

Passover: It's never too early

• DR. BATYA L. LUDMAN

Walking into my office to write in my appointment book that I had a repairman coming after my last patient and before an outside meeting, I noticed that my floor looked dirty.

I went and got the broom and swept. I then went and got the cordless vacuum cleaner and vacuumed. I returned the broom to the closet and the vacuum to the kitchen. I examined the failing recipe in the oven, walked into the bedroom and, now 10 minutes later, realized I'd been distracted and never wrote down that the repairman was coming.

While I'm not sure that I'd forget the repairman or the meeting and head out for a walk, writing them down in my book would just help ensure that I'd remember.

It's easy to get distracted, especially when you have lots on your mind, find it hard not to multi-task, and no longer have the brain of a 25-year-old. I used to laugh that my stay-at-home mom had a daily journal in which she wrote down everything. As a teenager, I'd tease her that she wrote down the obvious – why? Would she really forget? She never forgot a thing.

Now I know the answer is “Yes, it's possible.” But would I really forget the repairman any more than I'd forget Passover? I see my late mother at times when I look in the mirror and in so many other places in my home. And, as I begin to write this pre-Passover column when it's not even February, just as my mother would have, because procrastination causes stress, I, too, already have Passover on my mind. No wonder I need to write things down!

Friends told me they already were invited for Seder. Already? Yikes! Cousins from abroad will be visiting Israel, and so, with 10 weeks to go, I realized I, too, needed to take control and determine if we'd be hosting the Seder this year.

One wouldn't think this would be a huge stress for those who regularly “make Shabbat,” but somehow for many women it often is. I dream that just before I start my Passover cleaning, an angel will scoop up our entire family and rescue me, taking us away to some wonderful destination where everything's already done ahead of time. I simply show up. That fantasy was nice for the moment it lasted. And the truth is that Passover can really be enjoyable, and provide great teachable moments for every generation around the table. And when



‘THIS HOLIDAY is a wonderful opportunity for your children to see the power of giving.’ (Pixabay)

everything is done, I must admit, I'm right up there with my family: We love it.

So... given that this column will come out the week before Passover, I hope that all those who got over their rescue fantasies have been hard at work cleaning or will do so in the next short while, and see the cleaning as an opportunity for quality time alone with your thoughts; time when you can think of renewal and what you'd like to see grow in your life, what you'd like to enrich or strengthen.

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It's the time to metaphorically get rid of the hametz (emotional baggage) in your life and bring in the new and the fresh. It's time to look at the past and truly let go of what doesn't feel good. If you are not able to do it on your own, seek professional help so that you can, once and for all, move on.

It's time to imagine what you would like your Seder to look like – who will be there, in what way are they important in your life – and if it includes someone you have difficulty with, to work on improving that relationship.

It's time to look at ourselves and appreciate that we are not slaves, nor should we be slaves, to anything, but, rather, we have the freedom to choose what we do, and we should value this and teach the beauty of it to the next generations. This is a time of renewal and, with that, as always, for gratitude.

I WOULD be remiss if I didn't make my list of suggestions for a stress-reduced holiday. Knowing that everyone is short on time this week, I'll keep my list short.

1. Find the time each day to do something small and nice for yourself. It need not take more than a few moments, but do it with awareness and appreciation.

2. Each day thank the people around you who have been helpful in any small way. This includes your children.

3. Make time this holiday to give to others less fortunate than yourself. This is a wonderful opportunity for your children to see the power of giving.

4. If the recipe that you made does not turn out as anticipated, turn it into something else and change the name! My failed banana bread became banana bonbons in pretty wrappers.

5. Don't procrastinate. Keeping your stress level low by being organized, writing things down, and completing tasks early benefits everyone and allows time for unforeseen issues to come up and be resolved more easily.

6. There's so much to be grateful for. When you awaken in the morning or go to sleep at night, say out loud, or write down, at least five things. This can be transformative, helping you sleep better and be happier during the day.

7. Focus on what's really important throughout the holiday. Too often, we focus only on what we think is important.

8. Remember your loved ones who are no longer with you and find some small way to honor them. Ask your children to help you with this.

9. Remind yourself, as a rabbi once taught me, that dust is not hametz, and therefore arrive at the Seder table well rested. Make sure to delegate so that others not only share your load but enjoy being participants.

10. Ask yourself why this night is different from all other nights and make it as special as you'd like it to be.

11. Remind yourself that this family time is a time to highlight traditions. What message do you want your children to walk away with? Given that this may have a much longer lasting impact than the menu, use your time wisely.

I hope that you have a meaningful holiday and that it goes exactly as planned. In all likelihood, it won't, so I hope, too, that you're able to see the beauty in all that went right, appreciate all those who were with you, and allow yourself the freedom to dream about what next year's holiday will look like. *Hag Same'ah.* ■

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