

**ROSH HASHANAH
SECOND DAY
5769**

As Jews we are reminded that we do not simply read the literal text. We read between the lines, words and even letters. This is why, for example, our Torah has given birth to libraries filled with interpretations and commentaries. Just as there are many layers to our texts there are even more layers to our lives.

Too often we look only at the surface of life having no idea as to what is going on below. It is like gazing at a body of water unaware of what there is beneath the surface. Some explore and venture beyond the surface and others are apprehensive and frightened to do so. Who knows what we may find and who knows what may be required of us once we do? There may be inconvenient truths about our lives that will confront us and disturb the comfort and convenience of our lives.

Author, Jennifer Anne Moses, writes: "Years ago, my mother turned to me and, for no apparent reason, announced that by 40 or so, any woman who is more concerned with her outsides than her insides is in mondo trouble. She herself was blessed with an amazing lack of vanity. But maybe she sensed that, unlike her, when my own looks began to give out, I'd mourn. When she herself died of cancer at age 72, she was worn-out and white-haired. And more beautiful than ever."

Do you remember the story of the young girl during the Holocaust who reached in her pocket and gave apples through a fence to a concentration camp inmate who later became her husband? We know where the apples came from but from where did the kindness come? Where was Jennifer Moses' mother's beauty? Where is the beauty in any of us to be found?

In the kabbalistic scheme of the universe, the central sefirah or organizing principle of the universe is known as "Tiferet" which means beauty. This beauty we are told resides in the heart of the universe and in the heart of each person. This beauty is the essence of ourselves: hidden, mysterious and nevertheless ever-present. Too many of us do not know this part of ourselves and precious few of our children have any idea how to discover it in themselves.

When Reb Zusya's story was asked what he worried about when he thought of dying and going to heaven he responded: "I do not worry that I will be asked why was I not Moses but why was I not Zusya." Rabbi Howard Sommer shared that the quest to live up to the best that is within him is not only the driving force for his rabbinate, but of his entire life. As much as I may fail, this is my quest as well. Each of us is to be concerned not with being someone else but with being the most we can become. It is so sad when a person fails to recognize and value that which is within oneself waiting to be discovered.

Ethan Franzel reflects that as human beings we are prone to live on the surface level only and how easy it is for us to live merely as flesh and blood. The Maggid of Mezertich teaches us that to become truly human—to actualize who we really are and not just what we seem and appear to be—we need to strive to experience G-d as part of ourselves, as the missing part that will complete us. This is what the practice of Judaism is about. Judaism is to direct us to the missing parts of our lives and to illuminate them and fill them with purpose and meaning. Judaism is to help us go within and to go deep.

Numerous social commentators have shared their bewilderment as to why so many otherwise intelligent people are shallow, why so many otherwise educated individuals are superficial and why so many otherwise healthy individuals have such poor attention spans and limited interests. Others have observed that boredom is an inner matter. In other words, only people who allow themselves to be bored can be bored. People with active inner lives are never bored. People who are thinking, imagining, wondering and reflecting do not get bored. There is only boredom from within even though those who are bored think it is a function of something external to themselves—let's say a Rosh HaShanah service or a rabbi's sermon—and not something within themselves. Being bored is like being asleep. When we are asleep life happens; when we are awake we make things happen in our lives.

Our rabbis tell us that one thing we learn from the Creation story in our Torah is that G-d created us in G-d's image and gave us freedom to transcend physical nature by virtue of living in our minds and hearts where decisions are made. There are no decisions without freedom and there is no freedom without responsibility. Our conscience, how we use our free will and how responsible we are within us. We make decisions influenced by values, priorities, contexts, and more. Ultimately, however, to live responsible lives and make good decisions we need to have an active inner life where all of this happens, where all of our decisions are made.

What is the difference between a person who acts compassionately and one who does not; a person who is modest or respectful and one who is not? Self-control and discipline are matters below the surface where the real work of life and real living goes on. Rabbi Shmuel Lewis reminds us that decisions to change something about your character—to become less of this and more of that—are decisions that we make and either carry out or fail at; but all of the change and transformation takes place inside of us. It is not physical or visible though the results are certainly real and tangible. Being an honest person, being someone who can be honest with oneself, for example, is a matter of who we are on the inside and this determines how we behave on the outside.

We are preoccupied and distracted by externalities. When the two tribes of Reuven and Gad wanted to remain on the east bank of the Jordan River they promised Moses that they would go and fight with their fellow Israelites to conquer the land and only then return to their territorial allotments. They said they would build pens

and corals for their animals and then they said they would build homes for their wives and children. For our biblical commentators, the literal sequence is very significant. Our rabbis pointed out that these particular ancestors, like many of us, were more concerned with their property and wealth than with what was of true and priceless value, their families. Their priorities were all wrong.

We are reminded that when we make decisions and set our priorities from the outside in and not from the inside out such things happen. If we dwell within we will build solid foundations of values and principles that will then be the building blocks of our priorities and decisions. How much of the difficulty in our lives is related to our failure to prioritize correctly? Reb Zusya observed how many of us do not want what we truly need and do not need what we passionately want?

Every simchah involves responsibility. Simchah is not the food and drink, the band and decorations. Simchah is a state of being, something within that is expressed without. A simchah is not a party; it is a celebration filled with thankfulness and hope. When these are absent within, all of the money spent cannot make a simchah. Cars and watches can be enjoyed but they do not transform us. We all should worry as much about the scratches we put on our own souls and the scratches we put on the souls of others as we do about a scratch on our cars, watches and jewelry.

The inside-outside model works well in helping understand the difference between religious observance and observing our religion religiously: in other words, understanding the difference between living only by the letter of the law and not also by the spirit of the law. There can be no inherent goodness and certainly no holiness to observance that is void of or deficient in the ethical imperative. Our movement's "Hechsher Tzedek Commission" is predicated on this very principle. Jewish law and observance absent Jewish ethics and morality is not Judaism. The disconnect between our inner worlds and concerns and our outer behavior is what leads to having glatt kosher meat on the surface of life that is glatt treif in its essence. This disconnect accounts for numerous injustices and inequalities created and maintained by some of Jewish law such as all the Jewish women who cannot remarry, the "chained women, the agunot." This disconnect explains why there are observant Jews who are dishonest or not very kind people.

The disconnect between what is seen on the outside and what is on the inside manifests in many different ways. For example, what about Jews who are comfortable being Jewish in their homes and synagogues but not in public? What about Jews who are comfortable being Jewish in their synagogues but do not do Jewish in their homes? What about Jews who like Jewish food but not Jewish study or prayer? And what about Jewish parents who literally stay outside the synagogue as they drop their children off to come inside to services and religious school?

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was criticized, as was our own Rabbi Albert Goldman, for marching in Selma in the 1960's and marching against the war in Viet

Nam. He explained that what he felt inside himself about civil rights and the Viet Nam war was the same as he felt about the mitzvot commanding him to fight for Soviet Jews, against anti-Semitism and for Israel. Rabbi Heschel's inner private sphere was not separate from his outer public sphere.

When he was asked about marching in Selma, Rabbi Heschel said he "was praying with his feet." He was teaching us about the necessity and urgency to have the spirit of the law and the letter of the law become one; to have our inside lives as Jews and our outside lives be the same. To have our hearts and souls connected to our feet, hands and actions. This is another reason of why we cannot have a disconnect between our Jewish values and how we vote.

We all are aware of how many people there are that are seen one way but are another. For example, the loving husband, father, soccer coach and all around good guy who is embezzling at the office and the person who is loved and respected by everyone at work who comes home and beats his wife. Again, tragically, the disconnect between our outer lives and inner lives.

We are taught and instructed to cultivate our inner selves and have the fruits of our labor be expressed and enjoyed in our outer lives and world. When the Temple is described in the Torah, what we are commanded to make first are those things that are not seen publicly—the ark and the menorah—but which are of ultimate importance. The most important parts of ourselves are like the ark and menorah: hidden but the sources of the vitality and light of our lives. And just as only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies so only can each of us make the journey within, go beyond the surface and discover the treasure that is our true selves. I cannot do it for you and you cannot do it for me but we can support and encourage each other to make this journey; a journey that will take us to a day when we will know not only when we were born but why we were born.

Rosh HaShanah provides us with the opportunity to consider how much or how little we live externally, superficially, on the surface and how much we live within, deeply, richly and significantly. As Jennifer Anne Moses' mother reminds us and challenges us: anyone who is more concerned with one's outsides than one's insides is in big trouble.

Given our education and intelligence, our discretionary time and income, our security and overall well-being, what prevents us from going within and going deep? What are we going to say when we die when we are asked not why we were not Moses or why we were not Reb Zusya but why we were not all who we could be as Jews and as human beings? In the year ahead, are we going to be thinking about our cars and watches or concerned with our hearts and souls?

SHANAH TOVAH.