

IDENTITY THROUGH ADVERSITY

In the Haggadah we read:

והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו, שלא אחד בלבד עמד
עלינו לכלותינו, אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו
לכלותינו...

“This has sustained our fathers and us, for not only has one (nation) arose to destroy us, rather in every generation they arise to destroy us”.

The simple reading of this text is perplexing. How does the generational, constant drive of the nations to destroy the Jewish people, serve as the tool for our survival? How has this endless, intense ambition for our annihilation ‘sustain’ us in Galus?

Maharal points out that the essential narrative of the Haggadah is the account of the evil quest of Pharaoh and Lavan to obliterate Klal Yisroel, while it doesn't mention the designs of Esav whatsoever. He explains that the Haggadah only deals with those who maintained a ‘senseless’ hatred towards Klal Yisroel, the likes of Lavan and Pharaoh, while Esav had a reason to hate Yaakov; he believed Yaakov ‘stole’ the Brachos that rightfully belonged to him.

Beis Halevi explains that the unwarranted hatred towards us is what solidifies our identity as Jews. When

the hatred stems from a ‘reason’, we attribute it to the reason, rather than a direct message from Hkb”h to change our ways. However, when the hatred seems to have no reason at all, it is actually rooted in the highest purpose of all – a divine message reminding us that we are different, we are Jews, and must behave accordingly. If not, then for no ‘reason’ at all we find ourselves despised and alone, standing lonely in the world with only Hkb”h on our side.

Beis Halevi continues, that historically, whenever (and sadly it occurs quite often) Jews lose their Jewish identity, slipping into gentile culture, attitude, a foreign way of life, Hashem triggers this ‘senseless, unwarranted’ hatred to jolt us back into our spiritual reality, a reality whose values, morals, passions and desires are completely different that the world around us.

The Haggadah deals with the confrontations that mold and shape the core identity of Klal Yisroel – the types of senseless hatred that, by definition, is fashioned to assist us in actualizing who we truly are.

Therefore, the words of the Baal Haggadah ring so very true. In fact, it is the very constant, senseless hatred that Hashem sends our way, the unprovoked drive of the nations to destroy us, that has sustained us throughout the long, dark Galus. This, perhaps more than anything else, has kept the Jewish people focused, guaranteeing our continued Jewish identity until today.

An important lesson we can learn from this, as well, is that sometimes it is the ‘unprovoked’ challenges that confront us in life, that can truly serve to solidify our essence and justify our existence. These trials remind us of our deepest meaning and bring out our genuine identity, the best of who we truly are.

בברכת חג כשר ושמח,

Rabbi Tzvi Fener



THE UPSHERIN

A Story of Delayed Nachas

The call from the little boy's father to Rabbi S. was routine. His son was turning three years old, and the family wanted to celebrate the Upsherin with Rabbi S., as he was known to create a unique experience for first time learning of the Alef Beis. As the arrangements were being made, the father, Rabbi B., asked if it was ok to bring his grandmother along to the event. Rabbi S. was accustomed to having many spectators, and joked to Rabbi B. that he can bring as many people as he wanted, in fact, if he topped 16 spectators, he would get the 'most relatives at an Upsherin' award!

Over the years, Rabbi S.'s name had gotten out. If you were going to take your son to a Rebbe to learn Alef Beis at their Upsherin, this Rebbe was the one to go to. Rabbi S. found these occasions to be a great privilege, opportunities to instill these precious children with a love for Torah, Mitzvos and Hashem, together with Derech Eretz. These ideals are what brought him to the world of teaching in the first place. The challenge he faced, though, was how to keep the generally shy and bashful little boys in his class engaged while teaching and interacting with them. Over the years, Rabbi S. had come up with an exceptional way to include the boys in the lessons, and give over the message and morals he wished to impart.

The little boy was led by his father into the classroom. Rabbi S. had prepared chairs for the rest of the family members in the rear of the room. He noticed that there seemed to be four generations in the room, as a great-grandmother was in attendance. Rabbi S. started to learn with the young child, the Upsherin boy. He taught the Alef Beis, and then went on to say how the Torah is what makes the Yidden who they truly are. In order to engage the class,

he asked: "Can a person just learn Torah?", the boys answered a resounding "NO". The Rebbe then asked, "what else does a person have to do?" The boys responded "Work".

"Work? What kind of work must a person do?"

"Work on their Middos" was their loud reply.

"That's right!" said the rebbe. When a person is upset or angry, they cannot act upset and angry. They must to put their hand on their yarmulka and ask Hashem to help that their yetzer hara should not let them act upset! And when a person wants to take something that does not belong to him, he should ask Hashem to help him work on himself and not take it or even be jealous!

The event ended with the little Upsherin boy handing each child a treat.

Later that day the Rebbe received a call from the very emotional mother.

As he had observed, there had been four generations in the classroom. The little boy's great grandmother had come. And not from around the corner, rather, all the way from Chicago.

Mrs. B. went on to explain, that her grandmother who was clearly 'not yet' religious, had not yet even come to terms with the fact that her son had become an ehrlicher Yid. Although her son was now a grandfather himself, she had still not accepted that her progeny was living a life of Torah and Mitzvos. It was therefore quite puzzling to the family that she had insisted on coming to the Upsherin from Chicago, at her advanced age, while Chicago was still deep in Covid restrictions. If it would have been a

large family simcha, such as a Chassuna, they would have understood, however, an Upsherin was not a such a large scale simcha. They were even more puzzled that a woman who clearly showed contempt for Torah desired to come to a Yeshiva where her great grandson would be learning Torah-Alef Beis for the very first time.


Mrs. B. continued to relate, that as they were leaving the classroom, she overheard the great-grandmother muttering to herself: “Really, they also teach these children to be

‘Mentschen’, to have Middos Tovos and Derech Eretz? Can it be that I’ve been living my whole life as a mistake”??

Although we don’t know if this great grandmother changed her life around after witnessing this Upsherin, but what we can be sure of, is that she was a changed person!



Stress Management for PD



It is not uncommon for the stresses of daily life — feeling overwhelmed, under prepared and over stimulated — to cause anxiety and unrest. These psychological issues can impact your health and even exacerbate the symptoms of Parkinson’s disease (PD). That is why it is important to assess what may be causing stress and learn how to deal with the situations that give rise to anxiety. Meditation, yoga or Tai Chi and deep breathing can help restore a sense of calm. Whether you are living with Parkinson’s or caring for someone with PD, finding balance can help you cope with the daily stresses of life. This may mean limiting your exposure to environmental stressors or using complementary therapies. Such approaches are wonderful ways to lower anxiety, lower blood pressure and improve your all-around health.

Yoga or Tai Chi

Tai Chi is a moving meditation based on the circulation of “chi,” life’s energy force, believed by the ancient Chinese to be blocked in the presence of disease. It is comprised of continuous, flowing movements. Yoga, which originated in ancient India, can include holding stationary poses or moving into a flowing series of poses and aims to integrate the mind, body and spirit. Both can help with relaxation, which can help with PD symptoms. Additional benefits include:

- Increased awareness of movement and actions
- Better awareness of proper body alignment/ posture and enhanced flexibility
- Improved balance and core strength, which help to reduce fall risk
- Improved breath support and control

Managing Stress

Identify stress triggers along with ways to help control your emotions and release anger in a safe way. Try writing in a journal or going for a walk when tension reaches a breaking point. Physical outlets, such as hitting a pillow, can help you vent frustration. If stress triggers are unavoidable, you need reliable ways to reduce and manage them. No method is too silly if it works.

3-minute Relaxation Routine

- *Select a key word such as relax, calm or peace*
- *Concentrate on relaxing using your key word. Pay attention to your breathing. Take in one deep breath and hold it.*
- *While holding your breath, tense up a group of muscles, such as the muscles in your face, arms or legs.*
- *As you breathe out, relax the tense muscles and let go. Continue using your key word as you drop your shoulders.*
- *Repeat, alternating to different muscle groups, for 3 minutes.*

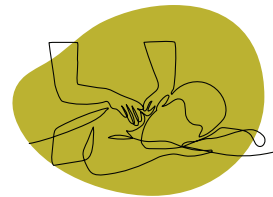


Consider Massage Therapy

Many people with PD recognize the benefits of massage. Massages are available in a variety of settings, including many local malls. Specific benefits may include:

- reduction in rigidity and tremor
- improvement in sleep
- increase in daily stamina
- reduction in anxiety
- increased feeling of relaxation

In finding a massage therapist, it is important to find someone trained by an accredited school of massage therapy. Tell your



medical team, family or friends that you are considering getting a massage. They may be able to provide you with a referral. You can also find a massage therapist by calling toll free 1-888-843-2682 or visiting the American Massage Therapy Association website: www.amtamassage.org/findamassage/.

Breathing Exercises

Breathing exercises offer a simple and effective way to relax in moments of stress or anxiety. When you are stressed your body goes into a high state of physical arousal. You may notice muscle tension, a faster heart beat or shallow breathing.

Distinguishing Between Stress and Anxiety or Depression

Feeling stressed or worried is understandable when managing a chronic illness. It is important to remember that depression and anxiety play a key role in PD and its effect on quality of life. If constant worry or nervousness go beyond what is manageable, a person may be experiencing anxiety, which is more serious.

Remember, anxiety and depression often go together. Symptoms of anxiety can include:

- feelings of panic
- fear and restlessness
- sleep disturbance
- poor concentration
- palpitations
- shortness of breath
- irritability
- dizziness.



Symptoms of depression can include:

- excessive worrying
- persistent sadness
- crying
- loss of interest in usual activities and hobbies
- increased fatigue and lack of energy

- feelings of guilt
- loss of motivation
- complaints of aches and pains
- feelings of being a burden to loved ones

If you think your stress may be a symptom of depression or anxiety, do not feel embarrassed to seek professional help or counseling. A social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist can help you pinpoint the causes of your distress and provide constructive ways to cope with the situation.

You may find Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), a non-drug approach to developing the skills and actions that change patterns of thought and behavior related to depression, to be a helpful tool.

Your mood is a critical aspect of living with PD that you can control.

Talk to your friends, family and doctor about your feelings of stress, anxiety or depression.

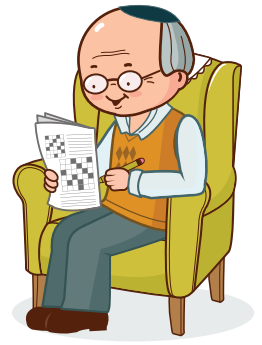


For more resources on managing stress, anxiety or depression, call the Parkinson's Foundation Helpline at 1-800-4PD-INFO (473-4636).

PUZZLE TIME

Buzz-Word

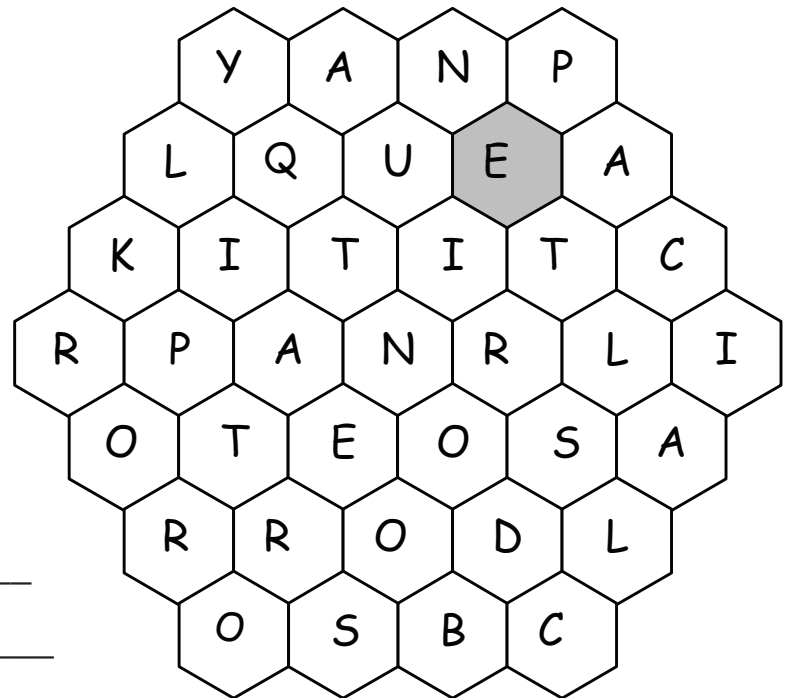
by Ann Richmond Fisher



THE SHADED E AND THE SIX LETTERS SURROUNDING IT SPELL PETUNIA, WHICH MATCHES ONE OF THE CLUES BELOW.

FIND 7-LETTER WORDS FOR THE REMAINING CLUES.

SHADE THE CENTER LETTER OF EACH WORD.



1. FLOWERING PLANT PETUNIA -E
2. A SOLO PERFORMANCE _____
3. EXCELLENCE _____
4. PERSON RECEIVING MEDICAL CARE _____
5. ADULT MALE DOMESTIC FOWL _____
6. OLD ITEM _____
7. OPENING IN NOSE _____

NOW UNSCRAMBLE ALL 7 OF THE CENTER LETTERS TO SPELL OUT THE BUZZWORD.

A COIN: _____

HALACHOS FOR PREPARING FOR PESACH

Preparing for Pesach can be overwhelming for anyone. The added challenge of Parkinson's, or caring for someone with Parkinson's, can make the task seem all the more daunting. With this in mind, we have included some basic Halachos that can alleviate some of the stress that can arise at this time of year.

Original article by Rabbi Carlebach.
Edited for reprint.

CLEANING

Where must one clean and check?

Areas that one commonly brings food into them, such as a living room, playroom, or the like, should be cleaned properly and checked.

·Areas that are going to be used on Pesach for eating or cooking, such as the kitchen, pantry, refrigerator etc. must be cleaned well to ensure they are kosher for Pesach. Alternatively, the surface of these areas can be covered.

·Areas that are never used for chometz, such as attics, sheds or non-food storage areas, need NOT be cleaned or checked.



SEARCHING

Bedikas Chometz

·A thorough search should be conducted of all places cleaned for Pesach.

·Areas that are Pesach'dik all year round, or have been made Pesach'dik, need not be checked.

·If one cannot conduct the entire search by themselves, someone else can join to help them. It is preferable that the other person be present when the Berachos are made. If they are not there for the Berachos they do not need to make one themselves.



CHOMETZ

What is considered chometz?

·Any piece of Chometz the size of an olive must be searched for and destroyed\disposed of.

·Chometz smaller than the size of an olive, yet has significance, such as a piece of Cheerio cereal, should be disposed of.

·Although it is prohibited to eat crumbs, nonetheless, their insignificance automatically renders them ownerless (even if the owner did not declare them so before Pesach). Therefore, most authorities hold that there is no obligation to dispose of or even search for crumbs.

·When one is cleaning cabinets and the like, that are not being used for Pesach, there is no obligation to make it crumb free. In accordance with this Halacha, one need not check seforim for chametz, as they only contain crumbs. This is the straightforward Halacha.

·Yet, there is a more stringent opinion that one must check for crumbs. However, this only applies to crumbs found in a clean place, not a dusty or dirty area. According to this stringent opinion, books, seforim and toys being used on Pesach must be cleaned and checked. In any case, anything that is being sold need not be cleaned or checked.

SEDER NIGHT

Be aware that alcohol may have a negative effect on your Parkinson's medication.

·Grape juice can be substituted for wine, l'chatchila. One may also dilute low alcohol wine with grape juice. Speak to your Rov and Doctor to work out what is best for you.

·Get up a couple of times during the Seder to stretch your limbs in order to keep you from getting stiff.

MEDICATION

DO NOT STOP TAKING ANY MEDICATIONS!

·In general, most medications are permitted to take on Pesach, regardless of their content.

·Chewable or gel caps may present a problem. Ask your doctor if there is alternative medication that can be taken for just over Pesach.

·To reiterate. IN ANY CASE, DO NOT CHANGE ANYTHING IN REGARD TO YOUR MEDICATIONS BEFORE SPEAKING TO YOUR DOCTOR & ROV.



Brooklyn Women's Caregivers Event

This past Motzei Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel, we hosted the LifeSpark 'Brooklyn Women's Caregivers Event' at the charming Azrad Hall in Brooklyn, NY. The affair warmed the hearts and brought Chizuk and support to the many who attended. The Candle-Lit décor and lavish buffet added a touching ambiance to a perfect evening. Women from all walks of life came together in true Achdus form.

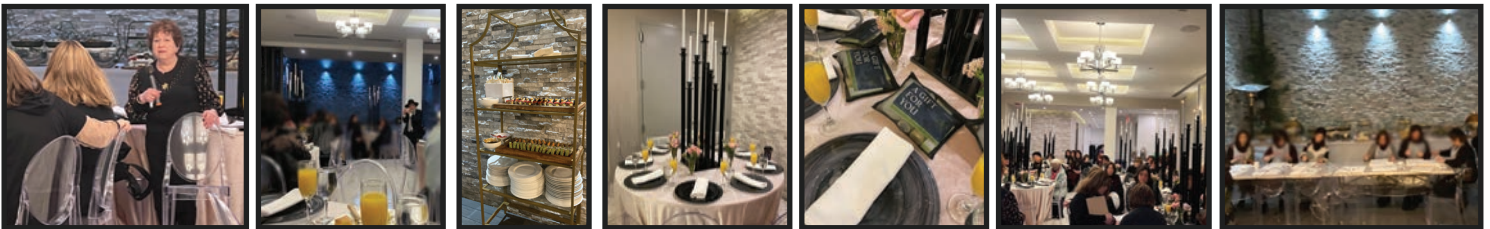
The event began with a fiery introduction by our founder; Rabbi Moshe Y. Gruskin, followed by Divrei Chizuk from Parkinson's Patient and retired social worker Mrs. Nechi Sirota. The comedy by Mrs. Devorah Kuperman, had us in side-splitting laughter, and for those lucky few who chose to

stay late, a beautiful self-drawn painting accompanied each woman home that night. A self-care package was set out for the women's enjoyment as well.

Laced with Chizuk, Support and lots of LifeSpark warmth, the understanding and encouragement gained by all those who participated was truly the greatest gift of all.



For questions, info and/or a copy of the recording of the event, please email us at info@lifesparkpd.com, or call our office at 732-534-6388.



LIFESPARK
igniting victories for parkinsons

107 7th street
Lakewood, NJ 08701
732.534.6388
info@lifesparkpd.com



VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE!
WWW.LIFESPARKPD.COM