

# The Adventure We're On

Kol Nidre 5781

Rachmiel told me about an interview he saw on the news of a man in California who had just watched his house burn down to the ground. There was a webcam in his yard, and he watched from a safe place as the fire approached, and then consumed everything he had, leaving charred rubble.

The Newsman asked how he was doing, and he said, "I have a mantra, which saves me. Here it is: Attitude is the only difference between an ordeal and an adventure."

As we journey through this arduous and challenging time, these Holy Days are a gift for us, a moment of timeless being, an opportunity to step out of the tumult of the world, and reevaluate the efficacy of our approach to suffering, conflict, grief, fear and division. It is an opportunity to transform this ordeal into an Adventure.

How do we take the journey from ordeal to adventure? We need Compassion, Inner Joy, Perspective, Imagination, Companionship, Humor. Perhaps this Yom Kippur, we can take that journey.

We begin the journey by calling on God as the Compassionate One, (Rachamana) which means opening up the power of compassion within us, remembering our responsibilities to care for the most vulnerable among us and the most vulnerable place within us- our own broken hearts.

And when our hearts break open, and we come to stillness, it is possible to allow an inner wellspring of Joy to bubble forth in spite of the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in. Our practice is meant

to connect us to that inner resource that is not imperiled by the storms of the world.

In the ancient world, Yom Kippur was known as one of the two most joyous days of the year. It is the Shabbat Hashabbatot, the sabbath of sabbaths. We are meant to dive deep into those inner treasures, a place where petty concerns fall away, we face Death, open to life and let ourselves be blown away in the recognition of the overpowering truth of the miraculous nature of existence itself. To unlock this joy on Yom Kippur assures us that in the coming year, we will appreciate the gifts of life, enjoying each simple pleasure, seeing the humor in things. This is the joy that will bring resilience to the heart, see us through painful times and show us the way towards inner spiritual freedom.

Our Freedom from reactivity depends on being able to hold a wide perspective, and even a soul-perspective, remembering that we came here to learn how to love and be loved. From that soul- perspective, every unkind, violent, meanness in the world is meant to awaken us to the possibility of kindness, peace, wholeness and love that are waiting to pour forth from our innermost being as the true and highest expression of our unique life's purpose.

And yes, for that expression to come forth, we each need to call on our creative spirit, our wildest imaginings, our boldest visions. For it's only when we step into that sea that looks impossibly deep and dangerous, that we find ourselves on dry land, rejoicing in our Freedom.

And as we take this journey from ordeal to adventure, it's important to look around, reach out your hand, connect with others who are on this same journey. We need companions on this path who will inspire us with the twinkle in their eyes, who will laugh with us, lift our spirits when we fall into despair. We can do that for each other.

Every adventure requires some risk, but the greatest risk of all is to refuse the adventure. This adventure is a journey inward; it is a journey from numbness to feeling it all; from habit to spontaneity; from being shut down to experiencing love in all its complexity.

This adventure is towards greater awareness of the blessing that is right here, right now. It is becoming who we were meant to be. And even though this reward of expanded consciousness may seem far away, the Torah reading that we'll read tomorrow says, "It is not mysterious or remote from you. It is not in Heaven or beyond the sea. It is something so close- in your mouth and in your heart. You can do it! "

The Song of Songs takes us on the great adventure of Love and reminds us of how close Fulfillment is: This (this very moment) is my Beloved and this is my friend.