

**JEWISH LATIN PRINCESS  
BRACHA GOETZ, AUTHOR OF SEARCHING FOR G-D  
IN THE GARBAGE  
EPISODE 69**

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

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

**Yael Trusch:** How does a Harvard educated medical student of Psychiatry end up with an eating disorder despite knowing very well what she was doing to herself? Is knowledge enough to stop us from the self-destructive behavior? What can you do if you're about to overeat or engage in another type of addictive behavior? Welcome to Jewish Latin Princess, I'm Yael Trusch, and I have an exciting interview today with the most interesting woman, Bracha Goetz.

Bracha is the author of *Searching for G-d in the Garbage*, as well as thirty-seven children's books. How's that for being prolific? Bracha had riveting journey which led her to finding Orthodox Judaism and completely transforming her life. And get this, she healed her anorexia practically overnight. What about Orthodox Jews, who unfortunately are engaging in self-destructive behaviors or addictions, how do we answer that? She didn't finish her Harvard degree in Psychiatry but instead dedicated her life to raising her family and distilling the most complex Jewish concepts into their simplest essential elements so that children could grasp them. You will be shocked by the ironies of Bracha's story, the Divine Providence, the immense wisdom, love, and authenticity in her message, here's Bracha Goetz.

***[THEME MUSIC]***

**Yael Trusch:** Bracha Goetz, welcome to Jewish Latin Princess. How are you?

**Bracha Goetz:** How wonderful, thank you!

**Yael Trusch:** I'm so happy to have you on the show, it is such an honor. You are the author of 37 children's books and most recently you've published a candid memoir for adults, *Searching for God in the Garbage* – congratulations on the new book.

**Bracha Goetz:** Thank you so much.

**Yael Trusch:** Before we get to your children's book, I want you to tell us about this new work – a departure from your established career as a children's author – what was the impetus for this work? Why take this detour?

**Bracha Goetz:** Okay, great. Well, actually, I wrote the book thirty years ago, so –

**Yael Trusch:** Oh, really?

**Bracha Goetz:** It wasn't, well, it was just published recently so it wasn't like I just did it now. I did it I guess ten years after I became observant. When, I had gone back to my parent's home they were clearing out their apartment and I found my old diaries, so, when I started reading the diaries, suddenly I saw the string kind of that tied my life together and I could understand the path that I took. It suddenly... everything made sense about why I wanted to become an observant Jew.

I saw that at age 12 I started searching and searching and for years I was searching that many paths looking for the meaning to life, and when I saw the diaries, then, everything made sense about the entire journey up until that point, so I realized then that I wanted to put this together into a book, it would be kind of a case study of a person, of how they developed eating disorders and how becoming an observant Jew helped me to heal from the eating disorders. So it's really a very interesting book and it's very out of the box that way in that it actually, you go through the minds of the person

as they're going through it because I had actually diary entries through the years, it covers 20 years of time from age 12 to 32 and so it covers how the eating disorder has gradually developed –

**Yael Trusch:** Wow!

**Bracha Goetz:** And then and how I got better, yeah.

**Yael Trusch:** Wow! So walk us down that road a little bit, how did that ex – how did those two come together? The experience of overcoming an eating disorder and becoming an observant Jew, when did those two... connect the dots for us a little bit about the journey.

**Bracha Goetz:** Got it, okay. The book is kind of a psychological mystery because as you go through the book, it isn't until the end that you understand what I'm going to share with you now, so when you go through the book, you actually go through the steps of what I'm going to – of the realization I'm going to explain at this point. The realization I came to is that really, my body was – well, when I had anorexia, it was my body that was starving.

It was starving for spiritual nourishment and that was my way of crying out for help and then when I would have like over-eating binges, that was my way of... that searching desperately for the truth, I was searching so much for spiritual nourishment but I didn't know where to find it and when I came to the realization that I come to in the book, and what I so much want to share with so many people in the world is this concept that addiction has a spiritual basis, and I think that that's crucial and I think that there are people with addiction, so many different types of addictions, whether it's a food addiction which is one of the most basic addictions there is or the other types of addictions. They all have a spiritual basis and when we... and they are crying for help. They – that they are crying for a genuine hunger and it's our souls that are hungry when and I say now when a person is overeating which is a very common addiction, they over – food addiction is to be overeating.

If a person can ask themselves, just pause long enough in the midst of over eating to ask, is it my body that is hungry or my soul? If they asked that one question, they will have the clarity immediately because once you have the knowledge to ask that question, it gives you so much insight into yourself and you realize that it's really, your soul to me – anybody that's over eating, their body isn't really hungry, it's their soul that's hungry and no amount of food will ever fill that hole. So that's really, that's the core of my book.

The core of my book is that addiction has a spiritual basis and you just see within my book the whole process of how an addiction develops, and then how it can be healed through spiritual nourishment.

**Yael Trusch:** Yet, so many... I have a hard time asking that question that, you know, when you say it its almost simplistic. Do you ever get that? Do you ever get people saying, okay, but how do I ask that question and how am I able to even listen? I think people don't know how to listen to that voice of the soul anymore.

**Bracha Goetz:** People don't know how to listen. Well, I mean, that's the thing. We have to always be tuning into our souls, you know, it with more and more kind of aware that what we really are, we are really souls just clothed in bodies.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** So, we just got to keep getting the word out, I feel –

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** Like one of my ideas is that prisons... prisons should be filled with this type of messages constantly filling prisons about how their souls, just clothes in bodies and more and more messaging like that, so that no matter how a person, no matter what trauma or abuse a person has endured in their life, their soul is still pure within them.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** And this is such an important message that we just can't get it out enough.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** We just going to keep repeating this message because everybody needs to know that their soul can always be accessed, it's still as pure as it ever was.

**Yael Trusch:** How apropos to the time of year that we're having this conversation as we're heading into the high holidays just really the message that we need to walk out of Yom Kippur with, that understanding that our soul is intact, it is really a piece of God and it's pure as can be, nothing can really tarnish it. It's just a little smudge that we could clean off but at its core, it's not tarnishable. I –

**Bracha Goetz:** Exactly, exactly. As deep as abuse and trauma can go, there's a certain level of the soul that it can't reach and so many people don't know that. They feel hopeless in life and we just got to keep explaining this – this important, this vital piece.

**Yael Trusch:** A hundred percent, but going back to your story and still my question which is, that it is hard for people to realize no matter, even if we're right shouting it out of the rooftops, meaning, there has to be something, some experience that helps people make that connection. What was it for you? How did you end up finding this truth in Judaism? What was the wakeup call, the a-ha moment? How did that happen?

**Bracha Goetz:** Yes, great. I want to answer that but I just want to say one other thing that you just sparked me to say. The concept alone is never enough and that's the thing. I was drawn to the concepts in Judaism but I'm a very conceptual kind of person, so like I would be, like, for in – I was only dating non-Jews for years and I would be on the beach with a boyfriend and I'd be reading a book that, with one of my non-Jewish boyfriends, I would be reading a book about Hasidic tales and I love stories in the Hasidic tales but, I mean, I wasn't exactly going to become a Hasidic person. I didn't know any Hasidic people or anything like that. You know I was loving it, but that's the thing about Judaism. It's not just thoughts. The Mitzvots are the actions, they're the strings that tied all together, so we have to get, we have to also act.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** And one example of, when a person asked themselves that question, is it my body that is hungry or my soul? Then, right in that moment, this is the thing like you were saying, it's not just a conceptual thing. Right in that moment, if they just do one action that feeds their soul instead of their stomach in that moment, then the bag of potato chips will lose its grasp on the person.

**Yael Trusch:** Yes.

**Bracha Goetz:** But all they have to do, let's say they're sitting there with a bag of potato chips and their cell phone, all they have to do is just text somebody lonely or a call somebody lonely, or they had to... or sit... stand up from their chairs, step outside, feel the sunshine, feel the breeze; or turn on some inspiring music, start moving around, and dancing and stretching. Suddenly the soul is getting nourishment that it was craving and right away the pull of the potato chips just like diminishes into almost nothing.

It happens miraculously in those moments, so I want to explain to people that it's not just once you asked that question then if you just do one tiny action that feeds your soul, you will see the results right away and then that becomes a new habit, and that's how you change the habit into nourishing your soul, it's when into nourishing you soul when you're feeling like doing an addictive behavior, because the addictive behavior is really just there as a message for the person to tell them that it's their soul that is hungry.

Now, to the question you asked me about the, "a-ha moment" in my life, how did I come to become observant and all that? Well, the title of my book is, Searching for God in the Garbage, and people that know me today that didn't know me in the past, when they read my book they are shocked and kind of horrified, I would say, to read – yeah, to read the worst parts of the book. The most, in a way, explicit parts of the book that go into the depths of when I hit rock bottom, you know, in my life. And they'd say, like how could you share this with the world? Because, I mean, it doesn't bother me to share it with the world. I want to help people by sharing it, that's my

purpose, you know, and I want to show how far a person can sink without nourishment of the soul.

I wrote this book for – this book is really for everybody even though it talks about how I became Orthodox, it's also helpful to non-Jews because, I mean, every person is a soul, and whatever type of nourishment a non-Jew needs for their soul, I mean, they have addictions, too! This is all what's needed by everybody, so for me, the nourishment that I needed was the Torah, but, for anybody else that fills their soul doesn't – it depends. I'm a Jewish soul so that's what needed. Throughout the book, I'm searching in other religions. I was involved with Christian Science and I was involved with Buddhism, and they were pieces of those religions that filled my soul to an extent but they were not the perfect puzzle piece that I needed because I have a Jewish soul, so, it wasn't until I learned about the Torah at a level of depth that right away, I studied in Nivei in Ohr Sameach. They had a small women's division that later combined with Nivei.

But when I got there, I listened to the classes and I didn't even know what they were talking about because most of the – it was like half of it was in Hebrew and I didn't even really know what they were saying and my soul was rejoicing. It was like, yes! This is what I've been looking for! It was like... I could... it could perceive the depth. You know, we have an intuitive awareness of what's really true and I was so elated, I felt such a feeling of ecstasy and bliss when I finally got to a class that was talking about what I was searching for, about the meaning to life and also at Aish HaTorah, I went to Rav Noach Weinberg's classes and it filled me in a way that nothing ever did before and so –

**Yael Trusch:** But take us... you get to Novais you get to Israel, but how did you even get there because I understand that you were at Harvard, you were a medical school student, you were shoulder to shoulder with the Kennedy's and the Rockefellers and the crème de la crème of American Society, how did you end up all of sudden in Israel discovering Judaism over night?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Right! Great question, okay. So here's what happened. First of all, when I was a teenager, I wasn't getting such great grades, I was hanging out people using drugs, all kinds of things. I've always searching, experimenting... up until I was twelve, I was just like so happy in life, but once I became twelve, I would become so aware that something was missing. And I just began searching for it. So it was the 60's, too, it was a very exciting time.

**Yael Trusch:** Okay.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** 1968, it was incredible! I mean, I went camping out across country, I did all kinds of interesting things, searching for truth and like I said I got involved with different religions and all kinds of boyfriends and then at one point when I got involved with Christian Science I got the idea that, oh, the mind of God is infinite. Well, my mind is part of God, it could be infinite, if I just study I could just do really well so all of a sudden I started devoting myself to my studies and Secular Education and all of a sudden my grades just shot up, then I ended up going to Harvard and it was really interesting, but just because I love knowledge.

I was just searching for more and more so then I went on that path of knowledge, and so then – and of course, like I always wanted to be helping people and so I wanted to become a psychiatrist and go to Medical School. While I was at Harvard though I was very involved with feminism and the women's movement and I was part of a seminar called, Women Look at Biology Looking at Women, and we put together a textbook that's still used I think in women's studies classes across the country and my specialty in that and the chapter that I helped write in that book was about why are so many anorexic – why are so many women anorexic? So why are so many anorexic's women? You know?

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** What is it about, well – and it was interesting is that I was writing this as I was becoming more anorexic because as I said... yeah, the more I studied it I was getting really into it and what drew me to

that to begin with was an interest in that. I was already heading in direction, so –

**Yael Trusch:** Wait, there's a huge irony here! You're a medical student, you're studying to become a psychiatrist, you understand the clinical consequences of an addictive behavior... of not eating and over eating, yet, you're going down that path?

**Bracha Goetz:** Right, and that's my point because intellectual knowledge is not enough.

**Yael Trusch:** There you go.

**Bracha Goetz:** That's exactly the point. I couldn't as... and you see in the book, all my struggles would be saying, why can't you just eat normally? What are you doing this for? You're ruining your life! I knew all that, it didn't help, you know because my soul was literally starving, and I was desperate for spiritual nourishment. So what happens in the book, and then it's really interesting, it's an amazing thing. And so by the time I was in Medical School I was really in bad shape. I was still doing okay in school, but I was really just so unhappy and miserable increasingly by then my boyfriend was a Baptist, a Southern Baptist – And he's like I remember his mother didn't want any Jew's in the house, it was like – but, so what happened is I felt like I was getting crazier and crazier, and doing really these crazy things which again, that's where the title of the book comes from but I won't go into that.

Again, people could read about that part but at that point I said I think I need a psychiatrist to go to. I went to, I was referred to a Japanese psychiatrist. I've never been to a therapist, so I went to this Japanese psychiatrist, I told him everything like what was I doing, all the crazy stuff that was going on and I told him that my parents really want – my mother really want me to date someone Jewish and she arranged for me to go to Israel for the summer to volunteer in the Oncology Ward at Hadassah Hospital and I just happened to mention that to him and he said, you know, you think like you're a real mess, but I'm telling you, I have a feeling when you go to Israel this summer, I think you're going to find yourself spiritually.

**Yael Trusch:** Wow!

**Bracha Goetz:** It was the weirdest thing, it was like... it was amazing and then all of a sudden, I don't know, I felt better, okay! I thought I was really messed up, I thought I needed to be put away at that point, but he I'm not that messed up, okay! And it wasn't that long until it was the summer, a few more weeks 'til I went away to Israel for the summer, and I was at Hadassah Hospital. My mother is interesting, she said you could do whatever you want in Israel; just don't contact this one guy I knew from childhood who became in quotes, "a religious fanatic". He went to Aish HaTorah.

So right away of course I contacted him. You know, I was always rebellious and I contacted him. And I said, you know, I want to be a psychiatrist but I don't even understand why life is worth living. I don't even understand what the purpose of life is? And he wrote back to me before I got there, he said, you... I'm going to take you to some schools and you're going to understand what the purpose of life is. Okay! So he met me in the cafeteria at Hadassah Hospital and he took me to Novais into the small women's Division of Ohr Sameach and after one week of going to classes –

**Yael Trusch:** Oh, my!

**Bracha Goetz:** I moved, yeah, I moved into Ohr Sameach. They were a small school. They really wanted more students to live there and I moved in and at first I ended up taking a year's leave of absence but I didn't come back. I am... this was... and it was really interesting too because I started dating pretty soon after I was there like three months later. I met my husband in a Sukkah on Sukkot, Chol Hamoed Sukkot, and my parents were very upset. They thought... they felt like I just –

**Yael Trusch:** They're upset that now you're becoming more, too religious or that you're dating somebody that's religious?

**Bracha Goetz:** Yes.

**Yael Trusch:** Both?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Right, well, they thought I had joined a cult. Yeah, they were very, very concerned and I really, I have no –

**Yael TRUSCH:** And they weren't aware of what you really were going through before this point or were they?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Very slightly. You know, in those years I get... I don't know how to explain this but parents really didn't want to know what their children were doing like they didn't really want to know about involvement with drugs or with other men or things like that. They did not want to know about my private life like that, you know? So they didn't know about what was happening. A little bit they did, you know what I mean? But some –

**Yael TRUSCH:** So they – now, they think you are joining a cult, so what happens then?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** They wanted me to come back, they said that's nice that you studied about Orthodox Judaism, but study about the other types of Judaism, and come back and this is like a fad and don't do this, don't stay there. And I am dating somebody and then I want to get married, I mean, this is happening pretty quickly, you know?

**Yael TRUSCH:** Wow!

**BRACHA GOETZ:** So for sure they wanted to come and when they came for the wedding it was really to take me away and bring me to Australia or someplace. It's really sad, my mother had sunglasses on at the wedding. It was very thick because she was crying. It was like that. It was a very – at that time I didn't have any empathy for what my parents were going through until years later.

**Yael TRUSCH:** Right.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** I understood how unsympathetic I was to my very quick change. I didn't give them time to adjust to it all, it's like – Oh, I found the truth and you have to accept that you know? I mean, I really... it wasn't, but I couldn't do it any better than I did at that time, but years later, of

course I understood that it wasn't... it was understandable their reactions, so – oh, oh! So when they came and they wanted me to leave, they took me to the doctor who was the Head of Oncology, who had helped me get to volunteer position, they went to speak to him because somehow, my mother worked at a place in... and he was the connection that helped me get the position so we all went to speak to him and she said, shouldn't she leave? She's going to give up medical school, I mean, where... how could she stay here and marry this man and what is happening? And he said to her, there are so many people that want to be doctors right now, that's but how few people want to devote their lives to helping Judaism, to strengthening Judaism for other young people? I mean she's doing –

**Yael Trusch:** Whoa! The oncologist said this?

**Bracha Goetz:** Yes, and so that's and he was actually, yeah, and he was an Orthodox person, too. It was really beautiful, so I don't know, my parents were kind of shocked also by his reaction and that's just how I felt about my life. I really and I did, I ended up really staying home with my children for 17 years to raise them and I just devoted myself to that. People could definitely be physicians and be mothers at the same time, I couldn't though. I'm a very... as you know, I mean an addictive personality. I'm an all or nothing type in many ways and I needed to devote myself to my family, that was what I needed to do.

Also, there was just so many changes in my life and this was all my energy where I wanted it to go, so basically, I mean I did write books and things like that through the years and I edited books, but basically I was home with my children until the youngest was like in first grade, yeah.

**Yael Trusch:** But... the healing, so there's a spiritual healing that happened. I mean you – right away, it's like your eyes opened up and you're all in. What about the relationships with food, does that get healed right away or does that take years in the making? Like, how does – do they go hand in hand, immediately?

**Bracha Goetz:** Right, that's the interesting part. That's what I was trying to figure out because my brother-in-law was writing me letters about

comeback to America. Here you had these problems with anorexia and with the binge eating, how could you be suddenly better?

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** You know you need therapy and you need to do all this stuff and I had the questions myself, how did I suddenly get better? How did this happen so quickly at the same time that I became observant? I didn't even understand it until that's what happened when I re-read the diaries when I, you know, back to when I became 32 and I, then it started to come together.

What was going on here? How could it be that I got better and I understood why, it was because my soul was filled, I got the nourishment that I was craving, it didn't even... I myself was floored by it, like I couldn't even answer my brother-in-law I'm going, you know, you have a good point and I don't feel like I'm running away, he said, you're running away; and I knew I wasn't running away, that was the interesting thing, and I'd said, you know what? It looks like I'm running away but I'm not, like I feel really peaceful. I feel more joyful than ever so what is going on, you know?

And that's when I tried to analyze this. So the book is really my answer to that question, that I had for those basically 10 years between 22 and 32, how was it possible to get better by getting the spiritual nourishment that I crave and that's when I came to the answer and then years even years later than that, I saw that there were certain Rabbis that were writing about this. Rabbi Shais Taub.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** Rabbi Twerski, and Rabbi David Goldwasser.

**Yael Trusch:** Yes.

**Bracha Goetz:** I just saw this like a couple of years ago, this is so funny because I've written my book like 30 years ago but I saw that he wrote a book and the name of it is, *Starving Souls: A spiritual guide to*

understanding eating disorders, well I was blown away. I know, I was blown away when I saw that –

**Yael Trusch:** Wow.

**Bracha Goetz:** Because I know, yeah! I said my book is a case study of exactly his theory and I haven't even read his book on purpose, I hadn't read it because I just want to make sure that what I'm saying is authentic just from my own experience and I don't want to be taking away his words but I know that he must be and I have read Rabbi Shais Taub's works and he also writes this and Rabbi Twerski, so I just feel like or I don't think I'm offering something completely noble but because I think all these Rabbis are onto this, too, –

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** But I am saying this from a woman's perspective and I also am just giving my own personal perspectives they're act – a person can actually see a case study of what it's like to develop their disorders and then to heal from them. So, and I don't want to say that a person can still and I'm very grateful for this, too. There are times when I still had a trigger from the past and I will remember what it's like to have those type of binge experiences, but it's very, it's like a fleeting experience but it's – I'm always grateful for it because I can still get into the head of the person that has an addiction.

**Yael Trusch:** Wow.

**Bracha Goetz:** And I think when a person has been through that, I think it's with them for their whole lives. It's so hard to ever forget what it's like because it's an un-relentless, desperate type of feeling that takes over your whole being and it's like a person is imprisoned when they have an addiction, so there's such a freedom to being released from it. You don't ever want to go back here once you've been there, but you will get triggers that will remind you of it and that's a good thing, I think, because then you can relate to people for the rest of your lives and try to help them also to overcome their addictions.

**Yael Trusch:** How beautiful. Now, Bracha, the question on my mind is not an easy one and I wonder if it's come up before, because one could argue, yes, this is all amazing, but there are people within our observant communities who are involved in a life of Torah Mitzvot who unfortunately, do have addictions. So how do we grapple with that? What's the answer to that?

**Bracha Goetz:** Right, I spoke to a number of people like these, the point is I talked to them about that they need to add more joy to their lives. There are many people also, there were, that are culturally Orthodox or they were brought up that way and they're doing it but they're not getting joy from the Mitzvot.

**Yael Trusch:** Right, it's the outlook that we need to have about Judaism and Mitzvot, right?

**Bracha Goetz:** Yeah, it needs to really be nourishing the soul, and that's the thing, if they don't feel like it is then they are, then there are things that they need to do that... do what nourishes your soul, that's what I tell people. The more you fill your life with what nourishes your soul, the less space you will have for your addiction, it just becomes less and less important because your souls is being nourished.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** And the important thing is like many times people say it's a lot of work to overcome an addiction and this, this, with this, it's not a lot of work – it's a total joy. That's the important point I want to get across because all in all is filling your life with more and more joy. This is really what God wants for us. God created us to give us pleasure, to give us the deepest pleasure possible. That's what we were needed for, so –

**Yael Trusch:** Ivdu Es Hashem B'Simcha – Serve Hashem with joy.

**Bracha Goetz:** Yeah, and Rav Noach taught that so much, that that's the purpose of life. It's so amazing because we think all the purpose of life is hard work, we got to work on ourselves but the real, the underlying purpose to that, the purpose of life is to have the deepest pleasure

possible. It may involve work but the work itself, the work if it – whatever work it involves is a joy.

It's all and I'm not saying that we don't go through painful times, again, that's another teaching, an awesome teaching, of mind blowing teaching of Rav Noach, that what's the opposite of pain? What's the opposite of... does he say what's the opposite of pleasure or what's the opposite of pain? Or anyway, it's not pain... pain is not the opposite of pleasure. Pain can often be a part of pleasure. As we know from giving birth, pain can be a huge part of pleasure.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** The opposite of pleasure is comfort and that's what addictions provides us with, they provide us with a temporary comfort and then we... to override that relentless pain, it puts us in the state of comfort, a very fleeting comfort. Oh, this tastes delicious – now I'm feeling pleasure. Yes, Hashem made pleasure, made food pleasurable. It's supposed to be a pleasure for us but there's so many other deeper way more lasting pleasures in life so when we fill our lives with those, then food just doesn't become such a major part, it's not such a need any more. Then we eat what we need. We eat what we need in order to live and do Mitzvahs and also to have pleasure from the food because Hashem made the food pleasurable.

We could be eating you know gray, dry, tasteless things to keep us alive and give us energy, but Hashem made them pleasurable with taste and smell and that's a good thing, but we get stuck on the pleasure of food when we don't have enough other pleasures in our lives, other deeper pleasures. That's what I see that again and again and people that are overeating, even if they're Orthodox, they are stuck on the pleasure of food because it's an immediate comfort, it's an immediate pleasure, and what it indicates is there's not enough other deeper, more lasting pleasures in their life right then. Let that be a message to fill one's life with other deeper pleasures, that's how I see it.

**Yael Trusch:** Hmm, beautiful. Bracha, when you were raising your children who are now adults, right? You're a grandmother already, Baruch Hashem.

**Bracha Goetz:** Yes, thank God!

**Yael Trusch:** With your daughters, do you have daughters?

**Bracha Goetz:** Yes, Thank God.

**Yael Trusch:** Were you open about your journey with eating disorders? How did you manage that?

**Bracha Goetz:** Yes, but not much, like it was not a big part of my life so they barely knew about it but they knew about it a little bit.

**Yael Trusch:** Uh-huh. But in raising them, like I guess how did – knowing what you knew from firsthand experience, were you more cautious or more to not say certain things? Now we're so hypersensitive to what we say to our daughters about related to body image and to diets and things like that. How did you relate to all that?

**Bracha Goetz:** Right, I don't know, I don't think I made it a major thing because it wasn't a major part of my life anymore. So none of them are really too involved with that kind of thing.

**Yael Trusch:** Good.

**Bracha Goetz:** And I just... I was, I encourage healthy eating but I didn't want to be like too much into... I don't know. I don't think I'd put any too much pressure on about these things at all because it wasn't –

**Yael Trusch:** Wow, and that's actually awesome to hear because it sounds like it's like a total healing, you know, like it didn't even... it wasn't at the forefront of your mind.

**Bracha Goetz:** Thank God, that's exactly the point, right, exactly. And because food is not at the forefront of my mind anymore, you know?

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** I mean the whole body image thing is just not and I guess I just feel now if I eat in a healthy way, then it's just good, you know what I mean? That's just all I have to do.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** And also –

**Yael Trusch:** So Bracha, going to your career as a... in the children's book space, you've become an observant women, you're raising your children, how did you end up as an author of children's book which is a niche in and of itself, it's not just something that anybody can pick up. It's a certain skill set.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Yes, great question. I – it's just really interesting because many people just say to me, you went to Harvard, you must be like a real intellectual and you know – but the point is, I love to think very deeply but in the most simplified way. What thrills me is to get to the essence of an idea. Is to get to the very core and so to me, children's book writing that's exactly what I love to do because I like to write about the deepest concepts in the simplest way possible and also in a joyful way because that's also my style, those are the things. So, and I tried to write the books that I wished I had as a child. The books that answer the questions that I had when I young that I want an answer, you know, like the invisible book. The invisible book is about all the things we believe in that are invisible.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** So why not God? Why not believe in a soul? Why not believe in God? We believe in time, it's invisible. We believe in what else?

**Yael Trusch:** Gravity.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** In gravity, right.

**Yael Trusch:** I have the book.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** You know that, you really must have the book, right?

**Yael Trusch:** I've read it many, many times.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** That's it, exactly. When I'm reading the book, it's funny that I forgot, when I'm reading the book in front of audiences, right away, I get to that page and I just drop the book.

**Yael Trusch:** That's cute.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** You know because the gravity, we didn't have it, it just pulls the book right down to Earth and yet we can't even see that force that's pulling the book down to Earth. See, in my books people don't realize that there is a lot of science in them too because I love science, you know, I was very involved. When I was setting, I didn't just want to be a psychologist, I want to be a psychiatrist because I love the mind-body connection.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** So that's what I'm very into so I do, I do put in a lot of Science in my books like in Remarkable Park, too, it's all about, why do we learn from animals? I'm very into nature and then Hashem's Candy Store, of course, it's all about what – again, that's about, it's about healthy eating. It's about the messages that are in food.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** I got that from God's Pharmacy which is something I saw online and then also from Rabbi Avigdor Miller's teachings about the Wisdom in an Apple, you know, I mean there's just... there is... there's so much to learn from our natural world cause Hashem put messages in everything.

**Yael Trusch:** In everything, yes.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Right, and Remarkable Park, that's what it says in the end of the book. This is to get your whole... your eyes to look at this

whole world as an open book cause that's what it was and that's I mean, that's how Abraham Lavino learned from everything, just learning from nature. There is so much, so basically, I write children's book because I am a person that's still filled with wonder about life and in that sense you know, I still had that sense of wondering I like to write in that way, still as a child, and write children's book to other children. I think I can still get in to the head of a child and I see that with my grandchildren, too, I like to play on their level, you know.

**Yael Trusch:** But it's amazing that you discovered this beautiful skill, this talent that obviously Hashem gave you. It's amazing.

**Bracha Goetz:** I love – it gives me so much joy. When I was in Ohr Sameach it's really funny, again, because they knew I went to Harvard, they kept moving me up to the advance classes and I know, really I kept sneaking back to beginners and I never left beginners. When I finally left I was still going back to a beginner's class cause that's all I wanted to learn. I just... I just want... I love the most basic concepts.

**Yael Trusch:** Great.

**Bracha Goetz:** I just want to hear them again and again and get them so deep into my soul, that's what I love –

**Yael Trusch:** Yes, I hear you.

**Bracha Goetz:** And so, yeah!

**Yael Trusch:** So some might consider 37 books and now a memoir plus raising a family, it's a herculean feat, I mean, to what do you attribute your ability to be so prolific, so productive?

**Bracha Goetz:** I'm just very... I'm very happy. I'm very... I have a lot of joy in my life. I'm very grateful. My parents raised me with so much love and so much joy and I dedicate, one of my first books is the Happiness Box, it's dedicated to my father who really gave me the gift of happiness. He's like the happiest person I ever knew. My father, a blessed memory and he was a person that had no expectations in life, he was happy with

whatever he got. I'm so grateful for all the love that I have in my life and I'm grateful that I was born a Jew.

Many people have to become a Jew and it's quite a journey. I'm grateful that I was led back to learn about the Torah, I mean, I just – thank God I was given a lot of joy in my life and I hope to share the joy with so many people because I feel that... I feel that my soul is really shining and many other people's souls are not shining yet and I really love to help people's souls to shine. My soul was covered with garbage and that happens to many people, other people, too, and we have to kind of remove the layers that grip hold the garbage that's piled on top of our souls so they can shine. That's –

**Yael Trusch:** But I'm hearing... I'm hearing some beautiful things about your parents, so –

**Bracha Goetz:** Yeah.

**Yael Trusch:** In many ways, you don't, you obviously, it's obvious that you don't blame them for what was going in your youth. It was coming from –

**Bracha Goetz:** They didn't know, they didn't know any better, you know?

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** They were uneducated in Judaism.

**Yael Trusch:** Right, right.

**Bracha Goetz:** You know, that... it's just the way it was at the turn of century, that's in my book, too. When people came over from Europe, so many, at that point this was not after the holocaust, this is the turn of the century when they came over, they would throw it to fill in the Hudson River. I mean it meant nothing to them. They didn't know the value, they can't be blamed at all and all we could do was educate and young people today, also, we have lost so many people. I almost intermarried and an intermarriage is so widespread.

**Yael Trusch:** Yes.

**Bracha Goetz:** I – we can't do enough to reach out and help to educate young Jewish people because they just don't know. I didn't know and I totally understand what that's like.

**Yael Trusch:** A 100%. Did they ever have kind of come around and start appreciating your life, the path that you chose and the way you were raising your family?

**Bracha Goetz:** Yes, so much, after the grandchildren came.

**Yael Trusch:** Yes!

**Bracha Goetz:** The grandchildren.

**Yael Trusch:** They do all of that, I'm with you. I get it.

**Bracha Goetz:** They swear how amazing these people were. They're beautiful middos, what kind people they we're, how thoughtful they we're – so when my mother, before my mother passed away, she asked if my father could live with us, before she passed away and my father had Alzheimer's. He was 84, he lived with us until he was 87. Well, most of the time and when I say that my father became observant when he was 84 because he lived in a kosher house then he was keeping Shabbos with us and he, everyday was so beautiful. He'd wake up and he'd say, "Is it Shabbos today?" because he loved being around the Shabbos table with everybody.

**Yael Trusch:** Ahh...

**Bracha Goetz:** That was his favorite part. In fact, he passed away on Shabbos with all the children around him, all the grandchildren were there. Everybody was around him, it was – I got to see it was one of the most beautiful passing's I could ever imagine. I'd never been with somebody that passed away except for my father.

**Yael Trusch:** Wow!

**BRACHA GOETZ:** And it was an incredibly spiritual experience. Oh, my, gosh! We were... I don't think we'll ever forget it.

**Yael Trusch:** Wow, wow! What a gift.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Yeah, I got to say this, he was not well at all. I mean he had a heart condition and Alzheimer's. His eyes were close and then suddenly, just before he died, he opened his eyes wide, he saw where he was going and he was like, "Huh!"... and we all saw it! It was the most amazing thing. I get... I still... I'm still... I'm getting tearful now just thinking about it, it was so many years ago, but, you know!

**Yael Trusch:** Amazing.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** I know now that my parents can see all the truth, everything and everything that's happened so I'm so grateful – For the beautiful childhood that they gave me and all the love, yes.

**Yael Trusch:** It's so beautiful. So Bracha, 37 children's book, a memoir – what's next?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** I don't know. I'm... I don't know because I don't really feel like writing books anymore, it's really interesting.

**Yael Trusch:** Really?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** I'm in a whole new place. After this memoir came out, I said to my husband, I don't think I'm going to be writing more books and he was like, come on! Well, I said ... have I ever said that before? No, I've never said it before. But I'm not, this is not, I don't know. I just feel like I've done what I had to do in that way.

**Yael Trusch:** Interesting.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** I'd still, I don't, I'm still... I still had... I worked I coordinated a big brother - big sister program, so I'm still working. I do that, it's my day job and I love doing it. It's giving mentors to children that need mentors which is very gratifying, fulfilling work. So like I'm also, I'm not like just like the psychology part of me, too, that I love doing that.

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** But what lies ahead, I don't... I really, honestly, I, this is what I really what I want to devote myself to, to spreading this concept. I feel that now that my book is out, it's almost like, it's like a hook for me to be able to talk about this concept that addiction has a spiritual basis and I really want to spread the word about nourishing souls. This is what, right now, is what I want to spend my time doing.

**Yael Trusch:** Was it hard, Bracha, to market this book to publishers giving... given that people associate you with your children's books?

**Bracha Goetz:** Oh, that's the thing – no Orthodox publisher wants to publish the book.

**Yael Trusch:** Really?

**Bracha Goetz:** Oh, this is the thing. They... this is very interesting. Non-Orthodox publishers, they would read the first half of the book. One publisher, when I lived in Israel, right back then, 30 years ago, when I was 32, I went to like the top publisher in Israel and they were like, this is the best manuscript I've ever read. Oh, I said, you read the whole book? No, only the first half. After they read the second half, I never heard from them again. They were not at all interested in publishing a book that someone had become Orthodox. The first half of the book is very interesting, that was totally... they loved that part but not the ending so and then the Orthodox publishers would not publish the first half of the book.

**Yael Trusch:** Yeah, I got you.

**Bracha Goetz:** Because, yeah, because I really go into, not the most gritty details, I leave out some things because I want Orthodox people to be able to read the book as well, but, I – for instance all my children read the book, have read the book, not all of them, most of them, whoever wanted to. I didn't tell them they had to read the book, but the young, but my grandchildren, they all say, I want to read your book, I say, when you get married you can read the book, not 'til then.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** So, I just don't feel it's appropriate for children, you know?

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** It's not the book I want them to read and not that I'm embarrassed, I'm – my children are so happy that they're parents of Baalei Teshuva. They say they... it's the best of both worlds because –

**Yael Trusch:** Wow!

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Yeah! Because they don't take it for granted, they are so appreciative of being born observant of the Torah, and yet they understand that it's not a given, that it's something that you have to strive for, so, oh! I was going to say, so the Orthodox publishers didn't want it and the non-Orthodox, nobody want to publish my book so for over 30 years, 30 years, I would once in a while send it out again, I'd edit it a little more, keep going – I get a new idea, I'd sent it to this but nobody wanted it.

So finally last year, like two years, whenever I need, when I start, I found a literary agent and she was a religious Christian and she was interested in my children's books, publishing them main stream so she began to publish... to find publishers for my children's books to publish them mainstream, because some of my books and they have universal concepts, they're not all Jewish concepts. So then when she starts doing that I said, maybe, she wants to read this so I sent her the manuscript. She was so excited about it and she was totally into it. As a religious Christian, it was the perfect person because she really love the book, so –

**Yael Trusch:** Wow!

**BRACHA GOETZ:** So she eventually found a publisher. Again, it wasn't easy for her either. For the same exact reasons, you know, because we need this just like certain people that are going to be open to publishing a book, like this which is a very spiritual book and yet, again like the Orthodox, you have to be careful about talking about certain subjects –

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** So they could how much... so it got stuck in a place that it couldn't be published but now that it's finally been published I enjoy talking about it. I use every opportunity, that's why I contacted you because I love to talk about these concepts and I just want to spread the word so as many souls can shine as possible, that's it, yeah.

**Yael Trusch:** Bracha, finish the sentences for me, okay? I'm Bracha Goetz and I feel most spiritual when?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** You know this is going to sound funny. I feel most spiritual when I'm doing body flow on the roof. We, at our JCC, in the summer time, we have this body flow dance classes on the roof of the JCC at night, so we do it under the stars with the beautiful music, with these beautiful people all around me and we're all advancing, and I would say that those are the most spiritual moments in my life.

**Yael Trusch:** I love it!

**BRACHA GOETZ:** I like... I'm in ecstasy, yeah!

**Yael Trusch:** My favorite Mitzvah or one I feel most connected with is?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** My favorite Mitzvah? Oh, my favorite Mitzvah would be all the blessing that we make before everything.

**Yael Trusch:** Really?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Because it teaches us appreciation in every moment.

**Yael Trusch:** Yes.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** It teaches us... it teaches us mindfulness, it teaches us – like when I, you know, all the Jewish people that are joined to Eastern religions so they were in the past it's all about mindfulness and that's what the blessings raise our consciousness, that's what it says, it takes us to a higher consciousness so that everything that seems mundane in the world, it's spirituality is emanating from it right when we make the blessing. It's to me, the most exciting thing.

**Yael Trusch:** That's –

**Bracha Goetz:** All the blessings in me.

**Bracha Goetz:** So nice to hear because from my perspective as a Baalei Teshuva I get it and then sometimes I struggle with, you know, getting, just losing that excitement or –

**Bracha Goetz:** Okay.

**Yael Trusch:** As a parent, seeing my kids just like not be so into it like whatever, yeah, I mothered a –

**Bracha Goetz:** Oh, yeah.

**Yael Trusch:** Berakhah, I'm like, no, no, no. Can you say it loud and clear please, people.

**Bracha Goetz:** Yes and I do that, too!

**Yael Trusch:** And then I sound like that mother.

**Bracha Goetz:** For sure, and I mumble my Berakhah sometimes, too, but that opportunity is there and when we grasp it, we are soaring, you know?

**Yael Trusch:** Yes.

**Bracha Goetz:** Exactly.

**Yael Trusch:** Yes, my fondest, sweetest Jewish memory is?

**Bracha Goetz:** Oh, that would be when I first held my husband's hand after the chuppah.

**Yael Trusch:** Oh, wow!

**Bracha Goetz:** I mean, you know, after years of being with people of the opposite gender for years and being involved with them and then dating this person who we never touched each other and it was just our souls were talking to each other the whole time, it was just so tough and after the chuppah when I felt his hand, it was like the most electric feeling,

ever. You know, I just remembered that moments so well, and yeah, that's going to be, that's it, yeah.

**Yael Trusch:** That's beautiful. Something I wished I'd learned about Judaism growing up is?

**Bracha Goetz:** Everything! Oh, my, gosh! I mean, I wished... I wished I knew what the purpose to life was, that was the main thing. I feel like Rav Noach taught me that and oh, my gosh! He had a poster in those years outside Aish HaTorah. It was a picture, this is in my book, it was a picture of this huge bagels and lox sandwich and it said, "Is this the combination of three thousand years of Jewish history?" Bagels and lox, so, and here – yeah, when I saw this, you know, here I was, a person with an eating disorder seeing that it was like, whoa! He totally gets it. Exactly!

**Yael Trusch:** Right.

**Bracha Goetz:** So like the whole purpose of life is to have the most pleasure possible –that is amazing! Nobody says that but Rav Noach, he was so ground-breaking, you know, so that it's the purpose is to have the most pleasure possible. How do we have the most pleasure possible? By filling ourselves with spiritual nourishment, there is nothing like it, nothing. So it's the most lasting deepest pleasure possible.

**Yael Trusch:** Right, it's serving Hashem. It's not serving ourselves, serving Hashem is a different kind of pleasure.

**Bracha Goetz:** But we get tremendous joy from it, too!

**Yael Trusch:** Absolutely!

**Bracha Goetz:** That's the thing, tremendous pleasure, exactly!

**Yael Trusch:** Absolutely.

**Bracha Goetz:** Exactly.

**Yael Trusch:** When I give Tzedakah, I like to give to?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** My son's Yeshiva. My son opened the Yeshiva in Phoenix, Arizona, okay!

**Yael Trusch:** Oh, how wonderful!

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Yes, there was no Yeshiva in the whole state, so he was going to call it, Yeshiva of Phoenix. So, he said, wait a minute, I'll take the whole state, so it's the Yeshiva of Arizona, so –

**Yael Trusch:** Wow!

**BRACHA GOETZ:** We give our Tzedakah money to now it's Yeshiva High School of Arizona, yeah.

**Yael Trusch:** That's awesome. I love it, I love it. Finally, I'm Bracha Goetz and today I'm most grateful for?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** I'm most grateful for... I'm most grateful for that I'm a soul that there's so much pleasure in my life now, that my soul is shining, that I could help other souls to shine. I'm most grateful for my wonderful husband who I appreciate more than ever now that the children are all married and parents themselves, and all my amazing children and grandchildren. I'm so grateful.

**Yael Trusch:** Bracha, I'm so grateful to you and for this interview. Thank you for being so open and for sharing this beautiful message with us today and for this wonderful book that I feel is out there to help everybody. We're all... we all need to reconnect to that part of us which is so real yet so easy for us to neglect and this is not just about eating disorders or addictions, it's about really finding, getting to the core of who we really are and what we're meant to be doing in this world. Thank you so much, Bracha.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Beautiful, beautiful! You said perfectly!

**Yael Trusch:** I could... I could be your agent. Everybody, the book is called, Searching for God in the Garbage and it's available on Amazon and everywhere books are sold, and you – we could follow you on Facebook to keep updated with everything that is going on with you, right?

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Right, and anybody that doesn't have money to buy the book, they can also, they could get an eBook, read it online and or you can get your public library to get the book. It's in public libraries, too, so –

**Yael TRUSCH:** Nice!

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Feel free.

**Yael TRUSCH:** Beautiful. Thank you so much, Bracha.

**BRACHA GOETZ:** Thank you!

**[THEME MUSIC]**

**Yael TRUSCH:** Thanks to Bracha Goetz for stopping by. Her latest book is, *Searching for G-d in the Garbage* and can be found on Amazon or anywhere books are sold. This is the last episode of 5778. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for being here, sharing the podcast and leaving reviews and wish you all a Shana Tova Umetukah, may it be a sweet new year where you should see only reveal good in your life. After Rosh Hashanah we shall be back here with more. We're kicking off the New Year with fashion blogger and icon, Adi Heyman. You won't want to miss her. Have a wonderful Rosh Hashanah, everyone!

**[THEME MUSIC]**

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