

Chocolate for a healthier generation

Jay Levinson

Is chocolate healthy? Unsurprisingly, the answer is usually “no.” That is not to say that it must be absolutely eliminated. One must realize that adding sugar to a food adds no nutritional benefits. An excess of sugar can generate or increase health problems. Even school children are taught that sugar can be a cause of tooth decay. For adults, common problems include insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome, obesity, and Type 2 diabetes.

A common source of excess and unneeded sugar is the wide variety of snacks on the market today. Do you really need to eat the snack? That is a separate question, but in many cases you certainly do not need the sugar. One of the most popular brands of mehadrin dairy chocolate sold in Israel has 13.25 grams of sugar in every 100 gram chocolate bar!

Milk is generally healthy, but it does have its drawbacks, not only in terms of possible allergies and lactose intolerance. There can be problems with fats.

Yair Darel, CEO of Ornat, the company in Kadima producing JOMO chocolates, is very clear: the health problem is not the chocolate, it is the sugar and sometimes the dairy additives.

Ornat started out in 1988 as just another gourmet chocolate company looking for a niche in the institutional customer market (restaurants, hotels, catering, etc.), but there was fierce competition. Then came the usual problems, including increased overheads, leading to lower product cost and quality. By 2013 the company failed

and was sold to Yair Darel.

There was no point in repeating failure. Darel decided that a new path was needed. Anyone can just redesign the wrapper and declare a new product, but serious change needs time. Darel studied the market, travelled extensively, tasted different chocolates, and set a new direction. His position in the market was to sell chocolate as a healthy product.

Darel experimented. He found Chinese herbs to add interest to chocolates. He tried new manufacturing techniques. Then, in 2016, he introduced a new line of no sugar, “healthy” chocolates for institutional customers.

“Puff the magic dragon,” as the song goes. All went reasonably well until Covid-19. Then there were virtually no tourists coming to Israel, so airline sales declined. Hotel sales declined. Weddings were sized down drastically, so there were very few orders from caterers. The events of 7 October 2023 only intensified the situation. Something new was needed in marketing the chocolates. JOMO was to be the solution.

Today’s younger generation is conscious of health, but likes to enjoy life. There is no need to refrain from chocolate. Eat a healthy piece of chocolate. “Piece” and not the entire bar all at once. Darel stresses that his chocolates are divided into breakable sections. A portion is one section, two at most, and not more.

Youth understand FOMO (for the older ones of us, Fear Of Missing Out --- apprehension to miss something, like a tempting chocolate bar). Darel’s new product was thus named JOMO (Joy Of



Missing Out --- passing on the standard product for something healthy). The sales emphasis shifted from institutional to individual customers.

JOMO costs more than an on-the-self supermarket chocolate. They tend to be sold in health and natural food stores. All chocolates are suffering from the increased price of cocoa beans, up five times what it was in the recent past. For kashrus reasons (decision of the certification), all beans are purchased only from the Ivory Coast and Ghana, even though they are sold from other countries.

JOMO comes in an increasing number of flavours, all pareve and vegan, and all under Eida supervision (not Pesach). There are also snack packages and a newly introduced spread. Yair Darel, the CEO, is honest and straightforward. Just as he says not to over-eat JOMO,

he stresses that although no product contains sugar, these chocolates are not appropriate for a diabetic because of other ingredients.

International sales are just starting, first in Chareidi neighbourhoods in the United States. Discussions are already underway to expand sales. (If marketing considerations mean only local kashrus certification on the label, there will always be an unwritten Eida *hashgocho* as well, without exception.

Recommendation: all seven tasters to whom I gave samples were unanimous that Jomo chocolates taste very good. Some tasters felt that the chocolates are less bitter than standard pareve products, and two thought the taste was of dairy chocolate, despite being pareve. Perhaps most significantly, the three adult tasters all asked where the product can be purchased. Enjoy!

An act of compassion and inclusion

Invisible Tribe: Stories of Strength and Encouragement for Children Coping with the Loss of a Parent-Sara Miriam Gross – Menucha Publishers

R. Deutsch

As an author, Mrs. Gross had a dream: she wanted to write a book which she would have loved to read as a child – a book for children who have lost a parent, as she did at age 7. And so, she did...

In this heartwarming story collection, children of all ages – including adults with an inner child who never had this chance – will discover other boys and girls who have also lost a parent. The stories cover many different situations and are laced with humour and very real emotions. Although the stories are fictional, or perhaps precisely because of this fact, children will readily identify with the characters and the challenges shared.

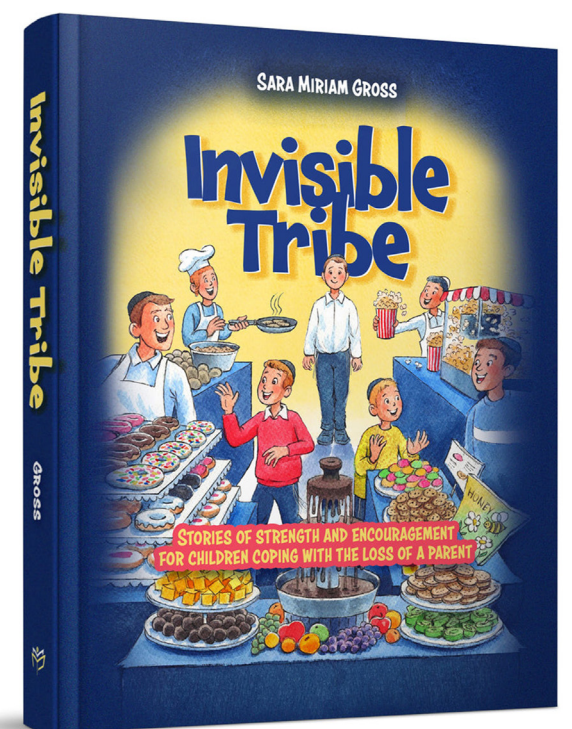
Invisible Tribe has been organised into sections for boys and girls, as well as a separate section on the adventures and ups and downs of the “Peppercorn” family. With an easy-to-use index at the back for children who want to read about a particular topic (yarzheit, Kaddish, birthdays...) and beautiful full-colour illustrations by Dena Ackerman, this

book will definitely become a favourite with those children who, unfortunately, are in this situation.

Taking care to protect the feelings of orphans is a mitzvah which is mentioned five times in the Torah, underscoring its importance. When children who come into contact with an orphan can understand them a little better, this mitzvah becomes easier to keep. With guidance from a teacher, for example, classmates of a child who has lost a parent could read one or two stories and come to a deeper level of caring for their hurting friend.

Invisible Tribe contains 42 beautifully written stories, which were originally written for the Links Family publications, under the directorship of Mrs. S. R. Kohn. “Stories have the power to hug our heart, whisper courage in our ears, and show us paths we may not have seen before...” reflects Mrs. Kohn in her approbation. “... we witnessed the magic firsthand. Our kids [members] saw themselves reflected in the pages, understood their feelings better, and felt less alone.”

On reading this book, Rebbetzen Tziporah Gottlieb of Neve Yerushalayim commented, “**Invisible Tribe** is more



than a book. It is an act of compassion and inclusion. No one invites tragedy, but facing the next day and the day after will be far easier (and happier) with this book in your heart.”

Sara Miriam Gross had a dream. Now that she has actualised her dream, she has another one: that this book soon become obsolete, with the arrival of Moshiach, speedily in our days.