

JEWISH LATIN PRINCESS
ROCHIE PINSON, AUTHOR OF RISING, THE
BOOK OF CHALLAH
EPISODE 58

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, your host, Yael.

[Theme Music]

Yael Trusch: Ok let's talk challah, ladies, homemade or store bought? Do you make challah or do you buy it from a bakery? Is challah one of those things about Jewish life that still remains a mystery or that you think is out of your league? Is it even relevant to the modern Jewish woman? My guest today believes it is so, and she teaches us how in her book Rising, the Book of Challah. I'm Yael Trusch, your host, and you're listening to Jewish Latin Princess.

I have Rochie Pinson on the show. Rochie's new book, full of exquisite recipes, tips, how to's and the meaning behind it all, is so much more than a cookbook. And you don't have to believe me. Even Anthropology took notice of it; so much so that they're selling the book this holiday season. Did Rochie ever expect such success with this book? How was this book even born? Was Rochie always an amazing challah baker? Any miracles she's seen from women making challah? What is the mitzvah of challah? All of this with the delightful, Rochie Pinson.

[Theme Music]

Yael Trusch: Rochie Pinson, welcome to Jewish Latin Princess and congratulations on your book!

Rochie Pinson: Thank you, Yael and thank you for having me out here.

Yael Trusch: By the way, I pronounced your last name like with the Sephardic accent just because it's just such the way I think it is, but is it? How do you pronounce it?

Rochie Pinson: Well, actually it's interesting because it is originally a Spanish –

Yael Trusch: Right?

Rochie Pinson: Surname and I love how like the French say it like, *Pensone* which sound, oh, right!

Yael Trusch: Aha!

Rochie Pinson: Doesn't it sound so good?

Yael Trusch: It's beautiful.

Rochie Pinson: But if that—there was like a *Pinson* on the boat with Christopher Columbus.

Yael Trusch: Right.

Rochie Pinson: Yes! So I don't know. I mean it's my married name so I took it on but I like it. It sounds good in a lot of languages.

Yael Trusch: Right! But your husband is not Sephardic, right?

Rochie Pinson: No! He's not.

Yael Trusch: That's so funny.

ROCHIE PINSON: Alright! Descendant of Rashi

Yael Trusch: Ahh!

ROCHIE PINSON: His mother's mother was an Yitzacki.

Yael Trusch: Oh wow!

ROCHIE PINSON: So that's like the original Sephardic, I guess you know from Sepharad not, you know.

Yael Trusch: Right!

ROCHIE PINSON: Like the Arabic countries, yeah!

Yael Trusch: Oh, wow! Cool! Look! Who knew these little details? We're here to talk about Challah and your book but look how much we're learning. Alright! So your book is called *Rising, the Book of Challah: Recipes for challah and life from Rebbetzin Rochie's kitchen*. And Rochie, this beautiful book is so much more than a cookbook. Not only is this a book that has everything you ever wanted to know about baking challah in the literal sense of the word, numerous tips and recipes, but it also has extensive beautiful explanations on the meaning behind this age old mitzvah that God entrusted to Jewish women. So it's complete in a sense as it covers both the spiritual and the physical dimensions of the art of making challah.

But I understand you didn't—you're not much of a kitchen lover or baker, so take me to the early days like what took you to the art of challah? Was it something that you grew up doing as a child?

ROCHIE PINSON: Actually, very much not. So growing up—I actually grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia. My parents were sent there by the Rebbe as shluchim and they started the first Chabad center of Vancouver. So I was born there, and it was a small town and there was nothing kosher. So we made everything from scratch. The one

thing that my mother was able to get away with not making was challah.

Yael Trusch: What!?

Rochie Pinson: We had a bakery. That always somehow, and it was to her muscle because that was the one thing she claimed she couldn't do. She's tried early on in her marriage and there was some disaster that happened with it and it involved her mother-in-law from what I hear.

Yael Trusch: Oh...

Rochie Pinson: And she was traumatized and that was it for her. No more challah. So, I grew up thinking, challah grows in a bakery. And that was really at work, you know, every week it arrived so I didn't have to know any different.

Yael Trusch: Aha!

Rochie Pinson: And still—so when I got married, making challah wasn't even in my consciousness at all. And it actually ended up that when we were newly married, my husband and I were asked to go to Kobe, Japan. I think I have this story in the book a little bit, but for our listeners, I guess who are listening and haven't read the book, I'll share the story which is kind of how I got hooked on making challah.

So my husband and I went to Kobe Japan to lead the community there for the High Holiday season. They were without a Rabbi at that time. Now actually, there is a shaliach who lives in Kobe Japan. And there is more of an infrastructure but at that point, there wasn't much. So we went there and as we arrived there a few days before Rosh Hashanah and were speaking with the community leaders and in all my innocence I asked them where we're going to get the challah for the holidays? And you know the president of the shul gives me this funny look and he says, actually, you know in Kobe, the Rebbetzin makes the challah. So you know a little shock to my system. And I

called my mother frantically and she was frantic because she didn't know how to make challah.

Yael Trusch: Oh, my gosh!

Rochie Pinson: So she shared the recipe and we tried to figure it out together and—

Yael Trusch: The blind leading the blind.

Rochie Pinson: Yeah! Pretty much, pretty much. Although we had that old classic cookbook, the purple Spice And Spirit —

Yael Trusch: Yes!

Rochie Pinson: Which is still a classic somehow after all these years. . .

Yael Trusch: It is.

Rochie Pinson: And so she read it out loud and I wrote it down, this was way before we took a picture and sent it by text. So, it was an adventure and at the end of it, I had made some 50 challahs and that whole hug when I was serving those challahs to the community, it really satisfied a part of myself that I think I've never been expressed. I was just starting this journey of nurturing of being married, of giving of myself and I didn't have children yet, but this feeling of nurturing the community through this challah that I made was so powerful. Besides for that feeling of doing something that I never thought I could do.

Yael Trusch: Right.

Rochie Pinson: But just that and I had helped cook many other things throughout the holidays but there was nothing like the challah. Something it satisfied, something very deep inside me and I got it. That there was something about the challah, at that point I didn't know

what it was, but I knew when I came back to New York that somehow it was going to have to be a part of my life.

And in building a home, in building a family, I knew that challah was going to be a big part of it. I didn't know how big a part of it was going to be, it ended up being a very big part over the years, but I definitely knew that I had to make challah every week. And I did. So that's where my journey with challah sort of started.

Yael Trusch: So you go back to New York and despite the fact that challah is readily available and good challah, you know?

Rochie Pinson: Yes! Yeah!

Yael Trusch: You took it on to start this out.

Rochie Pinson: Yeah.

Yael Trusch: At what point does it become something that you want to share with the world?

Rochie Pinson: That's a good question. You know, it was a progression. First of all, I started realizing that there was something more to challah. It was really about finding challah like informing, the nurturing I was doing. And then after I graduated from college, I took communication design, I wanted to go into advertising and design and I got to fancy job in the City, and after a week of that job, coming home Friday and I didn't have time to bake challah. And at that moment, I understood that the challah baking was not just about baking the challah, it was representing my priorities and what I wanted from life and how I wanted to build my home.

At that point I had one child. And I quit the job, after that Shabbos. It was a really difficult Shabbos, realizing that I had to make a decision here. And at that point I realized that the challah baking represented how I wanted to nurture, how I wanted to build my home, what kind of awareness. I ended up actually working for good friends of mine who started a company very soon after, an advertising company and I

came on as the Art Director and worked for many years for them. I found a way to balance my creativity and being a mother and finding a way to make challah every week.

And later on we moved on ourselves and we started a community in downtown Brooklyn. And that's really where I started sharing this challah gift in my life. You know every Friday night we would have crowds of people and the one thing that the women were always going crazy for was the challah. And I think it wasn't so much even the taste, although I hoped it was good, it was really about that, wow, you made this yourself?

You could do this? How does happen? And then I would say to them, come Thursday and bake challah with me, and that's how it started. So, every week, I would have women coming to bake challah with me and then I started making it into a more official challah class and then there was waiting list that were going on for 6 months because I just couldn't—it was like over capacity and there was women who wouldn't come for anything else. Not for Rosh Hashanah, not for Yom Kippur, and to bake challah they would come, because it was just speaking to something very deep within women that was – there was a need to nurture and to give of ourselves in this way that we weren't addressing. And so that's how it started. As I was teaching these classes, I started sharing more and more about it.

Yael Trusch: Wow! That's the perfect segue to my question which is about women. I've heard often women tell me, very capable and accomplished women, even in the kitchen tell me—no! I'm just too scared of making challah. There's like a certain myth out there that challah is hard, difficult thing plus it's messy or it looks messy and that challah making is just not for the modern busy woman. Especially because we could buy it in the bakery, right? But so what do we say to that? What do you say to that?

Rochie Pinson: That's amazing, what you're saying and it's so true and that's really – that's one of my main reasons for writing this book. I mean one of my—well, not the reasons for writing, but one of the

things I was hoping to accomplish with this book was to make challah baking accessible.

And you're right! Every single place I travel to teach challah, in every group I speak to there are always a few women who will say that. And, you're right, sometimes they're accomplished bakers or cooks and they'll say no challah, that's where I draw the line. And what I'm trying to do in my book is really demystify this and show women that this is actually so much easier than you think. There are so many ways to fit challah making into our lives and not only is it not difficult, it's a mitzvah! So, it's the one thing that we cook or bake or make in our kitchens, that is a mitzvah.

And if you're going to make anything, let it be challah and I do these demos with women and I'm making challah and I said to them and there's always a woman saying, oh, that's too time consuming. I said how many salads did you make for Shabbos this week? How many different deserts? How many chicken recipes, you know? And they're like, oh, I make seven salads, I make thirteen dips, I make—so I said, you know, all that other stuff is lovely, but there's a one thing that's a mitzvah, that's really bringing the awareness of spirituality and godliness into your kitchen, and that's challah. So if you're going to make anything, start with the challah.

And, I think that message has really resonated with women all over. And people who've repeated that line back to me, and people who have been terrified of making challah, including my mother by the way.

Yael Trusch: Oh!

Roche Pinson: Who after 40 years, I sort of shamed her into it. It's my book, because after my first book came out, before the cookbook which was just sort of a book about challah where I wrote that she was scared of making challah, she was like—no, this is so embarrassing. I have to make challah. So I showed her, we did it together, and since then she makes it every single week, and her challah rivals mine. It's amazing.

Yael Trusch: Wow!

Rochie Pinson: So I always tell that to the women I'm teaching that it's never too late. And even if you have something in your head that this is something that you can't do, you can revisit that. Maybe you can.

Yael Trusch: Right! So you talked about the mitzvah, but just to clarify for people. The mitzvah is really is in the act of hafrashat challah and taking that small portion of the dough. And I've also heard, and maybe tell me if you've heard this before and how to address it, I've had people write in how much they love making challah, so the opposite of what I said before—

Rochie Pinson: Right.

Yael Trusch: And they tell me that they've taken courses with this French baker and that French—I don't know what—and they talked to me —

Rochie Pinson: Right.

Yael Trusch: About all these details, the temperature of the oven, the temperature of the dough and I'm flipping because I know I'm not that particular, right?

Rochie Pinson: Many are, yeah!

Yael Trusch: And then, then I asked them about like the mitzvah and either they didn't know about it or they just tell me—well, I don't want to make so much, we're only two at home, or whatever. And I'm like—oh no! But you're missing out on like, like you're almost there! You're missing out on the spiritual component.

Rochie Pinson: Yes, yes! It's true! The essence of the mitzvah of challah is, I mean that's where the word challah comes from, and it's the gift that we gave. We took off a piece from our dough and gave it to the priest in the temple. And when we do that today, that's where

we draw down the awareness of godliness and the awareness that the source of our sustenance. So that's mitzvah is really the mitzvah of challah.

Yael Trusch: Right.

Rochie Pinson: But even when people don't take the challah, even though I always encourage and I give so many different ways to make that accessible for a person, freezing techniques, so, even if you only make a full batch one's a month and then you can freeze it and have it for the month. And even if it's only once a year, then you're going to separate do that, between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, that's the time to do it. But even with all of that, what I'm trying to bring is, that even the process of making challah holds a lot of potential for connection.

Yael Trusch: Tell us.

Rochie Pinson: And so, it's not just about the mitzvah even though that's sort of the peak experience and without it, you're definitely missing a very important component. Like, but every step in the process of making challah is really powerful. And there are so many lessons in the challah that I bring in my book. That some of them were like to the actual mitzvah of separating the dough, but some of them are just lessons that we learn from the making of the dough and from the serving of the challah. And all of it is really part of the experience.

So even though, I'm always encouraging women to make the blessing and take a piece off because that's the mitzvah, if someone tells me I just make a little bit and I'm like, good for you. Because when our house smells like challah on Friday, that makes it a home, that makes it a home of Shabbos, that makes it a home with an awareness of spirituality and meaning. So it's a great start. It's a great start and I know so many people who started off baking challah and ended up keeping Shabbat and all the mitzvah because of that. So, it's a wonderful gateway into bringing godliness into your home.

Yael Trusch: Right.

ROCHIE PINSON: And even just the process of making the challah and serving it Friday night at Shabbos day is already an amazing step in the right direction.

Yael Trusch: So you mentioned already that there are so many deeper meanings and so much that we can learn from something that seems so mundane, baking bread, right? And you cover so much of these in your beautiful book, but can you share some thoughts, some ideas that we could integrate later this week as we go into our kitchens into the act of making challah? Just some ideas that we could keep in mind.

ROCHIE PINSON: Absolutely! Absolutely! One of the things that I find so beautiful about the mitzvah of challah, is that we take off the piece of challah when the dough is in the process of becoming the bread, of becoming challah, before it takes shape and form, and I always find that that's such an important lesson especially today in our hyper result-oriented society, that we're just – we don't have patience anymore and we've forgotten the art of waiting, and giving something time to become.

And it's a very male-oriented world in that way where we kind of just expect results and we expect them right now. But nurturing and the work of the woman is really very frustrating if that's our mode of thinking, if that's expectations, because the work we do as woman is very often repetitive. The work of nurturing is constantly doing the same thing over and over again. We wash the dish and then they eat on it again.

Yael Trusch: Right.

ROCHIE PINSON: We make the bed and they go back to sleep again. And we comfort them and then the next minute they're crying again about something else or the same thing. And just to—if we're living in this state of expectation of immediate results, and that it's only about the results, then we're missing out on the magic in the moment. And the potential that's within the process. And I think that as women, if we can be present within the process, rather than waiting for something to happen, that's when we can really be joyful in our work

and love what we are doing and give it the best of ourselves to it. So taking off the piece of dough and not waiting 'til it's a finished product, really reminds us to be present in the process and not simply be waiting for results.

Yael Trusch: This is such a powerful lesson for so many areas of our lives. I mean our work and even parenting, right? Parenting is something we're doing and we don't know what's the result's going to be, right? Or immersed in it—

Rochie Pinson: We can't know. We can't know, absolutely!

Yael Trusch: How beautiful. Rochie, I know in your book you did mention miracles that even though you might be aware that one could achieve with them to a person doing the mitzvah or taking on the mitzvah, taking challah and so have revealed miracles in their lives, but still, you didn't share those in the book intentionally, could you still share one of those powerful stories with us anything that stands out that you say, wow! Either personal or...

Rochie Pinson: Yes! Yes, so many. So many really. I see so many miracles that was a very conscious decision not to put miracle stories in because I really wanted each person to find their connection. But I have seen incredible stories happening. I'll tell you one where we did a challah bake that was organized especially for a woman who was very ill and she was in a comma. She had such an incredible circle of friends and they called me up and said, can we put together—will you come if we get together 40 women and we want to pray for her? And I said, absolutely!

And we went, it was in Westchester and the power in the room was just palpable, the 40 women. And each person made a full dough so that every person can make the bracha and the energy in the room was so powerful and the times that I've experienced these miracles openly, you could feel the energy in the room. You could know. You just knew that we were accomplishing something very big at that moment.

It's like the moment of conception, the moment we're like, you knew you're drawing down something into this world that is larger than yourself. And this particular time, we were all taking the challah together making the bracha, I spoke to the women at length of how we accomplished drawing down the blessing when we take the challah and I still got chills when I speak about this because we had just finished taking the challah, all of us making the blessing together, and the woman who was the organizer, got a phone call from this woman who was ill from her daughter that her mother just opened her eyes –

Yael Trusch: Huh!

Rochie Pinson: And sat up at that moment. And she didn't even know about the challah bake. She didn't know what we were doing for her mom. And she called to share that her mom just opened her eyes and sat up. So, it was like –

Yael Trusch: Wow!

Rochie Pinson: You can imagine what happened in that room. It was just so intense.

Yael Trusch: Wow!

Rochie Pinson: And you know that's just one story. I've had stories where there was multiple people in the room who are praying for different things, and nine months later, I get invited to a bris I get – it's just it's pretty incredible. It's really amazing and what I found even more than the power of praying for ourselves? When we're making challah, it's the power that we have for praying for another person and that's when I've seen the biggest miracles really happen, is when everybody is, you know, when a person turns to the person next to them and says, can I pray for you? What healing do you need? What are you missing in your life? And those prayers, I find, those are the most powerful.

Yael Trusch: Yes, because I guess it's connected also in a sense to this – the idea behind challah where we're giving to another, right?

Rochie Pinson: Yes!

Yael Trusch: And the most—the greatest form of giving is giving of our prayers.

Rochie Pinson: Yeah. Absolutely!

Yael Trusch: Yeah, it's incredibly powerful! Rochie, your book is exquisite. Not just in the contents, the explanations, the recipes, but let's talk about lay-out and photography, please. I mean –

Rochie Pinson: Well, yeah.

Yael Trusch: I'm guessing the fact that it's, should I say it, that it's going to be sold in a place like Anthropology very soon.

Rochie Pinson: Yes, yes, I know. Yes, I know. I'm still pinching myself.

Yael Trusch: Right? So talk to us first, before we even get to how does one get to anthropology, talk to us about that process of creating something so beautiful. Yeah! Tell me.

Rochie Pinson: Oh, my goodness! Well, you know what? I had a vision from the beginning. And I knew—I mean, the reason it's so beautiful, well, first of all, I'm an artist. So if it's something I'm going to make, I have to love it. As a graphic designer, I work for a lot of clients and I have to do their vision. So this was my chance to create something that was entirely my vision and my taste, just do something that I love. And it was – I mean it was the hardest thing I ever did, absolutely!

But it was also so incredibly rewarding to be able to follow through on my own vision from beginning to end. Every step of the process, those really—I had a very clear vision and part of the reason that I wanted it to be so gorgeous and it's being realized with Anthropology wanting to carry it, is that, I wanted this to be something that every person will want to have in their home not just—

Yael Trusch: Yes.

Rochie Pinson: A person who already keeps Shabbos, who already makes challah. I wanted this to be something that we almost slipped in the spirituality sort of undetected, under the radar.

Yael Trusch: Yes.

Rochie Pinson: And then you open it up and it's kind of this bonus. But you get it because it's so beautiful and you want to give it as a gift, and you'd even want to keep it on your coffee table which I keep hearing from people that was like the one comment that I get from everybody is – This is not a cookbook, it's a coffee table book. And really, that was the intention. I wanted it to be something people would be proud to display in their home or to give as a gift, and then they would open it up and discover something that they hadn't even expected. That was the reason I felt like it had to be so pretty.

Yael Trusch: It is. It is absolutely gorgeous. So when you say you had a vision, did you also have—your photography is very particular and I know that you brought in somebody very particular from I think Portugal or something?

Rochie Pinson: Yes. I know I'm a little crazy. Once I get something in my head, forget about it.

Yael Trusch: So you wanted that style with the dark backgrounds that was your vision?

ROCHIE PINSON: Yeah. I really wanted to convey sort of the warmth and this feeling of a home. That feeling that challah gives you, so I knew right away from the beginning that this was going to be a book that was going to have that sort of dark warm background.

Yael Trusch: Yeah.

ROCHIE PINSON: A lot of the stuff right now is very white and very fresh looking which I love in terms of design. But this is not salad. This is—although I probably would have gained less weight if I wrote a cookbook on salads, but we won't go there. There's a look and then of course, the wonders of the internet and having being able to follow photographers that I admire and somehow every single time I would see a photo that was exactly my vision, it was always the same woman.

Yael Trusch: Aha!

ROCHIE PINSON: It was always this woman Monica Pinto. The wonders of today, you can just figure out who is this woman and I looked her up and I write to her and I say, any chance, I mean this sounds crazy—would you come to New York and do my book? It was just amazing because how everything came together. First of all, her last name Pinto.

Yael Trusch: Yeah.

ROCHIE PINSON: In a way, I said to her. You're Jewish because it is a very Sephardic Jewish last name. And she said, you know I'm not but I think my ancestors are Jewish. And I keep getting like information about my ancestor and of course we know that in Portugal and in Spain for that matter, most of the population has Jewish ancestry.

Yael Trusch: Yes.

ROCHIE PINSON: There are many, many, many people who are Jewish and don't know it. She told me she was always so fascinated by Judaism, doesn't know why and she always wants to know more. So for her, this wasn't just about coming to shoot the pictures, it was about learning about the Jewish tradition that she was always curious about. And it was such a learning experience for both of us. Every photo, why do we need salt? Why are there two challahs? What's the Kiddush cup? Why do we cover the challahs? What is Shabbos? We spoke more than we took pictures, let me tell you.

YAEL: Wow!

ROCHIE PINSON: Amazing! It was such a great experience.

YAEL TRUSCH: Wow! So how long did the whole project take from beginning to end?

ROCHIE PINSON: I mean the actual working on it all the time, about two years. Yeah. For two years I was pretty much in labor with this book.

YAEL TRUSCH: Wow!

ROCHIE PINSON: Yeah.

YAEL TRUSCH: I just want to also mention to readers that again, you're a Graphic Designer, you're a head of a community, you're a Shlucha and your mother, and this is all taking place. Give us some tips for—

ROCHIE PINSON: Oh, I just know this for myself that the—and I think this is the slogan we're all familiar with, right? If you have something you need to get it done, you give it to somebody busy.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes.

ROCHIE PINSON: I know this for myself. I accomplished the most, the busier I am. Time is stretchy. Time is really flexible and the more we have to do, the more we somehow accomplish.

Yael Trusch: Yes, I like it. Like our dear Rebbe said, once I believe when something is worth doing, it's worth doing now.

ROCHIE PINSON: Yeah, that is absolutely the key. Absolutely, when there's something worth doing, you do it. Procrastination is really our enemy, so, yeah. And of course, when you're passionate about something, you find the time for it, that, you know?

Yael Trusch: Right! We make the time for what's priority and important. Rochie, how did the book even get to Anthropology? How did they hear about it? Did you go to them? How did it happen?

ROCHIE PINSON: I actually had the good fortune of having a friend. Actually, she is a baalei teshuvah who was part of our community and very close with her, she's just a complete neshama and I actually made her shidduch and I'm very closed with her and she worked for Anthropology for a little bit.

Yael Trusch: Oh, wow.

ROCHIE PINSON: When the book came out, she said you know this has to be in Anthropology. And I said yeah, but, how is that going to happen?

Yael Trusch: Yeah.

ROCHIE PINSON: I actually happen to have some friends who wrote cookbooks and they had told me that they tried to get it into the Anthropology and it's impossible. They only carry maybe five cookbooks at a time, and they're very specific, and she said well, I still have some contacts there so let's send them a book and see.

So, I didn't even have expectations. We sent it off and I get a phone call from the woman who's in charge of the book buying and she said, you know, the woman who got the book brought it over to my desk and let me look at it but she didn't let me take it, because she said she wants it. And no one's got to have it.

Yael Trusch: That's a good sign.

Rochie Pinson: She said I would love to have a deeper look at this but I don't even have a copy. So, that was the first good sign. So I sent her two. I said one is for the office and one you get to take home and she just fell in love with it. She said, we don't usually do single subject cookbooks or but she said, this is just—we have to carry this. It's very exciting, we're going to be setting up meetings, God willing, in the summer because they're planning to carry it for the next holiday season.

Yael Trusch: How beautiful.

Rochie Pinson: So that'll be the Chanukkah of 2018-2019.

Yael Trusch: How beautiful. I just think it's such a big Kiddush Hashem that people are going to be exposed to learning about this deeper mitzvah in a place where they are.

Rochie Pinson: Yes!

Yael Trusch: You're bringing them right where they are.

Rochie Pinson: You know, Yael, I have to tell you something which is an amazing thing. This is, I feel how when you do something from the heart and for a higher purpose –

Yael Trusch: Purpose, yes.

Rochie Pinson: That Hashem has your back and I feel like, I started off the book, the first introductory page is a message from the Lubavitcher Rebbe actually, from a speech that he gave

to the women, where he spoke about the idea of this mitzvah of challah and how represents our lives and how we approach everything in our lives. And in sort of shopping around this book to publishers, earlier on the stage, I wasn't sure if I should include that page. There was a part of me that was saying, the secular world, how are they going to—maybe I should bury it somewhere on the book or maybe I should leave it out when I'm shopping the book around, you know? There was that little gate to her that part of me that thought that maybe I should take it out, it's not good PR for the book.

I didn't listen to that voice, I kept it in and I said, if I'm doing it for a higher purpose, then eventually, I feel like I'll see the blessings. And you know, publishers didn't believe in the book, I have to say in the beginning.

Yael Trusch: Really!

Rochie Pinson: Yes, and I marketed it to a bunch of different—I shopped it around and everyone said, who's going to be interested in this? The market is too small, there's no end. I didn't let them get to me. I knew I had the vision, I knew what this could do and I just plowed ahead. I was very encouraged by the story of J.K. Rowling who wrote Harry Potter.

Yael Trusch: Yes.

Rochie Pinson: I've heard her story where she was fully rejected by 26 publishers before Harry Potter came out. So I said, if they didn't see the promise in something that blew up like that, I don't have to take to heart these rejections. And I kept going for it. At the end of the day, I went with Feldheim, who believed in the project. I was very blessed that they really allowed me to keep my vision exactly as I wanted it. And when Anthropology said, we want this book exactly how it is, there's no caveat, there's no—please remove the page where people are going to open it and there's a message from the Rebbe on the first page. I realized that, that

was a sign to me that when you do something with a higher intention, and you stick to your principles, it pays off in the end.

Yael Trusch: I believe it really does. How beautiful, Rochie. This is so inspiring. Rochie, so what's next? The book is out. You're speaking all over. You're still writing your blog, www.therisinglife.net, right?

Rochie Pinson: Yes. I'm probably not as good about it as I should be. I find it when I write, I have to be in writing mode.

Yael Trusch: Yeah. Believe me I know.

Rochie Pinson: It's a very different part of the brain, right?

Yael Trusch: Yes.

Rochie Pinson: I'm also an artist. For me to go back and forth, is really tricky. I find that it's hard for me to switch and I'm still learning on how to do that, so I'm not writing as much as I would like to be but I'm figuring it out as I go along, that's life. We're learning as we go.

Yael Trusch: In your speaking, so if people want to reach you for speaking engagements they could find you there in your blog, right?

Rochie Pinson: Yeah, www.therisinglife.net. I'm also on Instagram, @rochiepinson, and on Facebook, so there are endless ways to find me and I love hearing from people. Hearing peoples stories from challah, people send me their photos of the challah that they made, inspired by my book and I get so much nachas, I feel like all that work and everything that was put into this, just every time I hear it, it's all worth it.

Yael Trusch: You know, I have to share with you that I already tried your classic challah recipe, and I attribute you. I give you credit for my ability to now braid a six braid challah. You don't know how many years I've tried—

ROCHIE PINSON: Yeah?

YAEL TRUSCH: And I gave it up even with the great instruction on the purple cook book, Spice and Spirit, I just could never master it. And I don't know what you did there but it works now on a minute. I'm on it.

ROCHIE PINSON: Oh, you're making me so happy! That is amazing!

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes!

ROCHIE PINSON: That is absolutely amazing to hear.

YAEL TRUSCH: And, you should know that I'm a bit of a challah snob to the point—

ROCHIE PINSON: Oh?

YAEL TRUSCH: That my family was like—what? You made somebody else's challah? Like, I don't like – no guys, I'm so excited about this challah. I know challah. This is going to be really good challah. And they were like, oh, mommy this is really so good. My husband was so impressed. He's like, first of all we couldn't believe that you're trying somebody else's challah because you're so picky about your challah.

ROCHIE PINSON: That's a big move! Yeah! Challah is very personal. It's true.

YAEL TRUSCH: I absolutely fell in love with it. My family is in love with it and that's my new classic one.

ROCHIE PINSON: I'm so happy to hear that and really it's true. I don't know what it is about this recipe. It's really perfection. I went through hundreds of recipes over the years because I was determined and this one is – there's just—it just never goes wrong, somehow.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes. And I have one like that. I've advertised and given to women many times my no-fail challah recipe.

ROCHIE PINSON: Yes!

Yael Trusch: That's when my family was like, what? You're doing her challah? Yeah! I know guys, this is going to be really good. It is.

Rochie Pinson: It is. Oh, my gosh! Wow! That's a big one. That's something that one Jewish publisher actually told me when I showed them the book. They said, women have been making the same challah recipe their whole lives; it's their mother's recipe, their grandmother's recipe, whatever it might be they're connected to it. They're not going to open a challah cookbook and try something new. And I said, some people will.

Yael Trusch: Yes.

Rochie Pinson: I said, there are people who will.

Yael: Even challah snobs like me.

Rochie Pinson: Even a challah snobs. If you're going to be a snub, be a challah snob totally.

Yael Trusch: Exactly. Oh, Rochie, you've been great. Let's wrap it up with some JLP fill in the blanks and this is something I do with all my guests. It's the part of the show where I'm going to give you some open-ended sentences, and you're going to fill them with whatever first thing comes to mind.

Rochie Pinson: Ooh, this sounds like fun!

Yael Trusch: Yes.

Rochie Pinson: Okay!

Yael Trusch: Alright.

Rochie Pinson: I'm up for it.

Yael Trusch: I'm Rochie Pinson and I feel most spiritual when?

Rochie Pinson: I'm making in challah.

Yael Trusch: I could have guessed that one.

Rochie Pinson: That was an easy one.

Yael Trusch: And this one is similar but you could choose something else if you want to. My favorite mitzvah or one I feel most connected with is?

Rochie Pinson: Actually, this one is different. It's mikveh.

Yael Trusch: Wow!

Rochie Pinson: I don't know. People don't do that.

Yael Trusch: No, but I've had several guests already told me that, and I think that is so powerful because that is a hard mitzvah.

Rochie Pinson: It's the best mitzvah. I know I wrote a book on challah, and my whole thing is challah and but also teach a lot of women about mikveh. I teach a lot of brides, and actually as soon as we hang up from this call, I'm actually going to a first class with the new bride.

Yael Trusch: Oh.

Rochie Pinson: So that's the next thing I'm going to be speaking about and I can't wait. I love speaking about mikveh. I love the mikveh. It's – I'm passionate about that mitzvah, so there you go.

Yael Trusch: How beautiful. My fondest sweetest Jewish memory is?

Rochie Pinson: Oh, I only get one?

Yael: Oh, indulge us, please!

Rochie Pinson: I don't know what you know, there's everything in life is Jewish but I think I would have to say, I haven't married off any children yet but my son's bar mitzvahs were very, very, powerful moments in my life. Unexpectedly, I haven't thought that it was going to be such a big deal but when they get called up to the Torah and that moment of transition was very, very, powerful.

Yael Trusch: How many boys do you have?

Rochie Pinson: I have three boys, now two of them had been bar mitzvah and one is next year.

Yael Trusch: Oh, I have one coming up also next year.

ROCHIE PINSON: Oh, really? What's his birthday?

Yael Trusch: His birthday is the 29th of the month of Tevet.

ROCHIE PINSON: Okay. So mine is Sivan, so yours going to be a little bit before mine.

Yael Trusch: A little bit before yours, yes, and he's my oldest so—

ROCHIE PINSON: Oh that's sweet. Mine is my youngest.

Yael Trusch: Oh, your baby. I've been told already that I'm not allowed to cry. Meanwhile, I've been crying since the day he turned 12, because—

ROCHIE PINSON: Okay.

Yael Trusch: I can't believe that this is like happening.

ROCHIE PINSON: You'll cry, you'll cry and it's amazing. It's just the power that we have in our traditions, that that moment they change, you know? How when you cut their hair three years old like you see that transition—

Yael Trusch: Yes.

ROCHE: When they become bar mitzvah, something changes in them, and it's so powerful, and when you see it, it's really good bye to this little baby. They're becoming man. It's very emotional. It's very beautiful.

Yael Trusch: Yes. Something I wished I had learned about Judaism growing up?

ROCHIE PINSON: I would say that I've wished to make – that I learned to make challah, but no, I'm so happy that I discovered it when I did, otherwise I would have taken it for granted. What do I wish I had learned about Judaism? I mean I grew up feel like my learning of Judaism has been a process throughout my life. Having grown up being observant, there were many things that I took for granted or didn't explore when I was younger.

Yael Trusch: Right.

ROCHIE PINSON: And definitely, rediscovering the mitzvah as you get older and having to teach it to other people, really makes you have to think about it, in a new way and understand it differently.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes.

ROCHIE PINSON: That's been a real joy in my life is just connecting, reconnecting to the mitzvah in a new way and finding my own personal connection to the mitzvah. Not just because it's how I was raised, but because now it's who I am. So it's been all the mitzvah had been a journey for me to rediscover.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yeah, and isn't that again connected to what we were talking about before, this idea of behind the challah, of giving. When we teach, we gain so much more. We really—right?

ROCHIE PINSON: Right.

YAEL TRUSCH: When we're giving to others, but really were gaining so much as teachers ourselves.

ROCHIE PINSON: A hundred percent that's so much a part of my message. Also, the idea when we take off from that piece of challah, when we take off from that dough, and the dough looks perfect in a whole, but it's not whole until we remove a piece from it.

YAEL: Exactly.

ROCHIE PINSON: And that lesson that we really come into our own fullness, when we give of ourselves.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes. When I give Tzedakah, I like to give to?

ROCHIE PINSON: A person.

YAEL TRUSCH: Like an individual that you know is in need?

ROCHIE PINSON: I like to give personally, yeah, not to sort of a nameless faceless, but I love to be able to give Tzedakah in a way that feels personal.

YAEL TRUSCH: And finally, I'm Rochie Pinson and today I am most grateful for?

ROCHIE PINSON: Oh, my goodness! I'm most grateful to be alive and still have passion for this mitzvah of challah, even after all this talking about it and teaching about it, making so many! I'm grateful that I'm still in love with it, and still get excited about it.

Yael TRUSCH: On that note, tell us, how many challahs did you have to bake to get into these pictures for this book?

ROCHIE PINSON: Many, many, many.

Yael TRUSCH: Challahs, yeah.

ROCHIE PINSON: Yeah. I think that I actually stole the freezers space from almost everybody I knew.

Yael TRUSCH: Oh, that's funny.

ROCHIE PINSON: So I had freezers like I had to have lists of which freezers, which challahs were in?

Yael TRUSCH: Oh, my gosh!

ROCHIE PINSON: It was really, it was an interesting project.

Yael TRUSCH: What a project! What a great project! Everyone the book is, Rising, the Book of Challah, and you can purchase it on Amazon, and again it will be sold at Anthropology in the fall, but trust me, you don't want to wait for that. You want to get your copy now.

And it gets better because Rochie and I want to gift one of you, dear listeners, a copy of Risings, so we have a giveaway that we're announcing today on www.jewishlatinprincess.com the blog and here on this podcast, as well as in social media, so follow the instructions there, pronto! To be entered into a raffle to win your own copy of Rising, the book of Challah. And if you would like Rochie to come speak to your community or do a challah workshop, be in touch with her at the www.risinglife.net. Rochie, thank you so much. This was amazing!

ROCHIE PINSON: Thank you, Yael! This was so much fun.

Yael TRUSCH: I know, I had a great time.

ROCHIE PINSON: And I loved connecting with you.

Yael Trusch: I loved it and I can't wait to get into my kitchen and make my challah for this week! Thank you.

Rochie Pinson: Yes! It's going to be so exciting. And God willing, we'll meet each other in person one day.

Yael Trusch: Yes.

[Theme Music]

Yael Trusch: Thanks to Rochie Pinson for stopping by and sharing with us some of the lessons that she shared in this beautiful book. Again the book is *Rising, the Book of Challah: Recipes for challah and life from Rebbetzin Rochie's Kitchen*.

You can get your copy on Amazon, but wait! Also, why don't you enter on our give away? Head over to www.jewishlatinprincess.com to find instructions to be entered on the giveaway, one of you could win a copy of this beautiful book. Trust me you will love it!

In fact, I think everyone should have two copies; one on our coffee tables and then one in our kitchens. That's what I think I'm going to do because I have it, I devoured it, and then I've been using in my kitchen and then it goes back to my coffee table and in fact, when I put it back in my kitchen, I don't want it to get ruined or dirty, so I think I need to get myself another copy. It is just wonderful! So head over to www.jewishlatinprincess.com and follow instructions to enter. I can't wait to see who gets a copy of the book.

I am headed to New Jersey to speak about the Jewish Home. My lecture, *Mi casa es Su casa: Kabbalah of the Home*. So, I'll definitely be sharing with the ladies some of what I learned here from Rochie and from Rochie's book. If you'd like to have me speak to your Jewish community, send me an email at yael@jewishlatinprincess.com.

Thanks for being here, everyone. Have a great week.

[Theme Music]

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