



# Getting on the runway

The employees at “Haboydem” don’t look different to outsiders, but peeling away their outer appearance reveals a complex world of various mental illnesses, which make it difficult to perform daily functions. Within this unique second hand clothing store, complete with professional guidance and treatment and essential community support, they acquire the skills and confidence to go out to new lives. A place where fashion, recycling and social business meet.

**Naava Stolar** • Photography: Vered Babai  
Hadas Parush Flash 90

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got the job!

Can you believe it?? It can't be, it makes no sense... I am literally shaking with excitement ... They told me I made a good impression, conveying confidence, and that they would really be pleased to employ me! You'll make a farewell party when I leave, right?" These joyful exclamations thundered through the air, as Shira (real name withheld) burst into Haboydem, on a cold winter Jerusalem morning, which was still empty of people except for the saleswomen, the store manager, and I, who had come to interview one of them. The cheers caused great excitement for all the saleswomen, all of them without exception came up to give her a big hug, to wish her success and hear more about the new role, and wishing that they too would find a new job soon.

After the excitement calmed down a little, I approached Shira and asked her for details of this important achievement. She passionately and excitedly explained that her new job was as a chambermaid in a hotel. Needless to say, I was surprised because this is not exactly a job that makes one rich. But Shira, like most of the women who work in the shop belongs to a group of people defined as dealing with mental illness. For them, finding work independently is not a trivial act and requires considerable effort and the ability to overcome all kinds of complications.





For Shira herself, this achievement represented significant progress; another step in her rehabilitation and return to normal life, as her period of work at Haboydem is drawing to a close.

### No longer invisible

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The second hand clothes shop, located in a warehouse near the Hadar Mall in the Talpiot industrial zone in Jerusalem, is a unique project to promote people recovering from mental illness and to enable them, after one year in the store, where they receive significant attention from the staff occupational therapist and other staff members, to join

the regular workforce. The store is expansive, and you can find a large selection of clothes for men, women, children and babies, as well as toys, home wares, jewelry, shoes and more. Clothes are donated by the many people who visit the store. Sometimes, the store also receives excess merchandise from retail stores or designers. Sorting the donated clothes is entrusted to the staff numbering 17 women and one man, with the money received from sales used to pay the workers' salaries.

One of the women in the store is Orna Harush (49), a shift manager who has worked eight months in the store, making her one of the more experienced employees. While we were talking, she occasionally stopped to teach a new worker how to register a sale at the cash register, or to help customers choose an outfit. A casual observer would find it hard to discover any evidence of her emotional difficulties.

Harush, well kept and very gentle, describes herself as someone who has suffered from bipolar disorder for years, which sometimes makes it difficult for her to function in her daily routine. She tries hard to overcome her many difficulties and function normally. She is married and has four adult children, two of whom are married. She comes to the store three times a week from Mevaseret Zion, for her shifts of three and a half hours. Her dream, when she leaves the store, is to become a children's aide or maybe, even learn another profession.

The public exposure of her illness is not easy, but Harush is willing to do it, in order to help others in her situation. "Many people deal with mental illness of one kind or another, but what is important to know, is that you can deal with illness and therefore do not need to hide or be ashamed of it." Harush believes her mental illness stems from the difficult childhood she experienced: she was born in Katamon in Jerusalem, and her parents decided to divorce when she was six. After her parents' divorce, she was sent to learn in an ultra-orthodox boarding school



for girls in Jerusalem, from first grade through eighth grade. On weekends, the family would come to take her to her mother's home. She recalls that on one occasion, on Rosh Hashannah eve, her mother forgot to pick her up from the boarding school. She went to look for her mother in Machane Yehuda market because she knew she would be there around that time. So she went from stall to stall in the market until she eventually found her mother. Because her mother could not function, her grandmother raised her and her brother. "I remember being quite withdrawn myself. I had friends, but I preferred to be on my own. When I was in second grade, my grandmother passed away, this was a traumatic event for me."

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**Guy Avihod: People dealing with mental illness need assistance "after the crisis" to understand why they could not find the resources to deal with the illness, and how to best overcome it. Not to let the difficulty of mental illness manage them, but to learn how to deal with the problem and manage it.**

At age 12, she switched to a seminary in Jerusalem, where she studied for two years but failed to finish. "The ultra-orthodox education system did not suit me; it was very different from what I saw at home, so I decided to leave." Later, she did a course in care-giving and then met her husband who was a carpenter. After going out for three years, they decided to marry. She was then 17. ("He showered me with love, like a father"). The difficulties began at age 19 when Harush found herself the mother of a small baby. "It was very hard for me to handle my own baby. I did not have a mother or someone else who could guide me. I faced a lot of pressure and started to get depressed. I shut myself in my room for days - not eating, not drinking and crying quite a bit, until somehow I managed get out and function, assisted by health professionals and medication.



**Orna Harush: “The children don’t always understand my difficulties. My youngest daughter tells me all the time that she does not understand why I should be taking pills.”**

strength and the tools to deal with my difficulties. I learned here how not to succumb to pressure, which results in outbreaks of depression. I also learned how to talk to people and not to get hurt by every little thing, since I am very vulnerable. I also learned to give instructions to people, which seemed very much against my personality.”

**How do you deal with stress in the store, with large numbers of people at the register, or customers who are not nice?**

“First, I take a deep breath, calm myself and it helps. Sometimes others come to help me, even though I would rather deal with it myself. Yes, there are stressful situations, but you learn to deal with them.”

**In another three months you will be finishing your year here. How do you feel towards leaving the store?**

“I will be happy to leave to somewhere else, and move on with my life. On the other hand, I have made good relationships with people here, so it will be difficult to leave.”

**“I just want to live”**

Rama Dahan (60) worked in the store until a month ago. She is now an instructor at the NPO “Enosh”, which deals with the rehabilitation of the mentally ill in the community. Until her departure, Dahan was a central and significant figure in the store. She was there from the first day that the store opened. Her name frequently came up in conversations with the girls. I was told that I must meet Rama, the driving force behind the place. Indeed, Dahan did not disappoint. The self-confidence she radiates and her smiles in all directions do not reveal the mental illness she deals with, or the tragic life she has experienced. When we sit down for a one on one conversation, her outer shell is peeled away, and the story that is exposed is not an easy one. It is hard for her to open up and tell her personal story.



**Rama Dahan: “For years I ran away to escape. I turned to drugs and alcohol, in order not to feel anything, to avoid pain or fear, so as not deal with difficulties of life.”**

Over the years, I worked at all kinds of jobs, from caregiver to helper. I could not manage to keep a job. I had ups and downs all the time, good times and less-than-good times.”

**How did the children respond to the moods and difficulties you experienced?**

“The children don’t always understand my difficulties. My youngest daughter tells me all the time that she does not understand why I should be taking pills.” Harush came to Haboydem thanks to the recommendation of her social worker, and since then, she feels she is in a much better place. This place gives me a sense that I am worth something, that I have abilities, and that I am not invisible. It gives me

Like Harush, she only does it to help other people in her situation. She was born in completely normative family, warm and supportive, in the Abu Tor neighborhood of Jerusalem, to parents of Algerian origin. During high school, she met the love of her life and soon became pregnant. At the age of 18, she became the mother of “a beautiful little baby who later grew into an amazing young man”. She adds, “until the day he was murdered.” Her efforts to have additional children were unsuccessful, despite the treatments she underwent, and she found herself with only the memory of her only son - the love of her life. For Dahan, this was not the only tragedy that she was to experience, although it left the deepest scars in her soul. At a relatively young age, she also lost her husband who was murdered. “I really loved my husband, it was a love that remained unfulfilled. For many years, I was angry that he dared to be killed and abandon me. Today, after years of psychological treatment and faith in the Creator-of-the-world, I have let go of this anger. I understand today that there are some issues in our lives that are not dependent on us. On the other hand, I have also much gratitude, for the goodness occurring in my life.” Dahan refused to go into detail regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of her loved ones. But it seems that, despite the passing years, the pain is still burns powerfully within

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her, as well as the longing for them.

“Even though my child died, he continues to accompany me. I live for him and preserve myself for him. My heart is broken; I am consumed with longing and emotions of guilt for not being there for him. My house became a kind of shrine for him. I talk to him every day and I feel he replies. The first thing I do when I go home is kiss his picture. I believe that he is in a better world, and that is what helps me live”. Until two years ago, Dahan was told that she suffers from a personality disorder. After a reexamination, the doctors realized that she was suffering from schizophrenia. “Over the years I have had quite a few hospitalizations caused by depression and fears that I experienced as anxiety and fear of failure. I was depressed, having shut myself up in my room and disconnected from the world. I would not eat or drink, and stopped taking medication. I would also hear all kinds of noises. So this would go on for a while, until some family members appeared and would hospitalize me.

Years ago, the understanding of mental health wasn't so advanced and they didn't know what they know today. When I look back over my life, I think my childhood may have been different, had I been diagnosed at an early age. For years I ran away to escape. I turned to drugs and alcohol, in order not to feel anything, to avoid pain or fear, so as not deal with difficulties of life”. The decision to join the workforce was reached later in her life, since in the world Dahan was brought up, it was clear that the man's role was to work and to provide support. Only after her husband was murdered, did she decide to go to work. “Up until the time my husband was murdered, I did not think that the role of the woman was to get up in the morning and take care of herself. Only after I was left alone, and out of economic necessity, I decided to go to work. Once I weaned myself off drugs, I worked with at-risk youth and ex-addicts. Later I worked at all kinds of clothing stores, but I did not manage to keep any job for long.” The last hospitalization, which was also the hardest, led Dahan to decide that this time she was determined to overcome it. This last time I admitted myself was on the eve of Passover. I had sunk to a very poor condition, having run out of steam. It was after the memorial of my son's death, a very traumatic period for me.



Three months of hospitalization was very hard, but on the other hand, I decided to go for broke and wanted it to be the last hospitalization. I let the doctors take care of me and I listened to them. At the same time, I decided to accept my illness—the schizophrenia - and to deal with it. This time, the doctors did not give up on me. They were determined to try everything until something really worked, so it would be the last time I would be checked in. They tried all sorts of medications. In the end of my stay, they referred me to the Ministry of Health's Basket of Rehabilitation Services ("Sal Shikum") committee, who told me about a new second-hand clothing store that was about to open up, and where I could fit in. This time I decided not to give up on myself and resolved to remain in the place even if it wasn't easy. I was helped by many professionals and it has proved itself. I slowly progressed from sorting, and eventually became a shift manager, and the rest is history."

Today Dahan is balanced in terms of her medication, which, in her opinion, works wonders. And most importantly – without the apathy or dulling side-effects which psychotic drugs sometimes cause. About a month ago, she started working for "Enosh" and is very happy with her job.

"Toward the end of my work at Haboydem, I sent my resume to several places and in the end I was accepted by "Enosh". The fact that I was still working at the time at 'Haboydem', when I was looking for the job really helped me, it gave me the backing and confidence, because looking for a job can be very stressful, and brings anxiety that perhaps they will not want us, because they will be afraid."

**What did you get from working at Haboydem?**

"This Haboydem is a gift that I received from the Creator of the universe. He told me – try a little more, another hospitalization, and in the end, you will also receive a gift. This place has given me insight that the sky is the limit. I received security, warmth and a supportive family, companions, and especially, the will to live. Now I have



hope and faith that I can work, outside of sheltered workshops". **Beyond the friendships formed and security you have gained on the job, you feel that the work there has changed your outlook?** "Totally. I used to think that whoever seeks help, is a weak person. Today I understand that anyone seeking help simply wishes to live."

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**Learn to manage the illness**

"My dream is to establish a network of stores all over country, to help as many people recovering from mental illness to recover and live full and healthy lives", says Guy Avihod (40), one of the founders behind this unique

**SOCIAL CAMPAIGN**

**Students from Emunah College in a unique fashion presentation**

To mark the opening of the new Haboydem store in the center of Jerusalem, students from the Emunah College offered to create a unique Jerusalem awareness campaign, wearing clothes from the store. The production was orchestrated by Moran Dahan and stylist Tal Greenberg. Photos, taken at different locations in the streets of Jerusalem, were intended to awaken an identification and support for our capital city which has suffered these last few months, under the wave of terror attacks.

project and who runs the shops in Jerusalem. He is currently very busy establishing the second store in the center of Jerusalem, at Kikar Zion. As we talked, he pulls out of his pocket his smartphone and shows me with great excitement, the images of the new store. "We took the respected designer Dror Zunz, who, with attention to every detail, designed our European-style store; a prestigious boutique. When so that people enter the store, they feel that they are in a special place." Avihod entered the field of mental health quite by accident, but was drawn into it. He is now doing a post graduate degree in social work, and is working on a Ph.D thesis on the subject. In the course of his travels around the world to raise funds, he lectures on the field and his experience within it.

Avihod was born in Jerusalem and grew up in Los Angeles, a family of traditional background that became more observant. At age 17, he skipped a grade, so shortly before he celebrated his 20th birthday, he had already completed his B.A. in political science. "I wanted to become the Prime Minister, until I realized that the real power is in civilian society." Afterwards, he returned to Israel and did his military service as an officer for basic training inductees. At 23, he married and returned to the United States to work in his father's successful business, manufacturing custom-made wheel chairs. Despite the good life and economic comforts, he decided at the age of 27 to return with his young family to Israel. For six years he studied toward the Rabbinat in the Kollel of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu ("It was a privilege and a great gift"), but decided not to continue serving as a community rabbi or in the Rabbinat. "I was not interested in the Rabbinat with all the politicization that went with it. I was looking to do something more meaningful for society, which would make me feel that my life too could have some significance." He started giving a daily daf yomi shiur in the synagogue next to his home in the Arnona neighborhood of Jerusalem. It was there that one of his students who worked in the field of mental health, introduced him to the issues of the profession, and proposed to establish a rehabilitative Beit Midrash for mentally disabled. Avihod grasped the opportunity with both hands, running from one mental hospital to the next, to hostels and visited family health clinics. He then recruited a group of rabbis to teach within the first Beit Midrash. Within seven years, it became a network of religious schools throughout the country with around 250 people learning. "It was a kollel attended by people learning in pairs, chavrutot, learning Talmudic studies. We are talking about people who until then were not doing anything, some did not even receive any psychiatric assistance, because there was no one to help them or offer them something significant. The chavruta study gave these people meaning to their lives, and a sense of security and self-worth."

While working in the Beit Midrash, Avihod was exposed to various aspects

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in the field of mental health. At some point, he understood that one of the problems that people with severe mental illness find that it is difficult during the initial phase of rehabilitation to find a job and become part of it. Avihod, who describes himself as hyperactive, equipped himself to tackle the issue and decided to try and find a solution. "The Ministry of Health has a basket of rehabilitative services to people with mental health problems, "Sal Shikum", providing services in the fields of housing, vocation and social life. But the field of "transitional employment", meaning preparation for permanent employment, is not yet fully developed. People dealing with mental illness need assistance "after the crisis" to understand why they could not find the resources to deal with the illness, and how to best overcome it. Not to let the difficulty of mental illness manage them, but to learn how to deal with the problem and manage it. "Three years ago he opened a plant nursery in the First Train Station in Jerusalem, which was intended to provide transitional employment." The store did not succeed because the business model was not right, so then he decided to focus on clothing. Together with businessman Elie Lederman of Raanana, they decided to set up the project that required raising considerable resources.

"The people who work here come from assisted housing programs, hostels or hospitals, acquire skills needed for working on the outside. The store is actually a laboratory, allowing them to

work on their individual difficulties and help them recover. We teach them about individual choice, independence and self-confidence, with the goal being that they will be able to perform any work that they wish to pursue afterwards, once they leave here. The store is very open and encouraging, we talk about everything openly. We work closely with the Ministry Of Health,

and their "Sal Shikum" representative, Merav Admon's insight is critical to our success. We receive the ongoing professional support and guidance of Dr. Naama Katz, an expert in mental health at the Ono Academic College, who advises us throughout the process and shows how to support the personal growth of our workers. By her side, we have our own staff occupational therapist, Vered Goldman-Gerber, who is in the shop four days a week. We also have Stephanie, our in-house stylist, who takes care of the layout of the store, and my wife, Eris, who has joined to help manage the store. We build individualized rehabilitation programs for each worker, defining goals and objectives that are tested along the way. The workers reinforce each other; there is a very positive dialogue between them all."

**You do not feel that the fact that most of the workers are mentally ill might scare away the customers?**

"Many buyers come to the store do not know the story behind the creation of the store or feel that the saleswomen have any difficulty. People are afraid of mental illness, because they are not sufficiently familiar and they are fed primarily by movies. The majority of our workers, who have completed their year here, have been able to enter the labor market outside. The women who walk out of here are in a different place. They believe in themselves, are aware of their capabilities, and most importantly, the disease is no longer managing them." ■