In August there was a solar eclipse which occurred because of a particular alignment of our earth sun and moon. Now, I know that the Rabbis considered a solar eclipse to be a bad omen - or even something that occurred because of certain human transgressions. But, I have learned here at TBZ, (as recently as during my class at the dedication of the Reb Moshe and Dr. Ann Waldoks Lifelong Learning Center - Thank You!) that we are empowered to make new meanings from problematic Jewish texts and practices, even without rejecting the traditional frameworks.

So my personal prayer comes from some connections that I found between that cosmic occurrence and the challenging times we are now living in - but it's not about evil, sins, or omens, but rather something more inspiring. It is a prayer for creativity.

Here's my reasoning: The total solar eclipse occurs because the moon, whose size is 400 times smaller than that of the sun, happens to be located 400 times closer to earth than the sun. And so, when the moon lines up just so and blocks the sun from our view - it pretty much blocks exactly the whole sun and just leaves the beautiful corona extending around it. So, let's see... 400 times smaller and 400 times closer... really? This is a unique geometric relationship of inexplicable coincidence. For me it is a precious mystery that helps allow for the possibility of a divine creator. How could it otherwise be that in a universe of infinitely possible places, sizes and distances, we are here and our sun and moon are arranged just like this, and no other way?

In Breshit, we read that

God began to create heaven and earth
and,

והשם אלוכים את שמי הנמואות הנוסליים

*God made two great lights*

Then, we read,

ויבראה אלוכים את האדם בצלמו
בצלם אלוכים...

" And God created ādām in God's image. In the image of God... "

With all this creating and making, what could it mean that humans were created in God's own image? It is certainly not about a physical likeness - there is no body involved. I think it means first, that humans, like God, have the capacity to create, to make something from nothing (well, maybe "from nothing" is over-stating human capacity, but still...) And, second that the process of creativity is rooted in the divine.

Back to the eclipse for a moment. My husband, Jack, and I were struck by the outpouring of creativity we came across when we tried to make plans to be in the path of totality to see it. Information was available with the tap of a finger about the precise timing on every single point of the eclipse's thousands-mile long path. Astronomers had figured all that out by following centuries of creative theories and experiments. Creativity allowed weather forecasters to be able to predict breaks in cloud cover so people could know where to go for a clear view. To protect your eyes, there were almost magical devices created - special glasses, pinhole cameras. There were even talking apps so you wouldn't have to peel your eyes away from the sky for even a second to check your phone for the time or eclipse updates. And, beyond the scientific realm, an internet search will turn up so many beautiful photographs,
paintings, poetry - human artistic creations inspired by this celestial event.

Enough about the eclipse. Here is the point. When people create, they make choices. They exercise their free will to imbue their creations with usefulness, beauty and meaning. They use their imaginations to see the world as it is and then change it to become more like the way they want it to be, the way they think it should be, could be, to be a better place.

The capacity to create (in the image of God) is therefore a force that brings forth hope. Hope for a better world because of what we can do and make.

There is a lot of worry out there. We are living in very distressing times. People are upset, many are pessimistic. I've even heard that some young couples are questioning whether or not to have children because of their anxiety about the direction our country and world seem to be going in. This is very painful to feel and to witness.

Now, it's not that I'm not also upset. But, the arc of history is long and I know that in the past, the present, and the days to come, there is great potential in creative acts of people and communities, who participate to solve problems large and small, near and far, to make change and repair the world.

(So, here is my personal prayer:)

May we find strength to be those people who bring our best creative selves to all of life's arenas; that we succeed in removing internal and external obstacles that block our path to acting in God's image to create a better world for our future and that of our descendants.