

Black Modern Orthodox woman sells empowering Jewish apparel with Hebrew slogans

Elisheva Rishon's designs celebrate some of her own identities while offering universal messages of affirmation that people of all backgrounds can draw strength from

By **TOI STAFF** and **ALMA VIA JTA**
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Elisheva Rishon created her clothing brand Eli7 Designs with the mission to empower people — Black and Jewish women in particular.

Rishon, a Black Modern Orthodox millennial raised in New York's Orthodox communities of Crown Heights and Flatbush, grew up experiencing some of the racism that results from the denomination's strong homogeneity. She'd been excluded from games as a child, and had friends make incorrect assumptions about her personality or the way she speaks.

Now living in Los Angeles, Rishon is coming out with new collections that celebrate the many facets of her identity, like The #Jewishvibe Collection, The Melanated Beauties collection, and the Ethnic-Racial Celebration Collection.

Selling everything from sweatshirts to T-shirts to shoulder bags, many of these designs include affirming words that celebrate a multiplicity of identities, especially for those who are marginalized.

She's also written articles from an Orthodox insider's perspective about the impact of her community's intentional and unintentional racism on her, and what it's like to be at times alienated by her own fellow Jews.

I was inspired by Rishon's mission to center Black and Jewish pride in her fashion. Her positivity and commitment to empowerment were clear when we chatted over email, where we discussed her brand, Jewish values, beauty as resilience and more.

This interview has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity.

What inspired you to found Eli7 Designs?

My natural coping mechanism when faced with endless negativity is to counteract it with beauty — and that's the place that Eli7 Designs comes from. I wanted to make something in fashion that would make people feel both

good *and* empowered by their identity.



On your website, the company is described as “A Modern Twist on Empowerment Fits.” Will you elaborate on what that means to you?

The majority of my brand focuses on making you feel something real. My brand also intentionally has different collections that at some point intertwine to emphasize that everyone is connected and we are all one people. I also designed them in such a way that my apparel can easily be dressed up or down to suit everyone’s fashion style.

A lot of your clothing includes Hebrew phrases and

words such as “*Boker Tov*” (good morning), “*Koach*” (strength), and “*Hashem*” (God). Why is it important for you to have Hebrew as a part of your brand?

Hebrew is essential to my Jewish identity. It was the second language I was learning while growing up, and it is a language that is so beautiful because behind every word is a deeper cultural, spiritual and amazing meaning that speaks to my soul.

Additionally, Hebrew sayings such as “*Gam Zu L’tovah*” [this, too, is for the good] or “*Hashgacha Pratit*” [anything that happens is all a part of God’s plan] are universally significant mantras of Jewish culture no matter whether you are Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, secular, etc. They tell a story of the essence and resilience of the Jewish people.

Can you talk about your own relationship to Judaism? How were you raised and what does your practice look like today?

I was raised in the Orthodox Jewish communities of Crown Heights and Flatbush [Brooklyn]. We went to *shul* [synagogue] every Shabbat and all the *chagim* [holidays], even when I didn’t want to. When I was younger, being Jewish to me meant being “religious” in a robotic, unquestioning way. Today I am much more relaxed in practice and consider myself to be very Modern Orthodox. I typically don’t attend shul because I’m not into the

prying social interactions. Today I believe that being Jewish means building your own special connection with Hashem, connecting with Jewish culture on your own terms and being a light to the world.

I love your designs that state with pride an intersection of identities like “Black, Jewish, and Fabulous.” How does your identity as a Black Orthodox Jewish woman inform your commitment to creating empowering clothing?

Growing up as a Black Orthodox Jewish woman in America has been a super challenging experience that never ends.

There will be many tears, rejection, untold amounts of patience and poor assumptions made about your character by some people just because you are Black.

So I say “Black, Jewish, and Fabulous” in my design because it speaks to me and so many other Black Jewish people in America who have been told that:

Their Black Jewishness is a **bad** thing.

Their Black Jewishness is a **strange** thing.

Their Black Jewishness is a **suspicious** thing.

Their Black Jewishness is an **impossible** thing.

No, their Black Jewishness is more than a good thing — it’s a *FABULOUS* thing! And that’s it, PERIOD!

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/black-modern-orthodox-woman-sells-empowering-jewish-apparel-with-hebrew-slogans/#gs.g1fatp>

