

# Spiritual Support in This Time of Pandemic

by Rabbi Shefa Gold

Friends,

My heart goes out to all of us as we navigate this forced retreat. To all those who are sick or grieving or suffering in anxiety, I send warm waves of hopefulness, compassion and perspective.

On a vision quest, we find a small space and allow it to become a sacred microcosm. We look for meaning and inspiration in the small details of life. Each of us has the opportunity now to turn our homes into the world we would envision in miniature — a place of learning, humor, creativity, spaciousness, connection with self or family, with acts of kindness, and with the inner freedom to respond to the world from a place of wisdom and love. We are all being sent beyond our comfort zones to the work of awakening. And we have, in the treasure-house of our inheritance, so many resources to call on in this work.

At this perilous moment of pandemic, I am brought back to a childhood memory. After sitting through a long, mostly boring conservative service punctuated by delicious moments of song, I hear (but don't hear) the words of Adon Olam. My mouth begins to water and I creep over to the edge of the aisle, ready to sprint towards the brownies at the *Oneg* where I can hover till the blessings are said. I am filled with anticipatory joy.

All the while, those profound words were weaving their way into my psyche. And now at this moment of collective trauma, they rise up in me to be savored.

Here are the final words of Adon Olam with my commentary:

## **Into Your hands I entrust my spirit: *beyado afkid ruchi* · בְּיָדוֹ אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי**

Yes, this is the time to relax and surrender and open to the widest perspective. The illusions of control are shattered. I give myself into the embrace of the Great Mystery. I don't know how this will all unfold; my liberation comes in giving up my need to figure it out. I receive this time as a Mystery unfolding and sometimes as a surprising adventure.

## **When I'm asleep and when I'm awake: *be-et ishan ve-a-ira* : בְּעֵת אִישָׁן וְאִשְׁרָה**

Yes, this world is in a trance of materialism, separation, consumerism, reactivity, greed and fear... And yet we are all in the process of awakening. Sleep has been difficult these days. That's when the anxiety level seems to rise and I am caught off-guard by my overactive planning mind, which is now thwarted by the truth of just not knowing. In moments of awakening, I know that we are all connected, and that I am ultimately safe.

## **And with my spirit my body too: *ve-im ruchi gviyati* · וְעִם רוּחִי גְּוִיָּתִי**

Yes, the key is in cultivating an exquisite sense of presence. Without my plans... I can only inhabit this moment. In this moment I can relax my body and open to receive the simple gifts of aliveness, color, fragrance, taste, music or texture. I can savor each precious breath and express my gratefulness for the life-force coursing through me.

## **Oh God, You are with me and I shall not fear: *Adonai li velo ira* : ה' לִי וְלֹא אִירָא**

Yes, I am quite certain that anything that I might do from fear is toxic both to myself and to the world. And the antidote to fear is the deep knowing of connection, which is unity consciousness, which is God. God is the loving force that holds me steady through all of this tumult and change.

How blessed we are to have community, meaning and the powerful inner resources that can support us through this time!