

The article
everyone clipped
Why Me? Guestlines// April 2012

I've been clipping inspirational articles for years. Among them, among my absolute favorite articles, is that by Rav Aryeh Z. Ginzberg entitled, "This Is Not the Way It's Supposed to Be." Rav Ginzberg encapsulates the Torah approach to dealing with challenges, and this article should be required reading for all. Life is synonymous with challenge. Overcoming the challenges leads to growth and the sense of accomplishment and indeed, sense of joy. But to overcome these challenges we need encouragement and a goodly dose of inspiration. Rav Ginzberg's article says it all. I reread the article every couple of months; it helps me approach life with the proper outlook and enhances my life to a huge degree. Thank you Rav Ginzberg!

—Miriam Liebermann,
New York, New York

I think I have all the Words Unspoken and Lifetakes, pieces, but one article was especially meaningful. A few years ago, Rabbi Aryeh Zev Ginzberg wrote a Guestlines called "Why Me?" about how we're so quick to ask "Why me?" when difficulties arise, and we neglect to do the same when we're showered with *brachos* from HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Rabbi Ginzberg writes about Sorala Krigsman *a"h*, who said the following to her son when he asked, "Why you?" after she told him about her diagnosis:

"When I first heard the terrible diagnosis from the doctor a few years ago, my first reaction was also exactly that: 'Why me?'"

"But then I thought to myself, *When I was a young kallah standing under the chuppah next to such a special chassan and most of my friends were still single, I didn't ask, 'Why me?' When HaKadosh Baruch Hu blessed me with six beautiful and healthy children, while some of my friends were having such difficulties, I didn't ask, 'Why me?' And when I was fortunate to walk several children down to the chuppah, while so many others have not been able to, I didn't ask, 'Why me?' Now that I was chosen by the Ribbono shel Olam to contract this terrible illness, I am not going to start asking, 'Why me?'*"

And later, he explains:

Mrs. Sorala Krigsman *a"h* understood that just as we accept all the wonderful *brachos* and gifts that Hashem grants us without asking "Why me?" so, too, must we accept the things that we, with our limited Olam Hazeh vision blurred by tears and pain, are unable to perceive as *brachos*, without asking "Why me?"

I teach *Trei Asar* to 11th-grade girls, and in Sefer Chavakuk, we explore the concept of *emunah*. This article is so powerful, I keep it with my notes and read it to the girls every year. You can't imagine how many girls have told me how that article resonated with them, and how they keep accessing the message!

—Reva Bess, Lakewood, New Jersey

Our family recently went through a challenging situation. I was used to nodding and murmuring my thanks when friends and acquaintances stopped me to offer sympathy, *brachos*, and *chizuk*, but the meeting that blew me away happened a few months later when I bumped into a casual friend while out shopping. After the initial familiar exchange, she put her hand on my shoulder and with utmost sincerity proceeded to quote an article she had saved from *Mishpacha* that was a source of much *chizuk* to her, and she felt would be helpful to me and my family as well. Rabbi Ginzberg's article "Why Me?" resonated strongly with her, and she offered a copy to help me get through this trial with a positive outlook. Unbeknownst to her, that article was already saved ... in my heart, as it was written about my beloved sister, Sorala Krigsman (we obviously had different last names for the past 25 years). What a *nechamah* it was to me that two years after my sister's *petirah* she was still being quoted as a source of inspiration! So, while many articles have been clipped and saved, this one wins hands down as the most memorable to me — and obviously to others as well.

—Gitte Rupp, Brooklyn, New York



“He opened the deep reservoir of his neshamah and described in vivid detail the challenges and difficulties he had undergone in his life.”

Why Share the Personal Pain?

By: Rabbi Aryeh Z. Ginzberg

Rav Moshe Sternbuch of Yerushalayim related that when he was around bar mitzvah age, he took a walk in the park with his *rebbe*, Rav Moshe Schneider, *rosh yeshivah* of the Toras Emes yeshivah in England. An older *bochur* approached them and said, "Rebbi, I'm leaving to the States tomorrow to get married, and I don't know if and when I will return to England. Please give me a *brachah*."

"Certainly," Rav Schneider replied. "What *brachah* do you want me to give you?"

"I want the Rosh Yeshivah to bless me that I should have a life without problems," the *bochur* requested.

"That is not a *brachah*," the Rosh Yeshivah replied. "There is no such thing as a life without problems. You should instead ask for a *brachah* that you will be able to overcome the challenges that Hashem sends you in life."

I think often of Rav Schneider's words when I look around at the people I come into contact with each day, from all walks of life, and watch as they navigate the significant challenges the game called "life" throws their way.

Every one of us faces our own *nisyonos* and challenges, which seem overwhelming at times and manageable at other times. I personally have been blessed — not blessed that my life has been without challenges or difficulties, for as Rav Schneider taught his *talmid*, there is no such thing — but rather I have been blessed in that I had a great *rebbe*.

My *rebbe*, Rav Henoch Leibowitz, the *rosh yeshivah* of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim of Queens, was an *illui*, a brilliant *lamdan*, and a great *baal musar*. For more than 60 years, he inspired thousands of *talmidim* with his *shiurim*, *shmuessen*, magnetic personality, and devotion to *harbatzas Torah*. But that's not the only "greatness" I refer

to when I say I was blessed with a great *rebbe*.

Permit me to explain.

My late father *ztz"l*'s relationship with the Rosh Yeshivah — as a *talmid* for more than half a century, and as his right hand at the helm of the yeshivah for decades — afforded me the opportunity to grow up at my *rebbe*'s feet. While Rav Henoch's joyous demeanor would electrify any room he walked into, I knew firsthand of the many difficulties and challenges he faced in his personal life.

He lost his father and teacher at a young age, suffered from debilitating migraine headaches for most of his life (along with other ailments that required multiple hospital stays), and he was never *zocheh* to have his own biological children.

Despite all these challenges, Rav Henoch radiated tremendous *simchas hachayim*.

It was not until I passed my 40th birthday that I truly realized how great my *rebbe* was and how truly blessed I was to have this connection. At that time, my wife and I were given the challenge of a lifetime with the birth of a child who had serious medical issues. We were devastated and overwhelmed. I did then what I had done anytime in my life when I was searching for answers and in need of *chizuk*: I called the Rosh Yeshivah. His wife, Rebbetzin Peshah *a"h*, answered the phone late that night and told us to come right over. We sat down at the dining room table and my wife began to share her pain and her fears with the Rosh Yeshivah and Rebbetzin.

When she finished pouring her heart out, my *rebbe* began to speak. He didn't share with us the many Chazals that he had at his fingertips that speak about *nisyonos* (except for one Rabbeinu Yonah on Mishlei), but instead he opened the deep reservoir of his *neshamah* and described in vivid detail the challenges and difficulties he had

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10 YEARS

Celebrating Our MISHPACHA moments

As a teacher of seminary-age girls in Israel for more than 30 years, I am always looking for articles about “real people” that exemplify the lessons I am trying to teach. This way, the ideas we’re learning become realistic goals in my students’ minds. Every week when I read *Mishpacha*, I think, “Is there an article I would like to cut and save?”

I was teaching a course about *nisayon* and how the tests that Avraham Avinu overcame instilled in us the ability to overcome tests in our own lives. I was trying to emphasize the importance of developing the mindset that we accept that HaKadosh Baruch Hu chooses for us what *nisyonot* He sends our way, and that we don’t have the *bechirah* to choose what we think is good for us. What we do have choice over is how we are going to react, and how we will grow from the challenges. We can spend our lives asking the “whys” or we can focus on the “what nows” and build ourselves.

When I read Rav Aryeh Z. Ginzberg’s beautiful tribute in memory of Mrs. Sorala Krigsman, a member of his *kehillah*, I knew that this was an article that had to be read to my classes. The incredible woman Rav Ginzberg described would become a role model: an “ordinary” woman who lived her life with this strong acceptance of her *nisyonot*. She exemplified someone who didn’t spend her life harping on the whys.

Here is an excerpt from this beautiful tribute to Mrs. Krigsman from *Mishpacha*:

When Sorala shared the terrible diagnosis with her youngest child, he asked the most obvious question that each and every one of us has asked many times in our own lives. “But Mommy, why you?” And this “simple” mother, searching for just the right words to comfort her child, perhaps her last opportunity to do so, answered with a heartfelt expression of such deep *emunah* and *bitachon* in HaKadosh Baruch Hu that it should be written and pasted onto the front page of every siddur that Klal Yisrael davens from each and every day.

What depth. What clarity of vision.
And what a *neshamah*.

—Rachel Rudman, Jerusalem, Israel

I clipped and saved an amazing article in your May 2, 2012, issue entitled “Why Me?” by Rav Aryeh Z. Ginzberg. I read it, cried, and internalized Mrs. Krigsman’s message to her child that when times were great, she never questioned her good fortune, so now when she was chosen to suffer, she is not questioning the Ribbono shel Olam’s ways.

Toward the end of the piece, Rav Ginzberg tells a beautiful *mashal* in the name of Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro of North Miami Beach about a poor person who won the lottery and was excited he would finally receive recognition in his town. He climbed the tallest building and began throwing down dollar bills, but everyone was so busy grabbing the money they didn’t look up to see who was throwing it. The next day he threw down ten-dollar bills, but again, they were too preoccupied to look up.

In sheer frustration, he threw down a bunch of rocks, and of course, he got their attention.

Rav Ginzberg writes:

Most of us are like the people in this *mashal*. Throughout our lives, HaKadosh Baruch Hu rains upon us an abundance of blessings: *parnassah*, children, *shidduchim*, good health, etc., and we hardly ever look up to acknowledge and express appreciation to the Source of these *brachos*. Only when He sends down rocks — sometimes in the form of a pebble, sometimes as full-size rocks, and sometimes, *Rachmana litzlan*, the size of boulders — do we look up and say, “Why me?”

But I wrote “most of us” are like these people, because every once in a while there comes along a “simple” *neshamah*, so pure and so filled with *emunah* and

bitachon to its very core, that it reminds us how to face the difficult challenges that invariably crop up in our lives.

Mrs. Sorala Krigsman *a”h* understood that just as we accept all the wonderful *brachos* and gifts that Hashem grants us without asking “Why me?” so too must we accept the things that we, with our limited Olam HaZeh vision blurred by tears and pain, are unable to perceive as *brachos*, without asking “Why me?”

Baruch Hashem, we have not been tested with such terrible *nisyonos*, and yet things do come up that might cause me to think “Why me? Why us?” Then I remember Mrs. Krigsman, and I shift gears to this new perspective. That is how Rav Ginzberg’s message — Mrs. Krigsman’s legacy — has helped me in my *avodas Hashem*.

—Esther Neumann, Antwerp, Belgium

If you have the ability to offer *chizuk* to a suffering individual by baring your soul and revealing your own pain, then that is what you need to do.

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undergone in his life. He shared the depths of his pain and told us how he had found the strength to push on and to dedicate himself to his life’s work at the helm of the yeshivah.

While I had observed many of these challenges up close over the years, that night more than 15 years ago I realized the true depth of the greatness of my *rebbe*, who was willing to share his personal life challenges, all to give *chizuk* to the family of one *talmid*.

When my dear friend Reb Yisroel Besser, one of the incredibly talented editors of *Mishpacha* magazine, told me that the magazine’s tenth anniversary issues would feature excerpts that had made the greatest impact upon readers, he was kind enough to mention that some of my Guestlines columns have influenced and provided *chizuk* to many people, as evidenced by the numerous letters the magazine received in response to those columns. He asked if I could explain why I wrote about personal challenges that we were facing and what all the feedback meant to us.

First and foremost: My entire purpose in writing these articles was to replicate what I experienced from my own *rebbe*. If you have the ability to offer *chizuk* to a suffering individual by baring your soul and revealing your own pain, then that is what you need to do.

When our beloved grandson Chanoch *z”l* passed away after a very brief life of constant medical crisis, we shared in these pages reflections about his life, the pain of the loss, and some of the thoughts that helped strengthen us. More than a year later, I received a call from a *frum* doctor in Johannesburg, who told me that affixed to the wall above the bed of a very sick child was a copy of the *Mishpacha* article about my grandson. The child’s family taped the article to the wall, and they read it every day and derive *chizuk* from it. All I could think of when I heard that was what a *zechus* it was for Chanoch’s holy *neshamah* that his very brief life has been a source of *chizuk* to the family of a sick child in South Africa.

I am told by the *Mishpacha* staff that the

article titled “Why Me?” in which I wrote about the incredible *emunah* of Mrs. Sorala Krigsman *a”h*, based on what I heard from her husband at the shivah house, had the greatest impact of all and continues to be a source of *chizuk* to many. This article was quoted at a women’s *chizuk* gathering in Yerushalayim attended by over six thousand women. It was also used by colleagues in dozens of Shabbos Shuvah *derashos*, and continues to inspire.

In addition to the beautiful *mishpachah* that Mrs. Krigsman created, the brief statement that she shared with her young son before her *petirah* has given countless people the ability to face their own challenges and forge ahead in life. I cannot think of anything more gratifying to have even some very small portion in providing *chizuk* to Yidden facing their difficult challenges in life.

A great chassidic rebbe who suffered terribly during World War II, losing his entire family and all his chassidim, was asked by a survivor how he had the *koach*, the ability to continue living. The rebbe responded, “It’s true, I lost my whole family and all my chassidim, but if I still have the ability to give *chizuk* to even one Yid and restore his will to live, then my life is still worth living.”

Over the last ten years, *Mishpacha* magazine has been a tremendous source of *chizuk* to so many Yidden the world over — and that, more than anything else, is one of man’s greatest achievements in this world.

May the new year of 5775 bring an end to all the pain and suffering of Yidden with the coming of Mashiach, and may we busy ourselves with articles about how to balance lives with an overabundance of *simchah*.

Rabbi Aryeh Z. Ginzberg is the rav of the Chofetz Chaim Torah Center of Cedarhurst and the founding rav of Ohr Moshe Torah Institute in Hillcrest, Queens. He is a published author of several sifrei halachah, and a frequent contributor to many magazines and newspapers, where he writes the Torah hashkafah on timely issues of the day. He is also a sought-after lecturer on Torah hashkafah at a variety of venues around the country.