



### The Persistence of Memory, Salvador Dali

Melting clocks is an image that I associate with the Pandemic. Oy, the meltdown! Time is supposed to be measurable, and for the Jewish People we gather in holy spaces to mark time. We call those *shehecheyanu* moments.

The contents of Salvador Dali's famous painting "The Persistence of Memory" - cliffs that signify "eternity" and the artist's roots as well as the clock-faces that sag, bend and never register what moment or hour it is - they rebel against the Jewish spirit. How can we mark time that is melting away or stand on the bluffs and look out over our lives, if we can't leave our homes?

Larissa Bailiff of MOMA notes that Dali painted "The Persistence of Memory" on a surprisingly small canvas. Our expectations of where we can locate ourselves are shattered by the painting. The material world is compromised; metal cases are melting away. We would not ride a camel through the strange desert that the insects inhabit. The heat bakes away the technology we depend on to keep us in rhythm. Ants - *bugs* - crawl over the hands and faces of what was once protected and impermeable. We are unnerved. Who can bless?!

And, yet, the softness of the surrealist landscape invites thought and reflection. We do start to wonder if we could locate ourselves in that strange landscape. Questions rise like the hot sun: "If time is melting now, will that give way to an ocean of possibility and time for something new?" Is there a new moment in the making? Will the clocks re-wind?

One question I have been struggling with this year is: how will we pronounce an honest, heartfelt and meaningful She'hekhayanu blessing? How will we say: "Who brought us to this time, helped us reach this occasion?" Given the limitations and restrictions and how I feel I'm missing the defining structures and designs and communal setup of our Yamim Noraim services. It feels more like a Persistence of Memory Rosh Hashanah with ants in my honey, shofars made from soft fleshy tissue and melting machzors whose letters and words are falling out of the sides of the books.

But, as I start to sing the nusach of the tfillah, the grand tunes stir something inside of me. It feels like the clocks in the Dali painting take back their shapes and the clock alarms start to chime! Reinnervated timepieces create gateways of blessing, and the bugs are sent fleeing into the sands from which they came. The cliffs in the distance stand like mountains that the Psalmist sang about: "*Esah einei el heHarim...*" Lift your eyes to the mountain ranges! From where will our help come?"

In this moment, at this "now," at the beginning of the new year, at this strange and very different Rosh HaShanah with our small screens and the return to the sanctuary and the aesthetic very different and the timing of our services so changed - it all comes together like a surreal painting that will hang with us for the rest of our lives.

And in my heart I am sensing blessing. Honey is dripping over soft, round challahs, and apple slices are flying. The shofar twists and bends, calling! The moment is here to bless: "Who gave us life, who sustains us, and who enabled us to reach this memorable time." *Shehechayanu!* It's an embrace - even of this time in our world, our community and in our lives.

L'shanah Tovah; Teikhateivu v'Teihateimu,  
Rabbi Bolton