

We all have many identities depending how we look at ourselves, because we are the stories that we tell about ourselves. Mine are very Jewish stories.

My connection to Judaism started with early family experiences. We were not observant and Passover was the center of our Jewish calendar. Yet I remember my feeling of rootedness-I sensed being a product of my family but also thousands of years of history. Jews are part of the family of humans but our identity includes our being a separate tribe-which of course can be a mixed blessing.

We Jews have contributed to humankind proportionally far beyond our numbers. I cherish that part of my heritage and believe there is something different about us.

In this season I find meaning in the Jewish encouragement of self-criticism. We talk about the reckoning of our souls, and directly confronting sins, both personally and communally. We openly declare that we as individuals and collectively can and do err, and that we must be committed to doing better. Yet we look for and find absolution. We do not remain perpetually condemned for our sins of the past. We say that we have sinned rather than we are sinners. On Yom Kippur after facing our failures we ask for and feel cleansed and we start a fresh.

Over time I have also come to appreciate that Jewish theology is open and varied. In my Jewish journey I have tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to explore unanswerable questions of meaning that go beyond my physical science background. Non-dogmatic Jewish thought encourages that personal exploration. I find comforting and meaningful the Jewish notion that conflicting ideas can and should be held in constant tension, without the need to resolve all conflict.

Finally I would be remiss if I did not include my love of Israel in my identity. For 2000 years Jewish people lived without a place where we are sovereign. Our values and identity developed in our powerlessness.

That has changed. I had the colossal luck and privilege to be born 2 weeks after the establishment of State of Israel, a place where Jewish values are finally put to the test of sovereignty. Israelis do get some things wrong, but they get a lot of

things right. For me the state of Israel is a precious gift and a big piece of my life is working to maintain her existence for my children and future generations.

At the start of 5782 I am very grateful for my Jewish life that is filled with meaning and purpose.