

JEWISH LATIN PRINCESS
CHAVIE BRUK, CO-DIRECTOR OF CHABAD-
LUBAVICH OF MONTANA ON THE GIFT OF
ADOPTIO&RAISING AN UNCONVENTIONAL
FAMILY
EPISODE 62

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.

Yael Trusch: You're listening to Jewish Latin Princess, I'm Yael Trusch your host, welcome to the show. Today's interview takes the concept of parenting, intentional parenting to a whole new level. I'm talking to Chavie Bruk.

Chavie is the co-director of Chabad-Lubavich of Montana in Bozeman, Montana, a remote town with a very small Jewish population. But that's not why I brought her to the show, although, yes, that is incredible and admirable, I brought her to the show because after facing the challenge of infertility, Chavie and her husband are now a parents to five adopted children. But it doesn't just end there. The circumstances around each of these children's adoption is more than unique and miraculous, and Chavie's display of faith, perseverance and intentionality is exceptional and something that you have to listen for yourselves.

Just to name one of the incredible circumstances that you will hear about today, Chavie's 7-year old daughter has GLUT-1 Deficiency, a disorder so rare that she's the only one in the State of Montana to have it. I had the

pleasure of listening to Chavie tell her story a number of years ago on a women's convention and I knew then that I wanted to hear more from Chavie, and that I wanted to share her with all of you in the podcast eventually.

So here we are today. This episode is not just for women considering adoption or facing infertility, this episode is for everyone. We all have a struggle, we all face challenges... everyone can learn the lessons that Chavie shares with us today. Get ready because this is authentic, real, and just absolutely inspiring.

Here's Chavie Bruk.

[THEME MUSIC]

YAEL TRUSCH: Chavie Bruk, welcome to Jewish Latin Princess, it's so great to connect with you.

CHAVIE BRUK: Thanks it's really an honor to be here.

YAEL TRUSCH: Chavie, I heard you a couple of years ago, I heard your incredible story of faith and perseverance raising your beautiful large family in Montana, and I remember at that point being so inspired and this podcast was just a thing that I was thinking of launching one day, but I just had you in my mind for the longest time that I wanted to have this conversation.

But first, before we even go to your family, to you and your husband, let's give a little backdrop on some context to listeners about where you live because you're out in Bozeman, Montana, which is not your average Jewish community. So before we explore the impact that you've had there, tell us what is Jewish like there?

CHAVIE BRUK: Bozeman, Montana, is a small town in the Wild West and it is a beautiful town. We're in the mountains and it is just gorgeous. I mean, we have like nine months of winter a year so that can get a little difficult, but it is a wonderful family oriented place, great place to raise a family and it is

kind of out of the way like you really have to work hard to get here, but it's beautiful and Bozeman –

YAEL TRUSCH: How many Jewish families live there?

CHAVIE BRUK: I can't give you an exact number, but we... our estimate is between five and six hundred Jewish households, which means at least one person in the house is Jewish. There is like a 99% intermarriage rate here in Bozeman Montana.

Yeah. I mean considering the population size of Bozeman, it is a really nice amount of Jewish families.

YAEL TRUSCH: And you moved there over ten years ago, right?

CHAVIE BRUK: Yes, we moved eleven years ago in 2007 and yeah, we've been here eleven years and we love it.

YAEL TRUSCH: Amazing! Amazing! What's the closest large City that you get there?

CHAVIE BRUK: Okay, that's a good question, so larger cities would be for example Salt Lake City. Salt Lake City, Utah is about a seven hour drive. Denver, Colorado, is about a ten-hour drive.

YAEL TRUSCH: Oh, wow.

CHAVIE BRUK: And Seattle, Washington, is about a ten hour drive. So those are our three major cities that are around us.

YAEL TRUSCH: Okay, alright. So that gives us a little context of Jewish life and I'm presuming that before you and your husband got there and you said that there's such a high intermarriage rate, I mean what kind of Jewish life was happening? I'm assuming there wasn't much going on at least publicly.

CHAVIE BRUK: Yeah. And there's a reformed temple in Bozeman. They were meeting, they had like a travelling Rabbi and they would kind of have

once a month or even less often some kind of gathering. But that's kind of really it that was going on here.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right, right. So you have five children, Kana Hara five children that you and your husband adopted, and I want to go through those stories of adoption and because each of those circumstances just have so many lessons and divine providence and just incredible miracles around them. But let's take us back in time a little bit to the early days of your marriage and when the reality that adoption might be a possibility because going the natural route didn't look like what was happening.

YAEL TRUSCH: Correct.

YAEL TRUSCH: Take us back to those painful moments of realization.

CHAVIE BRUK: Okay. So, we've got married in March of 2006 and we moved out to Bozeman in March in 2007, we moved a day after our anniversary and as expected, you get married, you have this kind of vision of how your life is going to be, you don't have many siblings and I always wanted a big family that was just kind of my plan.

And as time went on and it wasn't happening like I thought it was going to and we started delving into that world of checking everything out, and all the test, and all the doctors and going to that route of infertility and that was a year or so of doing all those thing and then we kind of came to this point where we had a procedure scheduled and it was, basically if this procedure was successful, then that would be wonderful and if it were wasn't, that was it. There was no—that was like the end of the line, there was nothing else left to do.

And so this procedure was scheduled for Erev Shavuot in New York and as it turns out it was not successful, and the doctor just told us, he is like, unless there's a huge miracle that happens you guys are not having biological children.

YAEL TRUSCH: Oh, my gosh!

CHAVIE BRUK: It was kind of surreal to be, and he wasn't very—he was a good doctor but not a very emotional doctor so he's very like cut and dry and no kind of emotion with it and I was 23 and my husband was 26 and I feel like that's really, really young to get such life altering news and kind of having to process that and just kind of... it was very shocking, very painful, and we were kind of just like, okay, what now? And I'm a type the person that doesn't have a lot of patience and I'm kind of just like, okay, well okay! So if we're not having biological children, what's happening because I'm not going to be in this world without raising a family, like I just didn't know how to do that?

Yael Trusch: Interesting.

CHAVIE BRUK: For some people that's okay.

Yael Trusch: Aha!

CHAVIE BRUK: But for me, I was just like, that's not an option for me, so I'm going to figure out how to realize my dream but in a different unconventional way. And so that's kind of how adoption came into play, that's actually interesting because when we got off the phone with my parents after this lovely event, my father said, I think just off the cup, and he didn't realized what an impact that have, and he said, you know maybe there's some children out there who are just waiting for you. And I really took that to heart and I was like, okay, well adoption is what it's going to be.

Now mind, you I'm 23 years old, I have no idea what it means to adopt.

Yael Trusch: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: And so it was a very long process. We actually learned about it, all the ups and downs, all the things that work and don't work and it was a few years till adoption was actually a reality, but right then and there it was a decision that I made with my husband, obviously, that we're going to figure this out. Now that does not take away from the grief and the pain and

the time of mourning, that lost of your plans and your future that you had thought was going to be and wasn't.

Yael Trusch: But before we get to and now the intricacies of adoption that you soon after had to learn about, I want to go back to what you said and to your father's statement because I think it's worth stressing that, that you didn't, for you not having children was just not an option and like you suggested not everybody might have taken that approach.

So I want to dig into a little bit what is it that you're thinking there? Where does that come from? And I saw it in your father, too. There is a belief there in having children. Talk to us a little bit about that.

Chavie Bruk: Okay. I think it's about really knowing who you are and knowing what you want out of life and not letting anything stand in your way. I really want to stress the point that just because I did it this way, doesn't mean it's right for everybody. I know myself and I know that I grew up I'm the oldest of nine. I grew up with a big family. I know what my dream is and what I want. I didn't know how I was going to—to me like I said—to me having a family is/was the most important thing to me.

When you're told, you're not going to have a family in a conventional way, there's two ways you can go. You can say okay, I will learn to live my life differently and I will learn to be without a family which is an okay option. But for me, I'm like well no, I'm going to have a family, and I'm just going to figure out a way to do it. Maybe it's going to be unconventional, maybe it's going to be kind of a coloring outside the box that was created in our communities but that's okay with me, because my goal is to have a family. As long as I get there in a Kosher proper way—

Yael Trusch: Right.

Chavie Bruk: But it could be a little out of the box. For me, I just didn't want—I didn't let anything stand in my way of realizing my dream and—yeah, go ahead.

Yael Trusch: No! I hear that, we have to be intentional about what we want—

Chavie Bruk: Yeah.

Yael Trusch: And we need to know what we want and who we are with respect to what our goals are.

Chavie Bruk: Yeah, right.

Yael Trusch: So now let's go to the process because I remember the story of your first child and it was miraculous, and then of itself finding this child. So do you want to start with that and how that came about?

Chavie Bruk: Sure! I think that's the great way to start because this is kind of how the journey began. So we get this news, and we're like okay, adoption, right? It's like, okay, how do we figure out even what it means to adopt? Then there's international adoption, there's domestic adoption is. Yeah, we're looking into all these countries and it's really complicated and then looking—we just really kind of confused about where to go, there's not a lot of guidance because we're kind of the first ones to really do this in this kind—I mean there are sporadic stories but kind of—in our recent time, we didn't know anybody who adopted in the Chabad community for sure. We were kind of just like muddling through and we definitely started the legal process which is getting a home study, which means you are legally approved to adopt. You can't just adopt.

You have to have—You have an organization that will come and check your house and it's tons and tons and tons of paper work and questions and essays and reading material and finger prints and that's a really long process and we got going on that side of things so God-willing, if anything would come up, we'd be ready and have our home study in place. And as far as finding a baby or a child was happening simultaneously. My husband was in New York for the *Kinus Hashluchim*, I think it was 2009. And he has a really good friend who lives in Russia and he kind of opened up about our situation and being that he lived in Russia, he said, listen, if you know our situation

over arises just keep us in mind and that was that. Then later that night, at the convention, they showed this unpublicized JEM Video about the Rebbe talking to two women about adopting babies and it's the first time they've ever showed this video and it was just we really felt that *Hashgacha Pratis* and we really felt like the Rebbe and HaShem giving us a message that, this is the right thing for you, this is the path that you should go on. It really was really special and amazing to get that message right at the right time.

YAEL TRUSCH: Wow.

CHAVIE BRUK: That was kind of—the conference came and went and then a couple of weeks later, after Sukkot, the next year, so not a couple of—the next year, to make a long story short, there was this woman in Russia who gave birth to a baby, nine weeks early, she was 3 pounds, really not well and was in the hospital for six weeks with surgeries and all these kind of things and when it was time to discharge the baby, they called my husband's friend and just needed guidance and the birth mother needed guidance and help and they really wanted this baby to go to America for further evaluation. They kind of did all they could with the resources that they had there. The birth mother agreed and this couple flew with this mom to New Jersey to get a medical evaluation for this baby.

During this process, the birth mother realized that she just couldn't manage it, she couldn't handle it and she really wanted a life that she couldn't provide for her child. She decided that she wants to give up this baby for adoption. They're already in the States when this happened and this couple obviously, did a lot of talking and working through and she had to see social workers and making sure that she was sound in her decision and she was adamant and we got a phone call that said, are you guys still interested in adoption, we have a situation and that's how we became parents.

So this girl who's my first child, Chaya, was 9 weeks old and we adopted her in New Jersey. She was our first child and it was such an amazing experience and just how the *Hashgacha Pratis* and of how it all came to be

is really fascinating. Talk about a miracle to have children, never mind even adoption is a miracle.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes.

CHAVIE BRUK: The process and the divine intervention that happens. The little things that you say to right person at the right time is just amazing how if HaShem want it to be, it will be.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right. It's like she was meant for you and your husband. Does this mean that you know Chaya's parents?

CHAVIE BRUK: I've—no. I haven't personal—

YAEL TRUSCH: Biological parents?

CHAVIE BRUK: I've never met her parent—well, her birth father is on the picture but her birth mother I've never met because it was a closed adoption.

YAEL TRUSCH: Okay.

CHAVIE BRUK: The birth mother's request and so we were not in the same room or we did not cross path. The couple in Russia know who it is, we know her name, but we've never actually met.

YAEL TRUSCH: So you bring Chaya home, you have this wonderful child and shortly after you- how did baby number two, Zeezy come into the picture.

CHAVIE BRUK: Okay. So we bring Chaya home and it's really fabulous obviously and also being a new mom is challenging and like being a new mom if you gave birth too, right? So you're figuring everything out and—

YAEL TRUSCH: Sure!

CHAVIE BRUK: It's wonderful and exhausting at the same time, but a couple of months later, we got a call from a *shliach* in New Jersey with a situation where a birth mom is going to give birth and isn't able to provide for

this child and wanting to know if we are interested and we're like yeah! Absolutely!

Yael Trusch: Wow.

Chavie Bruk: Eleven months later, oh no—yeah! Eleven months later because they're 13 months apart and we got Chaya two and a half month. So little less and 11 months later, we brought Zezzy into our family. They're kind of like both babies at the same time which was really cool and kind of—

Yael Trusch: Really fun! Brings a lot of life to the household.

Chavie Bruk: Yeah! Like when I looked back at that I'm like, how actually did I do that? Because now I look at my baby who's almost 10 months old, and she'll be one soon. I'm like—they're still such babies when they're one, how can I have another one? I know people do this all the time but when you look back at it, you're just like, wow!

Yael Trusch: Yeah and it's worth mentioning here for listeners that it's not like you and your husband while you're going through all these the research, all the stuff and then finally having children, it's not like you ever could take a break from your day job, I mean you are the leaders of the Jewish community. Like that's—

Chavie Bruk: Yeah, exactly.

Yael Trusch: That's still going on in the back drop.

Chavie Bruk: Exactly it's a 24/7 job and we were already here for—I want to say like three years, we had brought HaShem. Lots of stuff going on and we want to definitely to keep that up and our mission in Montana is extremely important. It was really important for us not to let that kind of fall by the way side while all this is going on.

Yael Trusch: Right.

Chavie Bruk: It was—it's busy.

Yael Trusch: It's very busy. So Zezzy is your second ad now you have a toddler. You realized something is not right. What happened then?

Chavie Bruk: Okay, so Zezzy, when she was one year old, she was in her high chair and during breakfast, she kind of just went limp and started to experience a seizure. We rushed her to the hospital and no one can really find any definitive, anything wrong per se. It is true that children could have a seizure and never comes back. Some kids have fever and do seizures but she was healthy, she wasn't sick. We kind of just we're told to go home and kind of just watch and see.

And then as she's getting older, her developments are a little delay, like she didn't walk until she was two. She was delayed with her movements and her speech and she was having these crying episodes where she would just kind of going into this crying mode, we call them this like melt downs but they weren't like regular tantrums like basically, they would laugh like over an hour and then she would be totally out of it. Then when she won't be able to communicate with you, she will kind of say weird stuff that didn't make sense. It was really kind of bizarre and it was very distinct, it was very hard to manage. She would do it often and then when this was happening, everything had to stop like she kind of took over. It was very challenging and so we took her to a neurologist. We don't have a pediatric neurologist in Bozeman so we have to travel to Billings which is two hours away to go to a visiting pediatric neurologist because they don't have a permanent one either. There was this visiting neurologist coming from Salt Lake and he kind of chuck around and he's like, no she's just... everything's fine, it's all behavioral, don't worry about it.

We're like, okay, this is a neurologist. They know better than us but after a while we're just like, no! This is not right. There are too many signs of something but I didn't know what to do. Because I live in Montana and I don't have the facilities to address this issue. So I was talking to a friend of mine who leaves in New Jersey and she was telling me about this, Comprehensive Neurological Center where you can take your child, kind to

do like all testing. They'll do ECGs and they'll do psychological and they'll do all the testing for the brain under one roof. And I was like, that's what I need. I need it like do a full workout.

So I took her, she was about three then. So I took her and we went for like three days and we got a full evaluation and what we discovered was that, she was having multiple seizures a day through her ECG and she wasn't sleeping at night. And so she'd wake up in the morning, it looked like she was sleeping but her brain wasn't. She wake up in the morning, so disoriented and so cranky like—it is almost like she had low blood sugar and our doctor kept on testing her sugar because she'd wake up and she'd be so disoriented and so confused that she'd want food even she wouldn't want food. And she would make you crazy and no one knew what she wanted and she didn't know what she wanted no, because her brain was so exhausted.

So she was diagnosed with epilepsy but the doctor was like, I really would like to—epilepsy is a huge general term. If we can, sometimes if you do genetic testing, you can kind of pinpoint, where in the brain the seizures coming from or what is going on to kind of help us decide which medication —there's a lot of different medication, which medication will be the right one and how to go further.

Yael Trusch: Okay.

Chavie Bruk: A lot of times, you don't get any more answers and you just have to figure out, but with Cece, we discovered through genetic testing and through confirming her diagnosis of the spinal tap is that she had a really rare genetic disorder called GLUT-1. GLUT-1 is when the brain doesn't process glucose. Glucose especially for children is your main energy source and that's where the brain receives its energy to function.

Her glucose transporters, the transporters that pass—that allow the glucose from the blood pass the blood brain barrier are deficient and so she doesn't get anywhere near the right amount of glucose to sustain her brain and

energy that she needs. So not only is it—epilepsy is really just a symptom of her condition.

The seizures are symptom of her brain being energy deprived and so are her developmental delays and everything else that we were seeing made complete sense with this diagnosis. So, yeah, she was diagnosed with GLUT-1 and there is no cure for it.

Yael Trusch: How many people in the world have such a condition?

Chavie Bruk: Five hundred people in the world are diagnosed. It's getting a little bit more because—first of all GLUT-1 is extremely hard to diagnose because it masks so many other things. You think it's epilepsy, you can think it's just a movement disorder and if you don't know to test for this, then it's really hard to kind of meant to find.

Yael Trusch: So it's already a miracle that you even got to the bottom of this because they could have told you it's epilepsy and then that's it.

Chavie Bruk: Well, in the beginning we were treating it for epilepsy and she was on the seizure med that was, I mean it wasn't working and—

Yael Trusch: Oh gosh!

Chavie Bruk: It turns out that it's the complete wrong medication for someone with GLUT-1 but how would you know if you don't know?

Yael Trusch: Right.

Chavie Bruk: So, as we're getting—I think it's becoming a little bit more easier to diagnose because the doctors are becoming more aware of it and they will test for it, but it is—whichever way you twisted it, is a very, very, rare disorder.

Yael Trusch: So practically speaking, how did that, now what changed at home, how did you have to take on a practical level care of Zezzy with her condition?

CHAVIE BRUK: Exactly. So being that there is no cure, the only form of treatment is a ketogenic diet, and I know a ketogenic diet is a rarely big fad right now, it's like, oh, I know the ketogenic diet and yes the basic concepts are the same, you're wanting to eat high fat and very, very, low carb, but the medical version of a ketogenic diet is very different than a weight loss version, and she is only—I have to measure and weigh her food, so she eats very specific ratios. So she has a certain amount of fat to everything else ratio that she has to eat and so in order to provide that, everything that she puts in her mouth has to be a certain ratio. There's no such thing as popping a strawberry in your mouth because, with that we do is the glucose, she got glucose it wouldn't get to her brain, and then her brain malfunction, you know?

YAEL TRUSCH: Oh gosh!

CHAVIE BRUK: So she needs to have everything, even if it's a tiny snack, it needs to be the right ratio of fat, everything else. So she's on about a three to one ratio, and thank G-d there is a computer program that I can use to calculate her food, because not only you have to have the ratio correctly but you need to have—each meal have a certain amount of calories, it has a certain amounts of protein and in all these things together have to work.

And so it's very scientific and I would never be on to do it with my brain. So you kind of calculate these meals and she has about five meals a day that are equal in all these aspects, and she has a very loaded amounts of calories so she's also not eating a lot, she eats very, very, little which is how her brain works optimally, right like there's no, we eat when we're hungry and we eat when we're bored, and we eat when we're happy, and we eat when we're sad. For her she gets exactly what her brain needs for the next three hours and then in three hours later she will be hungry, because there's no like extra storage and that's how the brain works best for her. So it was a huge, huge adjustment to kind of figure out this meals and it's a huge time commitment as well. It takes a long time to kind of prep her meal and it's been almost three years now, so now it's become routine and it's—

YAEL TRUSCH: Routine.

CHAVIE BRUK: Part of life. It's still takes the same amount of time and I do have some help sometimes with that, and she is an amazing kid and she, we call it the magic diet because it does magic for her brain.

YAEL TRUSCH: I love it.

CHAVIE BRUK: And she is a kid that accepts it and you will rarely hear her complain like every kid around they're eating pizza or candy, whatever and she is happy with her food, she does complain about being hungry, more than—sometimes I can help and sometimes I'm like you just have to wait for your next meal like there's nothing I can do. She only has a certain amount of... she can't just eat on a whim. She only has a certain amount of meal that she can have a day. So she finishes all her meals by 1pm then that's it, that's all she gets. The meals are bases accordingly, so she can get the regular amount of food throughout the day. So sometimes it's a challenge depending on where she is. If she's growing, she's hungry more, it's more of a challenge than when she's not as hungry.

YAEL TRUSCH: Wow! How old is Zezzy now?

CHAVIE BRUK: She's seven, Kana Hara. She's eight in... she was born on Shemini Atzeret.

YAEL TRUSCH: Are you home schooling your kids, Chavie?

CHAVIE BRUK: So my kids are not home schooled.

YAEL TRUSCH: Okay.

CHAVIE BRUK: And that's another kind of unconventional path that we took. They are in local schools being, they all have high needs in different ways and home school which is not the right choice for us and so we kind of had to think out of the box again.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: And thank G-d for the guidance of a Rav, and a *mashpiah*, and all those things to help us make the right choice that was what was right for our family and I'm very respectful in not advocating for something like that, and it has to really do what's good for their family but for us, it's been the best thing I could have done and I'm very grateful to have been able to make that choice and kind of I have to work really hard in filtering out the noise around me and not worry about what it looks like and not worry about what people would think. And really kind of dig deep and understand what was best for my children and for me.

Yael Trusch: Good for you.

CHAVIE BRUK: Because being a mom is really hard. And being a mom and a teacher, I just didn't think it wasn't working, I wasn't the best self trying to do both.

Yael Trusch: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: With my children because they are—there's one PDHD and one with the... they just needed that structure and they needed that. They get services in school and all the things that they get, so I am very grateful to have had the support around me to be able to do that and to make that decision because I cannot even imagine what it would be like otherwise.

Yael Trusch: Right, right. So anyone in your situation and your husband and rightfully so, I don't think that one could argue against making the decision, one, to maybe leave Montana.

CHAVIE BRUK: Right.

Yael Trusch: But as you mentioned before that was not an option, you are completely committed to your work as Chabad emissaries of the community and leaders of the community. Or two, not to continue adopting children this was challenging enough, Baruch Hashem! They are two precious children, but you continued on this road and then the next child came with its own life... the while story.

CHAVIE BRUK: Unique circumstances.

YAEL TRUSCH: Tell us about him, he sounds so fun.

CHAVIE BRUK: Okay, so my third is Manny and he, what makes him unique is that he is by racial so he is Black and—

YAEL TRUSCH: But you didn't know that going into right?

CHAVIE BRUK: So we were actually told that it was a possibility, so what happens with the biracial situation is it can go either way. And you just don't know, it's a one in three chance that you'll have a child that's white, a child that's Black or a child that's kind of a mix, and basically we just have to be okay with whatever was going to happen, and that was also a process of figuring out who you are and what you're capable of, and what's important to you and for me, it wasn't a problem for me and I really was ready to embrace that challenge and like I say inherently, my husband and I believed that people inherently are not racist, right? And from the community it's not that people are racist, it's just that it's different. And people don't really know what to say or to response to from a little black kid running around Shul, you know what I mean?

YAEL TRUSCH: Yeah.

CHAVIE BRUK: Like it's not that they're racist and they're going to be but sometimes it's just different and different needs to be embraced instead of—

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes,

CHAVIE BRUK: We just really thought that we can handle it and the best thing we ever did and he is awesome.

YAEL TRUSCH: Good for you.

CHAVIE BRUK: And he is wonderful and most of the time it's like not even a thing.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: Once in a while you have to be able to grow a little bit of thicker skin because people will say things that not necessary. Some people mean well and just don't realize what they are saying and some people are not as kind or whatever, you're going to meet all types of people in the world.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yeah.

CHAVIE BRUK: And I feel like our job as parents is just to instill in our children the confidence and just being proud of themselves and who they are. We can't protect them from everything and we can't protect them, I don't know when he's going to go to Yeshiva, I'm not going to be able to protect him from every mean thing a kid's going to say.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: But what I could do is give him the tools and the knowledge to be okay with himself and proud of himself that if a kid says something to him, he is going to be able be okay and not let that destroy him. And so that's just and I think that's goes for all children, right?

YAEL TRUSCH: Exactly.

CHAVIE BRUK: We wanted to instill in them confidence we wanted it because kids are mean sometimes. And no matter what are those, someone, they can make fun of you if you have glasses or if—

YAEL TRUSCH: Absolutely.

CHAVIE BRUK: Any situations so it's just about being very open, having these conversations and like Mani says, he's in Montana which is a very predominant white community.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: And all his friends are white and his families is white and he says once he comes home and he says, I want to be white and we talked about it and I don't say why do you want to be white? Let's talk about this,

work through his emotions and then hopefully, with this conversations will make him proud of who he is and really teach them that we are all different.

YAEL TRUSCH: That's right.

CHAVIE BRUK: You're different because your skin color is different but you're also different because you have different talents than your sister next to you. You are super musical and you dance and you sing and your sister is an amazing writer and everyone is different and we also looked different, but that's okay like I don't want to teach him to be color-blind, I think that's ridiculous, I think we have to recognize our differences and understand who we are, but I want to teach them that it's okay to be different and that's what makes the world's a wonderful place. How boring would it be if we are all the same?

YAEL TRUSCH: Absolutely. I didn't ask you before but up till now the kids, their birth mothers were Jewish, meaning the kids are born Jewish, you didn't have to go through a conversion right?

CHAVIE BRUK: So I have some and some.

YAEL TRUSCH: Okay.

CHAVIE BRUK: Like I tell when I speak or whenever one ask me questions, I'm very open about that but as far who is who that—

YAEL TRUSCH: I was going to say, I don't want to ask you who is who, that's irrelevant.

CHAVIE BRUK: It's a fine line of sharing and being really open with my story but also respecting that these are also my children's story.

YAEL TRUSCH: Totally.

CHAVIE BRUK: They have to be okay with what I'm saying so certain things that would up to them to share when they want—

YAEL TRUSCH: The truth is it's irrelevant. I just wanted to make people aware that in that case that is a reality that one has to go through and that's it. You just go through it. Okay.

CHAVIE BRUK: Exactly and so there's certain... I'm really careful in respecting their story and their privacy so a lot of things are public and a lot of things are you know what?

YAEL TRUSCH: Good for you.

CHAVIE BRUK: They're going to be able to share that part of their stories if they want to and if they don't want to –

YAEL TRUSCH: They don't have to.

CHAVIE BRUK: That's definitely okay.

YAEL TRUSCH: Good for you.

CHAVIE BRUK: But as much as this is my journey but it's also their journey.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right, right.

CHAVIE BRUK: And so I just have to be able to walk that fine line because I like to share I like be able to share their wonderful experiences at the same time be respectful of my children.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right. Then you adopt a preteen who comes with their own –now you're used to raising young children.

CHAVIE BRUK: Right.

YAEL TRUSCH: You're going through this but raising a preteen is like a whole different ball game.

CHAVIE BRUK: Oh, yeah, definitely. It's something—

YAEL TRUSCH: I would know because I'm in that stage now and it's like oh, what did just hit us?

CHAVIE BRUK: Exactly and then my oldest was seven and so I really kind of jumped the game here, so our fourth child is Shoshana, and she is my fourth child that I adopted but is the oldest, so it's kind of fun and we mixed that up a little bit that caused a whole other post of challenges to hide out her identity was being the oldest and so –

YAEL TRUSCH: Being oldest, right.

CHAVIE BRUK: That was really, it's so cute. So we had to talk about that a lot. I think part of going through this hard kind of transitions is not brushing them under the rug and be like your fine, you're fine, it's okay, you know. No, let's talk about this, this is hard and Shoshana and Chaya had to talk about it to each other and people has to recognize that it's hard for both of them. Shoshana, it's hard entering a new family but she had to realize that we are also adjusting to her and to her joining our family it's not only about her, right? It's about everybody.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: Who is adjusting to the situation, so, thank God, things are really settled in that respect like Chaya signed a letter just recently and I was cracking up she goes, love, your first but not oldest daughter.

YAEL TRUSCH: Oh, she's so cute.

CHAVIE BRUK: That was really, really cute. So Shoshana, she joined our camp two summers ago for a couple of weeks and she's from Wyoming and she had a very tragic kind of upbringing. Her birth mother had died when she was young and her dad who loves her just couldn't provide the stable environment that a child deserves.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: And he was struggling and just not in a good place and after camp it was kinda like she wanted to stay and we were more aware of her situation and it was kinda just like how do you turn away from that? It would

make sense to because adopting a preteen is definitely a challenge and I think no one would hold it against us and I don't think God would either.

Yael Trusch: Right.

Chavie Bruk: But we just really felt that this was meant to be and she was brought into our life for a reason and so she joined our family about two years ago and when she joined our family her real name was actually Courtney and she chose her Jewish name, and I think it's so beautiful. She chose Shoshana Yael.

Yael Trusch: Oh!

Chavie Bruk: Because, oh, like you, and Shoshana because she felt like she was a rose amongst the thorns and Yael because she really connected to that warrior spirit, fighting for her life and her better future and so that's we call her Sushana and she's wonderful. She's smart, she's talented, she's spiritual and she's also a teenager.

Yael Trusch: Right! She's normal.

Chavie Bruk: Yeah, also besides her being a normal teenager, it is definitely a challenge of raising as what we all you didn't get to raise from the beginning so it's walking that line of also being having firm boundaries but also growing and developing that relationship at the same time which is a challenge because when you need to have boundaries you're not... it doesn't feel like you're building that relationship.

Yael Trusch: Wow! True.

Chavie Bruk: But, you know it is. That process and part of those showing her the clear boundaries is showing her the love and showing her that we care about her and showing her that life is about not being to do whatever you want at all times, it's about having that structure and that structure whether she recognizes it or not helps her feel safe and helps her feel like she doesn't have to take care of herself. She is now in a family that is going

to take care of her and going to teach her how to grow and how to development into a beautiful young lady.

Definitely very different than raising a child from birth and definitely having to build that connection and that love as an older child and as not having that cute cuddly baby time to build that connection is definitely different, but it can be done and you just have to really put your mind to it and be able to also understand that it's not always going to feel fun and it's not always going to be roses, it's going to be... its real down and dirty, but you persevere and what happens out of that is mind-blowing and so you just have to keep your eye on the prize. Sometimes when my husband and I are really like, we have to remind ourselves, okay, what's our end game here? What's our end game? When there's a challenge, okay, eye on the price... eye on the prize. And you cannot help get through those challenging moments.

YAEL TRUSCH: Wow this has taken parenting to a whole new level.

CHAVIE BRUK: Yeah, there was no such thing as like I talk to my sibling all the time. There's no such thing as just saying whatever comes out of your mouth and it's really, we call it intentional parenting, you really have to be thoughtful and because you don't realize what you say can trigger something for her and you don't even know what it is and why.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: And with all my children, you have to be really intentional of what you're doing. Now, not to say I fail at that completely all the time but at least I know that I'm failing and I'll try to do better next time. And I'm far from where I want to be, but I'd always have room to grow but definitely I've grown a lot as a person and as a mother with having these unique situations and just realizing that I have to be really careful with what I say and make sure that the message that I want to come across is coming across and not my frustration, or my anger because that's not really—even if I am that, that's not the message that I want to give. The message I want to give is support and love and knowing that who's boss like yes, I'm the mom.

YAEL TRUSCH: Boundaries.

CHAVIE BRUK: Yes the boundaries and you don't have to like them, they don't have to feel good, they don't have to be fun, but that's what my job is. You know what I mean?

YAEL TRUSCH: I totally know what you mean, and I'm so glad we're having this conversation because the truth is we should all parent like that.

CHAVIE BRUK: Yes.

YAEL TRUSCH: And so it's such a good reminder that intentional parenting is the way we all need to be doing it. Its' just for you it's become so much more obvious and it's such a great reminder to all of us.

CHAVIE BRUK: Yeah, and then the other important thing for me is knowing that when I mess up and I do very often, it's really powerful to be able to go to your child and say, wow, did not do that right, I'm sorry and I will try better next time. And what that teaches them is that its okay to make mistakes because we're not perfect.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right, we're human.

CHAVIE BRUK: And they can make mistakes and I make mistakes and when you recognize where you went wrong, then at least there's somewhere to rebuild.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: But if you're just going to brush that under the rug and be like, I'm the parent, it doesn't matter if I mess up and I have to answer to my children. Part of that is true but you're going to get much farther if you are able to swallow that and be like, wow!

YAEL TRUSCH: Let's do that again, next time.

CHAVIE BRUK: My emotions got the best of me there.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: I have to do that a lot because so much in parenting is so emotionally charged.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes.

CHAVIE BRUK: And it's okay. I have a lot of great support and therapists and parenting advocates in my life.

YAEL TRUSCH: Awesome.

CHAVIE BRUK: And they're like, you know what? It's okay to make a mistake that just shows that you're human.

YAEL TRUSCH: And you're building a relationship, when you're having those conversations of you know, I could have done this better, it just shows your child, we're in a relationship?

CHAVIE BRUK: Right, yeah.

YAEL TRUSCH: I care about it's a two streets—

CHAVIE BRUK: Right, exactly. Yeah.

YAEL TRUSCH: Chavie, as *shluchim*, you have a very public life as it relates to your community, you are role models of the face of Judaism, and so these people have seen you and your husband go through the journey of adoption multiple times, dealing with Zeezy's condition which is certainly something difficult to deal with in a Montana setting, well, anywhere but especially in that remote location. I'm curious to know what impact have your life choice had in community member and if you have any stories maybe—

CHAVIE BRUK: Yeah, that's a really good question, honestly, I have to say I can't speak for them and if you would ask them, I'm not really sure exactly what they would say.

But what I hope is that they would say is that, we put our money where our mouth is, right? We talk all the time about challenges and we talk all the time about how we have to persevere through challenges and we talked all

the time of *Hashgacha Pratis*, and Divine Providence and everything happens for a reason, and here we have the unique opportunity of actually showing that we really believe it, right?

And we believe that things happen for a reason and we believe that life is hard but our challenges make us who we are. I think not always can we actually practice what we preach and I feel like almost blessed that I had the opportunity to really show that this is not just - we don't just say these things for you and you have to live by it and we don't, or we don't just say these things to make you feel better, we say these things because we truly believe them, and when a challenge arises and when life doesn't go the way you planned, what are you going to do with that? Are you going to let it beat you down or are you going to pick yourself up and decide where you're going to commune at?

But at the same time, it's really important I think now, just to mention, it's okay to have those beaten down moment. I had them and I still have them. I don't want anyone to God forbid think that you are never allowed sad or upset. At HaShem, I've had a lot angry conversations with God. I think those things are very important and it's really important to be able to be in that moment of pain and anger and confusion because if you just ignore them, they're going to come up in all different ways and they're never going to leave you alone.

So what I've learned through my journey is you face those feeling, don't push them away. You want to have bad day? Have a bad day! But that's okay and if you let yourself go through those bad days they will go through... you'll pass through them much quicker because you're facing them. If you just say, well, I'm going to pick myself up and I'm just going to pretend that I don't have any pain and I'm just going to move forward, it's going to work for a little while but then you're going to get stuck because you're not working through those emotions. I just think it's really important to interject that we are human and HaShem made us human with all our emotions and all our feelings and we need to recognize them and we need to be there and we

need to embrace them and so that we can move on in a healthy real way, not in a fake like I'm going to be fine kind of way and I'm really not. Does that make sense?

YAEL TRUSCH: That makes absolute sense, but I think maybe what I feel maybe people are wondering okay, but I still have to pick myself up.

CHAVIE BRUK: Right.

YAEL TRUSCH: So I think you mentioned God multiple times and I'm wondering if... do you think that having that *emunah* in HaShem is what allows you to yes, experience those feelings but do not let them get you so down that you fall down the pit because I think –

CHAVIE BRUK: Ah, yeah, I completely agree. I think it's two fold. I think that I don't know where I would be if I didn't believe in *Hashgacha Pratis*. If I didn't believe Divine Providence I'd be like, what's the point? Why did you put me in this world? Why did you do this to me? I don't get it and I feel like I really would be a lost soul.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: Because I wouldn't have purpose, I wouldn't know even though I don't know what the reason is necessarily, I can make up my own reasons and they'd work for me but I won't know the real ultimate reason is why we go through the challenges that we do.

YAEL TRUSCH: For sure.

CHAVIE BRUK: But at least I believe that there is a reason which helps me understand that there's a bigger picture that maybe I don't need to know about, but I need to know that there is one.

YAEL TRUSCH: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: Secondly, is the way more practical thing is there be, like for me, I would not have been able to be as or I'd like to think I'm emotionally healthy and I do struggle but I don't think I'd be able to be there without that

support. Understanding in the beginning, I didn't understand that maybe I wasn't facing my emotions and maybe I was just forging forward because I'm an impatient practical kind of person and I don't really dealing with the grief and the loss that came with it.

But with a help of a therapist and with becoming more aware of my emotions and who I am, I am able to understand that there's grief and there's pain and if I let myself be in the moment when I feel that grief and pain, I feel like it could be a moment. It could be a couple of hrs and then I feel like I could move on in a healthy real way not in a fake I'm going to ignore my emotions kind of way.

Yael Trusch: Yeah.

Chavie Bruk: So for example, in the past where I have to think how many siblings, how many siblings in law, and someone is always pregnant, right? And someone is always having a baby and so getting that phone call can be painful some time.

Yael Trusch: Wow! True.

Chavie Bruk: Depending on where I am in my emotional state, so the old me would feel pain but be like wow, why should I even feel pain and push it away and just pretended it didn't exist and move on and then I'm cranky, I have attitude, I'm angry and I don't know why?

And going through that process of being more in tune with my emotions you get the phone call you feel pain, you feel pain and you let yourself feel pain, and guess what? The pain lasts a few minutes or maybe a few hours and then it's done because you faced it.

Yael Trusch: Right.

Chavie Bruk: You didn't push it away, So that's what I'm trying to say is when you are able to be real and be in tune with your emotions that allows you to pick yourself up in a way healthier way than ignoring them.

YAEL TRUSCH: Wow, Chavie, you've been such an inspiration. We have so much to think about here and apply in our own personal lives. Lets wrap it up with some JLP fill in the blank and this is the part of the show where I'll give you a statement and you just fill it with the first thing that comes to mind, alright?

CHAVIE BRUK: I don't know about this.

YAEL TRUSCH: Alright.

CHAVIE BRUK: We'll try.

YAEL TRUSCH: I'm Chavie Bruk, and I feel most spiritual when?

CHAVIE BRUK: I have to say lighting Shabbos candles. I think for me, I mean the crazy business of the week you have to stop, you have to close your eyes and to me it forces me to be kind of present in the moment welcoming Shabbos but davening for my family, davening for whatever needs to be and being thankful for of what we have. And so I think in that moment because it's kind of hard for me to produce spiritual moments in the chaos of every day, but when you're forced to I can actually appreciate and I'm more present in that moment because I can be in it.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes, I can relate. My favorite mitzvah or one I feel most connected with is? It could be the same one but many people have something different.

CHAVIE BRUK: Yeah, this one actually is not so hard to me to pinpoint for me, [00:51:10] which is—

YAEL TRUSCH: Really?

CHAVIE BRUK: An open home and being welcoming and inviting guest and hosting. I feel really connected to that and I love doing it. I grew up in a home like that so it feels natural but it also feels like it's kind of my mission and I feel great joy when I can post and make people feel welcome and feed them good food and so it works really well with my job description so —

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes!

CHAVIE BRUK: I'm grateful.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes. How fun and I'm sure your kids are really incorporating that. It's like you teach them by modeling.

CHAVIE BRUK: Okay, sometimes they say things, and I'm like what? You know, which house did you grow up in but –

YAEL TRUSCH: But you know what, you've learned that from you're [parents

CHAVIE BRUK: Yeah, exactly.

YAEL TRUSCH: And maybe when you were younger, you didn't appreciate it, but look at you now?

CHAVIE BRUK: Yeah, but in most part I hope they can appreciate it as well which is my goal.

YAEL TRUSCH: I'm sure they will. My fondest sweetest Jewish memory is?

CHAVIE BRUK: Okay, so, I'm going to be completely honest here, I have a terrible memory. Terrible, so I think it's really going to be hard for me to come up with a specific story but for me growing up in San Antonio I loved the holidays, the whole atmosphere, the preparation and getting ready for it and the meals and the serving and the hustle and the bustle, I love that growing up and now I still love it, now, it's a little harder because the responsibility is on me and not my mother and I don't get to just enjoy, I have to work really hard for it but there's something so special about the holiday. I feel that the atmosphere feels different and it's really cool to live in Bozeman, and celebrate a holiday where nobody else is in it, it's just a regular Monday or Tuesday for anyone else but for you, you're in a completely alternate universe.

YAEL TRUSCH: Yes.

CHAVIE BRUK: And it's so cool, so I love the holidays growing up, I still love them today and I just remember the energy and the atmosphere that the holidays created and I don't have a favorite holiday, so if you're going to ask me that I don't have. I love mom.

YAEL TRUSCH: True, true. No, no it is a different energy.

CHAVIE BRUK: Right.

CHAVIE BRUK: It's also a distinctly unique energy, different from Shabbos even. It's just I don't know, it's hard to put into words

CHAVIE BRUK: Yeah. I just have a lot of memories from that.

YAEL TRUSCH: Something I wished I had learned about Judaism growing up is?

CHAVIE BRUK: So I'm now going to answer this question a little differently than you would expect. Basically, I don't think I wished I would have known anything different because for me, part of the journey is coming across these learning experiences as you learn them, right? So it would be very different if I for example knew where my life would be and how each turn and twist and turn what happened, I have a very difficult life! But because you don't know and because learning is a journey and learning is part of the experience of learning is learning it at the time that you learn it. So if I could go back, I kind of wouldn't change anything because I think having those lessons and learning them as you grow and as different stages in your life kind of makes you who you are, so I don't know if I wished I knew anything differently, do you know what I mean?

YAEL TRUSCH: I totally know what you mean and beautifully said, yes. When I give Tzedakah I'd like to give to?

CHAVIE BRUK: So I really like to... I give a lot to like the... it's called Cherish Simcha Shabbos v'Yom Tov so to help people celebrate Shabbos and Yom Tov and so they create food packages and whatever for people who just don't have enough, so I really connect with that a lot. I also connect

with I kind of like to see what's going on in the moment so if there's a particular family in need or there's a particular campaign going on or whatever, I kind of you... if I'm giving stuff then I'm kind of look to see what's going on in the moment, but kind of that Shabbos and Yom Tov support is my go to.

YAEL TRUSCH: Wow, and finally, I'm Chavie Bruk and today I'm most grateful for?

CHAVIE BRUK: Okay, I'm really, really, grateful for my family, my children but also my parents, my siblings, my in laws, my sister in laws, my friends, and my community; because I don't think I would be where I was today without the amazing support and love and acceptance that everyone surrounded me has given me and it just makes such a difference because you do these crazy things and you do these out of the box things and people think you're crazy but really all the people in my life have been so supportive. From my friends, to my family, to my community and you know there's no words to apply to express how grateful I am for that I don't take it for granted, so it's really special.

YAEL TRUSCH: Wow, Chavie, you are such an inspiration. I want to come to Montana and just give you a big hug or maybe we should meet up.

CHAVIE BRUK: Well, come and experience, it's beautiful. You come we'll treat you like the princess you are, right? You're the Jewish Latin Princess, so we'll hopefully be able to accommodate you.

YAEL TRUSCH: I'm actually a very easy low key princess.

CHAVIE BRUK: Yes, that's awesome, but yeah. Bozeman is beautiful, it's a great place. Come with your family and we would love to have you at anytime.

YAEL TRUSCH: Chavie, I can't say thank you enough for everything you've shared with us and if anybody out there is struggling with infertility or you're raising adopted kids and or you're considering adoption, be in touch,

CHAVIE BRUK: Come to me, I've got it covered.

Yael TRUSCH: Yes, exactly. Be in touch and maybe I could put you in touch with Chavie or listen very carefully to this interview and distill all the nuggets of wisdom and faith, strength and just practicality also. Chavie, thank you.

CHAVIE BRUK: Well, thank you so much for having me. It was a real honor and I hope we get to speak soon.

[THEME MUSIC]

Yael TRUSCH: And that's Chavie Bruk for you ladies. What do you think? Pretty amazing, right? I hope you enjoyed this episode. If you've been here for a while and you never left a review, well head over to iTunes and click on that review button and leave me a review and rating, I love checking those out. And if you know of a uniquely talented Jewish woman whom you'd like for me to feature on the show, please reach out to me at @yael at www.jewishlatinprincess.com.

Everybody, I'll see you here next week. Have a great week.

[THEME MUSIC]

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