

No Time to Lose

At this time when the world around us is chaotic —when Hurricane Matthew leaves death and destruction in its wake and the terror in Israel continues unabated, when tens of thousands are murdered in Syria, including thousands of children and the U.N. Security Council doesn't have the time—or the will—to act against Russia and Assad's Syria, when Putin runs the world but no one in Washington reacts, because President Obama is busy crowning his heir, when our presidential elections show us the frightening state of our democracy, when Europe lives in fear of the refugees to whom it opened its arms—we must stop for a moment and recognize that each one of these hectic these days is not an isolated unit of time between the awe of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the joy of Sukkos and the judgment of Hoshana Rabbah, but auspicious days of *teshuvah*.

One of the ironies of our generation is our lack of time. We are so absorbed in being busy with ourselves that busy-ness has become an art in itself.

The more sophisticated technology becomes, the less we manage to find a minute for other people—or even for ourselves. We are involved in a crazy race to 'catch up', a race to meet our schedule that seems to be the most important thing, and we are unable to stop for a moment and ask, "What's happening with us? What's happening in our world?"

At most, when we hear news, gossip, or troubles, we stop for a moment, let out a sigh of "*nebach*" and carry on, running on to the next item on our schedule.

The various blogs and the insidious comments they provoke have destroyed our ability to feel, to identify, to understand. They have developed in us the habit to express unprocessed thoughts to the world at large in one fell swoop. They wreak havoc with people's lives in seconds, eulogize a tragedy in a minute, and reach conclusions flip-pantly, thoughtlessly, without a moment to spare.

They have not turned us into learned, attentive consumers of news — people who care about the world and want to know what's happening around them. Rather, in their way, they have managed to dry up all emotion, logic or responsibility.

But this message is about the real world, not the blog under-world.

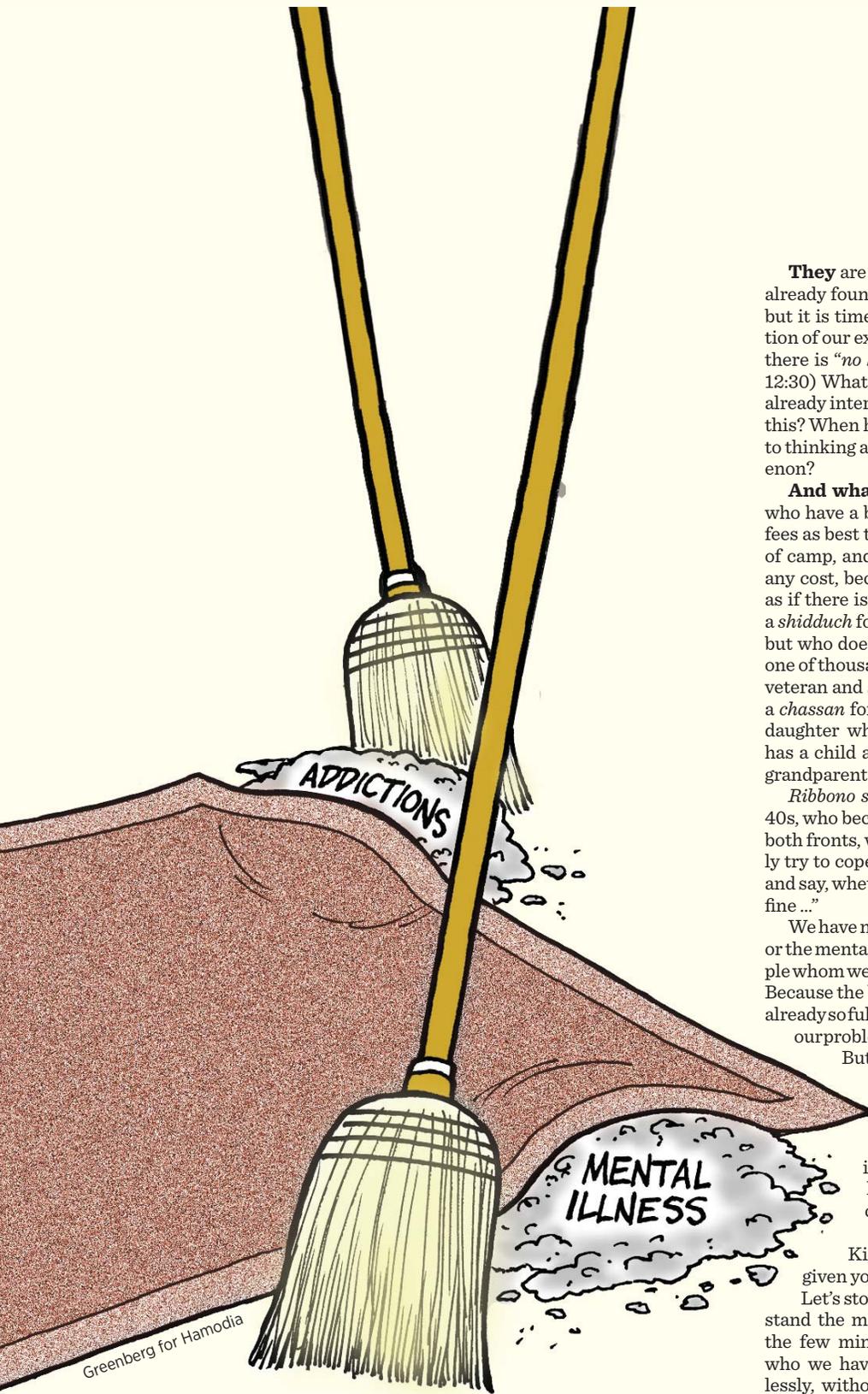
Many life stories, challenges and tragedies come across my desk.

These stories are not major headlines and not even secondary ones; they are not news and not matters of the utmost importance. They are the stories of everyday people who do not have connections, money or power. These stories are not sufficiently interesting for people to speak about them; they may not be sufficiently challenging to galvanize people into action, and, regrettably, there are countless such stories in our communities.

What are *they*?

They are the young women in different communities throughout the Jewish world who have not yet married; there are already thousands of them in their 30s. Many of them have excellent qualities, are talented, earn good salaries and are equipped with all the important qualities one needs in life. But for various reasons they have not managed to build their own families. These *yamim tovim* are particularly difficult for them. They are fed up with being the third wheel at every family occasion. They are fed up with being successful in everyday life and objects of pity when they arrive home for *yom tov*. What do we do for them? Do we think about possible solutions for them for five minutes?





Greenberg for Hamodia

They are the dropouts, who have left “the way.” They have already found a new way of life. We like to call them “at risk,” but it is time to realize that what is “at risk” is the continuation of our existence. Painfully, we have reached a stage where there is “no house where there is not someone dead.” (*Shemos* 12:30) What are we doing to deal with the problem? Have we already internalized the idea that none of us is insured against this? When have we devoted more than the minimum, at best, to thinking about the causes and cures for this tragic phenomenon?

And what about those who just want to survive? Those who have a big family, *baruch Hashem*, and try to pay tuition fees as best they can, to send their child to at least one month of camp, and to send their daughter to seminary in Israel at any cost, because otherwise her “*shidduch* resume” will look as if there is something wrong with her. They also try to find a *shidduch* for her sister who has already returned from Israel but who doesn’t really have “anything special” to offer; she is one of thousands, whose father is in *kollel* and whose mother, a veteran and successful teacher cannot afford the price tag for a *chassan* for her. Those parents even try to help their eldest daughter who, *baruch Hashem*, is married, *baruch Hashem* has a child and, *baruch Hashem*, the child is healthy—which grandparents don’t want to help in some way?

Ribbono shel Olam, do we see them, the *avrechim* in their 40s, who become gray overnight, the mothers who try to be on both fronts, working and also raising children, who so valiantly try to cope with all the challenges and also to smile always and say, whether it’s true or not, “*Baruch Hashem*, everything’s fine...”

We have not yet mentioned the people who are physically ill, or the mentally ill. We have not yet spoken of the dozens of people whom we lost this past year to overdoses of alcohol or drugs. Because the blankets with which we try to cover ourselves are already so full of holes, and the carpets under which we sweep all our problems are already so stuffed that we can’t step on them.

But Hashem in His mercy has given us the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, and He has given us days of joy after them and another day of Hoshana Rabbah, in which we ask Hashem for “a *gutt kvittel* (*pitka tovah*),” and we are sure that He in His mercy will give us all the free gifts that we look forward to receiving from Him as a matter of course.

Just a moment, says the *Ribbono shel Olam*. Yom Kippur is between man and his fellow man, and I’ve given you the last chance, Hoshana Rabbah.

Let’s stop for a moment and take upon ourselves to understand the messages that Hashem sends us. It’s time to find the few minutes necessary to help those around us, those who we have ignored until now, to make this effort noiselessly, without seeking credit or publicity, but with results. It’s time for us to understand finally that for everything we give to those around us, we will receive back so much more. ■

A gut kvittel!
Ruth Lichtenstein, Publisher