

HAVRUTA

חברותא

A PARDES
LEARNING
COMPANION

Raising a Jewish Child



"For those who think that being Jewish is primarily a matter of national identity, living in Israel and speaking Hebrew may be sufficient," says Jewish educator, Dr. David Resnick. "But then," he asks, "how does speaking Hebrew distinguish Jews from Druze?" Resnick's question illustrates his belief that even in Israel Jewish religious life occupies only minority status within a basically secular culture, requiring a conscious effort for those who wish to make it part of their lives.

"Building a *sukkah* or a Lag B'Omer bonfire may be fun," says Resnick, "and I'm certainly in favor of fun, but if a kid doesn't know what the Omer is in Lag B'Omer, what is the meaning of a bonfire as a Jewish act? Secular Jewish culture has lost all sense of *kiddusha*, retaining only some of the symbols," states Resnick, pointing to the fact that, not unlike the American scene, the secular Israeli *bar mitzva* usually takes place devoid of religious meaning.

On the positive side, however, Resnick feels that living in Israel provides a modicum of Jewish culture that all Jews share. "We live according to the Jewish calendar, and, even in secular schools, a base-line Jewish education

affords students the opportunity to learn Jewish history, holidays, some *Tanach*, and to travel around the land." "The average Israeli one stops on the street," says Resnick, "would know what the *shmita* year is, whereas in the United States, the average Jew wouldn't. But," says Resnick, "Israel may be in worse shape vis a vis the pull of secular culture, for Americans at least know they have a problem."

This excerpt from a conversation with Dr. Resnick serves as an appropriate introduction to PARDES PEOPLE: Raising a Jewish Child. For, it illustrates that, despite seeming differences between raising children in Israel and the United States, Jews everywhere share a similarity of concern for the tone, content, and purpose of their children's Jewish upbringing. With this in mind, we asked a number of Bonei Pardes living in Israel to talk about child-rearing, Jewish style.

Despite the variety of perspectives reflected by those interviewed, certain issues were raised spontaneously by almost everyone—the need for tolerance of those whose Judaism differs; the centrality of being in *Eretz Yisrael*; and the priority placed on bringing up children who are *menschim*—not just good Jews, but good people.

The role played by Pardes in all this is clear. For Pardes students learn not only from texts, but from the example set by faculty. The family relationships and communal commitments of Pardes teachers have served as models for an entire generation of Pardes students. Since Pardes does not demand a single standard of religious observance, it is not surprising that its alumni are not easily categorized, but adhere to a broad range of religious perspectives and lifestyles. It is also not surprising that, no matter where on the scale of religious observance these Bonei Pardes may be, they nevertheless maintain intense and spirited involvement in Jewish life.

Dr. Resnick has a doctorate in psychology from Columbia University and rabbinical ordination from The Jewish Theological Seminary. He teaches in the School of Education at Bar Ilan University, and is the Israel Representative for the Jewish Education Service of North America.

Jane Kimchi

NEWSBRIEFS:

- Pardes welcomes new Board of Directors member, Walter Hubert, internationally-known businessman and philanthropist. In Israel since 1986, Hubert has been active in promoting Israeli industry.
- Debbie Snyder succeeds Steve Mazer as Pardes secretary.

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- Professional social worker Vivien Auerbach is Pardes' new Coordinator of Community Service Programs.
- Hebrew University Professor of Education, Michael Rosenak, is chairman of the search committee to find a successor to Levi Lauer as Director of Pardes. Professor Rosenak is a member of the Pardes Board of Directors.

Levi Lauer Leaves Pardes

After 17 years as Director of Pardes, Rabbi Levi Lauer is stepping down. During the years of his tenure, Pardes has grown from an institution with a student body of a few dozen to its present enrollment of 90. As counselor, advisor, and mentor to hundreds of students, Levi has been instrumental in affecting countless decisions concerning lifestyle, career, and level of Jewish involvement. Levi has been responsible for making the Jewish world vividly aware of Pardes' unique mission. He has eloquently articulated the role Pardes plays in providing, from within a halachic perspective and

a textual tradition, opportunity for dialogue with Jews of all backgrounds. Through his efforts, Pardes has become known as an institution based on the principle of tolerance and committed to the notion that learning should make a substantive difference in development of self-understanding and sensitivity to moral concerns. As Levi moves on to new challenges, his indelible imprint remains. We wish him much happiness and success.

A Personal Note: Pardes was one of several institutions I contacted in 1980 when I was in the process of making plans to spend a year in Jerusalem. As Hillel Director at Ithaca College, in a

Jewishly impoverished environment in upstate New York, I was feeling the need to stoke the furnaces of my Jewish being. Levi's letters in response to my initial inquiry and to my application were so personal in tone and inspiring in content that I felt my destiny awaited me at Pardes. And so it has. My family and I spent the year here while I attended Pardes, and, after a year back in the States, we came on *aliya*. Subsequently, I had the privilege of working with Levi, and finding in him, among many wonderful qualities, the extraordinary ability to listen, argue and also change his mind. He was a terrific boss. I'll miss him.

JK

Orientation 5775/1994.

In the Beit Midrash, Acting Director Baruch Feldstern gives an introductory *drash* on the importance of Hebrew language for plumbing the message and meaning of Torah. Ninety students from the U.S., Canada and England, two of whom were born in the Soviet Union, introduce themselves. Seven are in their second or third year at Pardes. Several rab-

binical students and one cantorial student from The Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Leo Baeck.

Two attorneys, a doctor, Jewish educators, and community service professionals. Lots of humor and enthusiasm. A few hope to integrate their feminism and Judaism and "make sense out of being a Jewish woman." An attorney grateful for "the opportunity not to have to wear a suit." A

young woman who always wanted to be Yentl. Several who hope to resolve their career choices (whether to become a bio-chemist, a psychotherapist or a rabbi). A young woman running U.J.A. missions from the U.S., who got tired of the ten-hour flights and decided to make *aliya*. And with it all a sense of intimacy, of people getting to know one another, making friends, and talk of "building community," the beginning of a year filled with promise.

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PARDES PEOPLE: Raising a Jewish Child



SUSAN LIEBERMAN OPPENHEIMER '82-'84, grew up in New York City, received her B.A. from Swarthmore and an M.S.W. from the Wurzweiler School of Social Work. She is a psychotherapist at a community mental health center in Jerusalem, and mother of three children ages five, three and two.

My approach to raising children probably has a lot to do with the fact that I am a product of two, sometimes competing, value systems—the secular and the religious—and find myself constantly trying to relate to people from the two worlds these represent. Thus, on the one hand, while I feel that the basis of everything is Torah, on the other hand, it is not only through Torah that I define myself. Development of my professional life is also a form of spiritual growth. Nevertheless, I'm not without conflict that I'm doing social work and not learning Torah.

I'm not sure whether my attraction to observance comes out of a strong

superego or a sense of faith. Perhaps I simply like prohibitions and direct rulings regarding what is acceptable and what is prohibited. But I do think life is more than just an individual spiritual search. We live in a God-centered universe with ramifications for all mankind. To be as full a Jew as I can means to enhance the moral quality in the world, and that is what I regard as my destined task.

What do I want for my children? I want them to be grounded in Torah, filled with *yirat shemayim* (divine awe) and to be *shomrei mitzvot* (observant of commandments). I want their conduct in all areas of life to be informed by their religious outlook and



their observance.

I have a deep faith that living a halachic life can be a source of inspiration and that one can take it in many directions and give it many forms of expression. I also believe that everything one does has potential spiritual implications. There is a sacredness in each and every creature. I see myself as part of the working through of an ultimate plan and my life having significance as an expression of God's presence in the world. If my children are without this sense, they can be decent, creative human beings, but they will be lacking this awareness of God's presence. If I can't transmit this to my children, a certain spiritual light will be dimmed, and, blessed as I am to be a parent, I will not have fulfilled my mission.

I do feel, however, that one can have a live sense of God's presence in the world without having to live in a narrow community. There is so much variety in the world, such a small proportion of which is Jewish and smaller yet Orthodox. Furthermore, I don't think that all Jews who keep Shabbat should be segregated in one neighborhood, but that observant and secular should live together. Diversity is the current reality within the Jewish people and I want to live with it rather than pretend it doesn't exist. It is not easy to raise children in such an open environment, but there's much to learn from all the variety.

It is reflective of who we are that Shmuel and I have chosen not to live in a closed religious environment. By virtue of this, our children are exposed to a range of viewpoints and behavior. Of course I cannot guarantee that my children will make the same choices as I have, I can only put my faith in the ordered running of an Orthodox home as a means of passing on Jewish values.

I'm now teaching the children *brachot*. Sometimes I feel like a football coach calling out plays as I remind them of which blessings to say. While it is enough for me to do a particular *mitzva* because I know it is commanded of me, children need to acquire not only discipline and habit, but also an understanding of the importance and meaning of what they are required to do. But this is just where I feel on shaky ground. Since I didn't grow up in an Orthodox home, I feel less sure how to pass on positive values and find myself relying heavily on Shmuel who comes by this naturally.

Nevertheless, the ultimate message to my children must be that we do

things a certain way because we are commanded. I believe this message is the beginning of the understanding of what it means to be a Jew. We can think about it and have philosophical conceptions about it. The bottom line, however, is that what makes me a Jew in the fullest sense is keeping the *mitzvat* that God gave us, for our Jewishness is determined not by our faith, but by our actions. ●



SANDRA BEN-DAVID '80-'82, is from Oklahoma City. She has a B.A. in Human Biology from Stanford University, was coordinator of student activities at Pardes from 1983-85, and has five children ranging in age from four months to ten years. She says she is an "at home mom" who has over the years taken periodic excursions out of the house to train as a childbirth educator and labor assistant, work as a nursery school teacher, and teach brides.

When I was growing up, my parents' choice of neighborhood in which to live was based on the quality of its school system. Aryeh and I made a similar choice when we moved to Efrat, a community with a high quality neighborhood Talmud-Torah. The difference, of course, is that my parents' choice of school was based exclusively on the quality of its secular education.

In our children's Talmud-Torah,

the boys and girls learn separately. The children study *Humash* until the age of ten, *Mishna* from ten to fifteen, and *G'mara* beginning at age fifteen. The young children learn *Humash* with Torah trope (melody). They sing and memorize Torah so that it is very much a part of their lives. I hear my girls in the bathtub singing back and forth to each other sections of Torah they have learned by heart. While the emphasis in the early years is primarily on *Humash*, the children learn secular subjects as well.

I want my children to be educated in accordance with their individual needs so they can develop their natural abilities. I want their teachers to be warm and supportive and to teach them to see that Torah, the Land of Israel, and the State of Israel are the core values from which everything else stems. Clearly, secular education is also important, yet the primary choices they will make in life, such as whether to serve in the army or where they want to live, will be determined by Torah values. In this context, what will be more important to them, Torah or C.S. Lewis?

Education and life in this system are organically connected. When I was a girl, there wasn't a single teacher who served as a role-model of the kind of woman I wanted to emulate when I grew up. My children's teachers, by contrast, are young, vibrant and having babies. The class is invited to weddings and *britot mila*. At home we review what the children learn each day, and each evening Aryeh asks questions about *parshat hashavua*. There is always overlap between what they learn at school and at home, and on Shabbat there is opportunity for more in-depth involvement, with the children acting out Torah stories or making up skits.

Because Efrat is a religious community, our immediate circle of friends happens to be other observant families, but we still have friends less observant with whom we enjoy spending time. Our kids have aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents who are non-observant. We try to encourage tolerance, love and the understanding that everyone makes choices in their lives.

In defining myself as a religious personality, I realize that growing up as a woman influenced by feminism and secular values created certain conflicts. I believe it is crucial to lessen the possibility of such conflicts for our daughters. While a certain amount of questioning, tension and angst, is necessary, and even desirable, I hope they will have fewer problems with is-

sues of modesty, *mehitza*, and head covering, which are external issues on many levels, and instead dive directly into the deeper elements of philosophy and Jewish texts. Learning is more accessible to them than it will ever be to me, and I want them to be able to benefit from it with fewer distractions. They will have questions of their own, different from mine. There will be crises and rebellions, but hopefully these will arise from within the system. I would not give up my own life experiences, but because of the choice I have made as an adult to be more committed to halachic Judaism, I am offering my children something different from what I had.

Pressures are magnified for those of us who are *olim* and parents. We tend to have larger families here than abroad, and most of us do not have extended family support networks nearby. Friends are loving, but have as many or more kids than we do. We all try to live what we preach, exemplifying patience and tolerance. If we want to live according to Jewish values, there are additional demands on us to perform *mitzvot*. In fact, we make them a priority. Without having to verbalize them, our children see us, or participate with us, visiting the sick, sleeping in the *sukkah*, or welcoming guests. We always try to find the experiential and enjoyable part, so that our kids will grow up seeing that observing *mitzvot* is both a lot of fun and the Jewish thing to do. By making education joyful, our children acquire a love of Torah. I believe this will sustain them throughout their lives and endow them with a desire to learn and to grow as Jews. ●



LAURA NELSON LEVY '82-'83, is from Cherry Hill, N.J. She has a B.A. in Education from the University of Massachusetts (Amherst). In Israel since 1981, Laura is a licensed tour guide and mother of three children, ages four, two, and six months.

Raising children in Israel poses a particular challenge for me because Jewishly we do not fit neatly into a single category. We're not strictly observant, yet unlike many Israelis, we don't turn our back on observance. Thus, though we may drive in order to be with friends on Shabbat, observing Shabbat is an integral part of our

lives. If I were living in America, I think the need to define who we are as Jews would result in my being much stricter than I am now. Here, however, where everyone around us is Jewish, I feel the need to introduce a spirit of tolerance and pluralism. I want "somewhat observant" accepted in this society, as well as the extremes at either end.

We make Shabbat special through ritual—lighting candles, saying *kiddush*, having a special meal, being with friends and family, making *havdala*. We don't conduct business, use the stereo (we've long since gotten rid of the television set), or do gardening. We try to read the weekly Torah portion, and, occasionally, we all go to synagogue. We take *tiyulim*, touring the land of Israel, in order to experience our connection to it, and to better appreciate its significance for our history.

One of the reasons I became a tour guide was to garner an inheritance I could pass on to my children. I wanted to create as many ties in as many ways as I could to this country, through history, archeology, land and religion—concrete connections that kids can feel.

In households where God is neither a subject of discussion nor a belief, I don't know how parents can answer so many of the questions kids ask. When I bring in God to explain to my son how his spirit came to join with his body when he was born, it forces me to clarify my own questions concerning belief. Our eldest son knows God is in heaven, but doesn't know how He stays up there. Why doesn't God fall from Heaven, he asks. At some level I realize my own need to believe in something more cosmic and powerful than what is comprehensible only in scientific terms. It also challenges me to be a better person so that I can serve as a model for my children.

I've been thinking about children's education since I first read *Summerhill* when I was 13. It was the single most important book I read as a teenager. I even corresponded with A.S. Neill and tried to start an alternative school when I was 15. I tend to think of his approach as Jewish, namely his emphasis on trust in and respect for the child.

Rather than being the stereotypically protective Jewish mother, I give the children a lot of freedom. Even as one-year-olds, I want them to wrestle with their environment, climb over rocks to get into the sandbox or climb stairs to get into the house. Freedom



presents many opportunities for them to wander, to ponder, and to ask questions.

This year we enrolled our four-year-old in pre-kindergarten at Jerusalem's Experimental School, and our two-year-old in a nursery school. By the time the kids woke up from their after-school naps, it was 4:00. They were tired and cranky and so was I. I had missed seeing them during their best hours when they were exploring the world and interacting with the environment. I felt this wasn't the relationship I wanted with my children. I wanted to feel the joy of being responsible for educating them.

With the support and cooperation of my husband, I've taken them out of school and now our home has become "Gan Ima". Because the children and I are together all day, the way we interact has become very important to us. The boys are learning gentleness, empathy and responsibility as they tune into their little sister. We talk a lot about giving *kavod* (respect) and about the Ten Commandments. They know that what makes us happiest is when they behave like *menschim*. On the days that we're home, the boys are no longer restless, waiting to be entertained. Now they play together and there is more *kavod*, negotiation and compromise. We keep a journal, and sometimes I use it to write down what they're doing. One day they were nudgy while I was writing so I read what they had done the day before. They were so excited to hear their names in the book, that I realized this was a wonderful way for them to learn about history.

I involve the children in home projects, such as helping me in the garden, and clearing up around the apartment building. They engage in caring for property while learning that I don't approve of people throwing their trash on the ground.

Because we're not rushed when we

go out, things happen spontaneously. We've discovered there's a whole world to explore on our outings. We look for people to whom we can give *tzedaka* which gives us an opportunity to talk about the importance of helping others. We listen to the Russian musicians on Ben Yehuda Street. One day, our four-year-old got to play the accordion and sing with one of them.

Because I realize I'm responsible for educating my children and because I want to instill certain values in them, taking back the role parents used to play is turning out to be the most difficult, challenging and exhausting job I've ever had.

I wonder whether there are other parents educating their pre-schoolers, or older children, at home who are interested in exchanging ideas or even getting together for occasional outings. I would be happy to hear from them. ●



TOVAH LEAH NACHMANI
'85-'86, is from Dayton, Ohio. She received her B.A. in Judaic Studies from Indiana University. Tovah Leah and husband, Gabi, have been working for the past nine years in Safed and Jerusalem for Livnot u' Lehibanot, a three-month program connecting Jewish adults to their heritage. She is the mother of five children, ages 9,7,5,3,2.

What my husband and I are striving for within a Torah environment is that first and foremost our children become *menschim*—developing themselves so as to have more to give to others. A child who feels good about himself and has a healthy self-esteem is a child from whom the *mida* of *hesed* (quality of loving kindness) natu-

rally flows.

My ideas about raising children began to crystallize even before coming to Israel. When I was 19, I met observant families for the first time and began to think about how I would like to raise my children. I saw that it was possible to raise a child in a community that believed in and supported similar values, and I saw within Judaism a framework for raising children in an environment where people care about each other. I wanted to raise my children where this was not only possible, but expected.

When I married and had my own children, I moved from theory to practice. I realized that a child's natural gravitation is toward the self. So the work of the parent is finding a creative balance between building self-esteem and teaching a child that he is not the center of the universe. I want my children to always have their eyes open to the world around them and do what they can to make it a better place—beginning with sharing toys, helping siblings with homework, visiting sick friends.

I think the way one does this is by example, and by being conscious of one's own behavior. I speak in a gentle voice, always trying to give the other person the benefit of the doubt. I tell the children what I need or want rather than criticize them; they, in turn, reflect and repeat this behavior. We also discuss issues and try to resolve conflicts as they arise. We learn at home, on the floor of the children's bedroom or at the Shabbat table, through stories, *Humash*, or *Sifrei Halacha*. Often at dinner time we discuss *halacha* and its meaning. I choose what is most relevant to the children, and they are interested because they see it as an integral part of their lives.

Central to Judaism is the obligation to train our children to realize that there is more to life than just following our instincts, even to the extent of not speaking ill of someone or dressing modestly. We must strive to put our mind before our instincts, think before we act. So when I lose patience and yell at my kids, I make an effort to reach out to them and discuss my behavior, showing that I'm also human and make mistakes and that I'm going to try to be better. Even with secular activities, I look for creative ways to introduce Jewish values, whether it is when the kids are playing soccer (I have three boys who love the game), or checkers or chess. I emphasize playing fairly and having them shake hands after the game and say "good game" rather than yelling

"I won."

I want consistency for my kids between home and school so that there is an atmosphere of communal sharing and transmission of values. Living in Israel has only increased my awareness of the importance of communal goals, beginning with the local community and encompassing *klal yisrael* (the entire Jewish community). This ties in with our work at Livnot and our choosing to live in Jerusalem rather than on a *yishuv* (settlement). It is important for me to live, not just with other observant Jews, but with all of *am yisrael* (the nation of Israel). This enables me to maintain my openness toward all Jews and to try to be a personal example to others.

In raising my children, open-mindedness is not the primary goal. I am concerned rather with instilling the devotion, commitment and self-sacrifice it takes to be a Jew. I want my children to be open to *klal yisrael* and to really and truly feel that every Jew is their brother or sister, respected and cared about as if part of the family. I'm trying to raise my children to be open-minded to human beings, but to be discerning and critical thinkers when it comes to ideas and actions. I want them to have a clear sense of right and wrong. We are no different in our kindness to Arabs we know than we are to fellow-Jews. It helps me personally, within the current atmosphere in Israel of anger, frustration and mistrust in the peace process, to differentiate among these feelings and see the Arab as a human being whom I can regard with as much humanity as my fellow Jew.

I feel that just as I take great care to feed my children kosher food, whatever I give them to read, to watch or play with also has to be kosher, by which I mean consistent with Torah ideas of what it means to be a *mensch*, one who strives to lead a meaningful life and reach out to others. We don't have a television set at home because I do not think local or Hollywood producers are concerned with portraying behavior we would want our children to emulate. I don't feel our children are old enough to sift through the violence and immodesty on television and make decisions on their own. Day-to-day life is filled with enough challenges, tensions and exposure to immodesty and aggression.

What guides me in selecting and censoring for my children are the educational guidelines of Rabbi Aviner, a disciple of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook. His approach is that a person should learn everything—science, philoso-



phy, and even disciplines not necessarily in line with Judaism, but only after one has a strong foundation in Judaism. Of course, every child reaches this stage at a different time, but, in his view, not before army age.

Until my children are at an age of mature ethical discernment, they must be raised in much the same way as flowers in a hothouse. When children are older, I have no trouble with their being exposed to what the world has to offer. My husband and I have given a great deal of consideration to every decision we've made, therefore we want our children to grow up in the path that we've set out for ourselves. If, along the way, they opt for a different lifestyle, I'll always love my children for what they are and look for the good in them. ●



MICHAEL KAGAN '77-'78, '79-'80, is from London. He has a B.A. in chemistry from Sussex University, a Ph.D. from the Hebrew University, and recently completed post-doctoral work at Brandeis. He lives with his wife, Ruth Gan '87-'88, and four children in Jerusalem where he is founder of Profile Technology Ventures, a high-tech entrepreneurial firm. He is developing an approach to Judaism he calls Wholistic and is co-founder of Ruach Hadashah, a network of teachers who share this approach.

ing Judaism a means rather than an end, but it is also a danger to fix a child to a designated path, without room for growth, inquiry or spiritual discovery. A spiritual path must be one that he finds, not one that is given.

By the same token, I recognize that the spiritual journey for Jews is through Judaism, through Torah. I see the two complementing each other—Torah and the process of self-discovery—both serving as pathways to spiritual fulfillment. I expose my son to Jewish learning. The school he attends is Orthodox, yet liberal in approach. His home environment is Orthodox, observant of *mitzvot*, but it is also a home open to exploring and learning from other spiritual disciplines—tai chi, yoga, meditation. My books and friends reflect this openness.

A few years ago, after I finished Pardes and other intermittent learning and settled into a routine Jewish life, I underwent a spiritual crisis, questioning the meaning behind what I was doing and what I'd been taught. I realized that my learning had been an ego trip. I was not learning for its own sake, but for my own intellectual gratification, to beat my *havruta* with a sharper understanding of the text. I was the product of the way I'd been educated both generally and Jewishly—to view things from a rationalist perspective, that the way to God is through the intellect. From *Hilchot Yesodei Torah* of Rambam I had learned to regard the body as just the vessel that carries the intellect with it.

What I began to discover, however, was that I also have emotions, a psyche, and a body that seemed to be left out of this whole process. I started to participate in workshops on creativity and self-expression, getting in touch with my emotions and with my whole self. I learned along the way that Kabbala sees the path to God not solely through the intellect, but through all aspects of creation, all of which contain sparks of holiness. This approach resonated with the new physics I was doing. The realization that all creativity, in whatever form, contains the signature of God and must be revered, taught me that there is much to learn from everything, a perspective I began to call "wholistic."

I believe that Torah contains the entire Truth, but that one shouldn't limit one's exploration to the confines of accepted Orthodoxy. One should go beyond the purely textual approach. The Western world today is lacking in ritual. I'm trying to intro-

duce ritual that will change us, make us laugh and cry. I have developed workshops organized around the Jewish calendar, showing that the cycle of the Jewish year is an integrated, finely balanced path to wholeness.

Take Pesach, for example. Already a month before the holiday, one begins to clean the home, clear out the *hametz*, all of this building to a climax on the Seder night, one of the most experiential occasions in our entire year. Are we conscious of how we feel as we partake of *matzot* and *maror* and of what it does to us? The big question we should ask ourselves when it is all over is "Have I changed?" rather than "Do I know more?" Not that one can't do both, but the emphasis should be on one's inner *Mitzraim*. "To what am I enslaved in my life? What is my fear of freedom?" The Haggada with the right awareness can take us on a painful journey into the inner darkness and out. As each year comes around, we become a little freer, thereby consciously becoming a servant of God. This is what I want for my son.

Similarly, when a child is ready to become *bar mitzva*, which, among other things, marks a transition between childhood and manhood, there needs to be greater awareness of what this means for both child and parents.

During the formal *bar mitzva*, the father makes a prayer praising God for releasing him from responsibility for his child. The father lets go—at least halachically. What is lacking is a deeper letting go—an acknowledgment and awareness that this piece of me, this carrier of my genetic and spiritual makeup, is not me, even though he may look like me, even though I have imparted to him my knowledge, skills, sense of beauty and wonder, my belief system, my past and the past of my fathers. And I must begin to let go and allow him to go his own way. And he too must learn that he is growing too big (literally, as well) to find shelter under my wing. That his destiny awaits him. That he must build his own relationship with God and the world. He must know that even while the energy of rebellion surges through his adolescent blood, confusing him, driving him to say and do things he doesn't necessarily understand or believe—I will always be there, somewhere, for him.

So I thought about providing Itamar with an experience to supplement his formal *bar mitzva*, one that would evoke these new realizations and also serve as a reference point for him throughout his life. The concept



For me, Judaism is a path to living a spiritual life. The way I raise my eldest son, Itamar, now 14, is that being Jewish is not the end goal. What I'm trying to give him are the tools so that he can find his own way, a way which I hope will be one of self-discovery. Of course I realize the danger of mak-

was appealing to Itamar, who was both thrilled and a bit scared by it. I discussed the idea with two adult friends who are very close to Itamar. Together we chose a time, a site, and designed a ceremony to take place in the desert.

The ceremony, which lasted 24 hours, took advantage of the desert ambience, interweaving Jewish symbols and biblical references. It also involved Itamar spending part of the night in what he perceived as solitude, though in fact, he was always under the watchful eyes of the adults. Its purpose was to make him feel that he was being tested in terms of his ability to summon up his inner strength and his trust in God, and to have him begin to realize that sooner or later he will not be able to lean on me. I hoped he would gain from this a deeper understanding of what it means to be responsible halachically for his own life. For my part, this rite of passage was a recognition of the reality that I too must start separating lovingly from my son.

The choice of bringing up children—sons and daughters—in Israel means choosing to take them on a journey that will inevitably lead to the army and military service. Wouldn't it have been better, fairer, kinder, to have stayed in England? Military service will irreversibly affect them for good and perhaps—God forbid—for bad. Through rigorous training in the modern art of warfare they will be wrenched out of childhood and hurtled into adulthood. They will quickly learn the meaning of taking responsibility for their own lives and the lives of their fellow soldiers, an initiation in which they will be forced to face the fear and shadow of death.

As a parent, I wish to create a more gentle, loving, and spiritual transition from childhood to adulthood, one in which, through sacred ritual and imagery, we can "walk along together."

In the wake of the special ceremony we created, Itamar and I experienced feelings of joy at having achieved a deeper closeness between us, and of regret that we must eventually go our separate ways. Itamar feels proud of himself. The imagery and memory of that night is a deeply embedded frame of reference for both of us. I'm convinced that he'll continuously find deeper meanings in what we did and deeper sources of strength within himself. I pray that in his relationships to his own children he'll be able to transfer the feelings of intimacy that this experience enabled us to share. ●

EUDICE (BEINER) BEN OR '82-'83, grew up in Randallstown, Md., where she and her husband Ricky '82-'83, were next-door neighbors. She has a B.A. in Special Education from Boston University and came to Israel in 1979 on the WUJS program, after which she decided to stay and make aliya. They have five children, ages 10, 7, 5, 3 and 1, and live in Jerusalem where Eudice runs a customized gift basket service.

Jewish religious education begins in the home where the parents set an example of love of Judaism. In our home we concentrate on celebrating the spirit of Judaism rather than observing the letter of the law. On Shabbat and holidays the emphasis is on enjoyment. We camp out during Sukkot and Lag b'Omer. We gear Shabbat to the children. I love Shabbat, being together with family and stopping our usual workday activities. But I rebel against the emphasis on food and entertaining. I find it stressful to always worry about the preparing and eating of meals. In order to eliminate the stress and concentrate more fully on the kids, we've stopped having guests.

We often feel frustrated at not having more time to spend outdoors. Driving to a park or to the sea on Shabbat enables us to relax. We started driving on Shabbat after our fourth child was born to make it easier to visit my parents. Nevertheless, I'm still not comfortable with it. The kids know how I feel. It's a compromise at best.

Here in Israel, the whole community, in fact, the whole country, speaks to me of Jewishness, whether celebrating Purim, getting ready for Pesach, or lighting Lag B'Omer bonfires. It's a far cry from the way I grew up as the only family in the neighborhood with a *sukkah*, or feeling funny going out of doors in Purim costume. It's also not like growing up as secular American Jews.

Our children attend a Tali school, part of a movement to introduce Jewish curriculum into the secular schools. Under the auspices of the Reform movement, it appeals to Reform Jews who have moved to Israel and to secular Israelis who want their kids to have some Jewish religious knowledge, but who themselves may not be religious. Tali schools offset the too



prevalent idea that to be religious one has to be Orthodox.

While we are already convinced of the beauty of Jewish religious practice, we also want Judaism to be spontaneous, exciting and non-coercive. I want to give my kids the tools so that if they wish to become *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars), they can. Our kids are frustrated we don't fit into a mold. If we care about Shabbat, then why do we drive. And, why do we drive but not let them go to parties on Friday night. We tell them we've spent many years trying to find our way, and this way works for us.

We're trying to encourage our kids to have a pluralistic and tolerant outlook. If they were to come to us and say they wanted to go to a school that is either more or less observant than the one they are in now, we'd be open to it. On the other hand, I wouldn't want them to attend a completely secular school because I'm a product of one and realize an entire dimension was missing. We were never able to bring up the subject of God. We want our children to be exposed to the spiritual realm. We openly discuss God with the kids and talk about good and evil and why God created evil people. Our first grader came home one day wanting to teach us a course about the *neshama* (soul). She would come in with a pad and paper and ask us what we think the soul looks like and ask us to draw pictures of it, and what does God look like and what is the difference between God and the soul.

Sometimes my husband and I ask ourselves why we still have discussions about what we want out of life and whether it's time we were outgrowing them. But with all the choices available to us, our lives are not yet set. We are still experimenting and evolving. ●

THE PARDES CONNECTION

news of classmates and staff. . .

Steven Fine '80-'81, is Assistant Professor, Rabbinic Literature and History, at Baltimore Hebrew University.

Jody Fox '85-'87, and **Brian Blum** '85-'86, and their two children, have recently made *aliya* from Berkeley, California. They are living in Jerusalem.

Jane Kimchi '80-'81, is author of *Women Against Women, American Anti-Suffragism 1880-1920*, published by Carlson Publishing Inc., Brooklyn, N.Y.

and their weddings...

Carolyn Peltin '86-'87, to Allen Hoffman. They are living in Los Angeles, where Carolyn is a social worker and Allen a surgeon on the staff of Sinai Medical Center.

Pam Skopp '91-'92, to Matt Greenwood. They are living in Riverdale, N.Y.

Suzanne Wachsstock '92-'93, to Eliot Zev. They are living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

and their babies...

Jeff Allon '79-'80 and **Shelly Rifkin-Allon** '82-'83, are parents of a daughter, Ma'ayan Razia. They are living in Jerusalem.

Yochanan Ben Avraham '84-'86, and wife, Michal, are parents of a daughter, Ma'ayon. They are living in the settlement of Yitzhar.

Aryeh Ben David '79-'80, Pardes faculty, and **Sandra Shanker Ben David** '80-'82, are parents of a daughter, Ra'aya Tiferet. They are living in Efrat.

Ora Wiskind-Elper '84-'85, and husband, Eliezer, are parents of a daughter, Gila-Sarah Elper. They are living in Jerusalem.

Yarden Fedder '85-'87, and wife, Ruthie, are parents of a daughter, Hodayah Chana. They are living in Jerusalem where Yarden is a technical writer.

Shawn Fields-Meyer '89-'91, and husband, Tom, are parents of a son, Amiel Ilan. They are living in Jerusalem for the year.

Susan Glazerman '86-'88 and **Bruce Gabel** '86-'87, are parents of a son, Natan Avraham. They are living in Safed.

Asher Goshen '85-'87, and wife, Nitzhia, are parents of a son, Moshe. They are living in Jerusalem.

Jeffrey Green '86-'87, and wife, Miriam, are parents of a son, Raphael Nehemia. They are living in Beer Sheva.

Dennis Gura '82-'83, and wife, Kathy, are parents of a son, Alexander Raphael Jeremy. They are living in Los Angeles.

Jeremy Kalmanofsky '91-'92 and **Amy Kalmanofsky** '91-'92, are parents of a son, Yedidya Ephraim Yonah. They are living in Philadelphia.

Mirjam Koschland '80-'81, and husband, Yakov Amrofel, are parents of a son, Ariel Moshe. They are living in Jerusalem.

Batya Miller '84-'86, and husband, Herzl Hafter, are parents of a son, Moshe Ze'ev. They are living in Jerusalem.

Laura Nelson-Levy '82-'83, and husband, Seth, are parents of a daughter, Timna Aviva. They live in Jerusalem.

Debi Pinto-Cohen '84-'85, and husband, Bob Cohen, are parents of a son, Nadav Moshe. They live in Jerusalem.

Dafna Stolper Renbaum '82-'85, and husband, Pincas, are parents of a daughter, Tehael. They are living in Michmash.

Arlene Ruby '85-'86, and husband, Mickey Harel, are parents of a daughter, Raya Leah. They are living in Jerusalem.

Jeffrey (Tzvi) Stern '83-'84, '85-'86 and **Frances (Avital) Rodriguez** '85-'86, are parents of a daughter, Ava Regina (Chava Rifka). They are living in New York City.

Matt Tannin '84-'86 and **Janice Gould Tannin** '85-'86, are parents of a son, Tzvi Meir. They are living in New York City.

Pardes mourns the passing of Joy Ungerleider Mayerson ל"ו, friend, Board Member, and generous benefactor. As friend, she often chose to sit in on classes at Pardes, and to accompany Pardes students—Dorot Fellows whom she had sponsored—on various trips throughout Israel. As Board Member who lived part of each year in Israel, she chose to serve on Pardes' Israeli Board rather than its American counterpart, so that she could be more fully involved in the on-going life of Pardes. As generous benefactor, she made major contributions to Pardes, testimony to the compatibility she perceived between Pardes' values and her own.

The following is adapted from the words of Rabbi Irving Greenberg, Member of the American Pardes Board, and President of CLAL, The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, in his address on the occasion of Joy's *shloshim*:

Joy was a whole person. She chose life of the mind. She chose life through the vigor of the body. She enjoyed every minute of life. She loved Israel. She chose life through philanthropy and good deeds. She worked for peace. She chose life in her love for young people, in her association with them, her involvement in their lives and activities. Above all, I think of the young organizations which link American students to Israel through vital learning and living experiences. I think of Pardes—learning at the highest level with women fully participating. She was not only a most important contributor; often, she was the one who raised matching funds, who pushed a forward vision. She thought and felt young even as she gave them the gifts of age and wisdom. They were the most vulnerable causes, the ones most orphaned by her death. Their future is the strongest tribute to the ongoing impact of her life.

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