



## *SightLine / Reports from the Field*



In this *Report from the Field* by the Covenant Foundation, Dr. Esther S. Friedman reviews various projects including Let's Farbreng! Read the entire report [here](#).

### **Let's Farbreng!**

For Peretz Chein, the fellowship became an opportunity to reimagine Farbrengen, a treasured Chabad tradition, as a structured, shareable practice of wellness.

"Farbrengen is emotionally powerful; it creates space for deep sharing, listening, and reflection. But outside the Chabad world, most people have no idea what it is or how to enter it." That was his starting point. Peretz, a longtime Chabad rabbi, has directed the Chabad at Brandeis with his wife Chani since 2001, and together they founded M54: The Institute for Insourcing. He joined the M<sup>2</sup> Research Fellowship on wellbeing with a problem: how to share the power of Farbrengen, a sacred circle of storytelling, song, and spiritual vulnerability, with students who had never experienced one. "I felt a disconnect from the practice myself," he said. "I wanted to re-engage with it, not just spiritually, but pedagogically."

At first, Peretz set out to articulate Farbrengen as more than just a cultural tradition. “I came in wanting to articulate Farbrengen as a practice. Something that others could experience and even lead.” The fellowship’s worldview paper requirement helped him distill its essential elements, the structure, flow, themes, and emotional landscape. This prompted a critical shift: “The worldview paper helped me clarify what I was really trying to do, to create a pathway for people to taste the emotional experience of Farbrengen, without needing to be Chabad, or even particularly observant.” He realized that he needed something people could actually use: “After some feedback, I realized it couldn’t just be theoretical. .... That’s where the game idea came from.”

Peretz created a structured board game that mirrors the emotional rhythm of a Farbrengen. It includes:

- Theme cards (e.g., joy, doubt, courage) to frame the conversation

- Turn tokens to guide participation

- A timer to hold space for silence and contemplative pauses

- A circular board representing non-linear emotional flow

- Three types of dice to prompt the conversation, the l’chaim toasting, and the contemplative silence

“The game models the flow of a Farbrengen. You start with a theme card and take turns conversing on the theme. There’s even a piece for silence, because that’s part of the rhythm too,” he explained. “There’s structure, but also openness. You can’t force authenticity, but you can create the conditions for it.”

Testing the prototype yielded enthusiastic feedback: “When we tested it, people said: ‘That felt real. I didn’t think a game could feel like that.’” Today, Let’s Farbreng is publicly available for purchase with additional resources, videos, and photos shared on the M54 website. More than 300 games have already been purchased, bringing the experience of Farbrengen to communities well beyond Chabad.

Reflecting on his experience and learnings at M2, Peretz shared:

(Before the fellowship), I generally associated wellness as something external you introduce into your life to bring you to a state of being well, however you may choose to interpret being well, like going to a spa, exercising, spending time doing enjoyable activities, prioritizing your commitments, or stopping the things that cause you to be unwell. After observing people of diverse ages and backgrounds experience the Farbrengen with Let’s Farbreng, I discovered that wellness can emerge from within oneself when the right

systems and structures support it, elements like companionship, authentic conversations, singing, toasting, and contemplative silence that form the essence of a Farbrengen. This realization has fundamentally shifted how I approach wellbeing. Rather than constantly seeking external solutions or activities to fix what feels broken, I now understand that we each carry an innate capacity for wellness that simply needs the right conditions to flourish.