

Dear Reader,

Tu B'shvat compels us to tap into the concept of growth and rejuvenation. It, in essence, obligates us to stop and reconnect with the growth that is inherently possible in us as individuals. What the possibilities are is so eloquently discussed in Rabbi Fuere's article on the intrinsic message of Tu B'Shvat. Here's to us praying that you can gain spiritual and practical advice in dealing with the day-to-day opportunities for victory provided by the Master Arborist.

A Freilichin Tu B'Shvat  
The LifeSpark Team



**Inside this Issue**

**Tu B'Shvat's intrinsic Message**

**Curled clenched toes?**

Tips for dealing with dystonia.

**Event recap & LifeSpark news**



Although many of you have known us as "Sparks of Life" we have rebranded and changed our name to "LifeSpark". Regardless of the name the message remains the same. We continue to strive to bring the Spark of Life back to patients with PD and their families.



# Tu B'Shvat's intrinsic Message

By Rabbi Feuer



Shevat. A month of development and growth, wherein we celebrate the ראש השנה לאילנות. On ט"ו בשבט, the 15th of the month[1], we rejoice as the trees begin their process of renewal, preparing themselves to bear fruit in the coming year.

The Gemara[2] tells us, that although the weather in Shevat is yet frosty and uncomfortable, nonetheless, the ground begins to thaw, initiating the ascent of the sap into the tree trunk. This begins a process of fertilization, priming the trees to cultivate fruit that will first appear in the spring season.

This cause for celebration seems difficult to comprehend. Why should we rejoice now, when the final product is so far away? All we have before us now, is a dark, difficult path of challenge and gradual growth. Frustrating and painful. Why the ראש השנה festivities?

The lesson for us is obvious, yet sometimes so difficult for the human mind to acknowledge. Hashem did not create Man as a finished, actualized being. He made Man as a 'work in progress'. A being of potential, waiting to be realized. The joy and celebration of the human condition is not simply the ultimate results, the eventual accomplishments, rather, it is the celebration of the challenging experience of life itself. The toil, sweat and tears, of our unique journey – Man's march towards achieving his potential. It is upon this trek that we discover of our inner soul, our individual personalities and resolve to keep growing, while we gradually find our purpose, our objectives, our very selves. ראש השנה לאילנות is not a celebration of the final fruits. Rather, as the פסוק tells us: האדם עץ השדה, humans share the core features of the tree[3]. We must contemplate the journey of the tree, finding purpose at the very beginning, joy, when the sap initially starts to ascend. Man, as well, must learn to revel, even find honor and delight, as he commences travel upon his challenging road ahead. The demanding path of human development and transformation.

Not only will we find meaning upon reaching our goals, rather, we will find the very trying trail itself to be paved with priceless gems, precious stones that can only be discovered along the way.

1] עיין משנה ריש מסכת ראש השנה  
2] עיין שם, יד, ב, וברש"י שם  
3] עיין דברים כ"ט) כן ביארו ע"פ דרוש

**On Dec 6, 2020 we had our first event in a very long time. Although initially we worked tirelessly to have an in-person event, with the rise of COVID cases we decided that it was best to do a virtual event. Notwithstanding the difficulties of all the technical details, the event was a tremendous success. Each doctor outdid themselves in providing clear and direct useful information given their short amount of time to speak. We are all very grateful to the dedication of Dr. Rezak, Dr. Pallone and Dr. Nasser. We hope to bring you more virtual events with informative information on a variety of topics and how it pertains to PD.**

**Included, is a short survey of questions that will help us with our upcoming events. Please mail it back or feel free to call in your answers at 732-534-6388 or email to [rachel@sparksoflifejcp.org](mailto:rachel@sparksoflifejcp.org). Your feedback will be much appreciated.**

# Dystonia

## Strategies and Tips for Dealing with Dystonia

Curled, clenched toes or a painful cramped foot are telltale signs of dystonia. Dystonia is a sustained or repetitive muscle twisting, spasm or cramp that can occur at different times of day and in different stages of Parkinson's disease (PD). Dystonia symptoms, similar to other Parkinson's symptoms, vary from person to person. Up to 30 percent of people with PD experience dystonia. It can occur throughout all stages of PD, but is a common early symptom of Young Onset Parkinson's. The involuntary movements and spasms most commonly occur in the arms, hands, legs and feet. Other common body parts include the neck, muscles around the eyes, vocal cords and jaw. Stress or fatigue can make dystonia symptoms worse.

### Managing Dystonia Symptoms

While trial and error are required to find strategies that work best for you, members share these methods that helped them handle and manage their dystonia symptoms:

*"I have been living with PD for 18 years and have experienced dystonia in various parts of my body. Predominantly, they occur in my right foot which tends to roll to the outside of my body with toes cramping downwards. It happens most often when my carbidopa-levodopa is wearing off. I find that I can somewhat control the muscles by slowing my breathing, mindfully visualizing a relaxing image (waves, music, waterfalls) or counting slowly..."*

*"My husband, who was diagnosed in 2011, has problems with dystonia. His dystonia sometimes feels like restless legs, which occurs more in the evening. His dystonia happens anytime during the day and can impact his thigh muscles all the way to his toes. He sometimes uses a 'roller bar' on his legs to relieve the cramping. He also has dystonia in his hands where his fingers freeze and have to be massaged to resume normal activity. On his hands he can immerse his hands in warm water and that sometimes helps."*

*"I had dystonia in my toes long before I knew that I had Parkinson's. There are two things that help me. First is rubbing my toes with a soothing cream. I also found several items in the "foot section" on Amazon (i.e., Bunion Corrector & Bunion Relief Sleeve and ZenToes Gel) that*

*help me straighten my toes, which is helpful when I wear shoes or have a fair amount of discomfort.*

These strategies are from our Parkinson's Foundation Helpline specialists and callers for dealing with dystonia:

*"I experience curling in one finger that prevents me from using my walker, I find gentle exercises for arms and hands help a little."*

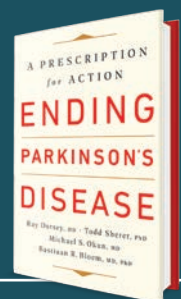
*"Heat is good for increasing blood flow while cold is good for reducing inflammation, which may not help if it's PD pain."*

*"If someone has dystonia and is on medications, keep a symptom journal of 'off times' and discuss it with your neurologist."*

Members also encourage persons with dystonia to discuss their symptoms with their physician as well as a physical therapist specializing in PD. It's important to note that deep brain stimulation surgery has been found to help dystonia.

## Recommended Reading

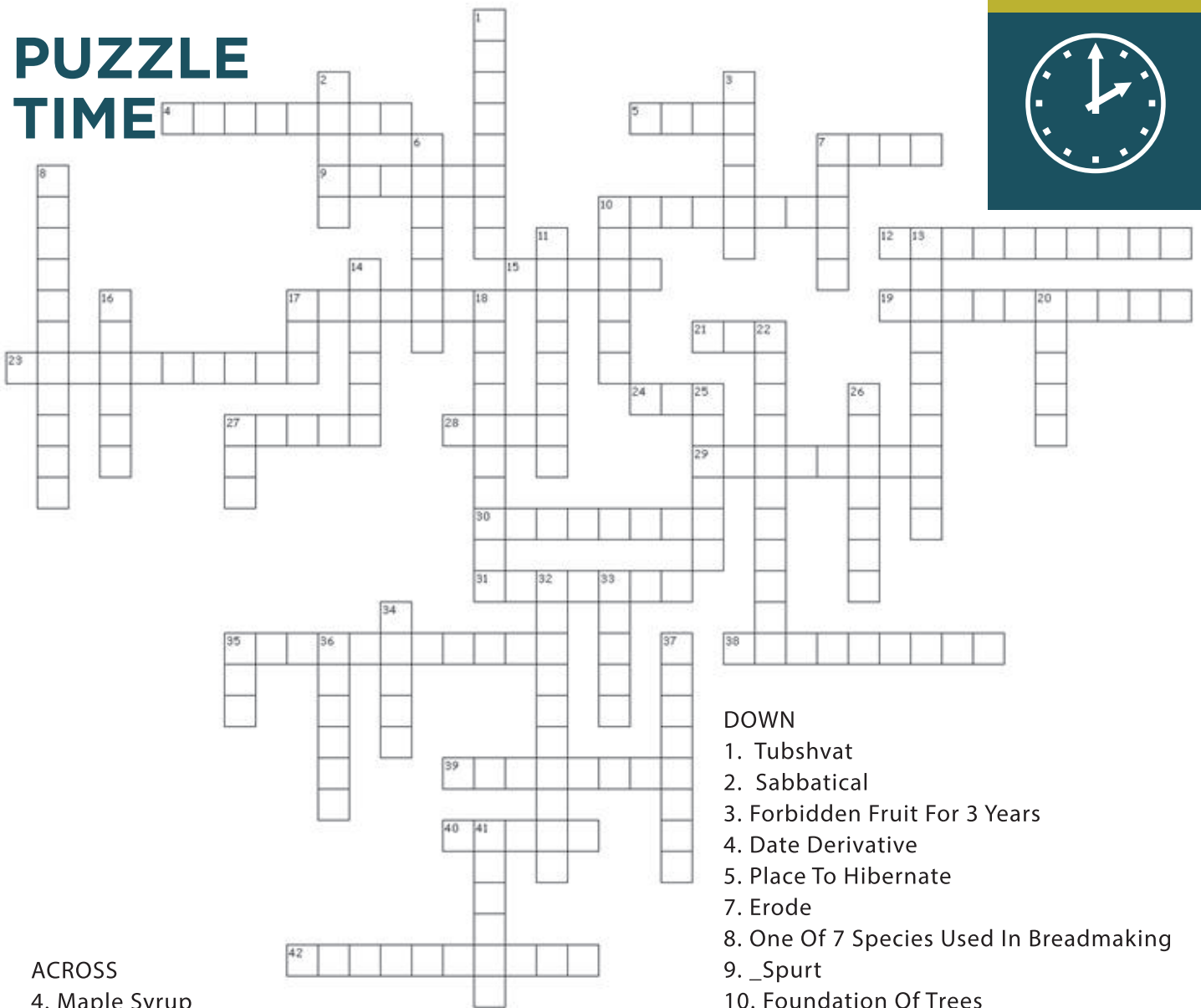
Available on Amazon



With thanks to our Sponsor:



# PUZZLE TIME



## ACROSS

4. Maple Syrup
6. 7500 Varieties
9. One With A Green Thumb
11. Tree Limb
13. Green Pigment Found In Plant Life
15. Tree Surgeon
17. 15Th Day Of The 11Th Hebrew Month
18. Trees' Source Of Food
19. Boiled Or Baked Nut
21. Nut Tree With Showy Pink Blooms
23. Prepared From Ritual Fruit
24. Breakable, Nut Candy
25. Juice Producing Fruit
28. Seeded Fruit
30. Tree In Lashon Kodesh
35. Commonly Used In Fruit Platters  
Though Not A Fruit
37. Shabbos Day Hot Dish Ingredient
40. \_Fish
41. Preserved Fruit
43. Third Of The Seven Species

## DOWN

1. Tubshvat
2. Sabbatical
3. Forbidden Fruit For 3 Years
4. Date Derivative
5. Place To Hibernate
7. Erode
8. One Of 7 Species Used In Breadmaking
9. \_Spurt
10. Foundation Of Trees
11. Bud
12. Fruit Used As Chocolate Substitute
14. Given To The High Priest
16. Commonly Known As Evoo
20. Plant Starter
22. Tree Blessing Month Heb.
24. Study Of Plant Life
26. Revive
27. Plants
29. Land Of
31. Happens Once In A Lifetime
32. Essential Necessity To Humans,  
Animals, Plant Life
33. Part Of The Myrtle Family, Used By Florists
34. Stings And Produces Food Product
35. Ozone Hazard For Short
36. Trash Dumped In Water E. G.
38. Sustenance
39. Worlds Favorite Berry
42. Fruit Commonly Eaten As Newton