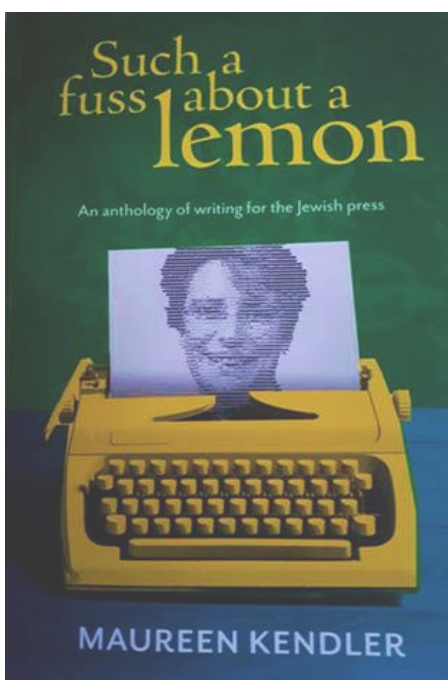


Maureen's Torah

וְהַגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעֵבוֹר
זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם:

“And you shall tell your child on that day, saying: it is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt” (Exodus 13:8)



“Amid the high drama of the Children of Israel leaving Egypt, planning education for future generations is the priority. Epoch-making moments are unfolding: the Israelites are charged to mark and feel the uniqueness and significance of what is happening. They must memorialise the Exodus for every generation to come, who will not know about it. To give this event eternal significance and reverberation across time is an ambitious but vital task.

It takes genius in the heat of the moment to say: what is happening now is of inestimable importance. Forgetting is going to be much more natural – and much easier than remembering. But it is essential that this story, of all stories, is passed on.”

(Such a fuss about a lemon: An anthology of writing for the Jewish press, Maureen Kendler, 2022, p.16)

“Pass the parcel. That’s sometimes all you can do. Take it, feel it, and pass it on. Not for me, not for you, but for someone, somewhere, one day. Pass it on, boys. That’s the game I want you to learn. Pass it on.”

— Hector in Alan Bennett’s, *The History Boys* (2004)



Listen to:

BBC Radio 2 Pause For Thought:

Maureen Kendler on

‘My Favourite Teacher’ (9.10.15).



Ecclesiastes 12:11

The words of the wise are like prods,
and like nails well planted;
from the composers of collections,
given from a single shepherd.

דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים כְּדָרְבָנוֹת
וְכַמְסָמוֹת נְטוּעִים
בְּעֵלֵי אֲסָפוֹת
נִתְּנוּ מֵרֹעֶה אֶחָד :

Jerusalem Talmud - Sanhedrin 10:1

“The words of the Sages are like prods” (Eccl. 12:11) – Rabbi Huna said, like a beautiful gem (*kidror naot*)...

“דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים כְּדָרְבָנוֹת” - אָמַר
רַבִּי חוּנָה : כְּדָרוֹר נְאוֹת...

A different interpretation: “like prods” – like this ball thrown between the girls (*kechadur banot*). Just as this ball is thrown from hand to hand, and eventually will come to rest in one hand, so “Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly.” (Pirkei Avot 1:1)

דָּבָר אַחֵר : “כְּדָרְבָנוֹת” - כְּכַדוּר
הַזֶּה בֵּין הַבָּנוֹת. מֵהַ כְּכַדוּר הַזֶּה
מִקְלָטָת מִיָּד לְיָד וְסוּפָה לְנוּחַ
בְּיַד אֶחָד. כִּדּוּ מִשָּׁה קֶבֶל תּוֹרָה
מִסִּינַי וּמִסָּרָה לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ וְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ
לְזִקְנִים וְזִקְנִים לְנְבִיאִים
וְנְבִיאִים מִסָּרָה לְאַנְשֵׁי כְּנֶסֶת
הַגְּדוּלָּה.

Another point, “like prods” (*darvonot*). A prod has three names, *mardea* (Mishnah Oholot 16:1), *darvan* (1 Sam. 13:21), and *malmad* (Jud. 3:31):

דָּבָר אַחֵר : “כְּדָרְבָנוֹת” - שְׁלֵשָׁה
שְׁמוֹת יֵשׁ לוֹ : מַרְדֵּעַ דָּרְבָן
וּמְלָמֵד :
מַרְדֵּעַ - שֶׁהוּא מוֹרָה דִיעָה בַּפֶּה.
דָּרְבָן - שֶׁהוּא מְשָׁרָה בִינָה בַּפֶּה.
מְלָמֵד - שֶׁהוּא מְלַמֵּד אֶת הַפֶּה
לְחַרוֹשׁ בְּשִׁבִיל לִיתֵן חַיִּים
לְבַעֲלֶיהָ.

Mardea – because it imparts knowledge to the cow.

Darvan – because it generates understanding in the cow.

Malmad – because it teaches the cow to plough, in order that it thus keep its owners alive. [with a good harvest].

אָמַר רַבִּי חֲמָא בַר חֲנִינָה : אִם
לְפָרְתוֹ עוֹשֶׂה אָדָם דָּרְבָן, לִיָּצְרוֹ
הָרַע שֶׁהוּא מַעֲבִירוֹ מִחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם
הַזֶּה וּמִחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא עַל אַחַת
כְּמָה וְכְמָה .

Rebbi Hama bar Hanina said: If a person makes a prod for their cow, then for their bad inclination – which will remove them from this world and the World-to-Come – how much more so they have to make one.

“...and like nails planted” (Eccl. 12:11) - Why does the verse not say, “like nails well fixed” or “like and trees planted”? They selected the choicest iron and the advantage of an orchard that is immovable.

“וְכַמְסָמוֹת נְטוּעִים” - וְלָמָּה
לֹא אָמַר “וְכַמְסָמוֹת קְבוּעִים
וְכַאֲלֵנוֹת נְטוּעִים”? בְּחֵרוֹ לָהֶם
בְּיָרְרוֹ הַבְּרָזָל וְשִׁבְחוּ הַמַּטֵּעַ
שְׁלֵמְטִיל.

A different explanation, “and like nails well planted” – just as this nail, once you fixed it, then even if you go back and extract it from its place, the place where it was is still recognisable; so too against any one whom the Torah scholars extended a hand [i.e. excommunicated], even though they went back afterwards and drew them near, in the end they will get what they deserve from their hands...

דָּבָר אַחֵר : “וְכַמְסָמוֹת נְטוּעִים”
- מֵהַ הַמְסָמֵר הַזֶּה אֶת קוֹבְעוֹ, אִף
עַל פִּי שְׂאֵת חוֹזֵר וְנוֹטְלוֹ מִמְקוֹמוֹ
מְקוֹמוֹ נִיכָר, כִּדּוּ כָּל מִי שֶׁפָּשְׁטוּ
יְדֵיהֶם הַרְבִּים בּוֹ יָד, אִף עַל פִּי
שְׁחִזְרוּ וְקָרְבוּ אוֹתוֹ סוּפוֹ לִיטוּל
אֶת שְׁלוֹ מִתַּחַת יְדֵיהֶם...

A different explanation, “like nails well planted” – When the words of Torah leave the mouths of their owners in a proper manner, they are sweet to those who hear them, “like nails well planted”. But when words of Torah come garbled, they are as bitter to those who hear them, like nails.

דָּבָר אַחֵר : “וְכַמְסָמוֹת
נְטוּעִים” - בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁדְּבָרֵי תּוֹרָה
יוֹצְאִין מִפִּי בְּעֲלִיהֶן כְּתִיקָנוֹ הֵן
עֲרִיבִין לְשׁוּמְעֵיהֶן כְּמְסָמוֹת
נְטוּעִים, וּבְשָׁעָה שֶׁהֵם יוֹצְאִין
מִמוֹסָמְסִין הֵם מְרִין לְשׁוּמְעֵיהֶן
כְּמְסָמוֹת .