

Pesach 5777

# RISE

Reaching out with Inspiration, Support and Encouragement



A project of Chakeinu



### *Our Story*

It all began when a group of women with a shared vision joined forces to make their dream a reality - a community of mental health support for Jewish women.

Together they founded Chazkeinu, a network of women who share their stories, hope, and faith while struggling with mental illness. Each of our founders contributed her own talents and passions as together they created resources to decrease the stigma surrounding mental illness in the Jewish world and help those affected to end their isolation.

Today Chazkeinu has hundreds of members from around the globe and continues to grow at a rapid pace. As we expand our programs, we keep our founding vision at the center of all we do: **“We strengthen ourselves by strengthening each other.”**

### *Our Programs*

- Phone Support Meetings
- Outreach Member List
- Chat Club
- Davening (prayer) Group
- Partner Program
- Shabbaton
- Inspirational Emails
- Chazkeinu Gatherings
- Quarterly Newsletter
- EMPOWERED a non-emergency support hotline

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# | Letters from the Founders |

*I feel both honored and humbled as I send this message to my Chazkeinu family. You all mean so much to me and are such an integral part of my journey. I wish I can hand-deliver this newsletter with a personal message to each and every one of you. Please accept this letter as if I am speaking directly to you.*

*To my dearest Chazkeinu sister,*

I want to personally thank you for stepping out of your comfort zone and joining Chazkeinu. The admiration and respect I have for you is immeasurable. Please, always remember that you are a courageous, remarkable, and extraordinary individual. Thank you for helping me feel whole again. You strengthen me and positively impact my life in ways that I never imagined would be possible.

One of the Brachos (blessings) we recite during Pesach and other holidays is, "...*Shehecheeyanu V'kiymanu Vihigiyanu L'zman Haze*h." We thank Hashem who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion. Chazkeinu has reached the exciting milestone of its first anniversary! I have overwhelming gratitude to Hashem for enabling us all to reach this auspicious time. As Pesach approaches and the spirit of freedom is in the air, I thank Hashem for granting me Chazkeinu, a gift of freedom from a life of isolation and stigma. Pesach comes with its unique challenges, and the longing for empathy and connection is great. Let's take this time to continue to reach out and strengthen each other. As our song says, "...*Connecting forever we're never alone. We all have each other as our own.*"

May we all merit uniting with the ultimate redemption, when Chazkeinu will be our means to express the true joy of recovery in our lives.

Wishing you a meaningful and fulfilling Pesach!

Your #1 fan,  
*Zahava*

*To my dear Chazkeinu sisters,*

Never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined the explosive growth of our much needed organization in just over a year. I am so grateful to each and every one of you for taking that brave step to join Chazkeinu. It is our hope that Chazkeinu can provide you with support and encouragement in an area where you may have been otherwise reluctant to discuss with others. Each of you is making the commitment to end both the self-stigma and the outside stigma in regard to mental illness. You are pioneers showing others that it is safe and beneficial to join, and you have so much to gain in return. We are so excited to keep adding additional programs to our organization in order to be of greater service to our members. I look forward to much continued growth in the future. Please continue to spread the word about Chazkeinu so more women can benefit from the many programs that we offer.

*Tamar M*

# Mailbox



Before Chazkeinu, I felt very alone in my struggle. My only support was the information I could get online, and I was not comfortable with the uncensored quality that came from people that did not share my values. At Chazkeinu, there is a strong feeling of loyalty where we all fiercely protect each other from negative thought patterns when we are together. That is very powerful and a key factor in healing. I benefit by contributing to and gaining from this feeling of community and growth.



Chazkeinu is not only for individuals struggling with mental illness but also for their families, friends, or anyone effected in any way. It's a safe environment where we can learn about our struggles, share experiences, and gain support. I've noticed that anytime I email or speak to someone from Chazkeinu I'm so impressed by the warmth. They constantly wish me happiness and serenity and make me feel so comfortable and cared for.



The great thing about Chazkeinu is that it takes away the feeling of being alone in the struggle of mental illness. It helps me feel validated and accepted, and it's the only place that I can be authentic and truly be myself.

*We would love to hear from you.  
Please email  
[Chazkeinunewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:Chazkeinunewsletter@gmail.com)  
with your questions, comments,  
and feedback.*



As a spouse of someone who is suffering from mental illness, I felt lonely. I was completely in the dark about what exactly my husband was going through and this contributed to pain and in-acceptance of his diagnosis. Being part of Chazkeinu has helped me understand what my husband is going through and has helped me come to terms with it as well. This has made a great impact on his recovery and our relationship as well.



I enjoy getting the emails with poems and articles. It makes me feel like I'm not the only one who has such feelings. I used to think there were only a small number of people who suffer from anxiety, but I can see from these emails and poems that it's a lot more people than I think. This knowledge is very comforting!



Before Chazkeinu, I was alone, lost in the vast sea of mental illness. Although I had a therapist, a doctor, & even a friend or two who suffered from mental illness, my support system was very small. Now, I look forward to each Chazkeinu phone session with eagerness. Hearing mental illness spoken about by people like me who seem so normal created a whole new picture of hope for me. Together with mental health professionals, these people are addressing MY pain, MY fears, MY dilemmas, in a way that encourages me to cope & grow.

# True Freedom



By Avrohom Steier

**P**esach. The festival of liberation and freedom. The time of the year when we remember the breathtaking miracles that Hashem performed to remove us from our physical and spiritual bondage and to break the stranglehold which our Egyptian taskmasters had held us in for so long.

The notion of freedom would seem to be highly relevant to the average person who is “relatively” in control of their thoughts and emotions. For those who suffer from mental illness, however, the word “freedom” is not a state of being, rather a goal to attain. Their entire existence is centered on desperate attempts to free themselves from their internal taskmasters who are unyielding and unwilling to release their vise-like grip over their subjects. How can we feel the freedom of Pesach when we seem to be so distant from it?

I believe that to answer this question we must first understand the deeper meaning of freedom. Freedom in Western society is understood to be the ability to do what you desire and not be constrained by outside forces that wish to force you to follow other, less desirable pursuits. According to this definition of freedom, the person that lies on the beach all day basking in the sun’s rays without a care in the world is living the height of freedom, while a second person who must work hard to earn a living is not truly free.

However, Judaism would seem to have a different definition of freedom. We know that everything in our lives is preordained from Heaven and that the only freedom that we possess is our free will (the ability to choose between good and bad). R’ Mattisyahu Solomon adds an important point to this understanding. He writes that the focus of free will is not choosing to do something; rather, it is the ability to choose to **not** do something; to refrain from following an impulse or desire,

or to not follow through with a negative plan of action. Based on this idea, we come to the conclusion that Judaism’s definition of freedom is the ability to choose to not think and act in certain ways, despite the inherent drive to do so.

I think that this concept can be better understood with an example. Imagine for a moment, two avid smokers, one of whom has decided to quit, sitting side by side on a park bench. The one who

continues to smoke regularly pulls out a cigarette and begins to inhale deeply thoroughly enjoying the experience, but when he offers one to his friend, he politely but firmly refuses and walks away. Based on our definition of freedom, the second person who resisted the impulse and craving (because he knows that struggling against his temptation is for his ultimate benefit) is the one who is truly free, while the first who took the cigarette and did not resist the temptation is controlled by his desires and is not truly free.

*“The focus of free will is not choosing to do something; rather, it is the ability to choose to not do something”*

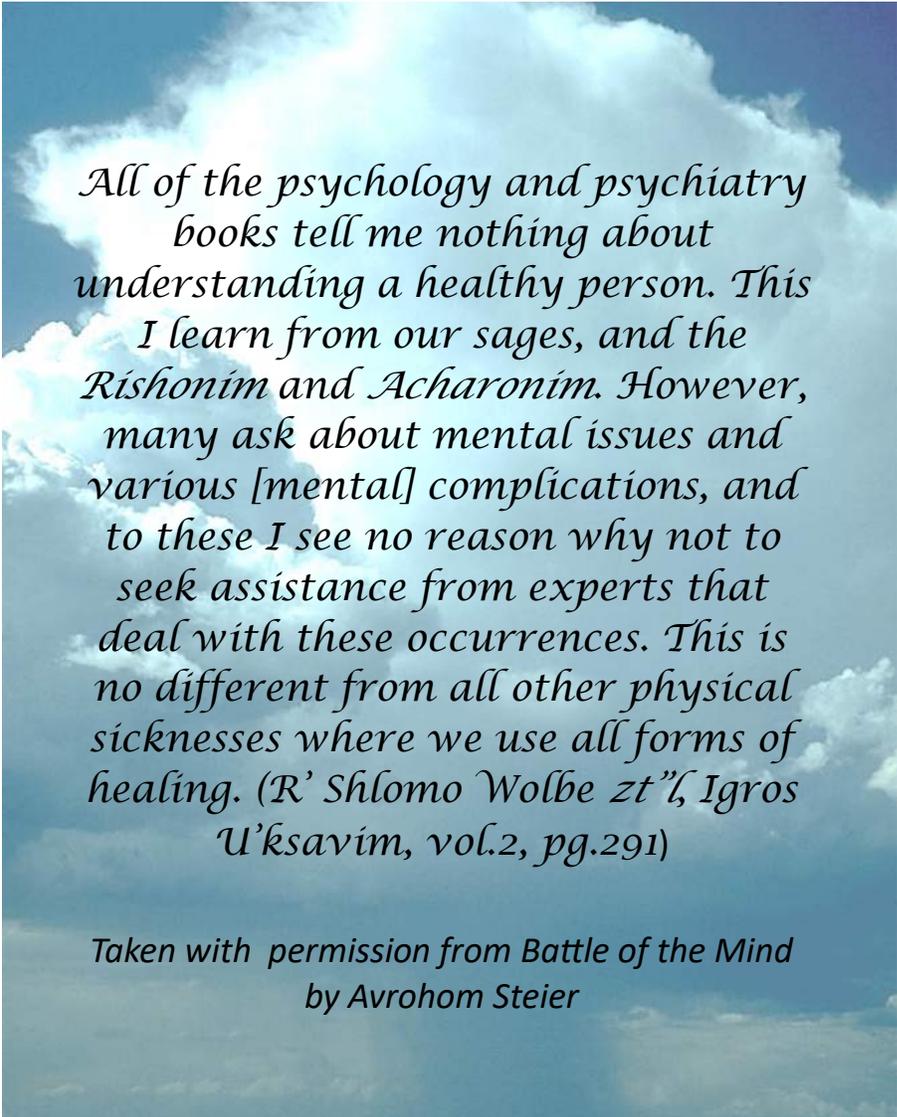
Most people live their lives much like our cigarette taker. They create a routine that conforms to their whims and desires, and they live with it their entire lives; rarely having to deny their temptations and impulses. According to our definition of freedom, these people may appear to be free, but, in reality, they are slaves to their desires and impulses.

There is, however, a second group of people. Those who do not allow their lives to be controlled by their impulses, desires, and emotions; rather, they fight vigorously to steer the direction of their path in life to something more pleasant for themselves and those around them. Much like our heroic reformed smoker, they know that, in the long run, saying “no” will lead them to a happier and healthier existence. They are the

ones who are truly free.

For those who struggle with mental illness, Pesach can be a puzzling time. How can freedom be celebrated when servitude seems to be the order of the day? However, from a clearer vantage point, perhaps we can see that the battle against mental illness is itself true freedom and that resisting against negative impulses and emotions is the only true freedom that exists on this Earth.

*Avrohom Steier is a talmid of Bais Medresh Govah in Lakewood, NJ and the author of the book Battle of the Mind; a book offering Torah based words of encouragement and inspiration for those battling mental illness.*



*All of the psychology and psychiatry books tell me nothing about understanding a healthy person. This I learn from our sages, and the Rishonim and Acharonim. However, many ask about mental issues and various [mental] complications, and to these I see no reason why not to seek assistance from experts that deal with these occurrences. This is no different from all other physical sicknesses where we use all forms of healing. (R' Shlomo Wolbe zt"l, Igros U'ksavim, vol.2, pg.291)*

*Taken with permission from Battle of the Mind  
by Avrohom Steier*



# How am I to Survive the Food Temptations?

By: Yocheved Rabinowitz, LCSW

**T**he Yomim Tovim (holidays) are meant to be a time of joy, celebration, and connection. However, for many, they have become a time of stress, disconnection, and anger.

Food was meant to be nourishing, pleasurable, and comforting. However, for many, it has become a source of friction, self-loathing, and discomfort.

At this time of year when we combine the two, many are left with intense feelings of anxiety.

Feeling depressed or anxious is not unusual during the holiday months. Upcoming family meals and the increase in responsibilities cause a great deal of stress. Fueling your body nutritiously and appropriately can make a difference to your overall stress level. However, with the focus of food and all the temptations around, this can be challenging.

Furthermore, since eating and body issues aren't really about food, but are rooted in genetics, biology, personality, childhood trauma, and family dynamics, the family aspect of the holidays can be an issue. If dysfunctional family dynamics play a part in your disordered eating pattern, this is cause for more emotional turmoil, fueling the fire of restrictive or bingeing behaviors. Even if you aren't around your family for the holidays, the Yom Tov itself can bring up painful memories that have contributed to your disordered eating behaviors.

Ideally, the healthiest approach to food is to eat when you are hungry and stop when you are full. This is key to healthy eating. However, many people are not in touch with their natural hunger and satiety levels. (<http://www.refuathanefesh.com/the-food-fight/>)

Here are some practical tips to help you navigate the overall stress and particularly the challenges that arise around food:

**1. Eat regularly:** Many people think they should skip breakfast and/or lunch to "make room" for a Yom Tov meal. However, this strategy backfires and fuels overeating. When your body feels famished, it will increase your appetite and hunger levels to make sure you are giving it enough fuel. This will likely make you overeat and/or reach for unhealthy foods. Your biological hormones are strong and often win over "will power."

Furthermore, if you have overeaten, you should not restrict later on, because your body will increase its hormones and throw your internal state off balance. Don't focus on the mistakes. If you feel too full or you have overeaten, move on and do not allow it to stress you out.

Equally important is to refrain from eating just because the food is available. Tune into yourself, and see if you are actually hungry before reaching for food. (You might also want to learn more about why you might be eating when you are not hungry.)

For some, having a very specific and structured plan of when to eat meals and what to eat during those

meals may help stay in check. For others, this can backfire when they think they “cheated.”

**2. Allow yourself to eat.** Telling yourself you can’t have certain foods because they are “bad” plays into disordered eating behaviors by overindulging when you “cheat.” Tell yourself you can have whatever foods you want while being mindful to eat only when you are hungry. Giving yourself permission to eat is vital in stopping disordered eating behaviors.

**3. Slow down.** Enjoy each bite, and put your fork down while chewing. Take a drink between each bite. This gives your body enough time to communicate to your brain that you are satisfied (not necessarily full).

**4. Pay attention.** Do not eat while cleaning or preoccupied, or while standing in the kitchen or talking on the phone. When you do these things, you’re more likely to lose track of how much you’ve eaten and/or if your body is full.

**5. Control portions.** Especially during the holidays, know that you’ll have more opportunities to eat snacks and desserts. You don’t have to deprive yourself, and you should **allow** yourself to indulge, just monitor your portion size.

**6. Keep the focus off the food.** Reflect on the significance of the holiday and the opportunities provided to enjoy the company of friends and loved ones. Don’t

focus on meals or eating; instead, think of the non-food related aspects of this season.

**7. Establish an accountability buddy and support network.** Designate a trusted person as the “buddy” you can check in with during these months. Talk with them regularly about your worries or anxieties. Give them permission to speak up if they notice that you are falling into obsessive or unhealthy eating behaviors. You can also develop a group of friends and/or family members who understand where you are at and what you are going through. The support of others can be crucial to getting through the holidays.

This year, have compassion for yourself and try to let go of the need to be perfect. The yomim tovim are a time of connection and gratitude. Remember that your worth as a person has nothing to do with your size, the food you eat, the amount of cakes you bake, or how eye-catching your mishloach manot are.

*Yocheved Rabinowitz, LCSW is a graduate of Fordham University School of Social Services with a master’s degree in clinical social work. She has years of experience in the diagnosis and treatment of a wide variety of clinical issues including anxiety-related disorders, depression, relationship concerns, problems related to low self-esteem, problematic family dynamics, transitional issues, and eating disorders. Her private practice is located in Brooklyn, New York.*

### *What If....*

**Hunger** means you eat when physically hungry instead of emotionally hungry.

**Attitudes** about your size has to do with the size of your heart instead of the size of your body.

**Parents** accept and value you for who you are, not according to how you look.

**Problems** are resolved in ways other than stuffing your feelings with food.

**You** spend as much time and energy on helping others, as you do on how you look.

**Happiness** comes from within rather than from expectations of others.

**Occasions** for the holidays emphasize relating to others instead of emphasizing food.

**Love of self** means you deserve to treat yourself in the best humanly possible way.

**Identity of self** involves more than how you look.

**Disapproval of self** is changed to approval of who you are.

**Acceptance of what one cannot change** includes your body features.

**You** treat yourself as you treat your best friend.

**Society** values you for being you without emphasis to your weight or size.

By: Sharon Sward, President of Eating Disorder Professionals of Colorado

## | Meet a Member |



# Meet a Member

*Can you please share with our readers a little bit about yourself and your struggles?*

I am a young woman in my early 30's who has struggled with a number of mental illnesses. When I first began therapy a number of years ago, I met criteria for Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). B"H (thank God), at this point, I have made significant gains in therapy, and I no longer meet criteria for most of these disorders including BPD and PTSD.

*Can you share with us how you have worked and continue to work on overcoming your difficulties?*

Therapy combined with medication and A LOT of hard work and dedication have really given me an opportunity to lead a happier and calmer life. Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and Schema Therapy, in particular, have really been the treatments that have been most helpful for me on this journey. DBT, developed by Marsha Linehan, is a skills based form of therapy, and it has taught me techniques to deal with difficult emotions and situations and how to balance change with acceptance. Schema Therapy, developed by Jeffrey Young and Janet Klosko, is based upon Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and it has helped me to recognize and weaken various problematic thought patterns and behaviors that were a result of my traumatic childhood. At times, I still continue to struggle with emotional sensitivity and maladaptive childhood schemas. However, for the most part, I can regulate my emotions, and my functioning is not impaired.

*Who has helped and supported you throughout your struggles?*

My husband has been a tremendous support for me throughout this whole journey, and he has constantly been there at my side. I wouldn't be where I am today without his patience, guidance, and assistance. My husband's Rebbeim have always availed themselves to talk, give *hadracha* (guidance), and *chizuk* (inspiration), and I feel fortunate to have a connection with them and to benefit from their Torah and *yiras shamayim* (fear of God). Relief has been with me on my journey from the very beginning. From the very first phone call I always knew that I could turn to them for an objective opinion and advice. I also have a lot of appreciation to all of my therapists for guiding me and facilitating my healing process and for helping me accomplish what I thought was impossible.

*How did you hear about Chazkeinu, and how have you benefited from their programs?*

I read an interview with Zahava in the local paper. In the article, she described her own struggles as well as Chazkeinu, and I was so impressed with what I read and with what Chazkeinu seeks to accomplish. Chazkeinu's battle against the stigma that surrounds mental illness and the beauty of people who struggle getting together to provide support really touches me and decreases the isolation I feel as a result of my mental illness.

*What message and words of inspiration would you give to those with similar challenges?*

A man desires to travel to Nepal and climb the famed Mount Everest. He longs for adventure and to feel the wind in his face as he scales jagged cliffs and surveys the world from atop peaks that few dare to traverse. If the man were to travel without proper training, without a map, provisions, or a guide, he is sure to perish shortly after his arrival. In order to properly undertake this challenge he must adequately prepare himself. He must buy the right gear and equipment, bring enough food and provisions, hire a guide, and engage in the proper training necessary to accomplish a task as formidable as this. However, unlike the man in our story, in life, one doesn't get to choose when or what their "Mount Everest" will be. Nonetheless, once on the mountain one must learn how to climb. Hashem, in his infinite wisdom, has deemed that I shall travel the mountain of mental illness, a journey fraught with intense challenge and pain. Yet, Hashem, the ultimate guide, has provided me with the tools, people, and will power necessary to survive and ultimately thrive on this journey. Fellow climbers, don't lose hope; continue scaling your mountain. We're all cheering you on.

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# Meet a Member

*Can you please share with our readers a little bit about yourself and your struggles?*

I'm a wife and mother with a part time job out of the house. I'm active and enjoy being busy. After a few years of marriage, I was very anxious and sought help to work through it. I started on a medicine that was supposed to calm me down but ended up triggering a full-blown manic episode requiring hospitalization. I now have a bipolar diagnosis. I've had multiple small-scale mixed episodes which are incidents that have characteristics of both mania and depression. I'm also dealing with unresolved trauma. A lot of the fear I live with on a constant basis can be traced back to events in my childhood, and I'm in the middle of processing it all. It's hard work and takes a lot of determination and commitment. Sometimes, the trauma work will trigger an episode. It's complicated, but B"H I am seeing progress and beginning to feel better.

*Can you share with us how you have worked and continue to work on overcoming your difficulties?*

At first I was determined to beat it all on my own. Ha. Once I allowed therapy, medication, exercise, and good friends (the *really* good type :-)) into my life, I started getting places. It's a humbling journey; one where I face myself without my defenses. It's less than fun. Focusing on my mental health is real *avoda*. I often feel drained and invigorated at the same time. It takes everything out of me to keep at it, but it is so rewarding. I am working on myself to change patterns that have ruled my life for many years. I am becoming a better, stronger, healthier person through this process. One day, one struggle, one victory at a time.

*Who has helped and supported you throughout your struggles?*

At first, I kept everything very quiet. I couldn't believe this was happening to me. I was always considered a strong, dependable person who could handle anything, and here my life was falling apart. I am fortunate to have a devoted spiritual mentor who is knowledgeable about mental health. She was and is there for me throughout my journey. Later on, when I needed their help, I involved a small number of close family members. Some have been very supportive. Others were shocked and needed time to adjust to this new reality of their beloved family member suffering so much. With my friends, I am very cautious. Most know nothing, and two are somewhat informed. I kind of talk to them about my feelings without being very open. They are great at accepting me and what I choose to share. Then, there's Chazkeinu. A whole other category.... :-)) I believe everyone is supporting me to the best of their ability, and for that I am grateful.

*How did you hear about Chazkeinu, and how have you benefited from their programs?*

After being discharged from the hospital, I felt very alone in my struggles, and I reached out to some organizations for support. One of them directed me to Chazkeinu. I looked it up online and reached out. I called the now familiar number, [314-346-7414](tel:314-346-7414), and left a tentative, unsure message. What I got back was the warmest, most welcoming and loving voicemail that I have saved until today. Zahava's words were, "You've come to the right place." That was all I needed. I became a regular on the Monday night conference calls. I also shared my story and had it recorded on the hotline. I made new friends, and I correspond with them via email. We share challenges, struggles, chizuk and humor. I find that all my Chazkeinu interactions leave me feeling more positive and hopeful. Most importantly, I have become more comfortable with my struggles and, ultimately, with myself. Thanks, friends. I love you all!

*What message and words of inspiration would you give to those with similar challenges?*

For me, the feeling of belonging and togetherness is so healing. You don't have to do this alone. Even though nobody can make your challenges go away, they can make the journey easier by holding your hand. I know how hard it is to take that first step and reach out. It takes bravery and guts, but since I've joined Chazkeinu, so much of my package was normalized. I am among people who've been there, and they get it. I used to be focused on finishing up my work in therapy and graduating with honors. Now my goal is to live Happily Ever in Middle, making the most of every moment.

*To be interviewed for this column please contact [Chazkeinunewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:Chazkeinunewsletter@gmail.com)*



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# Ask the Therapist

By Tonya Swartzendruber MA and  
Dr. David H. Rosmarin PHD, ABPP

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Dear Chazkeinu,

My husband was recently diagnosed with depression. How can I best support him in his struggles and recovery?

Shiffy

---

*Dear Shiffy,*

Dealing with depression in a family member can be difficult. The step that you already took, getting an accurate diagnosis, is a very important one. Next, it is essential to find a good treatment provider that knows how to handle depression and has a good track record of providing effective treatment. When you do find a good provider, stay involved in treatment. Spouses can play an essential role of supporting the patient through therapy. Therapists may also ask for your perspective on the patient's symptoms to get a better picture of all aspects of the depression and the impact it is having on the family.

In addition to ensuring that your spouse is working with a good therapist, there are several things that you can do to support your husband during this time.

### *What to say to your depressed family member*

It is sometimes hard to know what to say when a family member is depressed. Some simple, helpful things to say are:

- You are not alone, and we are going to get through this together.
- I care about you, and you are important to me.
- I know this is difficult.
- Depression is not your fault.
- We are going to get the help that you need to get better.

Depression can be isolating, both for the person with depression and those around them. It can be helpful to remind your spouse (or family member) that they are not alone, even though it can sometimes feel that way.

### *What not to say*

Although it might be tempting to remind your husband that he has a lot to be grateful for, or that he should look on the bright side of things, these types of statements tend to make depressed people feel worse. As much as possible, avoid criticizing your spouse for his depression. This often is easier to do when you are able to understand the level of struggle that someone with depression is going through. Finding good resources on depression to read or speaking to a mental health professional can help you to understand your spouse's experience.

### *Self-care and finding support*

Caring for a loved one with depression can take a toll on the emotional lives of their family members. Seek out support for yourself in whatever way is helpful for you. This could mean discretely talking to family and friends, or meeting with your own therapist. Know that it is normal to have a wide range of emotional responses to the depression symptoms of your spouse. Finding an outlet for talking openly about these reactions is very important (with someone other than your husband). Most of all, try your best to get enough sleep, keep a balanced and nutritious diet, exercise, and do things that you find enjoyable.

### *Know your limits*

Ultimately, no one can fix someone else's depression. Although you can be helpful in many ways by demonstrating your care and love for your husband, ultimately, the path to recovery is one that he must be committed to taking. So, don't blame yourself or take responsibility for your husband's moods. Instead, play a supportive and positive role, while allowing his therapist to guide the recovery process.

*All our best,*

*Tonya Swartzendruber & David H. Rosmarin*

*Tonya Swartzendruber, MA, is a Mental Health Counselor at the Center for Anxiety, where she delivers evidence-based treatments to adults, adolescents, children, and their families. David H. Rosmarin, PhD, ABPP, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, part-time, and Director of the Center for Anxiety, which has offices in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Monsey, and Boston. They can be contacted at 646.837.5557 or [info@centerforanxiety.org](mailto:info@centerforanxiety.org)*

*To submit a question for this column please email [Chazkeinnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:Chazkeinnewsletter@gmail.com)*

# | Chazkeinu Sisters Share |

## *An Army of One* By Gitty

I want to tell the world  
Of my army of one  
Facing each day's battles  
Wanting to share with  
someone.

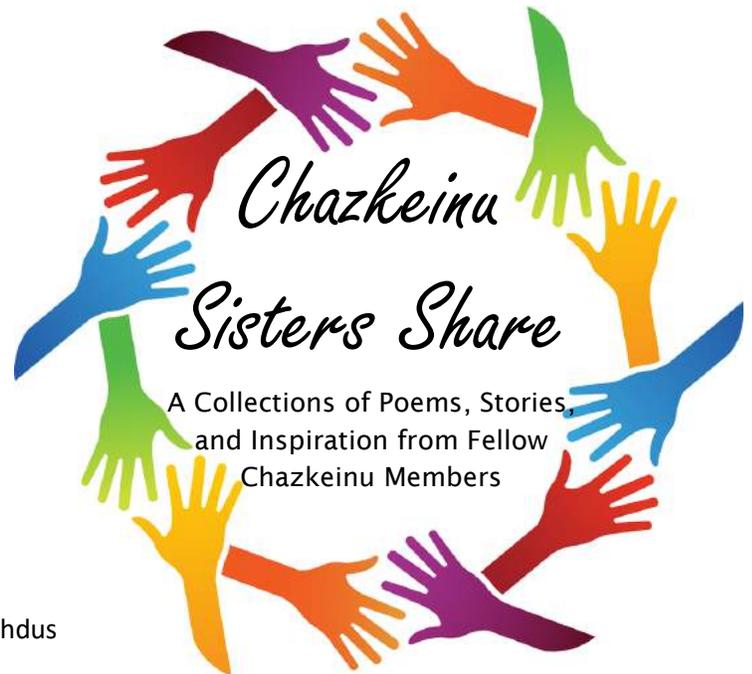
And then Chazkeinu came  
along  
With encouragement,  
inspiration, and uplifting song  
Bit by bit light shined into my  
life  
Of acceptance and support  
for each other's plight

With partners, guidance, and  
the online forum  
"Taboo" topics became  
the "norm".

It's okay to struggle  
It's okay to fall  
It's going to be good!  
Together we stand tall.

Life's still a battle  
I don't know what will be  
But meanwhile I thank  
Hashem  
For my Chazkeinu family.

Together may we meet  
Moshiach  
All of us strong  
With the kindness and Achdus  
of Chazkeinu  
I know it won't be long!



## *A Tight Ball of Yarn*

Like a tight ball of yarn  
Knotted  
twisted  
unkempt  
I arrived at your steps

Blinded by pain  
Going insane  
Not playing the game  
Filled with much shame

Tight and unwilling  
Yet determined on filling  
My want of fulfilling  
My fears, to start stilling

I pushed myself to go  
Mustered strength so low  
I needed to know  
I wanted to grow

The yarn came apart  
Arose from my heart  
I felt apart

I had the urge to dart  
Was it true what was said  
From my mouth, from my head  
All the lies I was fed  
I just wanted my bed

But I journey on undeterred  
My emotions were stirred  
unlocking feelings reserved  
I will not get unnerved

Now is the time  
So many years to rewind  
To deny is crime  
I'm still in my prime

I can't drop the ball  
If I do all will fall  
I will be left feeling small  
Out from the depths I will crawl

I must stop to fight  
Inside I won't be tight  
Oh how I long for that night

I will reach up to that height  
But for now I'll keep trying  
To continue untying  
The yarn that is flying  
I can't keep from sighing

The future looks bright  
I will come out of this plight  
I will be alright  
It's almost in sight

I know because I fantasize  
Every night I visualize  
I try to conceptualize  
Myself... the grand prize



## *The Tightrope Walker* By Yehudis



Staring ahead  
Trying to keep my balance  
I walk slowly

I speak to myself  
Over and over again  
'You can do this'

I start crying  
This can't be happening  
I almost made it

The wind is blowing  
I am scared that I might fall  
But I keep walking

I pull myself up  
I steady the rope  
Before standing up

Then I stop  
I will not be defeated  
I will go on

The rope starts shaking  
I tremble with fear  
Will I get across

Staring straight ahead  
I try to keep my balance  
One small step at a time

I keep on walking  
Ignoring the ripping below  
As I take each step

Then it happens  
A powerful wind blows  
I lose my balance

I'm almost across now  
My body relaxes  
I know that I will make it

I focus on the goal  
Keeping my balance  
As I slowly walk on

I grab the rope  
Hold on tight  
I try to get back up

Suddenly, a noise  
I look down in horror  
Watching the rope slowly come apart

I'm almost finished  
Just one final step left  
I'm certain I will finish strong

## *What would I do?*

*By Yehudis*

What would I do  
Without people who care  
The ones that stay with me  
Throughout every scare?

A very mean prank?  
Would I get through the hurdles  
All the tests I've been shown  
Without all the trials  
Could I possibly have grown?

And continuously grow  
Without all the people  
I value and know?

What would I do  
Without having a place  
Where I can ask all my questions  
And still feel so safe?

What would I do  
Through the ups and the downs  
Without all the people  
Who replace with smiles all the  
frowns?

I want you to know  
How grateful I feel  
For all of your care  
That's so visible and real

What would I do  
If my mind would just race  
Without different people  
To slow down its pace?

Would I be the same person  
That's visible to all  
The strong, loving person  
Who stands proud and tall?

Your warmth keeps me going  
Your care is the same  
Without all your guidance  
I'd be stuck in the rain

What would I do  
If I suddenly went blank  
While my mind played

Would I be able to rise

Thank you for all  
Is the least I can say  
For all that you do for me  
Day after day

## *Strike Your Match*



Sunlight's gone  
Vanished  
Faded into night  
Locked into  
The Prison of time  
No strength left to fight

Overwhelming Darkness  
Hope seems far away  
Seems like  
Night will never end  
With a new day

Searching,  
Wishing  
Desperately  
For a tiny glint of light  
But all that's there  
Is thick, dense fog

Heaviness of night  
Stumbling down  
The Staircase of life  
Trying not to look back  
Clouds are drawn  
Lights extinguished  
Groping in the black

Shackles of time  
Confine you  
Trapped behind strong bars  
The world you know  
Is wrapped in darkness  
Can't find any stars

When you have no strength  
Create it  
Navigate this maze  
When things are rough

It's your chance  
To strike your match  
Ablaze

There is power  
To be harnessed  
Just one thing  
Left to do  
Reach down deep  
Inside yourself  
Find the light  
That's within you

Generate  
The spark of courage  
You can melt those bars  
Remember that  
Your flame is brighter  
Than a thousand million stars

## *My Life's Ladder* By Naomi

My life's ladder  
Looms over my head  
Menacing, imposing  
It fills me with dread.

Its peak shrouded, misty  
Far flung, oh, so high  
I can never, will I ever  
Reach that place in the sky?

Each rung is so distant  
Every step is a strain  
Each stretch pulls me taut  
My resolve starts to wane.

I begin to wonder if  
There's a purpose to it all  
The steady war to bash  
Each sprouting brick wall...

And when I want to let go  
As there can't be a way  
To reach my journey's goal  
Before I turn gray...

I take a look behind me  
What are those things I see?  
They are rungs, old and conquered  
Setting me free.



## *The Power of the Mind*

*By Chani*

The power of a mind  
I find  
Is one of a kind

After all doors seem to close  
After all that life throws  
All you need after these blows:  
Is the right frame of mind

After you try and explore  
All avenues and more  
Feeling ripped to the core

You go on, with your mind  
After dealing with pain  
After feeling the strain  
Serenity you obtain  
With the right frame of mind

When the sun seems to set  
When those around you forget  
When you feel most upset  
You go on, with your mind

That powerful tool

That weapon  
That treasure  
That you possess

It is up to you  
To strengthen it  
To use it wisely

And when you acquire  
That peace of mind  
The extent of your riches  
Are truly one of a kind!

## *To Tell the World*

*By Gitty*

To tell the world  
Of the struggles  
Of the challenges  
Of the difficulties  
That the eye just doesn't see .

Of deep darkness  
Of overwhelming hurt  
Of raw pain  
Untouched.

Unable to be shared  
Because of a world  
That doesn't understand.  
Because of a world  
That jumps to conclusions  
And this pain takes over

Every minute  
of every day.

But then  
To tell the world  
Of the strength  
Of the fortitude  
Of the efforts  
That the eye just doesn't see.

Of living each day  
Of facing the world  
Of spreading happiness  
Through it all.

This strength is real,  
But unseen .

Invisible.  
Unable to be shared  
Because of a world  
That doesn't understand  
Neither the pain  
Nor the strength.

The pain is strong  
But the spirit is stronger  
And the spirit forges on.  
Alone.  
An army of One.  
Fighting the battle  
Every minute  
of every day.



**T**he sky is darkening, and the day is drawing to a close. It was a short winter day, but according to us yidden it is almost the seventh of Kislev. I look out of the window. It is raining here in London. A short, dark, and rainy day. I gaze out onto the blackening skies, watch the raindrops falling, and ponder...

Here I am, just moments before I hit the big 3! Soon it will be the seventh of Kislev a whole ten years since I was 20 – and on the brink of life. Now another decade has passed...

A wealth of emotions lay in that simple sentence. Ten years? That's a chunk...

Looking into them, the first emotion is sadness. When trying to recall where I was ten years ago compared to where I am now – according to how the world views having done something with life, it's not much at all. I have been in many different places in the last ten years, but now I am basically back to the same start. The thought of it is worrying and extremely unsatisfying. Not having advanced since then? Not having what to show for it?

I stop myself right there. This is impossible. I have laboured long and hard in those ten years, in fact – harder than ever before that. I have done things I once thought were impossible. I have gone places I thought I would never visit. I have conquered massive stuff – and climbed steep mountains. There is no way that there is nothing to show for it.

My sister is getting married next week. She is, in a certain sense, further along than I am... Or maybe I am measuring the entire essence of change in a completely false way?

I am creating my own list and imparting my own message with it to my close ones. The things that are not up to us, those are not our achievements at all! These are gifts from the Ribono Shel Olam, valuable gifts that come with a price tag, but gifts none the less. They are not here to prove our worth at all. What determines our value is something very very different.

Have I changed in those ten years? Have I moulded myself into something I am proud of? Have I accumulated myriads of collections filled with chessed?

Have I scaled any mountains? Have I made a difference in the lives of others?

Have I faced obstacles with newfound strength that, in the past, I never knew I possessed? Have I acquired real happiness? Am I able to go on, to smile, despite all that is going on in my life? Have I worked on any weakness and managed to better myself in that area?

Those are the real riches. These are the things that really count!

I turn my face away from the window and shift my gaze upwards.

I remember the time when I thought I would crumble, but after a few hours of talking to myself, I managed to go on with newfound strength. I remember the time when I didn't really want to do that chessed but persevered none the less and later realized it made a tremendous difference. I suddenly recall the old me, the entire picture, and realize with stark clarity that I am a changed person! A new person!

It is tough to face the lack of 'actual proof that I am 30' so squarely. It shakes me up realizing that I still have a long road to travel, until I can actually leave something behind. But the stamina, those new and strong emotional muscles, those are all here to tell the tale... The last ten years were not at all wasted; they were utilized in every possible way!

*"I have gone places I thought I would never visit. I have conquered massive stuff – and climbed steep mountains. There is no way that there is nothing to show for it."*

earned the goodbyes to the 20's and is entering the next stage in life with her heart and mind in the right place.

Dear friend... I know you sometimes feel this way too. You are not exactly back to square one, but you would love to have more to show after all these years. Take heart! You possess some riches that many out there don't acquire in their lifetime! You have proven that the impossible – is by far not impossible for you! You have shown the world what is truly valuable... Stand tall, you are a strong woman who deserves the age plus much more!

I wave goodbye to the raindrops. I don't have time to ponder anymore. There is so much to conquer in the next ten years...

I know I will still feel that I fall short at times – especially at the wedding next week, but I know how I will deal with it – I know exactly what I will say to myself:

“Those are not the things that are in your control. They are in the hand of Hashem, but the things that are in your control, are painting a valuable picture – be proud of who you have become!”

## *Our Yeshua (salvation) is on the Way!*

*By Saralah*

(Story taken from Mrs. Chani Feldbrand – on Chazak)

A man was stuck in a tiny cellar for many years. The cellar was hot and stuffy with little breathing room. All he had was once small window. He'd look at this window for comfort and hope that one day he would be set free. Fortunately, he didn't have to wait too long. One afternoon, his friend came by and stuck a little letter into his cellar. The letter read: "I am planning an escape route for you. One day, you will hear soft tapping coming from under you. When you hear this tapping, you are to lift the board up and go into the tunnel. This tunnel will set you free." The man was so excited that at last he'd be free! He was nearly jumping for joy. Soon enough he heard the tapping. He lifted up the board and peered into the tunnel. It was blacker than black and so tiny. He quickly took once last glance at his cellar that had been his home for years and squeezed his way into the tunnel. If he thought his cellar was small, the tunnel was half the size. That didn't stop him. He persevered and inched his way through the tunnel very slowly. After a few torturous minutes, he managed to come out and see... Light! Could you try to imagine his joy?

Dear Chazkeinu,

We are also in our own "cellar" and have our little "windows" - our sources of comfort. These windows are helping us get through each and every moment. One day, we too will find our "escape route" and see ourselves emerging. We will emerge wholesome and shine with a special glow. This glow will reflect all the years of hard work that we put in and will enable us to shine brightly!



# Dvar Torah

By Baila

*Hashem will make sure that exact justice will be done and avenge the suffering of the Jewish nation. לעשות נקמה בגוים (To do exact vengeance amongst the nations)*

When the Nazi murderer, Adolf Eichmann (*may his name be erased*), was hung, he died 'only once'. He only suffered for one second. We cannot say that is was enough to avenge for all those innocent children he had mercilessly killed.

After Cain killed Abel Hashem inquired, "What have you done? The sound of your brother's blood cries from the ground". The blood is in its plural form to show us that not only did Cain kill Abel his brother, but all of his descendants that would have come from him as well. When one person is killed, the killer is not only eliminating him, but also all those that would come from him.

So now we understand why the nations of the world need vengeance -- to avenge the bloodshed of innocent suffering Jews - the Jewish nation.

However, the question that was asked was, "If it was decreed by Hashem that the Jewish nation should suffer this way why do the nations need to suffer for carrying out this decree?"

The answer is those who oppress the Jewish nation have their own ulterior motives, and they take the torture to a whole new level.

The enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt had been Heavenly ordained, and yet Pharaoh and the Egyptians oppressed the Jews to a much greater degree than they deserved, and for that they deserved vengeance.

Our mental illness was pre-ordained by the "One and Only Hashem", 100 percent. In no way did we wake up one morning and decide, "Hey, it's time to be sick. Let's be crazy, because it is 'cool'." Of course not!! Of course it was decreed by Hashem that, for whatever

reason, I, Baila, or any of you, my Chazkeinu sisters, should suffer from this difficult challenge. However, with this in mind, do we now allow our family members/friends to walk over us, or destroy and crush us? Do we even allow ourselves to 'beat' ourselves up?

NO!! G-d Forbid!! Each person's value is not just judged with what he is at this exact moment, but actually encompasses a vast potential that each person has. So what if you failed this or that! Just get up and try again...."*it's better to try and fail, then fail to try!*" So what if you are not like her? You are YOU, and she is SHE. Hashem made YOU as you are because YOU are special. YOU were not meant to be HER."

We are way more than whatever our family or friends categorize us, or place us in, and/or portray us. We are all much, much more than that!

Yes, it was decreed by Hashem for us to suffer this way, and yes, we are meant to accept it, and our family and friends too. But, in no way is this a means or reason for ourselves, family or friends to reject, push or put us down. This is absolutely wrong.

We are all such pure and holy *souls in the eyes of Hashem* because of our suffering and negative response of hurt and rejection. With every rejection and hurt, the pain gets deeper and deeper. But as difficult as it may seem, we should and could better ourselves, despite the hardship of our surroundings and circumstances. Then, and only then, will we become more elevated and enriched to a level of purity and holiness, which probably could not have been reached without the difficulties that mental illness brought. Just keep strong, keep smiling and stay well!!

Wishing everyone a wonderful Pesach.

# HUMOR

By Renee Edison



Due to a recent wave of disturbing incidents at a local DBT group a review has been made to the dangers involved in many of the Mindful Exercises and the harmful effects which they can result in.

It has been reported this month that two ladies nearly drowned during a Stone- Flake-On-The-Lake exercise. After sinking to the bottom of the lake they were about to resurface when suddenly they ran out of breathe and began to intake large amounts of water. Luckily, they were able to be rescued and revived before any serious damage occurred. "It was quite shocking to go from drowning to death to sitting comfortably in an office chair," said one of the women who requested anonymity "I mean they say that technically it's possible to drown in just a cup of coffee, but this is a whole different level." The other victim was in no state to comment, but claimed to have seen other bodies down there. (Where did those other old members disappear to?) A proposal is currently in place requiring that proper lifejackets be worn during future exercises.

In recent weeks, many broken legs and feet have occurred as a result of people tripping during Spiral-Staircase-Exercise this has elicited numerous complaints from rescue personnel who find it increasingly difficult to transport injured patients on a spiral staircase. A request has been submitted to incorporate handrails into this exercise.

In a final and most traumatic event, just this past week an entire group got completely lost during a routine Walk-In-The-Forest exercise. After many hours of combing the forest, they were finally located by the devoted volunteer search teams and reunited with loved ones. "I was truly surprised," said one lady, "I mean this group leader has been through this forest like how many times. This type of stuff is not supposed to be happening." Other women were reportedly heard grumbling about losing another hard to find babysitter, but most were just grateful to be alive. Many suggestions have been made towards improving the safety on future such walks and all input is welcome.

As this memo goes to print there have been reports of ladies who are still unable to locate their breath, but more information is not available as of yet.

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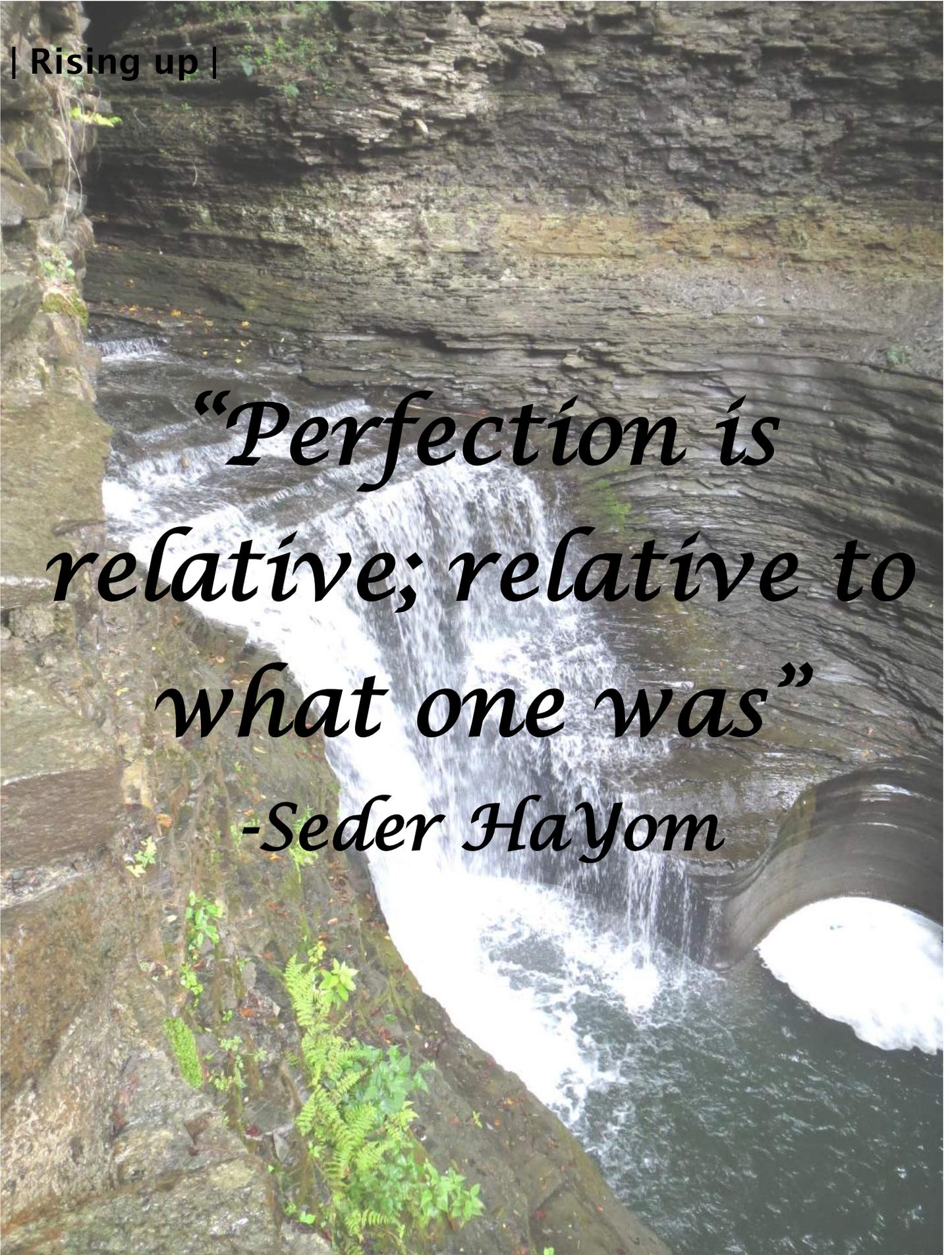
Editor's note: The examples cited above are all humorous and factious account based on real mindfulness exercise. Mindfulness is one of the core aspects of Dialectal Behavioral Therapy (DBT); a therapy developed by Marsha Linehan in the 1980s. DBT has been effective in treating a large variety of mental disorders include borderline personality disorder (BPD), eating disorders, and treatment –resistant depression. Below are descriptions of the stone flake on the lake and walking down the spiral stairs practices as described in *DBT Skills Training Handout and Worksheets, Second Edition by Marsha M Linehan Copyright 2015.*

**Stone flake on the lake.** Imagine that you are at a clear blue lake on a beautiful sunny day. Then imagine that you are a small flake of a stone, flat and light. Imagine that you have been tossed out onto the lake and are now gently, slowly, floating through the calm, clear blue water to the lake's smooth, sandy bottom.

**Walking down the spiral stairs.** Imagine that within you is a spiral staircase winding down to your center. Starting at the top walk very slowly down the staircase, going deeper and deeper with yourself.

| Rising up |

*“Perfection is  
relative; relative to  
what one was”  
-Seder HaYom*



Pesach 5777

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