

Eli Green's Jellybean Tree



by Shani Brown

Special Thanks:

Kol Koreh owes a great deal of thanks to certain individuals who helped make this audiobook a reality. Thank you to Shani Brown, talented author and illustrator of *Eli Green's Jellybean Tree*. Amanda Bradley helped with writing and editing the introduction and appendix texts. Miriam Steinhart narrated both the English and Hebrew versions of the story, and Scott Kahn produced the recording. Yaakov Feldstein provided the instrumental backing and was always available to help with his musical talents.

We thank Shoham Bar Gad for translating the story into Hebrew. Tzippy Kanievsky proofread the Hebrew text and added the necessary Hebrew vowels, and Ayelet Feldstein typed and edited the Hebrew text.

Finally, thank you to Dr. Rinat Green, tireless director of Kol Koreh, for overseeing the entire project.

As always, we give all our thanks to the One above, Who guides and strengthens Kol Koreh in its work.



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Introduction

Kol Koreh's mission is to provide wraparound, end-to-end solutions for children and young people with dyslexia and other learning disabilities. One step in our journey is developing a range of resources called the Kol Koreh Audiobooks Initiative, to help children with learning disabilities enjoy the experience of reading.

For children with learning disabilities, reading is often a grueling challenge. Their struggle to understand a written text prevents them from enjoying reading. By presenting stories and facts in audio format, we remove the barrier of visually decoding the text and let them "read" by listening.

While there are audio books available, they are not all age appropriate, and very few are available in Hebrew. We aim to create a range of audio books in both Hebrew and English for children and teenagers. These books will convey relevant messages through characters and situations that are highly relatable to children with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities. At the same time, we will prepare academic audio resources that enable children with dyslexia and similar learning disabilities to access their learning materials in the format that they find easiest to absorb.

With this in mind, we are excited to present the first instalment to the Kol Koreh Audiobooks Initiative, Eli Green's Jellybean Tree, written by Shani Brown. Aimed primarily at children aged 4 to 9, it tells the story of Eli, a young boy with dyslexia, who has a creative imagination and a talent for inventions. When Eli takes a unique approach to his science assignment, his family and friends don't think he'll succeed. But Eli's determination, persistence and creativity

pull through in magnificent ways that neither Eli nor his family expected.

This wonderful tale teaches young readers to believe in themselves and to persevere. The ending shows that although not everything in life goes according to our plans, the results can still be splendid. For parents and educators, this story reminds us that although a child might not have the specific capabilities that we wished for, his/her abilities and talents can appear in ways that we did not predict. Sometimes different is even better than what we had planned.

Eli Green's Jellybean Tree



by Shani Brown

To all the Elis who defied the odds and blossomed in their very own ways, with lots of patience, persistence and a bit of creativity...

Chapter 1

Eli Green was a regular kid.

He loved eating pizza, riding his bike
and dreaming about being a famous
inventor.



He was really good at fixing things
around the house, like the desk drawer that

wouldn't close well and the wobbly chair in the dining room. He had a special toolbox filled with all the usual tools: hammers, screwdrivers, nails and screws. It also contained some unusual things: rolls of wire, old fuses, bits of broken tiles and scraps of metal.

When there was nothing to fix in the house, Eli roamed the neighborhood searching for scraps of wood and other odds and ends to add to his toolbox. Then he got to work building all sorts of interesting inventions.

Once he built a toy car-plane with wheels and wings. Another time he built a safe-box with a special lock and a secret bottom. The shelves in his room were overflowing with all of the projects he created. His mother always joked that they would have to move to a bigger house to store all of his inventions.

Eli wished he could spend all day building things instead of going to school. Eli did not like school. His chair was not comfortable, and his desk felt rough and scratchy. It was so hard to focus on what he was supposed to be learning instead of

dreaming up a new invention. Sometimes when everyone else was busy reading or writing, Eli would instead sketch out an idea for his next project. Then the teacher, Mr. Weiss, would yell at him for not paying attention, and send a note home to his parents.

Eli really wanted to do well in school, and do the work like everyone else. He really tried to listen to the teacher. The problem was that sometimes the letters in his books started jumping around, and then he could not read the words they were supposed to make. He was always afraid

that Mr. Weiss would call on him to read,
and that his classmates would laugh at him.

It was much easier to escape from the
classroom into his dream-world of
inventions.



Eli did not like school.

Homework time was not any better. Everyday his mother would make him sit down and do his homework before he headed out to play.

"I can't do my homework," Eli complained. "It just doesn't make any sense!"

His mother offered to help him make sense out of it. "Let's see what you have to do. First, read me the instructions."

Eli squirmed in his seat. Finally he blurted out, "Mommy, I can't."

"You can't what?" asked Mrs. Green.

"I can't read these words." And Eli put his head between his hands and cried.

His mother hugged him and looked him in the eye. "Eli, I know you have tried very hard to do well in school. I think it's time that we do something different and get you some help."

Chapter 2

Mrs. Green took Eli to this cool Reading Center where they explained to him that he had something called dyslexia. That meant he really was smart, just that his brain worked differently from other kids who didn't have dyslexia. It's what made him so creative and so good at inventing things, but also made it difficult for him to understand how letters form words.

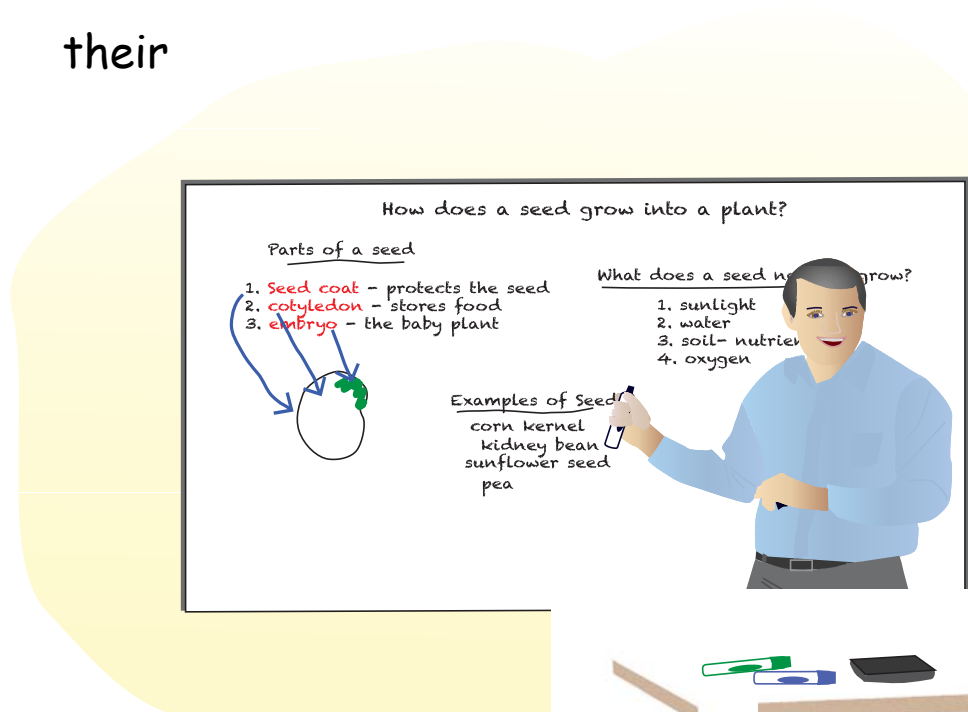
Eli went to the center after school several times a week. The tutors at the

Center taught him new ways to learn, and showed him all sorts of tricks to figure out the words. He practiced reading every day at home. With a lot of effort on his part, a ton of tefillos, and a lot of encouragement from his parents and teachers, after some time Eli discovered that he really could read!

Now in school, his desk was still uncomfortable, and he still had to work hard, but he no longer was afraid of being called on by his teachers. Of course there were still parts of school that he liked more than others. He loved Mr. Silverman's

science lessons, where he learned how the world around him worked.

One day, Mr. Silverman taught the class about how plants grow. They discussed the plant life cycle- how seeds become plants that make more seeds. They learned the names of the different parts of the seed and plant and drew them in their



notebooks.

Mr. Silverman taught the class how plants grow.

For homework, Mr. Silverman assigned a special project. Each student was to plant a seed or bean at home and watch it grow. After a few months, each kid would present a report describing what happened. Eli thought about different kinds of seeds and beans, and decided he would plant a jellybean.

Chapter 3

When Eli came home from school, he ran into the kitchen and grabbed a bag of jellybeans from the cabinet.

"Hi, Eli." said his mother. "How was your day? Do you have any homework?"

"It was fine, Mommy. I'm going to do my homework right now," said Eli, holding up the bag of jellybeans.



"Since when is snacking on jellybeans homework?" asked Mrs. Green.

"Oh no, these are not for snacking." Eli

laughed. "I'm going to plant them so I can grow a jellybean tree for Mr. Silverman's homework assignment."

His mother tried to hide a smile. "Um, Eli, you can't plant a jellybean tree. Jellybeans don't grow on trees."

"Well, maybe other kids can't. But us dyslexic kids can always find creative ways of doing things," Eli stated, as he searched his toolbox for supplies.

"Eli, wait..." But before Mrs. Green could finish her sentence, Eli ran into the garden with a shovel and the bag of

jellybeans.

Eli dug a little hole in a sunny part of the yard. He gently placed a handful of jellybeans at the bottom of the hole. He decided to plant all the colors, except for white, because those were too boring. He carefully piled dirt over the beans, enjoying the feel of the dirt running through his fingers.



Eli planted all the colors, except for white

Since this was a very special tree, he decided it needed something very special to help it grow. No ordinary water would do. So he went back inside, and mixed up some

lemonade. He then poured the lemonade into his mother's watering can and used it to "water" his tree. Finally, he asked Hashem to make his tree grow big and strong.

Eli made himself comfortable on the grass as he watched his tree grow.

"What are you looking at, Eli?" asked his little sister, Riki.

"My Jellybean Tree. I just planted it for school," Eli explained.

"You're joking, right?" Riki asked.

"Jellybeans don't grow on trees. You can't

plant a jellybean tree!"

Eli just smiled and continued to watch.

The next day, when Eli was watering the tree, his brother Dani rode past him on his bike.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Watering my Jellybean Tree," answered Eli.

"Ha, ha! Don't be silly. Jellybeans don't grow on trees. There's no such thing as a jellybean tree!"

"We'll see." And Eli continued to water his tree with the lemonade.



"There's no such thing as a jellybean tree."

Every morning before school, Eli
checked on his tree and watered it. He even

fertilized it with crumbs from the cookies that his mother had given him for snack last week. (He knew she would be happy that he finally cleared them out of his schoolbag.) In his science notebook, he carefully wrote down everything he did each day in one column. In the next column, he wrote down any changes that he saw.

"What have you got there, Eli?" asked his father one day as he left to shul.

"Just my Jellybean Tree. It's a project for school."

"But Eli, jellybeans don't grow on

trees!" protested Mr. Green.

"That's what everyone else thinks,"
said Eli, "But my tree is different."

Chapter 4

And the tree began to grow.

Eli watched as it grew bigger... and bigger... and even bigger!



The tree grew bigger...and bigger...and even bigger!

Eli knew that new trees did not give fruit right away. But if he had patience to learn how to read, then he had the patience

to wait for the jellybeans to grow - even if
it took all day!

So Eli waited. And waited. And waited
some more. When he got bored of waiting,
he read a little bit from his library book.



Eli waited and waited.

And then amazing things began to
happen.

A family of birds moved into his tree and built themselves a nest. A playful squirrel raced up and down its branches. And a friendly cat scratched his back against the trunk and then sat under the tree, purring.

Eli had an idea. Using some scraps of wood and rope from his collection, he built a swing and tied it to the strongest branch. Riki came out to watch what he was doing. When she saw the swing, she was so excited that she begged to try it.

"Of course," smiled Eli. "I made it just

for you, so you can also enjoy my Jellybean Tree."

"Thanks, Eli, you and your tree are the best!" And Riki swung up high until her shoes touched the leaves.



Riki swung up high on the Jellybean Tree.

Eli noticed something sticky dripping from the tree. He banged a peg into the trunk to make a hole, and then stuck a small wooden tube inside the hole. A yellow liquid dripped out of the hole through the tube. Jellybean sap! He got an empty bottle from the kitchen and placed it underneath the tube to collect the dripping sap.

Just then, Dani came by, all hot and sweaty from a long bike ride. "Want a drink?" asked Eli, handing over the bottle. "I just tapped it out of the Jellybean Tree."

Dani made a brocha and took a long sip

from the bottle. "This is good. Does it really
come from your tree? But it tastes just like
lemonade!" Dani was clearly impressed.

Chapter 5

One day, when Eli went to check on the tree and visit the birds, squirrel and cat, he saw some colorful specks peeking out from between the leaves. Finally! he thought, his excitement growing.

But as he got a closer look, he realized that they weren't jellybeans.

They were small blossoms, and as Eli watched, they grew into the most beautiful flowers he had ever seen. They came in all sorts of bright colors, just like the jellybeans he had planted: red, green, pink

orange, purple, and yellow. There were no white ones, of course, since he had not planted any white jellybeans. Eli climbed up the tree and picked some of the flowers.



Hmm, they smelled just like a candy shop!

*There was something very special about those pretty
flowers.*

There was something very special about those pretty sparkling flowers that made Eli feel happy inside. He decided to take some home for his mother. He knew she would like them even more than jellybeans.

Mrs. Green took the bunch of flowers, smiling and humming, and put them in her favorite fancy vase. Dani saw them and stopped worrying about the test he had the next day. Riki was no longer sad that she could not find her favorite doll. Mr. Green

put away a stack of papers he was working on, and offered to go bike riding with the kids. It seemed that everyone in the Green family was happier because of the jellybean flowers.

Chapter 6

It was finally Eli's turn to present his project in science class. He stood next to the teacher's desk and read from his paper: "Eli Green Grows a Jellybean Tree". He explained how he planted the jellybeans and how he took care of the tree. He described what happened as the tree grew. He brought in some of the pretty flowers, a bottle of the tree's sap for everyone to taste, and a picture of the Jellybean Tree in full bloom.

Everyone clapped as Eli finished his

presentation and sat down.

"Wait, what about the jellybeans?
Didn't the tree grow jellybeans?" yelled out
one of his classmates.

"No," Eli admitted sadly. "No
jellybeans. I guess my project failed."

Mr. Silverman spoke up. "Eli, you know
that there really is no such thing as a
jellybean tree. You grew a different tree
from what you wanted, but it is a very
special tree all the same. Do you know why?"

Eli was thoughtful. "Well," he answered
slowly, "it's a home for the animals and a

place for kids to play. It gives tasty drinks and its beautiful flowers make people happy. I guess there is more than one way for a great tree to grow."

"Right!" said Mr. Silverman. "Eli, you have worked very hard on this project and you have learned a lot. I'm marking you an A+!"



Eli's face broke out in a big smile

Eli forgot his disappointment about the jellybeans and his face broke out in a big smile. "Thanks, Mr. Silverman! And, you know what? I can always get jellybeans from the store."

Everyone laughed and cheered for Eli Green and his very special Jellybean Tree.

The end

A Message from Dr. Rinat Green

All children want nothing more than to be loved, nurtured, and accepted. As parents and educators, we want nothing more than to give them exactly that. We want everyone, including the child him/herself, to recognize their capabilities and the contribution they can make to the world around them.

But what happens when a child doesn't succeed in the ways that the wider world values or cannot live up to the academic expectations of their teachers, parents or peers? What happens when they feel that they do not measure up, no matter how hard they try, and the academic gap between them and their classmates only gets bigger?

This is the experience of children with a learning disability such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia or another processing disorder. These learning disabilities make it difficult to do tasks such as reading, writing, spelling, and math, which seem to pose no problems for other children. These difficulties compromise the child's ability to take in, understand and retrieve information so as to progress academically.

Out of all the different types of learning disabilities, dyslexia is the most common. It is a hereditary neurobiological condition that affects the way one can read, write, spell and comprehend information presented in written form. Dyslexia affects up to 1 in 5 students and around 80% of children who are referred for special education services for learning disabilities meet the criteria for dyslexia. Children with dyslexia are typically bright. Their difficulty with written text comes as a surprise, given that their intellectual level is average or above, and that

they are exposed to effective classroom instructions that are successful for the rest of their class.

Thanks to significant advances in research and technology, dyslexia, once considered the "hidden disability", is hidden no longer. We now have a keen understanding of what dyslexia is, the underlying causes of this condition, where it is localized in the brain and how it can be remediated.

There are ways to improve reading and information processing for individuals with dyslexia at any age. However, early identification coupled with intensive evidence-based instruction has the best success rate in helping students affected by dyslexia to thrive academically. This makes it vital to identify and begin intervention for dyslexia before a child enters first grade.

For more information about dealing with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, please visit Kol Koreh at www.kolkoreh.org

Happy reading!