



Lessons from Ephraim Finch & Parshat Shlach

Over Shavuot, I came down with the flu. While being unwell is never pleasant, it did grant me the rare chance to pause and immerse myself in a book I'd wanted to read—Ferryman – The Life and Death Work of Ephraim Finch by Katia Ariel. What unfolded on those pages was not just the story of a man, but a portrait of quiet, unwavering compassion. A story that, as I now reflect in the week of Parshat Shlach, reminds me that true heroism is often quiet, unseen, and deeply rooted in faith.

Through his decades of service at the Chevra Kadisha, Ephraim did not seek attention or acclaim. Yet, like Yehoshua and Calev, he consistently chose faith and care over fear and despair. He was present in the most difficult of moments—at the bedside of grief-stricken families, in the

קשר
KESHER

Friday 20 June 2025
כ"ד סיון ה'תשפ"ה

The most heartbreaking story in the book is that of Nathan Dzienciel a"n, a young boy tragically killed by a speeding car at the intersection of Hotham and Balaclava Road. In the aftermath, it was Ephraim and

פרשת שלח

Shabbat Times



Light candles 4:50pm

Shabbat ends 5:51pm



the highest praise one can receive—and it was bestowed upon Ephraim not because of fame or scholarship, but because of his acts of chesed, of loving-kindness.

My own connection to Ephraim is emotionally charged. When my father Anton a"h passed away, I was overseas. The levaya waited for my return. On the morning of the funeral, Ephraim called and gently suggested I come and see my father before the burial. That final image—my father lovingly wrapped in the white shrouds of tachrichim, prepared with dignity and care—remains etched in my heart. It was a moment of closure, of holiness, made possible by someone I had barely known before that day.

It is said that Ephraim has been present at over 10,000 burials. That means 10,000 families who experienced his calm, his quiet strength, his unwavering respect. Like Calev, who "had a different spirit," Ephraim has walked a different path—one of humility, service, and deep faith. He never asked for recognition. And yet, he has changed our community in immeasurable ways.

In Parshat Shlach, the nation weeps because they listen to the loud voices of doubt. But redemption begins with those who speak softly yet truthfully. Those who do the right thing, not for reward, but because it is right. Ephraim Finch is one of those voices. I am profoundly grateful that Katia Ariel has shared this story. It reminds us that the greatest among us may not wear medals or hold titles, but rather walk quietly among us, offering comfort, dignity, and compassion.

These are the unsung heroes. The ones we must cherish, emulate, and teach our children about. It is more than biography—it is a lesson in humanity. A story we should teach our children and our grandchildren. Because in knowing and valuing the unsung heroes of our community, we not only honour them, but we shape the values of the next generation.

May we all aspire to such humility, compassion, and faith.

Shabbat Shalom,
David Fisher

The Yavneh Academy: Antisemitism & Survival Part 3

This past Wednesday evening, we paused our regular Yavneh Academy programming to address the current situation in Israel. In place of his scheduled lecture on Jews in Communist East Germany, Zach Gomo delivered a timely talk on this acute episode in the long running Iran-Israel conflict. He traced Iran's history from the era of Cyrus the Great through to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, providing essential political and ideological context for the present war. Zach also offered a detailed analysis of the military dimension of the conflict, drawing on his personal experience serving in Israel's air defence network, where he operated the Arrow missile system. It was an informative evening with a full house!

Join us next Wednesday night 25 June as we dive into 'Hebrew 101' with our Head of Hebrew, Sharon Samuni.



The
Yavneh
Academy
תן לי יבנה וחכמיה

Term 2 Adult Learning Series

Every Wednesday throughout Term 2

VCE Study Centre 7:30pm
2 Nagle Ave, Elsternwick

בט"ד

Wednesday 25 June
כ"ט סיון 7:30pm

Hebrew 101
with Sharon Samuni



Wednesday 2 July
ו' תמוז 7:30pm

Hebrew 101
with Sharon Samuni

RSVP: tinyurl.com/lycacademy



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לחיים From JKA

Shuli Yitzhaki, Kinder Jewish Studies

Last Friday, our JKA class worked on their fine motor skills by making their own grape juice! Learning the Brachah of בורא פרי הגפן – Boreh Pri HaGafen, juicy grapes were placed into zip locks and the children got to squeezing! Their hard work paid off when they each had a taste of the delicious fresh grape juice, not without reciting the Bracha first! When the children are involved in exciting hands on learning, they can learn to appreciate and understand the meaning behind the Mitzvot.



Exploring Brachot in Nitzanim

Ilana Glassman, Creche Room Leader

In the Nitzanim room we are extremely excited to share the meaningful and joyful learning journey your children are taking this month as they explore the Mitzvah of saying Brachot over fruits and vegetables.

At this young and curious age, children learn best through firsthand, sensory-rich experiences. That is why we have been using art and interactive activities to teach the Brachot of "Ha'etz" (for fruits that grow on trees) and "Ha'adamah" (for vegetables and plants that grow from the ground). Each day, the children have been engaged in activities that make these concepts come alive in ways they can touch, see, and understand.

Through their art experiences the children extended their knowledge about fruit and vegetables as well as enhance their fine motor skills through pasting and painting activities. They have not only practiced identifying produce but also began associating them with their corresponding Brachot. We have created a "Brachot Garden" wall where the children proudly display their artwork along with the Hebrew Brachot.



Our interactive morning tea is also a tasting session. The children can try different fruits and vegetables, practice the Brachot with support, and express their favourites. These moments are helping them connect the Brachot with real-life experiences in a meaningful and age-appropriate way.

Another fun interactive activity we have been engaged with is providing a fun game where the children match fruits and vegetables to their source (tree or vine). This introduces basic concepts of classification which helps our Nitzanim children sort objects which is a foundational cognitive skill. While also learning that different foods grow in different environments fosters early scientific thinking. Our Nitzanim children are also expanding their language as we teach them both in English and Hebrew the names of the fruits and vegetables we are discussing.



Most of all these activities connects to the values of appreciating creation and mindful eating in our Jewish tradition. This simple activity plants seeds of knowledge, appreciation, and curiosity, setting a solid foundation for both general and Jewish learning. It is a joy to witness their enthusiasm and growing awareness of these Jewish traditions. You can support this learning at home by saying Brachot together before snacks and meals and encouraging your child to identify whether their food comes from a tree or the ground.

Winter Wardrobes



The Garinim Room is continuing to learn about Winter and the particular items of clothing that are necessary to keep us warm. Beanies, jackets, scarves, gloves and boots keep us nice and toasty, especially in this freezing Melbourne weather! The children pasted these clothing items onto their very own picture, helping to develop their gross motor skills.



Snowflake Exploration in JKB

Ariella Novis, *Kinder Room Leader*

To extend children's learning about winter, the children were invited to engage in a creative table experience where they could trace and design their own snowflakes. Using inspiration from snowflake images and a range of loose parts- including gems, rocks, and matchsticks- the children used their fine motor skills and creativity to construct beautiful snowflake patterns. This open ended experience encourages problem solving, pattern making, and attention to detail.



ELC Kinder Open Day

Ta'am Shel Yavneh

בסד



Blossom with Brachot!

Thursday 26 June 9:15am ל' סיון

Step inside our warm ELC. Enjoy hands-on Brachot fun, meet our educators, and see Jewish learning come to life!



The Fear of Success

Rivki Herzog, Primary Jewish Studies

In Parashat Shelach, Moshe sends twelve distinguished leaders to scout the land of Canaan. They return with reports of a land flowing with milk and honey – and giants. Ten of them insist, “We cannot go forward.” Only Yehoshua and Calev stand firm in their emunah, urging the people to trust in Hashem’s promise.

The rest, overwhelmed by fear, cry out:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אֶחָיו נַחֲנָה רָאשׁ וְנִשְׁוֹבָה מִצְרָיִם:

And they said to one another, “Let us head back for Egypt.”

It’s one of the most painful moments in the Torah. A generation, just one year out of Egypt and on the brink of fulfilling their destiny, they turn away. Their journey, which should have taken days, now stretches into years.

But what exactly were they afraid of? This was a question the Year 5 students found themselves asking. The Bnei Yisrael had just witnessed some of the greatest open miracles to have ever been performed yet that still wasn’t convincing enough for them?

Rabbi Sacks z”l, quoting the Lubavitcher Rebbe, offers a remarkable insight on this question, arguing that the spies weren’t actually afraid of failure or losing a war with the giants – they were afraid of success.

In the desert, life was safe, predictable, and holy. Food came from heaven. Water flowed from a miraculous well. Hashem’s presence was visible. In that world, spiritual life was clear and constant.

But success – entering the land – meant stepping into reality. It meant fighting battles, farming soil, managing economies, building cities and leading a nation. It meant responsibility. It meant uncertainty and perhaps most of all, it meant a spiritual life woven into the ordinary, not the miraculous.

The spies feared that holiness would be harder to find in a world of daily toil. They worried that once the miracles stopped and life became “normal,” their connection to Hashem might fade.

But perhaps, at a deeper level, they weren’t only afraid of losing something – they were afraid of stepping into something bigger. Psychologist Abraham Maslow called this the Jonah Complex, named after Yonah who ran from his mission. It’s the idea that people sometimes fear their own greatness – not because they doubt their potential, but because success demands courage, responsibility, and visibility. As Maslow put it, “We fear our best as well as our worst.”

The spies knew that entering the land meant becoming a real nation – with leadership, armies, farmers, judges, teachers. It meant standing out and stepping up! But just like Yonah, they turned away – not out of laziness, but out of fear of what it would mean to fully live up to who they were meant to be.

As Rabbi Sacks z”l taught, Judaism doesn’t ask us to run away from the world to find Hashem. Instead, it asks us to bring Hashem into the world – into our classrooms, our homes, our workplaces, and our everyday lives. Keeping the Torah isn’t just our mitzvot – it’s about how we treat people, how we create a fair and caring society and how we live with honesty, kindness, and purpose.

Perhaps this is still a fear some of us carry – especially when we think about Eretz Yisrael. The dream of Israel is spiritual, powerful, and often painted in poetic light. But moving there and of course living there certainly comes at a cost. It’s easy to wonder: will the holiness get lost in the day-to-day?

Parashat Shelach reminds us: holiness is not found by avoiding life – it’s found by entering it with intention.

In Year 5, we connected this message to our learning by discussing how living a Jewish life isn’t just about what happens in our chumash classes or any classes! It’s about how we speak, how we help at home, how we learn and how we treat others every single day. We explored the idea that holiness isn’t only found during certain chagim or specific times of the year, but in the way we live our everyday lives. Just like the spies had a chance to bring emunah and courage into the world, so do we – with our words, our actions, and our choices.

May we carry that message into our lives, our communities, and our connection to Israel – not with fear, but with courage. Not with nostalgia for the desert, but with faith in the future we’re building – one moment at a time.

Good Shabbos,

Primary J-Life Update:

Sara Amzalak, Head of Jewish Life & Learning (Primary)



Towards the end of last month, we celebrated Yom Yerushalayim with an array of activities in the Primary School. One of the activities for Years 2 and 3 was a colouring in competition. As students were keen to do their very best, extra time was given for them to complete the picture. Once they were finished, it was a tough job to judge them but three people were the winners: Jonah. G 3B, Maayan. A3B and Ariella. W 3A.

Wednesday VR lunch club is proving very popular with the Year 5 and 6 students. Students come to the Beit Midrash to don their 3D goggles and view the Beit haMikdash, various mitzvot and the chagim learning different aspects about them along the way.

This Friday, in conjunction with Parashat Shlach, where we learn about the Mitzvah of Hafrashat Challah – separating a portion of dough – students in Years 4-6 had a lunch time activity to make challot. More details and photos in next week’s Keshet.



Year 4 Blast Off!

Jack O'Neill, Primary General Studies

Year 4 students participated in a science experiment on forces. We used film canisters, added water and an Alka-Seltzer tablet, put the lid on, flipped the canister upside on, put it on the ground, stepped back and watched the canister shoot up like a rocket as the pressure from the gas build up forced the lid and canister apart.



My Body and The Five Senses

Learning Through Exploration and Reflection in Year 6 Hebrew

Michal Avitan, Primary Hebrew Teacher

Over the coming weeks, our Year 6 students will be engaged in a fascinating Hebrew unit titled “My Body and the Five Senses”. This unit goes far beyond simple vocabulary; it encourages students to explore how different parts of the body – and especially the five senses – help us understand, interpret, and respond to the world around us.

We begin by learning the names of basic body parts, which serve as the foundation for deeper learning. The primary focus, however, is on the senses:

- How do animals see differently than humans?
- Why does blood appear red or sometimes purple?
- What is the importance of the sense of smell – especially in the animal world?
- How does our sense of touch protect and guide us?

In parallel with this content-rich exploration, students will also be developing their writing skills in Hebrew. They will be learning how to write short monologues in the first person across three tenses – past, present, and future. While we are not formally teaching full future tense conjugation, students will learn how to use infinitives combined with time expressions (such as “in the future,” “one day,” or “after I grow up”) to construct future-tense paragraphs in a simple and meaningful way.

This combination of scientific curiosity and language development helps students build both knowledge and self-expression. It encourages critical thinking, personal reflection, and confidence in using Hebrew in creative and thoughtful ways.

Shabbat Shalom!



Year 6 Get Twisted

Dr Samara Adamson-Pinczewski, Primary Art Teacher

Year 6 Art students have been busy creating three-dimensional wire sculptures inspired by "The Travellers" at Sandridge Bridge. They experimented with coiling wire and tinsel to create a symbolic figurative sculpture depicting their own familial story of immigration to Australia.



Primary Maccabi Cup

Ryan Rothschild, Head of Sports (Primary)



On Monday, select Year 6 students competed in the second edition of the Primary Maccabi Cup. Jewish schools came together to compete in fierce games of basketball.

After a slow start, the girls team built their confidence and showed great improvement, leading to a 20-8 breakthrough win against King David. Ella S and Kayla E were a stand out with the defensive displays making it tough for the opposition to get on the counter. Nora A said, "It was extremely fun and we had a very good team effort."

The boys fought valiantly throughout the day and despite not getting a win on the board, they gained invaluable experience in competing in this representative event. Ariel S said, "It was challenging but all that matters is that we had fun." Mazel Tov to Rami G who took out the overall MVP award across the whole boys competition.

Thank you to the coaches and support staff as well as Maccabi VIC for organising the successful event.



Year 3 Read More In May

Pnina Douek, Library Operations Officer



Students in Prep to Year 3 were invited to participate in The Read More in May Challenge. They were challenged to not only read every day, but try different genres, read to different audiences and to read in different modes. Congratulations to the 30 students for participating in the challenge. Each participate received a prize during their library session and were excited to share how they did their reading differently.



Tzevet Enrichment Session for Year 6



Mikolot Public Speaking Competition

Sarah Teichtahl, Jewish Life Educator



On Monday night, Oren, Nadav and Orly participated in the Mikolot Semifinals. Mikolot is a Public Speaking Competition that runs nationally, covering relevant Jewish and Zionist topics, and aiming to build the next generation of strong Zionist leaders.

This year, three of our students were selected after an internal round to represent Yavneh at the semifinals along with students from Mount Scopus and Bialik. The topic for the speech was - What story in the Tanach speaks to you and why? Our students spoke with courage and conviction, presenting a high level of Torah knowledge and interesting sources.

The impromptu round was a highlight, with students speaking about figures in Jewish history who they would choose to meet. Year 10 students Oren D, Nadav L and Orly M displayed confidence in their knowledge of Jewish history and values, speaking about topics from Yosef's courage and humility, to Iyov and human suffering and even Menachem Begin.

While two students from other schools were chosen to represent Victoria in the finals, we are very proud of the high level of Torah knowledge and confidence displayed by our Yavneh Mikolot team. Wishing Oren, Orly and Nadav Kol Hakavod for your achievements.



JS Scholars Program: Rabbi David Debow

Our *Jewish Studies Scholars Program* allows gifted students across Years 7 - 10 to participate in text-based, high level learning opportunities. This week, we invited Rabbi David Debow - editor at Koren Publishers and previous Head of Midreshet Emunah V'Omanut in Israel, for an insightful and deep discussion-based session with our JS Scholar students.



GAT 2025: A Whole-School Effort in Supporting Our VCE Students

Prue McLeod, Head of Year 11 & VCE Co-ordinator

This week, 101 of our senior students at Yavneh successfully completed the General Achievement Test (GAT), a significant milestone in their VCE journey. The GAT is more than just a test as it plays a crucial role in the quality assurance of VCE assessments across Victoria. It helps ensure that school-based and external assessments are fair and consistent, and it also supports processes such as statistical moderation and derived scores. Importantly, it gives students a valuable opportunity to practise the procedures and expectations of the end-of-year VCAA exams.

The logistics of the day were a team effort. With multiple venues in use including the VCE Centre and Hamerkaz it was all hands on deck to ensure smooth running. We were supported by a dedicated team of 15 external examination supervisors (invigilators), and the success of the day would not have been possible without the flexibility and support of our incredible staff. From room changes and maintenance set-ups, to IT support, administrative coordination, and pastoral care for students, the day was a true example of the strength of our Yavneh community working together.

In line with VCAA regulations, no photos may be taken within examination venues but hoping this description helps with understanding the significance of the GAT.

הכבוד כל הכבוד to our students for their focused effort and to all involved for making this important day run so smoothly!



Year 12: Off To Zionist Camp!

Year 12 students left the College on Thursday for Year 12 Zionist camp. Students are afforded an opportunity to bond with one another and deepen their Religious Zionist identity in a nurturing and uplifting environment. Have a fantastic time Year 12!



Cohen's Star Shines on World Stage

Aaron Fetter, Head of Sports (Secondary)

Days after Yavneh's Year 10 Boys soccer team was inspired by a surprise appearance from Melbourne City's A-League Grand Final hero Yonatan Cohen, our very own student and soccer star Mikey Cohen embarked on a trip of a lifetime in Europe.

Mikey represented Melbourne City's U15 Academy Squad on the world stage at the prestigious Malmö Trophy in Sweden, an international youth football tournament for the best clubs in the U15 age group. Reflecting on his trip, Mikey said "it was an insane and unbelievable experience, one that I will never forget".

The first leg of the two-week trip saw Mikey and the squad stay at English Premier League powerhouse Manchester City's Football Academy, where they received an inner sanctum insight into the workings of one of the world's most successful football clubs.

Some words from Mikey himself:

"Once we arrived in England, we were given the rooms of the first team players, as they were in their off-season. I was given Pep Guardiola's (Manchester City Manager) room, and right next to me was Erling Haaland's (star striker) room. While there we were treated and lived like professional footballers. Our schedule consisted of breakfast then gym followed by a team meeting. After lunch we trained with the Manchester City Academy kids and played a different type of football. It was really eye opening and cool to see a level of football that Australia doesn't have. Later that evening we had a range of activities including free time in the player lounge, stadium tours and meet and greet with players that were doing rehab. This was our daily schedule for the whole week! We also had two Malmö Trophy warm up matches against Bolton Wanderers and Manchester City's B team. We jetted off to Sweden and when we arrived at the team hotel the opponents in our group were revealed to us and they were some of Europe's top teams: Real Madrid (Spain), Olympiacos (Greece), BSC Young Boys (Switzerland) and the host team Malmö. All these teams were out of this world and a true representation of European football. We finished 3rd in the group with one win, two draws and one loss. All games were challenging but the overall experience was out of this world and another step closer to helping me reach my goal of becoming a professional footballer. I am beyond grateful for the experience."



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Liked by meyerowitzamir and others
yonatancohen Winning goal in the Australia grand final!!!
We are the championssss 🇦🇺 @melbournecity
tomhermed מדהים אח שלי! רגעים לכל החיים 🔥🔥🔥



Before leaving for Europe, Mikey shared a Shabbat meal with his namesake Melbourne City striker Yonatan Cohen. The pair feasted on football chat (and Challah and dips), the perfect preparation for his international football journey which ultimately netted him a stunning goal, two assists and an unforgettable and formative experience, זה מצוין, מיילי!

Niche Player of the Week

Noah G, Year 8 Student

Tom McCarthy

Tom McCarthy is from West Coast and is a midfielder.

He got 31 touches against the Blues this weekend

He achieved a crazy disposal efficacy with 93.

McCarthy is one of the Eagles mid-season draft picks.



Guest Speaker: Yarin Shitrit

MAGEN
DAVID
ADOM
IN ISRAEL



מגן
דוד
אדום
בישראל

Magen David Adom paramedic Yarin Shitrit shared his experience in volunteering in Israel during high school and then becoming a paramedic who served on October 7. Yaron spoke of his time in the IDF, serving in Gaza and Lebanon. Yaron encouraged students to volunteer for MDA in the future.



תהילים For Israel

Last Friday, our Secondary students and staff immediately stopped what they were doing and gathered to complete the whole book of Tehillim, to daven for the success of the IDF and the protection of Israel. עם ישראל חי



Guest Speaker: Dafna Refaeli



This Monday, Year 12 heard from Dafna Refaeli, from World Bnei Akiva, who spoke about the different gap year programs available in Israel under Bnei Akiva MTA.



Bar and Batmitzva ME PROGRAM

2025-2026

- ✓ In-Class Lessons
- ✓ Mitzvah Workshops
- ✓ Parent-Child Learning Events
- ✓ Volunteering Opportunities
- ✓ Extend Your Learning in the Beit Midrash
- ✓ Tefillah Program
- ✓ Shabbaton

The 'ME' program for our Bar and Bat Mitzvah students begins in the middle of Year 6 and concludes halfway through Year 7. During the year, they explore fundamental ideas and skills in preparation for Jewish adulthood.

Throughout the course, students learn about themes such as Responsibility, Tefillah, Chessed, Talmud Torah and the meaning of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, as well as relevant Mitzvot and Jewish leaders from throughout history.

Students who wish to take their learning beyond the classroom will have a tailor-made program built for them to be delivered in the Beit Midrash

Throughout the year-long course, students are given the opportunity to volunteer with community organisations, interact with engaging guests and create tangible Jewish items to take home.

The Bar/BatME Shabbaton is always a highlight, with inter-generational bonding, creating lifelong memories towards the end of the program.

We look forward to watching your children thrive and grow within the ME program!



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J-LUNCH SCHEDULE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period 0	Gemara Club		Gemara Club		Gemara Club
RECESS		Halacha Club	Halacha Club	Halacha Club	
LUNCH	Torah for the Table- Y7-9	Ketuvim - Y10-12 What If? Y7-9	Machshava on the Parsha - Y10-12 J-VR: Y7-9	Practical Halacha in the modern world - Y10-12	The Jewish Week That Was - all years



Make sure you're following us on socials!
@yavneh_official

Upcoming Dates 2025:

JUNE:

Monday 23 – Friday 27: Secondary Exams & SATs

JULY:

Friday 4: Last day of Term 2.

Sunday 13: Fast day – 17th Tammuz

Tuesday 22: First day of Term 3.

Mazal Tavs

Mazal Tov to **Zac G** and family on the occasion of his Barmitzvah

Mazal Tov to **Sharon** and **Joshua Marlow** and family on the birth of a baby boy.

B'NAI B'RITH 30TH JEWISH YOUTH ART COMPETITION EXHIBITION



THURSDAY 26 JUNE - SUNDAY 20 JULY

Featuring a showcase of art by the Centre of Jewish Artists (COJA)

AWARDS CEREMONY: SUNDAY 20 JULY, 3PM

Glen Eira Town Hall Gallery

**Vote for your favourite artwork
with the People's Choice Award**



9523 0888 | artcomp@bbvic.org.au | www.bnaibrith.org.au/victoria



**We are davening for our
brothers and sisters in Israel!**
עם ישראל חי

שבת
שלום

