Finding Joy

It seems that there are a lot of things to be upset about. The world is far from perfect—or even in an acceptable state that would allow us exhale (after holding our breath for so long). Our easy access to infinite amounts of information is awash with disturbing news. And people abound who are upset and would have us be upset because of their distressed state.

Maybe they're justified. Maybe they're correct and the world is doomed. Maybe time will reveal that the apocalypse has already occurred—and we just didn't notice. Or maybe these people are misguided.

It might just be my age or my life experiences or my current situation, but I feel joyful more often than I feel depressed and upset. When I'm down, I know that things will change. Buddhism teaches us that everything is impermanent—as do other religious teachings. Joy and Sorrow come into my life randomly without cause nor reason. But I find peace knowing that nothing lasts—which makes my joys so precious and my sorrows less devastating. Neither lasts—but my life's meaning does last, and that's what keeps me going.

I found the following story in my notes from early in my ministry at UUFSCC:

The story tells that King Solomon had many servants but one servant, Benaiah ben Yehoyada, the captain of the Palace Guard, was his favorite servant of all. Solomon made this preference quite obvious to all the others, and because of this, the other servants teased Benaiah. So Solomon decided that Benaiah needed a lesson in humility.

The king summoned Benaiah and a few of the other servants and gave them an impossible mission to fulfill. He figured they would all fail equally and then Benaiah would no longer be teased for being his favorite.

"I have heard rumors of a fabulous ring," said King Solomon. "It has a unique power.

When a sad man gazes upon it, he becomes happy.

But when a happy man gazes upon it, he becomes sad.

Find this ring and bring it to me."

Benaiah set out in search of the ring. He traveled from town to town, inquiring as to its whereabouts. But no one had ever heard of such a ring. He was about to give up when he spotted a junk shop. Benaiah approached the owner and described the object of his search.

"A ring that cheers the sad and saddens the cheerful?" said the junk dealer. "Come inside." They entered the shop. From a boxful of baubles the junk dealer took a plain, silver ring. He engraved some words on it and gave it to Benaiah. Benaiah read the inscription, nodded sagely, and headed back to the palace.

Solomon summoned all the servants that had taken on this mission. The first came up empty handed, the second brought a ring made out of gems.

When Solomon summoned Benaiah, he was expecting an unsuccessful—and humbled—Benaiah.

So when Benaiah strode in and handed him the ring, the king was taken aback. Inspecting it, he read the inscription—and let out a melancholy sigh.

King Solomon removed his costly rings and slipped on the ring from the junk shop instead.

"It was I who needed a lesson in humility," King Solomon said.

For the inscription on the ring read GAM ZE YA-AVOR—

"This too shall pass."

http://www.shomreitorah.org/wp-content/upLoads/2011/10/Rabbi-Kramers-Yom-Kippur-Sermon-5774.pdf

yours in shared ministry.....Rev Russ