Spotlight
Women making a difference
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Cover

8 Women with hard drive
  • By TAMAR BEERI

12 The Arab-Israeli & Palestinian women making an impact
  • By KHALED ABU TOAMEH

14 Female face to the London embassy
  • By LAHAV HARKOV

20 Superpower of compassion: Organ transplants
  • By HAGAY HACOHEN

28 The burning bus: Edge of the precipice
  • By VIVIAN BERCOWIC

32 Mekorot mayim: Bringing water to Jerusalem
  • By ZEV STUB

Sections

6 Letters
34 Trending
36 Food
38 Observations
41 Arab Press
42 Books
45 Readers’ Photos
46 Judaism
48 Games
50 Arrivals

COVER PHOTO: Baysberg Team
Photos (from top): Amoun Sleem; Dvora Szerer

PHOTO OF THE WEEK | MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

SAY WHAT?
BY LIAT COLLINS

Mahlif/a kidomet (m/f)
Meaning: Celebrating a round birthday/anniversary
Literally: Changing the dialing code/telephone area code
Example: Tomorrow is my 60th birthday. Mahli/a kidomet!

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HAPPY HIPPIE

Thank you for the “groovy quiz” to check if I’m a bona-fide hippie (February 26).

Firstly, it was a nice diversion in the Magazine published for the Shabbat of “Purim Meshu- lash” to have a nostalgic article that had nothing to do with the past year and the coronavirus.

Secondly, as someone who experienced the hippie era from my teenage years until I completed university 51 years ago, I was pleased to see that despite my now slightly “senior” memory I scored very well on the groovy quiz.

Last but not least, I have my own hippie tale to tell. My children, who are all born and raised in Israel and have had the advantage of learning English as a mother-tongue in addition to their native Hebrew – thanks to their parents – grew up hearing The Beatles’ songs on records at home in addition to hearing these songs on the radio. My eldest child’s first name is a Hebrew word meaning “happy,” which was chosen because his parents were so very happy to have a child born in Israel – after a pause of 2,000 years in our family’s presence in Israel. After my kids learned The Beatles’ songs, they liked to claim we actually gave our child this name because we were former hippies and that when I was pregnant, I’d massage my abdomen and sing “And when I touch you, I feel ‘Happy’ inside!”

LEAH YERUSHALMI
Jerusalem

TIME AFTER TIME

David Brin’s excellent cover story “It’s My (After) Life” (February 26) reminded me of a television documentary (to the best of my recollection by the BBC and introduced by Magnus Magnusson) that I saw in England in the 1970s, in which a hypnotist took patients back in time before their birth to previous incarnations. Of the many subjects, my interest was perked by a woman who was taken back to the year 1190 in the town of York where she was a Jewess. She described how she, together with other Jews, were pursued by a mob trying to kill them. She described how they hid in the crypt of the York Minster cathedral and later hid in a wooden tower in York Castle called Clifford’s Tower.

There the non-Jews promised them safe passage if they surrendered but, when some came out, the mob immediately murdered them. Those who stayed in the tower took their own lives and the tower was burnt down when the mob set light to it. This, of course, was the infamous York Massacre a hundred years prior to the total expulsion of all Jews from England in 1290.

The hypnotized subject had never visited York and later in the program it was explained how all the facts fitted including the names of streets except that the cathedral did not have a crypt. However, about two years later the program was broadcast again with an addendum explaining that, since the first broadcast, the York Minster had been renovated, some floor slabs removed, and the crypt found.

Incidentally, the old Jewish cemetery was found in the early 1980s when a car park being built for a new supermarket revealed probable Jewish graves. Rabbis from London confirmed the graves were Jewish. As a result, the prohibition on visiting York (cherem) was removed and there was a ceremony of reinternment of the bones, with Jewish and non-Jewish dignitaries present, on July 9, 1984. (An unfortunate date as it coincided with the Hebrew date 9 Tammuz of the breach of the walls of Jerusalem leading to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the exile of the Jews living there 2,407 years earlier.) On the very same day as the ceremony, the cathedral was struck by lightning igniting a fire that burnt down the part rumored to have been built from taxes levied on the Jews.

The coincidence of the fire in the cathedral, the ceremony of reinternment of the bones, and the removal of the cherem on the anniversary of the breach of the walls of Jerusalem on 9 Tammuz is very interesting. Was Hashem trying to tell us something?

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Ahead of International Women’s Day on March 8, we meet the powerful individuals taking a byte of the hi-tech sector

• TAMAR BEERI

There are many career paths that carry with them the age-old stigma of being a “man’s job.” The corporate role, the man in a suit, is a trademark of the business world, and the bespectacled young fellow hunched over a bulky black laptop is equally tied to the image of the hi-tech industry. That, however, has not been the image of programmers and innovators in quite a while — that world is changing.

Today, women are some of the leaders of the technological sector and are more clearly distributed throughout each field within it.

ALEGRA KILSTEIN, chief information officer (CIO) at Amdocs, began her path into the hi-tech industry long before she reached the frontlines of the famed software company and multinational corporation. As a child, she always tended to go for learning natural and formal sciences over the humanities and other such subjects. She had studied in the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology for her bachelor’s degree and Tel Aviv University for her master’s.

From there, she began to flourish in the fields of engineering and computing, which led her to the role she holds today.

“I am responsible for Amdocs Information Technologies, including information systems, infrastructure and cybersecurity domains,” Kilstein told the Magazine. “I have a global organization with approximately 1,000 employees, mostly developers and engineers, spread out across the globe, and that includes men and women alike, with plenty of women in managerial roles.”

Indeed, approximately 30% of Amdocs employees are women — not the 50% mark of a true reflection of societal distribution, but a nevertheless impressive amount in contrast to other companies in such a market. In Amdocs Israel, the number is even nearer to the middle ground, with 44% of employees in the country being women. Kilstein explained that she never felt any sort of gender-based barrier standing in her way.

“In my personal path, I hardly faced any kind of gender block, especially not in Amdocs,” she affirmed. “I believe that one must believe in oneself and that as a woman, you can accomplish whatever you want. Our only limitations are the ones we set up in our own minds.”

RIKI ASHOURI-COHEN, a network engineer at the telecommunications company Ericsson, also did not feel that gender bias got in her way. She entered the world of hi-tech at a very young age, studying in a high
school (which has since stopped operation) run by telecommunications company Bezeq.

“I was one among four girls altogether in my home-room, and one among 12 altogether in our grade,” she recounted. “We were always the minority, but that didn’t make me feel different. No one in my career has looked at me and another person differently just because I’m a woman and he’s a man.”

Throughout her childhood, she had been completely and utterly enamored with the creative maneuvers of project management necessary to make it in the hi-tech world.

“I truly loved the subject,” she shared.

Part of what made the technological world a comfortable home in which to settle her career was the natural feeling of being an “equal among equals.”

“There are people that have stigmas about women and there are those that don’t see it that way,” she said. “It depends on your surroundings. Today, there are many more women in the sector. The surroundings have changed.”

SHIFRA SPECTOR, enterprise applications manager at NESS Outsourcing Group, said that there too she does not feel victim to such sexist prejudices.

A haredi mother of five, Spector has been with NESS since 1999 and today, manages a team of eight. But she began her work with the company as a mere employee at the support center.

“I developed professionally very much there, but eventually it was enough for me,” she said. “I was moved to internal information systems by NESS. I began as a supervisor and moved into management.”

She gushed about her love for the field of hi-tech, and the creativity needed to carry out the projects necessary.

“I always loved technology. When I was at the end of high school, I always said I’d be either a computer technician or a social worker. But I love the solution-finding, the fact that an issue comes to my table and I have to engineer it. It’s so fun. It was born within me.”

She admitted that entering the field of hi-tech was not easy as an ultra-Orthodox woman.

“When I studied years ago, the options for studies for haredi people were very limited. It was mostly teaching and caretaking. I couldn’t find myself within it; I had a really boring year of learning. When my mom saw me appearing so pitiful, she signed me up for a programming course and I learned 18 hours a week, which was a lot. My love began with the boredom of teaching, ironically enough.”

Despite her struggle to break into the world of hi-tech, Spector never felt that she was victim to gender bias.

“Sometimes I felt that people look at me with disbelief, but it always quickly changes. I had a customer who during our first meeting expressed a very intense lack of faith in me. Soon after, when he understood how I work, he told me that if I can’t reach him, I should do what I think is right. That’s the level of faith he ended up putting in me.”

The only place she truly sees the gender gap is in the struggle between work life and home life.

“It’s always home, work, kids,” she sighed.

However, Spector found that the field of technological advancement was actually a comfortable haven for mothers. Being a mom of five, she needed to be able to care for her children and be ready in case anything happened, and with the kind of work she does at NESS, that is always an option.

“I have so much flexibility to work from home, even before the pandemic, so I’m always available by email.
and stuff. My kids were never impacted by my work, even when my workload wasn’t light. I work hard and intensely, but we work with such flexibility, and that is so special.”

YET NOT all sexism in the hi-tech field has been eradicated. At the Technion, one of the most prestigious schools for computer engineering and computer sciences and where Kleinman studied, less than one-third of those currently working toward an undergraduate degree in those fields are women.

At Applied Materials – a manufacturing company for chips for electronics – Lidiy Varon, who manages a team of system engineers, says she is the only woman in the entire group of program engineers with which she collaborates. Furthermore, back when she studied for her bachelor’s in computer engineering at Hebrew University and master’s in electrical engineering at Tel Aviv University, she was one of very few women in her class.

She said the role she holds at the company feels like it was meant for her.

“I really enjoy this job and feel like I am utilizing all of my capabilities, both from my technical background and my background in physics,” she explained, referencing her previous work as a laser physicist. “Now everything is perfectly combined.”

Her love for the world of hi-tech was indeed born at home.

“My father is a building engineer and my mother studied physics and chemistry and later moved onto computers. I was always inclined toward sciences and math. Even in high school, my electives were physics and robotics.”

She admitted, however, that she was nevertheless always a bit of an odd one out, being a female in the field of technology.

“There are very few women in engineering and physics. It is a place in which I always felt comfortable because that’s how I was raised. Even in high school, there were very few women in physics and robotics. It didn’t bother me.”

But Varon did not just let the disparities remain under the radar. She joined a forum of women known as the Women’s Professional Development Network (WPDN), which aims at creating a platform for women in the same professional field to connect, speak and open up about struggles they face in the workplace.

“We talk about anything in which we can support one another,” she explained. “We deliberate how to close these gender gaps, the gaps that are the lack of women who can speak to one another, confess things to. If you know a woman who is a manager, you can consult with her, but these are so hard to find. These conversations would not happen on their own.”

Having a platform to share with other women allows them to question their experiences based on that of others and bring up issues in the differences.

“If we see a particular issue that we wish to raise, we take it from the forum straight to human resources or to management. The group is women but there are men too, who find it important to advance women and bring about gender equality. This works in a way that it is grown from the ground up; the workers create the group.”

INDEED, ONE of the main issues in trying to bring about gender equality in the field is making the career path appealing to younger female audiences. Today, learning computer sciences for men seems cool; the thought of a Matrix-style computer hack is appealing. But among young women, the field seems masculine or inherently nerdy.

In Amdocs, too, where the aforementioned CIO Alegra Kilstein works, there is nevertheless the need to put an emphasis on the move to advance women in the field.

“We set forth goals as a company relating to gender equality,” Kilstein noted. “We have plenty of programs with an even number of men and women or in which women play a significant role.”

Professionals at Amdocs value diversity, equality and inclusion, making it a part of the daily work life, she stressed.

“I really believe that equality is not a women’s issue, it’s a business issue,” she said. “Gender equality is essential for economies and communities to thrive. Collectively, each one of Amdocs’ employees can help us on our journey to close the gender gap.”

Kilstein could nevertheless not imagine a position in which gender bias was a relevant issue, since the world of hi-tech does not have jobs that one could realistically claim a man can do while a woman cannot.

CARMIT KLEINMAN, manager of the innovation center of Motorola Solutions in Israel, said she believes part of the industry’s gender gap issue is that women tend to be taken as people who can perform the little tasks, but are not truly up to task for the professional hi-tech projects. They are viewed as kolboinikiot, she said, referring to people who perform small, menial tasks.

“I can say that in my 20 years of a career, I’ve worked my share of technological jobs,” Kleinman said. “I’ve always felt that women, because of their tendency to do administrative work, they tend to go for more menial jobs. If there is a volunteer action needed, women tend to go for it much more than men. They take jobs that are not necessarily professional. They have, on the one hand, a much broader contribution. On the other hand, they can easily fall to the position of kolboinikit.”

According to her, women in the field fall into the role of glue.

“They bring everything together, but they are not the center of the action. The men could get the best slice of meat of work, so to speak. They don’t have time to organize events. They do the work. Women who do not root themselves in technological work do not get the same treatment.”

Kleinman, a mother of three, deals with technologies relating to public security using artificial intelligence.

“My career of over 20 years of software development began when I was a computer engineering student,” she recounted. “I come from a family of four girls, and we didn’t have a computer for each of us. I didn’t come from a home with a computer with games. I was always interested in natural and formal sciences.”

She explained the funny experience of deliberating
whether to pursue computer engineering in university.

“I worked briefly in a disk store,” she explained. “They also sold learning programs for computers. It was a hub of learning computer programming languages and the like. We didn’t have Google, so we needed books. I was shocked that people would call from everywhere and order these books. I thought that I must do it.”

Kleinman remembers the fateful day when she spoke to the university and changed her list of preferences in her application so that the first on the list, rather than psychology, was computer engineering.

“I was so excited by my first lesson in college,” she remembered. “The logic, the algorithm, I had so much fun.”

Despite her experience, Kleinman recognized that others did not feel the same; young women did not feel such an appeal. So she launched the MotoTech Project.

“It was meant to encourage middle-school girls to look at and learn about the hi-tech world,” she said. “They are taken to see Motorola and various jobs in hi-tech, which can be finance or human resources but also the technological side. It allows them to see the effect one can have on the technological world: on apps, innovations, etc. When they think about computer sciences, they don’t want to sit in front of the computer all day. But it’s so much more than that.”

She explained that young girls are brought to Motorola facilities, where they meet women volunteers from the company who show them around and introduce them to the world of hi-tech. The program has been extremely successful and received the global CEO award of Motorola, an internal award system for initiatives within the company.

“Not many young women see how much creativity there is in this field,” she asserted. “A lot of drive. Not many understand this because it isn’t sexy.”

Applied Materials, too, has an entire program dedicated to inspiring young women to look into hi-tech as a realistic potential career goal for the future. In “Crack the Glass Ceiling,” young women are brought to Applied Materials facilities in order to introduce them to the field without fear of any negative stigma attached to it. They meet with women engineers and physicists and gain true insight into such professions, without the fear of a judgmental gaze.

The young women additionally meet various “role models” who share the great challenges of working in a male-dominated profession. They discuss the tension between motherhood and professional career goals, and the vicissitudes of being a woman in hi-tech.

Hi-tech may be filled with men, but bit by bit, women are evening up the playing field and showing that the sector would crash without them – and that the world of technology and innovation is all the better with women at the forefront.

‘Not many young women see how much creativity there is in this field, a lot of drive’
Talented and passionate

The Arab-Israeli and Palestinian women making an impact

• KHALED ABU TOAMEH

J ulia Zaher is an Arab-Israeli businesswoman, philanthropist and former schoolteacher. She is owner and CEO of Al-Arz Tahini, a tahini manufacturing company in Nazareth. An advocate for diversity and women in the workplace, her company employs a large number of Arab women, in addition to Jewish, Muslim and Christian residents.

She continues to work toward empowering women in all fields and motivating them to join the labor force, Zaher notes from the outset.

“I have long been encouraging Arab women to join the labor force,” she said. “I want to see more women from the Arab sector at work so that they can improve their social and economic conditions. I have also been very supportive of people with disabilities in order to incorporate them into Arab society.”

Zaher wishes she could say that Arab society is better off today.

“Unfortunately, our society has not changed and we still need a lot of support in all fields.”

In her view, Arab women are not different than the rest of the women in the world.

“Arab women are very talented and capable. They can be successful in all fields, but they still need the support of society to achieve their goals.”

According to Zaher, the coronavirus outbreak has had both a positive and negative impact on her and on Arab women as a whole.

“In the beginning there was fear and uncertainty, especially because this was a global, and not local, pandemic,” she noted.

“We have taken precautionary measures and banned non-workers from entering our factory. For me, it wasn’t easy to be away from friends and family.”

On a positive note, Zaher said, the coronavirus taught her how to take advantage of time.

“We have a lot of time to handle our matters,” she explained.

“We learned how to manage things through Zoom, which I believe will stay with us for a long time. My only hope is to see our Arab society in a better situation.”

NIVINE SANDOUKA, a resident of east Jerusalem, describes herself as a professional aspiring to achieve social justice, peace and gender equity.

An expert in the field of program development, management, peace-building and gender issues, she currently works with the German Association for Development Cooperation – AGEH. She also runs a grassroots-based initiative called Judi – From Me to You that aims to connect women and volunteers in several civil society organizations.

To pursue her passion, she is the executive director of a newly established NGO called Our Rights – Hoqoqona in Jerusalem, focusing on the civic and political rights of Palestinians in the city, especially women.

“I work with a German organization in the field of peace-building,” Sandouka said. “Generally, I also pursue my passion to create positive change and thus I voluntarily run an organization to achieve Palestinians’ civic rights.”

Sandouka believes the situation of Palestinian women is “worse than ever.”

“Unfortunately, our society lacks morals and values,” she lamented. “It has become a society run by division and judgment. It is a society that is passive in the sense it is unable to embark on a process of real change.”

Sandouka hates the idea of being labeled a victim.

“Unfortunately, Palestinian women face many challenges: political Islam, patriarchy and occupation. They have to fight to overcome these three obstacles. For me, life is a big challenge.”

The coronavirus has affected life for her and most women.

“Today I work mostly from home. In addition, I have to cope with my new role as my son’s teacher and school, while doing my work. This year, however, I decided to take control of things; no more Zoom calls in the evening and more meditation. I have also decided to spend more time with my son. It is still challenging, but we have to make the best of it.”

“I hope life goes back to normal as soon as possible. I want to go back to seeing my close friends and family and travel.”

NADIA HARHASH, a Palestinian journalist and author from east Jerusalem, is known for her criticism of Palestinian Authority leaders and corruption. As a result, the mother of four has re-
received numerous threats. Last year, an unidentified arsonist set her car on fire in front of her home in the Beit Hanina neighborhood.

“Palestinian women continue to face many challenges,” Harhash said. “Our entire life is one big challenge. However, I am here to live up to my expectations. I cannot do that without fulfilling my own aspirations. We are born to be free, to make life better. In my case, it is not taken for granted.

“Life is a daily struggle for women like me. After all, I am a mother, and it is not just about me; it is about this generation that is growing and deserves a better life, to live better.”

Harhash is determined to pursue her role as a writer with the hope of improving living conditions for women and all Palestinians.

“My role is to write, and I’m doing it with all my might,” she affirmed. “It is not an option. I cannot sit aside and blame destiny or politicians for my miserable life. I cannot wait for a savior that will take us to safety and freedom. I see injustice, suppression and corruption, and I resist them and face them through my writing. If I don’t write about these issues, I will be complicit in them.

“It is often risky, but somehow the more fearless you become, the more powerful you are seen.”

Harhash is not afraid of threats and intimidation. “Fear is our worst enemy and I try not to allow it to find its way into me,” she added. “I am a mother who wants a good future for her children. This does not happen by providing proper shelter, education and a sophisticated lifestyle. Rather, this happens in a society that respects its people through equality and justice. And as a human being, woman, mother and Palestinian, I don’t accept less than this.”

As far as Harhash is concerned, the status of Palestinian women is no less grave than the status of Palestinian men.

“You cannot have a healthy society without having strong, capable women,” she said. “Strength needs freedom. Freedom, unfortunately, is not a term that is simply practiced in Palestinian society. We live in a vicious cycle of oppression from all directions. Consequently, the struggle of women has become one of survival, and not liberation.

“Ideologies covered with fundamentalist and religious slogans have infiltrated our society in the last decade. When we look around us, we see a whole different set of rules that are imposed on us. It’s as if we’ve been hijacked by ideological norms that became the law; tribal norms have become part of the law. One can only imagine where women are situated in such a set of rules, where patriarchy is the only given rule.”

The past year, Harhash said, will be remembered as the year when everyone wondered about the pandemic’s impact on their lives.

“The outbreak of the coronavirus has forced us to come face-to-face with our weakness and helplessness as arrogant human beings. On the other hand, the pandemic also gave us the opportunity to reconnect with nature and realize how simple life is. For me, this was an amazing experience. Staying at home helped me develop my own capabilities. I experienced creativity as I never dared before. I was able to reconnect with my own breath and my hands.

“My soul was out there celebrating a breath of life with nature. I could hear birds sing as the noise in the streets stopped.”

SAMEERA RADA EMRAN, a social and political activist from the village of Ein Qinya on the Golan Heights, is a bank clerk who in 2018 announced her candidacy for mayor. She is known in her community as a staunch advocate for women’s rights.

“I want to see women play a major and effective role in our society. I want the voice of women to be heard loudly. That’s why I decided back then to run for mayor. I was the first woman to run for office in our community.”

Her decision to run in the municipal elections was met by many challenges.

“It wasn’t easy for me. I had to put up with many challenges and boycotts. But I was determined to pave the way for women to seek a better future. I wanted to set an example for all women and encourage them to enter public life.”

Emran believes that the conditions of Arab society in general and women in particular have worsened over the past few years.

“Arab society is still lacking real leadership,” she complained. “We need a leadership that will help us achieve equality and other rights. In my opinion, our women continue to suffer from injustice. I believe that it’s wrong to say that our women have advanced and achieved equality in our society. Today, I can say that women have more responsibilities and fewer rights. Although our women work outside their homes and contribute to the development of our society, we are still sidelined by men.”

The coronavirus, Emran noted, has forced many Arab women to come face-to-face with the hardships of daily life.

“As a bank employee, I have seen the difficulties many people have been facing over the past year. It’s very painful.”

Emran said she was hoping to continue working toward upgrading and strengthening the status of women in Arab society in general and her village in particular.

“I’m hoping that one day I will be able to form a women’s list that will have influence in our village council.”

AMOUN SLEEM, founder and director of The Society of Gypsies in Jerusalem (Domari), is a prominent female activist who has been representing her small community for the past two decades.

“I believe that in order to build a strong and independent society, I must provide our women with the tools and skills to function independently so they will be able to transmit these mindsets and ethics to their children,” Sleem asserted. “In this context, we provide a business course for women so they can learn how to start their own businesses. We also aim to increase opportunities for women in the labor force. Our women are always eager to participate in new learning opportunities.”

Sleem isn’t satisfied with the status of Arab society nowadays.

“I really hope our society will change. We want more freedom of expression. We want to see an end to violence in our society. Our women continue to face many challenges in a male-dominated society.”

Sleem noted that many members of her community, including women, have lost their jobs after the coronavirus outbreak.

“We are doing our utmost to help our people. My group has been providing aid to many families and children. Our goal is to achieve economic, legal, social equality and justice for our community.

“We want to give a voice to the voiceless.”
Female face to the world

The trio of women heading up Israel’s pivotal embassy in London, led by Ambassador Tzipi Hotovely

- LAHAV HARKOV

The Israeli Embassy in London is one of Israel’s biggest and most important, in terms of trade, security and other partnerships. It’s also led by three women these days: Ambassador Tzipi Hotovely, Deputy Ambassador Sharon Bar-Li and Minister Counsellor for Political Affairs Dana Erlich.

In honor of International Women’s Day, the Magazine decided to check in with the team of smart, strong women representing Israel in the United Kingdom.

Hotovely spoke of the differences between her being an ambassador and a politician, having been an MK in Likud for eight years, as well as settlements minister and deputy foreign minister, among other positions.

“We seek each other’s advice a lot and have a feeling of teamwork on everything,” she said. “People talk about feeling lonely at the top. I was alone because of lockdowns, but I felt we are working together... We had an experience of bonding and of sisterhood that I think made us productive. We had a lot of trust; we share with one another and have respect for the process, not just the result.”

Having a female ambassador also changes the face Israel presents to the world, Hotovely explained.

“It sends a message. I think a society is measured by the status of its women, by who reaches the top roles.

“Israel and the UK have a special thing in common. We both had female prime ministers in a time when very few other countries did. We should be proud of Golda [Meir], the second woman in the world to reach the top of the pyramid, and [Margaret] Thatcher is an icon in British politics. Love her or hate her, she shaped the British economy,” Hotovely said.

Bar-Li emphasized, “We are professionals, we’re not just doing our job as women.”

But she said having a female-dominated embassy has advantages.

“We leave our egos on the side and feel very free to talk and seek advice from one another. We work with our doors open... I feel comfortable being vulnerable with my female colleagues, without looking weak. We strengthen one another.”

Erlich posited that diplomacy is a career in which characteristics that stereotypically belong to women are helpful, such as emotional intelligence, an ability to communicate, to multitask and to pay attention to details.

“When I started in the Foreign Service 11 years ago, I was used to being the only woman in the room. Now when there are more women than men in the room, I don’t always think about it. It’s become obvious. We have a greater presence,” Erlich said.

As for the challenges of being a woman in a senior diplomatic
role, Hotovely pointed to the strict lockdowns in the UK due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I’m a mother to three small girls and I arrived here to a reality in which there is no school for a long time. It’s also an age issue, if you’re a 60-year-old ambassador, then that’s beyond you. It’s not just women; it’s young women,” Hotovely, 42, said.

While Hotovely was used to working long hours as a politician, moving her whole family to another country added another facet to handle. She was grateful to her colleagues who have experience in that area for reaching out and giving her advice.

DIPLOMACY IN the age of coronavirus has been challenging. Hotovely did not get the traditional audience with Queen Elizabeth to present her credentials and all of her meetings have been virtual, not face-to-face.

“Diplomacy is built on interpersonal relationships, and it doesn’t work as well on a screen. We’re all suffering from it,” she said.

Still, Hotovely emphasized the “great opportunities” that can be found in the pandemic.

For example, the ambassador quipped that the embassy’s spokesman got more positive press for Israel than any of his predecessors.

“The headlines about Israel are about us leading the world in vaccines. People are looking up to us and we are a model for the world in getting out of this crisis. It created a positive discourse about Israel beyond the conflict,” Hotovely said.

The UK is often a battleground for Israeli public diplomacy, and most Israeli ambassadors in London are met with a hostile academia and very critical civil society.

But Israel’s COVID-19 response, as well as the Abraham Accords – in which the Jewish state established diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan – created a more positive conversation around Israel, the ambassador said.

Brexit has also contributed to strengthening Israel-UK ties, and the embassy has been working on building a better trade deal between the countries that will take the many areas of interchange into consideration, such as cyber technology.
And as the leader in Europe in vaccinating, as well as in scientific research, the UK is very interested in working with Israel on pandemic response.

“Scientific cooperation really flourished recently,” Hotovely said. “There is cooperation between our health ministries. Israeli professionals in relevant areas... were guests of honor at roundtables in Parliament. Israel at its best encountered the high quality of British scientific research.”

Bar-Li said it was “nice to see how, at a difficult time like this, the countries worked together to help each other, whether in the time when we needed ventilators, or later, when we exchanged best practices.”

Erlich said her contacts in various UK government ministries appreciated that Israeli diplomats were “here, for better or for worse” during the pandemic.

“A lot of us haven’t seen our families in a long time and some of us got sick, but we’re all in this together,” she said.

Israeli ambassadors also keep in contact with the local Jewish community, and Hotovely said she was received by UK Jewish groups with “great warmth – even if it was on Zoom.”

“It’s very important to us as an embassy,” Hotovely said. “This is a significant Jewish community, one of the biggest in the world, with a great connection to Zionism.”

Asked about how she responded and plans to respond to the antisemitism that British Jewry has faced in recent years, Hotovely commended the government of the UK.

“Fighting antisemitism is not just a Jewish and Israeli topic. It’s a disease that infects any society in which it exists. Societies must fight the diseases of racism and xenophobia. The UK government was the first in Europe to adopt [the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism], and it is doing good work advancing it in universities,” she said. “There is good cooperation with the government in fighting antisemitism.”

In recent years, BDS and anti-Israel groups have been on the decline in the UK, and the focus has shifted away from Israel, Hotovely said.

Bar-Li said, “BDS failed,” and pointed to the trade agreement between the UK and Israel.

“If you look at the trajectory, year after year trade has increased. There is no better proof than that of BDS’s failure. They became irrelevant. They’re not relevant to the post-Brexit psyche, which is looking for more economic opportunities. Israel here is seen as a place for cooperation, because of hi-tech and academic excellence and innovation... BDS is an anachronism,” Bar-Li said.

DESPITE ALL the challenges, moving her family during a pandemic and trying to do her new job as a diplomat when she can’t have face-to-face meetings, Hotovely said she’s glad she took a break from politics to become ambassador.

“I feel like I’m doing very important reserve duty. I’m serving my country,” Hotovely said. “This was a very drastic change even after four years at the Foreign Ministry, which I really loved... I think the big advantage is that it has given me perspective. Our politics are so internal, and now I’m seeing the world.”

The UK, Hotovely explained, is “an important bridge between Europe and the US and is very central in our relations. The triangle of US, UK and Israel on security and intelligence is of strategic importance and like no other.”

“Serving here is so important. The depth and perspective I’m getting – I wouldn’t give up on it, even with the difficulties of coronavirus and moving my family.”
**Acting With Compassion**

Zohar Yakobson, whose name is synonymous with the entertainment industry in Israel, has represented the country’s leading actors and actresses for over 30 years. Always on-the-go, she sat down with The Jerusalem Post for an interview just two days before boarding a plane to Los Angeles to accompany one of her leading actresses, Shira Haas, to the Golden Globes award ceremony.

“I think in Israel there is a lot of talent. We are a cultural powerhouse with many creative and talented people,” she said. “Israeli women especially have a strength – they are leaders, and they know from a young age how to be many things, including bold and daring and unique with a sense of individualism you don’t see elsewhere.”

Yet, despite her unbridled professional success, some 10 years ago Yakobson was struck by personal tragedy, as her daughter Tal, only aged 25 years old was diagnosed with a rare cancer and passed away 10 months later.

“We had a very difficult journey, there are not a lot of words to express the grief, the pain, the fright,” she said. “There is an infinite fracture, the pain of losing a girl who was so special, so smart and talented people,” she said. “Israeli women especially have a strength – they are leaders, and they know from a young age how to be many things, including bold and daring and unique with a sense of individualism you don’t see elsewhere.”

Yet, despite her unbridled professional success, some 10 years ago Yakobson was struck by personal tragedy, as her daughter Tal, only aged 25 years old was diagnosed with a rare cancer and passed away 10 months later.

This tragic shock has changed the course and focus of Yakobson’s life.

“Thank G-d I have been lucky to represent many talented people over many years, but the most important thing in life now is the ability to help and make a difference in the field of cancer,” she said.

Tal’s battle with cancer took Yakobson and her family across four different hospitals and even to Switzerland for treatment, though most of their time was spent at Sheba Hospital in Tel Hashomer, one of the world’s leading facilities.

“We were in one of the best hospitals in the world, with all the best technology and western medicine, and yet, doctors don’t really know what the patients go through – the chemo, the anxiety, especially for a young girl at the prime of her life,” she said.

At the time of her death, Tal was on the verge of completing a degree in Chinese and natural medicine and so, given her experiences and to continue her daughter’s legacy, Yakobson together with her husband, founded the Tal Center - the first of its kind Center for Integrative Medicine at Sheba Hospital.

“We made a choice to continue with life, to learn from what we went through so that we can help others,” she said.

Since its establishment in 2013, Tal Center has gone on to become one of the leading centers in the world, headed by the medical establishment alongside non-conventional medicine that provides holistic support for cancer patients.

“Since we opened, we have given legitimacy and influenced other hospitals in Israel, and today there are no hospitals in the country that do not have a dedicated department for young cancer patients. Since we opened, we have given legitimacy and influenced other hospitals in Israel, and today there are no hospitals in the country that do not have a dedicated department for young cancer patients.”

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“This has not been an easy year, with coronavirus, it is hard to raise money and there are sleepless nights, but I believe in miracles and good surprises,” she said.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic has created unforeseen challenges to Yakobson’s vision.

“This has not been an easy year, with coronavirus, it is hard to raise money and there are sleepless nights, but I believe in miracles and good surprises,” she said.

Indeed, Yakobson’s extraordinary strength and dedication in both her professional and social work have seen her achieve an unprecedented vision.

“I say this to my actors: that the sexiest characteristic is to be good-hearted – to help others, to prevent suffering, not to be indifferent to what is happening around you,” she said. “I try to manage my professional life and social work through this motto and live authentically with a lot of compassion and understanding that so long as you are here you must live your life and act and do towards the benefit of others.”

*For more information or to donate visit: stop-cancer.co.il/תרומות (Hebrew) or click here for English site. www.jgive.com"
In observance of International Women’s Day, we present brief profiles of five top physicians at Soroka Medical Center, part of Clalit Health Services, who discuss their vision, their work at Soroka, medical treatment during corona, and their thoughts about International Women’s Day.

Dr. Tehila Kaisman-Elbaz, Senior Neurosurgeon

Dr. Tehila Kaisman-Elbaz, a senior neurosurgeon at Soroka Medical Center, intends to specialize in neurosurgical oncology and is dedicated to providing individualized treatment for all of her patients. “I want to promote treatment that is tailored for each patient so that I can differentiate each brain tumor by its specific characteristics and adjust the treatment for the individual patient.” She speaks highly of the close relationship between Soroka Medical Center and the faculty of health sciences at nearby Ben-Gurion University and suggests that this relationship will lead to advancements in treating neuro-oncological diseases. “One of the things that is special here,” she says, “is the excellent relationship between clinicians and researchers in hubs and forums. The connection between clinic and research and technology will lead to the advancement of treatment for illnesses.” This summer, Dr. Kaisman-Elbaz will be beginning a two-year fellowship at the renowned Cleveland Clinic, where she will study new techniques in the treatment of brain tumors. “They have many innovative techniques, including focused radiation for brain tumors. In addition, an essential part of my work is research, and I will study the genetics of brain tumors, their classification, and advanced molecular methods.” Dr. Kaisman-Elbaz is looking forward to returning to Israel when her fellowship ends to apply the new technologies to her work at Soroka. She says that her department was less directly affected than others by the corona pandemic but has been treating corona patients from time to time and is committed to providing the best neurosurgical treatment for their diseases. “Our work routine has changed since the pandemic. In some ways and although there have been numerous difficulties,” she adds, “corona made us more effective. Meetings on Zoom, for example, were more efficient and allowed us to focus more on advancing patient treatment.” Dr. Kaisman-Elbaz says that Soroka Medical Center’s flexibility regarding her work as a neurosurgeon, research, and family was ideal. “It was an important consideration in terms of choosing a place to work. Women can practice medicine, conduct research, and can combine the two with raising a family.” She lists Prof. Rivka Carmi, the former Ben-Gurion University president, as a distinguished role model. “Prof. Carmi has supported me through my medical career, for which I am very grateful. Soroka Medical Center, and specifically my department heads, Dr. Avi Cohen and Dr. Israel Melamed, gave me a great deal of support and enabled me to do all of these things with a great deal of consideration and flexibility.”

Dr. Keren Rouvinov, Acting Head of Oncology Department, Legacy Heritage Oncology Center and Doctor Larry Norton Institute

“My vision as a physician,” says Dr. Keren Rouvinov, acting head of the Oncology Department at Soroka Medical Center, “is to provide the very best care for my patients and to be there for them. I want to continue my progress in my research and my profession.” Dr. Rouvinov, a medical oncologist specializing in urogenital tract malignancies, has been associated with Soroka for 18 years and notes that the hospital combines groundbreaking treatment with personal care. “We are being equipped with the newest technologies for radiotherapy to provide innovative treatment.” She adds that Soroka places great emphasis on research and notes that “Research is an important part of oncology. The oncology department’s research unit is advanced and provides opportunities and possibilities for innovative research and treatment.” Dr. Rouvinov says that the oncology department at Soroka continued its full range of treatments for oncology patients during the corona pandemic. International Women’s Day is a significant day for Dr. Rouvinov. “Every year, on International Women’s Day, I look at myself and those around me and see that women can and are able to advance, reach influential positions, and become leaders.”

Prof. Yael Refaely Allal
Director of Thoracic Surgery, Soroka Medical Center

Chairperson of The Israeli Society of Thoracic Surgery
Vice Dean & Director of School of Medicine
Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School, Ben Gurion University in the Negev

Prof. Yael Refaely, head of thoracic surgery at Soroka Medical Center, has witnessed a revolution in her specialty during her 27-year medical career. “Thoracic surgery has received a great deal of momentum through technology,” she says, “and has transitioned from major, open-chest surgery to video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery and robotic surgery.”

Prof. Refaely, who has been at Soroka for ten years, says that a great deal of innovation is occurring in the world of medicine in many different areas. She says that online and digital medicine, which have become popular during the pandemic, will continue to make an impact in the coming years. While she notes that nothing can replace the face-to-face encounter between a doctor and a patient, many medical issues can be alleviated through online treatment. She
Dr. Michal Maimon – Director of the Pediatric Emergency Department and Director of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Team, Saban Pediatric Medical Center

“As a physician, my vision is to provide professional and humane care to all of my patients while being attentive to every family’s unique characteristics,” says Dr. Michal Maimon, a pediatrician and head of the pediatric emergency department and the Suspected Child Abuse & Neglect Team at Soroka Medical Center in Beersheva. Dr. Maimon, a graduate of the medical school at Ben Gurion University, has spent her entire medical career at Soroka, apart from a fellowship at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

Dr. Maimon has introduced several innovations to the pediatric emergency department, including sedation, bedside use of ultrasound, and treatment of pediatric trauma by a team of pediatricians. She has received training in treating child abuse and sexual assault and established a hospital service for examining children who have been victims of sexual assault. Previously, children in southern Israel requiring this treatment needed to be transferred to hospitals in the country’s center.

Soroka Medical Center is a tertiary medical center that provides advanced medical services for Negev residents. “One of the challenges we face in the Negev,” says Dr. Maimon, “is providing quality care for children – even for those who may be living in conditions different than what is usually found in the Western world. For example, a child with diabetes may live in an area without electricity and needs insulin that must be refrigerated.” Dr. Maimon recalls that when the pandemic arrived in Israel, there was a great deal of concern among staff, but she says, “Thanks to the mutual support and partnership we overcame the difficulties, and today we are standing tall against the challenges of corona.”

International Women Day, says Dr. Maimon, is an opportunity to highlight women’s achievements and show girls and young women that they don’t have to choose between their careers or self-fulfillment and between being an involved and loving mother – they can have both.

Prof. Reli Hershkovitz – Director of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Saban Birth & Maternity Center

“My goal is to provide the best and most innovative medical care for women while maintaining their dignity and the dignity of our staff,” says Prof. Reli Hershkovitz, director of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Division at Soroka Medical Center. Hershkovitz has spent her entire medical career at Soroka since 1993, with the exception of a one-year fellowship at University College Hospital in London.

Soroka has the largest number of births of any hospital in Israel, and Prof. Hershkovitz says that the hospital had to make special arrangements to deal with the corona pandemic over the past year. “We made special birthing rooms for women infected with corona. We also prepared an operating room for women giving birth who had corona.” In addition, says Prof. Hershkovitz, the hospital encouraged women with health issues to come to the hospital for treatment if they were not feeling well, rather than staying away due to fear of becoming infected with corona.

As part of her responsibilities as the head of OB-GYN at Soroka, Prof. Hershkovitz encourages her staff to utilize new technologies, equipment, and techniques. She specializes in gynecological ultrasound and has introduced numerous technologies, including 3-D ultrasound, vaginal ultrasound, and hysterosalpingography, a radiologic procedure that investigates the shape of the uterine cavity and the shape and patency of the fallopian tubes.

For Prof. Hershkovitz, International Women’s Day is an opportunity to promote the outstanding abilities and talents of women and to help use their abilities to help resolve cultural imbalances in the treatment of women. She speaks with pride about her department. “The Obstetrics and Gynecology Division at Soroka is the largest tertiary division of its kind in the world. Our department is staffed with excellent, top-quality doctors, nurses, midwives, and medical support staff.”
When Dvora Szerer lost her sister, Zehava Feldman, to breast cancer in 2001, she also lost her singing voice. “I have always enjoyed Israeli folk music and dancing,” she told the Magazine, “and before Zehava passed away I used to dance and sing. After her death people would approach me and say, ‘We noticed that you are not as you once were.’ I was devastated. She was only 36 years old.”

Szerer founded Nehishut (“Determination” in Hebrew) in 2005 and has since been its CEO, working with the National Transplant and Organ Donation Center (NTC), Amos Gazit Ltd and the Health Ministry’s Emergency Medicine Association (Malrad) among others. Even before moving to the public health sector, she was a highly respected manager and public relations expert working as vice-head of marketing for the University of Derby Israel extension.

“In my professional life I sometimes walked into a conference room where only men were present,” she said. “A woman, I think, should never feel as if she is somehow less than a man. Even if I am the only woman in the room I feel as if I am in the majority. “I do not accept no as an answer,” she explained, “I do not start a meeting by asking the other side to explain to me the reasons they object to this or that idea. Instead, I offer them climbing hooks so we can all climb together toward a solution that is good for everyone.”

Once a family agrees to donate the organs of a loved one through the NTC, Szerer will reach out to them. If they grant their consent, she then shares their story with the world to encourage others to do the same.

Her radio and television appearances have made her well known among healthcare workers and the general public.

One widower who made such a decision stayed in touch with Szerer for years, as have dozens of others. Szerer recently learned that the widower was having difficulties obtaining a drug he needed for a difficult medical condition.

“I did not accept this situation,” she recounted, “and I turned the earth upside-down until he got what he needed. Saying no is easy. What I do is, I come up with solutions. Very often the people on the other end also want to say yes and are happy to encounter my metaphorical hooks. When they do, I tell them we all won due to their goodwill.”

Before Szerer was approached by the NTC she used to “black out” when entering a hospital, she joked, and needed to meditate to be able to set foot inside.

“Today I can see a heart transplant and see the beauty of it,” she shared, “but I still can’t see how organs are removed. That is too much for me even today.”

SHE POINTS to her late father, Ze’ev, as a source of her powerful commitment to the healing power of love.

“To this day when I am dining at a restaurant and a beggar asks me for a handout, I call the waiter and say, ‘Sit this man down and let him order anything he wishes from the menu and I will cover it,’” she says. “At times the beggar will eat and shed a tear because he is used to being unseen by the world.”

This is why a close friend once told her she is a “one woman’s superpower of compassion.”

“I cannot ignore human pain,” she stressed. “I speak with the families during their greatest sorrow and I weep with them over the phone. Many of them stay in touch with me through the years, and so do the organ recipients. Some of them have given birth to children since they got the organ donation. Can you imagine what that feels like?”

“Twice a year, on Rosh Hashanah and Passover, I call my friends and we arrange for thousands of food deliveries for families who decided to share the organs of their loved ones with people in need and are now going through material hardships,” she said.

During her years of work with NTC, she has been able to sign up Israeli supermodel Bar Refaeli, President Reuven Rivlin and hundreds of other public figures as part of an ongoing effort to make people more aware of the great value of donating their organs as their last act.

While some people might think there are religious restrictions against donating organs, Szerer is adamant that most rabbis today accept brain-death as final, even if the heart is still beating. Families facing such a decision can contact “any rabbi they wish to speak with” through the NTC, she explained, before making a final decision.

“My new goal is to make the organ donation card a default process when people obtain their ID,” she said. “I would like the issue of organ donations to be present in our public discourse as part of our social solidarity.”

She supports the digital outreach program that now enables anyone in the country to sign up online to obtain an organ donor card.

“Online, the process is fast and easy,” she explained. “People can do it in a minute and finish the whole process in a flash.”

A resident of Holon, Szerer initiated the creation of a special story garden that uses the sculptures of Meir Trosman to educate children about organ transplants.

“Today I can see a heart transplant and see the beauty of it,” she shared, “but I still can’t see how organs are removed. That is too much for me even today.”

“SHOWING EMPATHY towards the other means loving them as they are, without judgment and criticism.” (Tim Mossholder/Unsplash)

‘SHOWING EMPATHY towards the other means loving them as they are, without judgment and criticism.’ (Tim Mossholder/Unsplash)

Dvora Szerer, founder and CEO of Nehishut: Climbing together toward a solution. (Courtesy Dvora Szerer)

‘SHOWING EMPATHY towards the other means loving them as they are, without judgment and criticism.’ (Tim Mossholder/Unsplash)
“It’s in our blood,” says Sigal Bar-On, co-chairperson of Fischer Pharmaceuticals Ltd. “We grew up with it.” Bar-On, who together with her sister Dr. Nurit Harel heads the Israeli pharmaceutical giant founded by their parents, Dr. Eli Fischer and his late wife Devorah, worked in the family business during summer vacations and was determined to make it an integral part of her life. Bar-On, recalling her childhood experiences, smiles and says, “It was the best business school I ever had.” The company that started in 1965 in a tiny 100 square meter office in B’nei Brak is today a multinational firm that is a household name in Israel, renowned for its wide range of products in treatment toiletries, advanced anti-aging cosmetics, specialized dietary supplements, and innovative medical preparations. Bar-On enjoys her work immensely. “Visiting our manufacturing plant in the Galil is the most fun. It is a pleasure walking between all of the production lines, smelling and feeling everything!”

“My sister and I are chairpersons and partners,” says Bar-On. “We believe in teamwork. There are three heads under us – Danny Bar-On, my husband, is the CEO of the Body Shop chain of stores; Yossi Harel, my sister’s husband, who is CEO of international marketing; and Moshe Zilberstein, CEO of Dr. Fischer Israel, who has been with the company for many years.” Bar-On says that as a family-run business, it is essential to separate family matters from business discussions. “We are together frequently as a family on holidays and Shabbat, and we separate business from family.” She adds that the unique harmony that exists between members of the family was instilled in them by her parents. “It begins and ends with education and personal examples,” she says. “The older we get, the more we understand. My parents established Dr. Fischer in 1965 as a couple.”

Bar-On notes that this past year with the pandemic and its accompanying issues has been challenging from several perspectives. Fischer Pharmaceuticals manufactures Alco-Gel, the popular hand sanitizer, which became even more widely used due to the pandemic. There was a great demand for the product in early March, and the company had to quickly purchase vast amounts of the necessary raw materials, and bring them in by express air, instead of transporting them by ship. Workers on company production lines were separated into capsules, and office workers began to spend more time working from home. The company’s Body Shop stores, which are located in shopping malls, had to shut down. “Most important,” says Bar-On, we listened to our employees, and we stayed in touch with them. Their health was most important, and we had to arrange ways for them to combine working from home and the office.”

Despite the challenges presented by COVID, says Bar-On, Fischer Pharmaceuticals learned to accentuate the positive. “The situation pushed us and gave us a boost in product development. We put out new products that were in the pipeline.” In addition, she adds that the company learned more about the possibilities of combining working from home and the office.

Fischer Pharmaceuticals is well-known not only for its comprehensive line of products but for its extensive activities in the community at large. Bar-On says that helping others is a family tradition. “It was understood that when we got up in the morning, we were not only getting ready to work but getting ready for social action as well,” she says. The company supports numerous charitable organizations and established the ‘Art for Peace’ initiative, in which artists from Israel, Egypt, and Jordan have participated and shown their work. An exhibition of Israeli and Emirati artists will be online soon and is scheduled to be shown in Dubai, New York, and Tel Aviv during 2021. Fischer Pharmaceuticals also established the Devorah Fischer Gallery in Tel Aviv, named after Dr. Eli Fischer’s late wife and company co-founder, which presents exhibits to benefit various charitable organizations throughout the year. Speaking of the company’s efforts to improve society, Sigal adds, “We don’t want to just write a check. We want to do something significant. Giving is receiving. When you do something for someone, you get something back.”

Bar-On says that International Women’s Day is the ideal time to bring up important social issues that are not discussed on a daily basis. She is leading an economic and social forum of industrialists and business leaders tasked with increasing awareness to prevent domestic violence in families. Bar-On looks upon her company as a large community of hundreds of employees and suppliers and says, “We have not only business responsibilities, but societal responsibilities as well.”

“Fischer Pharmaceuticals provides equal opportunities for women, and there are actually more women at the company than men, including executive positions,” says Sigal Bar-On. “It is based on talent and merit.” She points out that the company’s most valuable asset is its workforce. “They are professional, connected, and committed. They are very important to us. We have Moslems, Christians, and Jews – secular and religious– all working together for the common good. We are a microcosm of Israeli society.”
AYELET FRISH: Professional journey. (Photos: Sivan Farag)

‘Today’s leaders recognize the advantage of women’s management’

...
unknown to the general public, such as the construction of the nuclear reactor during the “austerity period” in Israel when there was no money for eggs and butter. Somehow, by hook or by crook, he managed to raise huge sums and built the reactor in Dimona, which provided one of the greatest security and strategic assets of the State of Israel.

“In the Entebbe operation, he supported a military operation against the views of all the other government ministers, and refused to surrender to terrorism and exchange prisoners. He was also behind the development of Israeli Aircraft Industries.

“I realized that this was an unusual leader – not only whom the public did not know, but who himself was not prepared to speak of his accomplishments. He used to say: ‘These are sensitive issues.’ I started working on my most important mission. I was preoccupied with the question of how to instill his tremendous contribution to the State of Israel in the hearts of the people and in particular in the hearts of all those who had turned their backs on him. He was a tremendous leader. All he cared about was strengthening the State of Israel and the young generation and how to create a better tomorrow for the country.”

After his death, Frish watched the crowds pass by the coffin.

“I saw the kippah wearers alongside Israeli Arabs, alongside eight-year-old children, parents from Judea and Samaria holding babies, people from Baqa al Gharbiya, from Bedouin settlements, Bnei Brak and the entire world. The police announced that due to the huge turnout, they were extending the hours. It was then I closed a circle. But I must be modest: he had an amazing team that worked around the clock, and most importantly, it wasn’t me. It wasn’t even us. It was Shimon Peres. When you work with someone who is a man of action and vision, the sky is the limit. The title of the book he published two weeks before his death is No Room for Small Dreams. The title says it all.”

The late Peres was Frish’s greatest and most significant teacher.

“During these years, I learned alongside him to dream big, not to be afraid of doors slamming shut, to think creatively, to create international platforms, to maintain the uniqueness of each day, and to know how to tell a story. I learned to believe in myself and overcome the challenges, even if they are very complex. I know how to stop for a moment and consult with those I trust. I have an excellent team of confidants. Consulting with others is power.”

Let’s go back to the beginning, to the definition of “strategy and branding,” as Frish perceives them.

“The idea is to take a complex situation, a country with problems or a leader who wants to reach people’s hearts, and know how to tell his story through a short, clear message that touches the soul. The next thing is to use leverage through the various media,” she explains.

Is this also true today with the changing communication map?

“The media map has changed, but the consumption of exciting and personal stories does not change. Even if the personal story appears on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube and not in the New York Times, you can create effectiveness and motivation for action. It’s all in telling the story properly, building the right branding and knowing how to use advertising budgets differently than before. Do not cling to the old and traditional media. However, each vote is equal at the ballot box, and you need to remember that people over 50 still consume their media from the major news outlets. There is no need to fight change. It’s the mathematics of alchemists. Few people know how to brand countries or leaders and to get the results they want.”

Is it possible to brand anyone as a leader?

“The most dangerous thing for strategic advisers is that they fall in love with their power. The answer lies somewhere in the middle. You can only get to a certain point. If you don’t have a real leader who loves his people and country and works around the clock out of genuine passion, it’s ‘fake branding.’ In the end, the truth will come out.”

What about applying branding for leaders such as Prime Minister Netanyahu?

“When I analyze Benjamin Netanyahu professionally, there is no doubt that the State of Israel is important to him and that he has exceptional achievements in the political-security field, but I think a good professional could greatly promote his branding and his popularity among the public, reduce opposition, and with the proper amount of work, evoke feelings of sympathy and love and create situations that bring him closer to the people. One of the dramatic tools of a good high-level strategic adviser is the ability to build deep trust with the leader, one that is almost inseparable from day-to-day work. It also means intervening effectively and wisely in the daily agenda, content and decision-making. The most significant tool is to be part of the smallest decision-making team, and that’s where the biggest impact is.”

What is your dream?

“I like to reach my goals. I love tough challenges and I believe in being able to give of myself for great things. After Peres passed away, I was sure the next chapter of my life would be very boring, but the exact opposite happened. I realized that I had received a great deal of professional experience and tools from him. I understood that I have an objective - to continue to contribute with the experience that I have accumulated to projects, leaders and countries and help them realize a great vision.

What is the dream? Now that a window has opened to the Arab world: to advise their leaders.”
Making Magic

with Make-A-Wish Israel

"Doctors give the medicine, and Make-A-Wish gives the magic." For twenty-five years, Denise Bar-Aharon, together with husband Avi, has been providing magical wishes for seriously ill young Israelis, ages 3-18. Bar-Aharon and her husband founded the Israeli affiliate of Make-A-Wish in memory of Denise’s brother David Spero, who died at age 29 from esophageal cancer. Denise wanted to commemorate her brother’s life, and recalling her volunteer work for Make-A-Wish when she lived in the United States, contacted the organization’s worldwide headquarters in the United States, and established the Israeli affiliate.

Bar-Aharon proudly reports that since its inception, Make-A-Wish Israel has granted 4,300 wishes to children. “Our mission is to grant an incredible, life-changing transformational wish to a child that has a critical illness.” Bar-Aharon points out that granting the wishes of seriously ill children can truly be life-changing and cites a research study conducted by Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar and Professor Anat Shoshani of the Maytiv Center for the Research and Application of Positive Psychology at IDC Herzliya showed that doing so can prolong and actually save lives. “It just changes their whole being. When a child is in the hospital, and he says, ‘That’s it – no more chemotherapy,’ and you say to them, that Lionel Messi is waiting for you, or Mickey Mouse is waiting for you, there’s a transformation in their mental, emotional and physical condition.”

Bar-Aharon says that they offer the children four different categories of wishes – ‘I want to be. I want to have, I want to meet, and I want to go. Some children want to play the part of a superhero for a day, or be a princess, or a singer or a king; others want a gaming computer or a smartphone. Some want to meet a famous athlete, entertainer, or politician, and some want to go to a particular destination.

Eitan Fink, a teen who had been ill with cancer, wanted to be a White House correspondent in 2019. Make-A-Wish Israel made the arrangements and flew him to Washington. “Israeli news anchor Yonit Levy prepared him for the meeting,” says Bar-Aharon. He went to Washington and interviewed President Trump for fifteen or twenty minutes. It was just magnificent.” Smiling, Denise reports that there is more to the story. “When we went to Yonit, Eitan said to me – ‘My dream one day, if I stay well, is to be a correspondent here in at Neve Ilan and work at the news.’ Eitan is an avid news lover. Today, Eitan’s dream came true, and he, in fact, works in the news department at the Neve Ilan studios.”

Sadly, some Make-A-Wish children have not survived their illnesses. But Bar-Aharon says that frequently, by sheer determination, children managed to survive until their wish came true and have lived for many months or even years afterward. “It prolongs life. I’ve seen it over and over again,” she says.

Denise says that Make-A-Wish has a transformative effect not only on recipients but on donors as well. “As a human being, it gives me an unbelievable perspective on what’s really important in life, because every day, we see that life can be taken from us, as it was from my brother at such a young age at 29, but these children are faced with this so much earlier on. They say that dopamine – a hormone and neurotransmitter which helps promote positive feelings – comes in many forms. One of the ways in which you create dopamine in your brain is by giving, and I see my staff walking around the office, smiling. It’s just bliss. These kids – their childhood has been stolen from them, and if Make-A-Wish can come in and let them feel like children again, it makes me as a person, as a woman, as a nurturer, and as a mother figure feel incredibly grateful and incredibly blessed. And I think it’s also a lovely example to my children and my grandchildren.”

The impact of Make-A-Wish, adds Bar-Aharon, also extends to the parents of the children and their communities. “A boy wanted to be Spider-Man, and the entire community came out and cheered him on. They all came out, and people really respond to giving, especially children.”

She adds that many of the organization’s activities were canceled or cut back this year due to the COVID pandemic. “All of our fundraising efforts were canceled, and we need donations today more than ever before.” Soon, she says, the organization will be beginning an on-line Passover campaign for individual contributions. Denise Bar-Aharon says that on International Women’s Day, she thinks of the immense strength of women and the support and strength that she receives daily, both from her mother, who lives in the United States, and her daughter that are both family and life-long friends. The strength and love I receive from the woman in my life fill me and charge me to continue to do the work I do every day. International Women’s Day it’s a great day and well-deserved because women are extraordinary individuals.”

For more information about how you can donate and help Make-A-Wish Israel, visit the Make-A-Wish website at makeawish.org.il or call 09 7602848.
Din the hospital, and he says, 'That's it – no more doing so can prolong and actually save lives. "It Positive Psychology at IDC Herzliya showed that Center for the Research and Application of and Professor Anat Shoshani of the Maytiv research study conducted by Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar ill children can truly be life-changing and cites a points out that granting the wishes of seriously wish to children. "Our mission is to grant an incredible, life-changing transformational wish wishes to children. "Our mission is to grant an inception, Make-A-Wish Israel has granted 4,300 the Israeli affiliate. States, contacted the organization's worldwide for Make-A-Wish when she lived in the United brother's life, and recalling her volunteer work cancer. Denise wanted to commemorate her David Spero, who died at age 29 from esophageal and her husband founded the Israeli affiliate of seriously ill young Israelis, ages 3-18. Bar-Aharon proudly reports that since its Bar-Aharon says that they offer the children in four different categories of wishes – 'I want to play. Some children want to play the part of a athlete, entertainer, or politician, and some Eitan Fink, a teen who had been ill with cancer, Eitan said to me - 'My dream one day, if I stay arranged and flew him to Washington. "Israeli news anchor Yonit Levy prepared him for the meeting," says Bar-Aharon. He went arrangements and flew him to Washington. Trump for fifteen or twenty minutes. It was just magnificent." Smiling, Denise reports that there to Washington and interviewed President speaks of "When we went to Yonit, Ilan and work at the news. 'Eitan is an avid news lover. Today, Eitan's dream came true, and he, in fact, works in the news department at the Neve I don't want to go. I want to meet, I want to go. Some children want to play the part of a man, and the entire community came out and do. She added that many of the organization's fundraising and charity efforts were canceled, and we need donations to the COVID pandemic. "All of our fundraising activities were canceled or cut back this year due million. We have a lot of hopes and dreams. As a human being, it gives me an unbelievable perspective on what's important in life, because disproportionately to recipients but on donors as well. The impact of Make-A-Wish, adds Bar-Aharon, also extends to the parents of the children and the entire community.

Bar-Aharon says that they offer the children in four different categories of wishes – 'I want to play. Some children want to play the part of a athlete, entertainer, or politician, and some

She was shocked when, just four months later, she again found herself pregnant. When she was told her that she had twins, she was beside herself. This was already way beyond her ability and the first thing she thought to do was to call the EFRAT volunteer who had spoken to her during her first pregnancy. The volunteer comforted her and told her that she has been blessed by two children, one for the other pregnancy as well...This thought really did comfort Sarah. That and the knowledge that EFRAT was there for her and would give her the help that she needed after the birth gave Sarah the courage to go ahead and have the twins. After giving birth, Sarah wrote us how happy she is with her babies and with EFRAT's help.

After the babies were born, EFRAT delivered a 2 baby packages to her home containing a lafayette including clothing, blankets, bottles, pacifiers, brushes, and more. She also received a baby bath, stroller, and baby crib. She then received monthly packages of diapers, wipes, and food delivered to her door until the babies were 2 years old. She said that only now she realized that nothing is more important than the lives of her children.
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The burning bus:
Edge of the precipice

This is the second in an in-depth series of articles examining key aspects of haredi society and its role in and influence on the country today.

The burning bus.
Torchèd aflame on a main street in Bnei Brak, a haredi enclave abutting Tel Aviv, the bus was seen around the world in late January.

It has become an iconic image, seen by some to reflect the lawlessness and autonomy among haredim in Israel that has become somewhat regular in the COVID era. Not even the firefighters would rush to douse the blaze without a police escort.

Unfortunately, the bus was an extreme, but not isolated incident. Mass civil disobedience in haredi neighborhoods and a refusal to follow corona-related laws had been ongoing since the outset of the crisis. It was, however, a shocking new apex.

In the last year, there have been more than a few riots in hard-core ultra-Orthodox enclaves — among them Beit Shemesh, Jerusalem and Bnei Brak. Violent reactions were sparked by state-imposed lockdown rules requiring school closures, among other measures, across all segments of society.

For many haredim — particularly the numerous hassidic sects as well as those submitting to the authority of the Lithuanian rabbinate — shutting down schools was a red line. Perhaps most notorious throughout this past year have been the numerous edicts issued by Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, a 93-year-old revered in his Lithuanian-based community as a Torah sage, committed completely to religious observance and learning.

His 30-year-old grandson, Yaakov — or Yanky — has become a household name in Israel during the last year, presented as the rabbi’s key aide and interpreter. Speaking recently to a reporter about the rabbi’s controversial pronouncements during the COVID year, Yanky stated plainly: “Nobody here is crazy,” adding that the “most important thing in the world is the study of Torah. Without that there is no point to anything.”

This interpretation, to be charitable, is extreme and certainly not aligned with the position of many other rabbis in Israel who counseled their followers to abide by all state directives; a more sober approach that would seem to adhere to the ultimate Jewish religious value: the preservation of life.

In the course of the last few months, I have made an effort to connect with haredi individuals and families to

‘What you see are ten thousand mourners... what I see are the twenty or thirty thousand grieving, like me’
better understand this tension, from their perspectives, in their communities. And so, in February, I met with a woman who will be identified here as Batya, at her well-appointed, spacious apartment in Beitar Illit. A well-educated, articulate and spirited mother of quite a few, she shared the hardships of raising kids – particularly teens – who have been at loose ends for a year. Her family adheres scrupulously to the public health guidelines and her rabbi counsels strict compliance.

Our conversation meandered, at one point touching on “the bus.” She nearly exploded with anger. “It wasn’t us,” she insisted. “It was secular kids who don’t even live in Bnei Brak. They did all of this to make us look bad.”

As with every single haredi person with whom I met recently, Batya did not want either her name or photograph to be published. To a person, they insisted that their community celebrates pluralism of thought and, to a lesser degree, lifestyle, but they clearly feared the reaction should their unvarnished views be published.

Batya later sent me some news clippings and a homemade video taken from a balcony overlooking the site where a group of young men overturned a garbage dumpster and then set it on fire in the middle of a main street. One can hear the family on the balcony say that these young men are not from Bnei Brak. “They’re secular.”

THE VIOLENCE that night escalated, leading eventually to the bus torching.

We do not know for a fact that the young men were interlopers and not locals. But we can all see as well the scores of haredi men standing around and watching, not interfering. Not even resisting verbally. And one can’t help but think that it’s because this is not their first rodeo. Sadly, Israelis have become accustomed to scenes of violent haredi protests, including full-on abuse and assaults on law enforcement officers. It has become, alarmingly, routine.

A year ago, corona happened. Fear was rampant as all Israelis were confined to their homes, except for very brief and limited purposes. Little was known about the virus or how it was transmitted, but it was clear it had lethal potential as the death toll mounted. Israel’s health minister at the time, Yaakov Litzman, a haredi adherent of the Ger Hassidic sect, disappeared from public view. In the most crucial weeks at the onset of the crisis, the ministry’s director-general, Moshe Bar Siman Tov, became a nightly fixture on TV news: the voice and face of the government in the corona crisis. Litzman seemed to have lost the plot, forgetting to even pay lip service to the fact that he was the top government official in the Health Ministry managing the most critical issue in the country. He owed a duty to all Israelis, not just his ultra-Orthodox constituents. Yet there he was, speaking with an interviewer on haredi radio in March. In response to the host’s concerns as to how difficult it would be to celebrate Passover under quarantine restrictions, Litzman assured him all would be fine.

“The Messiah is coming,” he declared, without a trace of irony. “Messiah will come and we will have a wonderful Passover.”

Throughout the first lockdown, more than a few haredi rabbis urged their followers to defy government orders and keep schools and many synagogues open. Among them, of course, was Rav Kanievsky. He was said to have confirmed repeatedly to Yanky that continuing Torah learning was imperative, no matter the consequences.

And, so, schools remained open in defiance of state directives. As leader of the Lithuanian haredim – about one-third of the ultra-Orthodox population in Israel – Kanievsky cannot be dismissed as some sort of fringe figure. In fact, his authority is so established that even Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reached out to him on several occasions to implore him to rethink his corona-related comments. The Prime Minister. Kanievsky’s conduct incensed the majority of...
Israelis. Furthermore, during the first wave in the early spring there was significant resistance in the haredi community to the state requirements to wear masks in public and maintain social distancing protocols. Excuses and justifications were legion: the government failed to communicate the seriousness of the situation to the haredi public; the communication with the haredi public was not appropriately worded; haredim were being targeted for harassment by the authorities and media; it was impossible for them to adhere to the government directives because they had such large families often living in cramped apartments.

Corona amplified everything and everything was elevated to crisis levels. Civil disobedience was not just a disturbance but became a “super-spreader event” where mass numbers congregated, accelerating contagion and leading to extreme health consequences.

The haredi community has been ravaged by corona. They make up 12% of the general population but account for more than 40% of the diagnosed cases. The death toll – particularly among the elderly – has been brutal. One out of 73 haredim over age 65 has died in this pandemic, an unspeakable toll.

WALKING THROUGH Jerusalem’s heavily haredi neighborhood of Bayit Vegan in early February, I was accompanied by “Shimon,” a middle-aged man who grew up in the area and remembered it fondly. Now and then he paused to exchange pleasantries with an old acquaintance – stopping to remember his carefree times in the old schoolyard where he ran around, now a jumble of portables to accommodate the burgeoning population.

This crowding, he sees as yet another very tangible sign of the way in which haredim are treated as second-class citizens. Children are crammed into makeshift classrooms, while fancy new schools are built for the non-haredi population. What he is less receptive to discussing is the fact that the cost of education for the non-haredi population. What he is less receptive to discussing is the fact that the cost of education for the non-haredi population.

“Ahhh,” he responds. “There is no greater value to the state than a man who devotes his life to Torah learning.”

Shimon stops to chat with a young man corralling his three school-age sons, asking the boys if they are in school. Sweet and shy, they shake their heads. Their father confirms this, saying they have been in and out of school, with no routine, for the last year.

“Across the street is a synagogue, shuttered. Or so it seems at first glance. The side entrance is bustling, with people coming and going. I approach the main front windows of the building, which are blocked by curtains. Peering through a slit I see a room full of young boys, seated at desks, books open and being led in their studies by a male teacher standing at the front of the room. He senses my presence in a flash and instructs the boys to pull the curtains more tightly, blocking any view.

Around the corner is the neighborhood bulletin board: a hub for keeping current on local issues in most haredi communities. It is plastered with notices of funerals for the recently deceased, almost all of them taken by corona. Our talk segues into death and, inevitably, funerals.

Just a few days before our planned outing there were two funerals – one in Bnei Brak and the second in Jerusalem – for revered rabbis, taken by COVID. Aerial photos of these events showed swarms of black-garbed haredim jamming the streets in the funeral processions, causing outrage among the broader population.

“What you see when you look at those photographs,” admonished Shimon, “are ten thousand mourners.”

“What I see,” he continued, “are the twenty or thirty thousand grieving, like me, who went against every fiber of their being to stay away.” In other words, the essence of the haredi being, his DNA, is communal living, cradle to grave. To disconnect from that is to stop a beating heart.

The modern state of Israel has been based upon a compromise – however wobbly at times – between the ultra-Orthodox and others. It is an imperfect entente, resented by all. Non-haredi Israelis chafe at the reality that they serve in the IDF and do national service while their haredi compatriots overwhelmingly do not. And they resent the tendency of the majority of haredi men to study full time rather than work. The economic and social implications of this are clear.

Many ultra-Orthodox see their devotion to Torah study as the most noble vocation for a Jewish man, and credit the prosperity and safety of Israel to the power of their prayer. So when the government
ordered the closure of all synagogues and schools at the outset of the corona era, well, for many in the haredi community, that was a declaration of war of sorts.

PROF. YEDIDIA Z. STERN, president of the Jewish People Policy Institute and a member of the Faculty of Law at Bar-Ilan University, sees this as a watershed moment, when one of the greatest Torah sages of our era openly advocates civic rebellion.

Discussing this issue in November, Stern explained Kanievsky’s continued opposition to school closures as being in response to the devastating effect of corona measures on the haredi way of life. Controlled around the clock, there is little room for individuality of expression or habit. Once a wheel falls off the track, it threatens to derail the train.

The consequence of non-conformity, depending on the degree, can be extreme, with banishment being the most harsh but not uncommon. One haredi man in his late 30s, who I have known for many years, laments being trapped in a life he can neither live nor leave, because he cannot bear to consider the consequences of abandoning tradition, for his family and children. His fear is his trap.

Fear is also, interestingly, a central motivator for rabbis managing their communities, determined to keep them united, no matter the threat.

Israeli philosopher Micah Goodman casts the “fear factor” in historical experience. Speaking recently about his newest work, The Wondering Jew: Israel and the Search for Jewish Identity, Goodman explains post-Enlightenment modernity in Europe as having posed such an extreme threat to organized Judaism that it caused a collective “panic attack” among some ultra-Orthodox rabbis and communities. Their reaction to the potential disruptive consequences of intellectual enlightenment caused them to double down, retrench and further isolate. They feared the possible corruption of external influences and the impact they might have on loosening community discipline.

This tendency to isolate was further exacerbated after the Holocaust, when the surviving remnants of haredi communities, stripped of oral and familial continuity, took comfort and refuge in extremely legalistic, ascetic approaches to religion. They defaulted to what Goodman refers to as a freezing and closing of religious practice in order to preserve its essence. Rabbis feared.

When this closed European practice collided with the more flexible, less judgmental Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews in the early years of the state, the Ashkenazi leadership worked hard, for decades, to force-fit their paradigm on all Jews. To a large degree, can be extreme, with banishment being the most harsh but not uncommon. One haredi man in his late 30s, who I have known for many years, laments being trapped in a life he can neither live nor leave, because he cannot bear to consider the consequences of abandoning tradition, for his family and children. His fear is his trap.

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When this closed European practice collided with the more flexible, less judgmental Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews in the early years of the state, the Ashkenazi leadership worked hard, for decades, to force-fit their paradigm on all Jews. To a large degree, they succeeded in doing so.

Ironically, their poster child in many ways is Shas leader Aryeh Deri, the upstart Sephardic politician born in Morocco and educated in the strict Lithuanian yeshiva system in Israel. To gain acceptance into one of these yeshivot was to access prestige, power, respect – qualities the Ashkenazim treated as their birthright. As the dominant religious authorities in the early decades of the state, the Ashkenazi rabbis strained to force their elitist paradigm on the Mizrahi and Sephardic newcomers.

The latter are heavily influenced by their Ashkenazi cousins but remain a distinct force with quite different communal values, serving in the IDF, doing national service and living a less ascetic life, managing to balance their spiritual beliefs with the pragmatic demands of daily life. By all accounts the Sephardic and Mizrahi communities have abided by state law throughout this difficult period.

But the vast majority of haredim, according to a recent survey conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute, have extremely high levels of trust in rabinic leadership and quite abysmal faith in the institutions and leaders of the state; so much so that they believe that leading rabbis must be involved in setting health policy, particularly relating to the coronavirus. A shocking 90% believe the corona era has “greatly damaged” their relations with other Israelis.

Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute and a former MK, says that a “Jewish and liberal democratic” state is “not what the haredim agreed to in 1948.” Their vision, he cautions, was and remains a state in which Jewish law prevails over civilian law: rabbis over judges.

As for the bus: Who torched it is less important than the fact that it was. In the end, we’re all on that bus, together.

If corona brought home one thing, let it be that we resolve to find a way to get back on that bus and drive it in the same direction, veering from time to time, but eyes always on the road.

The writer was the Canadian ambassador to Israel from 2014 to 2016. A former lawyer, she consults for international clients on a range of issues and resides in Tel Aviv.
Huge infrastructure project brings water from the mountain to Jerusalem

This is real Zionism,” says Mekorot CEO Eli Cohen, as we walk through part of a massive 13.5 km. tunnel on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

“I grew up learning that Israel had to ration water very carefully,” Cohen says. “There were instructions about the importance of reusing bath water for cleaning and watering plants. Now, we are in a position of being able to help provide water for others.”

The tunnel we are walking through, which extends from Moshav Eshkol to Jerusalem’s Ein Kerem neighborhood, is the highlight of the national water company’s new pipeline that will supply the capital with water for the coming decades. When it is complete, it will be one of the longest tunnels in the world for transporting water with pressure, and represents one of the country’s largest infrastructure projects ever. It’s an engineering marvel fit for a country that has used technology to rise from water scarcity in its early days to abundance today.

“During the time of King David, Jerusalem’s only water source was the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley,” Cohen said. “When my mother lived in Jerusalem in 1948, every day she would go out to draw water at the well outside of her house.”

At the time of Israel’s independence in 1948, the first water line to Jerusalem ran along the Burma Road from Kibbutz Hulda, with pipes that measured 19 inches in diameter. When that system was upgraded in the 1950s, the pipes grew to 24 inches, and a later upgrade in the 1970s used 36-inch pipes. The pipeline currently in use, completed in 1994, has a 46-inch diameter. The fifth water system, as the project is known, will more than double the throughput with gigantic 102-inch pipes that can pump 65,000 cubic meters per hour.

The population of Jerusalem, Israel’s largest city, is nearing one million people, and projections show that the city and its outlying areas will keep growing in the future. That means that the city’s water consumption will rise from 340,000 cubic meters per day now to more than 1.65 million cubic meters by 2065.

“The problem is that the current water line isn’t enough for Jerusalem’s growing population,” Cohen says. “This new system is designed thinking 60 years ahead.”

THE NIS 2.5 billion project, which is scheduled to come to completion later in 2021, has been 15 years in the making, says Micky Elisha, project manager for the pipeline. The government tender for the Jerusalem water project was first issued in 2006, and approvals for the west side of the pipeline, a 22-km. stretch from Kibbutz Hulda to Moshav Eshkol, were given three years later. Five years after that, in 2014, the western section was completed, and permissions were signed for the more complicated eastern portion of the line. Work on the 13.5-km. tunnel from Eshkol to Ein Kerem began in 2016 and was completed in March 2020. Since then, workers have been laying the massive pipes inside the tunnel, with plans to finish later in the year, Elisha explained. An access tunnel runs along the length of the pipeline, with a small train track that can transport people and materials.

The tunnel, which was named Yael after Elisha’s daughter, was dug through mountains and reaches as low as 300 meters underground. Mekorot brought in teams from Germany and Austria with a powerful and massive tunnel boring machine (TBMs) that is 240 meters long and uses a 170-ton mining head. The machine would “bite” into the earth with powerful jaws, and send the stone out of the tunnel by way of a conveyor belt, while another arm lays a steel ceiling over the fresh hole for support. This process required workers on shift 24 hours a day, and progressed by about a meter per hour, with a tunnel diameter of about 4 meters. The occasional complication, like the unexpected discovery of a massive stalactite cave underground that had to be sealed off, led to temporary delays, but the tunnel was delivered on time. (Work on Shabbat was done by non-Jewish workers, Cohen notes.)

Unlike most water tunnels that pump water downhill, these pipes must pump the water from sea level to 860 meters above sea level. “Most water tunnels in the world are downhill, and rely on gravity instead of complicated pumps,” Elisha says. “We had to build the tunnel to be able to support a tremendous amount of pressure.”

It also means that it will require an incredible amount of electricity. The new pipelines will use more than NIS 100 million of electricity each year to pump the water uphill, and while there is a focus on energy efficiency to cut this down as much as possible, that still amounts to more than 10% of Mekorot’s annual budget, says Elisha. “Making the system even 1% more efficient translates to significant savings,” he says. “We are already Israel Electric’s biggest client, spending about NIS 800 million a year for our systems around the country.”

Each pump station has about six pump units that consume 7-8 kilowatts (kW) each, and power substations near each pump station will supply close to 65 kW each, Elisha says. As the pipes are laid through the tunnel, one side of the pipe is filled with concrete to remove the gap between it and the tunnel’s walls. The other side has an access tunnel that allows people and equipment to reach any part of the line.

Each portion of the pipeline has sensors that can identify leaks or other problems, connected to a central command center where the system is constantly monitored. “If we need to fix a pipe, we can shut off the pumping and send people inside the pipe to fix it,” Elisha says.

The pipeline reaches until Ein Kerem, the final station of the pipeline, where reservoirs and a pumping station are being built that will receive and store the water. From there, responsibility for delivering the water is handed over to Haghion, the local water company responsible for supplying water, sewage and drainage services for the greater Jerusalem area. A separate pipeline will take some of the water north toward Ramallah and the Palestinian towns near there, Elisha notes. “At that point, it’s in their hands to finish the job.”

AS NOTED earlier, Jerusalem’s water supply comes from desalination plants along Israel’s Mediterranean
coast, not the Sea of Galilee. While the Kinneret, as it is known in Hebrew, was Israel’s main water source for most of the country’s history, technology has changed all the rules of Israel’s water economics for the better.

“Israel’s water now comes almost exclusively from desalination,” Cohen says. “We currently have five desalination plants in operation, and another two are nearing completion. Another three will be ready within the next seven years or so, for a total of 10 plants.”

The Soreq plant near Rishon Lezion is Israel’s largest desalination plant, providing about 150 million cubic meters of water a year for Israel. The Hadera plant produces 127 million m3 per year, Ashkelon provides 118 million m3, Ashdod delivers 100 million m3, and the Palmachim plant offers 90 million m3. The new Soreq B and Western Galilee plants will provide an additional 300 million cubic meters in the near future, according to government information.

Water is transported throughout the country by Israel’s network of pipes, canals, tunnels, reservoirs and pumping stations that was completed in 1964 and runs from the Kinneret in the North to the northern Negev Desert in the South. While this system was designed to transport water from the Kinneret, it has been expanded and rerouted to move water from the desalination plants.

About 85% of Israel’s water currently comes from desalination, with the remaining portion pumped from the Kinneret and underground reservoirs. “We actually don’t need the Kinneret’s water at all, but after the heavy rains of the past two years, we started taking out a little bit,” Cohen says. “Once the new desalination plants are ready, we’ll go up to 100%, and just keep the pump in the Sea of Galilee as an emergency backup.”

This comes after nine consecutive years of drought prior to the desalination era, when Israelis obsessively tracked how far the Sea of Galilee was under its “red line”, and how much more water could be pumped before permanent ecological damage was caused to the body of water.

Jordan’s King Hussein once said that the region’s next wars will be fought over water, Cohen notes. But now, a country that once perpetually feared drought has as much water as it needs.

More than 55 years have passed since Israelis developed drip irrigation to optimize agricultural water usage while increasing crop yields. Now, some 75% of Israel’s wastewater is recycled for agricultural use, Cohen says.

With Israel a world leader for water technology and innovation, water resource consulting for other nations has become a significant part of Mekorot’s operations. Since 2007, it has provided outsourced consulting, technology, engineering, operation, maintenance and management projects in Argentina, Mexico, the USA, Romania, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Azerbaijan, India, and other countries. The normalization agreements with Arab Gulf countries provide an opportunity for further cooperation, with various collaborations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain being discussed, Cohen says.

“The main water problem in the world is management – not technology,” Dr. Diego Berger, international special projects coordinator at Mekorot, told the Magazine in January. The Jewish state “is blessed by its lack of water resources” because it forces us to manage our water carefully and innovate, he said.

It is that attitude that has allowed Israel, a small country on the edge of the desert with scant amounts of water, to become the global water superpower it is today.
Signs of relief

• NERIA BARR

Post-Purim and not yet Passover, while life slowly starts to make its way back to a kind of normalcy, it is time to look for better solutions for our best friend, choose the one-and-only pink for you, find exciting solutions to cut down time spent in the kitchen and remember to enjoy International Women’s Day this coming Monday.

Women’s Day
EcoLove launched a special box for International Women’s Day (March 8), with a host of organic products that include cleansing gel with cucumber, aloe vera and chamomile, soap and hand cream made with organic berries and grapes and even an organic toothbrush and intimate protection. The package was designed especially for Women’s Day – and is sold at only NIS 116/119 instead of NIS 146. If you order Monday the delivery is free. To order go to bit.ly/womens_day_ecolove

Pretty in pink
Gentle pinks are always a good choice when it comes to lip color for day-to-day running around, and Ga-De has just added new pink-nude shades of lipsticks and pencils that actually look beautiful on every skin-tone. The shades, which we let two women try, were very complimentary and fun. All the shades in the Everlasting Lip Color are long-wear (up to eight hours) and provide a deep color with a gloss finish. NIS 69.90 for the lipstick and NIS 39.90 for a matching lip pencil. Available in pharmacies and beauty stores, and online.

No more spots
Local beauty firm Alona Sherchter has just introduced a new anti-pigmentation cream. Based on innovative combinations of herbs, Dead Sea minerals and high percentage of active ingredients, they have just launched a new and improved formula of their famous lightening cream, which balances the melanin in the skin and reduces pigmentation and aging. The company’s recommendation is to use it together with peeling. NIS 250. www.alonashechter.com

Open a salon at home
Yulia Gal took over Tel Aviv with her ever-expanding chain of manicure-pedicure salons. A new immigrant to Israel, she built her brand herself, turning her salons into fashionable beauty centers. Now she is launching her own line of proven cosmetics, offering products she believes in and uses – such as antiseptic soap, medical hand and foot creams, anti-fungal drops and more – for home and professional use. All the products are available online from her salons and at Guilty beauty shop.
Purple soft
Following the successful launch of their Elvive purple shampoo for gray hair and blondes, L’oreal now launched a purple conditioner, excellent if you dye your hair blonde. The hair is softer and easier to style and the blonde more radiant than ever. NIS 21.90

Wake up call
Lierac Paris is a premium French cosmetic brand that I admit I never tried before. The brand, which landed recently in Israel, has a few innovative products that are really different. Their anti-aging series, for instance not only feels different but actually seems to work. After using their new line of anti-aging serum and hydration cream for two weeks, I actually could see a difference. The products are the result of research at the Lierac laboratories in Paris and they help reduce signs of fatigue, boost the skin and give it a fresher look. Based on mesothrapy, the ingredients include five different vitamins, six minerals and three hyaluronic acids. And it works. I have also been using their Cica-Filler serum ampoules every morning. It took me time to find how to extract the serum but the fact the it comes in ampoules – each with markings so you know how much to use in every application – is fun. NIS 235 for the serum and NIS 219 for the reviving cream.

Full wrap
Made by Israeli firm Lord Sandwich, the new gluten-free tortilla, made from sprouted orange lentils, is not only healthier but actually tastier than most tortillas. Made with whole protein, they are supple, flexible and easy to use, they retain the filling, dry or moist, with no spills, and provide, according to the company, a good source of protein, containing all necessary amino acids. Keep them frozen until use. My vegan gluten-free guest loved them. Another use for them could be as a base for a gluten-free pizza. NIS 19.90 for four large tortillas. Available in AMPM stores, Teva Castel and Nitzat Haduvdevan, Bereshit and more.

Bring on the heat
Masterchef has just launched new ready-made curry sauces that are actually good, although a little too spicy for me. Always on the look for shortcuts, when it comes to the daily chore of preparing dinner, I decided these sauces will be perfect for a quick tofu and vegetables curry that I made in virtually 15 minutes. We tried the green curry – a sauce very popular in Thailand that anybody who misses the white beaches is longing for. I used half a jar and then added more coconut cream to dilute the heat. It was perfect. The sauces already have coconut cream in them but we found it was a good way to reduce the spiciness. Excellent! NIS 14.90 kosher.

Good protein for sweet dogs
Let’s start at the end – our dog loved the new food from Zemach Israpet. Kennel Hyper Sensitive is a super-premium food for dogs that may be sensitive to protein from live origin. The new protein-rich food is based on hypo-allergenic protein that is easy to digest. There are many different kinds for different sized and aged dogs; we tried a few and all the dogs simply loved it. So not only this is a great food for our besties, it is made in Israel and is friendly to the environment. NIS 100 for a three-kilo bag, NIS 200 for seven kilos. Kennel Select and Kennel Sensitive are available in pet shops. For more information go to www.zipet.co.il

For runners
Whether you participate in marathons or not – the new Be Kind protein snacks are simply good, also promising to provide 12 grams of protein to keep your muscles working properly. There are two flavors: one with peanuts and peanut butter, while the other is based on peanuts and almonds with caramel toppings. Keep with you in case you feel like running (or snacking) in the middle of the day.
As parents, one of the most important tasks we’re responsible for is providing our children with nutritious meals that are also tasty and interesting. Below, you will find three recipes that can be used together in the same meal, or prepared on their own with other dishes.

The first recipe I chose is for an eggplant and chickpea salad, which is an unusual combination of commonly used ingredients. If you’re short on time, you can use a can of chickpeas (just make sure to rinse them well). For this recipe, you fry the eggplant and add tomatoes and pickled cucumbers, which are not commonly used together in salads. Everything is very easy and quick to prepare for this salad, except for the frying of the eggplant slices. If you prefer, you can also cover the eggplant slices with oil and broil them in the oven. Just be aware that this gives the salad a different flavor than using fried eggplant pieces.

The second recipe is for the main dish: meatballs, which are a favorite among most kids. What is a better way of demonstrating your love for your family than serving them nourishing meatballs that are cooked in a tasty tomato sauce?

Whenever I get ready to cook something with fresh ground beef, I hesitate between making hamburgers or meatballs with lots of herbs and other fun additions mixed in and cooked in tomato sauce. Other times, I use ground chicken or ground fish to make tasty dishes.

Alternatively, you can cook meat, chicken or fish patties in the oven. Or they can be fried on the outside and then added to a delicious sauce. In short, there is no limit to the variations you can come up with when you’re preparing meatballs. And when you’re preparing something especially for kids, you can make sure to use ingredients and flavors that even the pickiest eaters will love.

The classic meatball recipe I’ve included below is highly flavored by the spice cumin, which perfectly complements beef. You can use the same mixture to make hamburgers that are grilled on a barbecue.

The third recipe is for homemade bread, which is always a treat to eat. There’s just nothing else like eating fresh bread that is still hot from the oven, and the whole house fills with the aroma of freshly baked bread.

This recipe is extremely easy. It is based on the basic ingredients of flour, water and yeast. All you need to do is knead the dough well, let it rise, shape it however you want and then put the tray in the oven until the bread turns brown and gorgeous. And if you’d like to embellish the loaves of bread a little, you can combine a few different kinds of flour and add all sorts of seeds and herbs to the dough. This is a great opportunity to let your creativity flow and play around with the ingredients until you come up with a recipe that really lets you express yourself. The next step is to brush on eggwash and sprinkle with any or all of your favorite seeds.
including sesame, sunflower, pumpkin, flax or poppy.

**MEATBALLS WITH CUMIN**

Makes 25 to 30 balls.

15 stalks of parsley
20 cloves of garlic, peeled
500 g. ground beef (or chicken or fish)
2 tsp. cumin
1 tsp. salt
2 eggs
1 packet baking powder
2 Tbsp. olive oil

Sauce:
6 soft medium tomatoes
4 Tbsp. oil
10 cloves of garlic, crushed
3 stalks of celery, chopped
1½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. black pepper
½ tsp. sugar
1 tsp. cumin
½ tsp. cinnamon
1 Tbsp. tomato paste
2-2½ cups water

400 g. frozen green broad beans

Chop the parsley or garlic. Mix together with the rest of the ingredients. Make balls that are 3-4 cm. and store in the fridge until the sauce is ready.

To prepare the sauce, cut the tomatoes into small pieces. Heat oil in a large, flat pan and add the celery, garlic, tomatoes, salt, sugar and pepper. Sauté for five minutes. Add the cumin and cinnamon. Dilute the tomato paste with water and then add to pot. Bring to a boil.

Arrange the meatballs in the pot. Cover and cook over medium flame for 30 minutes. Add the frozen broad beans, mix and continue cooking over a medium-low flame for another 1 ¾ hours. Add another ½ cup of water if needed. Serve meatballs over a bed of white rice, mashed potatoes or spaghetti.

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:** Medium
**TIME:** 90 minutes
**STATUS:** Meat

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**EGGPLANT SALAD WITH CHICKPEAS**

Makes six servings.

1 kg (3-4) eggplants
1 level tsp. salt
Oil for frying
3 pickled cucumbers
3 large tomatoes
100 g. pitted green olives
100 g. pitted black olives
3 scallions, chopped
1 bunch of parsley, chopped
4 cloves of garlic, chopped
1 cup cooked chickpeas
Salt and pepper, to taste
Juice from ½ lemon

Peel the eggplants and cut them into 1 cm-thick pieces or 2 cm³ cubes. Sprinkle them with salt and let them sit for an hour. Pat them dry.

Heat oil in a heavy pan and fry the eggplant pieces on both sides until they turn brown. Remove and place on paper towels. Cut up the cucumbers and tomatoes into small pieces. Cut the olives into rings and add them to the cucumbers and tomatoes. Add the scallion, parsley, garlic, eggplant and chickpeas. Mix well. Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Taste and adjust seasoning.

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:** Medium
**TIME:** 75 minutes
**STATUS:** Pareve

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**HOMEMADE BREAD**

Makes 3-4 thin loaves.

500 g. (3½ cups) white flour (or a mixture of different flours), sifted
25 g. fresh yeast
1 tsp. salt
1 Tbsp. sugar
3 Tbsp. oil

Egg wash:
1 egg
1 Tbsp. water

Optional ingredients: Kosher salt, zaatar, black pepper, ground chili pepper, sesame or nigella seeds and chopped rosemary

Using a mixer fitted with a dough hook, mix the flour with the yeast. Add the salt, sugar and oil.

Knead the dough and gradually add the water until the dough falls away from the side of the bowl. You may not need to use all the water since absorption rates depend on what kind of flour you are using, so add the water slowly and stop when the dough has reached desired consistency. Add optional ingredients if desired. Knead dough again.

Cover the dough and let the bowl sit in a warm place for 90 minutes or until it doubles in volume.

Split the dough into three to four sections. Knead the dough and then roll each section out into a 3 cm.-diameter log. Place them on tray that’s covered with baking paper with space in between each one.

Beat the egg with the water and then brush on top of the dough logs. Sprinkle with spices if you desire, cover and let the dough rise another 20 minutes. Bake for 25 minutes in an oven that has been preheated to 180° or until a toothpick comes out clean and dry.

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:** Easy
**TIME:** 2¼ hours
**STATUS:** Pareve

Translated by Hannah Hochner.
What do COVID-19 and red lipstick have in common?

I haven’t taken a pandemic to hammer home the necessity of female leadership. Anyone who questions whether women can be great leaders should just look at the handling of the coronavirus crisis in women-led countries. From New Zealand and Iceland to Taiwan, Germany, Finland and Denmark – the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted what women already know: We have what it takes to manage anything from a poopy diaper to what will likely be remembered as our generation’s greatest s**tstorm.

In reading about why New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern’s coronavirus response was so successful, many articles cited her communication skills, which aligned with Jacqueline and Milton Mayfield’s research into effective leadership communication.

The Mayfields say there are three key things leaders must do to motivate their followers to do their best: “direction-giving,” “meaning-making” and “empathy.” “Ardern’s response to COVID-19 uses all three approaches,” wrote Suzie Wilson, a senior lecturer at Massey University in an article published “The Conversation” website.

“In directing New Zealanders to ‘stay home to save lives,’ she simultaneously offers meaning and purpose to what we are being asked to do,” Wilson wrote. “In freely acknowledging the challenges we face in staying home – from disrupted family and work lives, to people unable to attend loved ones’ funerals – she shows empathy about what is being asked of us.”

Contrast that to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s fear-mongering tactics in which he scared Israelis with scenes from the Middle Ages, warning that if people did not listen, they would be fed to wandering lions. “At first the tactic worked, however, it quickly became clear to the public that Netanyahu was not a partner in the public’s battle against the virus but rather was using the pandemic to make a ‘power grab unprecedented in Israeli history,’” as journalist Noga Tarnopolsky wrote on The Daily Beast website.

Ardern fostered solidarity and a sense of mission. Netanyahu further divided the country and left many people hopeless. Culture often first dictates to girls a set of gender-biased rules: “Nice girls don’t get angry,” “good girls do the right thing and sit quietly,” “nice girls do what they are told.”

Simultaneously, they are giving the contradictory message that “women can rise to the top;” they just need to behave like the men who are already up there.

IN AN INTERVIEW with National Geographic, Facebook’s Sheryl Sandberg described how when she entered the workforce in 1991, there were just as many women as men going into entry-level jobs.

“I looked to the side of me, and it was equal,” she told the Magazine. “But I looked above me, and it was almost entirely men…. We have not made progress in getting a greater share of the top jobs, in any industry, in the past decade.”

The coronavirus crisis has shown that this situation has to change, by underscoring the obvious: that women can do everything men can do – but to do it, they not only do not need to be men, they must be women.

I am raising four daughters and to counter the messages I fear they will be fed, I repeat the same mantras my mother told me: “Anything men can do, women can do better,” “if you want something done, give it to a woman” and “you can want a man, but never need one.”

And I have added one of my own: “Women are beautiful – on the inside and out.”

Beauty is an emotion. It’s how you treat your family and friends. It’s how you see the work you do – a passion versus a chore, an art and a science.

And beauty is also red nail polish and a big smile. On tough days, I wear bright colors to make the world more fun. On days I need to make decisions, I put on a blazer. And when I am feeling small, I buy a new pair of heels.

This is also something that only a woman can do. When women tap into their unique gifts, our companies and our countries are more successful.

Businesses with the most females had on average 42% greater return on sales, 53% better return on equity and 66% greater return on invested capital, according to a report by Catalyst that was quoted in Forbes.

Various other studies show that female CEOs are more effective at developing innovative mentoring programs, building bridges, inspiring leadership and motivating employees.

That’s because, as a writer for Harvard Business Review pointed out, “Men are generally more self-focused than women, they are more likely to lead in a narcissistic and selfish way.”

Women tend to put their people ahead of themselves, to better coach their underlings and view the success of their mentees as their own, according to the Review.

“Throughout history, we have told women that they are too kind and caring to be leaders, but the notion that someone who is not kind and caring can lead effectively is at odds with reality,” the Review noted.

People crave validation, appreciation, empathy; gifts we learn to give as mothers. International Women’s Day is meant to celebrate women and their achievements. It’s good to applaud ourselves. We’ve come really far.

But real success will be the day we no longer need International Women’s Day, because women are honored every day.
Is it time to say goodbye?

PAMELA PELED

One of the “Happiness Pillars” – if you believe in creatively enhancing happiness – is to never grouch and groan. No one wants to hear, That’s why I don’t usually share my loneliest moments or coping strategies for stormy evenings. However, the time has come to vent.

Whenever I feel particularly cheated that my lovely husband is no longer around, I focus fiercely on gratitude. At least I was never abused, I tell myself. At least I never felt the brutality of betrayal; at least I never once considered divorce. That has to be worth something.

I’m not familiar with the ache that surely accompanies the sound of a marriage breaking down; the drip of details that suddenly coagulate into a startling thought: Is this what I want for the rest of my life?

Now, shockingly, the lure of divorce seems increasingly lovely; the freedom from madness and chaos and pain. Nor am I alone. The chatter over coffee is increasingly of friends working on foreign passports for their children, or encouraging them to go on extended relocations abroad. Ung-ho Zionists and born-in-Israel realists seem to be reluctantly re-examining their motives for living in the Jewish state.

Many of the same secular are unhappily discussing divorce – breaking up with the land we have loved our whole lives.

Before you reach for your phone to dash off an angry email, damning me to all manner of perfidious punishment for my chutzpah, please understand that my Zionist credentials are probably as sound as yours. I left a land of plenty at 17, brimming with a desire to be part of the greatest miracle of the millennium: the rebirth of Israel. My brothers, husband and children all served in the army with honor, risking their lives over and over again. We have paid our dues and worked hard. We’ve been proud to be part of the Zionist enterprise. Through wars and terror, high taxes and torturous traffic, our commitment never wavered. Until now.

We have not changed much – my family, friends and I – in the 50-odd years we have lived and worked in our small homeland; the country has. There was more uncovered hair in Jerusalem when I was a student there; there were fewer restaurants displaying large kashrut certificates. As the religious, and especially the ultra-religious, have been fruitful and multiplied exceedingly, the demography of cities has shifted inexorably. All citizens are not equal anymore, and some are much more unequal than others.

I will give you an example.

I have a friend who’s a successful businessman. He’s an Israeli citizen who’s lived here on and off since 1976. He has a home in Tel Aviv, pays bituah leumi and health insurance, and salaries. Each morning he wakes up in London at 5:45 a.m. to do deals in Israel. He donates to Israeli charities and runs support groups. Michael also has a home in London, but he wants to come home from home.

The airport has been closed since January 26, when Israel became the only country in the world to bar its own citizens from entering. Israeli doctors are stuck in New York, Israeli mothers are frantically begging to be let in from Frankfurt, and Israeli tourists in Dubai are running out of money. Yet the airport is hermetically sealed.

Except for the exceptions.

Anecdotal evidence is flooding in. The few passengers who are allowed onto El Al “evacuation flights” report that the majority of their fellow flyers wear the black coats of the very pious. They, according to eyewitnesses, often refuse to wear masks, despite entreaties of the crew. Their demands have not mellowed with the emergency; some still refuse to sit next to women, vociferously voicing their moral superiority.

CRACKS IN THIS godly holiness that are frantically covered over are beginning to emerge. The sealed border from Sinai was mysteriously opened to let Arye Deri’s family slip into Israel on the sly. (Deri is Israel’s interior minister who has served jail time for corruption, and now, surrealistically, faces yet another similar trial.)

Deri’s devout family is not alone in their privilege. Ori Mishgev, a reporter from Haaretz, went to Ben-Gurion Airport early on Thursday morning, February 18, to meet El Al flight 014 from New York. (Haaretz, February 21, 2021.) The plane landed at 5:20, in time for travelers to say the morning Shema. Mishgev, who was not allowed inside Terminal Three for COVID-related reasons, stood outside and counted the recently embarked passengers. Of the 169 people who left the terminal with luggage, 114 were haredim (ultra-Orthodox), the vast majority young Yeshiva students. They didn’t look like “humanitarian cases,” he claimed, or “medical emergencies” who merited speedy airlifting to Israel.

The unholy mess just gets worse. The story stinks so badly one wishes it was all fake news. There are rumors that pious politicians, from the parties of God, are helping their constituents enter the country, while secular Michaels have to wade through oceans of paperwork that seem endless. (How many days in 2003 did you spend in Israel?) Black coats, it seems, can get you on a flight. It is well known that prior to elections, Haredi voters flock to Israel in droves. Here we go again.

Scenarios that once seemed utterly far-fetched have become utterly plausible. Perhaps our crime minister is barring the secular from coming home for fear that they will vote him out of office. Otherwise, why isn’t he giving citizens banned from returning the right to vote from the nearest Israeli Embassy? Haredim are pouring in every day as part of our Eternal Leader’s bloc – the more the merrier for him.

Israel was formed to be a safe haven for the Jews; that’s the raison d’être of the country: a shelter for us when trouble hits, a place that will always take us in. Now Israelis are banned from coming home (unless they can pull protección). Every other country in the world is taking in its citizens; only the Jewish state is deciding which Jews can enter. What’s happening to us?

There is one man responsible for this chaos, and he’ll apparently do anything to stay in power and stop his trial. In the process he is gutting democracy, and pushing anyone who dares oppose him off the playing field.

We know what happens to people imprisoned in miserable marriages; are doomed for the rest of our lives to depressed days and sleepless nights punctuated with panic attacks? Is this what living in a crumbling democracy is about to do to us?

No! We sane citizens are sure as hell not giving up on our ancestral home without a squeak. It feels as if this is our last chance for salvation. Anyone with a modicum of decency can surely see that we can’t be ruled by black-coated cultists and “Kahane Hai” crazies for one day more, without going crazy ourselves.

Think carefully before you give Benjamin Netanyahu another shot at abusing us all. We have to get down to the business of bringing back sanity. For the sake of our children we have no choice. Please vote with caution this time around. Let’s all live in a country that celebrates civil, human rights. Not just of the boys in black.

The writer lectures at IDC and Beit Berl. Peledpam@gmail.com Join her for a weekly lecture on “Enjoying Literature” – see Facebook: Pamela Peled
You really are amazing, you woman of the world juggling house, kids, career, husband and the rest of the universe and still managing to look beautiful and fresh.

You really think you are so powerful when with one decision of yours or one change of mood, the whole household atmosphere can change like magic. If you are happy, everyone is happy, if you are nervous, the day will just collapse for all. You are the pillar of their world for those around you who you love and cherish; your decisions are what makes life tick by.

Woman, you are incredible, when you finally go to bed at night last after you have locked all doors, cleaned the kitchen, prepared all lunches for the next day, laid out clothes for kids, flushed all toilets and shut all lights in the house, finally you get to switch on your light, the small light in your brain and start with your million thoughts, dreams, worries and prayers until you fall into a deep sleep exhausted from your own self.

We really are a piece of art, created in the image of God.

This reminds me of Purim, which we just finished, where the protagonist of this day is a woman: Esther. That is when I realize how small we all are compared to this giant in our history.

Hadassah was her real name, but she had to keep it hidden to protect her life, for she lived in the golden cage she was taken to, the palace of Achashverosh. Maybe because I was named in her honor, every time Purim comes around I am fascinated by her story. This year, though, Esther came to life for me, as if I had seen her as if I had touched her with my hands, caressed her tears.

We grew up thinking all we wanted to be Esthers chosen for our beauty over all the other women, crowned by the king and living in a palace for the rest of our lives. I chuckle as I see myself in a queen costume as a little girl at a party she threw at her palace despite being seen by everyone. No one would dare come to the palace and try to murder her, that's why she was the only one who could fast.

She morphs into the perfect queen, throwing parties with the enemy, serving wine and entertaining while her only aim is to destroy Haman and save her brothers and sisters. It will take time for all to see the full picture of the incredible life of Esther, her plan slowly carried out and put together piece by piece like a puzzle, her only protection from failing, her incredible faith in Hashem.

Just when we thought all was lost and the evil forces had won, it all turns around in our favor. Haman gets hung with his 10 sons, and Mordechai becomes a minister of the king. Do you understand the pain of this woman living side by side with the man she loved and being forced to stay with the king?

I DRIFT from this thought as the news on the TV shows the Golden Globes ceremony in Hollywood. I see all these beautiful women taking the stage with their stunning couture gowns, blowing kisses, thanking God and declaring power to the women.

With Esther in my mind right now they look like clowns to me.

Women in Hollywood have to show some skin before they get taken seriously, only to finally prove they have talent, and to those who manage to get to the peak of their career and receive an award, we see them standing all glammed up on a sparkly stage – and suddenly they turn into gurus and feel the need to start educating the world about politics and women's rights.

No. Not from you.

I thank God every day for having given me so many amazing women figures to idolize and learn from in my own history. If I just open a Chumash, a megalillah or the book of Prophets, it's bursting with women leaders, fighters and queens.

I look at the world around me getting more and more confused as to the role of the man and of the woman, those lines getting even more blurred each day.

I hear speeches of feminists declaring war on all – men, God, universe – and pushing for equality. The moment you scream for equality means you feel below something, someone.

The more I live in Israel the more I see how women here are integrated into all sectors of society, from politics to hi-tech, banking, science – I might say even slightly more feared than men! Women fighters in the army, in the police, in the air force. Women in show business and in journalism.

Many of the most powerful pens here in Israel are held by women.

This reminds me of the final struggle of Esther. With Haman’s death, the horrible decree was still pending on the Jewish nation and even after her begging her husband the king to cancel it, he explains to her with all the love he has for her he cannot do it, but he can order another decree to be issued that the Jews can defend themselves.

In those days, when the Jews faced war, that same day would be turned into a day of fasting and prayer, where all the Jews would fast except for the soldiers who had to fight, for they needed to be strong and ready.

In this case of Purim, Haman’s decree was against Jews of all ages from babies to old men. No one was to be left alive. This was a departure from a normal scenario of war. Everyone here was at risk – every single Jew was to be killed on the 13th of Adar. This made it impossible for anyone to fast, for everyone had to be strong and focused for a possible attack on them. Women had to protect their children. Men had to protect the women and soldiers had to protect the cities.

One only person was not at risk to be killed, for she lived in the palace and was loved by the king: Esther. No one would dare come to the palace and try to murder her, that’s why she was the only one who could fast.

The fast we do before Purim is called Fast of Esther because only she had to fast, locked in her golden palace, praying for her adored brothers and sisters all over the empire.

And when the day was over and the Jews celebrated victory with relief, Esther stood by the windows smiling with tears, for her life would continue next to Achashverosh.

Don't come and talk to me about women’s rights, world. I am so proud to be a woman in my country, as a Jew, with awe-inspiring figures in my heritage who teach me and inspire me every day how each of us women can change the world –not only diapers or hair color.

The writer is from Italy, lives in Jerusalem and heads HadassahChen Productions. A director and performer, she also leads the Keren Navah Ruth Foundation in memory of her daughter, to assist families with sick children.

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ARAB DEMOCRACY: IRAQ AS AN EXAMPLE
Al-Jazirah, Saudi Arabia, February 25

No Arab country emerged successful from an attempt to implement democracy. Even Tunisia, which sparked the revolutions of the Arab Spring and gave hope to millions of people across the world that democracy was coming to the Arab world, is still immersed in political turmoil.

But Tunisia isn’t the only Arab country where the democratic experience failed. Let us look at Iraq. Many people – including myself, admittedly – believed that the 2003 US invasion of Iraq would bring about democracy to the war-torn country. But the country that was once ruled by Saddam Hussein turned into a failed state dominated by Iranian mercenaries. Over the course of a few short years, Iraq’s elites fled the country and sought exile in the West. The country that had once been home to scientists, authors, musicians and researchers was deserted overnight. Soon enough, it was taken over by rampant militias. The infrastructure collapsed. Schools and universities were forced to shut down. And living conditions throughout the country dramatically deteriorated. The rates of poverty, destitution, and hunger among the Iraqi population have almost exceeded 50%. There is no memory of a functioning state apparatus, no jobs, no public services.

America, after its ill-fated invasion, claimed to have established a democratic system. It boasted the Iraqi constitution, the court, the parties, and the free and fair elections. But the truth is that all of these things are just fraud. The Iraqi constitution – devised by Americans, not Iraqis – de facto divides Iraqis based on their sectarian and ethnic affiliations, giving the Kurds the premierships, the Shiites the presidency, and the Sunnis the parliament. In the vacuum created in Iraq with the departure of US forces, Iran succeeded in deploying Shiite militias that took over Baghdad.

The democratic system is a system that contradicts sectarian and religious societies, and no democracy that the world has known can be fundamentally based on sectarian or ethnic affiliations. The very constitution that sought to instill democracy in Iraq is the source of the country’s political decay. The hope of seeing democracy flourish in Iraq has been quickly replaced with a failed state experiencing deteriorating conditions. Democracies can never rest on religious, tribal, or ethnic loyalties. To be sure of what I say, compare Iraq in the era of Saddam Hussein to Iraq following its so-called democratic reforms.

– Muhammad Al-Sheikh

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS FOR THE ISSUE OF THE RENAISSANCE DAM
Al-Masry Al-Youm, Egypt, February 24

The Renaissance Dam negotiations between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan have been taking too long for several reasons.

First, because of the Ethiopian intransigence on the issue: Addis Ababa continues to insist on taking unilateral steps that harm the interests of the other parties, which have long complained about the former’s stubbornness and strange procrastination. Despite the ongoing talks, Ethiopia has been chartering the way forward with the dam’s construction. Instead of halting construction until all sides reach an agreement, the Ethiopians have accelerated their work.

Second, regional and international institutions – including the African Union and American officials – have failed to effectively mediate talks between the three sides. Not a single third-party institution or body has been trusted by all sides to guarantee and protect the rights of all parties involved.

Third, former US President Donald Trump, who was a staunch advocate of Egypt’s water rights, departed the White House in January, paving the way for the Ethiopian side to harden its positions. Over the past few weeks, the situation continued to worsen. Granted, talks are still unfolding, and it is certainly possible that a solution will eventually be reached. However, as I already mentioned, negotiations have been taking far too long.

In the meantime, Egypt has been experimenting with various trust-building steps and mechanisms, with offers to provide Sudan with foreign aid and assistance in the fields of electricity, agriculture and development. This is part of a greater Egyptian strategy of opening up toward Africa. Cairo tried to help, both directly and indirectly, but Addis Ababa seems to be unmoved.

– Abd Al-Latif Al-Manawi

OUR VACCINATION DISTRIBUTION STRATEGIES
Al-Etihad, UAE, February 26

In light of the steady growth in the spread of COVID-19 mutations, it has become necessary to vaccinate the largest number of individuals as soon as possible.

However, due to the limited availability of vaccinations, an increasing number of experts around the world have begun promoting the idea that the best strategy to double the available number of vaccinations is to postpone the second dose for those who received the first one, and to vaccinate the largest number possible with a single dose, instead.

This trend is supported by the results of some recent studies, such as those conducted by a group of researchers in the largest hospitals in Israel, in which 7,000 hospital employees and workers participated. The study showed that infection rates among those vaccinated decreased by 47% two weeks after receiving the first dose and by 85% four weeks after receiving the first dose.

Likewise, a group of Canadian researchers found that a single dose of the Pfizer vaccine achieves protection by more than 90%. In early January, the British health authorities decided to extend the period between the first and second dose of the Pfizer and Oxford vaccines from 21 days to 12 weeks, or 84 days, which sparked deep controversy and harsh criticism at the time. The aim of the doctors and scientists was to provide coverage to the largest possible number of people in the quickest manner possible, in light of the shortage of available vaccines.

However, it is still unclear how long the reduction in infection rates lasts. This prompted the vaccine manufacturers, as well as the US Food and Drug Administration to call for caution in implementing “untested” strategies such as the administration of a single dose. This difference in opinions will be resolved by more studies on the best strategies for distributing vaccines, and the strength of the relationship between the acceleration of the spread of the virus and the increase in the emergence of mutated variants of it. After all, vaccinations available at the present time may not be of benefit in achieving protection from these new virulent strains.

– Akmal Abd Al-Hakim

Translated by Asaf Zilberfarb.
A sex-positive feminist tried to ‘have sex like a man.’ It came at a cost.

When she was 15, Tracy Clark-Flory discovered her father’s pornography collection. She was using his computer and came across a website called Perfect10.com. She saw no part of her awkward teenage self reflected in the women onscreen, a collection of blondes with inflated breasts, heavy-handed blush and Barbie doll proportions.

She was horrified – not by the graphic acts depicted on the monitor but by the idea that this was what her father found attractive. Her dad was a Berkeley hippie who’d always preached, “High heels are crippling. Makeup is unnecessary. Plastic surgery is unfortunate. Shaving your legs is silly. A woman’s most attractive feature is her brain.”

The impact on her was massive and kick-started Clark-Flory’s inquiry into sexuality, a journey that would lead to jobs as a sex writer for Salon and Jezebel. Over the past 15 years, she has delved into some of the most exploratory areas of sexuality. But this week the 37-year-old turns the lens fully on herself in a debut memoir, Want Me: A Sex Writer’s Journey into the Heart of Desire. The book is a candid, often unflinching portrayal of a young woman coming to terms with the connection between her desirability and her self-worth. In the process, she reckons with her identity as a sexually liberated feminist.

“I could pretty successfully cater to men’s desires and get that affirmation, but in the end, that affirmation never really felt like power,” Clark-Flory said via video call from the home she shares with her spouse and three-year-old son, a 10-minute drive from Woodstock 1994; Rose lost her clothes while crowd-surfing. The author asks women whether the way women’s sexual freedom is currently framed is what they want. (Reuters)

The sex she had prior to her marriage was all consensual. But that isn’t true,” she said. “We’re in this space of neoliberal, individualistic, commercial feminism that really emphasizes women seeing themselves, and I think that takes us away from the collective solution. And I want to acknowledge that unfairness.”

While Clark-Flory feels lucky to have found a loving partner – she’s been married since 2013 – there’s also a part of her that distrusts, even resents, that sense of relief. In other words: Why is the romantic landscape for women now so dire that ending up in a reciprocal, loving relationship feels like dodging a bullet?

Clark-Flory makes no secret in her book about how much of her self-image was shaped through men: “I was never alone. There was always a fantasy of some boy watching and warning me, making me better. Making me whole.”

In that sense, Want Me is her rallying cry for the generations of women coming up behind her.
Imagine the following scene: It is 0400 hours. A Palestinian freighter sails under the cover of darkness in the Red Sea. Two Morena-class boats—rigid-hull inflatable combat craft—stick to the freighter as a dozen men clothed in black quietly climb onto its deck. Seconds later, two Black Hawk helicopters hover overhead. Using fast ropes—thick ropes on which rapid descents can be made—a team descends onto the ship’s deck. Within six minutes, the two teams take control of the freighter and its crew.

This scene, familiar from countless Hollywood films, was not written by a scriptwriter. No director shouted “Cut” when the action was over. Code-named “Noah’s Ark,” the maneuvers were part of a real operation carried out by Israeli Navy commando teams on January 3, 2002. The purpose of the mission was to capture the Karine A, a Palestinian Authority freighter carrying 55 tons of arms and explosives—a cargo that would fuel the fires of the Second Intifada that had already consumed so many Israeli and Palestinian lives.

Taking over the ship was merely the first step in a complex operation that began five months earlier, after Israeli intelligence agencies picked up signs indicating the purchase of a freighter by Palestinian-Hezbollah operatives. An intricate series of events followed in which highly sophisticated means of collection combined with traditional qualities necessary in the intelligence game: curiosity, discernment and intuition.

The author of A Raid on the Red Sea, Brig.-Gen. (ret.) Amos Gilboa, served as the head of Israel’s Military Intelligence Research Department from 1982-1984, and continued studying the history of Israeli intelligence after retirement. He died shortly before the book came out in English. Gilboa knew how to tell a story, with editing and translation into English by The Jerusalem Post’s legal and defense correspondent Yonah Jeremy Bob. Moreover, Gilboa’s intimate acquaintance with the way intelligence special ops were conducted in Israel enabled him to produce an authentic and fascinating account of a dramatic chapter in Israel’s military history.

Part of the story takes place in the offices of Naval Intelligence, where young analysts, some of whom had graduated from high school only two years earlier, monitor activity around the boat, track its identity and locate it in Port of Dubai. This departure scenario was not haphazard. Gilboa knew how to tell a story, with editing and translation into English by The Jerusalem Post’s legal and defense correspondent Yonah Jeremy Bob. Moreover, Gilboa’s intimate acquaintance with the way intelligence special ops were conducted in Israel enabled him to produce an authentic and fascinating account of a dramatic chapter in Israel’s military history.

Assembling the intelligence needed for the operation was an exceedingly demanding task. As is usually the case, the intelligence information regarding the location of the freighter—whether it had already left the Port of Dubai and what its destination would be—was partial and contradictory. Nevertheless, the operation was green-lit by military and political decision-makers, and Operation Noah’s Ark commenced.

The operation was the first of its kind. Never before had commando teams captured a moving ship by simultaneously scaling its deck from the sea and landing on it from the air. In typical Hollywood fashion, the maneuvers were carried out under a heavy veil of secrecy, under incredible time pressure, with insufficient information and, crucially, using a lot of improvisation. (That’s one reason why Hollywood shows can go on.)

Ultimately, and despite the many difficulties and obstacles, the operation was a complete success. The Karine A crew were taken completely by surprise, and the takeover was concluded without a single shot being fired. The arms shipment found on the boat carried marks of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The operational success was translated by prime minister Ariel Sharon into a diplomatic one, turning Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who cooperated in the venture with Iran, into a pariah in the eyes of the Bush administration, leading to a change in US policy (though not necessarily improving the chance for peace).

Fiction and nonfiction literature on special operations have become highly popular in recent years. For anyone interested in the subject, this well-written, authoritative and fascinating account of a daring raid in the Red Sea is a must.

The writer is a professor (emeritus) at the University of Haifa.
The pleasures, pains of an olev

Living through the 1970s and 1980s in Israel, then returning to the US

PRIME MINISTER Golda Meir accompanied by Defense Minister Moshe Dayan on the Golan Heights in 1973 after the Yom Kippur War. The author’s account is set against Israel’s own story of triumphs and disasters connected to the war. ( Reuters)

By Aaron Leibel

He is clearly referring to one of the basic mistakes that anyone learning Hebrew endures during the early days. One classic is to confuse pants (or for English Anglos “trousers”) with spectacles (mishcayim and mishcayafim). In Leibel’s case he struggled to remember the difference between t’emim (te’emim) and t’amim (alligators).

Figs and Alligators is Leibel’s account of the 16 years that he, his wife Bonnie and their three daughters spent in Israel before sheer poverty drove them back to the States in 1988. Leibel, who became a widely-published journalist during his time in Israel, writes this personal history as if chatting informally to a friend. In simple terms he tells his story of living and struggling in the Israel of the 1970s and 1980s as a story that will evoke the difference between t’emim (te’emim) and t’amim (alligators). Figs and Alligators is Leibel’s account of the 16 years that he, his wife Bonnie and their three daughters spent in Israel before sheer poverty drove them back to the States in 1988. Leibel, who became a widely-published journalist during his time in Israel, writes this personal history as if chatting informally to a friend. In simple terms he tells his story of living and struggling in the Israel of the 1970s and 1980s as a story that will evoke the difference between t’emim (te’emim) and t’amim (alligators).

Aaron Leibel’s story would have been completely different had he not met and fallen in love with his wife, Bonnie. Now an Orthodox convert, she was born into a churchgoing Protestant family. Following their marriage in 1963, Bonnie became increasingly interested in Israel. It was the Six-Day War in 1967 that moved her to take a yearlong course of study leading to her conversion to Reform Judaism. As Leibel drew close to receiving his higher degree in 1972, it was Bonnie who suddenly suggested that they emigrate to Israel. Leibel’s first reaction was total rejection, but he slowly came round to the idea and in the fall of that year Leibel, Bonnie and their two daughters started on their great adventure.

And what an adventure it proved to be. Struggling to earn a living, both Aaron and Bonnie found work, but it was so poorly paid that they constantly needed additional income. Following the Yom Kippur war in 1973, Bonnie converted Orthodox & an unpleasant experience that left Leibel with a bitter taste in his mouth. When the haredi rabbis insisted that, as a condition of her conversion, he must undertake to put on tefillin (phylacteries) every day, he agreed to do so, but with no intention of keeping his promise.

“Ironically,” he writes, “the lie that I told has now morphed into the truth, as I now go to synagogue every day and put on tefillin at appropriate times.”

He did military service in the Israel Defense Forces and was a reservist for the rest of his time in Israel. His account of bringing up a growing family in difficult circumstances (a third daughter was born in Israel), is set against Israel’s own story of triumphs and disasters & the Yom Kippur War, the visit to Israel of Egypt’s president Anwar Sadat, the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, the Lebanon War, the First Intifada, and then Israel’s transformation into “the start-up nation” second only to the USA’s Silicon Valley in global hi-tech innovation.

And yet, in the final analysis, this is a story of yordim & a family who came to Israel only to leave. Their change of status from respected olim was something that Leibel noted and regrets. They had gone to live in the Jewish state, in effect tying their fate to that of their people, but circumstances finally forced them to return to the States. He lists the many things about life in his 16 years in Israel that he loved.

“But,” he writes, “I hated the poverty, the inability to buy our children what they wanted and needed.”

It was the effort to develop professionally that let to their financial debacle. Bonnie enrolled on a course in systems analysis, but they had bitten off more financially than they could chew. Their overdraft soared, the family budget had outgrown the communist ideal, of Jerusalem’s Mahaneh Yehuda market before it had a roof, of the uncontrollable inflation that reached 445% in 1984, of a currency that changed from lira to shekels and then to New Israeli Shekels. Anyone who lived through those times will cherish Leibel’s recollections; anyone who did not will be grateful to learn about those years from his first-hand experience.

Aaron are enjoying a happy and active retirement. They have a made a happy life for themselves in America. All three of their girls married, and the Libels have seven grandchildren. Both Bonnie and Aaron are enjoying a happy and active retirement.

“Having said all that,” writes Leibel, “I still missed the feeling I had as a Jew in the Jewish state.”

Anyone with a grounding in Hebrew will recognize, and smile, at the title of Aaron Leibel’s new book – Figs and Alligators.

FIGS AND ALLIGATORS

By Aaron Leibel

Chickadee Prince Books

136 pages; $12.99

April 20, 2021

MARCH 5, 2021
JUST ABOUT the closest an Israeli can get at the end of a day to bid farewell to the sun is off the coast of Netanya. (Bernard Olsburgh)

SKATEBOARD ACCESSORY: Luxury cars have ornate iconic hood ornaments. Local skateboarders (at Habima Square in Tel Aviv) have to make do with head ornaments. (Deborah Strauss)

(A) GIRL from the South we’ll call Jo, was sad ‘cause she hadn’t seen snow. A bus she got on went to the Golan – and now she is cold – but aglow! (Kinnereth Meyers)

HERE’S SOMEONE who knows how it feels to really be head over heels. It looks fun to do; you might try it, too. Just don’t do it right after meals! (Gan Sacher in Jerusalem) (Shimshon Leshinsky)

YOU TAKE a really cute kid, and she’ll outshine flowers (in this case, at Givat Haturmosim near Beit Shemesh) any day. (Tova Weinberg)

The week in photos

• From readers

Send photos of what you saw or did this week to Jpostmagphotos@gmail.com with your name and where the picture was taken — plus your Instagram handle if you want to be tagged. Feel free to add additional related info about the photo and/or suggest a caption.
Sin, compassion and leadership

The main story in this week’s Torah portion, Ki Tisa, is one of the most embarrassing ones at the beginning of the Jewish nation’s history: the sin of the golden calf. It happened when Moses went up to Mount Sinai and stayed for 40 days in order to receive the Divine directives written in the Torah. The nation waited for him at the foot of the mountain, but days went by and Moses did not return. There were people—according to tradition—they were the “erev rav,” non-Jews who attached themselves to the Jewish nation in the Exodus from Egypt, who had not let go of the idolatrous Egyptian culture and wanted to create a substitute: a god in the form of a calf.

These people turned to one of the respected people in the nation, Chur—the son of Miriam the prophetess, who refused to cooperate with them and paid for this with his life. Immediately afterward, these same people turned to Aaron, Moses’s brother, and demanded of him, “Come on! Make us gods!” Aaron, apprehensive of more bloodshed, preferred to cooperate with them. He tried to postpone the creation of the calf under different pretexts, but the pressure from the nation was ultimate—decisive. With surprising generosity, they donated the gold jewelry they had brought from Egypt, and melted it to create the golden calf.

The calf was made, and Moses descended from Mount Sinai and was faced with the shocking sight of the gold jewelery they had brought from Egypt, who had not let go of the idolatrous Egyptian culture and wanted to create the golden calf. Still, it is hard to understand why Moses broke the tablets. One explanation is that it was pure rage. Once he saw the Israelites dancing about an idol, Moses could no longer contain himself.

But this seems inadequate. Why should his reaction to the perfidy of the people be to destroy the work of God, the most valuable single item in the history of the world? Was he that incapable of self-control? Better to have marched back up the mountain to deposit the tablets somewhere safe.

Arnold Ehrlich, author of Mikra Kippshut, has a provocative and interesting answer. He notes that the Rabbis relate God said to Moses: “Yishar kohacha, answer. He notes that the Rabbis relate

Maimonides, who dedicated a long chapter to this in his monumental book, “A Guide to the Perplexed.” Moses asked two requests of God. The first: “...let me know Your ways, so that I may know You - so that I may find favor in Your eyes” (Exodus 33, 13); and the second: “Show me now, Your glory!” (Ibid ibid, 18). Maimonides explains that Moses wanted to know the ways in which God leads the world, and in addition, he wanted to grasp godliness itself. God refused the second request: A human being, even the greatest human like Moses, is incapable of grasping the essence of God. It is beyond human capability. But God answered the first request in the affirmative:

“I will let all My goodness pass before you...”

What did God teach Moses about His ways of leading the world? He taught him about the virtues of compassion that represent Divine leadership. Here, Maimonides adds significant insight: Why did Moses ask to know the ways of God? Because Moses understood that a human leader must adopt these ways when dealing with the nation. The incredible disappointment brought upon Moses by the nation’s creation of the calf led him to search for the Divine paths a leader should take.

These paths are the 13 attributes of compassion. Just as God is capable of forgiving the sins of humans, so humans are called upon to forgive the sins of others. A worthy leader is one who is guided by compassion. Moses learned this after the sin of the golden calf. It is a lesson we should also learn and internalize.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Why break the tablets?

Coming down from Sinai with the carved tablets from God, we can understand Moses’s anguish at the golden calf. Still, it is hard to understand why Moses broke the tablets. Once he saw the Israelites dancing about an idol, Moses could no longer contain himself.

But this seems inadequate. Why should his reaction to the perfidy of the people be to destroy the work of God, the most valuable single item in the history of the world? Was he that incapable of self-control? Better to have marched back up the mountain to deposit the tablets somewhere safe.

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They wanted something they could touch or see, to prove the reality of what they could not see. But Judaism fashioned ritual objects from good luck charms or conduits to God into reminders and symbols of our history and connection to God. We took the physical and stripped it of its ultimate power in the minds of human beings, for ultimacy belongs only to God.

The golden calf was a turning point in history not only for the sin but for Moses’s reaction. Moses smashed the tablets forever and always not to punish but to elevate. The fragments remind us of the fate of all physical things, but the message reminds us of the eternity of the Creator of all. (For those who wish to study the meaning of idolatry more deeply, Kenneth Seeskin wrote a wonderful short book, No Other Gods; and Moshe Halbertal with Avishai Margalit a more comprehensive philosophical guide, Idolatry.)

The writer is the Max Webb Senior Rabbi of Sinai Temple, Los Angeles. Twitter: @rabbiwolpe.
The failure of the Aharon-Hur administration

Ceremonial transitions of power and authority of an elite might be two lessons learned from the events of the Golden Calf

As he ascended to Mount Sinai, Moses temporarily relinquished power to Aharon and Hur. We do not know exactly what transpired during those 40 days, but we do know the result: the building of a Golden Calf, the near obliteration of the Israeli nation, and the subsequent execution of 3,000 of the perpetrators.

To investigate the failure of the Aharon-Hur administration, one must go back to the revolutionary reforms enacted by Moses at Jethro’s advice just a few weeks prior. Up until then, people came to Moses “to inquire of God.” Moses explained this system of government to Jethro: “when they have a matter, it cometh unto me; and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God, and His laws.”

The Moses to God administrative system worked since the people “believed in the LORD, and in His servant Moses.” But then suddenly, intermediaries were appointed. Those judges did not profess to have a direct line to God, but rather the ability to apply what Moses taught them. It was a sudden shift from prophecy to judgment. At least those “secular” judges operated under the auspices of Moses and could elevate big matters to him, but then Moses appointed two autonomous leaders, who ruled based on a one-line mandate: “And to the elders he said, wait for us here until we return to you, and here Aharon and Hur are with you; whoever has a case, let him go to them.”

This is the government structure under which the events of the Golden Calf occurred.

Moses seemed to apply the lessons of this structure’s failure. From thereon, transition of powers were done through a grandiose ceremony, as opposed to a one-line mandate. When Moses transitioned his priestly power to his brother Aharon, it was done through a multi-week ceremony, when decades later, Aharon transitioned power to his son Elazar it was done in a celebrated ritual on Flor HaHar, and when Moses himself transferred his power to Joshua, it was done through a detailed ceremony that made clear that Joshua is the new leader and that God is with him.

Moses also seems to apply another lesson from the Aharon-Hur failure: the introduction of an elite. Those two items – ceremonial transition and the authority of a Moses-appointed elite have proven extraordinarily successful.

ο The transition to the Levites lasted for over 1,000 years until the Temple was destroyed, and the transition of priestly powers lasts till today. Nobody questions the elite status of the Cohens, such as being the first to have the honor of Aliyah when the Torah is read in synagogues.

ο While the ceremonial transition of powers to an elite were successful, the unceremonial transition of powers was not. There was no ceremony anointing the tribe of Judah. This could perhaps explain the people’s lack of acceptance of Hur and rejection of Caleb, president of Judah and only tribal leader who joined Moses and Joshua’s call to proceed to the promised land.

ο This rejection continued in King David’s dynasty, whose rule over the united kingdom lasted for only two generations and was then met with the call: “We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel.”

ο So the people accept when it is clear Moses delegated, such as in the case of the Cohens and the Levites, but not when it is unclear such as in the case of Judah.

ο Hence, when the Temple was destroyed and a new elite emerged – the Pharisees sages (Chazal) – they too established that their source of power is from Moses – the Oral Torah! Indeed, Rabbinical Judaism, which they seeded, remained the organizing principle of Judaism through 2,000 years of exile.

ο Yet, while preserving Judaism, this system failed to lead the Jews back home. Theodor Herzl set forth to do just that with the cooperation of the rabbis. Herzl, like Moses, understood the need for ceremonies and for an elite: “I am a staunch supporter of monarchal institutions,” he wrote and then explained: “These allow a continuous policy, and represent the interests of a historically famous family born and educated to rule, whose desires are bound up with the preservation of the state.”

ο In Christian Europe, there was broad acceptance till the 20th century that God appointed the monarchs, hence the monarch’s desires are bound up with the preservation of the state.

ο Once Europe stopped believing in the Divine, it also stopped believing in Divine-right monarchies, and over the last century, new elites have filled the void.

ο In Great Britain it has been the civil servants. Prime ministers such as Tony Blair recounted their shock upon taking office as to just how little power they had relative to the civil service. This arguably created a continuous policy that Herzl attributed to the monarchs, and hence could “balance” erratic choices by the electorate.

In Europe, it is arguably the European Commission which has limited direct accountability to Europeans. For example the commission’s policies toward Israel are by far more critical than that of its member countries and its citizens. This too is an opportunity to balance “uneducated” views by the European electorate. After all, not everybody can be a foreign policy expert. For example, while individual Europeans might think that the European interest is prosperity for Palestinians, the European Commission has been aggressively sabotaging Palestinian employment and mentorship in Jewish-owned businesses, such as in SodaStream.

In Israel, there was a clear elite in the early days: the Ben-Gurion-led left-wing Ashkenazi who built the country and its institutions. Since 1977, when the Labor party was voted out, Israel seems to have gradually gravitated toward a model of multiple-elites such as the Druze in the police, Arabs in pharmaceutical and medical fields, ultra-Orthodox in motorcycle medics that saves thousands of lives every month, the national-religious in service, volunteering and ideology, and seculars in the judicial system and academia. Perhaps applying the lessons of the Aharon-Hur administration, such a model of multiple elites might be a necessary interim step before a model of no-elites.

Yet perhaps there is also another lesson from the failure of the Aharon-Hur administration that is relevant today. Moses checked the co-head’s power, and their mandate was not conveyed directly to the people, but rather to the elders. They were a weak executive by design. As there has been an unprecedented global shift of power over the last century from absolute regimes to checked executive, one should apply the lessons and beware of inadvertently creating breeding grounds for golden calves.

ο Herzl understood that. Indeed, he identified weaknesses of the French democracy system and architect a more perfect version of European liberalism in the Jewish state. We do not have Moses today to appoint elites, but we do have the writings of Herzl – perhaps it is time to begin studying them, as a tool to create a more perfect society in Israel and around the world.

The writer is the author of the upcoming book Judaism 3.0. For details: Judaism-Zionism.com; for his geopolitical articles: EuropeAndJerusalem.com. For his commentaries on the weekly Torah portion: ParashaAndHerzl.com
FRIDAY CROSSWORD

Across  
1. He got a different purpose for lodge (9)  
8. Shop uncovered concise memo transforming food technology (4,9)  
11. Plant once more on television (5)  
12. Loser might receive this as consolation (5)  
13. First woman to enter the French bank (5)  
16. Got in trouble around rocky height back in cave (6)  
17. The smallest amount give a high-pitched cry (6)  
18. Start to watch playing this game (5)  
19. Corrupt female I left in river (6)  
20. Susan turned back with heavyweight to find station (6)  
21. Fellow in agreement (5)  
22. Egyptian port (4)  
24. Beat peculiar brother without hesitation (5)  
26. Father with name for seductive woman (5)  
27. Conceited, I bring in a set of books (4-9)  
28. Rock having even weight (9)  

Down  
2. Stop and state temperature (5)  
3. Move out of sight on the radio! (6)  
4. Speak about number being flowery (6)  
5. Review problem at university (3,2)  
6. From objectors remarkably, his sympathy is actually discouraging (4,9)  
7. Prostrate after mishap and likely to get hurt (8-5)  
9. Coldness following stiffness (9)  
10. Counting as an appraisal that could be dead first (9)  
11. In this case there are no capitals (5)  
14. Jealously losing cockney female striving for superiority (5)  
15. Chemical discovered in Leicestershire (5)  
16. Troublesome Naomi embraces learner, one in the fuel industry (6)  
20. Part of Mercedes, Cortina or another car (6)  
21. Reportedly purchase most of the food easily (2,3)  
22. Something wrong about Italian protest (3-2)  

QUICK CROSSWORD

Across  
1. Avoid (4)  
4. Break apart (6)  
8. Status (8)  
9. Obligation (4)  
10. Doing word (4)  
11. Macaque (6)  
13. Extra run in cricket (3,3)  
16. Message (5)  
17. Sun-dried brick (5)  
19. Wear down (6)  
22. Chest disorder (6)  
24. Egyptian port (4)  
25. Pound (sl.) (4)  
26. Particular (8)  
27. Horrified (6)  
28. Quaint (4)  

Down  
2. Humble (7)  
3. Winter sport (6)  
4. Honeyed (6)  
5. Jog (5)  
6. Behave meekly (3,6,1)  
7. Russian city (2,10)  
12. Principal (4)  
14. Test (4)  
15. Obstruct (3)  
18. Sees dip (anag.) (7)  
20. Hound dog (6)  
21. Grovelling (6)  
23. Hardy (anag.) (5)  

WORDBUILDER

How many words of three or more letters, including plurals, can you make from the five letters, using each letter only once? No foreign words or words beginning with a capital are allowed. There's at least one five-letter word.  
TODAY’S GOALS:  
Good - 7  Excellent - 9  Amazing - 10  
SOLUTION 4525: ail, ails, aim, aims, ais, alm,  
ism, lam, lams, lias, lima, lis, mail, mails, mi,  
mils, sail, sal, salmi, sim, slam, slim.
Schneider v Federau, Berlin 1979. Material is level, but both sides have vague threats with queen and knight. It was Schneider's white move, and he likes his opponent was an ordinary amateur. His first thought was 1 Qd2 to guard against checks and protect his b4 pawn, but then he thought: can Black really mate me? He began to calculate: if it was Black's move and he went 1 ...Qb2+ 2 Ke3 Qxb4 3 Ne6+ Kg7 4 Qc4+ 6 Ke3 Qe2+ and it's probably a draw. But of course after 1 ...Qb2+ 2 Kg1 Qc1+ 3 Kf2 (not 3 Kh2? it was Black's move and he went 1 ...Qb2+ 2 Kg1 Qc1+ 3 Kf2) 4 Qd2 Qxb2 5 Kxf2 he wins.

In this case there are no forcing moves, and I win his queen. So Schneider thought was 1 Qd2 to guard against checkmate me? He began to calculate: if it was Black's move and he went 1 ...Qb2+ 2 Kg1 Qc1+ 3 Kf2? Qh1 mate) Qf1+ 4 Ke3 Qe2+ 5 Kd4 Qc4+ 6 Ke3 Qe2+ and it's probably a draw. But of course after 1 ...Qb2+ 2 Kg1 Black can simply take Qxb4. So can I do anything first, since it's my move? I have an idea. I play 1 Qxe7. Can you spot what happened next?

**SUDOKU**

**CHESS**

**THURSDAY’S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS**

Across:
1 Tack, 3 Titian, (Tactician)
9 Relieve, 10 Await,
11 Bib, 12 Petit four,
13 Sketch, 14 Scrambil, 16 Rehearsal,
19 Dab, 21 Anvil, 22 Optimal,
23 Melody, 24 Knee.

Down:
1 Throb, 2 Calibre, 4 Inarticulate, 5 Idaho, 6 Natural,
7 Bespectacled, 8 Next, 13 Sarcastic, 15 Abdomen, 17 Hovel,
18 Show, 20 Belphe.

Solution CNS0084: 1 Qxe7 Qf1+ 2 Ke3

Schneider plays 1 Qxe7? Qxe7 and Black wins.

**5X5**

Insert the missing letters to complete ten words - five across the grid and five down.

```plaintext
S I E
O O
A O D
L T Y
I S
```

Reference: Concise Oxford 10th Edition
Profs. Mindy Levine, born to a lawyer mother and physician father, grew up in West Hempstead, Long Island.

She married during her doctoral studies in chemistry at Columbia University, NY. During her postdoctoral studies at MIT, the couple lived in Brookline, Mass. Afterward, when they moved to the small town of Sharon, Mindy became a tenured faculty member at the University of Rhode Island.

By that time her hard work and tenacity had resulted in a very impressive CV. Despite a few Israeli vacations, Mindy had never lived here, though she maintains that she “wanted to live in Israel my whole life.” However, in 2018, accompanied by her husband and three children, she spent a five-month sabbatical at Bar-Ilan University. She taught two graduate classes in English, and her two older boys managed well in school.

When they returned to the US, Mindy was determined to return to Israel the following year to make aliyah. This was determined to return to Israel the end of her 12-year marriage.

Upon her return to the US, Mindy directed a lab at Ariel University, teaching two graduate classes in English, and her two older boys managed well in school. In addition, she hopes to revive the circus course which interested him. The youngest was managing in first grade.

Though Mindy reports that “the first semester of teaching in Hebrew was hard, as I had to master the requisite technical vocabulary,” she quickly adjusted to her new job instructing 75 premedical students at Ariel University. She was able to teach in person at the start of the academic year. Of course, by the dawning of the second semester she had to learn to convey the curriculum via Zoom, though some labs remained frontal. “Corona’s made things a little more tiring,” she admits.

Mindy describes the initial trauma of their arrival at “a pretty terrible rental apartment – a third floor walk-up – with 15 suitcases,” and their arrival at “a pretty terrible rental apartment – a third floor walk-up – with 15 suitcases,” in the blazing heat of summer.

“I carried the cases upstairs and the boys helped,” she says, “but I hadn’t realized that the apartment had no fridge, no stove and only one air conditioner.”

Although Mindy had rented some furniture, she had to busy herself finding some second-hand appliances on Facebook. She remembers ruefully how they sat on the floor that first Friday night eating their frugal supper of chicken nuggets, potato burekas and frozen peas.

Mindy was delighted when their home in Sharon was sold, as this enabled her to buy an apartment in Givat Shmuel. That apartment had no fridge, no stove and only one air conditioner.

Though Mindy had never lived here, though she maintains that she “wanted to live in Israel my whole life.” However, in 2018, accompanied by her husband and three children, she spent a five-month sabbatical at Bar-Ilan University. She taught two graduate classes in English, and her two older boys managed well in school. In addition, she hopes to revive the circus course which interested him. The youngest was managing in first grade.

“Corona’s made things a little more tiring,” she admits.

Mindy directs a lab at Ariel University, focusing on analytical chemistry, or chemical sensors. Chemical detection sensing is needed to trace spoilage in mass food or beverage production facilities and may also alert to potential hazards in smaller workplaces. Homemade alcoholic drinks are an example of the latter.

“In 10 years, I hope to still be living in Givat Shmuel, preferably in this same apartment,” she says regarding the future. “We are renovating one room at a time here, to really turn it into a wonderful place. My oldest child doesn’t go to sleep early either, so he’s generally talking to me until 11 p.m. or asking for something (usually food). I have been fortunate in being able to work from home, but it’s hard to be focused without getting interrupted,” she says.

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“My ex-husband comes to visit the children, and my parents visit when they can. They are not Israeli citizens, so it is not always so easy, but they were here last February and again for the holidays. When they are here, they help a lot with the kids.”

“Corona’s made things a little more tiring,” she admits.

In addition, she hopes to revive the Party Elements, a small business she put on a show with a demonstration, followed by a hands-on activity for the group – all based on a theme, such as dinosaur science. The youngsters can “hatch” dinosaurs from ice eggs using colored salt water, for example, discover dinosaur “bones” or participate in controlled explosions. “My sixth-grader likes to assist,” she adds.

As in most families, COVID-19 presents its challenges. “My kids are around all the time, and seem to need something all the time. My oldest child doesn’t go to sleep early either, so he’s generally talking to me until 11 p.m. or asking for something (usually food). I have been fortunate in being able to work from home, but it’s hard to be focused without getting interrupted,” she says.

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“I chose research because I had an almost pathological fear of being bored,” she explains. “I had considered medicine, but really wanted to be doing something new every day. I thought about industry too, but to be honest, I wanted the regular interactions with students and the mentoring opportunities that I get from academia.”

In addition, she hopes to revive the Party Elements, a small business she had in America doing science birthday parties, whether in English or Hebrew. Mindy loves to incorporate “the element of fun” in her parties, geared mainly for ages six through nine. She puts on a show with a demonstration, followed by a hands-on activity for the group – all based on a theme, such as dinosaur science. The youngsters can “hatch” dinosaurs from ice eggs using colored salt water, for example, discover dinosaur “bones” or participate in controlled explosions. “My sixth-grader likes to assist,” she adds.

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“I love my apartment and love my job,” Mindy declares, always resolute about looking on the bright side, and consistently inspired by her chosen field of chemistry.
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