



# Christian Friends of Rambam Newsletter

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 4

OCTOBER 2014

## A FEW SPECIAL DAYS IN ISRAEL

- **Passover**
- **Holocaust Memorial Day**
- **Memorial Day**
- **Independence Day**
- **Jerusalem Day**
- **Shavuot (Pentecost)**
- **Rosh HaShana (Feast of Trumpets)**
- **Yom Kippur**
- **Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)**
- **Hanukkah**
- **Purim**

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# Rambam and the Holidays

The spring and autumn months in Israel are filled with a succession of Jewish and Israeli holidays. Each one is full of meaning: feasting and fasting, sadness and joy, and behind it all, the Sabbath rest.

Even those who do not celebrate these holidays are deeply aware of their impact on the Jewish people. The challenge for any hospital, especially us at Rambam, is to relate to these holidays in a manner that honors our patients, their families, and our staff.

In a very real way, holidays are the best example of how our

thinking affects health: mental, spiritual, and physical.

This newsletter focuses on some challenging aspects of the holidays from the perspective of Rambam's health care professionals.

We have three goals in sharing these articles with you. First, we want to introduce you to a different side of life in Israel—the side you rarely see. Second, we hope this information will help you to better enjoy your own holidays. Third, and perhaps most important, may these articles help guide your prayers and support of



Israel, including the people-centered life-saving activities at Rambam Health Care Campus.

# Holiday Eating Can Be Healthy!

Many see holidays as the time for weight-gain and unhealthy eating. It all depends on how you look at it! Dr. Geila Rozen, Rambam's Director of the Clinical Nutrition Department shares a few tips for turning holidays into an opportunity for healthier eating.

Many holiday foods are packed with calories. Matzo, cookies, cakes, stuffing. Enjoy them but don't eat so much! Eat only one cookie—not three or four. Use healthier ingredients such as whole grain high fiber bread to make home-made stuffing; drink mineral or sparkling water—not sugar-rich sodas and juices. These changes alone can remove 600 calories from your diet!

Share, don't hoard and throw  
what no one wants overboard!  
Share those leftover sweets and

dried fruit with colleagues. But if you don't need or want it, does anyone else? If not, saving it won't feed the starving in India—better to throw it out!

Traditionally, rich milk products are eaten in gourmet cooking. Get rid of 100s of calories by using low fat products instead of cream. Cakes and frosting still taste great using low fat cream (10-15%) cream and 5-9% cheeses. Just as tasty is using cornstarch dissolved in cold milk for a cream sauce, and “creaming” soup with oatmeal dissolved in cold water.

Make healthy holiday habits a part of daily life. For example, eating together as a family, and eating at a table without distractions. Research has shown that children from homes where family meals were observed had fewer

problems with addictions or violence. In addition, people eat 30% more when eating while doing something else (such as watching TV).

Post-holiday extreme dieting hurts in the long run. Instead, develop long-term healthy eating habits. You can lose up to 5 kgs a year by cutting out only one soft drink and a couple of slices of bread daily.

Look at your weight realistically. Most people *think* they have a problem, but is it a problem or the influence of ads, magazines, and Hollywood? In fact, as we age some weight gain is actually healthy—research shows that older people with a slightly higher body mass index, live longer—especially if they are physically active!



Credit: CC BY-SA 3.0

# Holiday Help for Biopolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder (BD) is a mental illness characterized by periods of elevated mood and periods of depression. People suffering from BD commonly experience an attack of mania or depression for no apparent reason. However, many sufferers can identify events that trigger their attacks. These may include interpersonal, emotional or environmental stresses, sleep deprivation, alcohol excess or drug abuse, or change of season. Major religious holidays may also trigger attacks, or worsen a person's condition, particularly in the Israeli setting.

The uniqueness of Passover and New Year for the Jewish people is primarily due to their family-centered nature, filled with positive and meaningful emotional tones.

The holidays are an annual focus on family gatherings; ideally they celebrate the wholeness and integrity of the family—children are growing well and grandparents are aging gracefully—in a Jewish ethos of reading and singing together over a meal. For a person with BD, this emotional intensity itself can trigger depression or mania, particularly if their family has experienced loss or has a Holocaust background.

Experienced psychiatrists approach the holiday periods with special care in relation to their BD patients, often providing additional support to help them maintain a mental stability. Since BD may also worsen due to seasonal changes, it is not surprising that the emotional intensity

associated with holidays occurring during changes of season has special significance to those suffering from BD. Friends and families of BD patients need to be aware of the importance of this time of year. Encourage people with BD to keep close contact with their psychiatrist or counsellor, to ensure that holidays remain a meaningful family experience undisturbed by symptoms.

Your encouragement and support during the holidays can give special strength to those who live with this challenging disorder.

David Rabinowitz, MD  
Director, Psychiatric  
Outpatient Clinic  
Rambam HCC

## Help for Handling Loss



Depression in the face of loss affects many, not just people with clinical depression and mood disorders. That loss can be of a loved one—expected, unexpected, or traumatic—or even of someone many generations back. Whatever the case, the grieving person has been deprived of a 'complete' family in some way. For these individuals, the mourning is deep, with a seeming unfillable void.

In the Spring, each approaching Holocaust Memorial Day, national Memorial Day, and Independence Day functions as an emotional marker. As families prepare and gather for a particular Memorial Day,

the unspeakable pain of loss is again before them, heightened by the national ethos and penetrating public narratives that precede and dominate the day. Those who have lost loved ones in the Holocaust are again seeped in the persecution, cruelty, and brutality that colors that period, and the diminished family feels the pain in its own special way. Those who have lost a child or loved one in battle or in terror annually confront the empty chair—the yearning, and emptiness that can never be filled—as if it happened yesterday.

In Israel these Memorial Days, are especially meaningful for those suffering from depres-

sion. Most people instinctively understand what the scientific literature proves—there is a link between depression and loss. It is also noteworthy that particularly in Israel, the Memorial Days and many other holidays occur during changes of season, an additional risk factor that can worsen the moods of some people.

The picture need not be bleak. People who have experienced loss in the past, and suffer from depression, can prepare themselves for these special days. The following tips can be helpful if you or someone you love is struggling with depression and loss.

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# Holidays and Health

In the past, most workers toiled seven days a week; holidays were a rare and precious break from work. The past two centuries have led to an expanding awareness of the many benefits of having holidays and time off from work. Among the most important contributions of the Bible is the institution of the Sabbath as a day for rest, reflection and restoration.

There is an abundance of literature providing evidence for the health benefit of holidays: Well-rested workers are more efficient, more productive, and healthier. Hence, vacation time and holidays, especially if well-used, may help us all to feel better, and help us to refine our focus on what is important for establishing priorities.

How specifically do holidays improve our health? The benefits affect both our emotional and our

physical health. Holidays have been scientifically associated with reducing people's blood pressure to healthier levels, improved quality of sleep, and improving the ability to recover from stress (as measured using a stress-resilience test). Additional benefits include decreases in blood glucose levels, reducing the risk of diabetes, improved body shape (losing weight around our middles), which may lower the risk of heart disease and diabetes, and improved energy levels and mood.

Too many people do not use their holidays to replenish themselves and their health. Rambam Health Care Campus has made many efforts to promote health among staff workers, visitors, and of course for our patients. For our employees, this is worked out by requiring all employees to take at least two weeks holiday per year. For our patients, this means that

whenever possible they can be released home for the holidays—even if only temporarily.

Even the Rambam hinted at the importance of rest when he wrote the following:

“If a person studies too much and exhausts his reflective powers, he will be confused, and will not be able to apprehend even that which had been within the power of his apprehension. For the powers of the body are all alike in this respect.”

If you do not currently use holiday time to refresh yourself and your health, I hope that this short article encourages you to do so.

Jesse Lachter, MD  
Clinical Associate Professor  
and Gastroenterologist  
Rambam Health Care Campus



**Moses Maimonides, also known as Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon (the Rambam)**

*Language,  
Culture,  
and  
Rambam*

## Appointed Time and Feast

In modern Hebrew, people talk about the holidays (*hagim*, חגים). Old Testament language, however, is deeper, referring to “appointed times” (*moadim*, מועדים) and “feasts” (*hagim*) in Biblical Hebrew.

These are not days to take off to do what you want, rather days appointed by the God of Israel for specific activities which included a sacrifice and communal worship. All of these days are *moadim*. Only three are referred to as *hagim*—Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot—the feasts for which pilgrimage to Jerusalem was required.

Interestingly, the word we use as holiday, in Biblical Hebrew, is

called a “good day” (*yom tov*, יום טוב), and refers to Purim (Esther 8:17)—definitely not the same as an appointed time or feast!

The Jewish year was to begin at Passover, and would end after Sukkot. This can be confusing when thinking about Jewish New Year, which is celebrated today just before the Day of Atonement. Jewish New Year is actually the Feast of Trumpets—the only holiday with no precise explanation—only a command for a solemn gathering, the blowing of a trumpet, and sacrifices.

Jewish New Year actually marks the beginning of the civil year in

Jewish culture. That date was set by the sages following the destruction of the second temple.

Nevertheless, the appointed times for these holidays remains unchanged. They have been at the core of Jewish life for thousands of years, and have led to the establishment of rich and varied traditions.

The spiritual and cultural wealth of the Jewish holidays is an integral component of Israeli life, including the working environment of Rambam's patients and employees. Despite their hospitalization, may these appointed times be ones of healing for each patient.

# Help for Handling Loss

*continued from page 2*

Be aware that such days may be difficult, but instead of fearing these days, ask yourself "what is best for me?" and discuss it with family members. Know beforehand how you might feel. Permit yourself to respect your own feelings, and not to suppress them, and participate in memorial traditions as you feel able. If you are in

treatment, ask your psychiatrist if temporary medication changes are appropriate, and seek a consultation with him/her especially at these times. If you are in counselling, ask your therapist for additional sessions before and after the holidays, to help you work through the emotions you are struggling with.

But most important, know that your feelings at this time are not only comprised of

emotional pain—they are a salute, a tribute, and the giving of respect and love, to those who are no longer with you. These feelings are built in to the human condition—for all of us. The depth to which you feel pain, is the depth to which you can learn to love again.

David Rabinowitz, MD

Director, Psychiatric  
Outpatient Clinic  
Rambam HCC

## Thankful in All Circumstances...

In Israel, the Jewish High Holy days mark a time to look back with thankfulness and to look ahead with renewed hope.

This was not an easy summer for anyone in the country—yet we have much to be thankful for. The Emergency Department of the Ministry of Health recently adopted one of the most advanced computerized information and control systems in the world—developed in Israel at Rambam Health Care Campus. With the beginning of "Protective Edge" this system was put to use for the first time! [Read](#)

[More...](#)

The Pediatric Emergency Department has already opened and other departments are now scheduled to move into the new Ruth Rappaport Children's hospital in stages over the next few months. While much equipment is still needed, we are thankful for all that we have received so far.

Great progress is being made

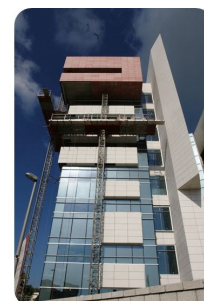
on the new Joseph Fishman Oncology Center and it is scheduled to open in June of 2015. This will enable comprehensive and consolidated care of our cancer patients in one facility, as in a comfortable environment.

This past year many Christian friends from America, South America, Finland, Norway, and other nations came to see the Sammy Ofer Fortified Underground Emergency Hospital. Groups and individuals surprised us with their generosity, and in some cases, spontaneous prayers for our many activities. Each guest was special!

As we welcomed the new civil year, we also welcomed our 200th "Like" on our Christian Friends of Rambam page. We are thankful for each of you



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**The Joseph Fishman Cardiology Center.**

*Photo Credit: Ofer Golan and Netanel Ayzic  
Spokesperson's Office, Rambam HCC*

who supports us with prayer and giving.

These are but a few reasons we are thankful! In particular we appreciate your prayers, gifts, and encouragement. Your friendship means much to us, and with your help, the coming year will be even better. Thank you for standing with the people of Israel via Rambam Health Care Campus!



**The New Ruth Rappaport  
Children's Hospital**

*Photo: Pieter Fliter*





## RAMBAM Health Care Campus

Creating the future of medicine.

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#### For more information:



[www.rambam.org.il](http://www.rambam.org.il)



[rambamhospital](https://www.youtube.com/rambamhospital)



[Rambam Health Care Campus - Hospital](https://www.facebook.com/RambamHealthCareCampus-Hospital)



## You Can Help & Pray

We depend on people like you to help us replace old equipment, build new facilities, perform research, and care for our patients. Your gift counts—whatever the amount. Click on the links below for more information on how you can help support the people of Israel via Rambam Health Care Campus.

#### Pray for Us and Share with

**Others:** Visit our [Christian Friends of Rambam Facebook page](#) often for prayer requests and regular updates about what is happening at Rambam.

**Friends Organizations:** Tax-deductible donations can be made via a Friends organization near you (listed above).

**Giving:** Please [visit our webpage](#) for more information about how you can make a difference in the lives of the

people served by Rambam Health Care Campus.

As you pray for Rambam Health Care Campus, for our many activities, for our patients, and our staff, we would like you to consider becoming part of the answer to your prayers.

It can be overwhelming when one considers the needs out there. When millions are needed, what is your \$5 or \$10? Every gift adds up, and is part of the greater whole. Truthfully, we need your help.

Please pray for donors for our list of current needs, and consider giving a one-time or repeating donation as well. Your gift is a reflection of your love for Israel and her many peoples, and it speaks volumes to us here!

## Current Needs

- Equipment and beds are still needed for the Sammy Ofer Fortified Underground Emergency Hospital
- Equipment and other essentials are still needed for the Ruth Rappaport Children's Hospital, including funds to complete the fourth and fifth floors.
- A major donor (naming opportunity) is still needed to for the new Cardiovascular Hospital.
- Equipment and other essentials are needed for the Joseph Fishman Oncology Center, scheduled to open in 2015.
- Several essential medical research projects also need funding, as does a planned Biomedical Discovery Tower, which will not only promote medical discovery but provide a strong boost to the local economy.

*...the LORD said to Abram, "...I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

*Genesis 12:1,3*