

גיליון 3751 • 4.3.2019 • 19.00 שקל (כולל מע"מ) • מחיר ללא מע"מ: 16.20 שקל

לאשה



אביה מלכה
התגברה על חרם של שנים והפכה לכוכבת ילדים



קארין זילבר
רזתה 50 קילו ועשתה הסבה למדריכת ריצה



שרי זאבי
התאוששה מחובות של מיליונים והיא מנטורית עסקית



סארה אבו כף
הגיעה מכפר בדואי עד לפוסט דוקטורט בהרווארד



אם אנחנו הצלחנו גם את יכולה!

ענהאל כליפה ודינה סמטה סולניות להקת "שלוה", לא נותנות לעיוורון לעצור אותן בדרך להופעה באירוויזיון



אברהם חינוך
מחולאים מפתיעים

יך יוכלו כוכבות השער לזנות מהיליון? "לאשה" מגישה: הכתבות הוקלטו ע"י הספרייה המרכזית לעיוורים ולבעלי לקויות קריאה (המרכז לתרבות מונגשת)

אתנה!
רוצות לזכות במארו טיפות בית AHAVA? מדוסי כמ"ג



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"If I Succeeded, So Can You"



We were chosen

To Perform in the Eurovision Despite our Blindness

Neither one was born in Israel, neither one can see, and both of them melted hearts when they sang with the Shalva Band in "Cochav Haba L'Eurovision: (and are now preparing for a performance in the semi-finals there!)"

Dina Samte and Anael Khalifa want to deliver an optimistic message to parents of children with disabilities.

When the magazine's project "If I Succeeded So Can You" started out, it was clear that each issue should feature some extraordinary image, someone whose career began from challenging beginnings and who succeeded in reaching the summit. The fact that the Shalva Band, seven of whose members have disabilities, withdrew from the Cochav Haba competition in order not to violate Shabbat, and despite that was invited to sing at the competition in Tel Aviv in May, made it clear that this was no passing gimmick. With appearances all over the world, from Moscow to New York, it seems they're here to stay. Dina Samte and Anael Khalifa, the two soloists of the band, tell their inspiring stories.

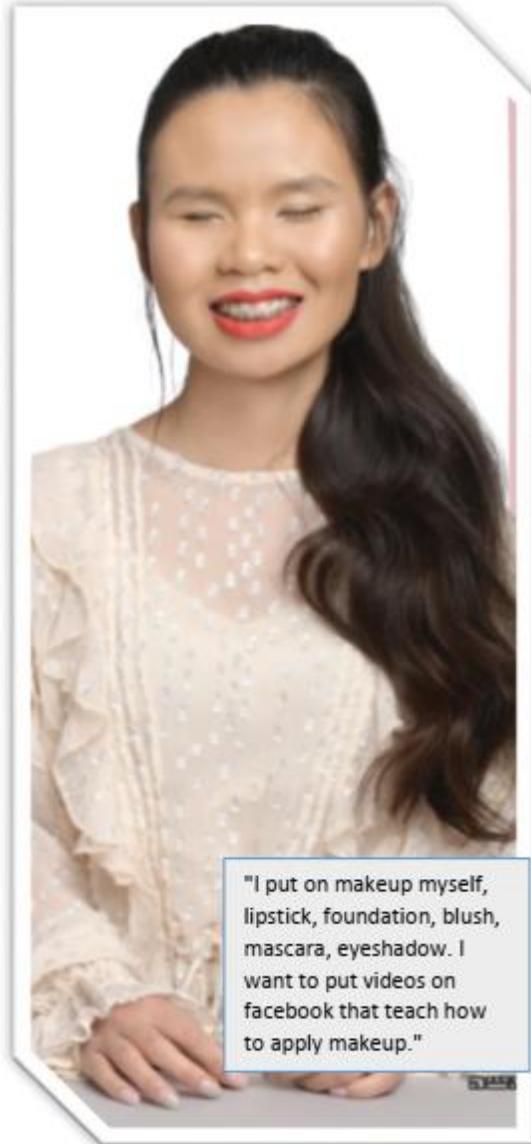
Translated from an article in La'Isha Magazine by Zipporah Roman
Photos by Jonathan Blum, Styling by Yaheli Avichezer

Dina: "After one of the programs my mother said: 'If I had known this is what would become of you, I wouldn't have cried so much.'"

Anael: " My parents were right when they decided to mainstream me in a regular school, even if on more than one occasion I felt that my friends didn't want to go out with me because I was different."



Dina: I was nervous, and Shai, the band director told me there were about 100 people in the audience. When I finished singing, **I heard thunderous applause**, and then they told me there were 3,000 people in the hall.



"I put on makeup myself, lipstick, foundation, blush, mascara, eyeshadow. I want to put videos on facebook that teach how to apply makeup."

Dina's Path

Dina, who turns 22 next month, was born in Manipur, India to a family from Shevet Menashe. The family and the community were not observant, she says, of many Jewish practices, other than Jewish family purity and burial customs. Nevertheless, generation after generation was taught about how they were exiled after the destruction of the second Temple, and they yearned to return to Israel, "where they would be able to properly observe the commandments." In 2007, the community moved to Israel. "There was a lot of intermarriage, so when we came to Israel we underwent conversion. Now I am fully a Jew," she emphasizes. In India, her father was a farmer and her mother a homemaker. Dina, the third child in the family, was born sight-impaired. "At five months, when you would expect a baby to react to light, and I did not, and my parents understood there was a problem. At one year old I underwent surgery on both my eyes. I could see a little, and could walk around on my own. At age six, I began school, but shortly thereafter lost my sight. Two weeks prior, I had a very difficult experience: I began seeing everything as if through a pipe. The day I turned blind, I had a gut feeling that something would happen. In the middle of class, I took my bag and ran. Part of the way I already couldn't see. I got home and suddenly darkness fell. I asked my cousins who were home to turn on the light, and they laughed and said, 'what? It's 2:00 in the afternoon!' Since then I can't see a thing." When her parents came home and learned that she couldn't see, her mother burst into tears. "I don't know where I got the strength, but I said to her: 'Mom, don't worry, everything will work out.' And now it has. I'm here and all is good," she laughed.

How was your new life as a blind girl?

Not simple. At first, I stayed at home, not in any framework, and then my parents asked my teacher to let me sit in class and just listen. Already on the first day, the other children said I was contagious, and the teacher decided it was best that I not stay in school. Then it registered. I understood that

I was no longer part of society. My world collapsed. I was stuck at home with my

THE BEST ADVICE I EVER GOT:

"Once someone told me: 'There will always be people who are better or worse than you, but **remember that only you are you.**'"

THE WORST ADVICE I EVER GOT:

"Someone once told me: ' You have Bituah Leumi (national social insurance) – **Stop working!**' "

mother, with nothing to get up for in the morning. I just waited for each day to pass." What saved her, she says, was music. "My mother would play music on the radio, and I started imitating the singers. My mother realized that I was musical, wrote me a song about blindness and a neighbor put it to music. When I was eight my father found a festival I could perform in. They dressed me in a pink dress and I sang on stage. Suddenly I understood that I had been given a gift. True I couldn't see, but I could sing. Already I was less sad. I found a reason to live: the dream that I would be a famous singer, that I would move people with my song, that I would touch them through music and show that despite the disability I am a person."

Dina performed often at weddings, and at age 10, right before moving to Israel, she put out a CD with 11 songs, most of which her mother wrote, and even appeared on television. When Dina got to Israel, there was a significant change in how she functioned. "Until then I didn't know how to do anything. Everything was done for me, mostly by my mother. No one thought that a blind person could manage alone. We got to Pardes Chana and then to Kiryat Arba, and one year after moving to Israel it was suggested to my parents to send me to the Blind School in Jerusalem. I very much wanted to go; because they told me that there they teach blind people to be independent, and that they would help me develop my talent." She got there without speaking Hebrew and with no life skills. "They taught me everything. I developed both in terms of education and independence, I started taking voice lessons, and I dreamed of being on stage. Almost seven years ago, they suggested I come to Shalva as a volunteer and help the band for children with disabilities."

The meeting with Shai Ben Shushan, the musical director of the band, and its driving force, was empowering, from her point of view. "He listened to me sing, and to this day I remember what he said: 'what a privilege it is that we have you here with us.' That sentence gave me enormous strength." Two days later, she performed with the band at Binyanei Ha'Uma (the International Conference Center). "I was nervous, and Shai, the band director told me there were about 100 people in the audience. When I finished singing, I heard thunderous applause from far more than that, and then they told me there were 3,000 people in the hall."

Dina went on to do her National Service in the Shalva Band, and appeared with leading singers. "I was very excited to meet Eyal Golan, because when I was a young girl in India, and received a CD of his, and I said to my mother that when we get to Israel, I want to perform with him. My mother smiled as if it were fantasy, but it became a reality."

Two years ago, on her 20th birthday, she lit a torch in the Israel's Independence Day ceremony. "I was so excited. I was afraid I would stutter," she admitted.

Anael: "She spoke beautifully and in a strong voice."

Anael: The moment I most long for in the world is **To hold my child in my arms**

With her in pink pajamas, and a pacifier in her mouth;
to hug her and hold her close to my heart.



Anael's Path

Anael, 21, born in Lyon, France, is the eldest of three in a religious family. She was born almost blind because of a genetic condition. During infancy and childhood, she underwent several surgeries to save the remnant of her sight, but they were unsuccessful and caused her much suffering. "At first my parents had difficulty accepting it," she says. "After all, the eldest child, blind – it was a blow. But there was no time for self-pity. They quickly picked themselves up, sent me to a school for the blind at age five, and taught me to be independent. I was a polite, educated French girl," she laughed. "Today not so much. I became Israeli."

When she was eight her family moved to Israel, straight to Maale Adumim. Anael was sent to a religious girls' school. "It wasn't simple. In France, I studied in a class with 15-16 blind children, with personal attention to each one. Here I entered a regular class with 30 girls, full of noise, and I didn't know a word of Hebrew. Fortunately, there was a girl from France who translated everything for me, and in three months' time, I learned Hebrew. My parents were right in sending me to a regular school, even if on more than one occasion I felt that my friends didn't want to go out with me

because I was different. I knew that in order to succeed I'd have to invest 200%.

In seventh grade, she transferred to a religious girls' high school where she completed the highest levels of matriculation, including level five in literature, English, Tanach, and a grade of 100 in the music matriculation. "Music has accompanied me since a very early age. When I was young, I cried a lot, because it hurt me from all the surgeries, and they always played music for me. From age four on my grandmother played opera for me, and at age 7 I started studying piano. At nine, I stopped playing piano and chose to sing. I took voice lessons at the

THE BEST ADVICE I EVER GOT:

"My parents told me: Despite all the fame, it's important to stay true to yourself. Know your worth, but **keep your feet on the ground.**"

THE WORST ADVICE I EVER GOT:

"The worst advice comes from people who don't know our songs, **but have comments on how I should sing.**"

Maale Adumim Conservatory with a wonderful Russian teacher, Veronica. After eight years, the conservatory sent me for a matriculation exam in voice. I got 100. As part of her national service, she worked at an organization where she conducted workshops and gave lectures to students on equality and accepting the other. "At first it was hard for me. I came from a regular school, with a feeling that I was regular, and suddenly they're saying to me, 'Anael, wait. You're disabled.' I had to present myself as someone who is disabled, I moved into an apartment at the Blind School, and I saw myself sinking into my disability. But later on, when I gave lectures and workshops for the children, I showed them a film in which I performed with the Maale Adumim Youth Orchestra, and I didn't speak about difficulties, but rather about empowerment."

The Meeting between Dina and Anael

Dina and Anael met years ago, on joint trips for blind youth. "I realized that she had an amazing voice," said Dina. Three years ago, the two of them, moved together with some other girls into a shared apartment at the Blind School in Jerusalem. "I called Shai (Ben Shushan) and told him that she could be a great singer. I would secretly record her and send the recordings to Shai, who was very impressed and contacted her, but she wasn't interested."

❖ Anael, what stopped you?

"I was simply afraid, I had no self-confidence. But Shai didn't give up and kept asking."

Dina: "So in May 2017, I couldn't participate in one of the performances. I asked her to fill in for me, and she fell into the trap."

Anael: "Shai took me on a tour of Shalva, and in each office he introduced me and said, 'meet Anael' and asked me to stay. I blew it! I was in shock, but of course, I sang. That's how I got into the band, and I served a second year of National Service there. In the process, I filled in for Dina at performances, flew with the band to New York, London, Canada, Mexico and Moscow – where not?"

❖ Dina, weren't you afraid of the competition when the camera focused on her?

"Of course it was stressful, but the fear wasn't of the competition. Anael and I are very different in terms of personality, behavior and music. It was necessary to blend two different tastes. It frightened me. Beyond the friendship, we succeeded in crystallizing musically."

❖ And your friendship remained stable?

"Of course!" they answered together. "But we tease each other," joked Dina.



Members of the Band. Ben Shushan, band director, is on the left

Dina: "Two years ago, I couldn't appear in one of the performances.

They asked Anael to fill in for me and she

fell into the trap."

Anael: "Shai, the band director asked me to sing. Rats! I was in shock"

The Big Breakthrough

When Shai Ben Shushan, the band director, suggested the idea of participating in the show "Cochav Haba L'Eurovision' (broadcast on Keshet Channel 12), most of the band members thought it was an excellent opportunity." Our message was that beyond the disability, we are people who can make dreams come true and live like every regular person," explains Dina. "Where there is faith and the will, one can also find the ability."

Anael: "I really didn't want to appear on the program. I was very scared. I was afraid that the publicity before the cameras would harm us, that maybe we'd be blinded."

❖ **And how did you feel on stage, opposite the television cameras?**

Dina: "I have no words to describe it. I never imagined that we'd be able, in such a short time, to touch so many hearts. It was a complete surprise."

❖ **Anael, can you explain your success?**

"We are professionals. We rehearse every day, and we work hard, like any other band. If someone were to listen to us on the radio, without seeing us and without knowing it was us, he would hear a professional band."

❖ **Did you expect to get so far?**

Anael: "Not at all. When we got to the first program, I didn't even think we would raise the curtain, and all of a sudden, I hear Shiri Maimon saying 91%! The most exciting was the audition they had for 65 singers who were able to raise the curtain, out of whom they chose 20. We sang, and I hear the sound of (the voting) blue, blue, blue... and the curtain went up. We got five blues, one from each judge."

❖ **Dina, how did your parents react to your appearing in a reality show?**

"It's very emotional for me to say this. My parents were in the audience for one of the performances where we received 94%, and my mother said afterwards: 'If I had known that this is what would become of you, I wouldn't have cried so much.' Suddenly I understood much better what I was doing there. I am delivering a message to every mother that so waited to get married and have a child, and suddenly gets a gift she didn't expect – a child with disabilities – and she is sad. When we appeared on stage, every parent could look at us and be happy and proud of their own children. For me, this is the thing that made this whole process worthwhile."

❖ **When you realized that the Eurovision general rehearsal would require you to violate Shabbat, and the idea came up of withdrawing, were you in favor or against?**

Dina: "I'm religious, but since I thought our performance was meant to deliver a message to the world, the decision wasn't easy. Then Shai gave the final word, that we're withdrawing, and I was very happy, even though it was hard for me. After all, we came to Israel in order to observe the commandments (mitzvot), and I mustn't get confused. On the other hand, it was a wonderful feeling that we didn't fail, but withdrew by mutual consent of all of us."

❖ **Even so, you will perform in the semifinals of the Eurovision**

Anael: "It makes me very happy. In essence, we got it all: we withdrew, we didn't need to compete in the finals, and we will appear in the Eurovision and deliver our message, that you need to treat each person as an equal, and to know that each person is special."

❖ **How did the program change your lives?**

Anael: "People take pictures of us in the streets, they're excited. It's fun, but you have to get used to it. We've travelled a long way. Lately I listen to the recorded auditions, and in the first song I just start to cry."

❖ **How badly do you wish you could see?**

Dina: "Sight is not so important for me. I've learned to see the world my way. The world is wonderful, and you need to recognize all the good in it, and that I can do without seeing."

Anael: "I'm not interested. To get accustomed to something new would take me years. Maybe I wouldn't like it? I'd rather stay like this, the way I know."

❖ **Where do you think you'll be in ten years?**

Dina: "G-d willing, I'd like to see myself with a husband and children, a singer who has an impact on other. If I, despite the fact that I couldn't see myself in the mirror, learned to love myself, then anyone can. Today I put on makeup by myself, put on lipstick, foundation, powder, blush, mascara and eyeshadow, and I want to upload videos onto Facebook teaching how to apply makeup."

❖ **Anael, what are your plans?**

Anael: "The moment I most look forward to in the world is to hold my baby, when she's wearing a pink pajama, with a pacifier in her mouth, to hug her and to hold her close to my heart."

❖ **What would you say to the ten year old Anael?**

"To fight for your place and to live like any other woman, without any self-pity, one who has hopes and does all she can to actualize them."



Friends of the heart - Sara Samuels with Anael and Dina

The Founders of Shalva in a 2002 issue of La'Isha

Catching some Tranquility – the Road to Shalva

The organization, Shalva, was founded 29 years ago by the Jerusalem ultra-Orthodox couple, Malki and Kalman Samuels, whose second child, Yossi (now 40 years old), was born normal and at the age of 11 months became blind, and deaf with additional disabilities as well.

Seventeen years ago, La'Isha reported Tzipora Roman interviewed Shalva founder, Malki Samuels. In the article, she told how their journey began: in 1990, she and her husband Kalman, with the help of a donation, hired two professionals and rented a cottage near their

home. They purchased a van, and every afternoon would collect children with special needs, who would spend the afternoon with them, and after giving them supper would bring them home. Malki, the driving force of the enterprise in those days, suggested calling the organization Shalva, which in Hebrew is an acrostic for 'freedom for the family and the disabled child.' "The intent was to free the family from the pressure, allowing them to have quality time with their other children," she said in that interview, on 25.11.2002.

Shalva's activities have greatly expanded over the years, and the band is a part of them. In addition to Anael and Dina, other members of the band, managed by Shai Ben Shushan, include the musicians Tal Kima (percussion), Yosef Ovadia (drums), Yair Vomberg (percussion), Guy Maman (voice and keyboard), and the guitarist Sara Samuels. "I'm Malki and Kalman, the founders of Shalva's youngest child," says Sara, now 20 years old. From birth I've been exposed to all sorts of people. My parents were involved with this all the time. It's their life's work, and operates 24/7. I would come there after school. At age 15 I started volunteering at Shalva, as part of my required volunteer work for high school students. At 18 I did National Service at Shalva. Towards the end of the first year I happened to do some work with the band, whom I've admired since their beginnings, 13 years ago, and so my second year of National Service was only with the band. My responsibilities were varied: to be their best friend, to deal with equipment, to help produce, and to play. Today I'm the band's guitarist,

and Dina and Anael are my closest friends.. They give me much more than I can do for them. In general, I'll never be able to give as much as I've received from the members of the band." Sara's brother serves as Chairman of Shalva. The Shalva National Center is located at 1 Shalva Road, in Jerusalem, and extends over 11 floors, and is surrounded by a large inclusive playground. Some 2000 children visit each month, and hundreds of children participate in the after school program. 400 volunteers assist the professional staff. The center also serves as an educational and professional training center, and as a national emergency center for people with disabilities.