

FOMO

Did I Miss Anything?

Nothing. When we realized you weren't here
we sat with our hands folded on our desks
in silence, for the full two hours

Everything. I gave an exam worth
40 percent of the grade for this term
and assigned some reading due today
on which I'm about to hand out a quiz
worth 50 percent

Nothing. None of the content of this course
has value or meaning
Take as many days off as you like:
any activities we undertake as a class
I assure you will not matter either to you or me
and are without purpose

Everything. A few minutes after we began last time
a shaft of light suddenly descended and an angel
or other heavenly being appeared
and revealed to us what each woman or man must do
to attain divine wisdom in this life and
the hereafter
This is the last time the class will meet
before we disperse to bring the good news to all people on earth.

Nothing. When you are not present
how could something significant occur?

Everything. Contained in this classroom
is a microcosm of human experience
assembled for you to query and examine and ponder

This is not the only place such an opportunity has been gathered

but it was one place

And you weren't here

—Tom Wayman

I just recently heard this poem for the first time. It made me laugh to think about the student who initially asks the question, 'Did I miss anything?' and at the teacher who is both gently mocking the student and teaching an important lesson.

Robin and I have a friend who we joke with about her FOMO---for those who don't text much, that is an abbreviation for Fear of Missing Out. We recognize this in young children who want to stay up late or school-aged siblings who don't want to go to school but would rather stay home with a younger sister/brother and mom/dad where all the real fun will happen. For most of us, we get over our FOMO.

But perhaps we should reserve a little FOMO for adulthood. I realize that we can only be in one place at any one time, can only take advantage of one opportunity at a time. Many of us deal with the challenge of figuring out which of the two or three important events that are happening on an average Thursday night we should commit to. If we fear missing out, we will always feel like we should have gone to the other event. Still, most of us don't always use our time as well as we might. Did we miss anything? The time spent with our spouse or child? The fascinating discussion or learning opportunity? The chance to make a difference in someone else's life? And yes, even Shabbat services or other programs at Beth Ahm?

Making choices about how to spend our time means that we will always miss out on something. Recognizing the value of our time encourages us to make those choices wisely.