

# Paperweight Perspective

## You shouldn't think it's 'them and us'



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There is an oft-used phrase that you never know what goes on behind closed doors.

I can vouch for that. I choose to sit at the front of the Paperweight office, by the door. It gives me a literal window onto the Jewish world. When clients come in for appointments, they look like you or me. From my vantage point however, I have discovered that a smiling face can mask a myriad of problems. Stresses and strains that no person should ever have to go through alone. And of course, the faces are not always smiling. They're nervous. Anxious. Tearful. Afraid. Every chair in our reception has a box of tissues next to the notebooks and pens. Because once behind the closed, private door with a caseworker, the man or woman you'd think has the world at their feet breaks down.

And here's the thing. These men and

women aren't just 'clients. There but for the grace of G-d, they are you and me. The economic and political implications of lockdown, furlough and the war in Ukraine mean that unless you are part of that unique one percent for whom your most pressing financial concern is whether to build an underground gym in your fourth home, you too could be walking through our doors.

The Jewish community as a whole is facing serious and life-changing financial decisions. We are all asking ourselves the same questions. Can we afford to put the

heating on this month? Can we afford not to, if we have a family member suffering from ill-health. How do we make our weekly shop last longer? Who knew that some friends were now relying on a food bank? Where else can we cut costs and spending? If you say you haven't reviewed your phone, energy and power tariffs in the past few months, I wouldn't believe you. Have you discussed whether you really need Netflix? Where you can purchase your food more cheaply? Have you bought blankets in bulk? Exchanged notes on the best places to buy draft excluders. Have

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baths become a luxury and showers the norm?

My point is that it isn't a 'them and us' situation. Today's client at Paperweight could be someone you know. And next week it could be you. We are all in the same boat. And for some of those people I meet coming through the Paperweight doors, it's sink or swim. So, my window on the world here in Hendon, as I sit by that front door, is akin to a window on our entire community. We are all in this together. I began this piece by saying that we never know what goes on behind closed doors. It's true. But the difference at Paperweight is that our doors are always open.

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