

Miracles

Chanuka time is a time of miracles. Since we were children the excitement of the school plays where we reenact the victory of the fearless Macabeem against the Yivanim thrills us. Do you still remember the costumes? As we get older we recount these miracles every year through our lighting of the menorahs and saying Al Hanissim. We are required to publicize these miracles to the world, and, to ourselves. A few months ago I had Esther Strasser on my show "Dr. Leah and You" which airs on JewishTalkRadio.com Wednesdays from 1-2. She told over her fascinating and miraculous tale of escape from Hungary in the 1950's. At the outset of the interview she quoted a line from perek kuf zayin (107) in Tehilim as her inspiration to speak. "Hodu LaHashem Ki Tov". Loosely translated this means, "Praise to Hashem for He is good". The amazing thing about recognizing the miracles that Hashem has done for us is that rather than making us feel lowly to this all-powerful force, it makes us feel special and uplifted!

Let me share some miracles from my life, some apparently grand and others, almost undetectable. I try to focus on the "miracles" because, if special things happen to me, then I must be pretty special, right? One year Chanuka time we went out to dinner at my in-laws' house. Usually I like to stick around while the candles are burning, but dinner time arrived and we had to leave the house. The next morning, when I went to clean up the menorahs to prepare them for that night's lighting, I noticed a strange site. One of the menorahs had actually melted (it's one of those faux silver ones). The arms were oddly bent and misfigured and blackened from fire. The oil cups had toppled out from the bent arms and were lying uselessly in the tin pan below. (I always put each menorah in its own 9x13 tin just in case a candle or oil cup falls, I see that this was a good idea.) At that moment I realized that an amazing miracle had occurred. From the looks of the menorah, there must have been an actual fire, yet, the house was not affected! I don't know if the fire happened while we were away or as we slept but I was amazed. (What's funny is that my smoke detectors ring when we cook so I don't know why they didn't ring then and alert the fire department.) Rather than throwing away the disfigured menorah, I saved it. It has a place of honor in my breakfront next to the "healthier" menorahs as an ever present reminder of the miracle.

Another item in my breakfront is a plastic Kiddush cup from Bikur Cholim. It might seem strange to have there next to my (faux silver) seder plate but, it too, reminds me of a miracle. I was expecting our youngest two children (yes, twins) around Shavuot time the year that they were born. Several days before Pesach I started to feel uncomfortable. The first Seder was Monday night that year. In the middle of the night on Sunday night I started to stare at the clock as it became obvious to me that those "twinges" were getting closer and closer together. By 6 am I was on my way to the hospital, leaving my husband to tend to the brood at home and finish getting the house ready for Pesach. I told him not to bother coming because, after all, I

wasn't due until Shavuous and was sure I'd be back at home soon (okay, so I'm not always the sharpest tac in the box). Well, once the doctor saw me he informed me that the hospital bed tray was to be my Seder table! It was a strange experience being by myself but I sang and ate and actually had two meaningful Sedorim on my own. My husband and kids had two lovely Sedorim at home as well and at 4 am the second day of Pesach the car service picked up my husband and he joined me in the ambulance as I was taken to a different hospital with more sophisticated accommodations for the preemies that were obviously trying to come out. Well, the end of the story is that our youngest are two beautiful children who, although entering the world at less than 2.5 pounds each, are strong and healthy children! As Esther Strasser expressed over her miracle, I too proclaimed "Hodu LaHashem Ki Tov" and taped those words onto their isolettes at the hospital.

Now here's the part where you have to think. What are the miracles that have happened in your life? Maybe you can recall a momentous event such as walking out of a house fire unharmed. But what about the almost undetectable miracles, the near fender-bender that never occurred, the fever that stopped rising just before hitting a critical level, the skid that ended with just a skipped heart beat but led to no impact? The more we focus on these types of miracles, the more we appreciate what Hashem has done for us. As I said before, if special things happen to you, then you must be pretty special! This is the message of the miracles!

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