

## **Jewish Heritage of Family Education in Finance**

### **A story told by a Chinese-Jew mom**

When I returned to Israel during the year 1992, my eldest child age 13, second child age 12 and my 10 year old daughter still stayed temporarily in China. Choosing that critical moment to go back to Israel was a complete dead end; my father was Jewish and he fled to Shanghai during World War II in which I was born there. My mother left us while I was very young and my father passed away when I was 12. I became an orphan. When I grew up, I worked at a copper factory as a female worker. After bearing 3 kids after marriage, my husband abandoned us. Staying in Shanghai, my eyes were filled with these memories of pain. It just so happened that Chinese-Jewish relations were established at the time. Feeling the need to escape, a need for a way out, I became one of the first groups of Jewish descendants in China to return.

My stay in Israel was harder than I thought during the first few days, I didn't understand the language (Father taught me Hebrew which wasn't used in Israel anymore), not understanding the favorable immigrant policy (new immigrants can obtain a sum of family stipend), I didn't know how to survive on the streets of Tel Aviv.

The savings I brought from Shanghai could only sustain me for 3 months of living expenses, and yet I needed to find a way to earn a living, and be able to bring my children back to live with me. I studied Hebrew arduously, learning the very basics of daily living words, I then invested in a small food-stand next to the road by selling spring rolls.

The currency in Israel is the Shekel, 1 Shekel equals about 25 Cents (US Dollar), the smaller currency is the Yageluo. 1 Shekel is about 100 Yageluos. My spring rolls shop can make up to ten or so Shekels. After a while, my spring roll stand business started to stabilize. In May 1993, I brought my three children back to Israel.

When the children first arrived in Israel, they were criticized by many of my neighbors. In the time while I was in China, I had uphold my own principle that no matter how tough things were, I would try as hard as possible to protect my children from the difficult situations. After arriving in Israel, I still did what a qualified Chinese styled mother would do: I sent my children to school, sold my spring rolls while they were in the school. After school ended in the afternoon, they came to my stand, I would stop the business and make wonton noodles for their dinner.

One day, my 3 children sat around me while I was cooking the dinner, one of my neighbors came and scolded at my eldest child, "you're a grown up child already, you should learn to help your mother instead of standing there like a fool, watching her busying all day restlessly." She then turn to me, started scolding me, "don't take the outdated Chinese way of parenting here to Israel, and do not think that you may be qualified as a mother just because you have given birth the child."

The neighbor's words were sharp and hurting, both I and my eldest child felt horrible. After we got home, I comforted my eldest one, "it's okay, mom can still hold on, I like to

look after you all.” To my surprise, the eldest one said, “Maybe she was right, mom, let me try and look after my brother and sister.”

The second day was a day for prayer, the kids were dismissed early from school and came to my stand, the oldest one sat next to me and learned after me in beating the skins of the spring rolls, rolling it up and frying it on the pan making the finished product. His moves were quite awkward, but it became increasingly skillful after days went by.

The changes on my eldest son were so great that even I could not believe. Not only helping me makes spring rolls, he also took some of the spring rolls he made, sold them to his classmates. Every morning, all three of them would take 20 spring rolls each to school and came back with 10 Shekels of income, turned them all to me. My heart felt for them while thinking of them bearing the burden of the family finance during such a young age. But they didn't complain at all, instead, they said they started to enjoy the feeling of making money.

The neighbors frequently came and chat with me, lecturing me on how a proper Jewish family runs, how to educate the child – Jewish people never feel that there's an age limit as far as start generating revenue. Similar to the Chinese way of parenting, “educating from early childhood,” the Jewish will take it further and think that to “make money from early childhood” is the best education there is. The neighbors told me that in a Jewish family, there is no free food and care, everything comes with a price, every child needs to learn how to make money to obtain all of their needs. I thought this method was kind of cruel and hard to accept. But the kids were also taught using this concept at school. It was easier for them to accept the concept than for me. Finally, I decided to change my Chinese way of educating the children and trained them to be Jews.

Firstly, I established a compensatory mechanism at home, nothing was free for the usage in the house, including the food and services that I provided as a mother. Eating at home, they needed to pay me 100 Yageluos for each meal, washing clothes costs them 50 Yageluos. At the same time, I gave them opportunities to make money. 30 Yageluos for each spring roll they would buy from me, they can add prices to sell and make profits in their own ways.

The first afternoon after they came back, I got news that the three kids sell their spring rolls in different methods, the youngest one was more straightforward and sold the spring rolls with the original price, 50 Yageluos each and she made 400 Yageluos. The second child used a wholesale plan in which she sold all the spring rolls with the price of 40 Yageluos to the school cafeteria, making 200 Yageluos in net profit, but he told me that the cafeteria is willing to buy up 100 spring rolls everyday. The oldest child used a very unique method, using a “bring you to China” lecture, introducing Chinese culture. The lecture includes a smaller piece of free spring roll for each person, but the ticket to enter the lecture costs 10 Yageluos. He divided the spring roll into 10 pieces per roll and had 200 customers, making 2000 Yageluos. After giving the school 500 Yageluos for space usage, he made a total of 1500 Yageluos.

Apart from the method used by the youngest child, the two older ones used methods totally out of my imagination. To my surprise that in such a short time, my three children who used to know only to stick by me and purr, could turn into Jewish businessmen.

Their grades were unaffected by the business, and in order to figure out more innovative ways of making money, they tried their best to learn and to think. The teachings in the classes were suited for them, because there weren't any preaching on charity giving in the lectures. In fact, the teacher did asked them a question, "when under attack by one with different religion, and you have to run for your life, what would you bring with you?" As for this question, answering "money" or "diamonds" isn't correct. This is because no matter money or diamonds, once taken away, you will lose it forever. The correct answer is "education." Different from property, as long as one lives, education cannot be taken away by others. They were very impressed with what the teacher said, "if you want to become millionaires in the future, learn from what you've got right now, because they will be of crucial importance to you in the future.

When the oldest one learnt the immigration laws during law class, he told me a family like us could and should be able to receive stipends from the government. I went to the hearing and received 6000 Shekels; this was a great sum to our family. After that, the eldest one told me that because he provided me this information, I should pay him a 10% commission fee. I hesitated for some time and finally decided to give him the 600 Shekels. After he got the money, he bought beautiful presents for all of us. As for the rest of the money, he said he will turn them into more money. Later on, he used this money to buy some cheap stationary from China and went to retail them in school. The profits were used to buy the next supply of assets to generate income. After one year, his account was way past 2000 Shekels.

Even though the eldest one knew how to make money, but in reality, the second child grasped the essence of Jewish business strategy - engaging in industries without put in capital, doing things others don't do, no extra money spent on investment. While the oldest child was using the resources of his home country China to make money, the second one was using the same resource, but a very different approach. He started a column on the newspaper with his 14 years old writing, introducing Shanghai culture and sceneries. With 2 columns per week, 1000 words per column, he made 8000 Yageluos per month.

The youngest child was a girl, since she was more reserved, and didn't show the talents for making money, but I was gratified to see that she inherited the Jewish views toward life with optimism and elegance. She learned to make tea and desserts. Every night, she will make a pot of black tea, along with desserts of her own style. The whole family sits down to eat and talk. Her desserts mixed with Chinese and Western taste, both brothers loved them. Of course these snacks weren't free; both brothers had to pay for them. After everything she had to pay for me, my youngest child still lived a quite enriched life.

When our family grew more prosperous in finance, the four of us started a Chinese restaurant. I held 40% of the stock, the oldest 30%, the middle child 20% and the youngest 10%. Soon the family restaurant became famous and we drew much attention from the society. I became a celebrity when once I was invited to meet and greet by the Labbin,. By this time, I have become fluent in Hebrew, plus the mother language Chinese. Opportunity came when I was considered to have the language advantage and was invited by the National diamond company of Israel to serve as the chief representative to China.

When I came back to China for the new job, my children were come along with me. With comparison with the Chinese kids, I came to realize that my kids were much more accomplished, even beyond my imagination. Before packing up for China, every child went to buy many Israeli goods. After settled in China, one of the teachers came to me complaining that my kids were selling Israeli goods including costumes and bullet shells etc. She suggested me that I should discipline my children. I told her that I didn't think I had the right to interfere with the ways my children conduct in businesses; and that because I was no longer responsible for their education expenses, this is how they supported themselves. The teacher was shocked with her mouth wide opened; she couldn't believe that with a monthly salary of 5000 USD I didn't pay for my children's education. I invited her to taste the 2-dollar snacks that my daughter made, and told her with my proud smile, "this is to show the little fruit that my kids had bare, through the years of learning from the Jewish education and ways. I truly believe that they will all grow up with talent and greatness."

After the university entrance examination, the eldest son entered a travel and recreation college of technology, he said he wanted to become professional in this area and go to Israel to start his own travel company monopolizing the Chinese tourism. The following year, the second child enrolled in Shanghai foreign language college, he said he wanted to become a writer, making money without putting in his own investment. The youngest child wanted to learn Chinese culinary, become a top baker of desserts and open her own bakery shop that would be the best in Israel.

After returning to China, I discovered that many Chinese parents were live in a contradicted set of mind: hoping that their children would all turn out as millionaires but at the same time were so afraid that they would be addicted to money. Just like hoping the kids to have happy families but at the same time afraid so much that they would start relationships too early in their lives. The Jewish used the sound of coins banging to greet the birth of their children; and money is their ultimate goal of life. As for education, learning, etc. are all heading to achieve this same goal. Chinese parents, however, even with great visions, they dare not to talk about this subject matter. Is this sentence so hard to speak out? Really, it's only one simple sentence, "child, I want to become a mother of a billionaire..."