

Transforming your values into reality



THE DOCTOR IS IN
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Here we are, having just finished Passover, and hopefully most are grateful that much of the hard work has actually been done to get us here.

For those who turned over their kitchens, cooked, cleaned, prepared a Seder and more, along with working, looking after children, as well as having a “to-do” list a mile long, it’s a miracle in itself that people got to the Seder table and were both physically and mentally present. Once, while dreading Passover preparation, I was shocked to discover it was our children’s favorite holiday.

It’s precisely because we are at this point that it is important to take a step back and ask ourselves, just how did we get here? What did we do right and what could we have done better?

One of our precious little granddaughters asked me again if this year everyone would get new packs for their backs so they can march around the living room like slaves. She also asked whether the table would be decorated with magnet tile pyramids and little people crossing the sea. Some days it takes a five-year-old to remind us just what is important. I took a break from my clients, the kitchen cleaning, and even my lists, to make sure we purchased those backpacks again and some things such as tambourines and fake cameras for the “journey.”

What are our takeaway lessons? I can’t help but ponder this as I tried to make space for eight adults and seven children under the age of seven (including three under nine months) in our apartment. I know with certainty that if we know what it is that we consider important, we will have a better chance of instilling those values in others and achieving them ourselves. When I look around at all the minor issues that I love to kvetch about, I am truly grateful for this package and really don’t want to replace it with anyone else’s.

So this year, I know that part of my sanity came from being organized and planning ahead when possible. How does one plan a Seder – the first part of which had us sitting on the floor and was, if nothing else, child-friendly? My husband, who initially boycotted the idea of doing 10 plagues and dipping into grape juice while seated on the living room floor, as he thought I was insane, finally agreed to it.

How, too, did one get everyone out of the house when one child was ready, another needed the bathroom, when one was wide awake, another was jet-lagged, and parents endorsed a strict sleep schedule? One practices patience, cooperation, enjoying a sense of togetherness, which at best only happens once or twice a year. Could it be that this is all about redefining expectations and taking goal-setting down a notch?

Don’t wait to appreciate

SO NOW we are about to celebrate the 75th anniversary of our amazing country. In spite of our fractious behavior, we too have so much to appreciate. It’s time we all take it down a notch as well and look around at what we have. As I, an Ashkenazi woman, was picking out just the right box of Pesach cookies in the store, a sweet Sephardi gentleman came by and asked me if I really liked those cookies, and if so, which ones should he buy. Before leaving, he blessed me, wished me a *chag sameach* (happy holiday), a good month and much more. In spite of the late hour and the crowds in the store, there was a true sense of *achdut* (togetherness). We all have our “only in Israel” moments, but isn’t this what we also want to be celebrating?

We are truly blessed to see miracles. How often in the course of a day are we spared from danger, bad things or misfortune – and all the while, we are neither aware of nor do we appreciate it? Whether it’s the food we eat without choking, the car ride we take without injury or the decision we make to do or not to do something that inadvertently turns out to be the wise choice – these things in themselves are little miracles.

Making time to be aware and thankful for what we have can change our entire



SAY THANK you for even the smallest things. (Howie R/Unsplash)

outlook on life. Thanking someone for a good deed or actually doing a good deed for someone else does require going out of our way – taking a detour. It may require an investment of time, often going against our “we want it now” immediate gratification philosophy, and certainly takes us off course in our highly pressured focus on “achievement and success.”

Or does it? Perhaps what we can’t see is how we get there faster and more contentedly with a totally different approach toward life. Perhaps the goal isn’t in successfully “getting there,” but instead it is the act of going there or “living life” that makes us successful. If we travel with the right set of equipment or values, every step of the journey can be potentially wonderful, thus making the end destination less important. We can see and appreciate what there is along the way. As the song goes, we often don’t appreciate what we have until it’s gone. Think about your eyesight, your loved one, or just the ability to do a small task that is now impossible.

Here is my personal “to-do” list for attempting to create my own miracles.

1. Let go of things. Decide when it’s time to move on and don’t hold a grudge. Anger gets in the way of forgiveness.

2. Make the choice to see the cup as half full instead of half empty. See each drop put in as a blessing.

3. Always be happy with what you have and don’t dwell on what you don’t have. Being rich is in the eye of the beholder. All I have to do is look around me, and I am a billionaire.

4. Smile. If outwardly you can be happy, then your inside will begin to radiate with joy as well. Smiles are contagious, and those around you will want to be with you and experience your joy.

5. Don’t wait to appreciate things. Grab the moment. It might not come again. Appreciate all that nature has given you for free.

6. Say thank you for even the smallest things. See how your world can change as a result. Never think that what you were given was not enough and look for more. Don’t have expectations. Be grateful for everything you have.

7. Teach your children to say thank you. Whether it is for a gift or because someone did something nice, a thank you (in person or electronically) is a nice habit to get into. Teach your children to do nice things for someone else.

8. Listen to what others tell you. Often you can fulfill a need and create a miracle in just a split second.

WE MAY not have a choice over the package that we are given in life, but we have a choice as to what we do with that package. We can see the package as a blessing or a burden, the glass half full or mostly empty. We can feel “done to” or we can take control over our lives and treat people the way in which we ourselves would hope to be treated. When we get to an intersection, maybe just once we might choose to let the other person go ahead, even if we were not sure who got there first. We can smile and really catch people off guard.

Can you imagine the shock you might give someone if “just because” you pay for the cup of coffee for the person behind you in line? The list of possibilities is endless, and these small acts of kindness really can promote change. But don’t take my word for it – try it yourself.

Life is what you make of it. You can open your eyes wide and see everything around you and appreciate the moment or you can walk through life with your head down and your eyes closed. You create your own miracles every day. While the grass often looks greener on the other side, and you may be jealous of what others seem to have, when you look at all that you have, you might just discover that what you have been blessed with is the best gift of all and it might be right in front of you. You may not have been looking in the right place.

Now is the time to personally take stock and look at your own miracles. May the miracles in your life keep you going back for more and more during this holiday season. ■

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