

Chanukah: Portal to the Infinite

Every Yom Tov imparts its own message, a precise directive guiding us along our spiritual evolvement, our continued growth in Avodas Hashem. As we learn the essence of our miraculous victory over Greece, we plainly come to appreciate the idea that Chanukah wishes to convey.

The Ramban (רמב"ם) defines our core triumph over Greece, its culture and ideals, as follows. While we value the phenomenal achievements of Greece and welcome their great benefit to mankind; the cultivation of human wisdom, extensive advances in the sciences, we, the Torah nation, diverge from them at one crucial point. We believe that as fantastic and beautiful the human mind is, nonetheless, its capabilities and understanding are fundamentally limited. We believe that at the root of our temporal intellect lies an infinite divine intelligence, beyond time and space, with unlimited, miraculous capabilities. We appreciate western culture; however, we save the celebration for our ability to connect to the divine source of it all.

The potency of Chanukah lends us the insight and ability to see beyond the dazzling 'lights' of Greece, past the magnificent beauty of our imperfect world. We rejoice as we achieve clarity, a vision of the infinite, otherworldly aura of Torah, Emunah and Dveykus in Hashem. Chanukah guides us in the root challenge of our existence: shall we suffice ourselves with the seduction and sparkle of worldly culture, or shall we strive to reach for more, for the eternal spiritual radiance, miraculous, with unlimited healing and love. Chanukah is our portal to access this light, giving us the confidence to journey and search for it, make it part of who we are, even in the deepest darkness of our lives.

The above sentiment was a core theme felt by those who participated in our recent Ribbon Cutting Ceremony of the LifeSpark Kauftheil Parkinson's Wellness Center, in Lakewood, NJ, on Sunday October 30th. While the physical structure of the Center is up and running, BH, the tools and resources are in order, already helping many in the Jewish Parkinson's community; the light of Chanukah beckons us to strive for more. At the Center, we know all this medical prowess is relatively minuscule, and we therefore pray to be connected to the ultimate source of rehabilitation, to the *אשר כל בשר*, He who's light and warmth makes all healing possible.

Rabbi Tzvi Fener



To Light Up the Darkness

On July 24, 1982, Phantom Pilot Gil Fogel was flying over Lebanon, along with Major Aharon Katz, when their plane was shot down by a Syrian missile. As the plane descended, Gil ejected himself from the plane. Major Katz was killed in the incident, while Gil was discovered by Syrian forces and taken into captivity.

Nearly a year and a half later, Gil lay in his cell, wondering if he would ever see his loved ones again. For all he knew, they assumed he was dead and would never look for him. There had been Israeli soldiers who were shot down and never heard from again. Perhaps he would be one of those. He could not help but wonder how his family was doing. Did they think of him often? In truth, the Israelis were working on a plan to swap him for other prisoners, but he knew nothing of this.

While still in training, Gil had been taught that it is imperative for POW's to keep track of the days of the week and the month. This gives a prisoner a sense of order and helps him maintain some semblance of normalcy. Thus, one of the first things he had done in prison was get hold of a calendar. Hence, he was able to follow the seasons and the Yamim Tovim.

Still, Gil could not help but grow despondent. But then, a few weeks before Chanukah, he thought of an idea. If the guards discovered what he was doing, he knew he would be punished severely. Yet he needed it; he needed to somehow bring some light into his dark existence. He needed to feel the Presence of the Al-mighty in the hopelessness of his prison cell.

Although most of the guards were far from friendly, a few had a modicum of decency. It was from those few that he would obtain some of his most basic needs.

First, he managed to procure a tube of toothpaste. Instead of using it to brush his teeth, he cut it into eight separate parts, which he formed into receptacles. After that, he tore some threads from his blanket and rolled them into wicks.

Every morning he would receive a meal. It wasn't anything to speak of, just something to help him live from day to day. He would extract some of the oil from the food and save it in the round receptacles he had fashioned out of the toothpaste tube.

After a few weeks of planning, he had almost everything he needed. He had a menorah, wicks, and oil. But he still didn't know where he would get a light from. As the days passed, he began to wonder if his plan would come to fruition.

From time to time, his captors would take him from his dark and decrepit prison cell, clean him up, and place him in front of the international authorities. They wanted to show the world that they took good care of their prisoners. On the day before Chanukah, the guards barged into his cell to prepare him for another "performance." He had lost a lot of weight since he was captured, and he looked frail and gaunt. They handed him new clothing and tried to put some color in his cheeks.

All this time, his mind was elsewhere; he was desperately trying to find a light. He had put so much effort into making his menorah, and he hoped that his plan would not fail now. As he sat in the Syrian official's office, waiting to meet with the International Red Cross, he looked down at his feet, and he could hardly control his excitement. There were eight matches right there on the floor! Clearly, this was a message from Hashem, a

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gift to ignite a spark in his soul, to give him hope in his captivity.

He waited until no one was looking. Then he bent down, picked up the matches, and hid them in his sock. When the representatives of the Red Cross met with him, they seemed pleased with his condition. Little did they know that his good spirits had nothing to do with the way the Syrians were treating him, but only because he had found a treasure.

The next evening, darkness settled in on Damascus. Every other evening, the setting sun signaled another miserable night of crushing loneliness. But tonight was Chanukah.

Gil took out his makeshift menorah, which looked more like an arts and crafts project made by a 5-year-old than a full-fledged menorah. To Gil, though, it was the most beautiful menorah he had ever set his eyes upon. He removed the first match, struck it against the wall, made a *berachah*, and lit the wick.

Gil could not help but think of his family. Tears streamed down his cheeks as he sang *Maoz Tzur* and all the other Chanukah songs he knew. At the same time, the irony of the whole situation was not lost on him. On Chanukah, the Jews celebrate their triumph over the Syrian-Greek forces. Tonight, in his own little way, in a dark and dank cell in Damascus, Syria, he, too, was victorious.

On June 28th, 1984, Gil Fogel, along with five other prisoners, was granted freedom in exchange for Syrian prisoners. Additionally, six dead bodies of Israeli soldiers were released, among them Major Aharon Katz.

Gil had to wait a number of years before he was able to relive his harrowing experiences in the Syrian prison and document them. When he did, he made sure to write about the one night in which he experienced light, the one night that gave him hope.

By: F.P

Lights of Unity

I'd like to think we ascend
To a higher level on Chanukah
There's something about
Gathering at dusk
And reciting the brachot
One by one
Then lighting the candles
The smell of oil
Wafting through the air
When the last child is done
Lighting their last candle
For a moment
One quick second
There is complete silence
All eyes are glued to the candles
There is a holiness
About these candles
the light that emanates
From them is indescribable
No matter what age
You can feel God
Almost as if He's in the room
Smiling at the unity before him
When the silence does end
Everyone gathers around the lights
And the songs of our people are sung
In beautiful harmony, young and old
Sing like never before
Jews all over the world
Stop what they're doing
Light the Chanukah candles
And sit as one with their families
As they bask in the feeling
of God's warmth and holiness



Ribbon Cutting Event

By: Rabbi Tzvi Feuer



On Sunday October 30th, the LifeSpark family celebrated the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony of the LifeSpark Kauftheil Parkinson's Wellness Center, in Lakewood, NJ. Our founder, Rabbi Moshe Y. Gruskin, opened the event with words of gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, welcoming the guests, expressing heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Chezky Kauftheil who dedicated the Center building in memory of his beloved father OBM, as well as thanking his dedicated staff who worked tirelessly to arrange the beautiful event. Our marketing director, Mr. Meir Tzvi Gruskin, gave voice to the vision of LifeSpark, as well as introducing the many dignitaries who graced the ceremony with their presence; the Honorable Mayor of Lakewood, Mr. Ray Coles, Mr. Meir Lichtenstein, Mr. Benny Heineman,



Erika Adelman, LCSW, Patient Liaison at LifeSpark, and others. Rabbi Gavriel Celnik shared words of insight and feeling, lending meaning to the challenges of Parkinson's Disease, leaving the crowd deeply inspired.

Five people were honored to hold the oversize scissors and perform the ribbon cutting: Rabbi Gruskin, Mr. Kauftheil, Mayor Coles, M. Lichtenstein and B. Heineman. Later, the crowd entered the building, to be duly impressed with the state-of-the-art professional décor, high-tech resources and the many therapeutic amenities available at the Center. Afterwards the donors, together with the immediate LifeSpark family, enjoyed an intimate, elegant dinner, in sophisticated ambiance and a delicious high-end catered meal. We were honored to be addressed by Eli Pollard, executive director of WPC (World Parkinson's Congress) and World Parkinson's

Foundation. Her words of wisdom and experience, deep understanding of PD, and reference to the opportunities for support and healing, left a powerful impact. She also expressed profound amazement over the rapid success of LifeSpark, and the opening of our center; the first for the Jewish community, as well as one of less than a handful in the whole world!

Mr. Kauftheil spoke of how proud and thankful he is for the opportunity to be part of the LifeSpark initiative, to support such a unique, vital enterprise. He told of his first-hand knowledge, as he stood by his father's side while he suffered with PD during the final ten years of his life. He mused how at that time there were no resources to assist his father, and how thankful he is, therefore, for this opportunity to have a hand in making available so many opportunities for others.





Rabbi Tzviki Feuer spoke of the biblical notion of the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. At the time of Ribbon Cutting the building is ready, well equipped with essential resources, yet we

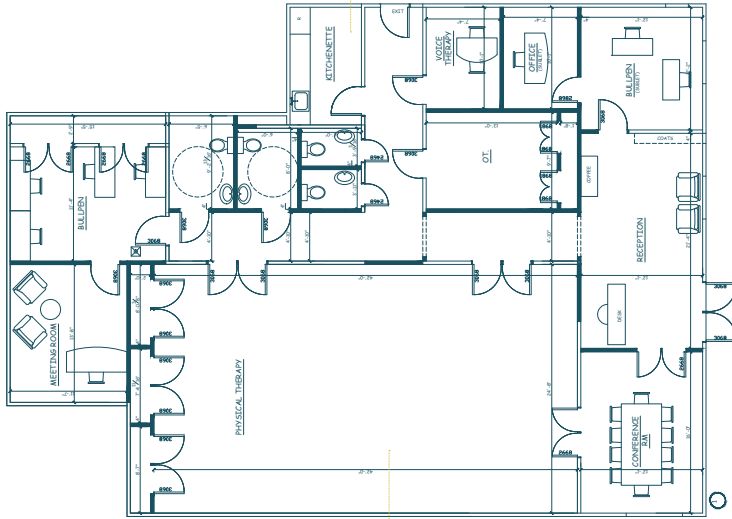
pause to cut a ribbon before we commence. What is the idea behind this pause? The theme seems analogous to the moment of original Man's creation. The six days of creation were done, and the world was ready and waiting to service Man, who was created last, on the final day of creation. Yet,

Hashem arranged that the grass and grains required for Adam's nourishment, be 'stuck' just beneath the surface of the ground. Adam could not access them. They were trapped in their state of potential, unable to actualize their life-sustaining capabilities. Adam would go hungry unless he would have them sprout. Chazal tell us that Hashem was waiting for Adam to Daven, to pray that Hashem shower down the rain, to bring forth the vast potential of earth and the whole of creation. Man's calling is to bridge the gap between heaven and earth, recognizing that all the bounty of earth needs the blessing of heaven to truly flourish.

The message of our Ribbon Cutting Ceremony is the



same. The stunning Center is here, phenomenal resources and staff. The call of this moment is prayer, to daven to Hashem that He shower us with Siyata DiShmaya, divine assistance to bring forth the great potential of our Center. To merit us with the ability to actually serve those that need us so much. To bring hope, healing and strength to the Jewish PD community. Just like Adam prayed for the rain, we too, lift up our hearts to heaven and pray, please Hashem, let it rain... let it rain! Amen! Mazal tov!



Women and PD

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Parkinson's disease (PD) affects an estimated 10 million men and women worldwide. Women have been shown to have a lower risk of developing PD, and research suggests that there are differences in the way that men and women experience Parkinson's. Studies indicate that women diagnosed with PD report different symptoms, more often report side effects and changes in their symptoms throughout the day ("fluctuations") and receive lower quality healthcare than men.

What explains these differences? Based on the evidence so far, researchers can make some educated guesses. Some differences may have to do with biology—the way men's and women's bodies react to the disease or to therapies. Others may be due to lack of access to healthcare or to unintended differences in the way women are treated for PD compared to men.

Why the Lower Risk?

Studies conducted around the world, and across race, ethnic and age groups, support the finding that women overall have a lower risk of developing PD than men, but we still don't know why. Environmental factors could explain this lower risk. It may be that women are less likely than men to be exposed to pesticides or heavy metals, or to sustain a head injury—all of which may increase a person's PD risk.



Biological differences between women and men may also play a role. Estrogen, the female sex hormone, may protect the brain against PD, but little is known about its influence. If estrogen is preventative, it may only be helpful at certain levels or for a specific time.

What Are the Symptom Differences Between Men and Women?

Parkinson's symptoms vary enormously from person to person. PD symptoms include motor symptoms, like tremor and stiffness, and nonmotor symptoms, like depression and fatigue.

Although women report experiencing some symptoms (including depression) more often than men, research to date has not conclusively shown whether symptoms affect women and men differently. This may be because symptoms vary as much among women as between women and men.



Are There Differences in Parkinson's Treatment Between Men and Women?

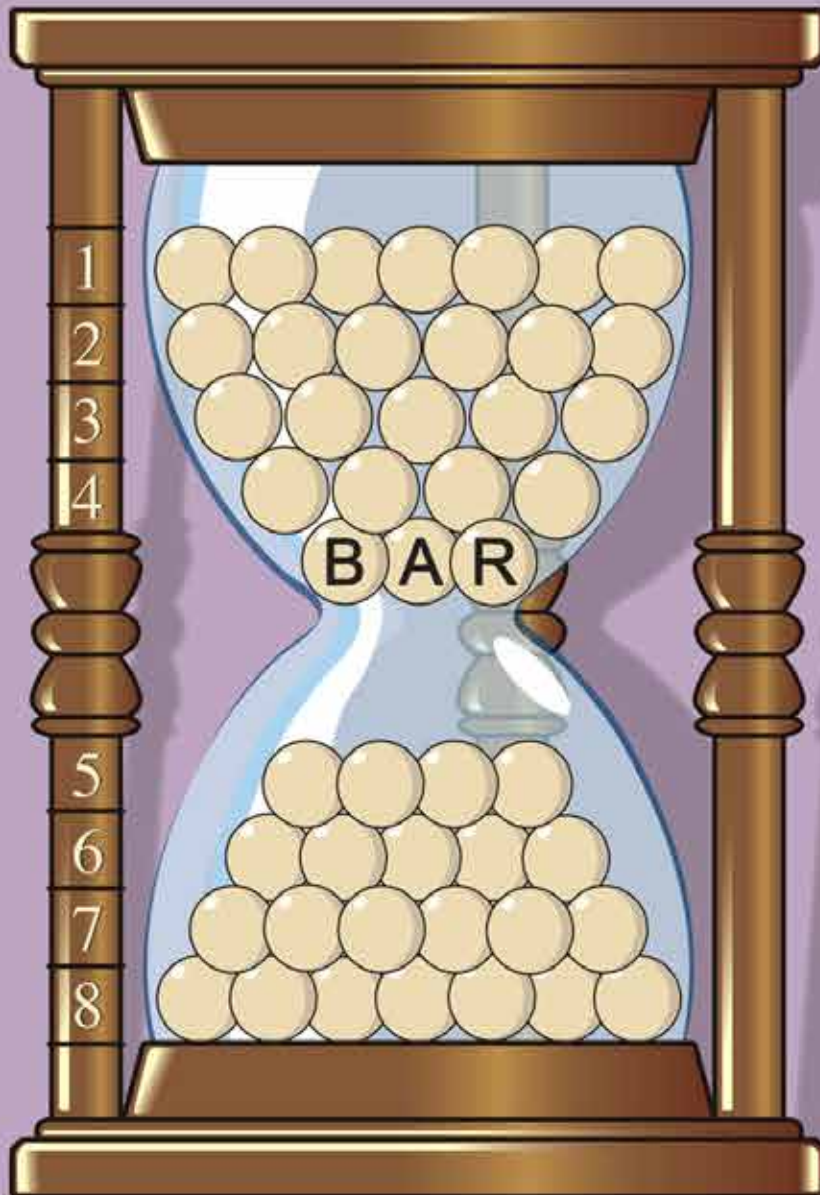
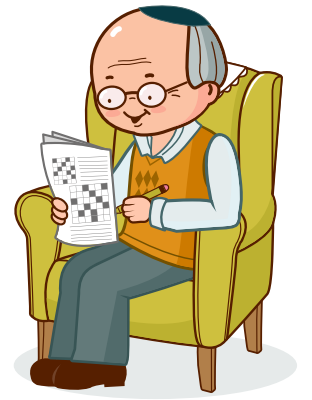
All current treatment options (including medications, surgical options and exercise) address PD symptoms, but they do not slow down or stop the progression of PD. Levodopa, often prescribed as Sinemet, is considered the gold standard therapy for Parkinson's movement symptoms. However, many people with PD experience changes in the effectiveness of the drug as the disease progresses. And some studies suggest that women are more

PUZZLE TIME

SHARPEN THOSE SKILLS

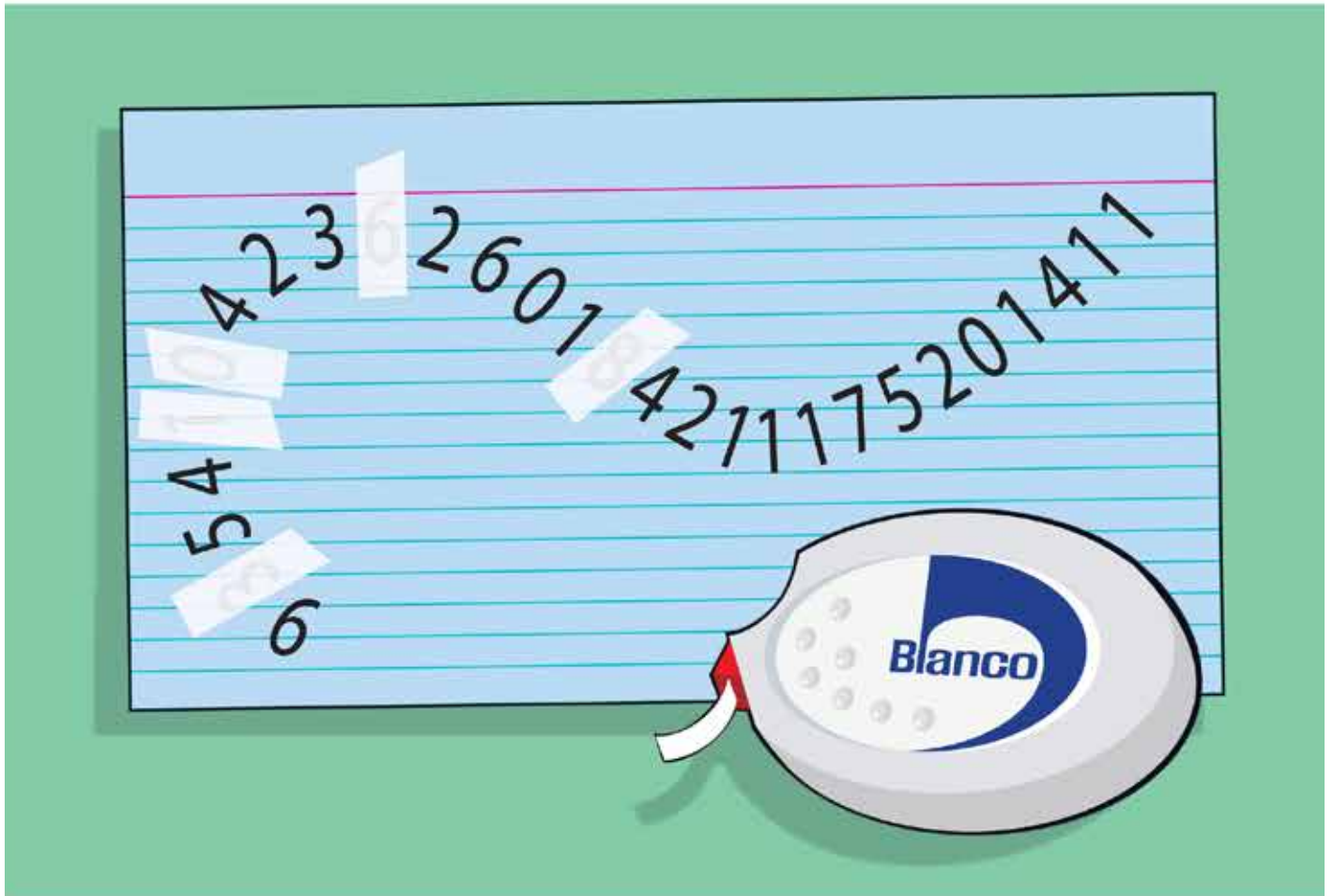
Starting in the middle, each word in the top half has the letters of the word below it, plus a new letter, and each word in the bottom half has the letters of the word above it, plus a new letter.

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) small army unit | (5) short for Abraham |
| (2) tease | (6) deep yellow color |
| (3) made from dough | (7) sculpture rock |
| (4) lyric poet | (8) pedestrian |



Answers:
(1) brigade
(2) badger
(3) bread
(4) bard
(5) Bram
(6) amber
(7) marble
(8) rambler

Which two numbers should be erased in order to restore the logic of the series numbers?



Continued from page 8

likely than men to report these fluctuations earlier in the disease course and more frequently overall.

In particular, it seems that women are more likely to have involuntary movements called dyskinesias that occur when levodopa levels are highest in the blood. There are several factors that could be contributing to dyskinesia, including dosage, body weight and age of onset. Lower body weight can affect how medications build up in someone's system. Lighter people sometimes need a smaller dose of medication to feel its effect. On average, women weigh less than men. If women and men are receiving similar doses, this may explain how levodopa levels are causing dyskinesias.

Physicians have also suggested that they find it harder to fine-tune Parkinson's medications for women than for men. Women more often experience large swings in symptoms from even small changes in medications or schedules.

Deep brain stimulation (DBS) is an accepted surgical therapy for both men and women whose symptom fluctuations are difficult to control. Yet, even though women are reported to have greater improvement in quality of life after DBS, studies have shown that they are less likely than men to receive this therapy.

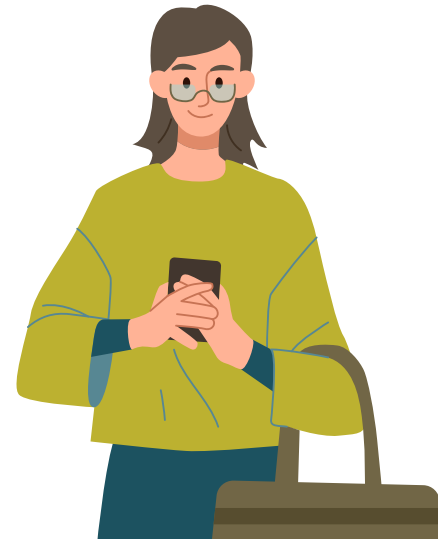


Are There Differences in Parkinson's Care Between Men and Women?

Women with PD may face more barriers to quality healthcare and social support than men. Women are less likely than men to be cared for by a Parkinson's specialist, such as a neurologist or movement disorder specialist, and are also less likely to have a care partner. On the other hand, women with Parkinson's are more likely to do the following:

- Go to doctor's appointments alone
- Use home healthcare
- Live in a skilled nursing facility

All these factors mean that women may not have access to adequate Parkinson's care.



Conclusion

Research to date on women's experience of PD underscores the need to focus more on this important part of the Parkinson's community. Compared to men, women are diagnosed with PD less often, respond differently to current therapies, have less access to and lower use of expert care and are less socially supported. These combine so that women with PD have poorer quality of life than men. Studies that specifically address these issues are needed to improve the lives of all people affected by Parkinson's.


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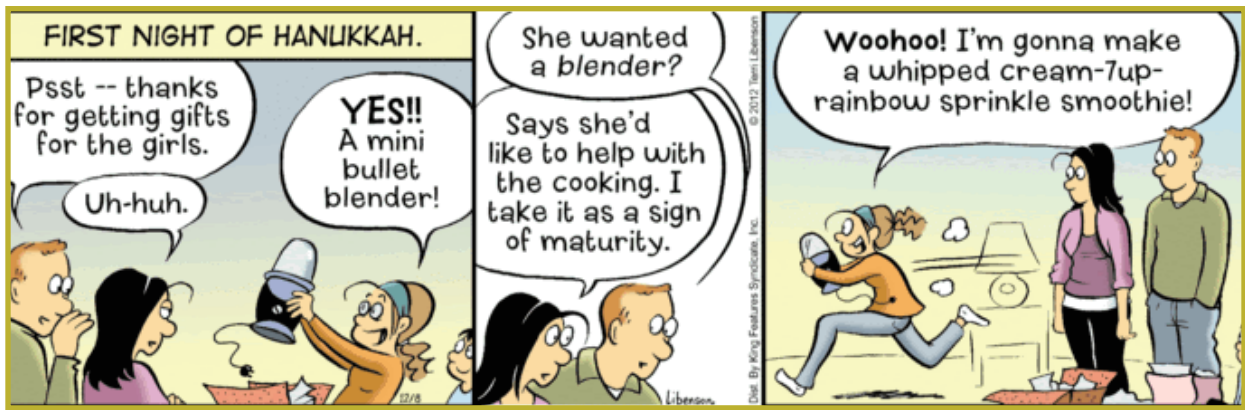
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