

## A Family Focus

An Interview with Sasson Basha, President, Aaron Basha

**EDITORS' NOTE** Sasson Basha knew from a young age that he would go into the family business, established by his father Aaron Basha. Basha handles marketing and public relations duties for the company and provides the inspiration for many of the company's charitable initiatives.



Sasson Basha

**COMPANY BRIEF** Established in 1906 as a pearl dealership, family-owned and -operated jeweler Aaron Basha ([www.aaronbasha.com](http://www.aaronbasha.com)) was housed on London's prestigious Berkeley Square until 1990, when the company moved to its flagship store on Manhattan's Madison Avenue. Aaron Basha's innovative products include their world renowned baby shoe collection of pendants and charms, as well as many other designs and styles made from 18-karat gold, platinum, fine enamel, diamonds, and other precious gems. Today, the Aaron Basha collections are also available in such high-end department stores as Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Harrods in London, in addition to several fine jewelers worldwide.

**As a luxury brand with a tradition and a loyal clientele, how is Aaron Basha handling the current economic crisis?**

It's basically about maintaining the business and creating stronger alliances and relationships with our partners.

**How broad is the business from a geographic point of view?**

The business is growing globally in a very conservative manner, and we are still going to be expanding and opening up new markets this year. The next project we are concentrating on is Asia, and we are very much looking forward to it.

**Is your clientele still primarily female?**

Our female followers do account for the majority of our sales. However, we have expanded our men's cuff link and shirt stud collection to include a number of very whimsical and exciting new products, which have already become quite coveted among our male customers.

**One differentiating factor for your brand is that, when a customer walks into your flagship store, they are always greeted by one of the Basha family members. How**

**critical is it to make sure that interaction remains at that level?**

It's very rare to meet the owners or designers at a flagship store in general. For us, it's completely normal. We feel it is extremely important to give all of our collectors this degree of personal attention. Thus, we maintain every relationship by greeting and meeting all of our customers daily.

**Aaron Basha is a brand and a product that is all about celebrating life, but do the price points at entry level allow you to target a broader market, or is it more of a niche?**

We maintain a very high-luxury level and we're going to keep it this way. We have introduced a few items at an entry price point level that allows for a broader clientele, although that is much more limited collection.

**Your father Aaron has always been intimately involved in creating and designing. Is that a part of the business which he enjoys the most?**

He enjoys all aspects of the business. Design is part of it, however, the whole family is involved in the creative process, and many times we get a lot of our ideas from our wonderful collectors. But to Aaron, involvement is multifaceted; it's in all the sides of the business.

**Is the core of the brand still the baby shoes?**

It's definitely still the core of our brand, but we have built many layers that all relate to each other in presenting this collection. It's all about the philosophy and lifestyle of our family that's represented in the jewelry.

**Can you give a brief overview of the Evil Eye collection? Did you know that it would be as successful as it has become?**

We've always known the Evil Eye is a very powerful symbol. Contemporizing the designs in our own special way and exposing them to the world has been quite an exciting period. Since its introduction, we have also further expanded this collection with several new and unique selections that have already garnered much attention from all ends of our clientele.

**You've had a tie-in with UNICEF and are generally very involved in giving back. How critical is that, and has it always been important in building the brand?**

Absolutely. We are extremely blessed to have received all the attention and success that

we have worldwide. As our brand continues to connect with families, children, and women, we feel it is very important that we support different organizations related to that connection. And, not only do we give back in our own ways, but also through the channels of all of our retail partners who allow us to join forces with them in supporting their local markets' organizations.

**With the speed of business today, is it challenging to determine where to focus your time and effort?**

You have to focus on the parts of the world that are expanding and growing, where there is big expenditure happening. Since we do have a global brand that is in demand, these markets are the places where we must concentrate the most on expanding and maintaining our business.

**With regard to production, has technology played a role in the way you're producing or designing pieces, and has it had an impact on the business?**

It has helped us in the creative process since we can now envision more clearly how the designs will look in real life before they are actually made and the tools have been created. However, the fact remains, jewelry is still a very simple and classic type of business. It's more art and craftsmanship rather than high-tech.

**How critical has maintaining a relationship with customers been, even after sale?**

We do follow up on all the sales. We have quite a strong marketing team that regularly updates our customers with new designs and we also maintain an open connection with our collectors to discuss their different needs, requirements, and even ideas they have for us on things to expand on.

**When the family is together, how challenging is it to focus on family time versus business time?**

When the family is together, it's tough not to discuss business because there are always exciting new things on the back burner. We are all extremely busy and sometimes do not have time to follow up, so when we do meet, it does slide sometimes to work. But we're still always having fun, and as we say at Aaron Basha, we take fun very seriously. ●

*Evil Eye bracelets*