

Inner Sovereignty

Erev Rosh Hashanah sermon 5779

Judaism is a Living Tradition, continually evolving, morphing, absorbing, ejecting, growing in response to the time and place it finds itself in. And we are participants in that process, co-creators.

The first day of the seventh month, started out in the Torah, as a day of rest and celebration, and a day when the horn of the Ram, a shofar is sounded to call us together. (It wasn't even called Rosh Hashanah until much later in the story.)

After the destruction of the First Temple, the Jews were exiled to Babylon, where they mourned and thrived and recreated their Judaism. When part of the people returned to the Land of Israel, the prophet Nehemiah, chose this day to gather everyone together, and hear the Torah that had been lost to them. The people were heart-broken when they realized how much they had forgotten and how far they had strayed from their own truth and inheritance. And then Ezra the high Priest reminded them that this time of return, reconnecting and renewal should be a time of celebration. He instructed them to "Eat rich food, drink sweet wine, and share with whoever had none."

And now the story gets even more interesting. Back in Babylon, at this very same time there was a holiday at the end of the harvest that was the occasion of pledging obedience to the Babylonian throne. It was an annual coronation accompanied by pomp and pageantry. The Jews of Babylon borrowed and transformed this holiday, and lifted it up to assert that only God is the true King. So, each year we have a coronation to remember and celebrate and enthrone the true King. Then, as the holiday continued to evolve, the rabbis reasoned that if God the True King was being enthroned on this day, it was also the time when he would pass judgment upon the World, either by renewing Life or ordaining Death. This time of judgment came to be known as a New Year, a time of reckoning.

And this time of the new moon closest the equinox became a season of rebalancing, realigning and remembering our obedience to the Cosmic rule, to the Great order imposed from on high.

With the destruction of the 2nd Temple, Judaism not only evolved, but totally recreated itself, transforming from the sacrificial, priestly and land based rites to a

more universal, prophetic, mystical and prayer-based form, which we call Rabbinic Judaism. Prayer took the place of sacrifice. Our kitchen tables became our altars. Our homes and synagogues and schools became the locus of holiness.

Judaism continued to evolve through the revolution of Hasidism that lifted up our hearts as the throne of the Divine. The Renewal of Judaism in our time refines that Hasidic vision even further by leavening its essence with eco-Feminist ideals and Gaia consciousness. We have learned that true *Tikkun Olam* — the Healing of the World — must begin with the expansion of the inner dimensions of awareness and responsibility. It is only through the attainment of our own inner freedom can we become liberators of a world that is enslaved by unconsciousness, greed and the illusions of separation.

And now as we hear the shofar, I would propose that the call is an invitation to Inner Sovereignty.

Inner Sovereignty means taking responsibility for your inner state, no matter what!

Victor Frankl, an Austrian Neurologist, psychiatrist, holocaust survivor and founder of logotherapy, experienced and witnessed the worst possible sufferings during his time in Auschwitz and Dachau. He concluded, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms — to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”

He also said that, “When we are no longer able to change a situation — we are challenged to change ourselves.”

Inner sovereignty means taking responsibility for your triggers and reactivity. Frankl teaches, “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” When we are triggered, we have no access to our most loving and wisest response. Our reactivity will always keep us from our love and from our wisdom.

And yet, every charged moment of reactivity alerts us to the necessity of *T’shuvah*. Any moment when we realize that we are triggered can be the moment that we are sent onto a path of healing the trauma and fear that we each carry within us.

On this Rosh Hashanah we can ask, “How can I sit back on my throne and reclaim my freedom to respond to this crazy world from the place of my most discerning wisdom and profound love?”

The path of Inner sovereignty requires me to once and for all take Blame off the table. When I stop blaming others, and when I stop blaming myself, so many other doors of possibility and creativity are opened to me.

The path of Inner sovereignty requires me to make a commitment to

Show up in each moment and take on the challenge of becoming trustworthy.

Psalm 97 says,

צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט מְכוֹן כִּסְאֶךָ: אֵשׁ לְפָנֶיךָ תִּלְגֵּךְ

Tzedek Umishpat m'chon kis'ech: aish l'fanayich telech (Psalm 97: 2-3)

Justice and Impeccability are the Foundations of Your throne:
Fire will go before You.

When we truly inhabit our rightful throne, it becomes a place of empowerment and collaboration. And then the way forward becomes clear. The Divine fire of clarity can illuminate and clear the way forward.

Chant #2:

עֲבְרוּ עֲבְרוּ בַשְּׁעָרִים פָּנוּ דְרֹךְ הָעָם

Ivru, ivru ba'sh'arim, panu derech ha'am (Isaiah 62:10)

Go through, go through the gates, clear the way of the people!