

# montana's

## jewish voice

B"H • Issue #53  
Happy Passover!  
Pesach, 5786 / April, 2026

### THE TORAH & DIGNITY OF CLOTHING

*Rabbi Chaim Bruk*

### A STREAM OF MY CONSCIOUSNESS

*Chavie Bruk*

### KEY LIME ICE CREAM

*Rivky Markossian*





DEAR FRIENDS,

Passover commences on April 1st and humanity needs to hear its message.

Passover isn't just about the Jews who were redeemed from Egyptian bondage in 1313 BCE, but about each of us exploring our inner

enslavement, our inner obstacles, our inner Pharaoh, and recognizing that, if we put in the effort, we too can experience freedom to be who we are at our core, at the Neshama, our soul level. We don't have to reinvent ourselves; we just need to remove the shackles that keep our essence locked up.

Growing up, we had the Seder at 603 Empire Boulevard in Brooklyn with my maternal grandparents, Rabbi Shimon and Esther Goldman, of blessed memory. After the Seder, way past midnight, we'd go from the dining room into the living room, where Zayde would dance with his young grandchildren singing, "L'Shana Hab'ah BeYerushalayim... Shoin Shoin Shoin Yerushalayim Habnuya," "Next Year In Jerusalem..." The warmth and vitality exuded by Zayde when he sang "shoin shoin shoin," "already, now" in Yiddish, still warms my heart today. Here was a man whose parents and six siblings were murdered by the Nazis, who rebuilt a family from scratch after surviving the Holocaust, who never stopped hoping, never stopped believing, never stopped yearning and praying to make our way to Jerusalem with Mashiach.

This Passover, as we seek to find inner redemption, let's resolve to think of collective redemption too. Let's make a Mashiach world something real, something we can envision, something we learn more about, so when that moment happens soon we aren't caught off guard but are expecting his arrival as we anticipated all along.

A Zissen Pesach! A Happy & Kosher Passover,

*Rabbi Chaim Bruk*

# MONTANA'S JEWISH VOICE

Quarterly publication by Chabad-Lubavitch of Montana

A mashup of thoughts, ideas, news, and stories from this unique outpost of Jewish life in the West. Remote Jewish communities are as old as time, but this remote Jewish community is young, vibrant, and growing. Our saga draws on age-old Jewish values, quintessential Western grit, and the idealistic fire of five Chabad families. Curious, complex, and committed, they model the highs and lows of being human, the relevance of being Jewish, and a simmering, lasting courage to persevere.

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-MJV Editorial Staff



## The Rabbi & the Neo Nazi

A REVEALING DIALOGUE BETWEEN CAMERON HAYES & RABBI AVROHOM PERLSTEIN

In an honest and revealing dialogue Cameron Hayes and Rabbi Avrohom Perlstein share how they, a Chabad prison chaplain and a white supremacist, to lifelong friends. Their conversation reveals how the Rebbe's message of Hashgacha Pratis and Dira Betachtonim can reach the most distant souls.

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# HOLIDAY GUIDE

Pesach 5786/2026

Wednesday, April 1 - Thursday, April 9

## The Seder in a Nutshell

### In Our Ancestors' Footsteps

At the Seder, every person should see himself as if he were going out of Egypt. The word Seder in Hebrew means "order," reflecting the structured, step-by-step nature of the Passover ritual meal. The Seder follows a specific sequence of rituals, prayers, and symbolic foods, all designed to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Each of the 15 steps in the Seder corresponds to an important part of this narrative:



### Kadesh—Benediction

The Seder service begins with Kiddush, proclaiming the holiness of the holiday. We recite the blessings over a cup of wine. This will be the first of the four cups we drink (while reclining) at the Seder. The four cups of wine allude to the four great merits the People of Israel had while in exile: (1) They did not change their Hebrew names; (2) they continued to speak their own language, Hebrew; (3) they remained highly moral; (4) they remained loyal to one another.



### Urchatz—Purification

We wash hands without a blessing in preparation for eating the Karpas dipped in saltwater.



### Karpas—The "Appetizer"

A small piece of onion or parsley is dipped into saltwater and eaten (after reciting the blessing for vegetables). Saltwater represents the tears of our ancestors while they were slaves in Egypt.



### Yachatz—Breaking the Matzah

The middle of the three matzos on the Seder plate is broken in half. The larger half is set aside as the afikoman (which will be eaten later in the meal), while the smaller half remains. This broken middle matzah symbolizes humility and will be eaten later as the "bread of poverty."



### Maggid—The Haggadah

This is the longest part of the Seder when we recount the story of the Exodus from the Haggadah. It includes the Ma Nishtanah (the Four Questions), which are asked by the youngest child. The child's questioning triggers one of the most significant mitzvos of Passover—recounting the Exodus from Egypt.



### Rochtzah—Washing

We wash our hands again, this time with a blessing, in keeping with the tradition of washing before bread (or matzah) is consumed.



### Motzi Matzah—Eating the Matzah

Take hold of the three matzos and recite the blessing before bread. Then, drop the bottom matzah, hold the top two matzos, and recite the blessing for the mitzvah of eating matzah. Then break at least one ounce from each matzah and eat the two pieces together while reclining.



### Maror—Bitter Herbs

The maror symbolizes the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. Take at least one ounce of

bitter herbs, dip it in the charoset, then shake the latter off and recite the blessing for maror. Eat without reclining.

## THE KABBALAH OF FREEDOM

In Kabbalah, freedom is not merely the absence of chains; it is the revelation of the soul's true nature. Pesach, the festival of liberation, is not only a historical commemoration of leaving Egypt but an eternal spiritual process that unfolds within every person, every year. The Exodus is happening now, again and again, wherever the soul breaks free from its limitations.

Chassidic teachings explain that Mitzrayim—Egypt—shares a root with the word meitzarim, constrictions. Egypt represents a state of narrowness: habits that trap us, fears that define us, identities shaped by external pressure rather than inner truth. Freedom, then, is not simply escape; it is expansion. It is the soul reclaiming space to breathe.

The Zohar teaches that Pesach is a night of revelation, when higher spiritual lights are drawn down without the usual barriers. This is why the Exodus happened in haste. True freedom does not always emerge gradually; sometimes it bursts forth all at once, breaking patterns that seemed immovable. In that moment, the Jewish people were lifted beyond their internal limitations before they were fully ready. G-d, so to speak, carried them out.

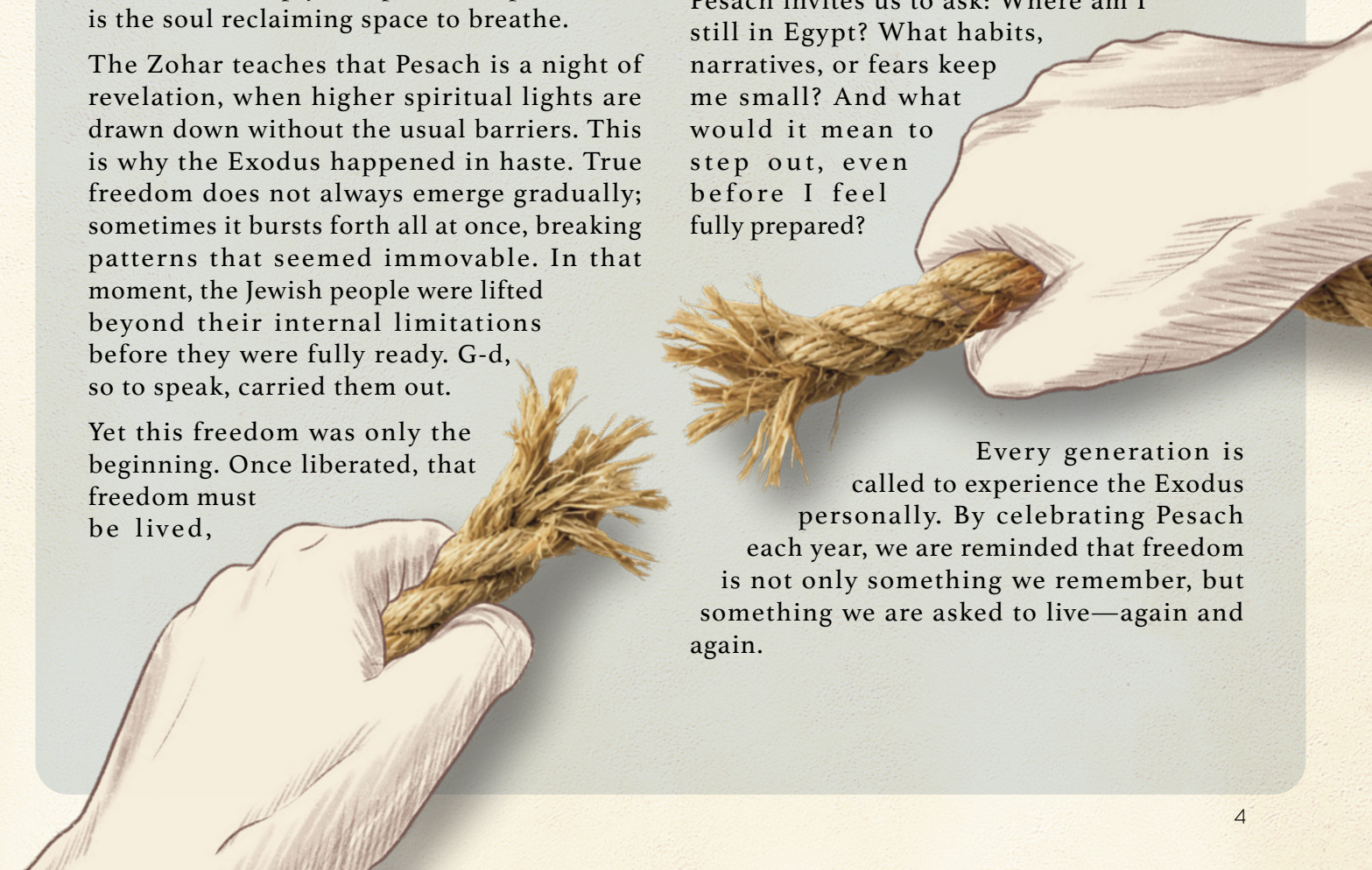
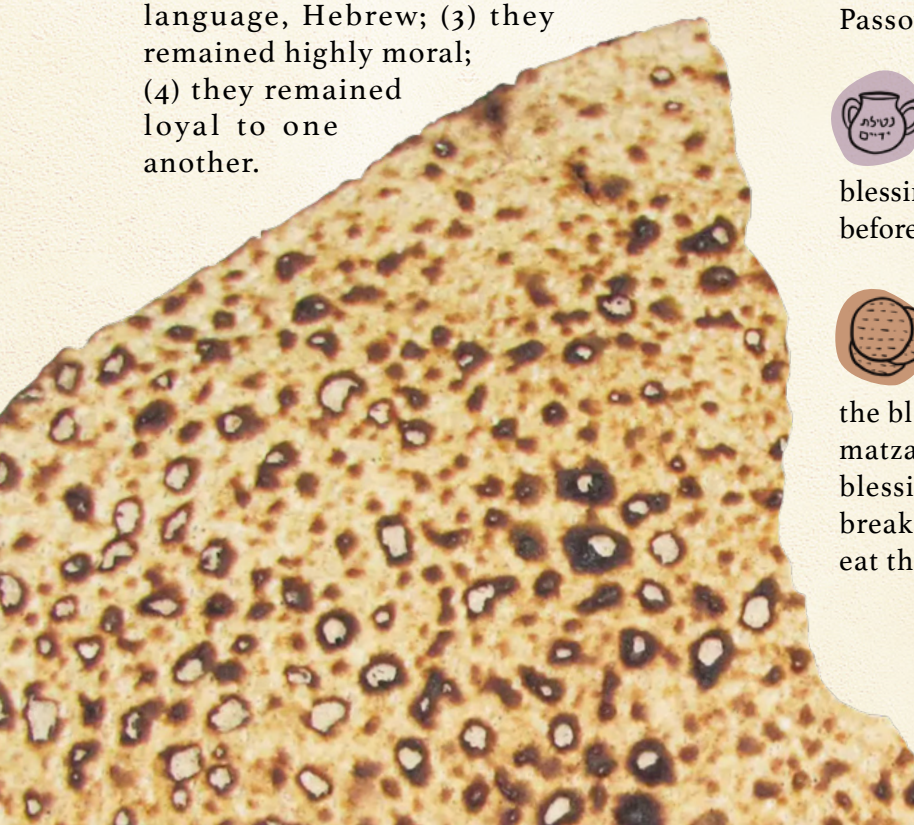
Yet this freedom was only the beginning. Once liberated, that freedom must be lived,

chosen, and expressed in the details of daily life.

One of the central symbols of Pesach is matzah, often called "the bread of poverty," but also described in the Zohar as "the bread of faith." Matzah is simple—flour and water, baked before it has time to rise. In contrast, chametz refers to leavened grain products that have fermented and risen. In Kabbalah, chametz represents ego and self-inflation, the sense of "I" that takes up too much space. Matzah represents humility, the quiet alignment with something higher than the self. Paradoxically, this simplicity is the key to true freedom. When the ego loosens its grip, the soul can move.

Pesach invites us to ask: Where am I still in Egypt? What habits, narratives, or fears keep me small? And what would it mean to step out, even before I feel fully prepared?

Every generation is called to experience the Exodus personally. By celebrating Pesach each year, we are reminded that freedom is not only something we remember, but something we are asked to live—again and again.





## Key Lime Ice Cream

An original recipe by Rivky Markossian.

Bright, tangy, and surprisingly light, this recipe is a welcome sweet finish to the Pesach Seder. Eggs take the place of pareve whipping cream, giving it a naturally creamy texture, a touch more protein, and a fresh lime zing.

### Ingredients

- 6 large eggs, separated
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup oil
- Zest and juice of 1–2 limes, to taste



### Instructions

1. Separate the eggs, placing the yolks and whites in two separate bowls.
2. In a stand mixer, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form, gradually adding the sugar. Set aside.
3. Strain the egg yolks to remove the membrane, then blend in a blender for at least 5 minutes, until smooth. With the blender running, slowly add the oil until the mixture becomes thick and creamy.
4. Gently fold the yolk mixture into the egg whites, taking care to keep the mixture light and airy. Then fold in the lime juice and zest.
5. Transfer to a freezer-safe container and freeze for at least 8 hours, or until firm.
6. Serve straight from the freezer, scooped into bowls, with extra lime zest on top if desired.

Happy cooking!

Rivky



### Korech—The Sandwich

A small amount of bitter herbs (maror) is placed between two pieces of matzah, forming a sandwich. This is based on the practice of the sage, Hillel, who combined these foods during the Passover meal in ancient times.



### Shulchan Orech—The Feast

The holiday meal is now served. We begin with a hard-boiled egg dipped into saltwater.



### Tzafun—Out of Hiding

The Afikoman (broken piece of matzah from earlier that was “hidden”) is eaten as the final food of the meal.



### Berach—Blessings After the Meal

A third cup of wine is filled, and Grace is recited. Then we recite the blessing over wine and drink the third cup while reclining. Now we fill the cup of Elijah and our own cups with wine. We open the door and recite the passage inviting Elijah the Prophet to our Seder.



### Hallel—Songs of Praise

At this point, we recite selections from the Hallel (psalms of praise), thanking G-d for the miracles of the Exodus and the redemption of the Jewish people. Then we drink the last of the four cups of wine.



### Nirtzah—Acceptance

Having carried out the Seder service, we say L’Shana Hab’ah BeYerushalayim—“Next year in Jerusalem!”

# totally unexpected!

## A Stream of My Consciousness

Originally published on [www.totallyunexpected.blog](http://www.totallyunexpected.blog) on August 5, 2025.

by Chavie Bruk

I recently read a book in which one of the perspectives was written as if we were inside that character’s head, essentially a stream of consciousness. At first, I couldn’t make sense of it. It felt disjointed, like I was reading half-sentences jumping from one topic to the next. It was hard to follow. I almost gave up but then I did a little research and it turns out the book alternates between a more traditional narrative style and a stream-of-consciousness.

I never read anything like it. But once I understood what was going on I was able to appreciate being exposed to a different kind of storytelling. I’ve come to think of it less as a writing style and more like getting a front-row seat to someone’s raw, unfiltered thoughts, before they’re organized, before they make sense, before they’re “acceptable” or “appropriate.”

Then I thought maybe I could put pen to paper and write my thoughts as they are. If an established author can do it, maybe I can too...

*I can’t believe I woke up with a headache on a fast day, hostages are still in captivity, I don’t like fasting, but this fast is only 25 hours long and there are still hostages being starved for almost two years at this point in Gaza... I don’t understand what G-d’s plan is and I’m annoyed. Oh, it’s 10:00 AM and there are kids screaming and fighting... it’s gonna be a long day...I think maybe I won’t leave my room, ha that’s a cute thought, haven’t we suffered enough as a people, it’s confusing sometimes to balance*

*joy and pain, whatever we are even doing, the world is stupid, why am I hungry already, I resent fast days like what’s the point, I probably shouldn’t think that I definitely shouldn’t ever say that out loud. I mean I know the point but it’s hard to be present with the point. Where did critical thinking disappear to? I want to scream at the world, I’m tired, haven’t been sleeping well, ugh I get anxious about the lack of sleep and the consequences, I actually hate sleeping, who cares what the world thinks can we just finish this war already, I should get up and be a good mom, nope don’t want to, 5 more minutes, only 11 hours left, get over it there is crazy suffering you can go one day without food, yeah shaming always works, it kinda does sometimes. You get the idea. I could go forever*



*as our brains don’t really stop. Ever. This is probably where the concept of journaling came from. Getting your unorganized jumbled thoughts out, creating space, clearing out some of that clutter. I’ve never been a journaler. Every time I tried, I would be blank like all a sudden my brain had no thoughts. I think in the back of my head that I still felt like it needed to make sense or be somewhat coherent. I think I was really missing the point, just writing every single thing that pops into your head without judgement has a lot of merit. Of course, I will try this for the first time on a public*

*post, but I really think I can get behind this. Give it a try, write down every crazy thought, no rhyme no reason. No shame. Maybe you do have to be an established author to get away with this as a public post but are there really any rules? You definitely don’t need anyone’s permission to do this for yourself. It’s pretty heavy and confusing out in the world. We gotta put it somewhere. Anyway, I shall now get up, get dressed, show up and do this day the best way I can.*

I’m grateful to feel safe enough with my audience to share my stream of consciousness.

Love,

Chavie

Subscribe for free at [www.totallyunexpected.blog](http://www.totallyunexpected.blog) to get Chavie’s musings in your inbox every Tuesday.



## HOW DO YOU FEEL CONNECTED TO A MAN YOU NEVER KNEW?

*Adapted from an article in Chabad.org by Amanda Eve Thum*

How do you feel connected to a man you never “knew?”

First, you move to Hawaii.

Weird start, right?

You get there, and your best friend from seminary, Ali, calls and says, “If you think you’re moving to Hawaii and not getting more involved in Jewish life, you’re wrong.” She connects you with some “thing” called “Chabad of Hawaii.” What is this? You have no idea.

You eventually, finally, slowly make it to the physical location of this place called “Chabad.” The rebbetzin, Pearl Krasnjansky, acts like she’s your new second mom, and then you fall a little bit in love with her.

Out of nowhere, right after you get laid off from one of your island jobs, the Rebbetzin and Rabbi offer you a job as their “Office Human.” You say, “Sure!” Then you begin to show up every day in your own interpretation of “modest dress”: lots of tie-dye and 750 scarves to cover all sleeveless tops.

One day, a girl from Israel, who had just moved to Hawaii to work in the kiosks, walks in. (Yes,

Israelis live in Hawaii too!) You happen to be the only one in the Chabad office that afternoon.

She cries to you about how homesick and lonely she feels. You use your Hebrew to connect to this young fellow Jew who reminds you of you.

You realize that G-d clearly brought you there to fulfill a Divine mission.

You spend another two joyful years on that beloved little island.

You choose to become shomer Shabbat, properly observing the holy day that comes every week.

You return, officially, finally, after an 8-year period of indecisiveness, to the Torah and mitzvot of your great-great-grandparents.

You feel alive.

You meet all of the rabbi and rebbetzin’s family: children, grandchildren.

Every single Friday night, you pick up your chair from the Shabbat dinner table and bring it closer to Rabbi Itchel—he’s “your” rabbi now, whether or not he knows it himself—to hear his weekly d’var Torah, his words of wisdom. Usually, he’s emotionally telling stories about this man known as “The Rebbe.”

As Shabbat ends each Saturday night, you end up sticking around for the weekly tradition of watching old videos of the Rebbe speaking at 770 Eastern Parkway.

What is 770? What is Eastern Parkway? You’re born and raised in Brooklyn, a 30-minute drive from there, but you



With Rebbetzin Pearl Krasnjansky, in 2020.

*Out of nowhere, right after you get laid off from one of your island jobs, the Rebbetzin and Rabbi offer you a job as their “Office Human.”*

have no idea that place exists or why it does.

You “find yourself” on an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Somewhere in that “middle” is a quick and painful marriage, and a slow and more painful Jewish divorce.

Through it all, you stick by Chabad. And Chabad sticks by you. In fact, you get even stronger in your fervor and delight to be Torah-observant, involved in your community, and committed to the way you want to raise your family.

You find a new partner at your “new” Chabad in Philadelphia.

You meet him on Shabbat in the party room during kiddush.

At this point, you’ve visited the Rebbe about 100 times.

This man you never “knew,” but still feel so connected to, you visit him at the Ohel, his resting place in Queens, N.Y. You don’t visit

him in the physical world; you visit him in the spiritual one. You’ve now written letters upon letters to him. You’ve cried to him. You’ve begged of him. You’ve asked. You’ve become close.

In Hawaii.

You see so clearly that none—not one—of these steps would have been there for you to take, none of this path would have been there for you to walk had the Rebbe not paved it for you.

The places that fed you. The arms that hugged you. The schools that employed you. The

communities that welcomed you. The “car menorah” parades that delighted you. The mission that lights you.

This is how you feel connected to a man you never “knew.”

More than a man, more than a rebbe, but “The Rebbe.”



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# ON BEING HUMAN

## The Torah & Dignity of Clothing

by Rabbi Chaim Bruk

My mother of blessed memory dressed us well. She shopped at OshKosh B'gosh in the City, Widensky's in Flatbush, Nathan's in Williamsburg, and other boutiques that had cute and sharp clothing for her kids. I still remember my beloved 4th grade teacher, Rabbi Zeiler, calling me "Flashlight," referring to my loud, perhaps bold, clothing with bright colors that he valued.

There is a part of us that appreciates good taste in clothing. It feels good and it enhances our presence to those around us.

In Judaism, clothing has a special place. The Priests and High Priests in the Holy Temple wore unique, sacred clothing that had to be woven and donned in a very specific fashion. Modest clothing for men and women that covers the intimate parts of our bodies is discussed at length in the Code of Jewish Law. Wearing special clothing on Shabbos and holidays is cherished in Judaism, even referring to it endearingly as "Shabbos clothes" in observant Jewish communities.

Maimonides writes that if a Sage of Israel, a Talmid Chacham, has a speck of dirt on their clothing, they are grave sinners and are liable for the death penalty. While that seems extreme (and perhaps we can be grateful that we aren't such great sages), it's clearly indicating the importance of presenting ourselves properly. The Talmud says that Rav Yochanan referred to clothing as "honor," indicating this same idea. Albert Einstein once said, "If most of us are ashamed of shabby clothes and shoddy furniture, let us be more ashamed of shabby ideas and shoddy philosophies.... It would be a sad situation if the wrapper were better

than the meat wrapped inside it." So, while we shouldn't get carried away on the externalities of clothing—internal values matter way more—there is value in our presentation.

Growing up, it wasn't just about the clothing; there was a standard to be classy. My mother and grandmother, Bubbe Esther, would always tell me to tuck in my shirt. My Bubbe was disappointed when she saw Chabad kids in the neighborhood who were unkempt. She, as well as my Zayde and my Israeli Savta, always dressed to the nines, though their styles were very different.

When our kids were born and Chavie started shopping for modest kids clothing, especially Shabbos clothing, I was baffled by the prices. With passing years, a larger family, and the gift of inflation, these garments cost more than ever, but when I see the kids dressed for school or heading to Shul on Shabbos, I smile at their elegance, their cuteness, and the fun that exudes from the clothing Chavie purchased for them.



Rabbi Chaim featured in Esquire Magazine, September 2015 issue: Fifty Men Looking Their Best

I know in Montana this can all seem sacrilegious. We don't emphasize a dress code in the Wild West. Yet this is the Torah that I am sharing and something we should all ponder, even on our cattle ranch. It's true that most

Montanans don't own a proper suit and wear cowboy boots and Levi's all the time (years ago, I heard a fellow at the cleaners talking about the jeans he was getting dry cleaned for his own wedding!!!), yet we have to be frank about the state of clothing in America and reintroduce some class and holiness into our wardrobes. Too many people shop at Walmart and fly on airplanes in their pajamas. Too often, people walk down the street wearing little or provocative clothing. We can change that one outfit at a time.

For me personally, it's complicated.

On many days, especially on long flights or drives, I enjoy wearing my Lululemons and a comfortable sweatshirt, but I also feel so much better about myself when I am wearing my rabbinic clothing. About eighteen months ago, I found a clothier in New York, Melech of Biago, who measured me up and ever since

has tailored good quality clothing that fits me properly, not too baggy, not too tight, not too long, and not too short. It's more elegant, and it makes a real difference to my self-image and, based on the compliments, it is welcomed by others too.

I don't think black-tie, elegant clothing is for everyone all the time, but dressing down is not a Torah value either. The Torah wants G-d's people to dress as representatives of the Jewish nation. Perhaps, and this is for everyone, we could start with Shabbos and Jewish holiday clothing. Go shopping and take your family along and purchase a few items of Shabbos or Yom Tov clothing so that when you're going to Shul, going to a Simcha, heading to a Pesach Seder or Rosh Hashana service, you can take out your beautiful Shabbos clothing and get into the mood of the holy day.

You'll thank me, and my Bubbe Esther.

## ONLY IN MONTANA





## JEWES OF THE WEST

### Carrying the Torch

An interview with Adam Mendelsohn and his parents, Jason & Ronni by Elie Benhiyoun.

Some people call it a gap year but I call it a growth year. If you asked me a year ago whether I'd be in yeshiva, I would have said, what is that? Now I'm in Jerusalem, studying at a yeshiva. How? Let me tell you.

### Summers in Montana

I grew up in Orlando but spent most of my summers in Montana. Bozeman is probably my favorite place on earth. Jerusalem is up there now, but if I had to pick somewhere that wasn't Israel, it would be Bozeman. I have an older brother and sister who are twins, Lauren and Ryan. We're a close-knit family and I truly have the best parents in the entire world.

Judaism was always an important part of our family, but it was more tradition than anything else. We'd light the Shabbat candles, then go watch a movie. We'd light the Chanukah candles and I wouldn't know what the Hebrew meant. I loved it because it was my family's tradition, but I never understood it. I would find any excuse not to go to synagogue.

### An Unlikely Bar Mitzvah

In March of 2020, we were in Montana for spring break. Instead of going back to Florida when Covid hit, we stayed. I was twelve, almost thirteen and my Bar Mitzvah had been planned for that June in South Africa. My first thought was: great, I don't have to do my Bar Mitzvah.



Adam, on the day of his Bar Mitzvah, putting on tefillin with Rabbi Chaim.

My parents wanted me to continue Bar Mitzvah lessons in Bozeman so they scheduled online learning sessions with Rabbi Chaim. I remember thinking: another thing I don't want to do. Then I met him, and I can't even

**I remember thinking: another thing I don't want to do. Then I met him, and I can't even explain. It was incredible. He really listened.**

explain. It was incredible. He really listened. I read somewhere that the words listen and silent have the same letters. I think about that a lot. We learned Chumash together and I felt like there was a depth I'd never experienced before. We started going to Chabad for the

### We Trust Our Kids

**Jason:** I couldn't stand Hebrew school growing up. We were forced to go and I never understood why you'd do that to a kid. So when Adam didn't like it, Ronni and I said, we're not doing this.

**Ronni:** Someone told us early on, get out of his way. And we did. That's been our approach with all of our kids. We've always had a hundred percent trust with them.

**Jason:** When Adam clicked with Rabbi Bruk, we weren't surprised. That's just Adam. If he has a passion for something he pursues it. Rabbi Bruk even wrote about how Adam was the only kid who studied with him for a full year after his Bar Mitzvah.

**Ronni:** It's not like Judaism was new to our family. I've always been involved. My kids have seen me doing this their whole lives. We gave Adam the space to find it, but the foundation was always there.

**Jason:** When he told us he was thinking about yeshiva, the worry was he'd come back in a black hat and a white shirt and his future kids wouldn't be able to eat at our house. I go back and forth with it. Is he being pulled into something different?

Yes. It may not be the path we chose but at the end of the day, what is he actually learning? To be a good human being.

**Ronni:** And he hasn't given anything up. He's still doing his pickleball business,

still planning on his degree. Maybe he's added to his life. That's what keeps us grounded. I mean, look, the way Jason and I are wired is, when something happens, you make it work. You don't sit in it. Jason got cancer in May of 2014, and that November we got on a plane to Israel because the twins were having their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs and that was not getting cancelled. And



then the fire. We lost the house, stayed with friends for a week, rented for two years, rebuilt on the same land. I'm not saying it wasn't hard. But our glass is always half full.

**Jason:** I never heard the word chavruta before Adam left. I didn't really know what tefillin was. Now I put them on every day, because of my son. He is finding such joy and peace in all of this that it would be difficult not to embrace it. Ronni and I are both Jewish. He wants to be more Jewish. How can we not support that?

holidays, Purim, Chanukah, Sushi in the Sukkah. Whatever Rabbi Bruk and Chavie were doing, we went.

In September of 2020, a fire broke out and burned down our house. We evacuated, stayed with family and friends, and eventually went back to Florida. But I kept learning with Rabbi Bruk even from home. The following summer, we came back to Montana and had my Bar Mitzvah next to Bridger Creek, on my family's property. Just me, my mom, my dad, my brother, my sister, and Rabbi Bruk.



Adam and his mom, Ronni Menelsohn.

It was the first day I ever put on tefillin. I hadn't just memorized lines. I knew what I was saying and why. Not fully but it meant something. It was one of the most beautiful days of my life.

### High School Hustle

When I got back to Florida I got involved with Chabad in Orlando and started doing CTeen. I went to Shabbatons in New York City. I loved how Chabad says every Jew is a Jew. You can walk in knowing nothing and they meet you where you are.

Freshman year I started a Jewish Student Union at Edgewater High School and became

president. I also built a math tutoring nonprofit that by graduation covered over eight schools and 500 students in Florida, and I joined the advisory board of a Holocaust education organization called Hate Ends Now. Around the same time I got into pickleball, started playing at Bogert Park in Bozeman and wondered why there wasn't a better app to connect players. So I launched PicklePalz. We're now live in the US, Canada, Israel, and India, partnered with DUPR, the biggest pickleball rating system in the world, and I'm working on raising the next round of funding.

But during this whole time, when I'd look at the world, or hiking in the mountains of Montana, I kept feeling this thing I couldn't explain. There has to be more. Everything is

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I kept feeling this thing I couldn't explain. There has to be more. Everything is too perfect. It doesn't make sense.

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too perfect. It doesn't make sense. I'd think about this torch my family has carried for thousands of years and wonder, why are people still doing this? Now I'm holding that torch. What can I do to build that fire up instead of letting it go out?

### Yeshiva – What Is That?

By senior year I got into the University of Florida and into the University of Virginia. Then Olami offered an affordable trip to Israel. I saw "Trip to Israel" and signed up. I missed the word yeshiva somewhere in the description.

We get to the airport and they tell us we're going to Derech and Netiv. I had no idea what those were. They said: yeshivas. I said: what's a yeshiva? When I got to Or Sameach and met

the rabbis and the students, I saw that the kids looked like me and dressed like me. They said: During high school we were exhausted, running from one thing to the next, we want a year to focus on ourselves. The only way we can be good to the world is if we're the best versions of ourselves first.

That night me and my friends, Mike and Zach, snuck up to the roof of our hotel in Jerusalem. We weren't supposed to be up there, and we just sat looking over the city. I knew I needed to come back here.

I came home and told my parents that I wanted to go to yeshiva. At first they were worried that I was throwing away everything I'd worked for. It was a reasonable freak-out. I understood it. But I sat with my decision for a long time. I wrote out everything that was important to me. My values. What I'd learned from my family. What I wanted to be when I grew up. Did I want to be the wealthiest person, or the person who did the most good?

I emailed UF and asked if I could defer. They said yes. I showed my parents. That's when the tears started. They realized I was actually going. They've always been supportive. It wasn't a no. It was more like, is our kid going

to come back a rabbi? They knew how hard I worked to get into college. Honestly, I get it.

My friend, Zach said: obviously if you're going, I'm going. I know you felt what I felt. I came in with very little knowledge but the thing is about the Torah is that it's infinite. You realize pretty quickly that it's okay to know nothing, as long as you're willing to learn.

I'm not going to be learning Torah 24/7, that's not how I'm wired. I need to get out and engage with the world. I love the people I'm surrounded by, and I still have a long way to go. That's the truth.



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**Best wishes for a happy and sweet Passover**

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