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The poster features a QR code, a logo for MHLV Dance, and several colorful illustrations of emotions: a smiling sun, a sad sun, a happy heart, a sad heart, and a blue flower with a sad face. Silhouettes of dancers are also present.

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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Robert M Beren Academy

Following Pesach break, RMBA students and faculty returned to campus and quickly immersed themselves in meaningful learning, creativity, and community experiences across all divisions.

RMBA came together in solemn remembrance of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, honoring their memory and drawing strength from the resilience of survivors whose courage continues to inspire future generations. The Upper School program opened with RMBA's High School Names, Not Numbers@ students lighting six memorial candles in tribute to Holocaust victims and in honor of the Houston-area survivors they interviewed for this year's documentary project. The program also featured a powerful presentation by Lisa Strauss, who shared the story of her grandfather, Martin Donald, tracing his journey from childhood in Berlin during the rise of Adolf Hitler to his service in the British forces and later role in bringing Nazis to justice after World War II.

Earlier that day, Lower School students participated in a meaningful Yom HaShoah tekes (assembly), where they shared reflections and sang Ani Ma'amin ("I Believe"). Alumna Hili Kister ('24), currently serving in Houston through Sherut Leumi (Israel National Service), also visited students in grades K-3 and read *The Happiest Boy on Earth*, offering younger learners an age-appropriate opportunity for reflection. Through learning, storytelling, and remembrance, RMBA students helped ensure that the memory and legacy of the Holocaust continued to be carried forward.

In Early Childhood, classrooms were filled with hands-on discovery and joyful engagement. Students celebrated Israeli pride as they prepared for Medinat Yisrael's 78th birthday through activities exploring the architecture, geography, and culture of Israel. They strengthened fine motor skills while creating Israeli flags using tweezers, cotton balls, and paint markers, and engaged with sensory and science stations as they began constructing 3D sensory maps inspired by Israel's landscapes. Their creativity continued with Israel-themed postcards, which were later assembled into a collabora-

tive classroom display representing the number 78.

Pesach learning came to life through a variety of creative and sensory-rich experiences. Students decorated Kiddush cups with gems, designed Seder plates while learning about the symbolic foods, and explored elements of the Kohanim's service in the Beit HaMikdash through hands-on activities simulating the collection of ashes. Additional sensory explorations introduced age-appropriate concepts related to food preparation and kosher practices. Across these experiences, students built foundational academic and social skills while deepening their connection to Torah learning and Jewish tradition.

Lower School students also engaged in experiential learning both in and beyond the classroom. As part of a multidisciplinary project on plants, students explored how trees grow, change, and adapt through research, engineering, and writing. They built wooden tree models, created trifold displays, and wrote informational essays based on

their research about different tree species. One highlight of the project was assembling and rebuilding a collaborative 3D tree puzzle, which helped students better visualize plant structure and adaptation. In preparation for their showcase, students focused on editing their writing, enhancing presentations with creative design elements, and practicing teamwork by sharing materials and supporting one another's work.

Third grade students enjoyed an educational visit to the Houston Museum of Natural Science, where they explored exhibits including King Tut's Tomb, searched for dinosaur fossils, and viewed Passport to the Universe. Throughout the museum, students engaged with interactive exhibits that deepened their curiosity about science and history. The group also enjoyed a picnic lunch at Miller Outdoor Theatre taking advantage of the beautiful weather.

Lower School students also showcased their creativity and problem-solving

skills during the RMBA STEAM Fair. The exhibition-style event invited families to explore a wide range of student projects highlighting science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics. From hands-on experiments to innovative design projects, the fair celebrated the curiosity, imagination, and enthusiasm students brought to their learning.

The RMBA Marathon also continues to be a tremendous success, with students steadily working mile by mile toward their goal. Many runners even gave up recess time to log extra miles, demonstrating impressive dedication and perseverance. With the finish line in sight, students prepared to complete the final 1.2 miles together, an exciting milestone that reflected both their commitment and their school spirit.

Upper School students engaged deeply with Holocaust education through research, reflection, and creative expression. Middle School students created original butterfly designs inspired by the Holocaust poetry collection *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, which they had





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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

studied in class. Using a wide variety of materials, they brought their artistic interpretations to life. Once completed, a team of middle school students, together with a high school student, designed and installed a display in the front lobby. The entire project was student-led and student-created, inspired by Holocaust Museum Houston's "Taking Flight" butterfly project from about a decade ago. In addition, seventh graders in Mr. Duke's class worked collaboratively on a classroom wall map of the world, with each country's national flag painted as part of the display.

Upper School students also participated in a Holocaust education project displayed in the hallway. Each class researched a central topic and presented its learning through informative posters. Topics included the Righteous Among the Nations, Holocaust survivor stories, acts of heroism, the origins of the Holocaust and those responsible, and the history of camps and ghettos, including daily life and living conditions during that time. Several students also shared personal family stories,

adding a deeply meaningful and personal dimension to the project. The experience emphasized remembrance and helped students connect with this history in a thoughtful and impactful way.

Beyond the classroom, RMBA's Parent Teacher Organization brought the community together for a Chopped-style cooking competition. Families gathered for an afternoon of friendly competition and culinary creativity as teams worked with mystery ingredients to create both savory and sweet dishes. The event provided a fun opportunity for students, parents, and staff to connect while celebrating the vibrant spirit of the RMBA community. As part of the event, the PTO also began collecting favorite family recipes for an upcoming RMBA Community Cookbook, which will highlight the flavors and traditions of the school community.

RMBA continues to grow and is currently seeking an Early Childhood Lead Teacher and an Early Childhood Assistant Teacher to join its warm,

nurturing school community. Those who are passionate about working with young children and creating a joyful, supportive classroom environment are encouraged to reach out to frontdesk@berenacademy.org for more information or to apply.



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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Congregation Torah Vachesed

Torah Vachesed has made great strides with their new hire, Morah Shpritz Solomon, as she plans events for both adults and children.

On Chol Haomed Pesach over 50 families enjoyed a community BBQ at Arthur Park with sports, raffles and cheers. Great weather added to the lively spirits.

To end Pesach off with a bang, Torah Vachesed members engaged in making Mufletot for the most important festival of the year, “The Mimunah,” as it escorts Pesach out and chametz back in.

Additional new programming includes Rosh Chodesh programs for women- see photo of perfume making activity in honor of Rosh Chodesh Iyar, and Pirkei Avot

learning series for high school girls with Rebbitzin Rachel Yaghobian and other guest speakers.

Torah Vachesed is pleased and proud to continue offering quality programming to its members and the community at large. Come visit us and see for yourself.




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Beth Rambam Community Gathers for Biur Chametz Ahead of Pesach

By Ben Helstein

As Pesach approached, members of Congregation Beth Rambam came together on Wednesday, April 1, for the annual mitzvah of Biur Chametz, creating a meaningful moment of preparation and reflection before the holiday. From 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM, families, children, and community members gathered outside the shul as fires were prepared for the burning of chametz. The sight of flames rising from the barrels, combined with the participation of all ages, created a powerful and memorable experience.

Parents stood alongside their children, guiding them through the process and explaining the significance of the mitzvah. Young boys and girls carefully brought their chametz to the fire,

watching as it was consumed, symbolizing the removal of physical and spiritual clutter before Pesach.

The atmosphere was both practical and meaningful. While the act itself is straightforward, the moment carries deeper meaning. Biur chametz is not only about clearing out food before the holiday. It is about making space for something greater, entering Pesach with a sense of renewal and intention.

This year, that message felt even more powerful as the Beth Rambam community continues to grow and build. With plans underway for an expanded campus, the image of clearing away the old to make room for something new resonated beyond the mitzvah itself. Just as families prepare their homes for Pesach, the congregation is preparing its space for the future, creating room for

more learning, more connection, and more community life.

One attendee shared, “There is something special about doing this together as a community. It makes the preparation for Pesach feel real, especially knowing how much the shul is growing.”

The gathering also served as an opportunity for connection. Families lingered, spoke with one another, and shared in the experience. For many children, it is one of the most vivid and memorable parts of the Pesach preparation, seeing the fire, participating in the mitzvah, and feeling part of something larger.



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When Curiosity Has Nowhere to Go

Why more families are rethinking the divide between Torah and academics—and a model that meets children where they are, at every level.

Henry David Thoreau wrote that “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” Most don’t say it out loud. We adjust. We make do. We tell ourselves things are fine.

In education, that often looks like choosing the school everyone else chooses and hoping it will work for our child. Sometimes it does. But for some, it doesn’t.

In many religious Jewish elementary and middle schools, Torah learning is strong and central, but general academics often lack structure, depth, or consistency. For children who are curious, quick, or ready for more, there is often no clear place for that energy to go. And for those who need a different pace, large classrooms make it difficult to adjust.

At first, nothing looks wrong. Over time, something shifts. A child who once leaned in begins to pull back. One parent described her son as serious about his learning, with a real love for Gemara, but also a strong pull toward broader academic education. He spent years trying to obtain it. Today, at 27, he is not working, not learning, and, in her words, “not connected to anything.”

Tehila S., a strong student through years of Beis Yaakov education, later discovered gaps in her reading comprehension when entering college and had to take remedial courses before advancing. Now a manager of physician assistants, she reflects that there was not enough emphasis on study skills or preparation for real-world responsibilities, supporting a large family, covering the cost of kosher living, and managing the financial demands of daily life.

There are schools that try to do both, strong Torah and strong academics, but often at a cost that most families cannot carry. That leaves parents choosing between what they believe in, what their children need, and what they can afford.

In Houston, something different is

happening. Families are coming from across the country, drawn in part by a community that allows new approaches to take root, while in other places they might struggle to gain a foothold.

At Ohr Zahava School, the premise is simple: Torah learning and academic study are part of the same pursuit, each deepening and advancing the other. Now in its own home on Braewick Street, the school is building an academic yeshiva that prioritizes self-directed learning and welcomes curious, diligent students of all kinds, whether advanced or needing a different path to succeed.

The mornings are serious—kriyah, Chumash, Mishnah, halacha—taught with clarity and structure. Students build fluency and confidence and know how to learn.

That same standard continues throughout the day with academic studies. Students read full texts, not summaries. They memorize poetry. They write, including in cursive, and learn to express ideas clearly. They study history, science, and math in a way that builds real skill. They learn art and music as a part of their core curriculum. They cook. They build. And they go out.

In a unit leading up to Pesach, students studied freedom not only through Yetziyas Mitzrayim, but alongside the thinkers who shaped how the world understands liberty. They asked what it means to be free, not just physically, but internally. Then they went to the Water Wall in downtown Houston.

Standing inside the rushing water, they could picture the force and scale of the yetzias mitzrayim, not as a story, but as something real.

This is how learning stays. How does it work? The school uses a Montessori-inspired model. Children move at their pace. They push ahead where they are strong. They get support where they need it. They learn how to manage their work and take responsibility for it.

There is structure behind it. Ohr Zahava has a full-time dyslexia specialist and behavioralist. There are movement

breaks throughout the day. A gross motor gym is being added next year.

Support is not pulled out, it is built in. As one teacher put it, “Students receive the core of their intervention within the classroom. The supports are built into the lesson itself, intervention isn’t separate, it’s part of the learning.”

Most students at Ohr Zahava are already working above grade level in some area or showing real strength in music, sports, art, cooking, or something else. But that is not the main point. They take their work seriously. They care about what they produce, and it shows.

One parent said simply that her children have learned how to work. Another described watching her children grow, more confident, more capable, forming real friendships and learning how to treat others well.

And then there is the question every parent eventually asks: Can we do this in a way that families can afford?

At Ohr Zahava, tuition is \$8,850. As founder Megan Kluger explains, “I don’t want tuition to break the back of families, so I looked and looked for ways to cut costs. This includes mixed-age classrooms, use of technology, and helping students learn independently.”

For families like Tehila’s, this removes the tradeoff. Children can build strong skills, stay within the values of their home, and enter high school ready, steady, capable, and still connected. Not resentful of Torah. Not unprepared for the world. The question is no longer whether another model exists. It does. The question is whether more families are ready to choose it.

Ohr Zahava is currently accepting applications for early childhood (ages 3–5) and grades kindergarten through 5th and welcomes inquiries from families interested in a future middle school option.

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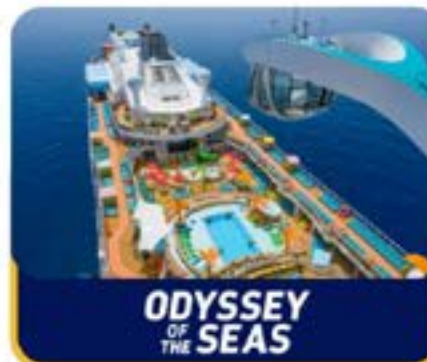


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WORD SEARCH

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|--------------|-------------|----------|
| Shavuot | Firstfruits | Megillah |
| Torah | Wheat | Night |
| Sinai | Barley | Study |
| Moses | Dairy | Har |
| Commandments | Cheesecake | Flowers |
| Tablets | Blintzes | Mountain |
| Revelation | Milk | Ten |
| Covenant | Honey | Festival |
| Israel | Ruth | |
| Harvest | Boaz | |
| Bikurim | Naomi | |

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE: 1. The butterfly is purple 2. There are 2 bees. 3. The middle butterfly is green. 4. The boot is yellow. 5. Spring is missing an 'l'. 6. The middle of the flower the cow is holding is a different color. 7. The leaves near the bunny are missing. 8. The blue flowers in the front are missing. 9. There is a puddle under the flower pot. 10. The leaves on the flower the cow is holding are a different color. BRAIN TEASERS: 1. A palm tree 2. A needle. 3. Your breath.

CORNER

POINTS to PONDER

If you expect the unexpected, doesn't that make it expected?

Why do we call them apartments if they're all stuck together?

If a turtle loses its shell, is it homeless or naked?

If a clock is hungry, does it go back four seconds?



BRAIN TEASERS

1. What kind of tree can you carry in your hand?

2. What has an eye but cannot see, and is often filled with tears?

3. What can you hold without ever touching it?

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS GEN-Z STYLE

1. I'm Hashem. No switching mains, no side quests with other gods. No alt accounts. Loyalty only, chat.
2. No idol builds. If you're crafting statues and glazing them like they're divine... that's max sus.
3. Don't name-drop Hashem for clout. No fake oaths, no "on God" when you're capping.
4. Shabbat = HARD log off. No grind, no hustle, no sneaky side missions. Just rest, family, aura reset.
5. Honor your parents. They carried your whole origin story, don't crash out on them.
6. No killing. That's not edgy, that's just instant ban behavior.
7. No rizzing up your neighbor's wife. Zero sneaky links, no cheating arc, stay in your lane.
8. Don't steal. Not cash, not snacks, not your friend's charger. No sticky-finger energy.
9. Don't spread fake lore. No lying, no rumors, no ruining someone's rep for clicks.
10. Don't be eyeing your neighbor's stuff. No envy, no comparing, no weird jealousy spiral. Mind your own build.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Torah Day School Engages Students and Families Through Meaningful Hands-On Learning Experiences

Torah Day School of Houston continues to enrich student learning through meaningful, experiential programs that bring Jewish tradition, creativity, and academic growth to life across grade levels.

In early childhood, fathers joined their children for a special “Matzah Bakery with Dad” program, which offered families a hands-on opportunity to connect with the Pesach experience in a joyful and interactive setting. The activity allowed students to explore the process of matzah baking alongside their fathers, deepening both their understanding of the holiday and their sense of family involvement in learning.

Another highlight in the early childhood division was a festive model Seder, where students participated in singing and dancing as they learned about the structure and meaning of the Pesach Seder. The celebration combined movement, music, and tradition, creating an engaging and memorable intro-

duction to the holiday.

In the lower grades, first grade students continue to thrive through a variety of hands-on learning experiences. Recently, students shared their writing with one another in an outdoor setting on a beautiful day, encouraging confidence, collaboration, and pride in their developing literacy skills.

In addition, Morah Gila’s class participated in a creative pre-Pesach project by tie-dyeing Pesach pillow covers. This artistic activity blended creativity with holiday preparation, allowing students to personalize items that connect to the spirit of Pesach.

Through these diverse programs, Torah Day School of Houston fosters an environment where academic growth, creativity, and Jewish learning are seamlessly integrated, strengthening both student skills and connection to tradition.



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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

YTE

Hatzalah Visits YTE Nursery classes

Last week, our 4 Nursery classes started their annual unit on Community Helpers. As an exciting kickoff, they were treated to a visit by the Hatzalah ambulance. Rabbi Aryeh Wolbe and

Mr. Yossi Goldberger, both YTE parents and Hatzalah volunteers, spoke to the children. The children had the opportunity to see inside the ambulance, hear how the radios work, and learn about some of the equipment and how Hatzalah helps people every day!



Rosh Chodesh Iyar at YTE

Rosh Chodesh is always an exciting time at school! Each division has its own assembly or program to mark the special day. Early childhood focused on Ve'Ahavta Le'Reyecha Kamocha.

Groups of children had to collect colored papers, and then organized themselves by color. Once they made paper chains with each color, they then connected all the colored paper chains around the gym. It was beautiful to see!



The 1st and 2nd Grade boys, 3rd and 4th Grade boys, and 5th- 8th Grade boys got together in different groups

l'kavod erev Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh for onegs. They had singing, storytelling, and enjoyed soda and kugel!



The 1st- 8th Grade girls had a special Rosh Chodesh assembly. After a beautiful Hallel, they did a fun maze activity with a twist. There were tricky ques-

tions the girls had to answer in order to know which way to move through the maze. The focus was on unity. Then they made delicious edible Lag Ba'Omer bonfires!



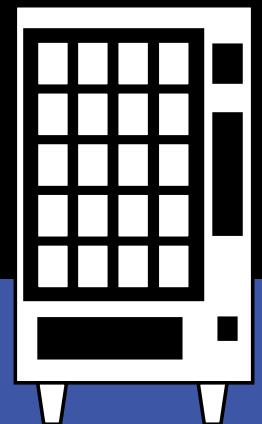
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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Olami Houston

Olami Houston young Jewish professionals gathered at the home of Rabbi Johnny Ouzzan for Zikaron Basalon, an annual Yom Hashoah program that brings Holocaust survivors to various homes across Houston to share their stories with Houston's Jewish community. Bob Ullmann came and shared the miraculous story of his family's escape from Belgium as the Germans were

closing in. The Ouzzans prepared a table of refreshments for socializing, followed by Bob's speech, and then every participant was given the opportunity to light a candle in memory of a Jew killed in the Shoah. This program was a partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston and the Israeli American Council, and Holocaust Museum Houston.



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Cooking & Cuisine with Chef Shoshana



Shoshana Isaacson is a chef and food writer. Residing in Houston, Texas with her husband, she cooks for a wide array of people. Passionate about world cuisines she is constantly searching out kosher ingredients, bringing authenticity to her table. When not cooking she enjoys reading, gardening, her passion for waste reduction, and spending time with her family. She can be reached at chefshoshana@theoutoftowncook.com or <https://www.theoutoftowncook.com>.

From Matan Torah to Harvest to Table

In Shir HaShirim King Solomon refers to the words of Torah as being “Like Honey and Milk, it Lies Under Your Tongue”. We know that as our neshamot need the words of Torah to grow our bodies need food to nourish them. On Shavuot we can do both of these things studying Torah and eating foods from the harvest of the Spring season. Here are a few recipes to bring to your Shavuot table.

Egyptian Barley Salad with Pomegranate Vinaigrette

Dairy. Serves 6 - 8

Based on a recipe from onceuponachef.com

Ingredients:

- 1-1/2 cups pearl barley
- Salt and pepper
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
- 2-1/2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses / syrup
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/2 cup golden raisins
- 1/2 cup unsalted shelled pistachios or walnuts, chopped coarse
- 4 oz feta cheese, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup scallions, green parts only, thinly sliced (you'll need 4 to 6 scallions)
- 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds

Step-by-Step Directions:

- Bring 4 quarts of water to boil in a large pot or Dutch oven. Add barley and 1 tablespoon salt, return to boil, and cook until tender, about 45 minutes, or according to package instructions. Drain the barley, spread onto a rimmed bak-

ing sheet, and let cool completely, about 15 minutes.

- In a large bowl, whisk together the oil, pomegranate molasses, lemon juice, sugar, cinnamon, cumin, and 1/4 teaspoon salt.
- Add the barley, cilantro, raisins, and pistachios (or walnuts) and gently toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Spread barley salad evenly on a serving platter and arrange feta, scallions, and pomegranate seeds in separate diagonal rows on top. Drizzle with extra oil and serve.

Vegetarian Barley Stuffed Grape Leaves

Parve. Makes 20 to 30 dolmas

Ingredients:

- 24-30 jarred grape leaves, rinsed well.
- 2-1/2 cups cooked barley.
- 1/3 cup red onion, finely chopped.
- 2 cloves garlic, minced.
- 3 tbsp fresh mint, dill, or oregano, chopped.
- 2 tbsp lemon juice (plus more for cooking).
- 2 tsp extra-virgin olive oil.
- 2 tbsp toasted pine nuts, roughly chopped.
- Salt and black pepper to taste.
- 1.5 cups vegetable stock.

Step-by-Step Directions:

- Soak grape leaves in cold water for 30 minutes to remove brine, changing the water 2-3 times.
- Combine cooked barley, onion, garlic, herbs, lemon juice, olive oil, pine nuts, salt, and pepper in a bowl.
- Lay a leaf smooth-side down. Place 1 heaping tablespoon of filling near the stem. Fold the stem end up, fold the sides inward, and roll tightly into a cylinder.



- Line the bottom of a pot with leftover leaves and lemon slices. Arrange rolls tightly in layers. Add vegetable stock and 1/2 cup lemon juice to the pot.
- Simmer: Place a heavy inverted plate on top to keep rolls submerged. Cover and simmer on low for 35-40 minutes.
- Allow the rolls to cool in the pot for at least 15 minutes to firm up. Serve warm or cold.

Buttered Barley & Apple Cake

Dairy. Serves approximately 8 - 10
Old recipe from the UK

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cups Barley Grits
- 2 Lemons, zested
- 1 1/4 cups Whole Milk
- 1/4 cup Salted Butter
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1 cup Super fine Sugar / regular granulated can be substituted if unavailable
- 4 Eggs
- 1 1/2 cups All Purpose Flour
- 1 tsp Baking Powder
- 1 cup sliced Tart Apples (slightly over is fine)
- 1/4 Light Brown Sugar

Step-by-Step Directions:

- Add the barley, zest of one of the lemons, and milk to a saucepan.

Bring slowly to a boil, lower to a simmer, and cover. Cook gently, checking and stirring occasionally, adding water if it gets too thick too quickly, for 20 minutes. Check that the grains are tender through; if not continue to cook until they are (adding extra liquid if required) and the mix is very thick. Remove from the heat, beat in the butter, and cover. Leave to cool. This can be done ahead of time and kept in the fridge.

- When you're ready to bake, pre-heat the oven to 350F. Grease a 9 inch spring-form pan and dust with extra light brown sugar.
- In a large bowl, thoroughly beat together the cooled barley porridge, sugar, eggs, and the zest of the second lemon. Separately, whisk the flour, baking soda, and salt together. Fold this through the wet batter.
- Scrape the mix into your prepared cake pan, and arrange the apple slices neatly over the top. Sprinkle over the 1/4 cup light brown sugar. Bake in the preheated oven for 1 hour until a skewer in the center comes out clean. The sugar will caramelize on the edges of the apples and may burn just slightly towards the end. Cover the pan with tin foil for the last 15 minutes if you don't like this effect.

Counting the Omer, Counting Your Steps: A 49-Day Journey for the 40+ Job Seeker

By Ovadia Hayat, Founder of Act II NOW

Every year between Passover and Shavuot we are given a beautiful assignment: count the Omer. For 49 days we mark one step at a time, moving from the physical freedom of Passover toward the spiritual freedom of receiving the Torah at Sinai. It is not a sprint. It is a deliberate, daily climb one day, one count, one small elevation at a time.

The same quiet discipline applies to the 40+ job seeker.

Many of us in mid-life or later feel we are standing at the foot of a very tall mountain. The market's changed. Age bias is real. Applications disappear. Interviews go silent. It's easy to look at the 49 (or 490) steps still ahead and feel overwhelmed. But the Omer teaches us something powerful: we do not have to conquer the mountain in one leap. We only have to take the next single step - faithfully, consistently, and with intention.

Each day of the Omer is an invitation to improve one small area of ourselves. The same is true in your job search. You do not need a perfect resume, a flawless LinkedIn profile, or a sudden burst of youthful energy. You only need to improve one thing today. Maybe it's sending one thoughtful outreach message. Maybe rewriting one bullet on your resume to highlight the judgment and results you bring. Maybe it is simply reminding yourself, "I'm not done yet."

The beauty of the Omer count is that the steps compound. Day 1 feels small. Day 49 feels transformative. The same compounding happens in a career transition. One daily networking conversation becomes ten new connections. One refined interview story becomes confidence that shines through in every conversation. One decision to keep showing up becomes momentum that recruiters and hiring managers can actually feel.

At 40, 50, 60 and beyond, you already possess what younger candidates are still trying to build: perspective, resilience, pattern recognition, and the hard-earned ability to steady a team through uncertainty. These are not liabilities. They are the very qualities companies desperately need right now. Your job is not to erase your experience. Your job is to reveal it one deliberate step at a time.

This season as we continue to count up the Omer, I invite you to count with purpose. Each evening, ask yourself: What was the one step I took today that moved me closer to my next chapter? Write it down. Celebrate it. Then wake up tomorrow and take the next one. Because just as the Jewish people did not receive the Torah in a single moment but through 49 days of preparation, your next meaningful role will not appear in a single breakthrough. It will be built, day by day, through the small, consistent steps you choose to take.



You're not starting over. You're climbing.

And every single day you choose to count the next step, you are proving - to yourself and to the world - that your best chapter is still ahead

Ovadia Hayat is the founder of Act II NOW, helping Houston-area and nationwide professionals 40+ relaunch with confidence and momentum. A former corporate recruiter with over 20 years placing hundreds of candidates, he now brings that insider perspective to mid-career transitions.

FAMILY LIFE

The Middah that speaks the Loudest

By Rabbanit Rachel Yaghobian

Sefirat Haomer is filled with 49 days of counting. It's filled with the 7 weeks corresponding to the 7 Sefirot. Chessed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod and Malchut. Each of the 49 days of Sefira has its unique blend. Its own opportunity for growth, introspection and study. Each week focuses us on the Middah on hand. Gives us an opportunity to see that Middah intertwined with the others. To see that Middah in its dominance. To try to capture as much as possible from that Middah before we move onto the next one.

Here I will focus on the first three weeks of Sefirat Haomer.

Week 1 - Chessed- giving, lovingkindness, an abundance of compassion and benevolence. Clearly the Middah of Avraham Avinu.

Week 2- the Middah of Yitzchak- Gevurah. Often misinterpreted as a negative Middah when misunderstood. In loose translation this Middah reflects discipline, limits, boundaries, judgement

and strictness.

Week 3- Tiferet- Balance and harmony. The Middah of Yaakov Avinu. This is quite a unique Middah. This Middah is the true blend of the two Middot above. A perfect combination of Chessed and Gevurah. The giving with boundaries, the kindness with limits, the love with discipline.

For many of us, IMHO, this is the most vital Middah. The balance, the harmony, the equilibrium, the tone that it sets in our lives is crucial.

This Middah of Tiferet takes Chessed to a whole new level. Think about Chessed-giving, flowing, wanting, desiring, non-ending kindness. What could be better? Could there be any harm in it? Yet giving without Gevura - can be harmful, hurtful, useless, overused and underappreciated. Gevura brings in the boundaries so needed in chessed, the limits so valuable to us, the discipline so crucial in sometimes stepping back, holding back and giving just a little bit less. Perhaps this sounds bad, or wrong or awful

This is where Tiferet comes in. In every aspect of our lives, we should be combining these two, whether it's in the chinuch of our children, chinuch of ourselves, in our relationship with Hashem, or in our relationship with others. The number one most important middah is balance - Tiferet. Never be too extreme to one side or the other. Never be too drastic, too dramatic, too wonderful or too terrible. Always choose the "Derech Hamelech" as the Rambam says, the mid- path, the path of balance, of Tiferet.

Being able to recognize, practice, appreciate and integrate this Middah into our lives is a tremendous Avoda and has tremendous rewards. It will certainly yield much healthier quality lives for each and every one of us.

During Sefirat Haomer- it's a real opportunity to use each day to climb just a bit higher- to use each day to learn and gain just a bit more. Join the Sefirot of the Omer Webinar with Rachel Yaghobian.

Contact Rachel at rachelyaghobian@gmail.com or at 832-659-5506, Its never too late to add more meaning and learn-

ing to your life.

Rachel Yaghobian is an experienced Kallah teacher and Shana Rishona mentor. She provides many opportunities for Torah learning and self- growth through nurturing our relationships with ourselves, others and our children.

She creates a consistent plan and platform for her clients to return to in a safe space for mentoring and growth. Her practical approach leaves her clients with many tools to use and implement in their own lives.

Rachel is also an experienced doula, who provides childbirth education, doula services and postpartum support and resources.

To contact Rachel rachelyaghobian@gmail.com or 832-659-5506. (text is best) Check out her new website www.rachelyaghobian.com and check her out on social media.

Practical Parenting



Nicole Rzonzew holds a Bachelor's in Psychology and a Master's in Education and is currently pursuing a second Master's in Mental Health Counseling. With over 20 years of experience in education, including 14 years as principal of Chabad's Gan Lubavitch in Bogotá, she now serves as EC and LS Counselor at RMBA. A proud parent of two, Nicole is passionate about guiding parents and supporting children's growth and wellbeing.

Raising Emotionally Intelligent Children

"A gentle response turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath."

-Mishlei Shlomo

In today's fast-paced and often overwhelming world, raising emotionally intelligent children has become not just a value, but a necessity. Emotional intelligence—the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions while responding effectively to others—is deeply aligned with timeless Jewish wisdom. Long before psychology gave language to these ideas, these principles were already being lived and taught: the power of words, self-awareness, and the impact of our behavior on others.

At the heart of this approach lies a simple yet profound truth: children learn far more from what we do than from what we say. It is not only our words, or even how we say them—it is how we live.

Modern psychological research, including frameworks like Conscious Discipline, highlights that emotional regulation is not innate; it is taught through relationships. Children "borrow" the calm of the adult before they can generate their own. Over time, a child's internal voice begins to echo the voice of their parents. A child who is guided through emotional dysregulation with validation and calm support may one day hear internally, "Breathe—you can handle this." In contrast, a child whose emotions were dismissed—"Stop crying, it's not a big deal"—may internalize a far harsher voice: "Of course I messed up. I can't do anything right." This reflects a powerful idea: before we can teach children what to think, we must first teach them how to be.

Language is one of the most powerful tools we possess. Words can either open a child's heart or shut it down. When a child is upset, instead of dismissing their feelings ("You're fine,"

"Stop crying"), we can validate their experience: "I see you're feeling frustrated," or "That was really disappointing." This does not mean we agree with every behavior, but it does mean we acknowledge the emotion beneath it. In doing so, we teach children that their inner world matters and that emotions are manageable, not threatening.

When our words are grounded in empathy and sincerity, they reach our children in a way that lectures and corrections cannot. Children don't just hear what we say—they feel it.

Conscious Discipline further emphasizes the importance of modeling self-regulation. When we, as adults, pause before reacting—taking a deep breath, softening our tone, and choosing our words carefully—we demonstrate emotional mastery in real time. This is not about perfection. In fact, moments when we lose our patience can become powerful teaching opportunities if we are willing to repair: "I was feeling overwhelmed, and I spoke too harshly. I'm sorry. Let me try again." Such moments teach accountability, humility, and resilience. Most importantly, they show children that mistakes are opportunities for growth. Additionally, becoming an emotionally intelligent person requires self-awareness. Helping children name their emotions—anger, jealousy, excitement, disappointment—gives them the vocabulary to engage in this inner work. A child who can say "I feel left out" is far better equipped than one who can only act out that feeling through behavior. It also encourages children to look inward rather than blame others or their circumstances, and to take an active role in developing their own sense of well-being.

Focus on what children can do, not just what they feel. In moments of upset, stay calm, name the emotion ("You seem frustrated"), and guide them toward the next step: "What can you do to make this better?" or "Let's try again." Encourage accountability by separating the child from the behavior: "You're a good kid, and that choice didn't work," and then help them repair—apologize, fix, or try a different strategy. Model this yourself when you make mistakes. Over time, these small, consistent actions teach children to pause, reflect, take responsibility, and respond thoughtfully instead of reacting impulsively.

Emotional intelligence strengthens relationships—at home, in school, and in the wider community. The ability to listen, empathize, and respond thoughtfully fosters connection and trust. These are not just social skills; they are

life skills.

Ultimately, raising emotionally intelligent children is about more than managing behavior. It is about nurturing young people with the capacity for awareness, compassion, and growth. When we combine modern psychological insight with enduring wisdom, we create a powerful framework for raising children who are not only well-behaved, but deeply grounded, resilient, and connected.

And perhaps most importantly, we remember: our children are always watching us—how we respond to them, and how we respond to the world.

Book Recommendation: *Permission to Feel* by Marc Brackett



Ask the Dating Coach

Dear Dating Coach:

Now that Pesach is over, if I am a mother of a boy and a mother of a girl who are ready to start dating, how do I prepare them practically with some basic tips — differently and/or the same?

BATYA MOSKOWITZ:



1. SAME FOR BOTH:

The “House Rules” Checklist

- Set the 24-hour rule: Within 24 hours of a date, they tell the shadchan yes or no. Put a reminder on your phone to ask “Did you update the shadchan?”
- One check-in per week, max: Not at every meal and every conversation.
- Stock the fridge: Dating kids come home at 11 pm starving. Have nuts, yogurt, cut fruit. Food first, feelings later.

2. DIFFERENT FOR YOUR DAUGHTER: The “Girl Dating Survival Kit”

- The 3-outfit rule: 2-3 go-to date outfits that fit, are comfortable, and don’t need last-minute tailoring. Comfortable shoes only — blisters

- are not a segulah for shidduchim.
- The emergency wallet: \$20 cash, and a phone charger in her bag. Always.
- The life-schedule rule: She keeps her chesed, job, or class. She is not available 7 nights a week. Busy girls are sane girls.
- The feedback script: Teach her: “Thank you, but I don’t think it’s the shidduch.” No apologizing, no essays.

3. DIFFERENT FOR YOUR SON: The “Mensch Bootcamp” Checklist

- The dinner test run: Take him out once. Can he order? Tip? Make small talk with a waiter? If not, teach him.
- The date budget: Give him a number per date. Show him 3 places in that range. He picks.
- The 3-question rule: He needs 3 things he actually wants to know, written in his notes app. “So what do you do for fun?” doesn’t count.
- The exit strategy: Role-play: walk her to her door, say thank you, leave. No hovering, no disappearing.
- The clean shirt protocol: 2 shirts pressed and on hangers at all times.

4. SAME FOR BOTH: The “Mindset” Checklist

- Know your non-negotiables: Sit once and have them list 3 must-haves and 2 deal-breakers. Laminate it mentally.
- No means no: Teach them both that saying no is a mitzvah if it’s true. Dragging it out is not.
- It’s not a performance review: You don’t need to dissect every sentence, action or move.
- Shabbos is still Shabbos: No dating talk at the table unless they bring it up. The world will not end.

5. SAME FOR BOTH: The “Mother’s Job” Checklist

- Be boring: You are the non-anxious presence. Your job is chicken, laun
- Don’t stalk the shadchan: You get 1 follow-up if 48 hours pass. Not 4.
- Retire from crowd-sourcing: You, your kid, and the shadchan. Your sister-in-law doesn’t need to vote.
- Back off after the fridge: Food, smile, “sleep well.” The debrief can wait for daylight.

-Be positive, remember the most beautiful things in life are not things. They’re the people, places and memories. They’re feelings, moments, smiles and laughter!

Best,
Batya

CHAVIVA GRANITSKY



Having two children starting shidduchim at the same time can feel both exciting and overwhelming. Now that Pesach is behind you, it’s a great opportunity to shift your focus and energy toward helping each of them prepare for dating in a grounded, thoughtful way.

Interestingly, when it comes to preparing a boy versus a girl, I often start from the same foundation. Anyone who comes to me asking how to get ready for dating hears a similar message: the more clarity and understanding you have about the process—what dating is, what each stage is meant to accomplish, and what you’re actually looking for—the healthier and more productive the experience will be.

This is where a dating mentor can make a significant difference. People often ask what the role of a dating mentor is, and at its core, it’s about helping someone develop a clear, balanced perspective. Without that clarity, it’s easy to focus on things that don’t truly matter. That can steer conversations in unhelpful directions, create unnecessary frustration, and ultimately make it harder to build real connection.

For example, when I work with someone, I break down the stages of dating in a very practical way. The first stage is simple: would I want to invite this person to my Shabbos table again? The second stage becomes more personal: do I actually enjoy spending time with them? And only after that do we begin to explore deeper emotional connec-

tion.

When someone expects deep connection right away, especially in the early stages, it can lead to confusion about why dating isn’t progressing or why they keep turning people down. Understanding the natural progression allows for more patience, clarity, and openness.

Because of this, I would strongly encourage starting both of your children with a dating mentor. It gives them a steady framework, helps them stay grounded, and supports them in building genuine connection throughout the process.

With the right preparation, dating doesn’t have to feel overwhelming—it can feel purposeful, clear, and even meaningful from the very beginning.

Wishing you much hatzlacha,

Chaviva



Our Coaches



Batya Moskowitz, a certified dating coach trained under Rabbi Dr. Yossi Ives, holds a Master’s from NYU and a BA in psychology. She specializes in supporting new daters, helping them craft strong self-descriptions, prepare for dates, ask the right questions, and debrief with clarity and insight.

A seasoned matchmaker with over a decade of experience, Batya connects clients across backgrounds and age groups and collaborates with matchmakers worldwide. Her signature line when asked about her success rate: “Not enough!”

lisabmoskowitz@gmail.com



Chaviva Granitsky is a dating mentor trained by Rochel Goldbaum in the Directed Dating approach, helping individuals navigate the dating process with clarity and confidence. She guides daters at a pace that feels right for them, offering support that brings understanding, direction, and the ability to move from “head to heart.” For mentorship and guidance, she can be reached at 713-291-0314.

The Power of Being Seen: Why peer support isn't a luxury—it's a necessity

By *Chaviva Granitsky, Founder of GIBORAH*

Think about this scenario. There's a baby on your hip, another child calling your name, and a never-ending list running through your mind. You move from one thing to the next, giving and giving all day long. Or maybe it's just one baby—but that baby is taking up so much of your time and energy.

And somewhere in the middle of it all, a quiet question can creep in:

When was the last time someone really understood me?

Am I the only one feeling this way? Not just a quick "Oh, I had a hard day too," or a passing "How are you?" where no one is really waiting for the answer. But truly being understood.

There's something deeply comforting about being in a space where you don't have to explain yourself. Where the women around you just get it. Where everyone feels safe enough to admit, "This is hard for me too." To talk honestly about what they're struggling with, what feels overwhelming, what they're trying to manage and sometimes can't. They understand the exhaustion, the

mental load, and the range of emotions that come with motherhood—the beautiful parts and the parts that can sometimes feel overwhelming.

And when you're in that kind of safe, positive space, something shifts. You can breathe a little. You feel less alone. You realize, I'm not the only one going through this.

And that, in itself, is incredibly healing. Yes, life is busy—especially in the stage of raising young children. It can feel almost impossible to step away when you're needed all day and pulled in so many directions. But the truth is, making time for support—for a space where you can talk, connect, feel understood, and be validated—is not extra. It's necessary.

At GIBORAH, this is exactly why we started offering monthly meet-ups for mothers with babies. It's not about having it all together or saying the "right" things. It's about creating a space for real, honest, non-judgmental conversation—where you can share and be uplifted.

We also incorporate a bit of Torah and chizuk, and the conversations are gently guided so that while struggles are acknowledged, you don't leave feeling like you just sat and vented. You leave feeling lighter. Stronger. Understood. With something to carry with you the next time things feel overwhelming.

We often think we just need to push through and keep going without stopping. But in order to be the kind of mothers we want to be—present, patient, and emotionally available—we need support too. Without it, the pressure builds, and eventually, we feel it.

We all need a place where we can feel seen, heard, understood, validated, and cared for.

There's a reason support groups are considered one of the most effective forms of healing. When we sit with others who are walking a similar path, it reminds us—not just intellectually, but emotionally—that we are not alone. And that feeling can change everything.

Giving yourself that space isn't selfish. It's not something that should come last.

It's one of the most important things you can do—for yourself, for your family, and for the people who rely on you.

Because when a mother feels supported, she's not just getting through the day. She's able to show up with more strength, more calm, and more presence.

And we all deserve that.

If you'd like to find out more about our monthly meet-ups, please contact Chaviva Granitsky at 713-291-0314.

*Chaviva Granitsky, PSI Certified, 3P Practitioner, MMC
Founder of GIBORAH*

713-496-2446, uragiborah@gmail.com

GIBORAH consults with Lisa K. Meyers, BSN, MBA, PMHNP Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Pra



You're Asking the Wrong Question About Screens

By *Shona Schwartz*

Most parents get stuck in a whack-a-mole loop because they started the cycle in the wrong place.

You've probably been there. Your seven-year-old discovers Minecraft. You Google "how much screen time is too much for a ten-year-old," land on three contradictory articles, pick a number that feels defensible, and announce a new rule. Two weeks later, the rule has eroded, exceptions have multiplied, negotiations have escalated, and you're back to square one. So you Google again. Choose a new rule. Two weeks later, same result.

This is what I mean when I say screen creep, and it almost always traces back to a single, sneaky problem: we're managing technology from the wrong angle. We're asking how much when we should be asking why at all.

The question "how much screen time is okay?" sounds responsible. It sounds

like we're taking this seriously. But it's actually a reactive question; it assumes the screen is already in the picture and we're just negotiating the terms. We've already let the technology into the room; now we're arguing about how long it can stay.

When our frame is how much, every decision becomes a negotiation. Every limit feels arbitrary. And children, who are, let's give them credit, quite good at spotting inconsistencies, will probe for loopholes in any rule that lacks a clear rationale. If the rule is "one hour of iPad," the fight will always be about why not ninety minutes. If the rule is "no phones at dinner," the argument will be about whether texting Dad counts. If the rule is one hour of screen time on Friday, they will ask why not a bit longer if they are watching 'good' content.

The Shift: From "How Much" to "What For"

Here is the question I want you to start asking before every screen policy is de-



ecided in your home:

Why does my child need this?

Not "how much Roblox is okay?" but "why should my child have access to Roblox?" Not "when can she use her phone?" but "why does she need a phone that texts?" Not "is an hour of YouTube too much?" but "what role is YouTube doing in my child's life right

now, and is that a role I want it to have?"

This reframe can be uncomfortable at first because it puts the decision fully back in your hands. It means that you, as the parent, must actively and intentionally create a policy that is healthy for your kid, not something that just sounds vaguely familiar to their friends. And that is a hard place

to be as a parent (especially since kids don't usually love limited screen policies!) Also, there's no quick app that will answer all the questions for you. There's no pediatric guideline that will hand you the type of device and number of hours that are healthy for your child. But that discomfort is actually the point. It means you're thinking, not just reacting.

Let's run through a few examples of what this looks like in practice.

The iPad. Instead of: "How long can she be on it?" ask: "What is the iPad for?" Is it to watch one specific downloaded show while I'm making dinner? That's a defined job with a clear ending, and as I wrote in a previous post, that's closer to a "good screen" experience. Is it to scroll through YouTube Kids alone in her bedroom? That's a very different job, actually; it's not really a job at all. It's a pacifier with an algorithm attached. Those require different decisions.

The smartphone. Instead of: "What age is appropriate?" or "When are the friends getting one?" ask: "Why does my child need this right now?" Does

she need to be reachable after school? A basic call-only phone solves that. Does he need to coordinate pick-up with you? A shared family calendar and a flip phone do that. A smartphone with texting, social apps, and a browser is a specific tool with specific risks, and it should be earned by a specific need, not handed over because it's easier than the conversation about family values and feeling different from their friends.

Video games. Instead of: "Is an hour a day too much?" or "Is this video game too sexually explicit or violent?" ask: "What is this game doing for my child?" Is he playing a race car game with his siblings for a short allocated time? Maybe he asked to try something that's finite and social? That's very different from a free-to-play mobile game engineered with variable reward loops designed to maximize session length. It's also different than justifying it because of boredom. Same category. Completely different answer.

Why This Stops the Whack-a-Mole Screen Creep
When you're managing screen time by the hour, you're playing defense. Something sneaks in, a new game, a new platform, a new neighbor, a new

pressure from the peer group, and you scramble to respond. You ban TikTok; they find YouTube Shorts. You limit the iPad; they migrate to the family computer. You're always one step behind because you're reacting to devices rather than proactively deciding on purposes.

When you lead with why, something structural changes. You're no longer making individual rulings on individual devices. You're building a philosophy, and a consistent philosophy creates consistent boundaries that children can actually internalize.

This matters because children don't just need rules; they need to understand the reasoning behind the rules. Authoritative parenting — warm, engaged, and rationale-giving — produces better outcomes than either permissive or purely restrictive approaches. Children who understand why a limit exists are more likely to apply that reasoning independently, even when you're not watching. That's the goal: not a child who stops when you're in the room, but one who's developing their own judgment around screens and technology use for their own well-being.

The why framework also lets you involve your kids in the conversation. And they can handle more of that conversation than we typically give them credit for. A nine-year-old can understand, "We don't have open internet in your bedroom because the internet was designed by companies whose whole job is to keep your attention for as long as possible, and your brain is still figuring out how to set its own limits." That's not scary, that's honest. And children who understand the reasoning become partners in the policy rather than adversaries of it.

Building a Family Media Blueprint
What does this look like when it all comes together? It looks like a family media blueprint — not a rigid set of prohibitions, but a clear set of values-based decisions about what technology is for in your home.

In my own family, when my children



were growing up in a screen-heavy community, I couldn't eliminate the social pressure entirely. Every birthday, rather than defaulting to whatever screen experience was easiest, I made a deliberate choice: a family movie, large screen, shared experience, values-aligned content. Not a habit — an event. That's exactly what the research points to as a "good screen" experience: finite, shared, and intentional. The goal was never perfect restrictions. It was a clear decision.

That's the difference that a why framework creates. Not a household where screens are the enemy, but one where every screen is doing a job you chose, not one it was handed by default.

The most powerful thing you can do for your child's relationship with technology isn't finding the right parental control app or landing on the right number of hours. It's shifting from a reactive posture to an intentional one. From how much to what for. From whack-a-mole to a family culture that knows what it values, and builds around that, deliberately, one decision at a time.

The families I've worked with who feel most confident about their screen culture aren't the ones with the strictest rules. They're the ones with the clearest reasoning. And that starts with asking better questions.

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