

Miracles in our midst



THE DOCTOR IS IN
DR. BATYA L. LUDMAN

We were recently invited to go strawberry and flower picking, enjoy a picnic and then visit a turtle park with two of our young grandchildren and their parents, all beautifully socially distanced and out in the fresh February air. The colors, sights and tastes, hugs and one-on-one time were almost as heavenly as hearing the news that our son in America received his first COVID-19 vaccination, making it that much sooner for us all to be together after a long year and a half.

The Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) rose seven centimeters after two rainstorms, and we finally had a neighbor over to dinner – the first non-family member to cross our threshold and grace our dinner table in so many months that I had all but forgotten how to entertain. I am so grateful for what others may think are the small things in life, but which in my mind are not in the least bit small. There is so much that we simply take for granted, but if there is anything we should have learned in the past year it is that we cannot take anything for granted. Nothing, ever.

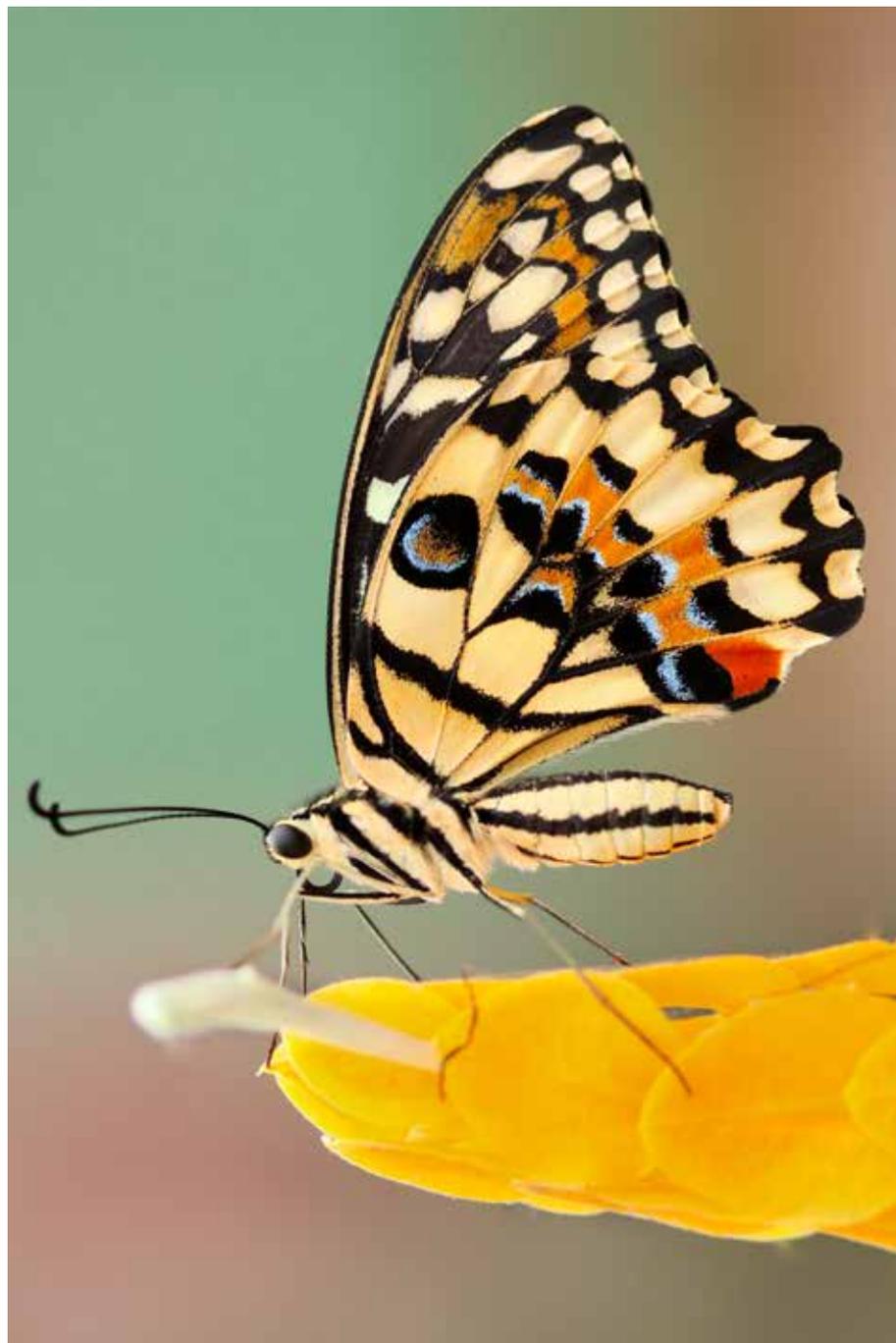
For years I have been bugging family, and clients, to notice the small things that happen each day and say them out loud or write them down. This, along with a few other tricks, has actually helped them slowly begin to see their world differently, and definitely more positively. We are primed to notice the negative, to search out and detect danger, and respond. After all, if we miss the predator in our midst, we will be eaten alive, but if we miss the sweet-smelling colorful flowers, nothing at all will happen.

Our goal must be to focus on the positive – the beauty around us that we need to bring into our awareness if we are not just to survive, but actually thrive. If we can learn to do this on a daily basis, we will feel energized, have less stress, feel happier, be able to reach out to others better, and be emotionally and physically so much healthier.

It is so easy to judge others, doing so unfavorably and with rapid speed. We get hung up on the fact that a president failed to call a prime minister and spend hours of wasted time wondering why; we focus on how bad the religious or the secular are; we see how many Facebook likes someone else has accrued and in making comparisons to ourselves feel inadequate, jealous and ever so sad. So often, in criticizing others and failing to look within ourselves, we fail to see and appreciate all that we have, and we all are blessed to have so much.

This past year of pandemic has been isolating for everyone in so many ways, from the youngest to the oldest members of society, and has impacted us all in more ways than we could have ever imagined. We will slowly come out of it as changed individuals within a changed society.

It is now up to each one of us, more than ever before, to make ours a better world. We have been given the opportunity to work together, to focus on the flowers and not just the tiger, by working hard to change our approach and remove the



A FRIEND drew my attention today to a beautiful butterfly. (Boris Smokrovic/Unsplash)

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happen to notice on the ground as I walk.

Increase the “feel good” hormones and lower the stress ones. It is all about awareness, noticing, sharpening our senses and appreciation. Dance, move, put on a song. We are in a better place, we have learned a ton, we have mastered dealing with so much. Say thank you and celebrate life.

I leave you with the following words written by Abraham Joshua Heschel: “Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement... Get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually.”

Try it – for one week. You might just find that you notice, with greater positivity, the miracles within our midst. ■

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doom and gloom, the sense of hopelessness and helplessness, and focus on replacing it with a huge dose of hopefulness instead.

AS VACCINATIONS have helped us move out of “getting through the day” survival mode, it becomes important to look ahead and focus once again on what we can do and not just on what we can't do or don't have. This will be our challenge as we work together as a family, and as a community. This is crucial for our individual and collective emotional and physical well-being and survival. Look how we have learned the importance of waiting in line, leaving space between ourselves and others, respecting personal space and making appointments, which we have discovered can be handled efficiently and with compassion, and a myriad of other things. If we can do these things just imagine what else we can really do!

My readers have reminded me of how they have used this time to benefit from all the studying and learning they did independently or managed on Zoom, something they barely heard of a year ago. They have smiled when recalling the joy they have experienced when running into someone they had not seen for a while, now having a greater appreciation for the relationship. They have taken on fun knitting and cooking projects, de-cluttered their spaces to be better able to enjoy them, and even gone on weekly picnics to the seashore, collecting beautiful glass that now graces their home.

A friend drew my attention today to a beautiful butterfly, commenting how she loves butterflies and looks for them as she walks. I said I stopped the other day to take a picture of a bird on a wire and another on top of a stop sign. I'm constantly sending my daughter pictures of my feet pointing to heart-shaped leaves, rocks and other assorted items I just