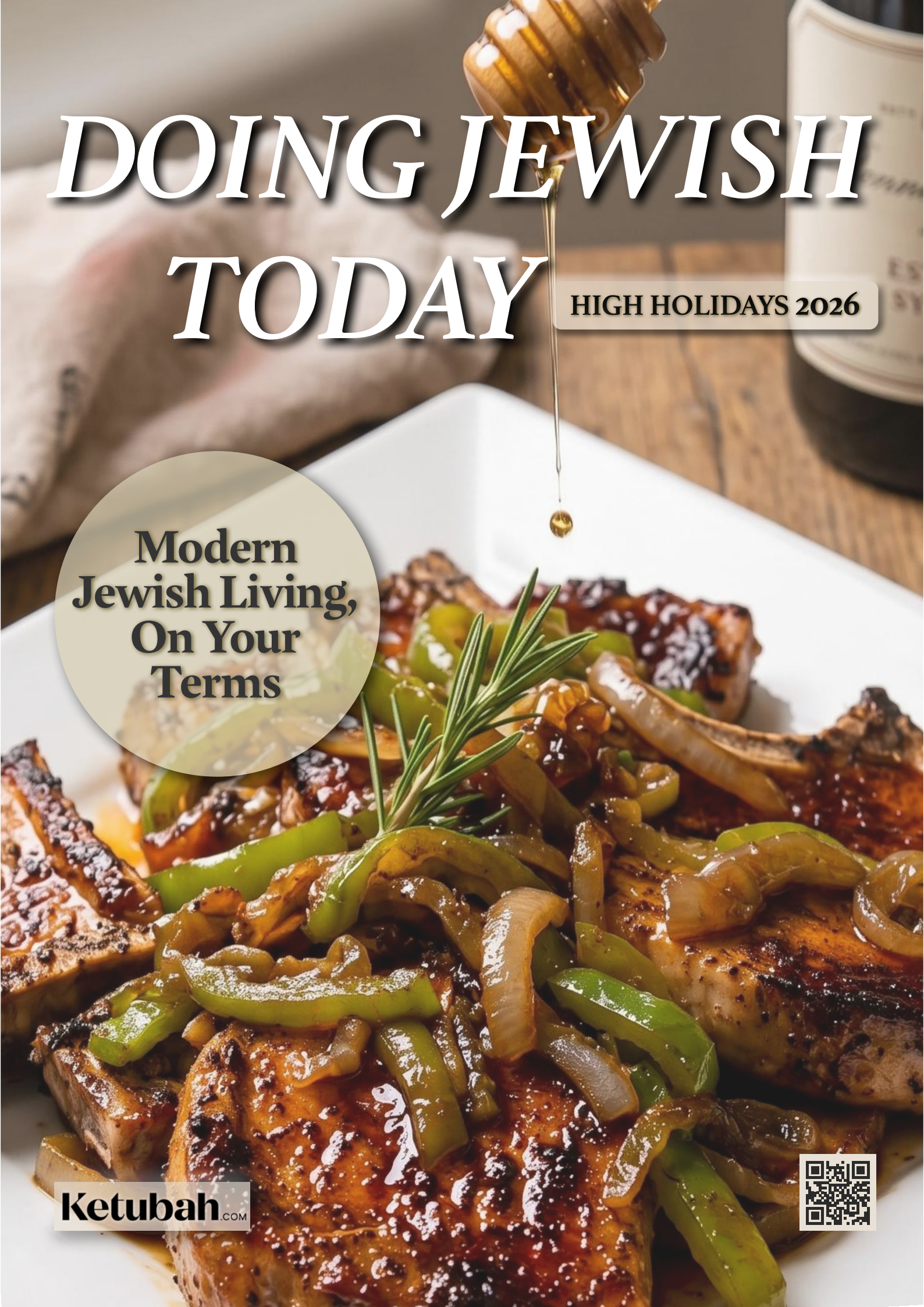

DOING JEWISH TODAY

HIGH HOLIDAYS 2026

Modern Jewish Living, On Your Terms

Ketubah.com

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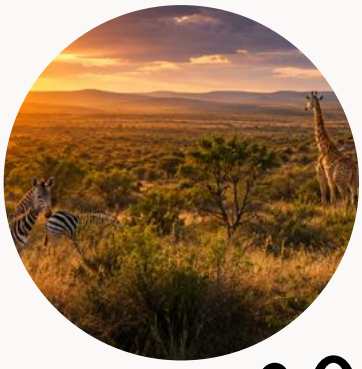

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Publisher's Welcome: Doing Jewish Today



DOING JEWISH TODAY

Judaism has never been something we simply inherit and leave untouched, it's something we live.

We live it in the choices we make - what we keep, what we question, what we adapt, and what we carry forward. We live it in our homes and relationships, in moments of celebration and of uncertainty, in the traditions we hold close and the ones we reshape to fit who we are today.

Doing Jewish Today is a magazine about that lived experience. It is not about how Judaism is supposed to look, not about a single way to practice or believe, but about how Jewish life actually unfolds - right now - through people, stories, creativity, and everyday moments.

This issue is inspired by the High Holidays, but its heart is broader: How Jews today are choosing meaning, connection, and beauty in their lives.

In these pages, you'll meet couples navigating modern Jewish, interfaith and LGBTQ+ relationships, families creating rituals that reflect their lives today, artists and writers finding new ways to express ancient ideas, and individuals who are figuring out what Jewish life means to them - sometimes confidently, sometimes more of a work in progress.

You'll find food and weddings, music and art, names and ketubahs - not as symbols frozen in time, but as living expressions of identity and meaning. Some stories may feel familiar. Others may surprise you. All of them reflect the many ways Jewish life continues to grow.

There isn't one correct way to be Jewish or "do Jewish". We believe there are countless honest ways to bring Judaism into your life. Our hope is that this magazine is an invitation to recognize yourself in someone else's story, a companion as you discover and maybe "try on" traditions you didn't know, and a spark to feel more connected in the ways you choose to live your Jewish life.

However you arrived here, and wherever you are on your journey, you're part of this moment. This is Doing Jewish Today!

Your Family Story, Beautifully Told.

TRANSFORM YOUR HERITAGE INTO TIMELESS ART

Celebrate the people who came before, the family you cherish today, and the generations still to come.



- CUSTOMIZED WITH YOUR FAMILY NAMES
- A MEANINGFUL GIFT FOR LIFE'S SPECIAL MOMENTS
- DESIGNED TO BE CHERISHED FOR GENERATIONS

Explore the Growing Family Trees Collection at

KETUBAH.COM

Use This Time to Grow

Start the Jewish new year with a grounding set of traditions that can grow with your family

By Jessica McCormick



The three-week Jewish holiday season that begins with Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) is a celebration of growth. On the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah (also called the "birthday of the world") and Yom Kippur (Day of Forgiving), we look back on the past year and take responsibility for our actions. We think about ways to make ourselves and our world better. We reconnect with family and friends and look ahead with hope to a sweet new year.

On the harvest festival of Sukkot (Festival of Small Huts), we tune into growth in the natural world – crops that sustain us, rain the nourishes the earth, and the sight and scent of bountiful plants that bring us joy. And finally, on Simchat Torah (Rejoicing with the Torah), we complete the annual reading of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and begin it all over again – a cycle of reading and storytelling that never grows old, because each year, we are growing right along with it.

This is the journey that Jewish tradition invites us to take each new year as our families grow too.

At PJ Library, we offer ways for families to celebrate these holidays at home on their own terms. Because each family is unique, our books, guides, and gifts are picked or designed for families so they can use the parts of our collection that meet the needs and interests of their children. Whether an age-appropriate storybook, podcast episode, or hands-on-recipe, our resources help children engage differently with each holiday and give parents and caregivers the tools they need to prepare and celebrate in a way that is most meaningful for them.

A Time to Grow, PJ Library's autumn holiday guide, can help families connect to the several holidays that fall – with quick succession – during this bustling time of year. While some families may go to synagogue to mark these holy days, others opt to stay home and share a meal. Our guide has everything you need to make a tradition that can grow with your family. The guide contains step-by-



step rituals for family meals, including blessings, symbols, and explanations to make them festive; as well as hands-on activities and recipes, with family projects to add fun and meaning to the holidays. Throughout the pages, find conversation starters and prompts for discussions about how we can grow as individuals, families, and communities.

For those looking to grow their community alongside their family, PJ Library subscribers can also access Get Together, a microgrant program that offers reimbursements for hosting Jewish-themed gatherings with at least two other families raising Jewish children. Families can share what they've learned with others by hosting a festive Rosh Hashanah meal, sukkah-decorating craft session, or apples-and-honey tasting. Get Togethers create accessible, meaningful paths to come together with local community members and neighbors and start building shared celebrations to cultivate and grow together.





PJ Library's Fall holiday resources can be purchased at pjlibraryshop.org Families with children ages 0-12 are encouraged to sign up for PJ Library and receive free monthly storybooks on Jewish holidays, traditions, and values.

***Jessica McCormick**, Director of Family Experience at PJ Library*

Rosh Hashanah
SESTINA

by Ariella Morgan

A sestina is a complex French verse form, usually unrhymed, consisting of six stanzas of six lines each and a three-line envoi. The end words of the first stanza are repeated in a different order as end words in each of the subsequent five stanzas; the closing envoi contains all six words, two per line, placed in the middle and at the end of the three lines. - "Sestina." Poetry Foundation

On the first and second days of tishrei, we greet
the jewish new year. This year, i find myself
in the warm front hall of my cousin's home,
where the smells of brisket and baked challah
linger. We reunite, hug, and move swiftly to
the living room, many greetings exchanged–
all warm in nature.Polished table settings,
our cheeks rosy; their elegant yet cozy living
room, surrounded by scents sweet.
After schlepping across the city, i finally
relax, and settle into well deserved rest.
We relocate to the dining room to eat, and
the conversation slowly starts to seep over
my head. Golden honey, speckled granny
smith apples, and my cousin, peter, is at
the head of the table. The taste of brisket
is sweet, as the thought of the past year
consumes my consciousness. I wonder
whether this holiday emphasizes rest.
It is in the chaos of everyday that
stress builds up and then lingers.
Next to me sits my cousin maya, who
I will grow closer to this year.
Her calm demeanor is also sweet.
Maya and I spend our time together
doing yoga, sampling cafes, and
being in nature. Earlier that day,
my mom had called me from her
tashlich walk through nature.
Cleared of her sins, tossed into the
depths of the pond, my mom had a
centered head.

My parents, back at home, recounted the brisket
they arrange alongside the sweets they prepared
for their guests. This year, i do not go home for
the holidays, but am fortunate enough to linger
in town, to truly embrace a crucial precursor of
growth: rest. For me, rosh hashanah emphasizes
a balance between a wake-up call and rest- A
means to look inwards and reflect on the
nature of my actions. Sometimes what I avoid
most, is what tends to linger. "Enjoy the
challah!", Peter projects from the head of the
table. The golden brown circular challah,
posed between peter and maya, barely eaten,
waiting all year to star. Its smooth edges,
and proud strands fused together– round
like a crown, laced with sweet emphasis
on an optimistic beginning for the
year ahead. My cousin maya, sweet in
nature, reaches for a slice, tears the
fluffy bread, donating the rest to me.
The delight of the challah is made
better by the extra honey i drizzle on
for an even sweeter year.
This ritual foreshadows dessert
to come, both nostalgic and
heartwarming in nature.
Afterwards, as we indulge in
honeycake and tea, with smiles from
the head of the year. This is my
chance to linger on what matters to
me, my prospects, intentions,
and company.



I can only hope that this feeling lingers.

The comfort of family, the support of my closest friends and their sweet presence.

Gratitude flows through me, as I look ahead.

Ambitions about the future excite me, but I must also remember to rest.

As I ponder at the full table, the nature

Of my future path seems less important, as I indulge in honey cake; boding well for the new year.

For me, gratitude and love will lead me through the head of the year. Thinking through the nature

Of my actions and the type of person I am; surrounding myself with sweetness, and hoping to linger

In a grateful headspace- which will accompany me throughout the year.



Ariella Morgan *is a contributor for* Nu Magazine

Artful Acknowledgement for Donors "Who Have Everything"

by Nava Hoffman

As the High Holidays approach, many of us begin reflecting on the people who have shaped our lives with generosity, wisdom, and unwavering support. Ketubah.com's collection of honoree gifts offers a beautiful way to express that gratitude in a meaningful and lasting form.

Featuring elegant Jewish artwork, Home Blessings, and thoughtfully designed keepsakes, these gifts are more than decorative pieces — they are expressions of kavod, honor and appreciation. Whether given to parents, community leaders, dedicated volunteers, synagogue supporters, or cherished friends, each piece serves as a reminder that acts of kindness and devotion never go unnoticed. Crafted with artistry and rooted in Jewish tradition, these gifts help commemorate milestones, leadership, and the countless contributions that strengthen Jewish communal life.

The connection to Rosh Hashanah feels especially fitting. As we enter the Jewish New Year, we are encouraged to reflect on our relationships, recognize blessings, and begin the year with gratitude and intention. The season invites us to think not only about personal growth, but also about the people who inspire and uplift us throughout the year. Honoring someone with a meaningful gift during this sacred time





carries added depth: it becomes both a gesture of appreciation for the past year and a blessing for the year ahead.

Many of the gifts in the collection incorporate timeless Jewish symbols and blessings that resonate deeply during the High Holiday season. Displayed in a home or office, they serve as ongoing reminders of faith, community, and shared values.

Just as Rosh Hashanah reminds us to strengthen the bonds within our families and communities, these artistic gifts celebrate the individuals who help sustain Jewish life and tradition every day. In giving a gift rooted in Jewish artistry and symbolism, we not only acknowledge someone's contributions – we affirm the values of gratitude, connection, and continuity that stand at the heart of the holiday season.

Nava Hoffman *is the Production Coordinator at Ketubah.com*



Every Married Couple Knows Someone Single

by Daniel Miller

Every married couple knows someone single. A sibling, a cousin, a friend from synagogue. Someone wonderful, thoughtful, and quietly wondering why finding the right person has become so difficult.

Too often, that person remains "someone we should think of for somebody" instead of someone we actually help.

In the Jewish world, we speak a lot about chesed and community. Yet one of the greatest needs is often sitting right in front of us: singles trying to build a Jewish home who could use more people looking out for them. Not with pressure or pity. With care.

Many marriages happen because someone made a small effort. Someone said, "I know someone you should meet." Someone invited two people to the same Shabbat meal. Someone followed up. That is how Jewish life has always worked. We are a people built on connection.

Today, though, dating can feel isolating. There are more tools than ever, and sometimes fewer people taking personal interest. I founded JMeetups.com to open more doors for Jewish singles: a free dating site, local and global WhatsApp groups where singles hear about events happening near them, and tools for matchmakers. Still, technology can only organize people.

The heart of it is a friend thinking of a friend.

It is natural to hesitate. What if the idea does not work? What if it feels awkward? Sensitivity and privacy matter, and not every single wants the same kind of help. But doing nothing has a cost too. Most introductions do not lead to marriage. Every thoughtful one, though, tells someone, "You are not forgotten."

Married couples also bring something no profile can. They know personality, warmth, family values, how someone treats others. People who know us can see beyond the surface.

We do not need every married person to become a matchmaker. What our community could use is more connectors. A connector notices, includes, and opens doors without pressure. A connector creates possibility.

So consider this an invitation rather than an assignment. Is there one single person in your life who comes to mind? Perhaps there is an introduction worth exploring, a Shabbat invitation to extend, or a gentle question to ask about what kind of help they would welcome.

Every couple that marries strengthens the Jewish people. Every new home matters. And you may already know the person who can help someone meet the one they have been waiting for.



Daniel Miller *is the founder of JMeetups.com*

Winter 2026–27 · Wedding Trend Report

by Tani Gordon

Winter Weddings are Finally Getting Interesting

Winter weddings used to be easy to predict. White flowers. Greenery. Velvet. Candles. Maybe a little gold if everyone was feeling adventurous.

Beautiful? Of course. But also a little expected.

The weddings coming for winter 2026–27 feel different. They are richer, more personal and much less interested in following one perfect formula. Couples are choosing details because they love them, not because everything fits neatly into a theme. The result is less about following a look and more about creating a mood.

Décor is Going Darker and Richer

The all-white winter wedding is not disappearing, but it is no longer the only look in the room.

Deep plum, chocolate brown and burgundy are taking over, often finished with a cool flash of silver instead of the usual gold. For couples who want a bolder look, pairing burgundy with an unexpected pop of chartreuse has become one of the season's most talked-about combinations. Sometimes these colours stand alone. Sometimes they layer together. Either way, they instantly make a space feel warmer and more dramatic, especially when paired with candlelight.



The mood is less "winter wonderland" and more incredible dinner party in a beautiful old house.

Tables are getting more layered, with patterned linens, silver-rimmed glassware, fruit, candles and flowers that look a little loose and natural rather than perfectly placed. Lighting is also becoming one of the most important parts of the room. Small lamps, soft pools of light and plenty of candles can make even a large ballroom feel intimate.

The biggest shift is that everything does not need to match. In fact, the most stylish rooms often look as though they came together naturally over time.



Wedding of Allison and Armon
Ketubah: Isfahan (Persia), 1879
by The Jewish Museum

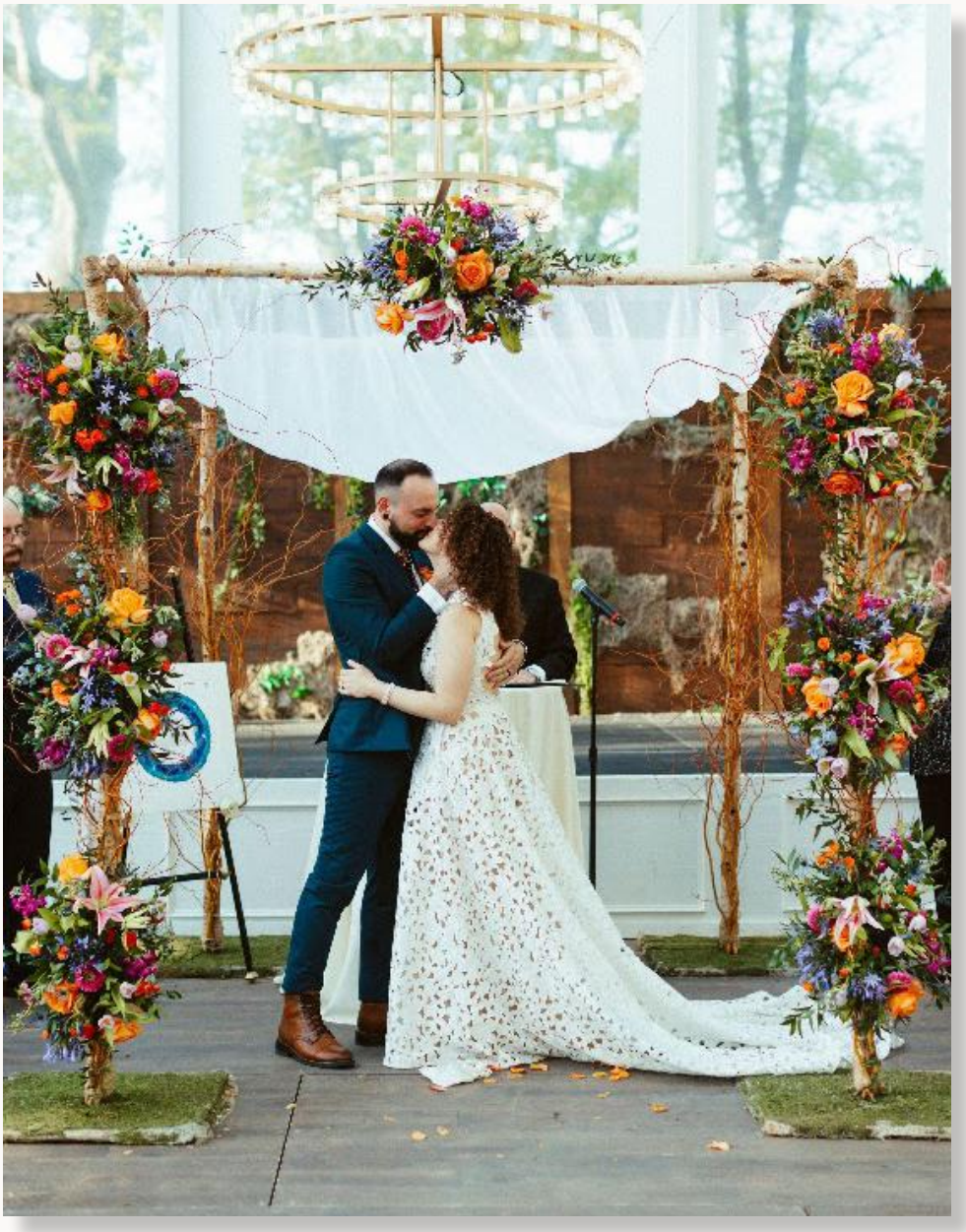
Fashion is Having More Fun

Bridal fashion is moving away from the idea that there is one correct way to look like a bride.

Some gowns are beautifully simple, with clean lines and very little embellishment. Others are full of lace, beading, dramatic skirts, texture and oversized details. Both feel current. What feels outdated is choosing a dress simply because it looks traditionally "bridal."

Winter also gives couples more room to play. A dramatic coat, long gloves, a statement veil or an unexpected shoe can completely change a look.

Grooms are getting more interesting too. Black tuxedos will always be classic, but deep brown, forest green, navy and textured dinner jackets feel fresh without looking like anyone tried too hard. The goal is not to look trendy. It is to look like yourself on an exceptionally good day.



Wedding of Rachel and Charles
Ketubah: Mineral by Ruth Becker

Guests Want a Great Night

Couples are also paying much more attention to what the wedding actually feels like for the people attending.

That means fewer long gaps, less standing around and more thought given to food, music and flow. Traditions are still at the heart of the celebration, but couples are making them feel more personal. A carefully chosen ketubah, a meaningful ceremony and family customs can become some of the most memorable parts of the day when they truly reflect the couple.

Some weddings are starting with cocktails before the ceremony. Others are adding a late-night dessert room, a surprise food station or a cozy lounge where guests can actually hear one another speak.

The best guest experiences are not always the most expensive. They are the ones that feel thoughtful.

Great food, comfortable seating, strong music and small personal details will always matter more than a generic favour left behind at the end of the night.

The biggest winter wedding trend is not a colour, a flower or a dress.

It is creating a wedding that feels beautiful, meaningful and genuinely good to be at.

And honestly, that is much more exciting than another room filled with white roses.



Tani Gordon *is the Director of Operations at Ketubah.com*

The Words That Helped Me Find My Way Back



by Karen Cinnamon

There are seasons of life that split you into before and after.

For me, losing both of my parents in the span of three years was one of those seasons.

I don't think anything can fully prepare you for that kind of loss. There were moments when I felt completely untethered, trying to keep showing up for my family and my work while carrying so much sadness beneath the surface.

One of the things that genuinely helped me through that time was turning to affirmations. They helped me find my strength when I was struggling to feel strong.

There's something so deeply Jewish about this. Our tradition has always known that words are powerful. We speak blessings over wine and bread. We return to the same prayers our ancestors have recited for thousands of years. We say Kaddish when language feels impossible.

And as we approach Rosh Hashanah, I've been thinking a lot about the words we choose to take with us into the new year. What do we need to hear more often? What do we want to believe about ourselves? What words might give us the strength we need to meet our next chapter? Because while Rosh Hashanah is full of joy, it can also sometimes feel challenging. We think about who is at the table, and who is missing. What the past year asked of us. What we survived. What we are still healing from. What we hope might be possible next.

Taking the time to dig deep and figure out what we need in order to live a life that feels centered and joyful - not just at Rosh Hashanah, but all year round - is such a powerful practice, and one that's made such a difference in my life. We all need words that bring us back to ourselves when things feel hard - and words that help us embrace and acknowledge the good.

That's why I created the Positive Jewish Affirmations Card Deck.

Each of its 52 cards is designed to offer a reminder of Jewish resilience, pride, and joy. Blending timeless Jewish wisdom with modern, empowering language that speaks to your life right now, each card becomes a small but powerful weekly ritual. Each deck comes with a beautiful beechwood display stand.

However you use them, my hope is that these cards become your anchor - back to who you are, what you believe, and the strength that has always been inside you.





Karen Cinnamon *is the Founder of* *Smashing The Glass* | *Your Jewish Life* | *Luxe Jewish Life*

What Does Marriage Even Mean Today?

A very ancient solution to a very modern problem

by Rabbi Brent Chaim Spodek

Every year, about four million people get married in the US - but what exactly are they doing?

The question isn't why they want to get married - for the vast majority, it's because they love their partner. The question is - what do they think that marriage is? What do they think they are doing when they get married?

It's not finally having sex - with 95% of Americans having sex before marriage, that's clearly not the motivation.

It's not forging an economic alliance in the ways it once was - while there are significant financial benefits to marriage, nobody is getting married because it is an effective way for them to run their farm or village cobbler shop.

Even those couples who are motivated by promises of monogamy, that's fundamentally a promise to not do something - be intimate with another person - but it doesn't tell you what you are doing.

The seriously hard truth is that we marry our partners with the intention of loving them forever, but inevitably there will be moments when that love feels very distant.

If a person gets married at approximately 30 years old and is blessed to live to about 90 years old, that means they will be married for twice as long as they have been alive when they make the commitment of marriage. It is a very attractive delusion to think it will be nothing but 60 years of smooth sailing with your soulmate.

Marriage begins not with vows said once, but in navigating the disillusionments that test those vows.

For a runner, it's no great leap to go for a jog when the sun is shining and there are unicorns farting rainbows alongside you. The commitment training really matters when it is cold and dark and raining. So too with marriage.

Just as few runners dream of slogging it out in freezing sleet, nobody likes to think of the hard moments when they are preparing for their wedding, but we get married for those hard moments.

At its core, marriage is a commitment to stay when it's really, really hard. But simply staying isn't enough - what we do instead of leaving is what marriage is about.





As Stephanie Coontz details in Marriage: A History, once upon a time, love was a delightful and unexpected upgrade to the otherwise functional institution of marriage, sort of like becoming friends with your mechanic. Nice if it happens, but not at all the point of the relationship.

That's hardly the case anymore.

Somewhere along the line, we decided we wanted more from marriage - a lot more. We wanted the kind of love that makes our ribs ache. We wanted the kind of partnership that provides not just stability but meaning. We wanted to be known, not just provided for. We want to be loved as the flawsome people we are - flawed + awesome, all at once. We want someone to see the un-Instagrammable parts — the bedhead mornings, the fears we inherited, the strange hopes that visit us in the night — and love us still.

We're not the first generation to wrestle with the tension between commitment and freedom. The ancient rabbis knew that there were moments in every marriage when extra resources were needed. Way back in the day, couples wrote out marriage covenants precisely for these moments. These covenants, known as ketubot, pushed people to stay in marriages by mandating a significant financial penalty for leaving. While nobody is well served by being forced to stay in an unhappy marriage, emotionally intelligent couples are repurposing that ancient tool as a covenant for modern marriages.

Modern ketubot are communications covenants - reminders of the best of who we are so we might bring that version of ourselves to our hardest moments. They are thoughtful, deeply reflective and necessarily idiosyncratic commitments.

Couples who have embraced writing their own modern ketubah include commitments like: "We will respect when our partner needs time and space and step back when needed" or "When a fight is brewing, we will step back from the situation, realize that the same clouds in the sky can look different to different people, and breathe before reacting," or "We will remember that in the tennis game of life, we are each other's partners in a game of doubles, not opponents in a game of singles."



Ketubot are a very ancient solution to a very modern problem. Far from being an archaic relic of patriarchal societies, modern ketubot function as formal sticky notes that remind two flawsome people of the best of who they are precisely in those moments when love feels like a distant memory.

Just like ancient ketubot, they are resources for the inevitable rainy days, but instead of relying on punitive force, they provide accessible practices that each couple identifies for themselves. They are a form of whispering counsel that couples write to themselves when they are calm, so they can access it when they are not.

In Jewish thought, the space between people in deep, honest connection is charged, even sacred, space. Marriage, at its best, is a covenant of enduring, loving presence. A modern ketubah says: I can't save you from your loneliness, but I'll meet you there. A modern ketubah says: I will keep learning and loving who you are, even when it feels easier to love who you were or who I think you should be.

Writing, and living by, a modern ketubah is less about happiness and more about holiness — not in the religious sense, but in the sense of humans dreaming of making something sacred out of daily life. Modern ketubot are the plan that makes that dream real.

Rosh Hashanah insists on a deeply Jewish and deeply inconvenient truth: we are not finished products. We are creatures of teshuva—of return—because we are forever drifting from the people we mean to be. We become petty, frightened, self-righteous, distracted, and occasionally convinced that the fate of the entire marriage depends on the correct loading of the dishwasher. Judaism does not ask us to pretend otherwise. It asks us to wake up, take responsibility, make repair, and return—to our values, to our promises, and to the person standing in front of us. A ketubah names the covenant we hope to live by; teshuva is what keeps that covenant from becoming decorative Hebrew calligraphy hanging above a marriage that has quietly gone off the rails. We do not stay faithful to love by never wandering. We stay faithful by learning, again and again, how to come home.

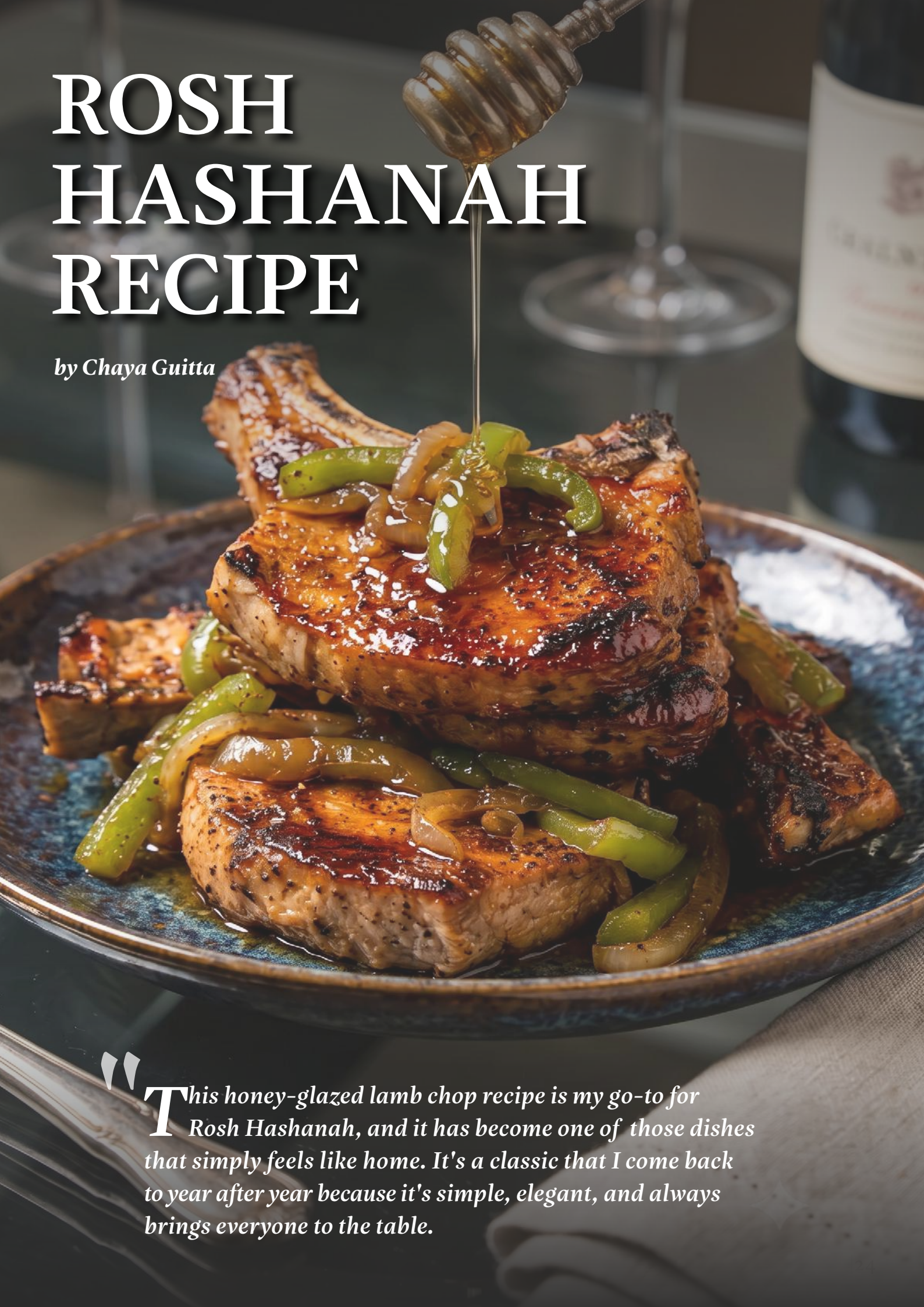




Rabbi Brent Chaim Spodek *works extensively with couples preparing for marriage, serves as a member of the faculty at Pardes North America and is the emeritus rabbi at Beacon Hebrew Alliance.*

ROSH HASHANAH RECIPE

by Chaya Guitta



"This honey-glazed lamb chop recipe is my go-to for Rosh Hashanah, and it has become one of those dishes that simply feels like home. It's a classic that I come back to year after year because it's simple, elegant, and always brings everyone to the table.

Honey Glazed Lamb Chops

Serves: 4 people

Preparation Time: 45 minutes

Cooking Time: 18 minutes

For me, Rosh Hashanah is about family, tradition, and starting the new year with warmth and sweetness. The honey glaze symbolizes that sweetness, and the aroma of the lamb and fried peppers cooking fills the house in a way that instantly feels festive. I've made this recipe for countless holiday meals, and it has become a dish that means a great deal to me. It's comforting, beautiful on a serving platter, and never fails to impress without requiring hours in the kitchen.

I hope it becomes a favorite on your Rosh Hashanah table too.



INGREDIENTS

For the lamb

- 8 lamb chops
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp paprika
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp kosher salt

For the fried peppers

- 3 bell peppers (red, yellow, and orange), thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Pinch of salt
- Optional: pinch of chili flakes

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Marinate the lamb: Mix the honey, dijon mustard, olive oil, garlic, paprika, salt, and pepper. Coat the lamb chops and let them marinate for 30 minutes (or up to 4 hours in the refrigerator).
2. Fry the peppers: Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the peppers and cook for 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened and lightly charred around the edges. Season with a pinch of salt and set aside.
3. Cook the lamb: Heat a heavy skillet or grill pan over medium-high heat. Sear the lamb chops for about 3-4 minutes per side for medium-rare, or slightly longer if you prefer them more well done. During the last minute of cooking, brush the chops with the remaining honey glaze and let it caramelize.
4. Serve: Arrange the lamb chops on a platter, spoon any pan juices over the top, and generously top with the fried peppers.



NOTES

For an extra glossy finish, drizzle 1 tablespoon of warm honey mixed with 1 teaspoon of fresh lemon juice over the lamb just before serving. It's a small touch that makes the dish feel especially festive for the holiday table.

Chaya Guitta *is a Customer Service Representative at Ketubah.com*

Sophie and Lyla Go To Schwartz's

by Lyla Epstein-Shapiro and Sophie Wright Sinclair



Once upon a time, two young vegetarians washed up on the shores of the St. Lawrence River. Freshly enrolled in McGill University, Sophie and Lyla arrived in Montreal with nothing but a glint in their eye and a deep hunger inside them. They were eager. They were Jewish. And they were passionate in their love of vegetarian cuisine.

Bundled up in winter clothing to the point of reduced mobility (at the behest of their Jewish mothers, of course), Sophie and Lyla set off down St-Laurent Boulevard in search of the best vegetarian restaurant this unfamiliar island had to offer.

They passed a local vegan grill. They passed a café proudly offering five varieties of nut milk.

Those could both be found back home in Toronto.

No, no. Sophie and Lyla were looking for something bohemian. Something avant-garde. Something, say, a little more Montreal.

Like moths to a flame, their hungry Jewish feet carried them to the only place that promised to satisfy.

"Et voilà, Lyla." Sophie gestured proudly to the sign.

"It's Schwartz's, 'a Montreal landmark that has welcomed countless celebrities and visitors from all over the world for almost a century.'"

Sophie beamed. She had done her research. Or at least skimmed the first sentence of the website boasting about their "world famous smoked meat."

The two skipped into the restaurant arm-in-arm, exchanging excited grins.

A waiter eyed their matching I LOVE VEGETABLES™ T-shirts with confusion. Still, professionalism prevailed, and the waiter led them to a booth.

After shedding approximately fourteen layers of winter clothing, the pair eagerly opened their menus. Around them, towering sandwiches flew past on plates, piles of smoked meat collapsed between slices of rye bread. Somewhere, a man loudly declared, "Make it extra fatty."

Lyla scanned the menu carefully.

"Sophie," Lyla asked slowly, "What is smoked meat?"

"Don't worry about that," Sophie replied. With dramatic flair, she pointed to the "extras" section of the menu. "This, my friend, is what you're looking for."

Lyla sighed and settled into her seat, overwhelmed by the plethora of plant-based options before her. Pickles. Coleslaw. Fries.

It was, in its own way, a vegetarian paradise.

The waiter reappeared.

"Hi there, what can I get for ya today?"

"One dill pickle with a side of coleslaw, please!" Lyla announced proudly.

"And for the main?"

Lyla blushed. "Oh suuuure! Throw a half-sour pickle in there, too, why not! Let's go wild – I'm ready to party!"

"Right, okay..." The waiter turned to Sophie. "And for the lady?"



“I’ll have the poutine please, but hold the gravy. And the curds.” Good ol’ Sophie Special.

The waiter blinked. “So... the fries.”

“I guess you could put it that way.”

The waiter sighed the sigh of a man who had seen many things in this line of work: tourists asking for gluten-free bread, conmen feigning injury to skip the infamous line, and hipsters inquiring whether they validate parking for BIXI bikes. “This job just doesn’t get any easier,” he muttered, retreating to the kitchen.

Soon their feast arrived, and two girls dug in with gusto.

The pickles were delightfully crunchy, the fries impeccably salted, and the coleslaw possessed a mysterious tang that spoke of tradition... or possibly mayonnaise.

After quenching their joint thirst for bold, exotic vegetarian flavours, Sophie and Lyla stepped out into the crisp Montreal air, glowing with culinary satisfaction.

Clasping hands and gazing into each other's eyes, they shouted triumphantly: “We have found the best vegetarian restaurant in all of Montreal!”







Passersby stopped and stared. A young man on a bicycle crashed into a telephone pole. It felt like the city had frozen for just one moment, just for them... The restaurant manager stuck his head out the door. "Hey, get back here!" He yelled. "You still have to pay!"

Sophie waved cheerfully. "We're on a quest, sir! A quest for greens!"

Sophie and Lyla spun on their heels and frollicked away down the streets of Montreal. They could not wait to find their next vegetarian destination!

*Nu Magazine does not endorse dining and dashing, nor do the authors. Please treat your waiters and local restaurants with respect. Do not try this at home.

All events have been fabricated for comedic purposes. Please do not hate us or our families.

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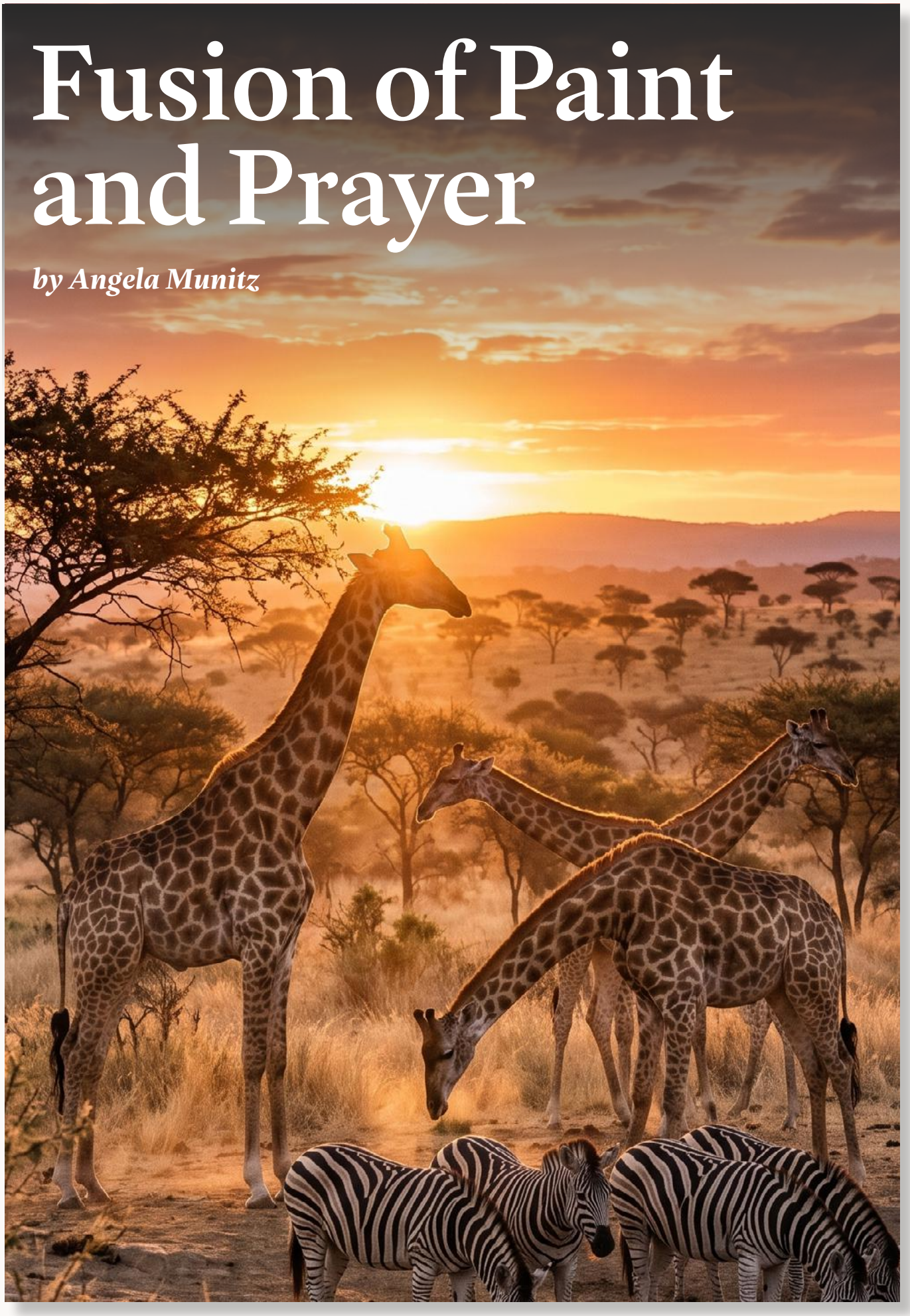
Lyla Epstein-Shapiro and Sophie Wright Sinclair *are contributors for* Nu Magazine

Fusion of Paint and Prayer

by Angela Munitz



A symphony of colour to me is the sheer beauty of South Africa. The magnificent power of the beckoning bushveld and the silent wanderings of zebra and loping giraffes, the knocking of beetles on cracked earth and thunderous clouds on the horizon is to me, living perfection.

It was in the city of Johannesburg where I grew up, that a Belombre tree buzzing with bees at sunrise, with morning dew weighing heavily on luscious pink roses and delicate gardenias, a rainbow of sweetpeas gambling over one another to reach the top of a fence while overhead the doves, hoopoes and mousebirds called and swept across the shocking blue sky of South African heaven - a glorious canopy spread over the abundant earth, is where my my visual story began.

It was raucous, dazzling beauty.

As a Fine Art Professor and History of Art major, Professor Guiseppe Cattaneo at the University of Witwatersrand encouraged me to be truthful within. He urged me to be patient and to paint only what spoke to me. Struggling to find purposeful subject matter for a chosen solitary journey that could be my future artistic calling, was a tall order for me at age 18.

In 1980 settled in the United States and longing for home- I wandered the zoos painting animals. For a few years I exhibited my work in galleries while our children were very young.













However it was a phone call asking me to produce a Ketubah 41 years ago that yanked my gut and grabbed me into a world of meaning and purpose.

My Rabbis had already been commissioning me to illustrate for them in Winston-Salem and Judaic art has not let go of me since.

Soon I was receiving calls from companies to design products but I would find myself returning to my studio in a silent, solitary way.

In addition, whilst being a docent at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, I transitioned into teaching History of Art to high school students at a private day school followed by a Jewish Day school. Of course I included Jewish history in my courses painting all the while.

I am certain that the memory of my parents taking me and my siblings to Shabbos dinner at Rabbi Abt's home at the age of three, struck the match of a love affair with jewish artifacts that never left me. Mrs. Abt handed me her silver b'samim box in the form of a fish that had a jewel for an eye and articulating scales. The body moved. That I found mesmerizing and it might have led

to a cacophony of creative noise within, to humbly dabble in the rich heritage of Judaic art in all its glory.

In clay, watercolour and oils I worked day and night with spontaneity – that is without planning of any sort. I refer exclusively to my imagination even now.

How fortunate I am to still receive commissions from individuals and families. There I have the joy and greatest satisfaction of meeting and maintaining relationships with many couples and families who call for their ketubot and other painted work and Judaica.

Then along came Michael Shapiro and his staff at ketubah.com

It is where I was able to find yet further gratification from my palette, and even deeper joy than I had imagined prior this very opportunity. How can I possibly be so lucky to work with such talented, patient and devoted professionals? What an inspiration Michael's dream, story and genius remains to me.

I have been supported by the force of my husband, children and siblings to work this way. My husband patiently but with laughter supports my midnight forays dashing into the studio with urgency, to attend to a sudden idea that needs to be put on paper immediately.

My work is my prayer and a song of colour and imaginings that are laid flat in a natural way that arrives and settles with ease.



I call it my fusion of paint and prayer. Yes, definitely. My **"fusion of paint and prayer".**

Angela Munitz *is a Ketubah and Judaic artist.*

In The Space Between Homes:
The High Holidays Story

by Anna Bronshtein

If you grew up in Israel, you know that the High Holidays are a sensory overload.

It starts with the Rosh Hashanah family dinners—loud, passionate, and full of debates over whose side of the family to celebrate with and whose dish turned out better.

Then comes Yom Kippur, which paradoxically belongs entirely to the kids. The country's highways freeze, cars disappear, and the streets fill with an endless sea of bicycles, scooters, and rollerblades. There are the Slichot tours in Jerusalem, magical "white nights" filled with cool autumn air and ancient melodies. You hear the Shofar everywhere you turn.

And, of course, the exhaustion! Just as parents catch their breath after summer vacation and get the kids back to school... bam.



The holiday marathon hits with weeks of more days off. But secular or religious, an undeniable magic fills the air as the whole country syncs to the exact same rhythm.

When you move abroad, everything changes. You step outside, and the street doesn't know it's a holiday. Schools are open, offices are buzzing, and neighbors carry on with a regular weekday. You're forced to pull sacred time out of a work week in a city moving at full speed.

For many Israeli families who moved in recent years, celebrating abroad carries a much quieter, heavier weight than most realize.

Leaving Israel didn't come from a lack of love, it came from a fierce survival instinct. It was a drive to find stability while our hearts remained tied to a homeland processing profound wounds and tension.

This has created a painful, invisible limbo. Mentally and emotionally, returning right now



feels impossible, the trauma back home is too raw. But legally and structurally, staying in the new countries we've moved to is an uphill battle. We are caught in the middle: facing complex immigration hurdles, visa deadlines, and bureaucratic walls in the places we are trying to put down roots. We are building homes on shifting ground, trying to give our kids permanence while living with the quiet fear that we might not be allowed to stay in the place we now call home.

Yet, life happens around the table. Celebrating the High Holidays abroad becomes a quiet act of resilience.

It starts with the great ingredient hunt, driving across a city often the size of all of Israel just to track down the right fish or a specific spice from home. The longing for family back in Israel is real, but abroad, it gets replaced by the warmth of friends who become family. Everyone brings a piece of their heritage into the room, creating new traditions together. Even people who never set foot in a synagogue back in Israel find themselves looking for one, just to hear familiar tunes and feel belonging.

Eventually, a quiet transformation happens. You adapt and create a rhythm that is uniquely yours. You look around your table, filled with new friends, blended traditions, and kids laughing in mixed Hebrew and English, and realize you feel at home.

Celebrating the High Holidays abroad teaches us that home isn't just a legal status or a place on a map. It's the warmth, community, and portable traditions we build together, no matter how complicated the road underneath our feet may be.

CHAG SAMEACH!

Anna Bronshtein *is the founder and president of I-CAN (Immigrant Collaboration Alliance Network), a non-profit organization that helps Israeli immigrants get established in Canada and advocates for policy changes.*

I-CAN
Immigrant Collaboration Alliance Network

Where Pop Art Meets Jewish Tradition

By Rory Trifon

Richard Bernstein's art has long celebrated life's most vibrant moments through bold color, fearless creativity, and an unmistakable Pop Art aesthetic. Now, for the first time, his work is being reimagined for one of Judaism's most meaningful traditions. The Richard Bernstein x Ketubah.com Collection brings together Bernstein's iconic artistic vision with the timeless symbolism of the ketubah, creating heirloom-quality works that honor love, commitment, and family. Rooted in both artistic innovation and Jewish heritage, this exclusive collection transforms the traditional marriage contract into a striking work of art that can be cherished for generations. Richard Bernstein is celebrated as one of the defining visual artists of the Pop Art movement.

Best known for creating the iconic covers of Andy Warhol's Interview Magazine, Bernstein transformed portraits of the world's most recognizable cultural figures into dazzling works of art that came to define the glamour, energy, and creative spirit of the 1970s and 1980s. His bold use of color, innovative techniques, and unmistakable aesthetic established what became known as the "Bernstein Look," influencing generations of artists, designers, and photographers.

After earning degrees from Pratt Institute and Columbia University, Bernstein quickly emerged as an important voice in contemporary art. Following his first solo exhibition in 1965, he exhibited alongside artists including Sol LeWitt, Larry Rivers, and Robert Rauschenberg before taking his work to Paris and galleries throughout Europe, Japan, and North America. Returning to New York in 1968, he made the legendary Chelsea Hotel his home and studio, where he lived and worked for more than three decades. Between 1972 and 1989, he created over 189 cover portraits for Interview Magazine, while continuing a celebrated fine art practice and pioneering the use of computer-generated imagery years before digital art became commonplace. Today, Bernstein's work is held in the permanent collections of many of the world's leading museums, including the



Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Portrait Gallery, the Hirshhorn Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Stedelijk Museum, among others.

Yet beyond the glamour and celebrity that surrounded his career was a deeply personal side that few people saw. Richard's legacy is now carried forward by his nephew, Rory Trifon, who remembers a man whose life was grounded as much by family and faith as by artistic achievement. Every Saturday, Richard gathered with his family for synagogue, followed by lunch and hours spent together before returning to his studio at the Chelsea Hotel. Those weekly Shabbat gatherings became a lifelong tradition that reflected his enduring connection





to his Jewish heritage and the importance he placed on family.

That personal history makes this collaboration with Ketubah.com especially meaningful. A ketubah is more than a marriage document. It is a lasting symbol of love, commitment, heritage, and the beginning of a family's story. Bernstein's artwork, with its joyful color, optimism, and celebration of life, brings a fresh perspective to this timeless Jewish tradition while honoring the values that shaped his own life. This exclusive collection invites couples to celebrate one of life's most meaningful moments through the vibrant vision of one of America's most influential Pop artists.

***Rory Trifon** is the President of The Estate of Richard Bernstein*

The Genesis of Hebrew Names

by Michael Shapiro

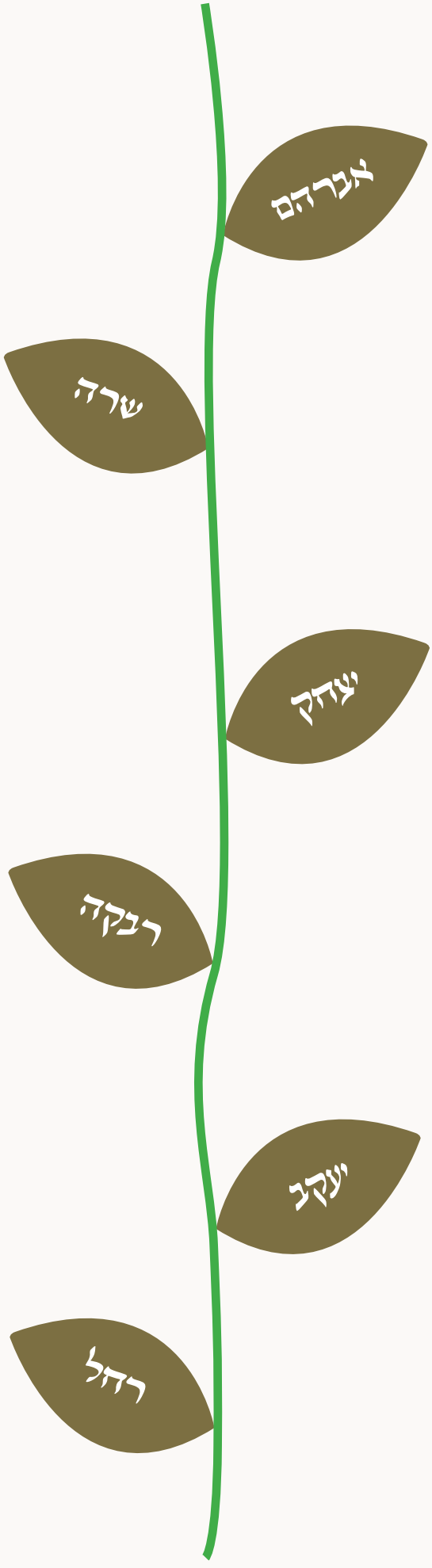
If you've ever attended a baby naming or admired the Hebrew names on a ketubah, you've probably noticed something remarkable: many of the most beloved Jewish names come from one remarkable family in the Book of Genesis.

And there is a lovely, timely word-root connection between Genesis and the Jewish New Year. The traditional Hebrew name for this first book of the Torah is taken from its first word, "Beh-raish-eet", commonly translated as "in the beginning". Beh-raish-eet comes from word "rosh" or "head", the first word in "Rosh Hashanah", which is the "head" or beginning of the year.

Many of the most beloved Hebrew names originate from the family of Abraham and Sarah, whose story figures prominently in Genesis (chapters 12 to 35). Long before they became names on synagogue membership lists or school attendance sheets, they belonged to a family that was anything but ordinary. They loved deeply, argued passionately, faced heartbreak, celebrated miracles, and struggled with questions that still feel surprisingly modern.

Let's start at the beginning.





Avraham (Abraham) may be the most influential name in Jewish history. Originally called Abram, his name was changed by God to Avraham, traditionally understood as "father of a multitude", the founder of a nation. Abraham represents the courage to begin something new. He leaves behind everything familiar in search of a future he cannot yet see.

Beside him stands **Sarah**, whose name means "princess" or "noblewoman." Like Abraham, her name was also transformed by God - from Sarai to Sarah - reflecting her expanding role in Jewish history. Sarah's story reminds us that strength often comes wrapped in patience. After years of waiting, she becomes the mother of Isaac at the age of 90, proving that some of life's greatest blessings arrive on their own timetable.

Yitzchak (Isaac) literally means "he will laugh." Sarah laughed when she was told she would have a child in her old age, and that laughter became immortalized in her son's name. It's a wonderful reminder that Judaism doesn't separate faith from joy. Sometimes the deepest spiritual lesson begins with a smile.

Isaac marries **Rivkah (Rebecca)**, whose kindness becomes legendary. When Abraham's servant arrives seeking a wife for Isaac, Rebecca not only offers him water but also draws enough for his camels—a tremendous act of generosity. Her name has remained popular because it evokes compassion, initiative, and quiet strength.

Their son, **Yaakov (Jacob)** reminds us that every family has its challenges. Jacob's life is filled with obstacles, growth, and transformation. After wrestling through the night, he receives a new name: Yisrael (Israel), "one who struggles with God." In many ways, that name defines the Jewish experience itself - an engaged quest, willing to ask difficult questions.

Jacob's beloved wife **Rachel** remains one of Judaism's most cherished matriarchs. Her name symbolizes gentleness and nurturing. Rachel's older sister - and Jacob's first wife - Leah often receives less attention, yet Jewish tradition celebrates her perseverance and spiritual depth. Between them, they remind us that there is more than one way to build a meaningful life.

What's remarkable about this family is not that they were flawless—they certainly weren't. They navigated infertility, sibling rivalry, blended families, misunderstandings, reconciliation, and profound love. In many ways, they look surprisingly familiar. Perhaps that's why their names continue to resonate thousands of years later.

When we give a child one of these names—or simply learn the story behind our own—we become another branch on this venerable family tree. And that may be the most enduring Jewish tradition of all: carrying ancient stories forward, one name at a time.





Michael Shapiro *is the CEO and Founder of Ketubah.com, HebrewNamer.com and the author of Ketubah Renaissance: The Artful Modern Revival of the Jewish Marriage Contract.*

Book Review - Ketubah Renaissance

by Stuart Halpern – August 25, 2025



Michael Shapiro's *Ketubah Renaissance: The Artful Revival of the Jewish Marriage Contract* is a brilliant and beautiful presentation of illustrated Jewish marriage documents created in recent decades.

Shapiro, founder and CEO of ketubah.com, is an enthusiastic and inspiring guide through the history of the ketubah and its current range of representations. As the scholar Shalom Sabar notes in the foreword, the earliest illustrated marriage contract was produced in Austria in 1391. Sparked by the Spanish Expulsion, the custom of decorating the text then spread across Europe and the Middle East, reaching "an artistic peak in leading Jewish communities such as Venice, Rome, Mantua, and Ancona." After a decrease in popularity in subsequent centuries in Ashkenazic lands, Sephardic Jews carried on the practice.

The flourishing of Jewish communities in Israel and the US during the past few decades, coupled with advancing artistic technology, have led to a resurgence in illustrated ketubahs, which the book demonstrates through sixty examples, helpfully introduced by Shapiro, who also provides biographical information on each artist. Included are wondrous ketubot by Naomi Teplow, Amy Fagin, Jessica Tamar Deutsch, Baruch Sienna and dozens of others.

As the preface notes, beautifying ketubot is in line with a Jewish concept of "hiddur mitzvah." The principle, the artist David Moss has noted, suggests that "when a joyous commandment requires a physical object for its performance, that object should be a beautiful one if possible." In a similar vein, The Song of the Sea, Exodus' fifteenth chapter, contains the verse "this is my God and I will glorify Him."



Catalog number Ket 487, courtesy of The Jewish Theological Seminary Library



Courtesy of Daniel Sroka

This review was originally published by Jewish Book Council. JBC enriches and educates the community through public programming, weekly reviews and essays, discussion questions, over twenty literary awards, and our Nu Reads book subscription series. Find out more here.

***Dr. Stu Halpern** is Senior Advisor to the Provost of Yeshiva University.*

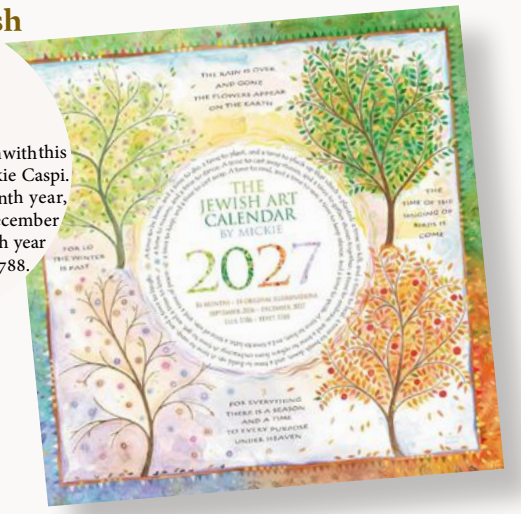
A Sweeter, More Meaningful High Holiday

By Ari Chohen

The High Holidays invite us to slow down, reflect, reconnect, and begin again. While the heart of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur lies in prayer, tradition, and gathering with loved ones, thoughtfully chosen ritual objects can deepen those experiences in surprisingly meaningful ways. We've gathered ten beautiful, practical, and sometimes delightfully unexpected finds that can make this year's High Holidays just a little sweeter.

Mickie Caspi Jewish Art Calendar - 5787/2027 - $21

Discover the beauty of Jewish tradition with this hanging wall calendar by artist Mickie Caspi. It carries you through a full 16-month year, from September 2026 through December 2027, corresponding to the Jewish year from Elul 5786 through Tevet 5788.



Hana Beechwood Challah Board by TOB Aero - $256.50

Designed by Thomas O'Brien, this round beechwood cutting and serving board features an ikat star motif and beveled edge. The round shape is perfect for round challah for Rosh Hashanah and will elevate your Shabbat table or home decor.



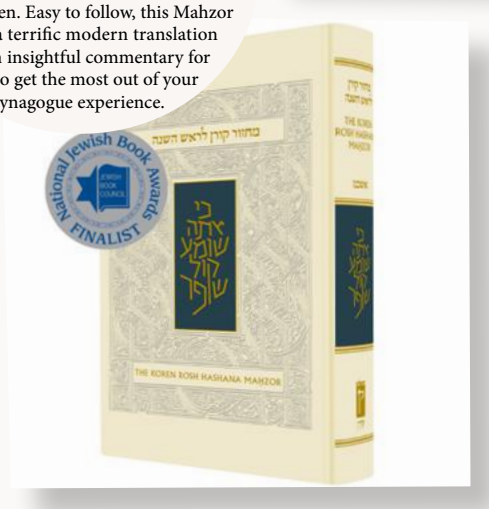
Apple and Honey Combo Dish by Gary Rosenthal - $144

A unique Apple and Honey Combo Dish is a Rosh Hashanah piece made to hold both the apples and honey. This two-tiered centerpiece is both functional and a beautiful statement. Graceful steel curves hold the honey aloft, above a dish full of apples while brass and copper leaves and vines entwine. A fused glass bead finishes it off. Glass bead is individually made and color may vary



The Koren Sacks Rosh HaShanah Mahzor - $38

Enrich your Rosh Hashanah celebrations with this marvelous Rosh Hashanah Mahzor from Koren. Easy to follow, this Mahzor boasts a terrific modern translation and an insightful commentary for you to get the most out of your synagogue experience.



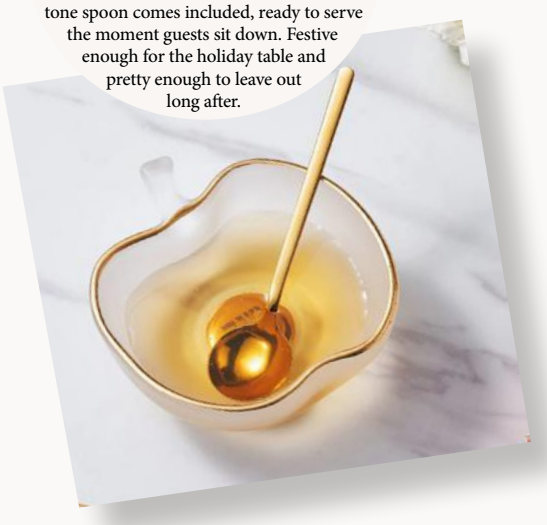
Pomegranate Silver & Gold Serving Bowl - $441

Celebrate life's precious moments with the Michael Aram Pomegranate Silver & Gold Serving Bowl, a luxurious blend of artistry and symbolism. Inspired by the ancient pomegranate fruit, which signifies renewal, fertility, and union, this stunning handmade piece brings timeless elegance to your table. Crafted from stainless steel, nickelplate, and 24K goldplate, its intricate design captures the essence of vitality and beauty.



Apple-Shaped Frosted Glass Honey Dish and Spoon - $20

Dipping apples in honey is the sweetest part of Rosh Hashanah, and this dish gives the tradition a modern, giftable spin. Frosted glass shapes the apple, handcrafted gold accents catch the light, and the Hebrew blessing "Shana Tova," a wish for a good year, is worked into the design. A matching gold-tone spoon comes included, ready to serve the moment guests sit down. Festive enough for the holiday table and pretty enough to leave out long after.



Yair Emanuel Glass Tea Light Holders with Metal Cutout Design - $20

Cradle your tea lights in these glass tea light holders with a skillfully crafted metal cut-out design, from renowned artist, Yair Emanuel!



Personalized Rosh Hashanah Marzipan Apple Slices - $83

Add a beautifully personal touch to your holiday table with our handcrafted marzipan apple slices. Individually personalized by hand with each guest's name, these delicious place cards turn Rosh Hashanah's sweetest symbol into a memorable keepsake – and a perfect conversation starter.



Barsheshet-Ribak English/Hebrew Customizable Silver-Plated Yemenite Shofar With Lion - $318

Wonderfully enrich your personal Judaica collection with this amazing decorative Yemenite shofar from Barsheshet-Ribak



Whether it's a handcrafted honey dish that becomes part of your family's annual tradition, an elegant machzor you'll treasure for decades, or a modern piece of Judaica that sparks conversation around the table, these items help transform familiar rituals into memorable moments.

I Can't Keep Calm, I'm a Jewish Mom Mug - $17.10

Looking for a fun gift that your mom will relate to? We have the perfect mug for you: Made of ceramic, this mug features the words "I Can't Keep Calm, I'm a Jewish Mom" with a crown featuring the Star of David above it. This original design is the copyright of Judaica WebStore. This mug will make a wonderful gift for Mother's Day, a birthday, or for any other special occasion!



***Ari Cohen** is a Project Development Associate at Ketubah.com*

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