

*JEWISH LATIN PRINCESS*

RIVKA FISHMAN, EDUCATOR AND  
AUTHOR OF “SARA THE BUCKET FILLER”

*EPISODE 44*

You're listening to Jewish Latin Princess Podcast by Yael. Every week get your dose of inspiration from the world's most uniquely talented Jewish women and from Yael herself. Seeking profound and practical ways to live a joyful, richer Jewish life? Welcome to Jewish Latin Princess Podcast.

And now, Jewish lifestyle expert and bilingual blogger at [www.jewishlatinprincess.com](http://www.jewishlatinprincess.com), your host, Yael.

**Yael Trusch:** Has your child ever come home from school sad because there is someone who is making his life miserable? Other than the teacher, that is. Kids, we've all struggled with this. It is so painful to see our kid in pain and also what we want to do sometimes is to rescue them. Social dynamics can be hard not just for kids, but hey, even for adults. We are going to all face not nice people throughout our lives, right. My guest today is on a mission to change the bully-proofing conversation, to incorporate empathy, get rid of the victim mentality, and empower our children to deal with others in the way they'd like to be treated—with kindness and respect. My guest is Rivka Fishman. She is the creator of the training for parents and educators, Bully Proofing Your Child, and the author of the newly released book, Sara, The Bucket Filler. You are listening to Jewish Latin Princess, I'm Yael Trusch your host. Thanks for tuning in.

This is a very important episode as Rivka has a super important message to share with parents, educators, and children. Rivka has been in Jewish education for 17 years, teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade in middle school. She is the mother of six children and seeing the dynamics among her own children, her students, and her friend's kids; got her to explore the topic of bullying. Unfortunately, the conventional methods were not getting to the root of the problem. What was it about the prevailing bully-proofing conversation that didn't sit well with Rivka and led her to take a different approach? How do we approach the problem of kids not being nice to each other? What are we doing right as parents and what could we be doing better? What should be the school's roles in all these? And hey, what if your child is the bully? What do we do then? All of these and more from the lovely, Rivka Fishman.

**[Theme Music]**

**Yael Trusch:** Rivka Fishman, my friend, welcome to Jewish Latin Princess! How are you?

**Rivka Fishman:** Good! Thank you. This is so much fun when we get to chat during the day without the kids needing, you know, water and bathrooms and stuffs. This is fun!

**Yael Trusch:** I don't know, I don't think we've ever done that.

**Rivka Fishman:** Maybe if we were shopping for couches, I don't know.

**Yael Trusch:** Oh yeah, that is true! Rivka, I'm so excited to have you over talking about the hot topic in parenting—bullying and kindness, and being kind to each other when we are children; because you've been in Jewish education for I don't know, what like 17 years already?

**Rivka Fishman:** Yeah.

**Yael Trusch:** And about six or seven years ago, you began learning about this topic of bullying. You've really took it head on and since then you've created your own training for teachers and parents, Bully Proofing Your Child, and now you've just come out with a children's book about kindness, Sara The Bucket Filler. But before we get to your new book, I want to ask you what made you explore the topic of bullying? Of all things that you had been exposed to in the classroom as an educator, what was going on? Were your children being bullied? Did you have students suffering in your classroom? What was the impetus?

**Rivka Fishman:** So after teaching fourth grade for a bunch of years, my own kids started to be in my class and not just my own kids, but my close friends' kids, too, are you know, like my own kids. And once they started getting to this age, and I was watching the way they were interacting, they just were not always being nice to each other. Really not bullying my definition for sure, but here we had kids who are nice kids from nice families that were constantly watching their parents make a dinner for somebody who had a baby or to pick-up somebody's kid... I mean, so... such... I mean, the family is full of such kindness.

And we have these kids just, you know, speaking not nicely to each other and I wasn't okay with that. And, so, I started to research ways to make kids be nice all the time, and I did. That's when I discovered that this wasn't bullying even though I have been calling it bullying for a little while and that was the beginning.

**Yael Trusch:** And so, you said you discovered that this wasn't bullying? It's such a big word nowadays. How do we define it, like what it is exactly?

**Rivka Fishman:** So, like technical definition of the word bullying is unwanted aggressive behavior, involving real or perceived, that's an important word there, imbalance of power. It has to be—to be bullying it has to be repeated, it might include threats, it might include rumors, it might include attacking somebody either physically or verbally, and it can also include excluding, and this usually does happen when there are

no adults around. So a way that I explain it to kids that makes it kind of easy is, there's a difference between being rude, being mean, and bullying. And when somebody is rude it's called unintentional hurting. So, it would be something like a kid... a kid with no filter, whatever it might be saying, oh no, you can't sit here because I told Trina I'd save a seat for her.

**Yael Trusch:** Aha!

**Rivka Fishman:** That might be rude. Mean would be, no, you can't join our basketball senior player because you're just going to make us lose, that's mean. Bullying would be repeatedly making fun of another kid and even getting others to join them. So that's kind of a way to define the difference between the different things. This might be a good time to mention that the word bully, I don't like that. I'm not so into labeling, so well just... let's stay away from that a little bit.

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, I know that you're not into that, and I know that you, when you were doing your initial research, it wasn't sitting. You tell me one time that it's just something wasn't sitting right with you in terms of the whole anti-bullying conversation, for lack of a better word. What was it that wasn't sitting well with you?

**Rivka Fishman:** So, we know that the most important thing in our Torah, is *Vahavta L'reacha Kamocha* - love your fellow, treat your fellow the way you would want to be treated. And when I was looking into all these programs, the most widely used programs, the programs by the biggest, "experts." They all involved things like tattling, judging, asking ten year olds to be witnesses; and then you have to go on a bully hunt to figure out who is the bully and who are you hunting? You're hunting kids! And it just feels very yucky. I feel like you are making a bad situation worse, which research shows that it actually does. These programs that are so widely used, unfortunately, do just makes things worse for kids. And I'm just giving up on these programs, and thought, you know what? I'm just going to keep teaching kids to be kind, teaching you know stuff like that and maybe I'm the only one in the worlds who feels this way. And, but I did around that time, I tell you a little more about it later but I took a course from somebody called Izzy Kalman, he run the Bullies to Buddies Program, and he—

**Yael Trusch:** Tell me how you ended up in that course, because I think that's a really neat story of how this all began.

**Rivka Fishman:** Okay, so the principal in our school, her name is Nancy Epstein at that time, she knew that I was on this quest to make it be nice all the time, that I was frustrated with this and we got a flyer in the mail at school for this workshop, Bully-Proofing Made Easy, and she said, I think you should go. I said, I'm going to have to take a whole day off of work. I have to figure out what to do with my kids before and after school, all these programs, they just, it's all the same stuff. I don't want to waste my time. She said, no, I really think you should go. So I went, and it was pretty far, it was far out near Hobby Airport and it was just—it was a schlep. And I look around the room, and it looked like the same people who wanted to do the same, you know, kinds

of, let's make the kids... let's go on a bully hunt and everything like that; and I didn't recognize anybody in the room, I don't think anybody in the room was Jewish, and within the first hour, the presenter Izzy Kalman, he quoted both the Rebbe - the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and the Rambam - Maimonides, and I was like, wow! I think I should listen carefully today and take a lot of notes because this guy, I feel like this is showing me that I needed to be here today. And those references probably went right over the head of everybody else in the room, but to me that kind of was like my wake up, that I should really be here, sounds a cool story.

**YAEL TRUSCH:** Yeah! That is such a cool story. You were in the right place, at the right time. So, okay, so you talked about trying to help kids to be nice all the time, and you've developed this training, Bully-Proofing our Children. Before we even get to what we should be teaching our kids, what have been the most critical mistakes that you see us doing as parents and educators? What is it that were doing wrong, that we're not fixing the problem? Where are we failing?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** So first let me start by what people are doing right. Okay?

**YAEL TRUSCH:** Okay!

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** So any parents who listens when your kid comes and complains to them about something that's hurting them, they are automatically doing something right. They love their kids, they want their kids to be safe, they want their kids to be happy. And where people go wrong unintentionally, really is rooted in this love for our kids. This love that we want our kids to be raised in a safe world that I was trying so hard to find and wanted to figure out the way the kids would be nice to our kids all the time.

And as a result, when parents do try to get involve a few things happen. Sometimes a parent can make it into a bigger deal than it is. Sometimes when parents see their kids being bullied, they get flash backs to those bad times in their old childhood, and they want to make sure their kid doesn't have to suffer the same way they did in a kind of take us to a situation where going back to the rude, mean bullying thing, it might just be rude and they turn it into a bigger deal. Like, I'm going to go, I'm going to talk to the parent, I'm going to talk to—you know! Then a kid who might have been able to just be empathized with needs a couple of skills, then you're thinking, oh my goodness! My parents think this is a really big deal. This must be a really big deal! And it really turns it into like a worst situation.

The next mistake that parents, really well meaning parents make is by talking to the parents of the other kid, and saying, hey, your kid is bullying my kid. That just never turns out well, it doesn't work. And worst, which it did happen a couple of times over my years of dealing with stuff like this, for a parent to go to the child who was mean to their kid, then you're the bully. Really, you know like, you're a big grown up like that's just not going to work. So those are some mistakes.

Another one would be, thinking that schools can make the bullying stop. I don't know anybody who has succeeded in getting their own children to stop fighting with each

other. Maybe, if you're an only child you can get your kids to stop fighting with each other, I don't know, but it's not possible. We can't, I mean, you can't force kids to always be nice, as they learn which is not so fun but it's reality. So, if you think, you know, if you can keep your own kids to stop fighting, assuming that the school should be able to make it be nice all the time and stop fighting, it's not realistic. It's really not.

Not that the school shouldn't get involved we can talk a little bit more about that, but... and then the last thing I just want to mention is that, it's very important, like really anybody, any parent who's listening to this is already doing this, which is really important to empathize with your child if they come to you with something like this. They need to know that you can be a listening ear for them without making it a bigger deal than it is. Any parent who is going to response that quote, manner! Ignore it! That's not helpful. So, that's not something that we do so much these days. But, yeah!

**Yael Trusch:** And so, on the topic of empathy, how important is it not just for you to demonstrate empathy as a parent but to maybe try to take an empathetic approach towards the child who is doing the mean behavior or is that, how am I going to get attacked for even having said that but like, do we have to teach our kids that there is some form of empathy towards this person who's being not nice or is that out of the question?

**Rivka Fishman:** No, you're completely with that. The first thing that you with your kid after you've empathized, is you want to help your kid understand why the other kid is being mean because this teaches that it's impossible to feel compassion and anger at the same time.

**Yael Trusch:** Okay.

**Rivka Fishman:** So, you can teach your kid to replace their anger with compassion for the other kid. It will help them get past feeling so hurt. And they'll realize, wow! This isn't about me, this is about them. And this is where I teach kids or often I teach parents to teach kids about bucket filling which is a bigger topic in the book so just give a quick explanation on that. A lot of people are already aware of it because there is a couple of different lines of bucket books, none of which unfortunately spoke about bully proofing which is why I then wrote a book with the concept. So, the idea is that all of us walk around with an invisible bucket and our buckets are filled with our thoughts and our feelings about ourselves and, our good thoughts and feelings about ourselves.

And when our buckets are full we feel happy, we feel ready to give to other people. And when our buckets are empty, we can feel very sad. And the sad sometimes often turns quickly into being angry. We all have buckets. And those have the buckets too. And if the cashier at the grocery store is super rude today, she probably has an empty bucket. And what we can do is, we can fill people's buckets. Often, people think, that the way to fill their buckets is by scooping out of somebody else's bucket and putting it into their own. But that doesn't work.

What really works, is being kind, I mean you're kind to somebody else your own bucket fills up as well. It's a pretty amazing... it's an amazing thing that works so well and so

easily. And when you can teach a kid that, hey! This person must have a really empty up bucket. Why do you think it is? Why do you think this kid that has been mean to you has such an empty bucket? And kids come up with amazing things, you'd be surprised. It's better for the kids to come up with it, then for you too because you don't want the kid to go to school and say, my mommy said, that your daddy yelled at you all the time that's why you're being—that's not going to work so well.

So, when the kid can come up with that, that sounds like, you know, that's really the best way to do it. Then, you know, there's lots of different ways you can help your kid figure out what exactly the problem is with the other child and then they'll want to like get past it until someone get past it. Well. It's not me, so if it's not me, what can I do to not be the target of this person's meanness.

**Yael Trusch:** So, this is really interesting because, it seems that, that is already a very empowering thing. Once they lose that personalization of the problem that, they realized that it's not necessarily about them, but it's about the other person who is struggling with something and therefore, it makes the child more empowered and less of a victim mentality. Would be accurate?

**Rivka Fishman:** Absolutely! We do not want to reinforce a victim mentality. And a victim mentality can always bully proofing things they don't believe in. They all basically reinforce, oh you poor victim, let's rescue you, let's save you, let's punish the people who are making... We need to empower kids. There's going to be mean people unfortunately until Moshiach she outcomes. Throughout life we are going to encounter mean people. And we need to know how to deal with it to something that... a great analogy that I came across recently was, when you're helping your kids with their math homework, when they come home with math homework, you can sit there and you could say, okay, now you divide this, and now you divide that. Okay, this divided by this is that and here's the answer. You see, you can do that and the math homework would be finished and they would get an A on that homework assignment. But then when they go to take the real test, they'll have no idea how to handle it.

**Yael Trusch:** Exactly!

**Rivka Fishman:** So, the same thing is true with social problems. We have to teach kids how to solve their own problems and just go hand and hand with that, we have to teach kids to have a little bit of sense of humor about it. I think we probably all know adults where we have to be so cheerful with every word we say because we might insult them.

**Yael Trusch:** Uh-huh?

**Rivka Fishman:** They are not so much fun to be around. We want our kids to be people who people want to be friends with, to people wants to be around. And this is such an easy way to do it. I'm not saying it's always easy. I'm not saying they are not going to go through a tough time but when they have the right skills it's going to turn out okay.

**Yael Trusch:** It's going to turn out okay. I love because it is such a positive... saying to something that has turned into such a negative conversation in so many households. Rivka, you've mentioned the use of humor before. So I'm curious. How does humor work in terms of—what is it that we're trying to teach our kids that can help them, bully proof them, through the use of humor?

**Rivka Fishman:** So, there's a kid book that actually does a really great job of doing it. It's the kid's book called, **Pat Roll Pull** and on the surface, it's a book about some kids making kallah in school. But if you could look—

**Yael Trusch:** I never—Sorry, but I never even would have thought of that book. Okay, keep going.

**Rivka Fishman:** Okay, so they are making kallah on school and she's really nervous because she has never been kallah before. She doesn't know what to do. And she's braiding the kallah and her friend looks over and says, that does not look like a kallah. And she says, you're right, it doesn't. It looks like an ice cream cone. And they all start to laugh. Now—

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, I knew it!

**Rivka Fishman:** That's a super comment situation of what had happened with kids in school. You know, I once had a student a hundred years ago, who got so super insulted because they were looking at pictures from a neighboring kindergarten and a new girl in the class said I was right there. She said it with a smile on her face in a really sweet way. Oh my goodness, your hair looks so puffy. And the girl got really mad. Like really, really mad. And when our kids come home, and they say, she made fun of my hair.

You would say really? What did she say? And she says, she said my hair is as curly as Bitsley. You could say, well, does your hair curly like Bitsley? And she'll be like, well, yeah maybe. And you'd say, okay, so it's not a problem. Like, she was just commenting. It's okay. You know, a sense of humor is really important. And they can help not escalate the situation that does not need to be escalated.

**Yael Trusch:** So if we could teach kids to take things in a more humorous way and play on the joke and be part of the joke then it diffuses the situation.

**Rivka Fishman:** Exactly! It works! And then I'm not saying that they really serious bullying situation that humor is the answer to that kind of thing, it wouldn't be. We would use some of the other skills for those kinds of things. But on a general level keeping a sense of humor is really healthy and important.

**Yael Trusch:** And as I am processing this whole thing, I have a question that I'm sure somebody out there listening is thinking about it and that is, well, what about when my child is the bully? What do I do then?

**Rivka Fishman:** So, I get that question a lot, and I think that may be for a lot of us, as crazy as it sounds, it's maybe harder when our kid is the bully than when our kid is bullied. I think that on some level we understand that in some point in life our kids are going to come across somebody who is mean and who is mean to our kid, and it does

not feel nice. But, when our kid is the bully? What? What did I do wrong? Why is my kid bullying? Why is my kid mean? And, here is the thing it is not your fault. Kids go through tough times and the best, the biggest favor we could do for our kids is to figure out what is going on. Why would be our kid be acting like a bully? Is it a self-confidence thing, do they need a boost in self-confidence in some area? Would they need, maybe this kid who they are being mean to, maybe they need some space from the other kid. Maybe we can ask the teacher, if she can do something with the desks, so that your kid has some space with the kid that they are picking... from this kid that they are picking on. So they can work on not picking on them.

But, when the kid is kind of in their face all the time, I am not saying it's the fault of the kid who is being picked on, but, sometimes without meaning to, they can do things that annoy somebody to a point that they are then going to be mean to them. Does it make it okay? Again, but really as a parent we have to get to the bottom of, why is my kid being mean? And really, it could be that we have to need help from a therapist to figure that out. Nobody should ever be afraid of turning to, you know, to get help from a therapist, somebody who could help them. We want to figure out, why is my kid's bucket so empty? What is going on? A kid with a full bucket is always trying to be nice, at least most of the time.

And, the other thing that we can do is, as a parent, we can't control what comes out of our kids mouths, we can't. I wish we could. It would be so much fun.

**Yael Trusch:** Oh, me, too!

**Rivka Fishman:** But, we can't, so, one thing that we can control though is what choices we are allowing our kids to make. So, for example, if our kid is having a birthday party and they only want to invite half the class. Okay, remember that some are at a class of 50 kids, or at time my kid is at a class of 10 kids or something like that. Anytime there is more than one kid invited, everybody else is being excluded. So, if we're allowing our kids to have a birthday party, then, we want to make sure that everybody is included. If we see our kids always hanging out with the same people, maybe we want to invite for Shabbos the family of the kid that your kid is never hanging out with. Try to teach inclusion. It is an important thing that we can teach by example and last thing along those same lines, there is just an issue for teens and pre-teens, and adults, too, is how things are being portray—how you allow your kids to portray themselves and how we portray ourselves on social media.

And when a kid posts a picture of going ice skating with two friends and they are leaving out the other five friends, let's say, and they post them on social media, with that it now said is, we went to this place and we did not bring you. That is essentially what they are saying by posting that picture.

**Yael Trusch:** Okay.

**Rivka Fishman:** Sometimes intentionally, sometimes not intentionally, but, we need to monitor their social media at different ages, at different levels, but, we definitely need to be their friends on social media. Don't necessarily comment because it will be embarrassing to your kid, you know.

**Yael Trusch:** Right!

**Rivka Fishman:** “Mom, don’t comment on my pictures”, they’re so embarrassing, you know! But, that is like the lowest level of involvement. To make sure that you are their friend, link and contact whoever it might be, just so that you are aware. And say hey, how do you think it made so and so feel, when she saw that you two went out for pizza and did not bring her along? Just make them aware of how they were to feel or just turn around and say, how would you feel if you saw these three friends together in a picture and you weren’t in—you know that you were not invited? So...

**Yael Trusch:** Right!

**Rivka Fishman:** So, those are some things for parents to do, but, it is also important for parents to not beat themselves up. Don’t bully yourselves either. There is only so much you can do. And the idea is to get your kid help rather than to beat yourselves up.

**Yael Trusch:** Mm-hm. And you mentioned schools and today, people, parents really have taken a stand at schools need to or they expect that schools would be bully or what they call bully free zones or there should have a no tolerance for bullying policy and you mentioned that it’s almost, it’s something that is almost unrealistic. What should be the proper response from the administration side? How could a school handle this in a way that parents still feel comfortable, but, it is realistic?

**Rivka Fishman:** So, we have different levels on this. First of all, we want to talk about these huge public schools that have mandated reporting and zero tolerance for bullying, everything like that. Then, I would refer people to see if your kid is in a school like that. I absolutely refer people to Izzy Kalman, you can find him on his websites, [www.bullies2buddies.com](http://www.bullies2buddies.com). You can also link to it from my website [www.sarathethebucketfiller.com](http://www.sarathethebucketfiller.com) and he is an excellent resource for things like this. He recently wrote an article in response to this video that went viral. A lot of people probably saw it. There is this little boy named Keaton, in a car and he is... it’s heartbreaking. He is crying about the things that the mean kids in school have done to him.

**Yael Trusch:** Oh

**Rivka Fishman:** And Izzy Kalman wrote an article on Psychology Today.

**Yael Trusch:** Okay.

**Rivka Fishman:** Where he talks about how... okay, the school did do the things that they were supposed to do and what happened? What happened was the kids just detested him more.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Rivka Fishman:** Now he is the tattletale. Now, he got them in trouble. Now, he got their friend in trouble. This isn’t helping him. He feels like more and more of a victim,

but, he does not feel helped because things are not getting better, right? You only feel helped when things are getting better, you don't feel helped because the Principal came and yelled at that other kid.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Rivka Fishman:** Maybe it's nice for five minutes but, it really does not actually help. So, it is a great article and basically the justice... we want to do the things that make somebody—make the situation better or to make the relationship better, not the things that are going to make somebody else detest us, you know? If you think about it in the adult world for example, the way it works. If our neighbor has a dog that's barking outside of our kid's window every day when our kids are trying to fall asleep, should we call the police and have the police come and warn them that they have to make the dog stop barking or else, or should we go to our neighbor and say, hey, listen, your dog is right outside my kids window would you mind taking it in just from 7:00 - 8:00 every night while my kid is trying to fall asleep, will that be okay with you? So of course, calling the police is not necessarily the way to go. And, so this is what we are trying to do. Now, kids can't always handle everything all by themselves, they do need adult involved. For sure, if we are talking about something that would be a crime, in the adult world crime means like that is a personal property or physically being actually hurt to a point where you'll call it assault and battery for example.

But, here's how adults should be involved. First of all, ask consultants for your kid. Your kid should be able to consult with you for advice and you should also speak to the school. The school should know what is going on but the way to approach it is not hey, I need you to do something about this.

The thing is listen, here's the story, here's what we are dealing, I want you to know what is going on and what the school should then do what school wouldn't naturally do is first of all, they will be in better position to help your fill your kid's bucket throughout the day. You know that this kid is having a really hard time with kids at recess then right when they come in from recess or right when they are going to go out to recess would not be when you as a teacher, would give the kid really a hard time for not bringing in their homework. You are going to know that they are going through a hard time and soften it up a little bit, do help them in other ways whatever it might be.

The other thing that teachers and staff in general can do when they know that this is going on is they can position themselves in the right places at the right time. So if they know that this kid's sandwich is always... the people who are always making fun of this kid comes with a sardine sandwich to school and it's stinky.

**Yael Trusch:** Mothers, don't send your children with sardine sandwiches, but, yeah!

**Rivka Fishman:** Yeah, you know that too! But whatever, you know that this is the story and this is what's happening. Your kid likes sardines and that's your family's, that's your thing then go for it. But, the lunch teacher can then position themselves sort of near that lunch table, and try to... first of all, if the teacher's standing there, it's not

probably going to happen because smart kids are not saying things in front of adults because they know they are going to get in trouble. But if they do hear it, they are then in the position to, you don't want them to rescue, right? You don't, oh, don't be mean to my kid or to this kid. No, that is so mean, don't be mean! What you want them to do and say something along the lines are—We don't do that in the school, we don't speak this way in the school. Yuck! That sounds horrible on my ears or wow! Is that a really nice thing to say? Any of these kinds of things where we are not rescuing, instead we're just correcting the kids behavior. We can definitely be part of a team to help this kid not be a victim anymore.

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, and as we're talking about this, I keep going back to your book and the concept of bucket filling, it's almost like at least in the smaller schools, we almost want to make the school environment want a bucket filling or and we could be preventing a lot of these behaviors if the general environment in the school was one of pointing out kindness and just general good, if there are errors and things like that where people feel positive in that setting would prevent a lot of what's go on between kids. I mean at the end of like... sometimes kids have rough times and rough days and might not be so nice to each other, but I guess, creating that environment would put us ahead of the curve.

**Rivka Fishman:** For sure. Absolutely!

**Yael Trusch:** Rivka, you have some role play that you like to do with parents. Don't you? Can we do one of them about how to help kids when they're feeling bad about themselves? They come home and they're in a sticky situation, how we can help them?

**Rivka Fishman:** Sure! Let's do one of those.

**Yael Trusch:** Okay.

**Rivka Fishman:** I sent you the one about Shira I believed?

**Yael Trusch:** Okay. So who am I going to be?

**Rivka Fishman:** How about, I be the parent and you can be Shira.

**Yael Trusch:** Okay, perfect!

**Rivka Fishman:** Okay, it could be parent or teacher, either one, could be a part of this team. It's great when it's both.

**Yael Trusch:** Hm.

**Rivka Fishman:** Okay, so let's all start. So Shira, you look really sad, what's going on?

**Yael Trusch:** Nothing.

**Rivka Fishman:** I'd be happy to listen if you want to talk.

**Yael Trusch:** Well, it's Rina.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** What about her?

**Yael Trusch:** Well, today when we got our test back, she looked over and she saw my grade, and then when we were on recess, she told everyone that I'm the teacher's pet, and now no one likes me because of that.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Ooh, I better that hurt.

**Yael Trusch:** Well, it didn't hurt I'm just angry.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** That's interesting because if someone said that about me when I was your age, it will probably hurt my feelings.

**Yael Trusch:** Well, I guess it kind of hurts but really I'm angry.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Hmm, you and Rina have always been good friends, right?

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, but this year something's different. She's always being mean to me.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Is school harder this year?

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, you see that I have to study every night and before I could do well without even studying, but what is that have to do with anything?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** I wonder how Rina's doing with that change?

**Yael Trusch:** Today when we got our test back, she was very proud to announce to the class that she got 62.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** She was proud? Are you sure?

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, she didn't care, why?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** How did you do?

**Yael Trusch:** I got a 92.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** That's great! And you said that Shira looked over your shoulder and saw your grade and then kind of right after that, she was mean to you at recess?

**Yael Trusch:** Right?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Well, I learned over the years that often the way people behaved towards other people has a lot more to do with what's going on inside of them, than what we have done to them. Have you ever had just a really bad day, where everything seems to be going wrong, your bucket just feels so totally empty?

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, today.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Okay, so we all have this day sometimes. How did you act to people that day? To your siblings? To me? To your friends?

**Yael Trusch:** Probably snapped or pouted. I'm probably not very nice on those days whenever things are going wrong.

**Rivka Fishman:** So that makes you like most people. I bet that's what's going on with Rina. She seems like she's having a hard school year and is taking that out on you and probably to some others as well.

**Yael Trusch:** But she seems so happy all the time even when she's being mean to me.

**Rivka Fishman:** Yeah, that's the tricky part. People usually looked good on the outside to cover up what's going on inside. The real way we know how they are doing is not how they look, but how they behave.

**Yael Trusch:** Maybe.

**Rivka Fishman:** If you'd like, I do have some ideas about what you can do when she's mean to you.

**Yael Trusch:** Like say... you're just being mean because you are failing in school?

**Rivka Fishman:** Hmm, how do you think that would work?

**Yael Trusch:** I don't know. I mean it would be fun to say that but she would probably just get more mad and just not—I don't think it's going to work.

**Rivka Fishman:** It's probably not very kind either, huh?

**Yael Trusch:** But she's the one not being kind!

**Rivka Fishman:** Does the Torah teach us that we should only be nice to people that are nice to us?

**Yael Trusch:** I guess not.

**Rivka Fishman:** Right. Being mean back usually doesn't solve anything anyway.

**Yael Trusch:** Okay, so what should I say?

**Rivka Fishman:** Well, for starters you can try to translate like what she says.

**Yael Trusch:** Like translating from Hebrew? I don't get it?

**Rivka Fishman:** Yes. Except in this case you're translating what Rina is saying into what she really means.

**Yael Trusch:** Okay.

**Rivka Fishman:** So when Rina said that you're the teacher's pet and no one likes you, she was probably feeling, I'm not doing very well at school like you are and I think the teacher likes you better and that's hard for me. If she said that you how would you feel?

**Yael Trusch:** Wow! I'd feel very bad for her.

**Rivka Fishman:** I would, too.

**Yael Trusch:** But how can I remember all that?

**Rivka Fishman:** Well if you can't figure out exactly what someone else is saying when they are being mean, you could always try and translate anything into, I feel bad about myself so I want her to feel bad about herself, too.

**Yael Trusch:** She feels bad about herself so she has to make me feel bad about myself, too. Okay, I can remember that!

**Rivka Fishman:** Let me know if you'd like some other ideas, okay?

**Yael Trusch:** Thanks!

**Rivka Fishman:** So okay, Yael, thank you! That was fun. As we were doing that I was reminded of a really great resource that some of your listeners might enjoy and that is a book put up by "Love and Logic", called, "Words Will Never Hurt Me". And it's another great resource. Easy reading for parents and it has more role plays like that. A lot of stuff that I added to the bullies2buddies program in addition to my own stuff comes from Love and Logic. Love and Logic is totally my go to for everything. Parenting, I always say it works 100% of the time that I use it a 100%.

**Yael Trusch:** I love that! Yeah, this is actually really, really helpful. I hadn't read it before but as I was doing it I could see how it would kind of start help... like it walks the child through the process of rethinking and reframing the situation so that they could take ownership over it on their own. I really like that.

**Rivka Fishman:** Good! I'm hoping it will be helpful for some people. I found that it's been helpful for a lot of kids when they are in these kinds of situations.

**Yael Trusch:** So let's get to your book which talks about bucket filling. You published it—a beautifully written and illustrated children's book Why a children's book as opposed to a manual for parents or a handbook for teens? Why a children's book?

**Rivka Fishman:** So being an author wasn't actually one of my life goals. This sort of just, it just kind of happened. When—I have been doing this stuff for a while and when my daughter was in kindergarten she got a new kid in the class who made her life really miserable on a regular basis. And I was like, oh, I can help you with this, you know I'm all confident with my skills that I have helped so many kids with. And it didn't work. And I realized, she's too little to understand this. She's not mature enough to understand it's not me it's her, whatever it might be.

And around that time her teacher's brought in a book that they kind of were trying to implement kindness in whole class about bucket filling. I said this is amazing! There's got to be one to help kids with exactly that story. So I ordered a whole bunch of books on line from Amazon. It comes the next day, you already know what you ordered, they

just show up at your door. And then none of them really did it so I kind of did my own story where I spoke, we talk to her about her day and we talked about, you know, we wove in the bucket filling and we... I was able to help her to see that it wasn't her it was the other kid but with the concept of bucket she was able to understand it.

And so after I told the story it kind of... people were like, well, you should really write that down and my daughter especially was very empathetic. You know, very like, she was very empathic about it. You know you write it down, make me the main character, the character should look like me. You know it was very cute. And it made a huge—it really made a huge difference. So in the back of the book there are actually is a kind of mini manual for parents and my Facebook page and other social media sites I do kind of you know throw some tips out there for parents as well. But I think as a kids book it's a great way to get very young kids thinking in this way from a young age because the younger you are when you start thinking this way, the easier it's going to be for you to automatically react this way throughout your whole life.

**Yael Trusch:** Yes and what you presented is really so true that in the system of bucket filling it's really a book about kindness. It's not a book about bullying. It has not even mentioned in the book that in fact the character in the book, she was just plain annoying, and you did that intentionally because... well, tell me why? Why she was just plain annoying?

**Rivka Fishman:** So I think that she's acting annoying but a lot of kids would run straight to the teacher or run straight to their parents if the kid was doing something like that for them like the kid in the opening scene of the book where the main character, Sara takes out her item for show and tell and the mean girl says "who cares!" So yeah, that's annoying, that's rude but it also probably mean and they're going to go home, she was mean to me. She's not just mean to me, she's always mean to me, right! Because that's the way, what happens with kids.

So this kind of story where a kid makes fun of what they brought for show and tell, takes her turn in the line, and jumps on the, you know, swing when she was walking towards it... that's what happens to kids most of the time.

**Yael Trusch:** Yes!

**Rivka Fishman:** That's really the most... this is pretty much the way it all starts, with stuffs like this. It doesn't usually start with things like somebody taking the other kid's lunch, trying to place things down her shirt. That's really just... that's the real... it's sad, it's awful, it's terrible when it happens and it shouldn't happen and it should be dealt upon that level. But for most kids, this is what's going on in their lives so I really wanted the story to be something that kids could relate to. I wanted to keep it real. You might notice that at the end of the story these two characters, they're not best friends, they don't go out and start holding hands and playing together.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** But the other kid stops bothering her. And that's what we want to achieve. We want the kid to not be a victim, but not be a victim by the other kid not picking on them. So that's what we can teach our kids.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Really most easily.

**Yael Trusch:** And as adults we've often said that, you and I, as friends in conversation that we will encounter people who are not going to end up being our best friends but we could have cordial, half-be pleasant relationships with even if sometimes those people are not so nice.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Yeah. A 100%, I agree.

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah. Okay. So, Rivka, let's do some JLP fill in the blanks. And I know you know this because you're an avid listener so I'm going to give you--

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** I sure am! I'm your biggest fan!

**Yael Trusch:** I will give you a few sentences, statements and you're going to finish them with the first thing that comes to mind, okay?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Hmm.

**Yael Trusch:** Okay, I'm Rivka Fishman, and I feel most spiritual when?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** I feel most spiritual when I'm teaching a class and it's kind of, you get a class to a point where they are all totally involved and just getting inspired and excited by what they are learning. And their faces light up, kind of leaning a little bit, that's when I feel most spiritual.

**Yael Trusch:** That's so awesome! Did you always know that you wanted to be an educator?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** No. I went to school thinking I was going to be a psychologist actually. And when I moved to Houston I was doing neuro-psych testing, not enjoying it very much. And then I, when I'm on maternity leave before the baby was born, because I have to stop me before they would schedule patients for me and I substituted in school for somebody else that went. I don't know how many days I can do this but I'll do it while I can because I'm not going to stay home to lick my thumbs, I'm just not one of those. And I loved it. And I was like, wow, this is fun! And this works really well for me and it just work it was... yeah, I knew teaching was my calling very soon after that.

**Yael Trusch:** So awesome. My favorite mitzvah or one I feel most connected with is?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Same thing, teaching Torah, for sure!

**Yael Trusch:** Hmm. My fondest, sweetest Jewish memory is?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Sitting around at this theater or even a Friday night Sabbath's table with my family and my grandparents.

**YAEL TRUSCH:** Oh, that's so beautiful. Your grandparents, you grew up in the same city with your grandparents, right?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** No. My father's mother lived in the same city as us and my mother's parent's lives in a seven hour drive, New Jersey. But we saw her very often, so...

**YAEL TRUSCH:** That's great! That's great. Something I wish I had learned about Judaism growing up is?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** So I'm really lucky in that I grew up in the great Jewish education. But if I could twist it a little bit, I wish that as a kid and as teenager, I had been mature enough to really let everything that I was learning sink in the way I should have. I think it was just like you know, school, learn it. I didn't soak it in the way that I that I wish inside I would have.

**YAEL TRUSCH:** Have you ever told that to your teenagers? To your kids?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** You bet! But I don't know if it works. We'll see!

**YAEL TRUSCH:** When I give Tzedakah charity, I like to give to?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Jewish schools. Can you hear a theme here a little bit?

**YAEL TRUSCH:** Nice! Very cool. Finally, I'm Rivka Fishman, and today I'm most grateful for?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** All of the people in my life. Everybody that we encounter is there to be there for us, to help us or sometimes just to teach us a lesson that'll make us grow in some way.

**YAEL TRUSCH:** Yes.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** So I'm very grateful for all the people in my life.

**YAEL TRUSCH:** That's beautiful. Rivka, thank you so much! Everyone, the book is, Sara The Bucket Filler, and it's sold on Amazon as well as on Rivka's website, [www.sarathebucketfiller.com](http://www.sarathebucketfiller.com). That's Sara with no H at the end. And also on your website you can contact Rivka about bully-proofing workshop for your community, for your school, or for a book reading for children. And you have ton of resources also there. If you need to find a therapist for your child and a lot more information that is helpful for parents and educators. Rivka, thank you so much for your wonderful work, I think you have a special code for JLP listeners on your book, right?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** I do. If you purchase the book through [www.sarathebucketfiller.com](http://www.sarathebucketfiller.com) at checkout, you can put in code, very easy, JLP for Jewish Latin Princess.

**YAEL TRUSCH:** Right!

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** And you get a dollar off the book.

**Yael TRUSCH:** Awesome.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** At checkout.

**Yael TRUSCH:** Okay, so [www.sarathethebucketfiller.com](http://www.sarathethebucketfiller.com), checkout, code JLP, took out a discount on your book. It's a great children's book, it makes a beautiful gift so I highly recommend it. And we're waiting for book number two! When are you starting to work on that?

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** So my sister and sister's in law, everybody with a lot of voice, you really need a lot of voice for that. So it's starting to form in my mind. That's where it all begins.

**Yael TRUSCH:** That's awesome.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** So...

**Yael TRUSCH:** Okay. All right! So we look forward to that. Thank you for your wonderful work and for putting it out there. So very needed for everybody. Thank you for being on the show.

**RIVKA FISHMAN:** Thank you, Yael. Bye.

**[Theme Music]**

**Yael TRUSCH:** Thanks again for Rivka Fishman for stopping by. You can find Rivka at [www.sarathethebucketfiller.com](http://www.sarathethebucketfiller.com) on Facebook and Instagram. Again, you can always go back to [www.jewishlatinprincess.com](http://www.jewishlatinprincess.com) and download the audio as well as a free copy of the transcript for this episode which should be a great idea if you want to review everything that Rivka told us today or maybe want to share it with your spouse or your kid's educators.

Again, episode 43 back at [www.jewishlatinprincess.com](http://www.jewishlatinprincess.com), both audio and transcript. And in order to receive a dollar off your copy of Sara The Bucket Filler, go to [www.sarathethebucketfiller.com](http://www.sarathethebucketfiller.com) and use the code JLP at checkout. It's a beautiful book with amazing reviews and I know that you will enjoy it with your young children. It also makes a beautiful gift and I personally think it should be part of every classroom, preschool classrooms, so if you have a birthday coming up or a special occasion where you'd like to donate that to your children's preschool classrooms, I think that that would be a beautiful idea.

Thank you again for being here! And as always, thank you for the reviews on iTunes. They make my heart sing! So, if you haven't go ahead and do that. I love hearing from you and I recently got an email from a new listener who's been binge-listening on all the past episodes and who's telling me how much she's loving the show and I asked her, how did you find Jewish Latin Princess? And she said she went on iTunes and she searched for Judaism and Torah, and the show came up. So you see? It works! We

have a five star rating, beautiful reviews, and the more reviews we have, the more iTunes gets the message that this is a show worth recommending to people. So, thank you so much for being here again, and I'll see you next time.

***[Theme Music]***

Thanks for listening to Jewish Latin Princess podcast. If you enjoyed this episode please subscribe on iTunes. Liberating and share the podcast with the Jewish women you love. To access today's show notes, ask Yael a question, or suggest a uniquely talented Jewish woman to be featured on the show, visit [www.jewishlatinprincess.com](http://www.jewishlatinprincess.com).