

LIKE A CEDAR OF LEBANON:

How to Stay

GREEN

When Your

Hair is

Gray

A NEW CHAPTER



INTRODUCTION: A New Chapter

“Would you like to have more children?” my obstetrician asked me at a checkup decades ago. I thought about it seriously. My three girls were then 5, 10, and 14. “If I had unlimited time and unlimited money, I think I would,” was my answer. “Oh,” replied my doctor, “then you want to be a *grandparent!*”

Of course, no one ever has unlimited time and money. But the later chapters in life are less about *building up*, and more about *following dreams* – less about *responsibilities*, and more about *contributing in ways we choose* – and thinking seriously about this can lead to a time of great satisfaction.

Jewish tradition has much to say about this. We will examine relevant texts in order to apply this wisdom to our own lives.

TEXT:

SOURCE: *Psalm 92:12–15*

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, “The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.”

צָדִיק כְּתֹמֶר יִפְרַח כְּאַרְז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה:
שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית ה' בַּחצְרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ:
עוֹד יִנּוּבוֹן בְּשִׁיבָה דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ:
לִהְגִיד כִּי־יֵשֶׁר ה' צוּרֵי וְלֹא־[עוֹלָתָה] (עֲלָתָה) בּוֹ:

CONVERSATION:

- Do you feel that you have reached the age where you can be compared to a cedar of Lebanon?
- When you think of the future, what do you imagine?



INTRODUCTION: Look Back and Move Forward

We sometimes look back and feel regret for things we have done (and not done) in the past, but regret does not have to be seen in a negative connotation. Regret suggests that we have gained new understanding and know something now that we did not know before. Earlier decisions might have been ill-informed, possibly due to lack of experience – we can look back now and see things differently.

One Hebrew word for regret is *nacham* נָחַם. The root נ־ח־מ means to breathe in, let out air, or sigh. Depending upon the part of speech, *nacham* can mean to regret, to repent, and also to comfort. This connection shows that we can learn from our previous decisions.

TEXTS:

SOURCE 1: Genesis 6:6-7

And God **regretted** having made humankind on earth. With a sorrowful heart, God said:

וַיִּנָּחֵם ה' כִּי־עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וַיִּתְּעַצֵּב אֶל־לְבוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר ה':

"I will blot out from the earth humankind whom I created—humans together with beasts, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I **regret** that I made them."

אֶמְחָה אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָאתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם
עַד־בְּהֵמָה עַד־רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נִחַמְתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתִם:

SOURCE 2: Isaiah 40:1

Comfort, oh comfort My people, says your God.

נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי יֹאמֶר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

Tell Jerusalem to take heart, and proclaim to her that her time of service is accomplished, that her guilt is paid off; that she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

דַּבְּרוּ עַל־לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם וְקִרְאוּ אֵלֶיהָ כִּי מְלָאָה צָבָאָה כִּי נִרְצָה עֲוֹנָהּ
כִּי לָקְחָה מִיַּד ה' כָּפָלִים בְּכָל־חַטָּאתֶיהָ:

SOURCE 3: *Wasted on the Way, Crosby Stills and Nash*

Look around me
 I can see my life before me
 Running rings around the way
 It used to be
 I am older now
 I have more than what I wanted
 But I wish that I had started
 Long before I did

And there's so much time to make up
 Everywhere you turn
 Time we have wasted on the way
 So much water moving
 Underneath the bridge
 Let the water come and carry us away

Oh, when you were young
 Did you question all the answers?
 Did you envy all the dancers
 Who had all the nerve?
 Look round you now
 You must go for what you wanted
 Look at all my friends who did and got what they deserved

So much time to make up
 Everywhere you turn
 Time we have wasted on the way
 So much water moving
 Underneath the bridge
 Let the water come and carry us away

So much love to make up
 Everywhere you turn
 Love we have wasted on the way
 So much water moving
 Underneath the bridge
 Let the water come and carry us away
 Let the water come and carry us away

CONVERSATION:

- There is a saying, “Do the best you can with the information you have.” How does this frame experiences from your past?
- What in your past would you have done differently if you knew then what you know now? Do you consider that “wasted time?” Explain.
- Have you had a “nacham” experience, where you have gone from regret, to repent, to comfort? How would you describe each of the stages of this experience?
- How can your past experiences inspire you going forward?
- What do you think of when you hear, “You must go for what you want[ed]...?”



[Click Here](#) or Scan the **QR Code Below**



to hear ***Wasted on the Way***

INTRODUCTION: Follow Your Dreams

Your dreams show who you are and who you want to become. In Hebrew, the word for “dream” is *chalom*, חלום. The letters can be rearranged to spell *lechem*, לחם which means “bread.” As bread is to physical needs, dreams are to emotional needs.

The texts below can help us navigate the chapter in life where we can focus less on building up, and focus more on following our dreams. As you read them, remember that we sometimes have preconceptions about who we are and what we can achieve. Don't let your past define you or limit who you can become today. Our understanding of ourselves is never complete. Be open to exploring different aspects of yourself, even if they feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar at first.

While some may experience physical limitations, we can still strive to accomplish our spiritual goals and move towards our destinations. But what really matters is who we become as we search and what we learn as we pursue our dreams.



TEXTS:

SOURCE 1: *Theodor Herzl*

If you will it, it is no dream.

אם תרצו, אין זו אגדה

SOURCE 2: *Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski, author on spirituality and mental health*

In spirituality, the searching is the finding and the pursuit is the achievement.

SOURCE 3: *Rabbi Noah Weinberg, founder of Aish HaTorah*

Don't be afraid of discovering that the 'real you' may be different than the 'current' you.

CONVERSATION:

- Has your idea of who you are changed throughout the years or remained the same?
- Do you see your goals as more *lechem*, לחם (bread) or *chalom*, חלום (dream)?
- What do you imagine your goals will look like going forward?



Chai Mitzvah, the Resource Center Engagement provides materials and programs to strengthen the Jewish community.

Originally created as a way to engage adults in a Jewish journey throughout their lives, today Chai Mitzvah has resources for all ages, providing adults, teens, and families (including grandparents) with a way to move forward in their personal Jewish journeys.

Our hope is that Chai Mitzvah will serve as a catalyst for igniting deeper Jewish engagement and fostering continued growth.



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