

FROM THE RABBI

One Day at a Time

It was Purim 2020, when we were beginning to realize a pandemic was upon us which would change our world. We had no idea how much it would change us as well. For all the prognostications of the days ahead on that Purim eve, we were truly unable to see into the future of the many months we would be struggling to overcome the plague of COVID-19.

Among the many lessons we are just beginning to realize we have learned is this: take one day at a time. This is not a new lesson; it quite ancient. Still, it is an opening to understanding, “Teach us to number our days that we may attain a heart of wisdom,” as our tradition teaches. In our fast-paced, often competitive world, too often we forget to notice the gifts of life and love each and every day. We neglect to pause and notice the joys and sorrows of each day, the accomplishments great and small that characterize our days. This is what a spiritual life offers us – the capacity, the skill, the structure, and the motivation to notice and appreciate the content of our days.

During this past year some of us — myself included — exercised our creative muscles in various ways. For me, it was making up new recipes — “concoctions” as my husband Bob calls our new dinner recipes. That may be the “small stuff” — yet significant as part of a continuum of our own development. Creativity is a gift from God, and the capacity to create is boundless for our part in the ongoing work of “completing the work of creation.” Perhaps over the Days of Awe we will find ways to share our stories of our creative accomplishments while enduring a pandemic.

From the “small stuff” to the cultivation of our character virtues, we are drawn to friendship and caring as responses to our pandemic fears, sadness, losses, and loneliness. Many of us were touched by the caring extended to us by others. I was deeply touched by the simple, yet generous and kind gestures shared by so many - as I experienced in my neighborhood and among members of our community. All the more so, the gifts of challah to our seniors prepared and delivered by our members, the phone calls to each other and the generosity of time by so many of you who came to our virtual weeknight evening minyan to support those who needed to say kaddish. So many members of our OZ community stepped up to engage in and lead the remarkable “Imagine 2025” process – yet another gift we have given to each other. And on and on — we grew our compassion and love in so many ways.

And we know it has not been easy. The stress of the pandemic has also generated more intense negative emotional reactions to challenges and upsets. Thank God our spiritual tradition teaches us to walk the path of reflection for each day. When we walk that path with awareness, we can let go of the prior days and contextualize our experiences and perspectives. This is how we grow in wisdom.

We could not have imagined the path ahead of us when we entered pandemic lockdown. If we had known how long it would take and how difficult it would be, how would we have approached our days? Fortunately, we know from the wisdom of Jewish tradition that our lives are an accumulation of days, and all we can do is take one day at a time. Then, when we arrive at the milestones of the Days of Awe, the High Holy Days, a New Year marks a passageway for us. Here we can assess the days of the past year. With appreciation and wisdom, we will begin our journey into the New Year, correcting our course with wisdom we have acquired while beginning the count of our days anew.

A challenge so many of us face is to feel stuck or powerless to change the world, or even the course of our lives. Our power of self-realization comes from focusing on the things we can control and cultivating those skills. One day at a time.

The month of Elul, the last month of the Jewish year, offers us an annual opportunity for “catch-up.” Day by day, Elul and the Days of Awe of the New Year, guide our steps in recognition of where we have been in the past year, what we have learned, and the wisdom we have acquired along the way.

May 5782 be a year of healing and renewal as we “return to the home of our souls.”
Leshanah tovah tikateivu v'teichateimu — May you be written and sealed in the Book of Life for good.

~ Rabbi Amy
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