

Today is a dress rehearsal for our death. We ask for forgiveness, we wear white, we do not eat nor drink as the living do. I used to feel uneasy at this comparison, unsure of what to take away from this day. I think I can name that emotion today. It is not fear, nor urgency, nor sadness. It is a turning towards, a welcoming, an embrace - of ourselves, of one another, and of God - the process of Teshuva.

A week ago I had an astonishing, heartbreaking and strangely purifying experience. I watched a young man die. He was unconscious, and I held his hand as said the Sh'ma for him for the last time. I searched for more words but no words came. None were necessary. His family gathered around him, stroking his face. And in that moment all disagreements, annoyances, hurts there had ever been between them were washed away. All was clean and calm like a morning after a storm. Only love, forgiveness and acceptance remained.

My next immediate thought was that we had waited too long. We all had - to say "I love you", to say "I'm sorry", to say goodbye... Not just to our cousin, but to each other and everyone we have ever loved. And in a way we had. We had failed. And we will do it again, and again. We humans let each other down, we forget what matters most, we do the wrong thing, we drop the ball on a project at work, we are rude to our parents, we don't let someone merge in front of us on the freeway. We fail all the time. What matters is what we do next.

Even as we have taken our first step away, we are already on our way home (Alan Lew). The act of turning away and wandering off the path is a part of the process of returning. The fact that time is linear and there is a beginning and end, a defined sequence of events, is actually an illusion, perhaps an optical trick for our limited human perspective. We know Shabbat is a special sacred place in time. Days of repentance have a different feel to them. Personal events in our lives can feel circular, like we are getting stuck in a particular spot. Teshuvah is the thread we can hold onto through the labyrinth of our lives. It is never far away. It is ultimately within us. We can always return and we all do ultimately return. It is not to say that we should not worry or strive or feel pain or regret things but rather in doing so we must also remember that we are created in the image of God (b'tzelem Elohim) and that our ultimate core is good and pure and that is what ultimately makes Teshuvah possible along with our continuous personal effort. So let us struggle and strive but also, let us be gentle with ourselves and one another.

As humans we need both - the darkness and the light, the crisis and the release, the life and the death. God separated darkness from light so we can know both. Out of the darkest moment comes a turning, a turning on of the light - it could be a blaze or just a faint ray.

"There is crack, a crack in everything - that's how the light gets in"

So here is my perspective: in death we return to the beginning, of pure love, acceptance and forgiveness. Whatever we could not do while living, becomes possible. We mend.

So why do we wait? Why can we not exercise the same love, achieve the same purity as we do when someone is on their deathbed? This is our chance and the time is now.

Adrian often says to me - but there will be disagreements, we will make mistakes but it is what we do with after that matters; we can pick ourselves up and hold each other up again and turn to one another and return to our source

I have never more acutely felt that the time is now. The time for...

Let us be gentle with ourselves

We get tangled up in the illusions of what seems important and urgent, we . So today, let us decide to not wait, let us turn to one another and to our source.

Time is an illusion and we may think of our life as linear: from birth to death, but really it is a circular motion of returning.

My next immediate thought was that we have waited too long. We all had - to say "I love you", to say "I'm sorry", to say goodbye... Not just to our cousin, but to each other and everyone we have ever loved. Any one of us can be gone at any moment and wouldn't it all be for nothing then?