabees, but the Syrians were defeated by the Maccabees. Antiochus sent out another expedition which also was defeated. He realized that only by sending a powerful army could he hope to defeat Judah and his brave fighting men.

An army consisting of more than 40,000 men swept the land

## **WHO'S WHO** *in the Chanukah Story*

Yochanan: High Priest Opposed Hellenism

Joshua or Jason: Hellenist High Priest  
(Brother of Yochanan)

Menelaus: Hellenist High Priest

Matisyahu: Old retired High Priest and  
father of Maccabees.

His Sons: Elazar, Shimon, Yochanan,  
Yonatan, and Yehuda

under the leadership of two commanders, Nicanor and Gorgias. When Judah and his brothers heard of that, they exclaimed: "Let us fight unto death in defense of our souls and our Temple!" The people assembled in Mitzpah, where Samuel, the prophet of old, had offered prayers to G-d. There was no possible way that a small group of Maccabee fighters could win this war, but miraculously, after a series of battles the Maccabees won.

## *The Liberation*

Now the Maccabees returned to Jerusalem to liberate it. They entered the Temple and cleared it of the idols placed there by the Syrian vandals. Judah and his followers built a new altar, which he dedicated on the twenty-fifth of the month of Kislev, in the year 3622.

Since the golden Menorah had been stolen by the Syrians, the Maccabees now made one of cheaper metal. When they wanted to light it, they found only a small cruse of pure olive oil bearing the seal of the High Priest Yochanan. It was sufficient to light only for one day. By a miracle of G-d, it continued to burn for eight days, till new oil was made available. In memory of this, our sages appointed these eight days for annual thanksgiving and for lighting candles. They called it Chanukah. Chanukah means dedication, as they re-dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem. It can also be read *Chanu-Kah* meaning they rested on the 25th of the month.

Now that you know the backstory to Chanukah, why not share it with a friend? That's what a Maccabee would do. 🔥

>>Read more at [www.Chabad.org](http://www.Chabad.org).



# CHANUKAH (12/18-12/26)

# HOW-TO

## Where do I place the Menorah?

Many have the custom to place the menorah in a doorway opposite the *mezuzah* (such is the custom of Chabad-Lubavitch) so that the two *mitzvot* of mezuzah and Chanukah surround the person. Others place it on a windowsill facing a public thoroughfare.

## How do I set up the Menorah?

It is preferable to use cotton wicks in olive oil, or paraffin candles, in amounts large enough to burn until half an hour after nightfall. If not, regular candles can be used as well. The candles of a menorah must be of equal height in a straight row. The *shamash*, the servant candle that kindles the other lights, should stand out from the rest (i.e. higher or lower).

The Chanukah lights must burn for at least half an hour each night. Before kindling the lights, make sure that there is enough oil (or if candles are used, that they are big enough) to last half an hour.

## Who lights the Menorah?

All members of the family should be present at the kindling of the Chanukah menorah. Children should be encouraged to light their own Menorahs. Students and singles who live in dormitories or their own apartments should kindle menorahs in their own rooms.

## How do I light the Menorah?

On the first night of Chanukah one light is kindled on the right side of the menorah, on the following night add a second light to the left of the first and kindle the new light first proceeding from left to right, and so on each night.



## What about Shabbat?

On Friday eve the Chanukah lights are kindled before the Shabbat lights (which are lit 18 minutes before sundown). Additional oil or larger candles should be provided for the Chanukah lights ensuring that they will last half an hour after nightfall. 🔥



## 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 God, 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 God, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time.

3. On the first night of Chanukah (or your first time this year) add the following blessing:

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

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

4. After kindling the lights, the *Hanerot Halalu* prayer is recited.

*Hanairot halalu anu madlikim al hateshuot v'al hanisim v'al haniflaot, sh'asita l'avoteinu, bayomim haheim b'zman haze, al yedei kohanecha hagdoshim. V'chol shmonat yemei chanukah hanairot halalu kodesh heim v'ain lanu reshut l'hishtamesh bahem elah lirotom bilvad kdei l'hodot ul'halel l'shimcha hagadol al nisecha v'al nifliotecha v'al yeshuotecha.*



# 2022 Impact Report



[www.chabadofvenice.com](http://www.chabadofvenice.com)



## Inside this issue

- You're Spreading the Light
- You Stretched Our Your Hand After the Storm
- You Gave Hope in the Hospice Unit
- You Brought a Family Out of the War Zone



# Holidays Shine Through the Hurricane

To put together the year-end edition of the Sholom Times is usually straightforward: there's holidays and events – apples, and honey. This year however, Hurricane Ian changed the tone of the season. Making landfall on September 28th, the storm shook our are to its core. Looking back, it certainly knocked us down, but with the power latent in the holidays, we were able to get back up.

In the days before Rosh Hashana, it became clear that something massive was coming. We all saw the map, the radar with red and white spots, spinning toward the heart of Venice. Like most schools, Chabad's Hebrew School of the Arts was canceled. Despite the doubled enrollment and the excitement of children in the previous weeks, we simply could not know what was going to happen.

In that air of uncertainty, the sun set, bringing in the first night of Rosh Hashana. That night, we held hands in prayer that the storm should change course, and asked that the Guardian of Israel should protect us. We had a tremendous Rosh Hashana evening dinner, in line with the sages' directive to celebrate and be joyous despite the day being one of judgment. By the second day of Rosh Hashana however, the verdict was sealed – Ian was coming. The next day, wind and flooding tore through our community. Power was lost, but hope was not.

Immediately after the storm, Chabad of Venice was transformed into a command center for relief. The team at Chabad, stocked each inch of space with supplies for those in need of goods, clothes, toiletries, etc. Rabbi Sholom, together with youth volunteers drove into North Port to deliver essentials to those trapped in their homes. The new couple, Rabbi Yosef and his wife Hadassa hit the phones to reach out on behalf of loved ones, and organize volunteers to make house visits and deliver hot meals. Despite the destruction, most everyone was okay – shaken to tears, but able to break a smile at the arrival of our volunteers. Through the coming days, people came in waves: some for food, others for support, some needed hotel rooms, others gas for their cars and generators. Thanks to hundres of generous donors, a relief fund was established to provide this assistance, and the fund continues to this day for those in need of resources to rebuild their lives.





Six days later, Yom Kippur began with Kol Nidrei, and from wall to wall Chabad was filled with emotion. There was hardly a dry eye by the Neilah prayer, where we shouted Shema Yisrael, in one voice, as a community.

From there, Sukkot arrived, bringing with it the joy of a Chag Sameach. After the two week roller coaster, we gathered together in the annual Klezmer in the Sukkah event with gratitude at having made it this far. Then by Simchas Torah, we held on tight to the Torah that taught us and teaches us how to overcome adversity and live as proud, joyous Jews.

Now we find ourselves at the precipice of Chanukah, the holiday of lights. With the passage of time, hope has begun to radiate in most everyone's eyes. We're eager to gather together once again, by the pure oil of the menorah, and with the light of a brighter tomorrow.

**L'Chaim!**







# You Were There for Sasha When The Walls Came Crashing Down

**Most anyone who has come through the doors of Chabad has gotten to know Sasha.** Those that haven't, have nevertheless seen her work. Whether it be setting up an event or maintaining the chabad facility, Sasha is the hands and legs of the day to day life at Chabad of Venice.

During the storm, Sasha was at home with her husband and 8 year old daughter. The rain began, the water level rose, and soon, the house was under water. At 3 PM, when the storm was at its worst, she had to evacuate her home and leave everything behind. When the rain subsided, they returned to find ABC reporters standing outside her street, and canoes transporting families and pets out of the wreckage

It's at this juncture that you became the lifeline for Sasha and for her neighbors. You gave her the emergency funds she needed, you brought dozens of hot meals to her family and neighbors, and you delivered hundreds of essential supplies in care packages through the raging waters that flooded the streets.

**"When you lose everything you have, you have the chance to see who, amongst all the people you know, can you really count on. My family, yes I call them family, at Chabad of Venice was on the phone with me when I could hardly speak; they were there for my friends and neighbors when policemen came to canoe them out of their homes, and they continue to be there for me and my family as we rebuild our lives. I don't know where I would be today without Chabad"**



Sasha's home after the four foot high flood broke through her walls

## You Gave Marty A Bar Mitzvah in the Hospital

**Marty was a patient at Venice Hospital's** hospice unit who, feeling at a loss, asked urgently to speak to a Rabbi. The hospital called Rabbi Sholom as he was driving home from a class, and he turned his car around towards the hospital. Twenty minutes later, Marty, with a shaggy, white beard and downcast eyes was holding the Rabbi's hand, struggling to speak.

"I've lost my faith," exhaled Marty, "I'm a bad Jew."

The Rabbi spoke gently to Marty, reassuring him of his inseparable connection to Hashem; how his loss of faith doesn't cause Hashem's to lose faith in him, and how for thousands of years, Hashem has held, and continues to hold, his neshama close like a father would hold his only son.

Though the Rabbi's words caused Marty to raise his teary eyes, he only replied one thing: "I never had a Bar Mitzvah, and now in this hospital, it's too late"



Without hesitating, Rabbi took out his grandfather's tefillin, which he always brings with him, and began rolling up Marty's sleeve. He told him "This is your bar mitzvah, and to Hashem, it doesn't matter whether you're in a synagogue or a hospital. He just wants to be with you."

As tears gathered on Marty's eyes, the two said Shema. They cried. They sang. As Rabbi bid goodbye, Marty thanked him and said these words: **"I feel as though I have my faith again."**

You gave Marty a friend at his final hour. You were there holding his hand. You gave him the light of hope when he needed it most.



# You Rescued Chaim from the War and Gave Him a Home

This On February 24th when Russia began its assault on Ukraine, **You were there for Chaim in his flight for safety.** Abandoning their home and possessions, Chaim, his wife and son, and thousands of other Ukrainian Jews needed immediate funds to buy exorbitantly priced essentials, gas, and transportation onto limited, west-moving caravans. All sought to save themselves: to find refuge outside the border. One contact led to another, before a direct request for aid reached Chabad of Venice.

A digital fundraiser began, you stepped forth, and the funds were raised to rescue and personally relocate dozens of families. Whereas some stayed in nearby Moldova or Romania, Chaim's family immigrated to America, and settled in our local community of North Port, where they became involved in



Chabad's Jewish programs. Today, Chaim's son is learning in a Jewish high school in Miami, living amongst boys who have only seen war on the television. You made a difference for Jews the world over, you cared for them when they had no one else, you welcomed a displaced family into the embrace of a Jewish community, and you gave a Jewish child the chance at a normal, peaceful life.



**"Once the bombs began to fall, we were forced to evacuate with only a few suitcases. We felt like the sky was crumbling on top of us. A few hours later, when we received a message that a Chabad in the US is helping our group make it to the border, we couldn't believe it. We thank G-d for the people of Chabad of Venice & North Port, and we're thankful to be a part of this tremendous community"**



**Mail to:**

**Chabad of Venice & North Port  
21560 Angela Lane  
Venice, FL 34293**

<sup>ב"ה</sup>  
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# THE POWERFUL OIL PARADOX

BY RABBI SHAIS TAUB

Rabbi Shais Taub is on a mission to educate and inspire audiences around the world. Taub's unique ability to explain big ideas with practical language has gone viral, even on TikTok. You can watch his classes on his site [SoulWords.org](http://SoulWords.org) as well as other popular platforms.

In the following article, Rabbi Taub shares his thoughts on Chanukah, Jewish identity, and how a small jar of oil answers many big questions about our purpose and ultimate happiness.

Chanukah celebrates the story of discovering the tiny jar of oil that miraculously burned for eight days. That's why we light a menorah and eat foods fried in oil to celebrate the miracle of the oil.

Oil represents the paradox of Jewish identity. So, that little jar of oil may contain more than just olive oil. Your bottle of oil may hold some answers to our Jewish existential questions.

It's hard to get oil to mix with other liquids, and it's almost impossible to remove oil once it gets into things. That's why I view oil as the poster child for simultaneously being in and out, above and within. Imagine the layers in a bottle of Italian salad dressing after sitting for a few minutes. But, on the other hand, the same oil penetrates deeply into everything it touches. Think of the stains on the bottom of a pizza box. That's the oil paradox.

As Jews, we seem to have oil's polar traits. Similarly, we remain a distinct people even after being "shaken up" for thousands of years. But on the other hand, like the cheesy oil that leaves its mark on the cardboard pizza box, we Jews always seem deeply involved and present in everything around us. Historically, we have risen to positions of prominence and power wherever we have lived. That's the Jewish paradox.

This mystery can help us answer the existential riddle of how we can live in luxury homes and still feel a little homesick. How we can have everything and yet still be searching for an elusive something? How we can be here impacting our surroundings yet feel like we are somehow not from here?



The answer is that we are both body and soul. Our body is from here, but our Divine soul is not. That's the "oil" miracle of the Jew. Identifying with our otherworldly Divine soul allows us to impact the world and influence others. This body-soul identity enables us to be at the center of things without ever blending into things. That's how you can be right here without being from here.

At our core, we are spiritual, otherworldly beings. And thus, we can never be content or feel like ourselves simply by pursuing physical comfort. Instead, our true satisfaction comes from bringing light to a dark world.

This paradox of body and soul may be why the same people who find joy in eating a chicken sandwich find infinitely more pleasure in feeding that chicken sandwich to the poor and hungry. Our basic needs may be satisfied with a sandwich, but our true self, our soul, finds joy in bringing spirituality into the physical realm through acts of goodness and kindness.

This little jar of oil that lasted eight days may be the essence of Jewish identity and the story of our people. The Torah teaches us that our primary purpose is to perfect this physical world, yet at the same time, it reminds us that even while we live in the material world, we are only visitors here. 🔥

**"Oil represents the paradox of Jewish identity. So, that little jar of oil may contain more than just olive oil. Your bottle of oil may hold some answers to our Jewish existential questions."**

# AVOIDING BURNOUT

BY CHAYA SHUCHAT

A STRESSED-OUT PEDIATRIC NURSE SHARES HER PERSONAL CHANUKAH THOUGHTS ON WHY SOME CANDLES DON'T BURN OUT.



Last winter, I was teetering on edge. As a mother and pediatric nurse, I felt drained to the last drop. So I tuned into a podcast for medical professionals on coping with burnout.

"People suffering from burnout feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet the constant demands of their job. If the stress is not alleviated, they may begin to lose the interest and motivation that led them to a career in a helping profession in the first place."

Yeah, yeah. I thought, somewhat impatient. I know what burnout is. She droned on: "Poor workplace conditions can contribute to burnout, such as when workers have little control or input over their schedules or responsibilities; when they do not have trusted co-workers they can turn to for

support; or when they have poor work-home life balance."

My mind wandered. It struck me that the Chanukah story itself is the quintessential lesson on preventing burnout. Wasn't that the central miracle that we celebrate? The small cruse of pure oil was only enough to burn for one day but lasted for eight. In other words, it burned and burned and did not burn out. What was its secret? And how do I tap into that reservoir of pure oil inside of me?

Oil is a fluid that does not mix with other liquids and cannot be diluted. That's why, in Chasidic teachings, oil represents the core of our identity that remains no matter where we go or what we experience. When we connect to our source, we can give and give, and our supply will continually be replenished.

Back to the podcast. "It is essential for people in a caregiving role to regularly restore their spirit through study, meditation, mentorship, and connection with colleagues. It's also important to periodically reflect on our responsibilities and prioritize them. Then, delegate those tasks to others and focus on the areas where our skills can be put to best use."

I reflected on the times I short-changed myself, my family, and my patients by thinking I could or should do it all. I thought it was a sign of weakness to admit that I couldn't be good at everything. Yet, finding our essence can be as simple as embracing our imperfections. Our incompleteness. We need to rely on others even as we allow them to depend on us.



*"It burned and burned and did not burn out. what was its secret? and how do i tap into that reservoir of pure oil inside of me?"*



There is another form of burnout known as "compassion fatigue." A sense of pervasive malaise sets in due to constant exposure to trauma and suffering. Working with people in pain, listening to their stories, and tending to their injuries, can be traumatizing.

I work in pediatric primary care, so I'm spared a lot of the gore and life-and-death trauma. I deal with the trauma of a different sort. The families fractured beyond repair, the parents lost to addiction, and the dazed, broken children who grow up in the aftermath. There is so little I can offer to alleviate their pain, to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. I can cope only with hefty doses of humility: Realizing that as limited human beings, there is only so much we can do. Ultimately only G-d can remove all pain and sorrow. As the Mishnah (Avot 2:16) says, it's not upon us to complete the work, nor are we free to desist from it.

I've recognized a tendency to withdraw from people in pain when their situation seems too complex, overwhelming, and hopeless. I've realized that this is a selfish

reaction, putting my need for emotional comfort above their needs. Reaching out with genuine empathy can help the person feel less alone. That can be essential to their healing, regardless of whatever else I can do for them.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe lamented on more than one occasion that he is the repository of people's sorrows and struggles, but very few follow up when the problem has been resolved. If we share our pain, shouldn't we share our joy? The highlight of my day is when a patient comes back to tell me her pain is gone; he graduated high school; she found a great new job. It's a gift to know that our efforts were meaningful and effective and that goodness prevailed over darkness.

Jewish life has always had this quality--living in the shadow of pain and sorrow, yet always looking forward with joy and hope. The Zohar states that we live with tears on one side of our faces and laughter on the other. We live not in denial of pain but in honest recognition and joyous determination to overcome it.

I sometimes distract myself to numb emotional pain, but taking emotional shortcuts is not the healthiest path. I think of the prophetess Miriam, the sister of Moses. Her name means "bitter" because she was born during the height of the Egyptian exile and deeply felt its bitterness. Yet, when the sea split, she led the women in singing and dancing with tambourines.

Only the coming of Moshiach will cure our sadness and suffering. As long as we're in exile, our lives are incomplete, and pain and suffering will exist. But, at the same time, we live with constant joy and anticipation of future Redemption. 🔥

**ABOUT:** Chaya Shuchat graduated with a master's degree in nursing from Columbia University and is a pediatric nurse practitioner in Pennsylvania. She is the author of *A Diamond a Day* and her upcoming book, titled *An End to Conflict*. For more information, visit [www.endtoconflict.org](http://www.endtoconflict.org).

Suffering from typical adolescent angst, a teenage boy once went to the Rebbe for advice. He asked the Rebbe: How come G-d didn't just create us as angels? If He had, we would be perfect and wouldn't make mistakes and create problems.

The Rebbe explained that G-d doesn't want us to be perfect; He wants us to be unique individuals who grow and learn from our experiences and mistakes. Then, the Rebbe asked the boy if he understood the difference between a photograph and a portrait.

"You take a picture when you want to capture a perfect replica of

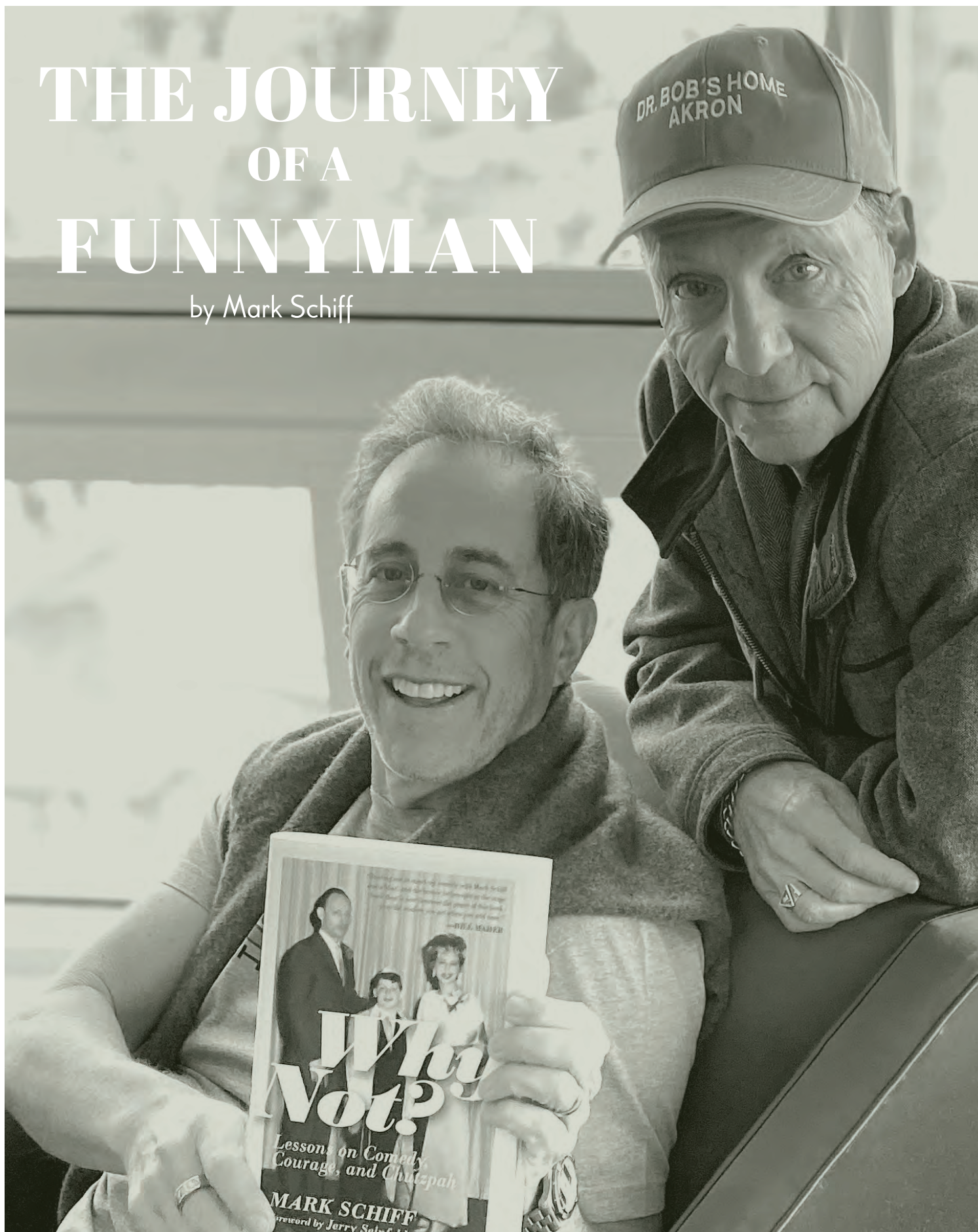
something you see. A portrait, on the other hand, is always filled with inaccuracies. It can never be a perfect reproduction of something like a photograph can. If anything, the better the portrait, the more creative license that went into it to bring out the meaning, color, and beauty that does not always exist in the surface look."

That's why portraits can sell for millions. People pay for the artwork because it is a reflection not only of the subject but of the artist. The Rebbe explained that angels are G-d's photographs. We, however, are G-d's portraits. 🔥

(Adapted by Sara Esther Crispe)

# THE JOURNEY OF A FUNNYMAN

by Mark Schiff





**Jerry Seinfeld says that Mark Schiff is one of the funniest, brightest, and best stage comics he has ever seen. Mark's stand-up comedy landed him on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno and Late Night with David Letterman and won him critical acclaim for his HBO and Showtime specials. However, even as he was writing and guest-starring on TV shows, like NBC's Mad About You, the funnyman was struggling with a sense of belonging.**

**In his new book titled Why Not? Lessons on Comedy, Courage, and Chutzpah, Mark shares his journey from growing up without a community to discovering LA's comedy scene and, ultimately, getting the last laugh by finding LA's Jewish community.**

When I was growing up, I had no community. My family didn't belong to a synagogue. My mother would say, "All they want is money." And I rarely, if ever, visited other family members. My mother would say, "Whatever you ask them for, it's always no," so we didn't visit.

I was a Boy Scout for a short time, which I enjoyed until I got pink-bellied and kicked out for stealing a flashlight I didn't steal. I didn't have many friends because they thought I was nuts.

And since I was an only child, evenings were pretty much Mom, Dad, and me. They went to sleep early, and I wasn't allowed to call anyone after nine because, after nine, you only use the phone if someone died. All I had was my fourteen-inch black-and-white TV and a cocker spaniel who mostly liked to hide under the bed.

My first real taste of community was when I became a comedian. I would see the same people every night at the clubs, and we shared a common bond in comedy. Night after night at the comedy club bar just starting out were Jerry Seinfeld, Paul Reiser, Gilbert Gottfried, George Wallace, Rita Rudner, Sandra Bernhard, singer Pat Benatar, and many others.

Many of my comedian friends had felt the same loneliness I'd felt growing up. It was an amazing time being with a group of people who, daily, were trying to get better at something that few other people had any interest in doing.

By 1984 I was living in Los Angeles. Then one day, I saw

a poster advertising a Torah class and went. Not because I wanted to learn Torah, but because I was lonesome and thought maybe there'd be girls there. When the student is ready, the teacher will appear—that's what happened. I met Rabbi Nachum Braverman and his wife, Emuna. I was a live wire, and they helped ground me. They introduced me to what I'd always lacked and always craved but hadn't realized: a community.

They invited me for Shabbat dinners and lunches and told me to come back anytime. I'm a literalist and took them up on it. I would show up, mostly on Saturdays, uninvited for Shabbat lunch. They never blinked. (If I'd tried that with my aunts and uncles, they'd probably have yelled at me or had me arrested or committed.) I also kept taking classes from the rabbi and his wife and met new people who seemed genuinely nice.

Many of these new friends soon started getting married and having kids, so I started getting invited to weddings and brises (circumcisions), in that order. I didn't recognize it then, but I was building my community. It was a great feeling.

In 1990 I got married myself. My wife, Nancy, did have a community growing up, so she quickly understood when I suggested we live in a strong Jewish community. We started having kids and—bingo—we became fully entrenched in the community. Over the last twenty-five years, I have been to more weddings, bar mitzvahs, brises, and funerals than you could imagine. It has been nothing short of amazing. The joy and happiness this has brought me and my family is amazing.

My wife and I are members of the Young Israel of Century City. Recently, services were held at a local Day School due to renovations, and I walked up three flights of stairs to the basketball court where the service was being held. Immediately, I recognized about one hundred people and felt a sense of warmth and security. I realized it wasn't the old building we had been in that gave me that feeling but rather the people who filled the place. I grabbed a tallit and a sid-dur and sat down to pray. I closed my eyes, took a breath, and said, "Thank you, G-d, for this community."

When I was in high school and on the verge of flunking out (which I deserved), a teacher said, "At some point in your life, you will have to decide what is important to you." She was 100 percent right. Three of those things were getting married, having kids, and building a community. I am grateful for those decisions every day.

If you need a community, come to my neighborhood in Los Angeles, and I'll introduce you around. If you need a kid, I'll even lend you one of mine for a while. 🔥

An exclusive excerpt from *Why Not?: Lessons on Comedy, Courage, and Chutzpah*, Copyright 2022 by Mark Schiff. All rights reserved. Published in the United States by Apollo Publishers.

**"I saw a poster advertising a Torah class and went. Not because I wanted to learn Torah, but because I was lonesome and thought maybe there'd be girls there. When the student is ready, the teacher will appear—that's what happened."**



## ARTWORK BY YEHUDA LANG

**ABOUT THE ARTWORK:** Yehuda Lang is a Toronto-based artist who shares Jewish ideas through colorful images. The V'he Sheamda prayer in the Passover Haggadah inspired Yehuda to create the soldier in Tefillin. You can view and purchase his art online at [yehudalang.com](http://yehudalang.com)



# THE PROTECTOR

In 1967, just days before the outbreak of the Six-Day War, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, began a campaign to encourage Jewish men and boys over thirteen to put on tefillin.

The verse: "All the nations of the land will see that the name of G-d is called upon you, and they shall fear you" was the basis for the Rebbe's idea.

Years earlier, the sages had explained that this verse refers to the tefillin worn on the head. In other words, tefillin protect us from our enemies, but now, as Israel's survival was on the line, it was time to translate this verse into action.

That summer, Chabad launched the tefillin campaign in Israel, and soon, the mitzvah was being performed in homes, offices, and street corners worldwide. So, what exactly are these tefillin, and what makes them essential to our spiritual and physical safety?

## LET'S UNWRAP THE TEFILLIN!

Most biblical commandments are instructions on what we should or shouldn't do. However, there are a few, in fact, only three mitzvot, that are simply signs or identifiers of who we are. In Genesis, G-d tells Abraham that circumcision would be their sign and covenant. Later, after the Jews left Egypt, G-d tells them to keep the Shabbat and Festivals holy as "a sign between Me and you." Then, G-d tells the Jews to wear tefillin as a sign upon their arms. It's a sign of who we are.

(We only need two signs or witnesses in Jewish law, so we don't wear tefillin on Shabbat and holidays, the extra indication would demean the sign of the day.)


## A POWERFUL SIGN

As Jews, knowing who we are is the starting point and foundation for everything we do. The tefillin serve as a symbol and reminder of who we are, a powerful sign that can protect us and provide us clarity.

## E PLURIBUS UNUM (OUT OF MANY, ONE).

Our daily life, from our busy morning routines to our dreamy nights, can be divided into three completely different categories. Firstly, our mind and everything we think about, followed by our heart and passions, and lastly, our actions. The spiritual alignment of these three powers is critical to our success. The biblical commandment of tefillin unites what we know, feel, and do together for one G-dly purpose.

## YOUR TRUE POWER

As a soldier fighting against darkness, you may face hostile forces that try to bring you down. But ultimately, you will be victorious when you demonstrate that your strength comes from your connection to G-d. The Rebbe's 1967 tefillin campaign sought to activate this truth and guard our people. And still today, the tefillin's powerful protection helps us nationally and personally as it pronounces to the world and ourselves that "the name of G-d is called upon you." 

## WINGS OF PROTECTION

The Talmud tells a tale about how Elisha, "the man of wings," got his unique name:

Once in Jerusalem, the wicked ruler proclaimed a decree against the Jews that whoever donned tefillin would be killed. Elisha, defied the order. It happened that Elisha was seen by the authorities wearing the tefillin, so he started running. But the soldier chased him and eventually caught him. By then, Elisha had already removed the small black box and leather straps and hid them in his hands.

"What is that in your hand?" the soldier demanded, "The wings of a dove, sir," Elisha replied.

That was a life-and-death moment for Elisha. A crowd of Jews gathered as the soldier clarified that Elisha would get the death penalty if he held tefillin. When Elisha finally opened his hands, miraculously, he was holding the wings of a dove.

The shocked soldier told Elisha, "I must have made a mistake; you're free to go."

And that's how he got his name, Elisha, the man of the wings.

The Talmud goes on to analyze the story. "Why did Elisha choose a dove's wings rather than any other bird?" The Talmud answers that Elisha chose a dove based on the words of King David in Psalm 68:14. "As the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her pinions with brilliant gold."

In other words, Elisha understood that our tefillin guard us, similar to how the wings and feathers protect a dove.

*(Talmud Brachot 14b)*

# AND G-D SAID: *Listen to Your Wife*

By Shira Gold

**My mother's favorite verse is "G-d said to Abraham, listen to your wife." (Genesis 21:12)**

Sarah and Abraham were discussing Ishmael. Abraham, ever the optimist, seems oblivious to Ishmael's wayward ways. Sarah, however, sees Ishmael's behavior as toxic and not conducive to raising Abraham's heir, Isaac. She wants Ishmael sent away with his mother, Hagar. At this pivotal moment, G-d tells Abraham to listen to his wife.

The woman's superiority and better judgment are recurring themes in the stories of our patriarchs and matriarchs throughout history. It has been the Jewish women who have steered our people down the right path in critical times. Like at the birth of our nation in the Exodus from Egypt. It was in the merit of the righteous women, our sages declared, that we were redeemed from Egypt.

Women share a special bond with Chanukah. Primarily because of Yehudit, the Jewish woman who bravely seduced the enemy general and fed him cheese and wine. Then, she killed him with his sword once he was drunk and fast asleep. The ensuing chaos helped turn the tide that would end with the Maccabees winning the war and restoring Jewish values and way of life.

Our tradition primes us to notice the feminine impact on Chanukah. As we enter the Chanukah season, we read in the weekly Torah portion about our matriarch Rebecca getting the better of her husband, Isaac.

We read how Isaac and Rebecca would have twins. One was a wild child named Esau, and the other was the righteous Jacob. When it was time for Isaac to pass the blessings of Abraham to his children, he exhibited the same lack of vision as his father, Abraham, and chose to bestow his blessings upon Esau. Rebecca intervened,

ethereal vivifying energy that is the soul is far superior to the physical, tangible body. Yet, there is great wisdom in the real-world experience of the feminine "body."

This advantage looms large on the Jewish mission. Our otherworldly souls can sometimes be oblivious to the realities of this material world. Earthly bodies value



ensuring that the blessings passed onto Jacob.

Later, when it's time for Jacob to marry and settle down, Isaac seems indifferent. Finally, Rebecca insists that Jacob marry only a member of their extended family. Isaac listens, and Jacob marries the women who would birth the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

What precisely is the feminine mystique that lights the way forward? The chasidic masters describe masculine and feminine energies as two divine modalities that make up all of reality. By way of example, the life-giving soul is male, while the body that receives and houses it is female. It would seem that the

concrete action, prioritizing character and behavior over detached transcendence. Our Divine mission to transform the world must come through physical activity within the material human experience. So G-d tells the soul to listen to his wife.

This powerful message enabled the Jewish people to survive the destruction of the holy temple and thrive through the darkest times. It reminds us that our faith and spiritual light must be practical and infuse our daily life with meaning.

Indeed, great men have done great things, but the feminine mystique accomplishes the Jewish mission of making this world an abode for the Divine. So, listen to your wife. 🔥

(Adapted from a 1989 talk by the Lubavitcher Rebbe.)



# Finding Myself

by Sara Esther Crispe



I spend my third year of college in Israel trying to figure out more about myself, my people and my Judaism.

And yet, one of the nights of Chanukah, which landed on December 24, I spent at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem for the experience. I spent Passover in Egypt for the experience. I spent Shavuot in the Sinai Desert for the experience. I kept having experiences, but still hadn't been able to find my place. My connection. My soul.

I knew what I wasn't. I just didn't know what I was. And then, finally, I chose to stop trying to experience and sat down to learn. Learning in a way where the learning could be something

***"I knew what I wasn't. I just didn't know what I was. And then, finally, I chose to stop trying to experience and sat down to learn. Learning in a way where the learning could be something I felt related to my life, to my questions, to my search."***

I felt related to my life, to my questions, to my search.

Fortunately, after finding the right teacher for me, whose teachings resonated on the deepest level, I finally felt that I was connecting. Not only to my Judaism, but to myself. Finding ourselves, knowing who we are, what we believe and stand for, is the key to our success. Now, as we celebrate Chanukah, every night we light another flame and are reminded that the Greeks did not try to kill our bodies, but our souls. They didn't care that we were Jews and they didn't care that we studied Torah;

they cared that we connected the two. They did everything they could to prevent our ability to live proudly as Jews. To identify ourselves as Jews and find meaning in our Jewishness. That was their problem then. And that must be our solution now.

As is often taught, the root of the word Chanukah is related to chinuch, education. We must learn, we must teach, we must educate ourselves and we must educate the rest of the world. But we need to start at home. Our Judaism needs to be alive, relevant and meaningful. When we know who we are, we can teach our children who they are. And when as a collective people we are secure in what it means to be a Jew, then we truly are indestructible. And just as our enemies were unable to defeat us in the past, so too they will fail in their present attempts as well. But only when we know who we are. 🔥



Sara Esther Crispe is the Chief Content Creator of Opyrus.com, a self-betterment platform transforming lives through the power of writing and the co-Director of Interinclusion.org, celebrating the convergence between academia and timeless Jewish wisdom.

She is also a world-renowned motivational speaker presenting on interpersonal relationships and the Kabbalistic approach to self-development. She is a dating, marriage, parenting and life coach who works with adults and teens. And she is a speaker for the My Gift of Mikvah organization.

Sara Esther was the creator and editor of TheJewishWoman.org of Chabad.org and has worked as a consultant for Jewish content on the Oprah Winfrey Network, HARPO Productions, Refinery 29 and CNN.

She is currently working on three books: one on marriage, one on the power of Jewish women and one on parenting, titled: *I Used to be the Perfect Mother...Then I Had Kids*. She lives with her family in Danby, Vermont where they run Jewish educational retreats and programming.



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# Classic Potato Latkes

Nothing like the way our bubbies made latkes in the old country! These latkes are not loaded with potato starch, flour, baking powder or other non-essential ingredients. My grandfather shared this recipe with me when I told him that I thought his were the crunchiest, lightest and most perfect potato latkes I've ever eaten.

---

## TIME & SERVINGS

• Prep time: 12 min • Ready time: 12 min • Yield: 8 servings

## INGREDIENTS

4 medium Idaho potatoes  
6 tablespoons canola oil or olive oil  
3 eggs, beaten  
2 tablespoons matzoh meal  
2 teaspoons kosher salt  
1/2 teaspoon coarse black pepper  
Applesauce or sour cream (optional)

## DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare a large bowl filled with cold water.
2. Peel potatoes, and as you finish each, place in cold water to prevent browning.
3. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
4. Cut potatoes lengthwise into halves or quarters so they fit into food processor feed tube. Process potatoes using the blade that creates thin, shoestring-like strips and transfer to a large bowl.
5. Add eggs, matzoh meal, salt and pepper and mix well.
6. Drop 6 to 8 spoonfuls of mixture into hot oil. Using the back of a spoon, pat down each latke to flatten it. Put as many as you can in the skillet without crowding. Putting them too close together will make them soggy.
7. Fry 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until golden and crisp around the edges; repeat procedure until finished with all the batter.
8. Blot excess oil with paper towels.
9. Serve warm with applesauce or sour cream, if desired. 🔥

**Tip:** Corn meal is a great substitute for matzoh meal, and will also make your latkes nice and crispy.





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**Event is Free**

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