

## THE ART OF CARE-GIVING: A new “life stage” (\*)

Jewish community aging. Best guess, @25% of American Jewish community 65+. Fastest growth: 85+. Living longer, better, but when health issues arise they are often more serious and require increased care. New “life stage” that can often last not months, but years and even decades.

\* According to the World Health Organization, the percentage of the world’s population over 60 will nearly double by 2050, rising to 22 % from 12%. In the USA, the census bureau projects that by 2035, people 65 and older will outnumber people 18 and under for the first time.” (NYTimes. 4/23/19)

## SOME RANDOM STATISTICS ON CARE-GIVING

a. More than 50 million people provide care for a chronically ill or disabled family member or friend during any given year...47% experience financial challenges as a result...6 in 10 work full or part time...24% care for two or more people...more than ½ of US labor force has caregiving responsibilities and @ 37 million Americans can spend nearly 4 hours a day looking after an elder...avg out of pocket expense per year @ \$7,200

b. The typical care-giver is a woman, about 50 , caring for her widowed mother who does not live with her. She is married and employed. Most care-givers are women. About ¼ of all caregivers are now between 18 and 34. *Gender bias? Economic impact of this juggling?*  
Legislation to compensate, provide safety net for time spent as care-giver?

Rise in male caregivers. AARP: 40% caregivers are now men up from 34% in 2010..men are slightly younger and provide slightly less care than female caregivers, but do similar things.

c. 30% of family caregivers caring for older adult are themselves 65+. Longevity revolution...living longer. Now, @1/4 of adults caring for elders are between 18 and 34...implications for Millennials? (AARP and Nat’l Alliance of Caregiving)..... Challenge as well for caring for adult children with disabilities. **THE CLUB SANDWICH GENERATION!**

d. Potential generational storm emerging as Baby Boomers (1<sup>st</sup> wave now 65-70) file for Social Security and Medicare. Creating stress on these programs. Likewise, as Boomers age and live longer, realization that not enough qualified care-givers/gerontologists to meet expected demands.

Worker-retiree ratio declined from post WW 2 (7:1) to now, about 3:1.  
...within next decade we will need at least 1.8 million additional home care workers...by 2018 demand for these workers will increase by more than 90%...legislation to provide tax credits for care-givers? (CARE act)

Also, by 2030...% of non-working citizens who rely on working people to Pay into Social Security/medicare will exceed 70%. Many Boomers don't Have enough saved to fund 20+ years of retirement. (The Week. Aug. 23, 2019)...."45% of Boomers have no retirement savings and more than a quarter of those who do have less than "\$100,000.00)"

- e. Expected growth as well in Alzheimer's cases from 5 million now to @ 15 million in next few decades as Boomers age out...again, who cares for us and who pays? Current costs for Alzheimer's/dementia= @ \$226B p/y increasing research and delaying onset by 5 years could cut the # of people getting these in 1/2. ("Changing the Trajectory of Alzheimer's/Dementia: How A Treatment by 2025 Saves Lives and Dollars") (see also [www.growingolder.net](http://www.growingolder.net) for spiritual support for individuals and families dealing with Alzheimer's)
- f. Care-giving tsunami makes it possible that in next few decades elder care issues will replace child care issues as major family concern....longevity revolution now has (as of 2015) @ 7% , some 3 million plus, people over 75 years of age active care-givers helping with activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, toileting), instrumental activities (shopping, transport, health care system) as well as increase medical and nursing tasks.
- g. Care-giver "burnout" responsible for economic, emotional and spiritual stresses and strains. Increased mental health fallout and family systems tensions. (see: "Anger May Fade to Sadness As Caregiving Ends". Aarp.org. 4/2/19)
- h. Now, more people 60+ than 15 and below. Every 8 seconds someone turns 65...@ 10,000 per day...70% of people 65+ need some support . By 2050 # of people 65+ expected to grow from 43 million (2012) to 84 million
- i. *Economics of aging*...THE social justice issue for next few decades? Average nursing home costs, 2015=@ \$80K p/y; basic assisted living @ \$3K p/m...add to that home health workers....and morality of having to "spend down" assets to qualify to Medicaid. Add to this, a growing sense of Income Inequality as Boomers Age within Boomer cohort and between Boomers and our children. Who pays for our care? Who will take care of Us? (see Jewish Sacred Aging/Facebook post from NextAvenue.org Oct. 16,2019 "The Distressing Growth of Wealth Inequality of Boomers")

\* These statistics drawn from a variety of current studies and reports including: AARP, National Alliance for Caregiving, US Census, URJ Jewish Family Concerns and Jewish Sacred Aging, Alzheimer's Association, L. Kotlikoff: "The Coming Generational Storm" and "The Clash of Generations"; Ai-Jen Poo: "the Age of Dignity" and interviews heard on Boomer Generation Radio program (pod-casts on [www.jewishsacredaging.com](http://www.jewishsacredaging.com))

\* See also [www.jewishsacredaging.com](http://www.jewishsacredaging.com) and Jewish Sacred Aging/Facebook for regular articles and posts on caregiving.

## TEXTS FROM OUR TRADITION THAT APPROACH CARE-GIVING ISSUES:

A) TORAH: Exodus 20:12..."honor" (*cabaid*) father and mother  
Leviticus 19:3.."revere" (*tira-oo*) mother and father  
Deuteronomy 5:16.."honor" (*cabaid*) father and mother

B) TALMUD: Kiddushin 31b-32a

*Respect*: not standing in parent's usual place, nor sitting where they usually sit, by not contradicting the parent's words or interfering in a parent's dispute with others.

\*dignity (*tzelem*)...money as a means of control...quality of life?  
Fundamental ethic in context of decision making?...conflict of interests between parent and child? (*shomer*)

*Honor*: helping parents eat and drink, clothe and cover them, and helping them go in and out.

\*honor: assisting.."who pays"?...if parents able: parent. Adult child...through time

\*honor and respect are deeds..actions not feelings...,love???????

\*ceding care to third party?.....parent---my family/self?  
Danger to parent/others (Alzheimer's/dementia?)  
*sakanot n'fashot and p'kuach nefesh*

\* Adult child should care for parent, BUT, if it becomes impossible due to change in parent or negative impact on family, or threat to parent or others...permissible to cede care to third party (Maimonides: Hilchot Mamrim 6:10)

- opportunities for spiritual growth, reconciliation, bonding
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- necessity of caring for care-giver (*hishamer-to care for self*)

#### C) PROGRAMS THAT MAY BE OR HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED BY CONGREGATIONS

- \* *shomrim* service at synagogue..honor care-givers
- \*support groups...respite care programs (caring community)
- \* adult day care...transportation...shopping...often partner with local Jewish Family Service is applicable
- \*congregation health worker—congregation nurse program
- \* patient-advocate
- \* recognition of care-givers in congregation via *aliyah* at High Holidays
- \* health and wellness programming
- \* annual educational forums on such issues as Jewish views on:
  - \*\*decision making at end of life
  - \*\*the art of care-giving
  - \*\* mental health
  - \*\* creation of a spiritual care-giving guide for family

#### D) RITUALS THAT SUPPORT NEW LIFE STAGES/EXPERIENCES IN LONGEVITY:

What is the role of religious ritual?

- \* blessings at signing advance medical directives/health care proxy
- \* blessing upon moving from family home
- \* *simchat hochma: celebration of wisdom/aging*
- \* ritual for welcoming a resident into assisted living
- \* removal of wedding ring after year of mourning
- \* cohabitation of older adults
- \* well spouse...Alzheimer's/dementia..re-definintion of

adultery

- \* do we need new vocabulary for new life stage..i.e.  
end of life, Alzheimer's/dementia?

#### E) DEVELOPING A CARE PLAN: ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What are my finances: do I have adequate finances in place?
2. Have we discussed who will have primary responsibility for my care?
3. Are all my documents up to date and easily accessible?
4. If I am unable to age in place, what are my preferences and, if I wish to/can remain at home, is my Home adaptable?

#### F) QUESTIONS FROM ATUL GAWANDE ("BEING MORTAL") AS LIFE EBBS:

1. What are your biggest fears and concerns?
2. What goals are most important to you?
3. What trade-offs are you willing to make?
4. What trade-offs are you NOT willing to make?

#### G) A CAREGIVER'S PRAYER

Sustainer of the Universe,  
help me to care for my loved one,  
with hope, courage and sensitivity.  
Grant me insight, resourcefulness  
and the ability to ask for help  
and to accept help when it is needed.  
May I find the patience to overcome difficult moments  
and to find meaning and purpose in the smallest task.  
O Eternal God  
help me to remember to take care of myself  
so that I may take care of others.  
Be with me and my loved one,  
as we journey on this path together.  
May the One who makes peace in the heavens,  
bring peace to me, to my family and loved ones, and to us all.

("Alzheimer's Families". Michele Brand Medwin. Colchester Woods Press. 2018. P.211)

Further information:

- "To Honor and Respect" (URJPRESS) chapters on Care-giving and Rituals
- "That You May Live Long" (URJPRESS) essays on caring for aging parents and our self.
- "Seekers of Meaning: Baby Boomers, Judaism and the Pursuit of Healthy Aging" (URJPress)

also via Amazon

Tool Kit for Jewish Clergy on Caregiving” [www.thectac.org](http://www.thectac.org). or [www.jewishsacredaging.com](http://www.jewishsacredaging.com).

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