

Excerpt from Sermon by Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch 8/5/2017

“... I would like to share news with the congregation that some of you already know. Some years ago, I was diagnosed with Young Onset Parkinson’s Disease, which you may recall is the same malady that actor Michael J. Fox has. For a long time, I kept this information private, because I was concerned that people would see me differently or even pity me. Some of you may have personal experience with Parkinson’s, or for TV addicts, you may be familiar with Louis Canning from “The Good Wife” or Terry from “Ray Donovan”. If not, Young Onset Parkinson’s disease is a long-term degenerative disorder of the central nervous system that mainly affects the motor system. It is known as a movement disorder and produces a long list of symptoms. Barring a medical breakthrough, my current physical condition is the best I will ever function at and currently there is no cure.

At the same time, I personally find deep inspiration in Michael J. Fox, as well as, l’havdil, from my Rebbe, the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel of blessed memory, with whom I was serendipitously very close. Rabbi Finkel zt’l suffered from late stage Young Onset Parkinson’s Disease for most of his tenure, when he led the prestigious yeshiva during its most prolific period, as it became the largest yeshiva in the world. Both of these incredibly accomplished individuals never lost focus and committed to becoming even more accomplished with this disease than they had ever imagined prior to their diagnosis.

Following their example, I intend to continue working to achieve aspirations I have for myself personally, as well as for our Mekor community. As I discussed in the dvar Torah, I will try to continually accept this diagnosis, and move on to the stage of Nechama, so that I can change my situation into something positive.

I feel privileged to serve our amazing, flourishing Mekor community, and with the help and love of God, I will continue to believe, as Michael J. Fox expressed with the title of his bestselling memoir, that for everyone and everything I am blessed with in my life, I consider myself to be a “Lucky Man”. Shabbat shalom.”