

## JEWISH LATIN PRINCESS

HARRIET LERNER, AUTHOR OF WHY WON'T YOU APOLOGIZE?

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*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.** Have you ever heard an unapology? One of those apologies that left you wondering, what was that? How do you deal with the unapologetic offender? And what if you are the offender? Yikes! How good are you at apologizing? You are listening to Jewish Latin Princess. Everyone, welcome back. I don't know that I am so good at apologizing, honestly. I recently had to apologize to my really good friend. It was all my fault. It really was. Apologizing is hard and being on the receiving end of unapology is also hard. Seriously? Can't a person take responsibility for what they have done? To help us navigate this I have the wonderful Harriet Lerner, on the show.

Harriet is a clinical psychologist and one of our nation's most respected voices on the psychology of women and family relationships. She is the author of numerous scholarly articles and 12 books including the New York Times Bestseller, *The Dance Of Anger*. You know *The Dance Of Anger*, right? You've read it? *The Dance Of Anger* has sold several million copies with over 25 foreign editions and of course she has a wonderful TED<sup>x</sup> Talk, "*Why Won't He Apologize*". And her latest book is, "*Why Won't You Apologize?: Healing Big Betrayals and Everyday Hurts*" and that's what we talk about today.

And what about forgiveness? As Jews we are taught in the Torah to forgive those who have harmed us and who genuinely apologized. And of course there are rules as to what a genuine apology is. Now Harriet thinks the topic of forgiveness is not black and white. There might be degrees to forgiveness and she has also seen throughout her work that the pressure of having to forgive can be quite harmful. I do want to apologize ahead of time because the quality of the audio today is not as usual. We had a few issues so I'm sorry about that. But here we go ladies, here's Harriet Lerner.

[MUSIC]

**Yael Trusch:** Harriet Lerner, welcome to Jewish Latin Princess.

**Harriet Lerner:** I'm delighted to be here.

**Yael Trusch:** I'm so happy to get to talk to you. You are such a wonderful writer. I want to set the stage a little bit for readers. You are the author of the New York Times Bestseller, "*The Dance Of Anger*", a fabulous book which has sold several million copies and 25 foreign editions. You have really become one of America's most respected voices on the psychology of women, family relationships, and now you've published this beautiful book, "*Why Won't You Apologize?: Healing Big Betrayals and Everyday Hurts*". Tell us—before I even get to the apology and the art of the apology all these good stuff that you teach us here, what was the impetus for this work? What was your personal reason? Why did you want to write about the apology?

**Harriet Lerner:** Well, we are all connected. We all screw up. We all unwittingly hurt other people just as we are hurt by them, so the need to give and receive apology is with us until our very last breath. And when done well, the apology is deeply healing. And when the apology is absent or we give a bad apology it compromises the relationship and sometimes it even end a relationship. So it's a really important subject. To be honest about it what got me to actually sit down at the computer and start writing because I have been studying the subject for a long time, as I receive a really bad apology. One of those blame reversing, sleazy apologies that just really stayed with me and it's funny but motivates the person to sit down and write. That's what got me started.

**Yael Trusch:** Was this from family related or work related?

**Harriet Lerner:** It is actually work related and I actually tell the story in the beginning of the book, you know a writer's revenge, but it was a work related thing.

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, you are right. The truth is it's such a necessary tool to have healthy relationships. We are always going to mess up and unless we master this art we might end up ruining a lot of relationships and having them end all together so it is definitely very, very necessary. So now that we have said it, we all need to know how to do it. We have all messed up in this area. How—what are some ways in which we mess up the apology, because I think sometimes we don't even realize how we are messing it up. What are those some typical ways that we could mess it up?

**HARRIET LERNER.** We all mess it up because we are wired for defensiveness and it is just so easy to slip into a dead apology. So the most common ways that we mess it up, well, first I would say, with the word, “but”. I’m sorry that I forgot to call you but I was loaded down with work. Or, I’m sorry to have yelled at you and I was so irritated when we were trying to leave the house but you are taking forever to get ready. It doesn’t matter if what you say after the “but” is true. The “but” makes your apology false. And the word “but” almost always sign of rationalization, an excuse, a criticism. So rule number one, get your “but” out of your apology and actually the same as the word “if”. You know, I’m sorry if I hurt you, I’m sorry... there is no accountability there. So these little words like “but” and “if”, will undue the sincerity of your apology.

And then the second way that we muck up an apology is we focus on the other person’s reaction rather than our own behavior. So we say something like, I’m sorry that you were upset and angry when I corrected your stories at the party. And again there is no accountability there. When we are focusing on the other person’s feelings, a real apology would say, I’m sorry that I corrected your stories at the party. You told me that you don’t like that. I was wrong and I won’t do it again. So finally, I mean they are actually a lot of words, we muck it up, but the other really important way is that we use the apology as a quick way to get out of the conversation. Because—

**Yael Trusch.** Oh, what is that?

**HARRIET LERNER.** We don’t want to listen anymore. So for example, someone in my consulting room, a man said to his wife, I told you 20 times that I’m sorry about the affair. Why do you keep bringing it up? Well, you know there are certain kinds of betrayals and harms that a real apology means that we sit on the hot seat and listen to the anger and pain of the hurt party for as long as it takes. So, those are a couple of a few ways that we muck it up.

**Yael Trusch.** Now I want to tell you everything in life is divine providence. This morning, to tell you the truth, I woke up to a text from a friend of mine. My dear, dear friend. We have been friends forever, like a sister, right? She lives in the other side of the tree.

**HARRIET LERNER.** Uh-huh.

**Yael Trusch.** And I know I am having this conversation with you today, the author of, Why Won’t You Apologize, and I got a text from my friend deeply hurt, rightfully so, saying, I can’t believe you did not call me or acknowledge my daughter’s mitzvah. And you know what? She is right! She is totally right.

**HARRIET LERNER.** Uh-huh.

**YAEL TRUSCH.** I had a list of excuses I could give her, all those “but” I had a crazy week and my husband is going through this and my kids through that, but you know what? I can't say that because the truth is she is right and the only thing I could say is, I am so sorry. You are right I messed up. What else could I have said? I don't—but for sure I did not do the “but” to maybe because I have read your book, and because I know that that would not be welcomed because there is no excuse. I messed it up. Even if I had a million things to do she is right to be hurt, right?

**HARRIET LERNER.** Right. And that is a wonderful example. And a good apology is often very short because the more we gab on and on the more we are likely to make excuses which you did not do. You did not say, I am so sorry and I was just crazy and overloaded with work during this whole time, so that is a great example of giving an apology where you are showing that you care about the relationship and you accept responsibility and there is no hint of evasion or excuse making and so good for you! You get an A+.

**YAEL TRUSCH.** And it does! You still have this little hurt in the pit of your stomach like you know you messed up and you hope that the other party is going to accept your apology and you know.

**HARRIET LERNER.** Uh-huh.

**YAEL TRUSCH.** But let us move on to you mentioned a couple who, he... you know you'd say they talked about the affair; the degrees of hurt. I guess my question is, being late to an appointment, or not returning something on time, or even not making that phone call that really was very meaningful to the other party and you forgot to make is not as... it does not fall on the same degree of having an affair or the damage maybe is not... “the gravity of the sin,” is not the same. So what does a good apology require of us say for a small offense versus a larger hurt or betrayal? There must be different degrees here with what we are working with, right?

**HARRIET LERNER.** Absolutely! And it is easiest to apologize for a small thing. Like if you spill red wine on your friend's carpet, I mean you are naturally going to say, Oh my god! I'm so sorry. Let me help you clean it up. I like to—let me pay the cleaning bill... and that is very easy. But when it is something serious, when it is an affair or is an abandonment, or let us say someone in our family confronts us with something we did really wrong even if it is ten years ago, thirty years ago. It requires more of us and one of the things that it requires when it is a big hurt or big harm is it requires that we really listen because it is not the words, I'm sorry, that heals the injury. The hurt party wants us to really get it.

They want us to validate and care about their feelings and they want us to carry some of the pain that we have caused them to feel. So an apology for a big thing is basically communicating—yes, I get it. I screwed up. I was wrong. Your feelings make sense. I want you to know that I am not going to do this again. I want you to know that this conversation will not slip out of my head.—and that may require us to sit on the hot seat and listen for a whole number of time because no apology will have meaning if we haven't listened carefully to the hurt party's anger and pain. And that is so difficult to do because often the hurt party is confronting us. They are intense, there may be exaggeration, there may be distortions. We want to bring up their crime sheet because we think they are 51% to blame.

And it is so difficult that requires so much courage and intention to listen, not for what we don't agree with so we can climb upfront our high scores and make our case, but to really listen to the essence of what that person needs us to get, and to say to our criticisms and our differences for another conversation. That is really very heroic to be able to do that.

**Yael Trusch.** Yeah. Sitting in the hot seat can be a tough one. You just reminded me that in Jewish Law, the Rambam, again not coincidentally, happens to be that this morning, my son was mentioning that this weeks teaching of Rambam. The Rambam quantify the mission in Torah. It is a big book where it just breaks up all the different commandments and observances from the Torah, and it talks about the art of repentance and forgiveness and asking for apologies. It does say there that, when we are talking about relationships between man and man, we should apologize and we should seek forgiveness from the other party and even try several times.

Do you think asking for... should we ask for forgiveness, should we say, "I really want you to forgive me" or is that almost like dismissing the other person or breaching a line that they are not ready maybe yet for... like how do we manage that? How do we manage the listen and the validating with straight out asking to be forgiven? Maybe they are not ready for that yet. Maybe we are pushing too much.

**Harriet Lerner.** Exactly! You know the hardest chapter in *Why Won't You Apologize* for me to write was the chapter called, "*You Need To Forgive*" and "*Other Lies that Hurt You*". And it is basically a chapter to the harmed party, for the hurt party. And it says something very important which is that you do not need to forgive someone who is not sorry, who does not care about your feelings, who is never going to get it, who is not going to listen. If you are the hurt party, you do not need to forgive a non-apologetic offender. However, you do need to let go of the corrocious aspects of anger and bitterness that keep you stuck. And forgiveness is only one patch for letting go. I actually do not believe that if you apologize to someone that you should ask for forgiveness. That may be true in some relationships; it may

be true for some people. It certainly is not true for everyone. An apology is not a bargaining tool that we give to get something back –

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Harriet Lerner:** Like forgiveness. And when we request forgiveness or even demand it, we can cut short the process of the injured person and we can hurt them all over again. And this business of apologizing repeated times and asking for forgiveness the second time, the third time; it actually leads to a blame reversing strategy. Suddenly the hurt party is the bad guy because they are not forgiving.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Harriet Lerner:** And the wrong doer feels self-righteous because blame has been shifted to the one who doesn't forgive. You know I am a therapist, since you know, so I have worked with people over decades where one of the things that I see in the therapy process for example, is that a parent, let us say for example, a mother will say to her adult daughter, "You need to forgive your dad". This happened a long time ago, "why don't you just let go and move forward." Many people believe that forgiveness, like gratitude, is a universally healing emotion. I believe by the way that gratitude is the universally, it is really a healing emotion.

**Yael Trusch:** I was just going to say...

**Harriet Lerner:** But when we encourage forgiveness, we actually may leave the hurt party feeling alone and abandoned and betrayed all over again. When we say to someone who has been hurt or traumatized, you know, "Your dad did the best he could. That has happened a long time ago. Why don't you forgive? Move on? Don't leave in the past." I want to stress these words, why can't you forgive him? You need to forgive him. When they are said about an unapologetic offender, are the last words that a hurt person needs to hear. And cliché is like, "You know, she did the best she could," or "It is what it is." Or "This happened forty years ago". It is not helpful. So it is one thing to toughen when you care about that you wanted to find a way to protect themselves from feeling so angry and so stuck. You don't want the ones who hurt them to have such power over their life. But it is another thing entirely to suggest that the harmed party should simply absolve their wrong doer and transcend their legitimate anger and pain by some act of will or grace. So forgiveness is a pretty complicated business, but that is my belief about it. That is what my research indicates.

**Yael Trusch:** Very, very complicated business. But yeah, it is important to stress out here. I guess what we are discussing is the unapologetic offender.

**HARRIET LERNER.** Exactly!

**YAEL TRUSCH.** If we have a person who is crafted a genuine apology and has done and really feels remorse and feels bad for what they did and they do it in the right way, then as the hurt party, we should forgive, right? If—

**HARRIET LERNER.** Well—

**YAEL TRUSCH.** I mean...

**HARRIET LERNER.** For the wrong doer, let us take it from both sides, because I am very interested in both sides. I'm interested in the offending party and I'm interested in the pain, the terrible pain, the one who is hurt. For the offending party, the one who has done the harm, I would not suggest that even if you have given the best apology you know how to give, even if you have listened as well as you know how to listen, I'd still did not think that it is useful to ask for forgiveness, or particularly to demand forgiveness. I think it is more useful to say, "I wish I could go back in time and change what I did and my hope is that I can earn your trust or earn your forgiveness over time". And saying that your hope is that you could show by your new behavior that the person can feel safe and suits in the relationship again. It is very different than having the attitude. Well, I gave you a really good apology, you better forgive me now. And for the hurt party or the harmed party, the extremes are never useful. Like I have my deceased Aunt Annie with someone who would never forgive no matter what. Like if you didn't sent her a thank you note, you would be cut-off forever.

**YAEL TRUSCH.** Right! She doesn't sounds nice.

**HARRIET LERNER.** She was a person who practiced a radical unforgiveness and that is not useful. The other extreme that we all hold hands and sing Kumbaya and forgive. We can forgive any shame, is also when it is in the extreme not useful. So for example, I was working with someone and her father apologized for something very serious. He apologized for earlier sexual abuse, these occurred decades earlier. And it is very unusual that someone who commits that kind of violation will really own it. And he wanted to know if she forgave him, and she was able to say that she very much appreciated his courage in apologizing, that it made... it had a lot of meaning for her, made a big difference. And she honored that and she also said, what happened left me—I have so much left over anxiety from what happened and it is still with me and it is just not a matter of forgiveness.

I can't say I forgive you as if a 100% forgive you. I can say that I honor your apology and I'm very grateful that you showed this kind of courage. So I don't think it is our job to tell other people to forgive.

I don't think it is the job of a therapist, a religious leader, a parent; to say to another person you need to forgive. Or to say, no, there is no peace or healing without forgiveness, and if you don't forgive you are going to be mired down in bitterness and hate for the rest of your life. That's not true! And one last thing, there are many myths about forgiveness and I find with people who I work with, and I talked about this in the book, that it is important to recognize that forgiveness is not an all or nothing thing like being pregnant. Like either you embrace the offender or you exile the offender, either you forgive him or you don't.

The truth is that you can forgive the other person 95% or 2% or anywhere in between. So for example, I had a woman say to her husband speaking of affairs in my consulting room and he had done quite a magnificent job earning back her trust. He was the one who has had the affair and he did a wonderful job overtime making amends and listening to her pain and bringing it up himself, you know, saying how are you doing with it and... but in the end, what she said to him was, you know, because he asked her, he asked her in my consulting room, do you forgive me? And she thought about it and she said, I forgive you 90%. And he looked at her with curiosity and she said, I do forgive you for having the affair.

I will never forgive you for sleeping with her in our bed when I was off taking care of my mother. I do not forgive you for that. And that was okay! She forgave him 90% and they were able to move forward in the marriage with love and mutual respect. So there are many mixes about forgiveness that I think hurt us.

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, I remember reading that. It is so—shocked by it and really absorbing this idea that there are... you can forgive to a certain extent and it's okay if you didn't reach that other 10% like I don't forgive you fully and this is the part where I'm not forgiving. Although, I have to say, maybe I'm not less forgiving as her because I'm not sure if I would stay married but that's just... maybe I'm not so—

**Harriet Lerner:** Well, she stayed married. And I would also add that sometimes affairs occur in the best of narratives and depending on the unfaithful—the person who is unfaithful—depending on their commitment to avoid future temptations, and their commitment to their spouse, and their commitment to truth telling, and their ability to work hard on earning that trust and helping the hurt party to feel safe and to again—I'm all for that. I am not for people bolting out of the marriage at the first infidelity, but again, like you are saying, that this is very personal decision so I'm sharing my bias.

**Yael Trusch:** In this case we've mentioned the person who does apologize, not only did he apologize but like you said, he worked on the marriage and he demonstrated that he's committed to the marriage, he changed his behavior so on and so forth, which is all kind of hard. It's lumped into the apology, you

don't just apologize with words but you have to take the actions to demonstrate that you are really changing whatever the misbehavior, misdeed was, right? What if an apology is never forthcoming? You are the hurt party and the apology is not going to come or it was just that apology that's not an apology period, you know, they—how does a person find peace of mind? You mentioned before that holding on to the anger is never a healthy thing, but how do we do it, Harriet?

**HARRIET LERNER.** This anger is not healthy for me so I think today I will let go of all my anger and obsessive thinking because it's hurting me it's not hurting him. He's having a great day at the beach, I mean, it's not easy but of course that's the challenge. It's very important to understand that some people will never apologize. And the greater the harm they've done, the less likely that a heartfelt apology will ever be forthcoming, because in order to apologize for something serious, a person needs to have a solid platform of self-worth to stand on. And from this higher vantage point, the person can look out at the bad thing that they've done and they can apologize, they can get it because they see their mistakes is part of a much larger, more complex picture of who they are as a human being.

But some people and especially those who do serious harm stand on a small rickety platform of self worth. And they are not able to get the hurt they've caused, and they're not able to listen to our feelings or to orient towards reality because to do that threatens to flip them into an identity of worthlessness or shame, and nobody can do that. So the non apologizer walks on a tight rope of defensiveness, above huge canyon of low self esteem. So one thing that is very important to know if you're the hurt party and you're going to approach for example, your mom or your dad or family member or someone who really seriously hurt you.

It is very important to understand that the apology that of course you long for and you want, and I don't just mean I'm sorry. I mean that person is going to get it and they're going to care about your feelings, and they're going to say yes that happened, your feelings make sense. It is important to understand that, that apology will probably not be forthcoming and it has nothing to do with how much that person loves you or doesn't love you. It had to do with how much self-worth that person have, that platform of self-worth.

So what matters here is if you are, you're the hurt party and you are going to open up a conversation with someone who harmed you, speak because you need to speak, irrespective of the response that you get. Speak because speaking your own truths is the ground that you want to stand on, you want to hear the sound of your own voice saying what you really know and believe to be true. I say don't apologize if

you're doing it because you desperately need an apology, because the more serious the harm, the less likely that that will be forthcoming—not now, not ever.

**Yael Trusch:** WOW! Heavy stuff but so important while so powerful. All right, something lighter how do we teach our kids to be better at this? What are some tips you can give us to this who are parenting younger children and as we've already established this is a fundamental skill, what can you... what words of wisdom can you give us when we're parenting in terms of how to teach our children about saying I'm sorry and meaning it?

**Harriet Lerner:** Well, whether you're a parent or a teacher, there are two things to keep in mind. For example, you need to model the behavior that you want them to do. It's very important that you apologize to your children. Children have a very strong sense of justice, even very little children. They need to have their reality validated, they know when something is unfair, and they need to know that their parents have the maturity and the integrity and the courage to say I'm sorry, I was wrong, and your feelings make sense, I made a mistake.

The other second thing that parents need to do if you want to teach your child to apologize, is when they apologize even if you've asked for it, you know you said, you apologize to your brother. Once they apologized say, "Thank you for the apology. I really appreciate it." With no add on, because the number one reason that kids tell me that they hate to apologize is that there are all of these add-ons. Like, you said you're sorry to your brother, but you know next time, maybe I won't have to ask you to apologize. And hey, you know you're looking down at your feet and you don't sound like you really mean it, now you go to your room and you think about it and you come back and you give a sincere apology. And you know kids tell me they want to stuff their fingers in their ears and run away.

Now this is by sense very simple, you just say thank you for the apology, I really appreciate it. It's very difficult, I know, if you want to do those add-on. And there maybe need for a longer conversation but save it, save it. Don't go on in ways that make your kid want to stick their fingers in their ears and makes them feel what's the point? Like why should I apologize if it's followed by a criticism or a lecture? So those are my two pieces of advice if you want to teach children to apologize. Model the behavior and when they apologize, even if you think their body language, kind of voice, etc. is not sincere, say "Thank you for the apology, I really appreciate it". Save the add-on for a different conversation.

**Yael Trusch:** Love it. I so love it. You just made me realize, when you said about modeling the behavior. I loved those two tips about kids and you just reminded me not just about the add-on when they apologize, but I'm thinking here when we model the behavior ourselves, it just... something went

off of my head that you told me before to avoid the “but” and the “if’s”, and for some reason I think as parents we're very tempted to, yes apologize, if we need to apologize to our children, right? But then add-on, all the but... I had a crazy day at work, but your sibling was crying, but you know all those “buts” which maybe we won't do with other people but we're so comfortable and we probably do this with our spouses, too, right? But I think that's so key, right?

**HARRIET LERNER.** It is very key and the truth is that it is in our most important and enduring relationships that we are most likely to not be our best and most mature selves so there are some days I treat my dry cleaner better than I treat my husband, Steve. Family relationships fit there, they are intense, they are like lightning rods that absorb stress from every other source. So it takes a lot of motivation and intention to be your best self with a partner or your children or your mother.

**YAEL TRUSCH.** Right!

**HARRIET LERNER.** It takes motivation and intention and a real wish to bring your best self to the relationship even when the other person is being a jerk.

**YAEL TRUSCH.** Yeah. Absolutely! Okay. Harriet, let's switch gears a little bit too some Jewish topics. I know you are a proud Jewish woman and I'm curious, do you have any Jewish traditions that you either worked hard at home or you adopted yourself as an adult that you feel are... you hold on to them dearly. They are very, very, important to you? Anything you treasure?

**HARRIET LERNER.** The truth is that I was raised in... I grew up in Brooklyn. I'm now a Kansan. By the way, I live in Lawrence, Kansas and spend decades in Topeka, Kansas. And for my progressive Jewish parents, being Jewish meant being a Noble Prize Lauriat, being a good person, making a contribution to the world, never coming home with a B+.

I remember my father talking about his daughter's, the doctors, when he was pushing us in a stroller and me and my sister, we knew that we would get our PhD, while other kids in the neighborhood knew they have to go to high school, and there was no organized. . . They were not favorable to organized relation. And because I was growing up in flat bush I also just thought everybody was Jewish. And I didn't, as I've said I came from a very under ritualized family, so that is what I have absorbed. And interestingly when I moved from the coasts to Topeka, Kansas, where I went to work in the Mangrove Clinic with my husband, Steve.

And I had my two boys, that's when I had this sort of consciousness raising about being Jewish because my kids, Matt and Ben, were the only Jewish kids in their class in Topeka, often. And I was being invited

in, Steve and I would be invited into school around the holidays, and the teacher would say something like, "Matt's mom is here to tell us about the Jewish way to celebrate Christmas," I mean that's what I heard, you know! And so I don't know everything changed from it.

My boys both got bar mitzvah, my husband who's fluent in Hebrew and who have lived in Israel, he taught at the temple there, and I began to really appreciate and get in touch with the importance of a ritual and being Jewish. But to be perfectly honest, I just didn't get that. Growing up in Brooklyn, I just knew everyone was Jewish. I was Jewish. I knew my parents were doing yard work. We are all working on the Sabbath, the Shabbos and I knew that people can't like that but I had to move to Topeka, Kansas to get it.

**Yael Trusch.** I think that happens often that we need to move away a little bit from certain things and then start appreciating them or owning them in our own terms, I guess and becoming a parent very often does that. It kind of triggers those feelings. So great! What does Judaism mean to me? What do I want to pass on to my children? It just takes a new different meaning.

**Harriet Lerner.** That's so true. Right. Having children, in addition to being very humbling experience, every children raise the stakes on everything. So if I never had kids, I would not have given that kind of thought to what is being Jewish mean to me apart from getting an A+ or getting a MacArthur grant, or being a Nobel Prize Laureate. It needs to meet something else.

**Yael Trusch.** All right. Harriet, let's do some JLP fill in the blanks and this is something I do with all my guest. It's basically I give you an open ended question and you answer it with the first thing that comes to mind, okay?

**Harriet Lerner.** Okay.

**Yael Trusch.** All right. I'm Harriet Lerner. I feel most spiritual when?

**Harriet Lerner.** When I can be totally present with people and be discerning but without judgment.

**Yael Trusch.** WOW, I love that! That is a hard one Harriet, to be without judgment. If we all practice that a little bit more in our lives, the world would be a much better place.

**Harriet Lerner.** Uh-huh, yes it would.

**Yael Trusch.** My favorite mitzvah or one that I connect with the most is?

**HARRIET LERNER.** Is when I help people. When I really help people with the talents I have about relationships.

**Yael Trusch.** WOW, in love that! Harriet did you always know you want to go into this field?

**HARRIET LERNER.** I knew that I was going to be a Clinical Psychologist before I entered kindergarten and actually I never veered from that goal as bizarre as it is. That's the truth.

**Yael Trusch.** That is so rare! Was one of your parents in the field of Psychology?

**HARRIET LERNER.** No, both of my parents had high school education and it might had something to do with the fact that my mother put my sister and I into therapy before the age of three. Unlike other parents of today who thought that therapy was the last resort to the mentally ill, my progressive Jewish mother thought that therapy was a learning experience. And we were very poor growing up in Brooklyn, but my mother had this insurance plan where for \$1, we had Dr. Spock, it's her pediatrician, Dr. Benjamin Spock and we had a therapist for a dollar a session. So my mother thought that this was going to, I don't know, make us better and smarter people. So when we went, I could barely talk and we went to therapy. So that probably had something to do with my career choice.

**Yael Trusch.** My mother would have been very good friends with your mother because she still quotes Dr. Spock on me and she sent me to therapy when I was 5 and any question I have with my children she says, "Why don't you call the therapist?"

**HARRIET LERNER.** Right. In fact the way the researches that Jewish people are very over represented in therapy and interestingly underrepresented in hospital session but overrepresented in outpatient therapy. And I have a colleague, Monica Mcgoldrick who tells us a great story about a Jewish family that was like in therapy forever! Like they were already doing really well and they kept continuing in therapy. So the team got together and this is very rare but they got together and were trying to think to how tactfully tell the family that they could stop therapy that might be a good idea.

Usually, you know the team is getting together to help people stay in, help the family stay in therapy. So, Monica Mcgoldrick was telling me that... so they tell... the therapist tells this family all the gains has made, all the goals set met that really they have their resources to not need to come to therapy anymore and then there's this silence in the room and the father who's very thoughtful says "Well, we budget it in for the next year, so we'll stay one more year," and Monica, who is Irish was saying, this was like so bizarre to her because the Irish, commit this to make a generalization, would have to be sort of hanging

by their fingernails to go to a stranger like a therapist to get help. But that's what the father said. So we budget it in we'll stay another year.

**Yael Trusch:** Funny. That's so funny. Yeah, it's true. I keep thinking about my mother. She loves therapy. She wants us—I do have to say Harriet, I used to love my therapist when I was a kid. I had the best time. I was probably like that family. I probably would have just stayed there and therapy for a very long time so you know what? What else? It's helpful. All right. My fondest, sweetest Jewish memory is? And I know you say you didn't have such a ritualistic upbringing but is there anything cast of crusaders or I don't know. Is there something... or even with the birth of your children something sweet that you hold on to that is just something a Jewish memory that you have that is sweet to you?

**Harriet Lerner:** Their bar mitzvahs. My two boys, Matt and Ben, their bar mitzvahs and also the ... that we have now. That's what comes to mind.

**Yael Trusch:** Ah, yeah. Those experiences are very, very powerful. Something I wish I had learned about Judaism growing up is?

**Harriet Lerner:** Everything. I learned nothing. Well, that's not true. That's not true because what I have learned... I take that back! Can I take it back because—

**Yael Trusch:** Yes.

**Harriet Lerner:** What I learned to that contributing and being serious about my work was very useful and I actually one thing we certainly did learn about was the Holocaust and the terrific things that happened. The horrific... did I just say terrific? The horrific things that happened to our people and actually, also, and this is part of being Jewish for me was a tremendous emphasis on social justice which I've always associated with being Jewish so when I was very young in Brooklyn, I was on pick-up lines. I was part of the Civil Rights Movement. For me that was being Jewish.

**Yael Trusch:** Absolutely! Absolutely! Yeah. Many, many Jews were involved and social justice is a big one. It's a big one and what you said before about being a contributing member, somebody who really gives to society, that what you got from your family. That's a very powerful Jewish value. Very, very important and it's never too late to learn new things about our heritage so...

**Harriet Lerner:** Exactly! Exactly!

**Yael Trusch:** Thankfully, nowadays with the internet and books in every language, I mean we can gain so much knowledge that we didn't have at our fingertips when we were younger. Anyway, when I give charity, Tzedakah, I like to give too.

**Harriet Lerner:** That's a tough one because of course it changes but I like to give to local organizations that's a part of my community and that our supporting causes that I really believe in. As well as national organizations but it's important to me to be contributing to things happening in the community.

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, in your local... you know it's funny that you said that because there's an order to charity giving and I was just reviewing it with one of my kids and you first need to start with, ideally with your family members if they need and in your local, like you said your local community before you expand elsewhere. I mean everything is important but it's interesting that you said that you really value that giving locally and it's very important.

All right, finally, I am Harriet Lerner and today I am most grateful for?

**Harriet Lerner:** For having this interview with you. I love it.

**Yael Trusch:** Oh, that is so sweet! Harriet, you are so wonderful. I so appreciate that.

**Harriet Lerner:** And are you!

**Yael Trusch:** I so appreciate your time and this conversation was so insightful. Everybody, the book is, "*Why Won't You Apologize?: Healing Big Betrayals and Everyday Hurts*". And I encourage everybody to go out there and get it because as you heard, this is really good, deep stuff that we all need to practice and practice until we master it because we are going to be doing it for the rest of our lives, right?

**Harriet Lerner:** Exactly! Hopefully! Yes.

**Yael Trusch:** Harriet, I can't wait to hear what more is coming from you. I'm sure there's a lot of... what are you up to these days? Now that you—are you in book tour or what's happening now?

**Harriet Lerner:** I am actually doing a lot of talking about the book. A lot of key notes and lecturing and talking about the book around the country and of course it has become very timely because politically there have been so many public apologies for, for example, sexual harassment. That has gotten quite a bit of attention.

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, yeah. Very, very timely and any more books you think are coming in the pipeline? Any ideas? You don't need to reveal your ideas but tell me, do you think there's more coming?

**Harriet Lerner:** Absolutely.

**Yael Trusch:** Yay! I can't wait and I hope you come back and visit me again and share about that.

**Harriet Lerner:** Oh, I will.

**Yael Trusch:** Thank you so much, Harriet.

**Harriet Lerner:** Thank you.

[MUSIC]

**Yael Trusch:** Thanks to Harriet Lerner for stopping by. Her latest book is, "*Why Won't You Apologize?: Healing Big Betrayals and Everyday Hurts*". And she's on twitter @harrietlerner. All of this and more back at [www.jewishlatinprincess.com](http://www.jewishlatinprincess.com). I hope everybody had a wonderful Thanksgiving. I did. I was actually getting ready for my upcoming trip to Miami and I had a chance to really appreciate and be grateful for all the blessings in my life. And I took a peek at some of the latest reviews on iTunes. I am so truly grateful for those. Thank you so much. They mean the world to me. Stay tuned because we have a brilliant interview next week on Marital Intimacy. You won't want to miss that. Until then, have a wonderful week.

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