

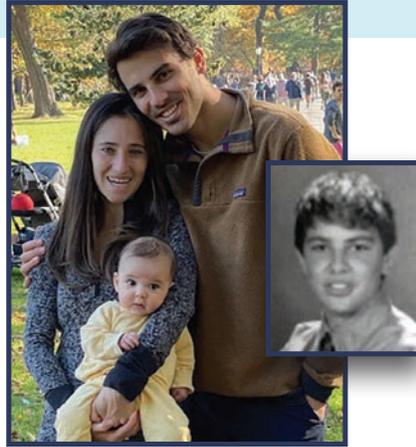


# Pressman Academy

## Alumni



Ilana Lasner, class of '99 with her son, Asher



Zach Sharfman, class of '04, Talia Spitzer and their daughter Ayla



Sam, class of '06 and Danielle Greene with their son Gavriel

In November, we spoke to three Pressman Day School alumni who became parents during the pandemic. Ilana (Emert) Lasner, Class of 1999, is a new mother to Asher and a neurologist at Cedars-Sinai in Marina del Rey. Zach Sharfman, Class of 2004 and new father to Ayla, is an orthopedic surgery resident in New York. Sam (Feldman-Greene) Greene, Class of 2006 and new father to Gavriel, is a 3rd grade teacher at Schechter Manhattan Day School. We caught up with them to hear more about their lives as new parents during the pandemic and how Pressman has influenced their parenting during this challenging time.

### **What's been the biggest challenge of having a baby during a pandemic?**

**Ilana:** The lack of the traditional support. I didn't have any family come to the hospital. Even for many weeks I didn't have my parents come visit--not until I was getting ready to go back to work to help with childcare. My in-laws have only seen Asher through video conferencing.

**Zach:** We live in New York, and I'm a doctor doing my orthopedic surgery residency. Talia was pregnant at the beginning of the pandemic, and I was working with covid patients. The numbers were better in Los Angeles, so we decided it would be better if Talia went to be with her family in LA. We spent more than half her pregnancy apart and long distance.

**Sam:** Gavriel is our first child, so we have nothing to compare it to. When a baby is born, everyone wants to visit and hold him. Now he's being introduced to everyone through the window or FaceTime. His grandparents couldn't hold him. It's a tough time, but because we are working from home, it has allowed us to be with him all the time.

### **What has been the biggest surprise of parenthood?**

**Ilana:** I still sometimes think it's unbelievable that Asher exists. It's still so amazing and surprising to me.

**Zach:** I'm still surprised every day with how much joy Ayla can bring to other people, especially during covid and how much joy she brings to the world and other people. It's a beautiful blessing and a surprise.

**Sam:** Before becoming a parent, if you asked me if I could get up every night for 2-3 hours or handle so many things with little sleep, I'm not sure I would have the confidence to say I could do it. When you're a parent, you step up because it's your child and there's so much love. You want to give your child everything, so you make it happen.

**What Jewish value that you learned about at Pressman Academy are you more in touch with, now that you're a parent, and want to make sure you pass on to your children?**

**Ilana:** At Pressman, I learned about the concept of loving kindness and having an open heart to anybody, not just your immediate family. I would like to pass on this Jewish value to Asher.

**Zach:** I would want to pass on our connection to the traditions of Shabbat. Pressman is where I learned about the traditions and cemented the knowledge of how to celebrate Shabbat and make that day different and holy. Now that I have a child, even more so, Talia and I are making sure we're practicing each tradition with intention and thought and passing down those same practices that I learned at Pressman to Ayla--the joy of Shabbat which is the core of our people since the Temple was destroyed.

**Sam:** I want to instill in my children the value of community and being part of a community. I definitely felt a sense of community at Temple Beth Am. We may have attended different minyanim, but we were all in the same shul. Going to Pressman, we would have all our friends come over on Shabbat. That's what I would want to look for in a community wherever my wife and I and my family end up--at a school and synagogue community. We both went to Jewish Day School and we both want that for our children.

**We wish our alumni and their parents much nachat from their new grandchildren!**