

MOONLIGHT

The UK's Quarterly Rosh Hodesh e-Newsletter

EDITORIAL

Shavuot is one of the most spiritually charged of all the festivals in the Jewish calendar and yet for many the most memorable thing will be the cheesecake!

When the Israelites came together at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah most authorities agree that G-d decreed That the Torah was given first to the Women, Bet Ya'acov, and then to the men, Children of Israel.

But why? Because despite the difficulties they had faced coming out of Egypt the women never gave up their hope and faith in G-d.

In Egypt they refused to allow Pharaoh to win when he ordered the Killing of the First Born by maintaining their marriages. At the Red Sea they came prepared with instruments to give praise to G-d. And when the men gave up hope of Moshe's return from Sinai, it was the women who refused to take part in the sin of the Golden Calf

As Jewish Women we carry an enormous responsibility not only to keep a Jewish home and educate the generations to come, but to never let the light of our faith diminish however difficult the times we face; for each of us carry within the heritage of our Matriarchs and the brave women at Mount Sinai

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“A SON IS BORN TO NAOMI” BY SAMANTHA WITKIN

Naomi is a crucial character in the book of Ruth that often gets side-lined by the end of the narrative. Yet, we are reminded of her significance in the plot when the women of the town pronounce “*a son is born to Naomi*” (Ruth 4:17) upon Ruth giving birth to Obed in the final scene.

In several ways Naomi is in fact the dominant protagonist of the Book. She is both the religious mentor of Ruth and the instigator behind the plan to redeem Ruth through her marriage to Boaz and thus lay the path to the Davidic dynasty. Furthermore, on a closer reading of the text, Naomi undergoes a transformation in the narrative in respect of her personal perception of and relationship with G-d. We will observe that this transformation is promoted by Ruth’s steadfast confidence in Naomi’s abilities and potential. I believe that the key to this transformation lies in the meaning of Naomi’s name.

Naomi is the second character that we are introduced to in the Megilla once we have met her husband Elimelech. “Naomi”, as the Midrash notes, means “comely and sweet” or pleasant. Just as her name suggests, Naomi is ‘pleasing’ to her husband in that she obediently follows him, without any objection, to Moab when the land of Israel is suffering from famine. Even in a patriarchal we might expect Naomi to behave differently. After all, the Naomi we encounter in chapters 2 and 3 reveals herself as a pro-active initiator of a masterful plan. Furthermore, according to the Midrash, Naomi is no average woman. She is the wife of Elimelech, who was a wealthy leader of the Israelites, possibly even a judge.

The Midrash tells us that in this desperate period of famine in the land and despondency among the Israelites, Elimelech chooses to abandon his people and land to live more comfortably with his family in Moab. Moab – a land whose people have a history of causing the Israelites trouble and seducing them to idol worshipping. However, we do not hear Naomi raise an objection to Elimelech. Both her and her sons appear to passively follow Elimelech to Moab, where disaster strikes. Naomi soon mourns the death of her husband and later her two sons. She is left with only her two Moabite daughters in law, Ruth and Orpah.

It is at this point that G-d enters the scene. We are informed that Naomi heard “how G-d has remembered His people in giving them bread” (Ruth 1:6). The text seems to be hinting that Naomi is quite detached from the Israelites. She could have heard that G-d had remembered HER people! Although acknowledging G-d working behind the scenes, simultaneously Naomi is quick to blame G-d for her loss and suffering in Moab.

Returning with Ruth to Bethlehem, Naomi’s description of herself to the women is very telling. She urges them not to call her ‘*Naomi*’ but instead ‘*Marah*’ (bitterness) (Ruth 1:20). Naomi picks up on the fact that her name is not fitting. There is nothing sweet about her life. As Eli Wiesel comments, “she almost says what have I done to deserve this?” Naomi continues: ‘*I went out full and the Lord brought me back empty*’ (Ruth 1:21). The contrast of emptiness and fullness is a theme that is repeated throughout the narrative. Suffice to say, that Naomi is introspective, angry with G-d and sees herself as alone and deprived. It is only Ruth who appreciates the potential in Naomi at this point, already having chosen Naomi as her spiritual leader.

The text is unclear as to whether Naomi was aware or had instigated that Ruth would find herself gleaning in Boaz’s field. (By way of background, it was the law that if a woman’s husband died leaving her childless, the next of kin was required to marry the widow or go through a procedure to renounce his duty). In any event, when Ruth returns from the field to Naomi, we observe a change in Naomi. She recognizes G-d’s hand in providing them with a redeemer in the form of Boaz, a relative of Elimelech (“*Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead*” (Ruth 2:20)). When Ruth returns from the field and Naomi asks her about where she gleaned, the text does not use Naomi’s name but instead refers to her as Ruth’s “*mother-in-law*” (Ruth 2:19). It is only once Ruth responds and informs Naomi about encountering Boaz that Naomi is referred to by her name. Not only has Naomi’s hope been restored by the presence of Boaz but the text hints that Naomi has a new sense of self and understanding that she must grasp this opportunity of redemption that G-d has bestowed upon them.

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Thus Naomi orchestrates a risky plan to prompt Boaz into assuming his role as Ruth's redeemer. She advises Ruth to approach Boaz while he is sleeping and guides her about what to say and do. When Ruth returns after carrying out the plan, it is now she who strengthens Naomi's clarity and resolve. On relating to Naomi details about her encounter with Boaz, Ruth states that Boaz told her: '*not to go empty to your mother-in-law*' (Ruth 3:17). However, we do not see anywhere in the preceding dialogue between Ruth and Boaz that Boaz made any mention of this. It appears that Ruth has picked up on Naomi's new sense of fulfillment through the presence of Boaz and is signifying to Naomi that her plan has been successful. She is subtly implying that Naomi must maintain her new found strength of character that Ruth had perceived at the outset.

Therefore the statement at the finale that "a son is born to Naomi" is not only an allusion to Naomi's new sense of fulfillment, but to a renewed relationship with G-d in which Naomi understands that to be G-d's partner in this world requires pro-active commitment. As Rute Yair Nussbaum (Jerusalem) commented in a shiur that I was fortunate to hear at Drisha (New York) last week: only a journey into ourselves can allow us to then come out of ourselves and truly encounter G-d.

Naomi's name is now more fitting than ever. She is 'pleasing' to G-d because she has actively participated in completing His work. It is note-worthy that the verse in Psalm 90:17: '*May the favour ('noam') of our Lord, G-d be upon us and let the work of our hands prosper*' – illustrates that G-d will respond to us with pleasure and favour when we are actively working. Moreover, in Proverbs 3:17, when discussing the quality of wisdom, it states '*her (wisdom) ways are pleasant ('noam') ways*', further affirming that it is wisdom and wise actions that G-d regards as pleasant.

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DUMB THINGS THAT PEOPLE SAY BY: DR. JUDITH GUEDALIA

Words are very powerful indeed. So much so that mute — unable to speak (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary) is in the vernacular, "Dumb." In Judaism we may hear terms such as *lashon hara* and *nivul peh* used to describe certain words in a context. A few years ago, with the expert help of Nefesh Israel's 'CEO' Elana Walhaus, I began the Nefesh Israel ListServ. It has since expanded to be both Nefesh International and Nefesh Israel, and as such reaches around the world. Many topics are raised on this Internet conversation forum between frum (observant) professionals in the field of mental health. Recently, a discussion related to the topics of *lashon hara* and *nivul peh*. Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Becker noted that "The 'official' definition of *nivul peh* is any usage which could have been said in a more refined manner (e.g. referring to that which could readily be called *lo tavor* as *tameh*.) Anything less than the most refined way of speaking, can be defined as *davar meguneh*, and not directly as *nivul peh*. (You'll excuse the pun, but four-letter-words go without saying.) The test is that *nivul* is much more far-reaching than the use of popularly acknowledged foul language. As such, the degree of violation would seem to be relative to the language skills of the speaker."

He went on to explain that, "*Lashon hara* refers to words which damage another's reputation when the besmirching utterance is true. *Motzi shem ra* is the term applied when the utterance is untrue. *Rechilus* is the term that applies to speech that causes friction between two other Jews (creating ill-will between them.) These concepts are specific ways of bringing home the idea that speech needs to be controlled. But how many of us are aware that we may be hurting another with our "compliments" or just day-to-day language? Chaim is sitting here in my office in a wheelchair. We are talking about stupid things people say — especially to him. He is kinder than I am; he says they don't mean to hurt him by saying the things they do, "but I still get hurt."

It's hard for Chaim to specifically recall instances, but he has a number of songs he knows that he wouldn't sing to people in specific situations. *Koom Ve Nithalech Baaretz* (Rise and let's walk around the country) is one such song, and isn't for people who can't walk.

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Chaim believes that no one would intentionally hurt another person, especially one who they see as handicapped in some way, but often when we speak, we don't always pay attention to the meaning of what we are saying. A person in a wheelchair is supersensitive to the expression: "Rise and Shine."

Ruth is blind. She tells me that people tend to shout at her when they notice her white walking stick. "They figure I'm blind, and that means I'm 'handicapped,' they feel that they have to make some type of adjustment; then they raise their voices to tell me that 'the traffic light is green.' Once, someone called out to me and said, 'Ruth do you know you're outside?'; 'No,' I felt like saying, 'I thought I was in the bathtub!' Dumber yet, she notes, are those who say: 'See-you-later' and then uncomfortably say, 'Oops, I'm so sorry.' Don't they think I know, I'm blind!"

There are sensitivities and sensibilities that are not always obvious. A mother who has dark hair, but whose children are blond (as is her husband) once painfully related that, in the supermarket someone approached her and said, "You are really good with those children, how much do you charge?" A red-haired child told me that she was often asked: "Are you adopted?," because none of her other siblings (or either parent) was "gingey."

A compliment to a mother of a couple of children such as, "Each is prettier than the last," can cut through the heart of the "eldest" of the family.

A child, whose father was killed in a *pigu* once told me that many people have asked him, "How do you feel?" "What was I supposed to say to that!" he weepingly asked.

When I made a (weak) attempt at humor and mentioned to Chaim that in the *Mishna*, discussing the High Priest's preparations for Yom Kippur, his wife is referred to as *beito*, his house. Wasn't his wife insulted when her being overweight was so blatantly noted? "No," said Chaim, "Rav Yehuda *HaNasi* didn't mean to insult her, but rather to make a point. Without a woman, the *Kohen Hagadol's* house was just walls. Even though he worked in the most glorious of places, his home would be just walls without his wife." I am quiet, and sit in awe of Chaim, again reminded how the kindness and benevolence of those we help puts us all to shame. Printed with permission of Dr Guedalia and the Jewish Press

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VISTING A FAMILY OR FRIEND IN HOSPITAL BY REBBETZEN EHRENTREU

When I first arrived in London I visited a hospice which had only one Jewish woman as a patient. She always had visitors from the community coming to see her and bringing her food. The non-Jewish nurse took me on one side and said to me "You Jews know how to use lives for something that will out last you." She did not know that in essence she was quoting from the Pirkei Avot. We learn the mitzvah of visiting the sick from Hashem when he visited Avraham in Elon Mamre.

Rabbi Hutner says that *Bikur* which many of us translate simply as visit, in actual fact comes from the Hebrew *Bikoret* and should be translated as investigation. Therefore we have a responsibility to investigate the circumstances of the patient and extend help to them. Not in the sense of a doctor but as a concerned person ensuring that each our presence can help meet their needs in the most sensitive way.

The mitzvah has no prescribed measures or limitations; so that the rich visit the poor, the young to visit the old, the wise to visit those who do not know. The image is encapsulated in Psalm 41 "Happy is he who considers the dull," we understand dull in this context to mean poor or sick.

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It is of particular importance to visit the poor, those living in extreme poverty or limited means, because that intervention may save lives, where ones help and support can revive the spirit of the invalid.

Gemilut Hesidim can be done with ones money or ones person. With ones person this is done through deeds, words or thoughts. Bikur Holim is done with all three. Deeds = visiting and helping, Words = encouragement and cheer, Thoughts = davening and prayer. Just as the surgeon puts out all his instruments before preparing for an operation so should we use our mind and our thoughts before we start praying.

A non-Jewish patient told me that the best visitor was one who left her feeling confident and with self esteem and conveyed their enjoyment at being in her company.

Medication and pain can cause someone to behave in an abnormal manner and can be offhand and offend the visitor. Remember they may be under stress may just be releasing the frustration they have pent up because of the situation they find themselves in.

I once visited a gentleman who was very unpleasant to me when I visited him but I persevered and always greeted him. One day he stopped me and apologised explaining that it was the illness that had made him respond to me like that. He wanted to express his thanks by giving me £100. I told him I could not accept but he asked me to give it to Tzeddaka to make amends.

Practical visiting

Do's

- Always identify yourself. The person you are visiting may not be able to recall your name.
- Sit at eye level. Making eye contact is very important and facilitates communication and conveys a feeling of honesty and caring.
- Be a sensitive listener – Reach out to the patient:
 - R – Reflect – consider the condition of the patient
 - E – Encourage – give chizuk
 - A – Accept – don't argue back, don't say 'where is your faith...'
 - C – Choose carefully the person to take over visiting if you are unable to cope
 - H – Hold, hug and show your appreciation
- You can not understand all about their medical condition, compassion goes beyond sympathy and becomes empathy.
- If you ask someone to daven for a patient remember to tell them when that person recovers.
- If someone asks you to pray with them by their bed, you can use any language as the Shechina is at their bedside. When away from them use Hebrew. Tephillah is very effective and can smash through barriers in aiding recovery.
- Always be guided by the patient as to how to respond – we don't always know what is best.
- Always respect a patient's privacy and dignity.
- Cheer them up – I sometimes recite a poem to them
- Consider how the patient will receive news so be careful in discussing or repeating something as it can be blown out of proportion.
- If a patient tells you they want to die – I tell them there is a sign up saying no room in heaven at present
- When visiting an old person try to stimulate them, never underestimate their intelligence or understanding and do not talk over their heads to others.

My mother had a saying: 'Old People are like old furniture. As long as it is in its right place it is fine but try and move it and it crumbles.'

Don'ts

- Don't take advantage and over stay your welcome or the hospital visiting times
- Don't visit when someone is in pain, embarrassed, has no energy or is drowsy – always ask at the Ward Desk first

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- Don't challenge a patient asking '...are you sure.'
- Don't probe into their illness
- Don't challenge the diagnosis they have been given
- Don't undermine a patient's doctor and don't give advice.
- Don't say, 'your family is taken care of and can manage without you.' The patient will feel un-needed and unwanted. Rather say, 'your family is taken care of but misses you and is looking forward to having you back.'
- Don't lie to a patient
- Don't tell them they are looking good if they are not
- Don't regale a patient with stories of others who have had the same complaint, every patient is unique
- Don't stop someone from crying by telling them to be strong. They may need to cry.

When someone challenges me as to how can there be a G-d if he is leaving them or a loved one to die I am reminded of a story of a young Jewish boy with a terminal illness in a London Hospital. He sadly asked his father why people could not live for ever. His father replied that Hashem knew that if people lived forever they would not appreciate their lives. Hashem gave us limited lives so that we could appreciate life and enjoy every minute granted to them.

- **Don't ever give up on someone no matter what their condition**

If you would like to visit members within your community who are unwell contact your Synagogue Care Co-ordinator. If you feel that you have the skills to become a lay visitor to a hospital and would like to be trained to do so then please contact the Visitation Committee of United Synagogue for information. Tel: 020 8385 1855

Rebbetzen Ehrentreu is the wife of Dayan Eherentreu, Rosh Bet Din and known for her sensitive approach to pastoral issues.

LEARNING FROM THE STUDENTS BY DALIA SHERIZEN

I boarded the plane, with my husband, Yoni, and son of 5 months, to England in August of 2003 not knowing what to expect. We were beginning our role in the newly created post of 'Educators' for the students at Oxford University. We are now finishing our third and final year at Oxford and reflecting back on the past few years brings a smile to my face. Yes, there have been the frustrating moments, but overall it has been a rich experience that I will carry and gain from for many years to come.

We decided to work with a student population because we felt that it was a time of life when people are searching. It is a time to form your identity and figure out what path in life you will take. Students, therefore, tend to be more open to changing who they are and growing in new ways, which becomes harder as people settle into jobs, family and life. There are many students who are actively seeking religion and Judaism. On the other hand, there are those that are finally able to shed their past and form an identity without Judaism. Campus life is really the front-lines where decisions about the future are made and it affects the rest of their Jewish life.

One of my fondest memories is meeting with an engaged couple walking them through an Orthodox ceremony. This sticks out in my mind because we first met him at one of my husbands' explanatory Shabbat morning services. He had been raised Catholic, but had a Jewish mother. He slowly integrated into the community and became part of the graduate scene where he met his future fiancée. She had never experienced anything Jewish before Oxford despite having a Jewish maternal grandmother. The two of them experienced, among other things, their first Pesach Seder in our home. They eventually got engaged and decided, despite upbringing, family and convenience, to have a proper Orthodox wedding! As we met with them, Yoni and I tried very hard to conceal our excitement that in a time rampant with intermarriage these two people found each other and are beginning their lives as members of the Jewish community.

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Working with students means that we deal with the unpredictable. Their lives function in a constant 'last-minute', work around the clock, sleep until the afternoon format. As a result we have never been able to create a solid schedule of the day as there is always a knock at the door, urgent phone call, or frantic email. Last erev Pesach I thought that my life could not get any more hectic. I was busy cleaning my house, alone, with my two year old and newly-born infant, while Yoni was kashering the shul kitchen, preparing to lead sedarim for 100 people and being a masgiach for a cook who 'thought he knew halacha'. Then there was a knock at the door... a student came crying needing immediate attention and talking to. Two hours later we returned to the frantic pre-Pesach pace, only a little quicker.

Working in this job means that I am fortunate to spend many hours of my week immersed in Torah study. Whether it is preparing for my weekly lunch and learn or learning one-on-one with a student I am engaging in something that I love and have a passion for. I find that no matter who I study with or what the text it I am always growing as a person. Each individual challenges me and causes me to think in new ways. Each person inspires me with their passions, talents and activist spirit that many times diminishes as a person enters 'real life.' I feel fortunate that I was able to benefit from and incorporate into myself this zeal and spunk and inspire growth within myself.

Remembering back to March 2003 when Yoni and I sat in our apartment in Jerusalem trying to decide which 'shlichut' position we should take. Many days and lists later we settled on Oxford. The Shabbat we spent on our interview left us inspired. We were so impressed with the students, their confidence, talents, intellect, and drive for Jewish knowledge. We came *because* of the students. Looking back, that is why we have stayed. Whenever we are asked what we like most about this job, it is not the learning or counselling or giving classes, but the students. Building relationships and friendships with these inspiring group of people has kept our own zeal and drive for this job going (despite its crazy hours and no separation between work and personal life). As we are about to leave I am only tinged with sadness at the thought of leaving Oxford because relationships are portable and so I am taking them with me.

Dalia Sherizen is a graduate of the London School of Jewish Studies. She and her husband are leaving Oxford this summer to take up a new post in London.

THE CONSTANT FIGHT FOR ISRAEL'S GOOD NAME BY JOY WOLFE JP

Around four years ago, when the British media was just getting into its stride promoting constant criticism of Israel, I was asked to take on the task of co-ordinating an action group to counter this extraordinary level of bias. Little did I know then that the project was to take over my life and involve me in spending 5 or 6 hours almost every day at my computer.

Sadly, things have got worse rather than better, and the need for us to be vigilant and to demand fair play for Israel is greater than ever.

The double standards of the UN, the EU, the BBC, some church leaders, MPs and MEPs, and most disturbingly, many Jews and Israelis and non governmental organisations in the UK and Israel, make it necessary for us to constantly challenge them and demand that criticism of Israel is fair, accurate, and above all, put in context.

Most recently the call for divestment from Israel by leading personalities in the Anglican Church, the academic boycott, and even a call to the international governing body of football to ban Israel, is clear examples of these double standards.

I sometimes wonder what it is that makes some British politicians; MPs and MEPs spend so much time and energy in venting their blind hatred against Israel. Don't their constituents want them to spend more time on pressing UK issues? Listening to people like Gerald Kaufman, Phyllis Starkey, MP for Milton Keynes, Baroness Tonge who told us she might consider becoming a suicide bomber and some others who sit in the House of Lords, I can't help wondering what has motivated them and given them such a biased and damning attitude to Israel.

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Our tiny Jewish state has done more than any other country in the world to share its expertise, and develop technological, scientific and medical miracles that it shares with the international community in its short life, yet still it is the butt of UN and EU criticism and condemnation. There are more anti Israel resolutions passed in the UN than against practically all the other member states put together.

UK NGO's such as Christian Aid, War on Want and others wage a constant war of words against Israel. We are often criticized for accusing our opponents of anti-Semitism, and asked not to confuse anti Zionism with anti-Semitism. But how else can you explain the blindness of so many organisations and individuals to the atrocities that go on around the world when they have no difficulty in criticizing Israel every step of the way? Why is it that the Jewish state should have such a spotlight on it and that for some people it can do no right?

We all know not everything is perfect in Israel, and it is easy to find examples of behaviour we are not proud of. But they are the exception rather than the rule. We regret that some so-called peace activists have been killed, but we ask the question why they were putting their lives at risk by trying to interfere with the IDF who were engaged in the task of protecting Israel. And we ask the question as to why there hasn't been the same protest and baying for revenge when journalists and others have been killed and wounded in other parts of the world?

Let me give you a few examples of the bias Israel faces. Take an average report on something that happens in the Middle East. If it is something that has happened to Israel, report usually says "according to an Israeli spokesman", whereas if it has happened to the Palestinians it is reported as fact. A minor, but nevertheless important difference. Interviewers on TV and radio often take a very aggressive stance when interviewing pro Israeli spokespeople and a much more gentle one towards their pro Palestinian guests. Outrageously untrue statements about Israel and the history of the conflict often go unchallenged, and reports so often are not set in context. So you will get the report of an Israeli attack on a Palestinian target that totally omits to tell us that it is retaliation against a previous rocket or homicide attack against Israel. We will be told about how the "wall" has blighted the lives of Palestinians, without being told that less than 5% is actually wall, and that it has been responsible for thwarting many homicide bombing attempts. We are not told of the corruption that has led to the fact that many Palestinians do have miserable lives. We are asked to feel compassion for Palestinian refugees, without any acknowledgement of the fact that there have been countless opportunities, accompanied by millions of dollars, for the whole refugee problem to have been resolved. And little or no mention is ever made of the nearly 1 million Jewish refugees who have been driven out of Arab lands. Where is their compensation – where is their "Right of Return"?

I recently had the privilege of accompanying Muslim Arab journalist Khaled Abu Toameh to some meetings when he spoke in London. To hear him expose the corruption of the Arab leadership and to talk about the double standards that apply when international bodies deal with Israel is a remarkable experience. Would that more people listened to him and heeded his warnings. While this Muslim Arab speaks up to tell us the truth through his eyes, the Gerald Kaufmans, Ilan Pappes, Stephen Roses and Jeff Halpers of this world are putting their own vicious spin, calling for sanctions, war crimes trials and boycotts.

Many people ask me what they can do to make a difference. They say they do not believe that writing a letter or making a phone call to complain can make a difference. But they are wrong... By not letting unfair coverage of Israel go unanswered we can begin to get our message across. While your personal letter may not get into print or your voice be heard on a phone-in, if enough people are giving the same message of complaint, eventually someone will listen. We have to be willing to challenge the misinformation and lies, we have to be ambassadors for the truth, whether it is just in speaking to your friends and neighbours, colleagues, your hairdresser – indeed anyone you can engage in conversation with. Be proactive – raise the issue, tell the truth, challenge the lies.

I have a large email network through which I send out alerts for action when the papers print a particularly damning article or the BBC is particularly outrageous in its reporting. I provide the tools to answer and the

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details of where to address your complaint. I'd be more than happy to add any of you to that list and you can contact me on j.wolfe@dial.pipex.com.

I also ask you to spread the good news about Israel. A particularly good source for this is israel21c.com where you will find a steady flow of news about medical breakthroughs, technological development, and artistic and cultural success. The mini camera that you swallow for internal investigation, the world-leading stem cell research, treatment of arthritis, multiple sclerosis – the list goes on and on. And when you hear anyone calling for a boycott of Israel, remind them they should throw away their mobile phone and give up their computer as it is largely thanks to Israeli research and technology that they have them!

We have recently celebrated Israel's 58th birthday. Fifty eight years of remarkable achievement, of the ingathering of oppressed Jews from around the world. We have the ironic allegation of "apartheid" against Israel, the greatest melting pot in the world where all are welcome, whatever their colour, culture or background. Jew Christian and Muslim able to live alongside each other in harmony when allowed to do so. And all this against a backdrop of 56 years of hostility from its neighbours. What a contrast to the oppressive environment in a Judenrein Arab world, where women's rights, freedom of speech as so much else lag so far behind.

We need to stand tall and be proud of our Jewish state, to be ashamed of those among us who spread misinformation and hatred, not least those in Neturei Karta who stand with banners with the Palestinian extremists calling for the destruction and boycott of the Jewish State. Please join those of us who constantly fly the flag for Israel and who refuse to let our detractors take the moral high ground.

My belief is that the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians want peace; they want to be able to get on with their lives, earn a living and bring up their families
Let's hope that the dream of peace becomes a reality in our time

Joy Wolfe is the Manchester correspondent of the Jewish Chronicle. She is life president of Manchester Zionist Central Council and of Manchester Wizo, and a provincial vice president of the Zionist Federation. She is a magistrate on the Manchester bench and chairman of the Probation Liaison committee. She is a founder of the Stockport Multiple Sclerosis Society and a governor of Langdon College, a residential college in Manchester for Jewish students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and a governor of North Cheshire Jewish Primary School.

Yedid Nefesh

Calling all *frum* singles! Are you fed up with the opportunities on offer? Fancy **a new and different way of meeting new people** ...and – who knows – maybe that elusive bashert? Here's just what you have been waiting for ...Small, intimate Friday night meals hosted by local families across the North-West London community, offering a truly **warm and relaxed environment** where you can get to know like-minded people of your own age and outlook.

If this sounds like your bowl of chicken soup, please contact Rebbetzin Judy Ginsbury (Hendon United Synagogue) on 8202 5514 or e-mail your contact details to yedidnefesh@hotmail.com
Shabbat networking for the young professional Council of United Synagogue. A joint venture with SAM (Strike A Match) promoted by the Rabbinical Council of United Synagogue.

THE GIFT – you may have seen this story on the internet – it has been forwarded to us by one of our readers. We would be delighted to credit the author if anyone knows who they are.

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their

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wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window.

The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside.

The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance.

As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene.

One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by.

Although the other man couldn't hear the band - he could see it. In his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days and weeks passed.

One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside.

He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed.

It faced a blank wall. The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window

The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall.

She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."

There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations.

Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared, is doubled.

If you want to feel rich, just count all the things you have that money can't buy.

"Today is a gift, that's why it is called the present."

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COOKING WITH DENISE BY DENISE PHILLIPS

Classic Cheese Blintzes – Cheese Pancakes

They may be called crepes in France or blinis in Russian, but the real Jewish version is a blintze. These are crepe like thin pancakes filled with cream cheese or cottage cheese and sometimes fruit.

For many people, cheese cake and blintzes are the 'piece de la resistance' on Shavuot and a great way to celebrate this joyous festival. But there is also a religious link to Shavuot as it is traditional to eat dairy foods at this time. Here are some of the reasons that I have researched.

- When the Jews accepted the Torah, they became obligated in the laws of kashrus. But until they became familiar with the laws regarding animal slaughter, they ate dairy.
- Receiving the Torah was a form of rebirth for the Children of Israel. Drinking milk is a link to this renewal.
- Shavuot coincided with the time when the lambs and calves born in the spring would be suckling. Therefore an abundance of dairy products were available.
- Legend has it that the Jewish people were at Sinai for so long that all their fresh milk soured and turned into cheese.
- In the Torah the Jewish people are promised a "Land flowing with milk and honey." Dairy meals recall this lyrical description of Israel.
- The Hebrew word for milk, *chalav*, has the numerical value of 40, symbolizing the number of days Moses was on Mt. Sinai

Recipes have been passed down through traditions and cheese blintzes are no exception. This recipe is from my latest book 'The Jewish Mamas Kitchen' published by MQ publications.

Preparation Time: 20 minutes
Makes: 6 blintzes

Cooking Time 20 minutes
Will freeze

Ingredients

Batter Mixture

300ml milk
110g Self raising flour
1 egg
Pinch of salt
Sunflower or vegetable oil – for frying

1 egg
Zest of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon caster sugar

Cheese Filling

225g cream cheese

Garnish: Vanilla sugar, zest of lemon

Method

1. Make the batter by mixing the flour, egg, salt and milk in a food mixer or blender until smooth.
2. Heat a little oil in a 20 cm/8 inch pancake pan. When the oil is hot pour in three quarters of a soup ladle of batter. Swirl around so the mixture covers the pan in a thin layer.
3. When the batter has set and the edges of the pancake begin to lift, gently loosen the edges and flip the pancake over onto the other side for a few seconds. Using a palette knife remove and gently place on some non-stick baking paper. Continue with the remaining batter to make about 8 pancakes.
4. Mix all the ingredients for the filling together. Place about one tablespoon of the cheese mixture in to the centre of each pancake. Fold in the top and bottom of the pancake over the filling, then fold over one side and roll up carefully to enclose the filling completely.

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5. To finish the blintzes, heat the pan again with a little oil. Put the pancakes in the pan and fry until slightly golden brown. Turn over for a second so that it is hot on both sides.

To serve the stylish way: Serve hot. Dust with a little vanilla sugar and some lemon zest.

Rugelach

This Shavuot why not make some rugelach! **Rugelach** (or Rugulach) is a Jewish pastry of Ashkenazi origin and is made with a cream cheese dough and different fillings that can include raisins, walnuts, cinnamon, chocolate, or apricot preserves which are rolled up like a croissant. These little sweet crescent shaped pastries are very popular in America but are gradually becoming a favourite in Britain. My recipe is made with walnuts and raisins. For perfect results do not spread too much jam on to the base as it only oozes out and burns the pastry. Make them with the children; little hands will enjoy the preparation.

Ingredients Makes: 48

For the Pastry

225g / 1 cup unsalted butter

225g / 1 cup cream cheese

400g / 4 cups plain flour

¼ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla essence

1 egg yolk – to glaze pastry

For the Filling

50g / 1 /4 cup light brown sugar

2 tablespoons grated lemon zest

100g / ½ cup walnuts or pecan nuts – finely chopped

100g / ½ cup raisins

1 tablespoons ground cinnamon

6 tablespoons apricot jam

Garnish: 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon

2 tablespoons sugar

Method

1. To make the pastry, combine all the ingredients together in a food processor. Add extra flour if the mixture seems too wet.
2. Remove from the food processor, cover with cling film and refrigerate for 3 hours.
3. For the filling, place the sugar, zest, nuts, raisins and cinnamon into the magimix. Pulse gently until it forms a nut pate.
4. Divide the pastry into 4. Roll out each ball on a lightly floured work surface into a circle about 18 cm / 7 inch diameter and ½ cm / ¼ inch thick Using a knife, cut the circle into 12 triangle wedges.
5. Spread a thin layer of apricot jam on the pastry. Place about a teaspoon of filling mixture on each triangle.
6. Roll up each triangle starting with the wider curved end. Curve the rolls slightly and place them on a lined baking tray.
7. Pre-heat the oven to 350F/ 180 C/ Gas mark 5.
8. Glaze with egg yolk.
9. Bake for 20 – 25 minutes until golden brown.
10. Mix cinnamon and sugar together and sprinkle over the warm rugelach.