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Grief Leave: A Time for Mourning

1 message

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Judea Reform Congregation



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לְכָל זְמַן וְזֶמַן לְכָל־חַפֵּץ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם. עֵת לֵלֶדֶת וְעֵת לָמוּת...
עֵת לִבְכוּת וְעֵת לִשְׂחֹק, עֵת סִפּוּד וְעֵת רִקּוּד.

“A season is set for everything,
a time for every experience under heaven.
A time for being born and a time for dying...
a time for weeping and a time for laughing,
a time for mourning and a time for dancing.”
(*Ecclesiastes 3:1-4*)

Dear Judea Reform Congregation,

I am writing to share with you that I will be going on a grief leave, for the period leading up to January 6th, my mother's yahrtzeit. I will begin this leave on November 11th.

As you know, the past year for me has been one of mourning, as well as healing from the 40 days leading up to her death. This year, the words of Ecclesiastes have both soothed and challenged my spirit. Indeed, *l'chol z'man v'eit l'chol cheifetz tachat hashamayim*, “a season is set for every experience,” and this pandemic has mingled many seasons into a labyrinth of grief and joy, lament and laughter, despair and hope. As both a rabbi and a son, my mother's death on January 6th—the day of the insurrection—is emblematic of a challenge to my own process of mourning, which at this point requires me to take this time to create a *mishkan aveilut*, a “sanctuary for mourning,” toward *refuah shleima*, spiritual wholeness.

In this period, I will sustain my rabbinic engagement in the life cycle events that I've committed to, and I very much look forward to doing so; in particular, with our B'nei Mitzvah, who have so much wonderful Torah to teach, and a beautiful couple who joyfully await their moment under the chuppah. I want to assure you that in my absence, our staff, my rabbinic colleagues, and our lay leaders are fully prepared to support you in every way--we are here and organized to support your rabbinic

needs. In the coming days we will share with you now we plan on enriching these days with invigorating worship and inspiring words of Torah, from a brilliant cadre of rabbis and lay leaders. I feel so blessed by their continuous support and their tireless devotion to this community. They are a treasure.

There are no words for the gratitude and love I hold in my heart for Judea Reform and its leaders, through every stage of this pandemic. All that this community has done to care for me and my family through the last year is a mitzvah beyond measure. The coming days for us all are days of "return," as we all become healthier and draw nearer to one another again. I view this period as one of personal return as well, one which will enable me to do what I love most about my rabbinate— being fully present for this extraordinary congregation, which I am honored to call my home.

L'shalom,



Rabbi Matthew Soffer

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