

## Loss

By: Dr. Leah Adams

This time of the year is sort of my own Bein Hazmanim. It is right between Tu Bishvat, my father's yahrzeit, and Purim, the day of my father's shloshim 4 years ago. With all of Tu Bishvat's celebration of birth and renewal, and the happiness of Purim, also comes a sense of loss that I experience over the death of my Abba. Ironically, he was the one that taught me the most about "moving on" and celebrating life despite his having experienced tragic losses in his own life. My regular readers know the story of my father's life from previous tributes and I'm more than ready to share his inspiring story with those who don't know it, (just contact me, see the end of the article) but today I want to dwell in the loss.

At first the idea of dwelling in the loss might sound psychologically unhealthy. Let me differentiate between falling into a clinically diagnosed depression, and the normal range of feelings of sadness that we experience when we suffer a death in the family. A simple way to see the difference between the two is the following: Depression generally involves a level of emotional experience that leads to some type of interruption in our ability to deal with life. For example, when our "sadness" leads to difficulty with our sleep, appetite, ambition, experience of pleasure etc. and is present for a clinically significant amount of time, we diagnose that as Depression. I encourage any readers whose life is significantly impacted by these types of feelings to seek help with a therapist. I often work on developing skills to overcome the handicapping influences of Depression with my patients. Sadness is a feeling that we carry with us, that although it leads to crying and emotional pain, does not handicap our long term ability to function.

Sadness makes us human. It is the brother of compassion and progenitor of Chesed. Let yourself cry. Let yourself express your sadness. Share this with the ones you love. Experiencing sadness over loss reaffirms to us the importance that the Niftar has had in our lives. This hopefully motivates us to behave in a way that has been impacted by the Niftar and that will permeate their memory. In my

case, my Father was a kind man and I share this kindness by running a costume Gemach in his memory.

Oftentimes people are afraid to show their sadness to their children. This leaves the children at a disadvantage when they experience pain at some point in their lives. When my Father was niftar it worked out (because I had scheduled my flight when my Father was ill) that I sat Shiva with my mother and brothers in Israel and then at home in Monsey. It was important that my children see my torn clothes and that they see me sit on the low chair. With this they were also able to see the flip side of the mourning which was that when my friends and neighbors came to be Menachem Avel and share in my pain, I was able to be comforted. The children were able to understand that although Grampa's death brought great pain to me and to them, Yiddishkeit has a system of dealing with the pain. Had I not shared this with them, they would think that sadness is abnormal and unhealable. Had they not seen the pain, they could not learn about the healing.

Sometimes we feel sadness over less significant, non life-threatening losses. We might be changing jobs for a better job, so we "lost" the first job. Maybe a friend moves away, and, even though they are still local, we feel a sense of loss. Sometimes our loss is as insignificant as losing a piece of jewelry. In these cases, too, we feel some form of sadness. Share your thoughts and feelings with your friends or family. Allow yourself the chance to reminisce about the significance of the item or experience. Remember, dwelling in the loss at the moment, understanding what or why we miss about this person, item or experience can actually leave us with pleasant memories that strengthen us. Living in the past, can actually help us in the future!

Leah R. Adams, PsyD is a Psychologist in Private Practice  
in the Monsey area as well as the host of "Dr. Leah and You"  
airing Wednesdays from 1-2 on JewishTalkRadio.com,  
or listen at 832-225-5371. She participates in some insurance plans  
and can be reached for appointments or speaking engagements at 845-661-8741.  
She loves to hear from you and about how you overcome your sadness and  
you can write to her at [drleahadams@gmail.com](mailto:drleahadams@gmail.com).  
This article originally appeared in "The Front Page Magazine" on 2/13/2013

