

SEASONS OF TRANSFORMATION

Exploring the Jewish Holidays as Markers for Personal Growth



WRITTEN BY SIMCHA FRISCHLING
ILLUSTRATED BY JEAN-PIERRE WEILL

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Learn from the past

Be grateful for the present

Create a more evolved future

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Let there be luminaries in the firmament of the heaven
to separate between the day and the night,
and they shall serve as signs and for festivals.

(Genesis, 1:14)

The entire universe (is) a process which, like all processes,
requires time in order to manifest the fullness of its being.
Time, therefore, is not mere featureless duration
but the essence of creative evolution.

(Godwin 42)

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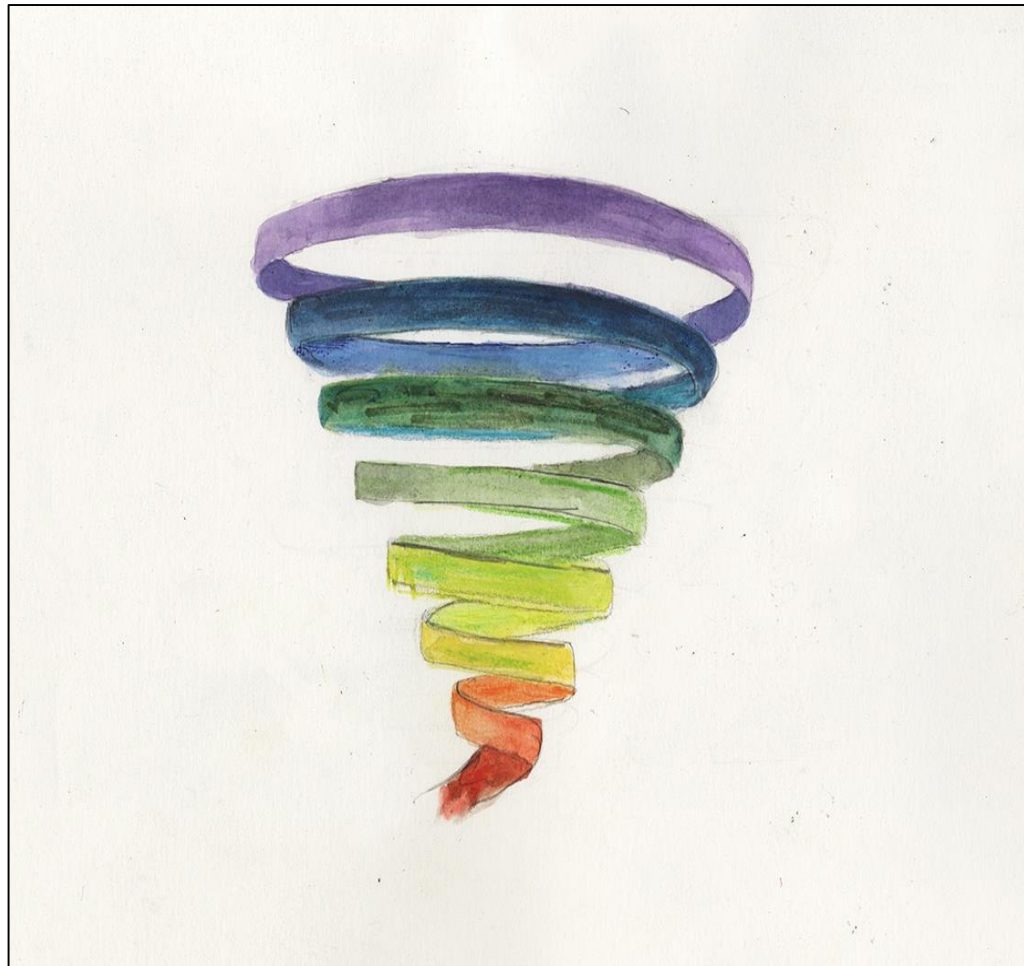
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Consciousness: Time



Thinking: Time, as viewed through the Jewish calendar, has two distinct, yet strangely relatable characteristics.

One: time travels in a linear fashion.

Each moment is visited once and then forever falls into the past.

Each moment is therefore very precious.

If we are not awake when the moment presents itself, it becomes a missed opportunity.

When experiencing time from this point of view, there is no going back and fixing.

Two: another perspective of time, as viewed through the Jewish calendar, is its cyclical nature.

In this respect, moments do, on some level, repeat themselves, giving us a chance to revisit them.

Living our lives within the context of cyclical time allows us, in some manner, the opportunity to be present again to what has passed.

Traveling up a spiral cone is a good image of the nature of these two qualities, where points are never exactly the same and yet there is an aspect of repetition.

The Hebrew word for year is Shana.

The definition of Shana, besides meaning year, also carries the dual meanings of change and repetition, two seemingly opposite concepts

yet a perfect reflection of our linear and cyclical experience of time.

The Jewish cycle of the year

is imprinted with profound historical events.

Because of the cyclical nature of time, the qualities generated by these events continue to be standing frequencies in the yearly cycle.

Consciousness: Historically significant events.



Thinking: Each meeting place in time, moed in Hebrew, provides a unique opportunity for us to resonate with and embody the qualities generated by these events.

These markers in time are the Yomim Tovim, the Jewish Holidays.

Pesach, for example, was a time when the Jewish people went from a condition of slavery to one of freedom.

Pesach is a standing note in the yearly cycle whose frequency is the quality of going from slavery to freedom.

Pesach is now a time when we can learn about and experience in ourselves, the process of emerging from slavery to freedom.

Who am I when enslaved?

Who am I when free?

What is the impact of living from each way of being?

What are the mechanics of going from slavery to freedom?

The holiday of Sukkot as another example:

Sukkot is an imprint in time,

when we travel from our constriction in Mitzrayim to our home in Israel.

Are we only focused on arriving at our destination?

And/or,

are we present with Presence every step of the way?

Purim:

Does life make sense to us only when we understand patterns?

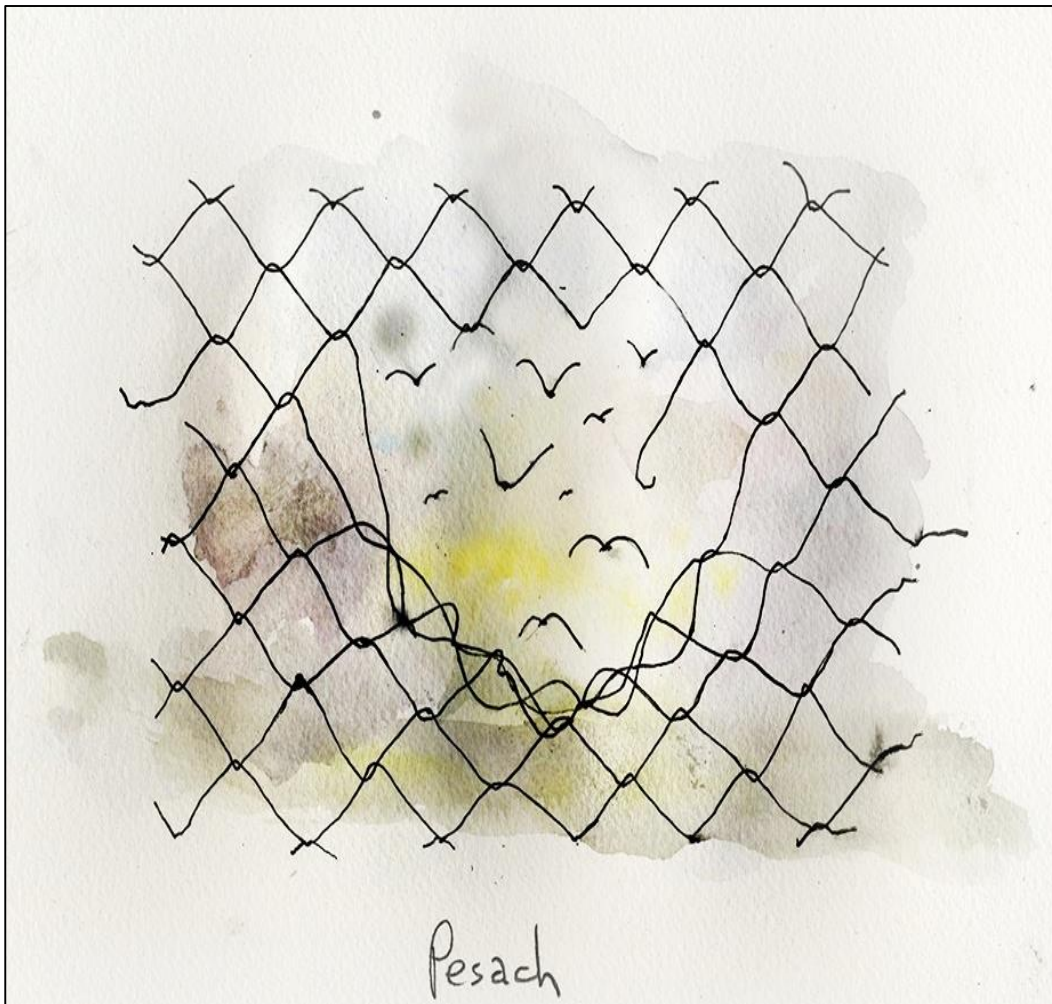
Or,

do we maintain faith in an ultimate intention,
even in the midst of chaos and not knowing?

We can resonate with these qualities by focusing our attention on each holiday,
through our learning about them,
and by doing the specific, prescribed actions
such as eating matzoh,
lighting candles
or listening to the blowing of a shofar.

**By resonating with these imprinted qualities,
we can enliven the full spectrum of who we have the potential to be,
and thereby resonate with these same qualities
that the Creator expresses as our reality.**

Consciousness: Pesach



Thinking: The difference between slavery and freedom is not merely a matter of external status, whereby one person is imprisoned to a master, while another person is not imprisoned...

True freedom is when a person or nation is driven by an exalted spirit to stay true to the inner essence and divine image within. One then feels that one's life is motivated by a greater purpose that is aligned to one's true self...

We must journey towards the inner light of personal freedom. (Rav Kook, Olat Hare'iyah 2)

Our purpose is to liberate consciousness.

The cycle of the Jewish year begins with the holiday of Pesach.¹

It is the time we emerge from our enslavement in Egypt. (Mitzrayim; literally meaning constriction(s); enslaved, while also under the unconscious constriction of not even imagining the possibility of another way of being.)

At the time of Pesach, we individuate.

We differentiate from our embeddedness, in order to have the possibility of consciously forming and appreciating a new integration.

I first have to be a conscious self in order to be a co-creative partner in relationship.

Pesach is our experience of freedom

¹ Some Jewish sources consider the month of Nisan – which includes Passover/ Pesach – to be the beginning of the yearly cycle, and some consider it to be Rosh Hashanah (the month of Tishrei). These are different frameworks which we will not go into here.

and the beginning of our forty-year journey home.
 Pesach is the note of leaving slavery
 and moving into freedom.
 Like all the Yomim Tovim,
 it is not simply a commemoration of a past event.

**The teachings and processes on Pesach
 are the actual mechanics for becoming free from enslavement.**

(Enslaving patterns of thought, for instance.)²

The teachings and experience of Pesach help us distinguish our true selves
 from our enslavement to constricted consciousness.

It is well known that the mystery of the Exodus is that
 consciousness itself was in exile and contracted. No one knew
 how to serve God with joy and an expansive mind, which is
 the fullest consciousness.

In the Egyptian exile, the people's consciousness was
 constrained, which is like metzar yam, the narrow sea. For the
 stream of awareness that flows from the sea of wisdom was
 constricted and diminished, and they had not yet achieved an
 expansive consciousness. But with Yitziat Mitzrayim (the
 exodus from Egypt) when they came out of metzar yam (the
 narrow sea), consciousness of God grew and expanded.
 The verse says, "And he (Israel) knew God" (Shmot 2:25),
 meaning that God-consciousness increased.

(Me'or Einayim, Devorim, S.V. Bemidrash Tanhuma)

² "Seasons of Transformation"

Exploring the Jewish Holidays as Markers for Personal Growth

During our formative years, for all sorts of reasons,
 many of us don't receive the necessary support or the necessary challenge
 that we need in order to thrive in wellbeing.
 We search for that which we think we are missing.
 We conclude that if we become more, or better, or different;
 what we have been lacking will come our way.

Our essential selves experience a famine.

Our true selves go into exile.

We leave our "home" – the inheritance of who we truly are.

**We become enslaved
 to adopted patterns of thinking
 and foreign ways of being.**

Our consciousness constricts.

We no longer resonate with the fundamental frequencies of who we truly are.

Pharaoh is king of Mitzrayim. He rules over Mitzrayim – the
 constriction of the mind, the limitation of awareness. It is his
 function to restrain and suppress human awareness of the
 Divine. When the Jewish people fell from their lofty level of
 awareness, then their Da'at went into exile.

(Pri Etz Chaim 21:1; Likutey Moharan I:62)

Many of us view present reality through the glasses of old patterns of thinking.
 We put these glasses on due to trauma or repeated circumstances (famine).
 And many of us still relate to the world through these old patterns of thought.
 Often the relationships we have and the choices we make
 are not based on the simple data that is in front of us.

We are in relationship with reality
 from behind the glasses of old, habitual patterns of thinking,
 through which many of us are still unconsciously viewing circumstance.

Such as:
 I'm not safe,
 because twenty years ago I was abused.

I don't deserve to be listened to,
 because when I was a child, everyone was too busy to pay attention.

I don't matter,
 because other things seemed to take priority.

It's not safe to make a mistake,
 because of the severe negativity I experienced when making mistakes as a child.

Most people unconsciously build a well-worn narrative
 around these patterns of behavior.
 And continue to feel fear, insecurity or anger
 as if they are still living under the influence of those conditions.

Unless we bring awareness and healing, these traumas can be passed down for
 generations.

We can spend our entire lives turning round and round,
 tethered to a vibrational core that is awakened by external
 situations. (Godwin)

Quite simply;
 if we relate to reality through the lenses of illusion,
 then we are enslaved to those illusions,
 and we are busy building edifices for "The Master of Illusion."

Pharoah was the Serpent (Siftei Kohen, Bereshit 6c)—the
 Primordial Constrictor of Awareness and Master of
 Illusion. The voice of Pharaoh. Of temptation. Of illusion.
 Of constriction. The thoughts that go through our minds
 that we know we really don't want.
 (Kramer, Breslov Haggaddah)

If we are enslaved to the binds of our personal stories,
 we are not free to be in a conscious relationship
 with what or who is actually in front of us.
 We serve Pharaoh, "the Primordial Constrictor of Awareness and Master of
 Illusion."

The focus of Moshe's argument to Pharaoh
 was to allow us to leave slavery to be in joyful relationship with Reality.

Send My people out, so they may celebrate Me. (Shmot 5:1)

**When I experience – or interpret – circumstance
 through the context of an "old story",
 I inevitably cause a resonance
 to aspects of my life that validate my "story."
 I become enslaved to my own cycle of imagination.**

If, for example the "tune" stuck in my head tells me that,
 "I don't matter," –
 Then, the way I dress would validate that story.
 I would care for my body as if I didn't matter.
 My posture would reflect my story.
 I would surround myself with relationships that reflect my distorted sense of self.
 I would have a job that reflects my internal narrative.
 My refrigerator would be filled with food that feeds a person who thinks he doesn't
 matter.
 We create the physical conditions that validate the insecure stories we have about
 ourselves.

When their Da'at (thinking) went into 'exile,' they entered a
 physical exile. They became enslaved to the human Pharaoh
 in Egypt. (Pri Etz Chaim 21:1; Likutey Moharan I:62)

**To a great extent,
we construct our reality from the inside out.
We attract and enliven aspects of the environment
that harmonically resonate with our patterns of thinking
and the feelings held in our bodies.**

Enslavement to old patterns of thinking and foreign ways of being
is very difficult to change.

We become domesticated.

We get used to hearing the world through the context of our old habits of listening.

Moshe, who had previously escaped the same constriction to which we were all
enslaved, was told to return.

He was commanded to remind us of who we really are and the inheritance that
awaits us.

But they did not listen, because they were breathing
so shallowly and working so hard.” (Va'eira, 6:9)

We breathe shallowly.

We don't allow our bodies to fully feel and metabolize our deepest desires.

We're so busy working.

We perpetuate the unconscious habits that distance us from our true selves.

Like the act of creation itself, attaining freedom is not a one-time affair.

Leaving Mitzrayim is an ongoing practice.

We do Pesach every year.

We remember leaving Mitzrayim every single day (in our tefillah).

Our facility of consciousness can always transcend this moment
with a more embracing perspective.

We can always wake up.

We can always transcend our own thoughts with a higher, more embracing level of
consciousness.

We have the opportunity to leave Mitzrayim countless times each day.

What are the dynamics of Pesach that free us from our personal Mitzrayim,
our constricted consciousness, our enslavement to fantasy,
our enslavement to Pharaoh?

- **We tell our “story” and make it an object of awareness. (we read the Haggadah)**
- **We participate in the Sedar, meaning order. We make distinctions.**
- **We taste the impact of living from constriction. We eat the marmor.**
- **We distinguish the feeling of freedom from that of constricted enslavement. We sit like kings.**
- **We courageously sacrifice the identities/idols we empowered within the context of our stories. We sacrificed the Korban Pesach.**
- **We simply walk away. We left Mitzrayim with matzoh, not waiting for the yeast/our egos to rise.**
- **We recall the plagues that distinguished us from our captors.**
- **We courageously venture into the Yam Suf, the sea of limitation, up to our noses. The sea splits and we cross over to the other side.**
- **We follow our highest value, Moshe, the embodiment of Netzach, the orchestra leader, “home” to our essential selves.**

- **On Pesach night we read the Haggadah**

We articulate our story,
its history,
who we were,
why we left home,
how we became enslaved,
how we suffered, and more.

By telling our story, we step out of it and,
to a degree, the story becomes an object of our awareness.
We remove our “glasses” and see them for what they are.
We come to understand when and why we put them on.
The impact they have on our lives.
And, the almost certain impact they will have on our future
and the future of our children.

And the more telling we do, the more light is revealed.

(Nachat HaShulchan)

**The more we distinguish our stories for what they are,
the less identified we become with our constricted, personal thinking.
The more we identify with our more embracing, expansive faculty of
consciousness – the part of us that can transcend and embrace our
thinking, our (all too precious) “story,” becomes an object of awareness.**

The story goes:

Yaakov and his family lived in Israel. They were “home”.

There was a famine, a lack.

They were forced to leave their home because of the famine.

They descended to a foreign land to find sustenance.

They became enslaved in this land called constrictions - Mitzrayim.

Pharaoh, the king of “Mitzrayim—the constriction of the mind, the limitation of awareness” (Pri Etz Chaim 21:1; Likutey Moharan I:62) enslaved them.

They all but forgot who they really were.

They suffered. “The children of Israel groaned because of the work and they cried out” (Shmot 3:23).

Through plagues, they were distinguished from those who enslaved them.

They sacrificed Mitzrayim’s idol of worship and put its blood on the doorpost out.

They left in haste, without waiting for the bread to rise.
They journeyed into a wilderness to be in relationship with One.
After a forty-year journey they returned home.

- **On Pesach night we participate in a Sedar,** which means “order.”

We ask questions, such as “ma nishta na” (What difference does it make?)
The Sedar is designed to stimulate the part of our mind that makes distinctions.
We distinguish the habituated patterns of thinking to which we are often enslaved.
We transcend and embrace our constricted thinking
with our higher faculty of consciousness.

“Ma nishta nah?” What difference does it make?

Nothing less than the difference between slavery and freedom.

- **We are instructed to eat marror,** a bitter herb.

We are told that it must not be stale.

We also are told not to swallow it whole. We must taste its bitterness.

We physically taste the impact

of living our lives from within the confines of our constricting stories.

**Really experiencing the bitterness of slavery
is precisely the impetus we need
to powerfully strive for freedom.**

- **We also experience freedom. We sit like kings.**

We distinguish the two and feel the relative difference.

Freedom is only as genuine as the choices it offers, and choices
are only as genuine as the differences they genuinely make.

(Weinberg 103)

We can continue living from enslaving patterns of constricting thoughts, or we can choose to leave - and live in direct relationship with reality.

There is no meaningful free choice without the ability to make distinctions (naming the animals)

and

the ability to judge between relative value. (eating from the Tree of good and evil)

- **We publicly sacrificed the lamb,** (on the original Pesach night when in Egypt) the idol, the object of worship in the land of constricted consciousness.

Perhaps we can summon the courage to sacrifice the identities we thought were necessary within the context of our stories, our own, personal Mitzrayim,-

Such as...

I need to be perfect.

I need to look better.

If only I was smarter.

If only I was as successful as...

It takes courage to sacrifice certain paradigms on which we relied from past experiences.

By sacrificing the “idols” with which we identified when we were serving enslaving fantasies,

we bravely test the waters of reality without the ‘protection’ of those “idols”.

We no longer have to sacrifice our own vitality

to appease the illusory gods –

the idols that we relied on to protect us,

when we were stuck inside

the enslaving confines of our constricted patterns of thought.

- **We eat Matzoh,** unleavened bread, because we left in haste, before the yeast had a chance to rise.

Chametz, leavened, fermented bread, is indicative of the fermentation of our thoughts.

(Kramer, Breslov Haggaddah 39)

We left before our ego/identity was able to re-engage.

After distinguishing old patterns of thinking and old ways of being to which we have been enslaved;

often the best antidote to our entrapment is to simply turn away – not to argue with,

not to defend against –

but to simply walk away, to be in relationship with Reality.

Matzoh symbolizes great awareness of God. The Jewish people ate it on the night of redemption. They also brought the Matzoh forth with them from Egypt. In it they experienced the taste of manna. Bread from Heaven. It epitomized clear perception. (Kramer, Breslov Haggaddah, 34)

- **We recall the plagues that distinguished us from our captors.**

Often, if not most of the time, we forget that we are looking at life from behind the glasses of old habits of perception.

We think that Mitzrayim is our actual home.

When we don't distinguish ourselves from the fantasies that enslave us, we lose our freedom.

And who we really are can die in a plague of darkness.

We aren't even aware that we aren't aware.

(Sefer Baal Shem Tov, Shemot #16-18).

Living through, what might seem like a plague, is that which is often needed to help us distinguish our essential selves from our enslavement to constricting patterns of thought.

- **After leaving Mitzrayim, we are faced with crossing the Yam Suf, the Sea of limitation.**

After bringing consciousness to our old patterns of thinking we still have to manifest our unique and creative freedom when interacting with the world. Freedom takes courage, the courage to believe in a life of beauty and divinity.

As always in Judaism, the goal is not the entertainment of noble ideas, but their realization in the external world of action and conduct.

(Berkovitz 139)

When we are no longer enslaved to old, unconscious patterns of thought, we are then able and responsible to follow the path of our chosen values.

- **We follow our highest value Moshe, the embodiment of Netzach, the orchestra leader, “home” to our essential selves.**

True freedom is when a person or nation is driven by an exalted spirit to stay true to the inner essence and divine image within.

(Rav Kook)

These are some of the principles that lead us from slavery to freedom. Freedom, the necessary starting point for meaningful relationship.

We can become conscious of our thinking and how that thinking impacts our health and the nature of our relationships with the world within which we live.

We can choose to take off the glasses.

Our stories can become objects of our own awareness.

We can feel the impact that old imprinted habits of thought have on our lives and the impact they would probably have on our future.

We can choose to walk away and not feed the fermentation of empty fantasies, the fantasies that possibly once sustained us in exile but which now no longer serve us.

Our consciousness can transcend and integrate the stories to which we were previously enslaved.

**In a sense,
our freedom in life
is no less
than the awareness we have
to our own thinking.**

**To be free, to engage
in meaningful relationship,
is to be entrusted
with the responsibility
for evolution itself.**

Moshe and Aaron, the two men who were most responsible for freeing us from our enslavement in Mitzrayim, and leading us back home, embody the qualities of humility and gratitude.

- The Torah specifies one quality that Moshe embodied more than any man ever: humility. (Bamidbar 12.3)
- And Aaron and his lineage were appointed to express the nation’s gratitude.

**Humility and gratitude,
the two qualities, in particular,
that led us from our enslavement of constricted thinking
to our free and joyful relationship with Reality.³**

³ Think about this for a moment;

As a **self**, (as an independent other, with the freedom to engage in meaningful choice)
who has some degree of insight,
that who I am
is really nothing other than
“**There is Nothing Other**” (Ein Od Milvado)

How could I integrate
these seeming disparate concepts that;
I am a self – and - “**There is Nothing Other**”
in the most graceful way possible?

I would be **humble**,
in that,
“I” am aware that
“I” am really **Nothing Other Than**.

And,

I would be **grateful**
in that,
yes, the absolute truth is that I am really “nothing other than,”
and yet somehow,
here **I am**.

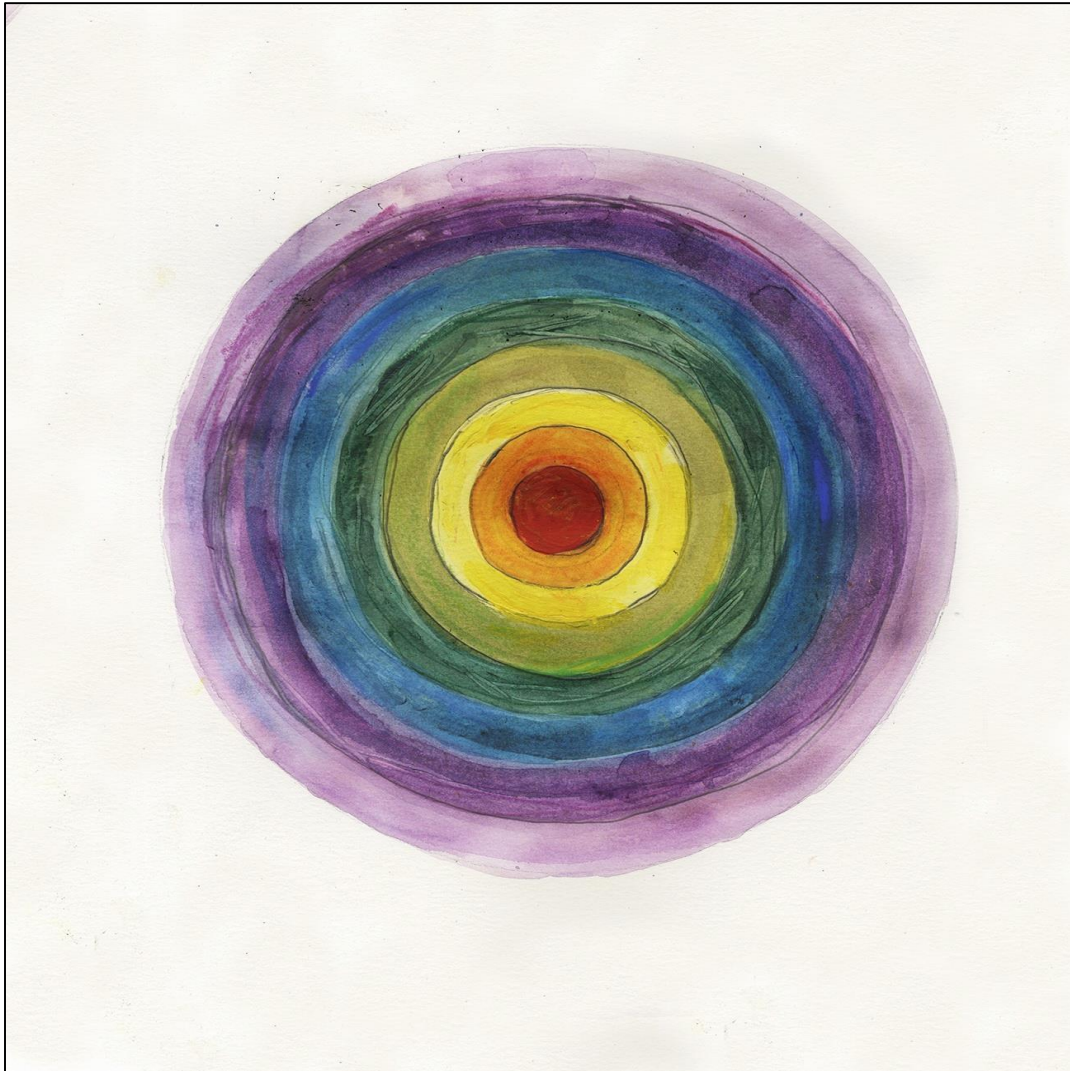
Humility

And

Gratitude

the two qualities that were most responsible (as personified by Moshe and Aaron) for freeing us
from our enslavement in Mitzrayim, and leading us on our journey back “home.”

Consciousness: Spherot HaOmer



Thinking: After reaching a satisfactory level in the acquisition of particulars, the spirit then proceeds to formulate for itself general principles, which transcend all the particulars. When they are fully elaborated, then the principles, which embrace the higher enlightenment, hover over the many particulars, as a dove hovers over its nest. (Rav Kook 205)

After Pesach, at which time we individuate from slavery, we travel through a period of time called Spherot HaOmer, the Counting of the Omer.

It is a span of seven weeks within which we are given the opportunity to become aware of, and resonate with, the universal and distinguishable stages of Creation. The same universal and distinguishable stages that comprise our own personal development - the Spherot.

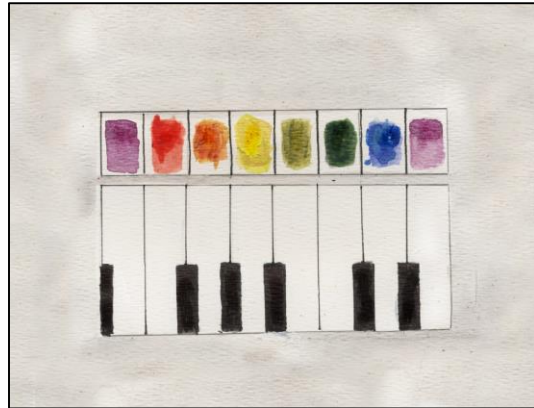
These are the qualities that One manifests as the world in which we live. These are the same qualities that we have the opportunity to embody, and therefore, enabling us to resonate with One's Presence.

These stages of development ultimately configure a 'Derech,' a road:

- **From embeddedness,**
- **to individuation and growth,**
- **resulting in a return to a greater embracing wholeness, complexity, consciousness and love.**

These stages are individual, distinguishable qualities or notes (Midot).

They follow each other sequentially, in a direction, as numbers (Spherot).



And by expressing the nature of evolution, these stages embrace that which preceded them. (The root of the word Omer in Spherot HaOmer is Ma'amar, meaning "to bundle".)



By growing through and embodying the full spectrum of these qualities, the melody that we compose with our lives, has the potential to resonate with the greater symphony that God expresses as reality.

During the period of Spherot HaOmer these basic stages (that become embraced qualities)

are expressed in their most fundamental progression, a simple scale.

In Book One; we explored these stages of development in various spectrums of reality;

- Our story of creation
- Cultural evolution
- Personal development
- The long-term impacts that individuals might incur when they are prevented from fully embodying these qualities at the proper time of their development.
- We also looked at individuals, in our sacred writings, who personify these specific ways of being.

One way of thinking of these stages; is that we are in relationship with reality through different colored glasses at each stage.

We experience life from behind the glasses of different stages of development.

It is the level of Malchut when we transcend and embrace, and can access all the previous levels.

The level of Malchut can be thought of as the level of melody in relationship to the spectrum of individual notes of which the melody is composed, and of which the melody now transcends and embraces.

Only through the lens of Malchut can we understand what is above it and what is below it. (Luzatto 42)

Let's listen to these notes again, as the daughter's journey back home.

One day,
 One was playing hide and seek with One's daughter.
 The daughter wandered off into the forest and became lost.
 One decided that everyone should continue to play the music the King had originally composed for the daughter.
 The King knew that the daughter was created with the same qualities as the kingdom itself. ("Created in our image")
 One knew that she would ultimately resonate with the music, remember it, and follow the melody back home to her true S/self.

The daughter found herself living in an unfamiliar city.
 She forgot that she was the daughter of One.

The daughter had many strong desires.
 When not directed, her desires drew her towards many distracting interests and activities.
 Ultimately, though, her most fundamental desires drew her towards freedom and loving connection. **(Keter)**

She met enlightened people and read profound writings.
 From her exposure to wisdom, she began to sense underlying principles around which her world was built. **(Hochmah)**

She committed to ongoing practices of meditation and prayer.
 These practices helped her to live from simple awareness.
 She learned to transcend and embrace thought.
 She began to identify more with consciousness and less with her personal patterns of thinking. **(Bina)**

She studied theory and composition.
 She learned how to adjust specific **qualities** of being; freedom, power, full self-expression, kindness, gratitude, humility, discipline, spontaneity, responsibility, humor, etc.
 She practiced different modes of **relationship**;

cooperation, intimacy, independence, creating healthy boundaries, trust, giving, taking, listening, compassion, fun, passion, etc.
 She became familiar with **process**;
 time, practice, patience, creation, discipline, growth, personal development, etc.
 She made choices in regards to her own **qualities, relationships and processes**, based on her ability to make distinction and judge relative value. **(Daas)**

One evening, just before dawn, when things were quiet, with few distractions, she heard music off in the distance.
 (The music with which the King created, and continues to create the world – and the same music of which the daughter herself was composed.)
To the extent the daughter was able to embody certain qualities within herself, was the degree she could resonate with those same frequencies that One manifests as our world.

She was drawn to its source.

The daughter sensed a common denominator to all that is.
 She sensed an all-inclusive, giving of life, an embracing unity, to which she felt very much a part.
 This understanding and feeling inclined her to care and to give.
 In spite of all our differences, we are all kin.
 She felt a compassion for our common humanity and our shared existence.
 This experience of oneness and unity was a feeling in her heart. **(Chessed)**

She woke up to the present moment.
 She distinguished herself and maintained healthy boundaries.
 She was able to exercise warrior energy against that which is toxic and destructive.
 She was in touch with her needs.
 She was decisive.
 She took responsibility for her actions and for her life.
 She respected and appreciated
 the uniqueness and boundaries of others. **(Gevurah)**

She experienced beauty and the harmonious relationship the individual has
 with the larger whole of which it is a part.
 She practiced embracing awareness
 and she experienced the joy of simple wellbeing.
 She appreciated individual things and moments as parts within greater contexts.
 She experienced harmony and beauty and truth.
 She learned from her mistakes and anticipated challenges.
 She developed a conscious perspective
 and engaged in collective cooperation. **(Tiferet)**

She recognized a hierarchy of values
 and orchestrated her life to manifest that for which she cared.
 She applied structure, commitment and discipline to her life.
 She fought for the things she believed in.
 She realized that her choices mattered.
 She mattered. **(Netzach)**

She explored and encouraged unique self-expression.
 She became introspective.
 She imagined and created novel possibilities.
 She felt and expressed gratitude for her life
 and for the opportunities she has been given. **(Hod)**

She became aware that her unique self was also a part
 of a vast interconnected web
 that is always in an evolutionary process
 that is returning to its Source.
 Because everything and every moment is interconnected,
 her thoughts and actions impacted everything.
 She therefore, felt a responsibility for all to which she is connected.
 She lived with integrity.
 She transcended to a more embracing level of understanding;
 being a fully and uniquely expressed individual,
 who is also in responsible relationship
 with an interconnected whole. **(Yesod)**

From this state, she looked around
 and remembered who she was and what was really happening.
 She realized that One was behind all that was created from the beginning.
 She lived her life as if everything and every moment has Meaning.
 Through the relationships she formed, she created greater depth and therefore
 greater consciousness.
 She experienced her life as a melody in a great chain of more embracing melodies.
 She took responsibility for all of which she embraced.
 And she was humble and grateful to that which was embracing of her.
 Her consciousness was the common denominator
 that re-membered everything together again. **(Malchut)**

During the 49-day period of Spherot HaOmer, we listen to each note within the context of each key, seven weeks, seven days in each week.

Imagine a piano keyboard.

We can play a scale of notes beginning with the note “C.”

The scale is the simplest melody using the particular notes in the key of “C.”

In this case the note “C” is called the tonic.

We begin the scale with this note, and ultimately the melody desires to return back home to “C.”

Home can be the original note or octaves higher or lower of the same.

We can also play more complicated patterns or melodies using the same notes of the original scale.

Or we can play even more complex melodies by adding notes that are not included in the original scale but are in relative harmonic relationship to the notes of the original scale.

Clearly, however, we don’t have to begin our scale or melody with “C.”

We can begin with any other note and experience a similar progression and a similar desire to return home now to a different note in a different key, say “F.”

We are simply creating the same pattern beginning at a different starting point.

Let’s distinguish the “note” of Gevurah.

Within the context of our creation story, it is the necessary stage of individuating. Within the octave of personal development, we heard it as the stage of fighting to be a self.

The note of Gevurah can be said to emphasize distinction, boundaries and individuation.

Let’s now explore the quality of Netzach.

Within the context of creation, the stage of Netzach is the innate desire to organize around increased depth and value.

In the octave of personal development, we understand Netzach as a level when we become aware of a hierarchy of meaning.

Our inclination from this stage is to align the details of our lives around a hierarchical value in order to actualize that which is meaningful to us.

Another perspective is to include ourselves as a part of an organization whose values we support.

The contexts will differ, however the essential qualities of Netzach can be thought of as recognizing and prioritizing values, orchestrating details to manifest the value and fighting to make the value a reality.

Let's explore "Gevurah sh'b'Netzach", that is,
the 'note' of Gevurah,
within in the 'scale' of Netzach.

Imagine, on a personal level, I recognize the value of having a healthy body.
I choose to orchestrate the details of my life to attain physical health.

Obviously, I might choose other values:
good personal relationships,
spiritual development,
financial security, and so on.

We can also see the different value systems in hierarchical relationship to each other,
with, according to the Ramchal –
the purpose of creation at the top of the list.

For this example, we will focus on the value of health.

If I were to orchestrate the details of my life around health,
I might go to bed early, eat well, and exercise regularly.

I would live in an area where I can breathe clean air and drink pure water.

Let's say I have a difficult time playing the note of Gevurah in general.

I would have difficulty setting appropriate boundaries with friends who, for
instance, want to go out late and drink.

I might have difficulty saying no to junk food.

Without being able to set strong boundaries,

I would not progress through the key of Netzach and fully actualize my chosen
value of health.

During the 49 days of Spherot HaOmer,
we can listen to each key
and each note within the melodic progression of each key.
We can distinguish the quality of each note.

We can then hear how well we are able to resonate with its particular frequency.
We can choose to develop these qualities in ourselves through ongoing practice
or with the help of a mentor or coach.

Using our example,
we can distinguish and learn to embody the note of Gevurah,
which would then allow us to complete our scale in Netzach.

Pesach frees us from our unconscious enslavement to fantasy
to then be in relationship with Reality.

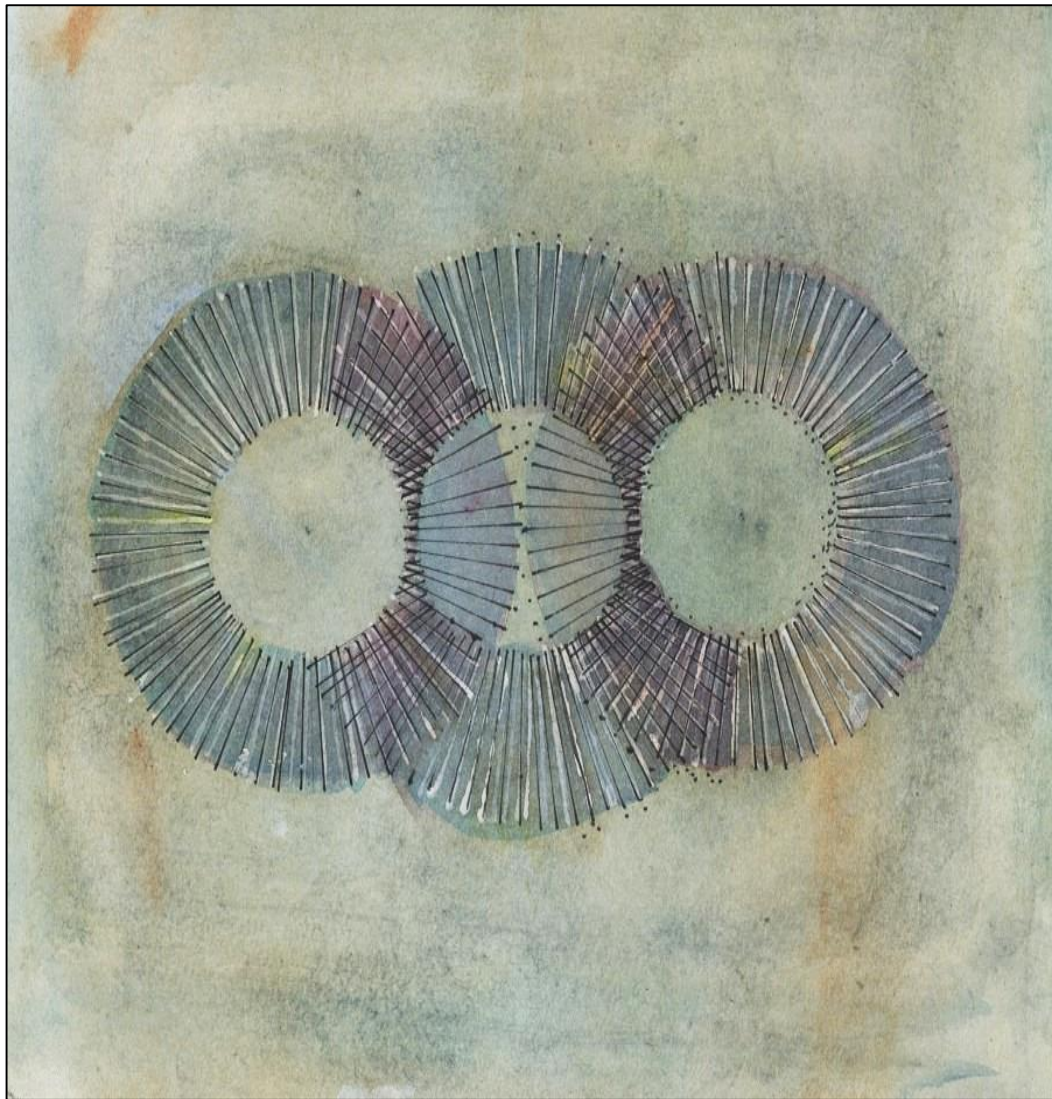
Spherot HaOmer

**gives us the opportunity to resonate
with the fundamental frequencies
necessary to be full spectrum individuals.**

**When we are able to embody
all the qualities,
we have the potential to be,
we can then engage in mature,
conscious intimacy with another.**

**And
we can fully resonate with,
and experience intimacy with
this same spectrum of qualities
that One shows up as our world.**

Consciousness: Shavuot



Thought: On that day, God will be One
and His name will be One. (Zechariah 14:9)

Not the same undifferentiated unity as at first,
but a unity that is co-created, named and appreciated
by the individuals who strive to
re-member.

Shavuot is the culmination of the very fundamental process that we have
articulated many times in 'Return to the Symphony.'

Undifferentiated, in the womb, in the garden	Enslavement	Klal
--	-------------	------

Birth, freedom, individuation	Pesach	
and		Prat

developing through a universal scale	Spherot HaOmer	
--------------------------------------	----------------	--

Conscious integration, or integration resulting in greater consciousnessShavuot		Klal
--	--	------

Klal	Prat	Klal
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We have seen the basic inclinations of evolution; transcend and embrace.

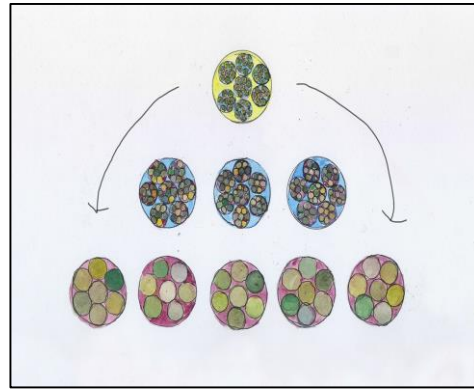
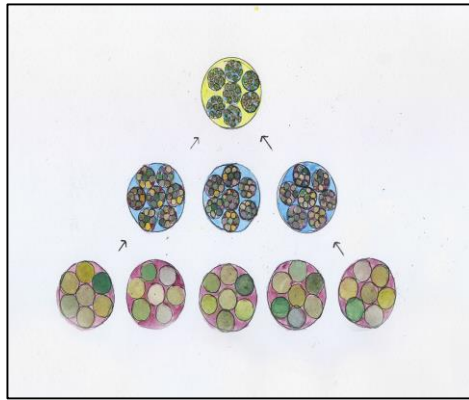
Novel forms of organization transcend and include that which existed previously as separate entities.

Evolution is both:

a striving for freedom

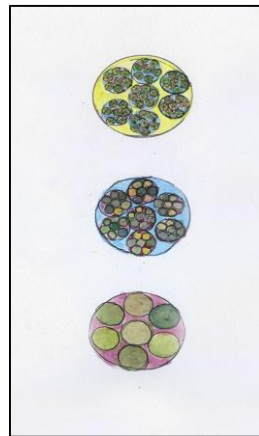
as well as

an inclination to include.



We also observed that these more embracing forms of organization have greater depth and therefore, internally, experience a greater spectrum of reality.

They are further along on the spectrum of consciousness.



It must be kept in mind, of course, that heaping things together does not increase consciousness (or peace).

Consciousness increases only when the integration of parts forms more embracing forms of organization that are in appropriate alignment with the mysterious “blueprint” of creation.

A pile of bricks is not more conscious than a single brick.

A group of fundamentalist nuts is not more conscious than a single fundamentalist nut. (And, from my experience, not even more conscious than a pile of bricks, for that matter)

We ate from the tree that allowed us to distinguish between good and evil. Our relationship to the world was exiled from a womb of simple awareness into an arena of relative significance and therefore meaningful choice.

The blinders were taken off.

We left the nurturing garden with our newly ingested facility of Daas.

By engaging in meaningful choice and projecting patterns through time, we now had the tools needed to be co-creative partners in helping to compose evolution’s melody home.

We do this through engaging in appropriate relationships within the spectrums of reality with which we resonate –

Truth	-	Beauty	-	Goodness
It	-	I	-	We

(Hochmah/Bina/Daas - Chessed/Gevurah/Tiferet - Netzach/Hod/Yesod)

By eating from the tree of relative value, we also ingested the capacity that allows us to appreciate the greater unity we help co-create; a more embracing experience of One.

The time period of; Pesach, Spherot HaOmer and Shavuot is our model for actively participating in evolution’s journey home.

- **We emerged from slavery to freedom through the process of Pesach.**
- **We then travel through the seven weeks of Spherot HaOmer in which we distinguish the universal stages of development and have the opportunity to embody them as qualities of being.**
- **Now, as full spectrum individuals, we can engage in appropriate relationships with each other, creating greater depth and, therefore, greater consciousness, as well as, resonate with the same qualities that the Creator manifests as our world.**

Again;
free, fully embodied individuals,
create deeper forms of organization through appropriate relationship.

These more evolved forms of organization
have a greater internal experience of One.

They are more conscious.

And, free individuals who embody the full spectrum of Midot (qualities)
resonate with those same Midot that the Creator uses to create and sustain our
world

When we choose to engage in appropriate relationship,
individuals come together to create more complex, inclusive formations.

Ideas come together to formulate principles...	We realize	(It - Truth)
Separate entities relate with harmony...	We internalize	(I - Beauty)
Individuals create families and communities...	We form	(We - Goodness)

**More complex and inclusive forms of organization are deeper.
These deeper forms of organization embody and therefore resonate with
greater unity, Oneness.**

To say that evolution produces greater depth is simply to say
that it unfolds greater consciousness. (Wilber, 41)

Simply said:

**When we engage in appropriate relationships,
we are co-creative partners in evolution.**

We create greater depth.

**Greater depth unfolds greater consciousness (a more embracing experience
of One)**

Hence, we receive the Torah.

- **From a place of freedom (Pesach)**
- **And accessing the full spectrum of who we have the potential to be (Spherot HaOmer),**
- **We can then co-create greater integration, with each other and with the Whole. (Shavuot)**

**The consequence of appropriate relationship, of greater integration,
is greater depth and therefore greater consciousness –**

Again, we receive the Torah.

Torah is not only the consequence of appropriate relationship but is also the guide
that defines for us what appropriate relationships are.

The Torah is referred to as the blueprint of creation.

It instructs us in choosing the nature and times of relationships that promote
formations that are in alignment with the Creator’s will.

In a sense,
the Torah is a teaching of appropriate relationship, (business, relations, food,
time...)
and appropriate relationship is the mechanism that connects the individuated dots
to reveal the hidden image of the Whole.

Shavuot celebrates our *receiving* of the Torah.

What are the mechanics of increasing consciousness?

**When we create greater integration through appropriate relationships,
in the spectrums of reality with which we resonate, (I, We and It)
we create greater depth –
which equates to a more conscious experience of One.**

**I am equating greater consciousness,
a more conscious experience of One,
with bringing the Torah down to earth.**

**I am equating greater consciousness
with waking up to What Really Is.**

Consciousness: Rosh Hashannah



Thinking: Darkness within darkness, the gateway to all understanding. (Tao Te Ching)

Many times, one is forced to descend to deep, dark regions, in order to find there the greatest, noblest and freest light. (Rav Kook)

From my understanding,
the drive behind creation is Chessed, to give.
And as we said,
an individuated other is needed to be the recipient of that which is given;
an individuated other who can earn, experience and appreciate that which is given.

On Rosh Hashannah, man was born. (Zohar Breishit 37a)

**On Rosh Hashannah
the world gave birth to
our conscious participation
in the evolutionary process
of return.**

At first, Adam and Chava lacked the freedom to proactively participate in the unfolding of evolution's journey.

On the sixth day they were given the ability to distinguish patterns.

They named the animals.

On that same day they were seduced into eating from the tree of knowing between good and evil.

They internalized relative value.

Without distinction and without relative value,
there is no meaningful choice.

Without meaningful choice,
there is no independent self.

Without an independent self,
there is no earning, experiencing and appreciating love in relationship.

And, without earning, experiencing and appreciating love in relationship,
there is no point to creation.

I think.

Separation is dependent on Din [individuation] (Zohar Breishit 17b)

Din is the only instrument of Chessed, the only way to truly give.

This is why acts of Chessed are so linked to Din that they are termed:
g'millus chessed, which translates literally as 'weaned kindness.'

(Weinberg 118)

There is no way to exercise Chessed without exercising Din:

Chessed gives birth to Din. (Weinberg 116)

Yitzhak [Gevurah] comes only as a child of Avraham [Chessed].

(Zohar Breishit 137a)

Rosh Hashannah parallels Yitzhak. (Zohar Chadash Shmot 55b)

What was our experience when we became aware of our separate existence?

What was the impact of being responsible for a future we co-create?

How did we feel leaving a timeless, compassionate womb/garden?

And, when we woke up to our individuated selves, what was our deepest desire?

God asked Adam and Chava,
"Where are you?" 'Ayeka?' (Genesis 3:9),
now that you have eaten the fruit that woke you up to your consequential selves?

Where are we,
now that we are aware of our separate existence
and our ability to shape the future
by making choices that matter?

Where are we, internally?

What are our deepest desires when we honestly feel the depths of our separate selves?

What are our deepest truths when we breath into
and call out from the separate existence
of which we are newly aware.

How would we answer God's question
on the day we ingested the fruit from the tree of knowing between good and evil?

How would we answer God's question
on the day we became co-creative participants in evolution's unfolding?

It is my experience, that our **truest desires**
from the place of really feeling our separate existence is:
our desire to return to intimacy.

Our desire
to be accepted,
to matter,
to be seen,
to be heard,
to connect in love.

And our most authentic expression,
when truly feeling our separate existence is:

**a simple yearning,
a simple call,
to re-member,
to return to the Source of our lives.**

Like every melody that individuates from its tonic,
we too have a desire to return “home”.

Perhaps, it was then,
when we first became aware of our separate selves
that we were able to resonate with music’s innate leaning
to return to the tonic from which it emerged.
Perhaps, on Rosh Hashannah, we truly felt music for the first time.

Yes, we could sacrifice our individuality
(the Akeida, the potential sacrifice of Yitzhak - who personifies
individuation/Gevurah)
and return to our previous condition as an undifferentiated part of the whole.

Or we could return to how we were in our youth
and relinquish responsibility for the choices we make by passing the buck;
Adam blamed Chava,
“The woman who You gave to be with me, gave me what I ate from the tree.”

And Chava blamed the snake,
“The snake seduced me.” (Genesis 3:12-13)

We could go backwards to a time when our choices didn’t matter.
We could deny responsibility, and give up our individuality.
We could crawl back into the womb
and blend into the oneness by returning to unconscious infancy.
“Spirituality” sometimes tries to pass itself off as that.

To give up responsibility is to relinquish the gift to care.
And, without care, there is no freedom –
because without care, there is no meaningful choice.

What if we didn’t blame someone else?
What if we simply breathed into the new evolutionary level that we now occupied?

Perhaps, from within the place that we found ourselves as other,
we might answer God’s question “Where are you?” from our deepest truth.
And express that deepest truth
in the simplest and most authentic way that we can -
with a simple call – from constriction to expansion.



We were born into a garden that provided for all our needs.
We were unconscious parts of a greater whole.
God created an agent, the snake,
who seduced us into thinking that we could do better.
“You will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:5),
able to create worlds.
We ate from the tree and therefore
could now create more inclusive forms of organization
through choices based on relative value.

We do this through the mediums of
mind (truth),
self (beauty) and
interpersonal relationships (goodness).

**Rosh Hashannah, literally, head of the year,
is the sixth day of creation,
when we became
co-creative partners
in evolving the world from prat to klal.**

Our choices were no longer just instinctual.
We had tasted the fruit of good and evil.
We were no longer infants suckling in undifferentiated intimacy.
We were exiled into a wilderness that could be intentionally cultivated
by choices made by conscious individuals.

Without this subject-object consciousness only instinctual
relationship is possible and while we do not really suffer in the
instinctual state, neither are we free to really learn to love.
(Moss 20)

On Rosh Hashannah we became aware
that our choices affected patterns through time
and could mold a future.
We could anticipate the consequences of our decisions.
We became aware of our nakedness.
We could anticipate our own death.
We woke up to our mortality.

For on the day you eat of it you shall surely die.
(Genesis 2:17)

Rosh Hashannah, the sixth day of creation,
was the “great” and “terrible” day
that humankind, with our capacity to distinguish
between good and evil, was born.

This was a great day because we ingested the fruit that gave us our consequential
selves.

We could co-create, experience and appreciate greater unity and thus a greater
closeness with One.

It was also a terrible day because,
from our perspective,
we were exiled from our comfortable intimacy
with the Source of our existence.

What wakes us up
to our individuated selves
in this separate moment?
What stirs our passion to journey back home?
What reminds us to re-member a fragmented illusion
back to the reality of One.

Ha’kol, kol Yaakov – The voice is the voice of Yaakov. (Genesis 27:22)

Tetan emet leYaakov – Yaakov’s attribute is truth (Micah 7:20)

Rising in the Shofar. (Zohar R. M. Vayikra 99b)

The prayers on the day of Rosh Hashannah are divided into three categories.

Say before Me on Rosh Hashannah; Malkut, Zichronot and Shofarot:

Malkut – so that you should make Me King over you.

Zichronot – so that the memory of you should come before Me for good.

And with what?

With Shofar. (Rosh Hashannah 16a).

MALCHUT

The first category of prayer on Rosh Hashannah is Malchut, the establishment of God's Kingship.

When viewing life from the level of Malchut, we are aware that the world is composed of wholes that are parts of greater wholes, all of which exist within an All, Embracing One.

Each complete melody is but a note in the context of a more embracing melody - forever.

Malchut is the consciousness of a melodic process of return to a Presence we have never left.

Malchut is the king who takes responsibility for the parts that he transcends and embraces – as well as, the humble servant who acknowledges the Greater Kingdom within which we are all embraced.

From the level of Malchut we transcend and embody all the previous stages of development that allow us to resonate with the full spectrum of qualities that One shows up as our reality.

Malchut is the novel organism formed through appropriate relationship that now exists with sufficient depth to be conscious of self within Self, as well as, Self uniquely expressed through self.

Malchut is the second klal that is the rectification of the original klal with the created prat.

ZICHARON

The second category of prayer on Rosh Hashannah is Zicharon, to remember.

On Rosh Hashannah we were forced to leave the embracing garden. And our experience as individuated other, awakens our passion to re-member the whole from which we (from our perspective) were exiled.

Re-membering, is the essence of where we are going and what we are doing.

To re-member is to be a co-creative partner in the universe's journey of return.

Zicharon also means consciousness and awareness. Re-membering is both the process towards greater depth, as well as, the resulting consciousness of the embracing unity we help manifest.

Re-membering through appropriate relationship is how we participate in co-creating the second klal.

SHOFAR

The third category of prayer is Shofar,
the simple expression of our deepest desires.

The Shofar is the horn of a ram.
On Rosh Hashannah we are instructed
to use our breath (that which is in constant interchange between individual and
universal)
to blow through the narrow end of the Shofar,
the constricted end.

The penetrating cry of the Shofar
awakens our individual selves
in this present moment
and stirs our most primal desire;
to return and experience Loving Presence.

Our Shofar is an arrow of awareness, a shaft of desire -
the desire to transcend. (Weinberg 192)

Through blowing the Shofar we rectify a great paradox.
We descend into the constriction of our separate existence.
And, from feeling that constriction,
we awaken our desire to reconnect
in intimacy with the Whole.

**By descending into the constriction of our separate existence,
we touch and resonate with the will of creation;
the gift of conscious intimacy.**

When we listen to the Shofar,
(which is the actual commandment on Rosh Hashannah – to listen)
we hear the will of the Creator,
not from above,
but from the desire hidden

within the physically
of the created other.

**The sound of the Shofar
is the simple note
that is the bridge between,
the highest will of the Creator
and the deepest yearning of the created.**

From the depths, I called out to God, who answered me
with divine expansion. (Tehillim 118:5)

The Shofar is blown with a:

- Whole, unbroken sound,
- Broken, individuated sounds
- And a return to a whole unbroken sound

- An undifferentiated whole, klal
- Individuation, prat
- A re-membering, a rectification of klal and prat - Malkut

**The Shofar is the passion, the desire
behind the process of Zicharon/remembrance.**

It expresses our yearning
that is awoken by descending
into the vortex of our isolated selves.

By blowing the Shofar
we express our desire
from inside that vortex.

Because the Shofar comes for Zicharon [remembrance]
it is as if it penetrates inside. (Rosh Hashannah 26a)

The Shofar awakens our passion that animates our melody of return.

By truly feeling our separation
brought about by involution,
we begin to participate
in the process of evolution.

The sound of the shofar
is made with a simple breath
not words, not a melody,
a simple cry.

Previously we made 3 distinctions regarding evolution:

- **The resulting formations of evolution:** **Holy Wholes.**
- **The inclinations/desire of evolution:** **Freedom and Relationship**
- **The processes of evolution:** **Transcend and Integrate**

We can see these same 3 principal distinctions of evolution in the order of prayer on Rosh Hashannah that the rabbis laid out for us:

- **The resulting, more conscious, forms of organization.** **Malkut**
- **The inclination/desire and** **Shofar**
- **The process of re-remembering.** **Zicharon**

Rosh Hashannah is called Yom HaDin, “The Day of Judgment.”

On the day we were given the ability
to make distinctions
and judge relative value
we also become accountable
for our choices and for our actions.

If we really are free to make meaningful choices,
then, who we are and what we do
really does have consequences
for a future we co-create.

What if on The Day of Judgment,
we are judged,
not for our superficial feelings of jealousy and anger,
but rather for our underlying desires that are at the root
of all our feelings?

What do we find if we descend deeply into the core of all our desires?

In my experience
they are all rooted in our yearning
to be free,
and from a place of freedom,
to reconnect in loving intimacy.

Let us be judged for that yearning.

Let us be judged for our passionate desire to return to loving intimacy.

**To express our truth on Rosh Hashannah
is to be in harmony with why we have been created –
to consciously experience closeness and love and intimacy.**

And when we powerfully express
our simplest and truest desires
for love and intimacy,
we transform strict judgment
into embracing compassion.

Just as the Shofar absorbs on one end and emits on the other,
so too, I [God] leave my throne of Din (judgment) to sit on the
throne of Rachamim (mercy). (Vayikra Rabba 29:4)

**Let us be judged for our deepest truth.
Let us be judged for the simple cry that becomes the vehicle of our return.
Because, on Rosh Hashannah, we want what God wants us to want.**

We can suppress our feelings.
We can talk and explain and lose ourselves in an ocean of words.
We can act out.
We can try to change conditions.
We can transcend our desires and witness them from a more objective perspective.

**Or, we can powerfully call out
from our constricted individuality
and let our innate desire
to re-member be heard.**

I said: what about my eyes?
He said: keep them on the road.

I said: What about my passion?
He said: Keep it burning.

I said: What about my heart?
He said: Tell me what you hold inside it.

I said: Pain and sorrow.
He said: Stay with it. The wound is where the light enters you.
(Rumi)

By having the courage
to feel our true feelings as individuals,
we awaken our desire to come home.

We are given the commandment to **listen**
to the blowing of the Shofar on Rosh Hashannah.

It is because our cry is
heard,
that we express our deep desire,
a desire that resonates
with the very Will behind
creation itself -
the desire to re-member.

**Ashrei HaAm ShYodei Truah
Fortunate is the nation that understands the call.
(Psalms 99:16)**

Twenty men are sitting in a circle. We have all come together to grow. We have all been through twenty-four hours of forming a strong, solid container, within which we are safe; to be real, to be vulnerable and free, to be uniquely expressive, in touch with our feelings and deeply honest.

*I look around. I see a man who is scared.
His body is desperately holding onto feelings that so need to flow.
We make eye contact.
I tell him to breathe.
Harder. Deeper.
He closes his eyes.
Breathe Deeper.*

Open your eyes
 Look at me.
 What's going on?
 Everyone else is quiet, present.
 Some are scared
 He says to me:
 You get all the attention. Everyone listens to you. You're taking up all the space.
 Breathe; I respond.
 Feel into whatever is there.
 Own it.
 Make space for it.
 Feel.
 Breathe.
 I tell him to get up.
 I also get up.
 Keep breathing.
 I put my back up against a wall.
 I invite him to stand in front of me.
 Keep breathing, I say.
 Hold my wrists.
 Look in my eyes.
 Keep breathing.
 Feel.
 What does the feeling want?
 I don't want to feel this way.
 No, that's not what I asked you.
 Stay with the feeling that's there, now.
 What does the feeling that you are feeling right now want?
 I want to be somewhere else.

Again, no.
 I'm not asking you what situation you would prefer.
 Don't change the circumstance.
 What does your feeling want, right now, in this situation?
 I want to put your head through the wall.
 I'm not asking you what you want to do.
 What does your feeling want?
 He answers angrily:
 Pay attention to me.
 Listen to me.
 What about me?
 Hold my wrists, I say again.
 Louder.
 Look at me.
 Breathe.
 Don't stop looking at me.
 Don't stop breathing.
 Say it.
 Feel it.
 Pay attention, he screams.
 What about me?
 Louder.
 Don't look away.
 Keep looking into my eyes.
 Say it.
 Louder.
 Say it
 Look at me.
 Breathe.

Hold my wrists. Tighter. Stronger. Harder.
Go there.
Feel it.
More.
What does your feeling want?
Own it.
He screams louder.
He squeezes my wrists tighter.
Pay attention.
What about me?
Three minutes of passionate, powerful, very intense desire.
What about me?
Pay attention to me.
How far back can you go with this same feeling, I ask?
Stay with the feeling.
Ride the feeling as far back as it goes.
The feeling.
Who needed to hear this?
I'm eight years old.
No one is paying attention.
No one is listening.
Louder.
Pay attention.
What about me?
Who needed to hear this?
Who?
My father.
He was always busy with something else.
Never there.

Never paying attention.
Look in my eyes.
Keep breathing. Tell him.
Look into my eyes and tell him.
What about me?
Pay attention.
More.
With your whole body.
Every cell in your body.
Like an animal.
Hold my wrists.
Let it go.
Ten minutes later I'm holding him in my arms.
We're both crying.
He cries and tells me; it's not about me.
I've been carrying this desire around for thirty years.
What are our true desires from our places of constriction?
Hear me.
See me.
Love me.
Hold me.
Connect with me...
They are simple.
They don't hurt anyone.
They are not blaming anyone.
They are beautiful and true.
Own it. Powerfully
Listening makes it possible.
As does the actual Mitzvah of Rosh Hashannah – listen - to the Shofar

Consciousness: Yom Kippur



Thinking: It does not matter how far one has strayed,
when we eventually collapse towards the core of
our being we are always welcome. (Moss 110)

Yom Kippur is an imprint
of God's loving presence in the fabric of time –
a loving presence
who is waiting for us to return
from our distractions,
our false identities,
our insecurities,
and from our misdirected passions.

**Yom Kippur is having the faith
that all of existence emanates from love
and that we are the ones for whom this love is intended.
And from whom this love can radiate to others.**

Yom Kippur is a day so available with love, acceptance and
forgiveness that it creates a safe space for us to reconnect with
our authentic selves. (Rav Eli Chaim Carlbach)

One desires to give
and therefore, created an "other"
to be the recipient of this gift.
And this gift is
our experience of intimacy
with One's Presence and Love.

We are told that creation is an act of love.
(Derech Hashem 1:2:1)

It was necessary,
for the recipient of this experience to be put to sleep
and placed into exile,
into the illusion of a separate existence.

Love is behind “the necessary evil,”
the illusion, of “separate existence,”
simply because
love is relational.
Love requires an other.

And,
Love is the impulse
that ultimately draws that which is separate
back together.

Again, because love is relational.

The greater truth of who we are
is not other from One –
but a s/Self who
never was,
is not now,
and never will be
apart from the Greater Whole.

We were put to sleep, into a dream of separate existence.
So, as the dreamers;
from our point of view, there is separation.

And because we live within this dream of separation,
desire is born.
The desire to bridge this illusory gap
and return home to a state of not-two.

We search for intimacy as if it is forever in the distance.
We buy into the illusion.

We ingested the venom of the snake.
We continuously mortgage the present moment,
the time/space for true intimacy,
for the hope of a better future.
We treat the object of our relationship as if She is not here.

God is Presence, and we are forever on our way.

On Rosh Hashannah we listen to the Shofar,
which awakens our desire to re-member from our perceived individuation.
We feel these desires at their root.
We reconnect to the fundamental melody of our life’s journey
to return to the Tonic from which we began.

But, before we could awaken to our core desire, to re-member the whole,
we are often seduced and misdirected
by superficial wants and false gods.

We try to look good.
We need to be “right.”
We wait for the perfect time.
We look for a better place.
We withdraw because of insecurities.
We get distracted.
We think we or our situation has to improve.
We bypass the experience
of deeply inhabiting the space in which we are actually living.

In other words,
the message from the original snake is still whispering in our ear;
It’s not for here.
It’s not for now.

It's not for you.
 If only I was smarter.
 If only I was more successful,
 better looking, etc.

**True intimacy with One,
 by definition,
 is never not here
 and never not now
 and never not for you.**

**True intimacy with One,
 is always here,
 is always now
 and is always for each one of us.**

When we were in the desert,
 after witnessing all that had taken place in Mitzrayim
 and after crossing the sea,
 Moshe went up to receive the Torah.
 He was supposed to be on the mountain for 40 days.
 We miscalculated the time.
 We didn't wait.
 We lost faith.
 We created an object of worship, the golden calf.
 We formed a relationship with another.

When Moshe did descend from the mountain,
 he saw what was taking place and he destroyed the tablets he had received.

It was on Yom Kippur that we received a second set of tablets.

What is faith?
 Imagine I tell you that I'm spending the day working on building your house
 and that is my full intention for the next eight hours.

You watch me.
 You see me leave for an hour.
 I could be wasting time and being unfaithful to my word.
 I could also be going to the lumberyard for additional supplies.
 If you know me well and have experienced the integrity that I have to my word,
 you trust me.
 Even though you can't see me for that hour,
 you have faith that I am being true to my initial commitment.

Through faith we know that even though God seems to be
 absent, He is present all the time; even though He is far, He is
 close at hand; even though He transcends all life, still we
 confront Him every moment of our existence. (Berkovitz)

Let's stay with our initial assumption
 that reality was and continues to be created
 from One's loving desire to give.
 In other words,
 all and everything
 is rooted in that loving intention.

**The loving intention to give
 is the simplest common denominator
 for all of existence
 and is that which gives life
 to all of existence.**

**There is nothing else happening.
 Existence is nothing other than details emanating from that intention.**

And know now, that HaShem your Master is the faithful God who
 preserves His covenant and loving-kindness. (Devarim 7:9)

**Faith is necessary
because darkness is necessary.
And darkness is necessary
because freedom is necessary.
And freedom is necessary
because conscious individuation is needed
to create and appreciate loving intimacy.**

Adam and Chava had to be expelled from the garden.
We needed to go into exile.

The King and Queen need to hide.
The song needs to leave the tonic.

But Reality taken in its full context does not forget.
The Song does not forget where it is going.

It is us,
the individual notes,
who get lost
in the infinite number of possible melody lines
that intersect our lives.

**We hear ourselves as notes
in secondary melodies
and forget the larger symphony
we were created to help complete.**

We lose our way.
We forget.

**And,
we can always return home
with authenticity.**

**Because conscious, authentic relationship
is why we are here.**

**We can be authentic concerning
that with which we have been inauthentic
because we are returning to a relationship
that desires the essential purity
of who we truly are.**

What if, for instance, a friend is sharing his day.

I could listen with no agenda other than to be a compassionate presence.

Or, if the context of my listening is;
my need to prove that I matter –

I might impatiently offer suggestions, to appear as the rescuer of the situation.

I am present to the relationship in the first scenario.

In the second scenario,

I am actually using the relationship to satisfy my own insecurity of not mattering.

What if I become aware of my secondary motivation;
my need to have others see that I'm important?

What if I wake up to the inauthentic context from which I have been generating
much of my life?

I might blame circumstance.

I might make excuses.

I might blame the other.

I might blame my history, my upbringing.

I might lie.

I might even pretend the relationship wasn't so important to begin with.

**How do I now offer myself back to a relationship to which I have been
inauthentic?**

**As in any intimate relationship,
the fullness of the truth that I bring upon
my return is often contingent upon the faith I have
in the love contained in the relationship to which I am returning.**

**In a truly caring relationship, vulnerability and truth are welcome.
That is the container of time that is Yom Kippur.**

A time that is safe
to be real
and vulnerable,
to come back home
to authenticity.
to presence.
to love.

*Let's say that I'm so busy trying to look successful in my career that I neglect giving sufficient attention to my child.
I was generating much of my behavior, unconsciously, from an "old story" within which I need to earn love and attention by being successful.
Those were the conditions of my childhood and I am, again unconsciously, projecting those same patterns of thinking onto present reality.
And my child is being hurt by my behavior.
I was less than conscious.
And my child has been wounded by my lack of awareness and my distraction.
And my always too busy behavior that followed.
I brought this child into the world.
It is my responsibility to care for him or her as best I can.
I really did the best I could.
And I fell short, when unconsciously enslaved to an old pattern of thinking.
At some point I become aware of what I have done and the impact my behavior has had on my child.
I take responsibility for what I have done.
I take responsibility for the impact my behavior has had.
I properly apologize for my behavior and its impact.
I can't go back in time and make it better.
Damage has been done because I was less than conscious.*

*I feel sad.
My child feels sad and possibly angry.
Now what?
Yes, I need to feel my sadness and remorse.
And, it serves no one for me to prolongedly wallow in my grief.
And, as best as I can, I need to distinguish and transcend my "story."
I need to be more conscious.
I need to move forward with as much presence and love as I can
in all my relationships, in particular with my child.

My child needs to feel his or her sadness and possible anger.
And, it serves no one for my child to handle this situation as a victim.
And, if my child chooses, he or she can move forward with as much understanding
and forgiveness as he can.

A mistake has been made.
A real impact has occurred from that mistake.
I have the opportunity to grow and learn from my mistake.
I have the opportunity to adopt a more conscious behavior going forward.
My child can feel what there is to feel.
And has the opportunity to understand and compassionately embrace.*

I think these are the two sides of Yom Kippur.

The same two distinctions that actually evolve consciousness itself.

- **Transcend (elevate consciousness - the realization of what has been done, me in the story above)**

and

- **embrace (forgiveness for what has been done, my child in the story above)**

Transcend and embrace, the two qualities necessary for a relationship to evolve.

Yom Kippur,
like Pesach,
is a time of freedom.
Every Yom Kippur
we annul our vows
and we blow the Shofar of freedom.
Every fifty years, the Yovel year, on Yom Kippur,
all slaves are freed to return home
and all land goes back to its original owners.

**We can think of freedom in two ways;
freedom from;
and,
freedom to.**

I can be freed:
from my enslavement,
from my Mitzrayim,
from my “stories”,
from my old, dysfunctional patterns of thinking.

I can transcend.

I can also be free:
to fall back into my old patterns of thinking,
to still make mistakes,
still be wounded,
to still be a work in progress,
to be human.

I can also embrace.

Consciousness is not about getting better.
Consciousness is not contingent on circumstance –
even if the circumstance is of my own psychological struggles.

We don't become conscious.

We resonate with consciousness.

Consciousness is all there is.

We evolve through the spectrum of consciousness.

Yes, of course we want to be free from all our constrictions,
from all our psychological baggage.
But on another level;
our bodies,
whether young or old,
sick or healthy –
our minds,
whether peaceful or busy,
powerful or insecure,
can all be objects of awareness,
can all be embraced within greater consciousness.

**Any circumstance,
whether external or internal
can be an object of awareness
to a subjective presence,
to a conscious presence who is;
always unnamable,
always hidden,
always free –
of any and every thing.**

**Consciousness is different from everything else.
Everything else is the content of consciousness.**

I want to make, what I think, are some very important distinctions.

We all make mistakes.

We spoke badly about someone.

We weren't totally honest.

We pretended to be paying attention, and were not.

Etc., etc., etc.

Let's say, I'm feeling anger towards someone.

In my judgement, he wasn't listening to me when I was talking.

Later that day, I speak badly about him in public.

Let's keep this simple and say that what I did was hurtful and wrong.

I realize what I have done.

I realize my mistake.

And I feel remorse.

I own my action.

I take responsibility for the impact my actions had.

I apologize.

That's distinction number one.

At the time, I wasn't conscious enough to stop myself from doing wrong.

And I caused pain to someone else.

I realized what I did, and took responsibility and apologized.

Distinction number two.

I was angry in a similar situation.

I had an impulse to speak poorly about someone.

I caught myself.

And I used discipline to not act out from my anger.

I didn't speak poorly about someone, but I still harbored anger.

Distinction number three.

In my judgement, someone wasn't listening to me.

I felt angry.

*This time, however, I was more aware than example number one,
where I did the wrong thing and then took full responsibility and apologized.*

*And I was more aware than example number two,
where I used discipline to stop myself from doing damage to another with whom I was
angry.*

*This time I used the opportunity to become more conscious regarding my own issue;
What is my issue with the issue?*

In other words,

What is generating the anger to begin with?

Again, the three possible responses:

- *Acting out from the anger and later apologizing.*
- *Feeling angry, but using discipline to stop hurting someone from my anger.*
- *Going deeper and using this situation to ultimately transcend my anger and become more conscious.*

For instance, without going into the details of the process:

Let's suppose I really pay attention to my anger when I judge this other person as not listening to me.

And I breathe into it and realize it is the same feeling I had when I, as a child, I felt angry and hurt when no one was paying attention to me.

I become aware that this present circumstance is simply resonating with an old unmetabolized feeling that my body has been holding onto since my childhood.

My issue with the issue.

- *Example number one is taking responsibility for harm I have caused.*
- *Example number two is avoiding doing harm.*
- *Example number three is becoming more conscious and is healing.*

Yes, we need to be able to exercise one and two.

But being more conscious also brings healing to my own unmetabolized wound.

Greater consciousness also creates greater leverage to avoid, in the future, examples one and two as well. Example number three does more than prevent toxic anger. Example number three brings more consciousness and love into the world.

The part of us who is conscious and responsible

is the free and clean spark

who is welcome in the inner sanctuary on that day.

We fast.

We wear white.

We are encouraged to resonate with our pure essence.

Others too have been inauthentic, maybe, even in relationship to us.

And, when he or she eventually collapses

towards the core of their being,

hopefully we will be there to welcome them as well.

Transcend and Embrace

Yom Kippur

is a day when we experience

God's love overflowing,

and flooding us with acceptance and forgiveness.

Yom Kippur is a day that models for us

how to be that way for someone else:

how to love, how to accept and how to forgive –

how we can create safe spaces for each other –

to help each other reconnect with our authentic selves.

Consciousness is not contingent on any condition,

not even contingent on the condition of me not yet being free.

Consciousness certainly is not about what I've accomplished.

Consciousness is not even about how I am being.

Consciousness transcends everything.

You can't describe it.

You can't find it,

because you can't lose it.

The evolution of the universe, everything that has gone before, has forged the capacity for self-reflection as it appears in humanity. The universe is a continuous stream of consciousness. (Love's Alchemy, Sky 33)

Consciousness transcends and embraces.

Yom Kippur,

a day to take responsibility (transcend)

and a day to forgive. (embrace)

Consciousness: Sukkot



Thought: It's all a journey back to now

Sukkot, which is our next Yom Tov, transcends and embraces the two previous markers in time that we just explored: Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur.

On Rosh Hashannah we experience our individual selves. We ate from the Etz HaDaas and were forced to leave the Garden. On a day in which we experience our separation, we have the opportunity to deeply feel our desire to return home.

The imprint of Yom Kippur allows us to resonate with a compassionate Presence from which we can never be apart. Because we are always a part of the undivided whole, we impact and are therefore responsible to that whole with everything we do, say and think.

Yom Kippur models for us the qualities of embracing love and forgiveness.

Sukkot embraces these seeming opposite desires into a beautiful, harmonious synthesis.

Sukkot holds the quality of

Tiferet,

harmony,

compassion,

consciousness...

which is where we transcend the paradox of; individuation and undivided wholeness.

Harmony is the relationship the individual parts have with the whole within which they are embraced.

The frequency of Sukkot is
not just the prat
and not just the klal.
Sukkot is the relationship of
prat within the embracing klal;
notes within melody,
moments within history,
individual within the greater context
of family or community.

Some spiritual practices are only concerned with being present.
It doesn't matter if we're
walking in circles,
breathing mindfully,
or meditating on the top of a mountain.
It's all about a mindful presence to now.

There are also ways of being
that focus exclusively
on goals,
on challenges,
and on what we can attain;
our heads are down
and the journey is just a means to an end.

**The holiday of Sukkot,
the quality of Tiferet,
harmony and truth,
gives us the perspective
that incorporates
both efforting and being.**

During the time of Sukkot
we dwell in a temporary hut called a Sukkah.
The Sukkah represents God's Clouds of Glory that accompanied us
on our journey from enslavement in Egypt to our home in Israel.

We are traveling to reach our destination.
We have a goal.

And,
during our forty-year journey through the desert,
we were embraced within the Clouds of Glory,
God's Presence – every step of the way.

**Sukkot teaches us
that we always have the opportunity
to be in relationship with Presence,
while also intentionally moving
towards a more evolved future.**

**We are told to dwell in our own Sukkah during the seven-day holiday.
Its' roof shelters us in the shade of an individual dwelling.
At the same time,
the Sukkah is constructed in a way
that keeps us aware of, open to and responsible for
the greater environment within which we are included.**

Often, as individuals,
we can experience ourselves
as merely living under the roof
as independent agents, solely concerned with self.
Or,
we can lose ourselves, above the roof,
negating our individuality

within the greater whole
or to the greater cause.

Two perspectives,
both with the potential to be out of balance. ⁴

Individuals can be oblivious to the impact we are having on the earth
which supports us.

We can deny responsibility to the larger community.
We can cut ourselves off from our family or from our cultural history.
We can ignore our opportunity
to participate in actualizing greater universal Meaning.

On the other hand,
we can be suffocated
by groups, by dogmas, by conformity,
by large fundamentalist organizations,
which, do not allow the free expression
of the individuals from which they are composed.
The 'greater cause'
and their frozen view of history
always seem to overwhelm
unique, creative self-expression.

**Sukkot, Tiferet,
is a perspective
that balances the importance of the individual
and the need for a larger, embracing organization.**

**In resonating with the note of Sukkot we acknowledge
the harmonious relationship of unique part within a greater whole.**

⁴ During Sukkot we read from the prophet Ezekiel that we will emerge from the future war between Gog (roof) and Magog (from the roof).

In Kabbalistic tradition, Yaakov personified the quality associated with Sukkot.
In the Torah, we are told,

Yaakov journeyed to Sukkot... built there a Sukkah
and named the place Sukkot (Genesis 33:17).

He dreamt of a ladder that was set on earth and who's top
reached heavenward. (Genesis 28:12)

He was later named Yisrael,
an individual as well as a nation,
an individual within the context of the whole.

When we evolve,
we transcend each previous level
and embody a more embracing point of view.

At first, as infants, we were only supported.
We had no sense of self.

The following stage brought self-awareness.
We fought for independence and self-dimension.

Only during the next level of development
do we acquire the perspective of part within whole.

We become aware of our selves
within the context of family, of community,
and within the greater environment.

We become aware of this moment
within the context of a past, present and future.

We learn to control urges.
We delay gratification.

We are aware of this moment in the context of extended time.
 We are able to project the consequences of our choices.
 We are aware of how we impact the greater whole of which we are a part.
 This same perspective allows us to be aware of the consequences of
 own thinking, and therefore is the root of consciousness.

We each have our own internal melody lines,
 our own stories, our own personal patterns of thinking,
 our own family and cultural influences.
 These imprints are often the contexts from which we listen.

Two individuals in relationship are often
 two old patterns of thinking
 intersecting around a common circumstance.

I know from experience,
 that war and violence and sustained anger
 are byproducts of unconscious communication,
 of one or both sides being incapable
 of transcending their unconscious perspective.

From the perspective of Tiferet,
 I can place the intersecting note of our interaction
 into the melody of my choice.

Without this transcending point of view,
 I have no choice other than to drop this note
 into the same melody through which
 I've been listening to life for the past thirty years.

**Being able to transcend the context
 from which I habitually listen is the perspective of Tiferet,
 and is the standing frequency of Sukkot.**

This simple awareness is actually the basis of wellbeing and joy.

We loosely defined wellbeing as
 having access to our full spectrum of qualities,
 which are all shades between:

agency	(I)
communion	(We)
while in conscious relationship with present reality.	(It)

During the seven days of Sukkot
 we invite the seven different personality types
 into our Sukkah, one each night.
 They are called the 'Ushpizin', the holy guests.

After leaving the constricting fantasies of Mitzrayim,
 we invite the fundamental qualities, that we have the opportunity to embody,
 into the Sukkah, into the greater context of conscious perspective.

Chessed	Avraham.
Gevura	Yitzhak.
Tiferet	Yaakov
Netzach	Moshe
Hod	Aaron
Yesod	Yoseph
Malchut	David.

These are not random qualities.
 As we saw in our story; these are "shades" of being,
 between Klal and Prat and Klal.

We saw how Pesach is 'zman Cherutaynu,' the time of our freedom.
 As we explained,
 Pesach is not a commemoration of our freedom
 but is our opportunity

to distinguish and experience
the actual mechanics of attaining freedom.

Sukkot is ‘zman Simchataynu,’ the time of our joy.
And again, it is a time that experientially teaches us
the mechanics of generating our lives from joy,
not just a symbolic remembrance of a previous happy occasion.

After the stage of Tiferet
we become involved in aligning our lives
with relative value (Netzach),
as well as expressing
our unique, individual glory (Hod).
Life becomes more complex.
We can get caught up in expectations,
successes and failures, how we look, what we accomplish, etc.

We might need to fight for that in which we believe.
Because we are now aware of relative value,
we can suffer from dissatisfaction and disappointment.

But as we have already said,
when we evolve in a healthy manner,
we do not disassociate from previous levels.
We transcend and *include* them.

**So yes, as we develop life becomes less simple.
Growing into the levels of Netzach and Hod
brings relative value, judgments and expectations.
But we don’t want to disassociate from the joy of simple presence and
gratitude.**

**To leave behind innate joy
and get lost in our accomplishments is,
as King Shlomo says in Kohelet, which we read on Sukkot,**

“Vanity of vanities.”

**The Sukkah represents God’s embracing Presence,
and yet we are still on our journey “home”.**

We have not yet arrived.

We still desire for what is yet to come.

We are still striving.

**And yet we are happy with who we are, with what we have
and within Who’s presence we are included.**

Sukkot is not impatience, doubt or unworthy insecurities.
Sukkot is optimistic anticipation.

Sukkot is about learning to play the full spectrum of notes
that we have the potential to embody,
in order to be in resonance with the greater melody
within whose presence we are embraced.

Are we ever not embraced within God’s Presence?

And,

Are we ever not responsible to strive towards home, towards wellbeing, towards a
more evolved future?

We are tasked to journey onwards to the Promised Land
constantly seeking and searching to reveal and uncover the
infinite in this world and in ourselves. Yes, within the arduous
yet meaningful journey of “lech lecha/go to yourself” (Genesis
12:1), there is a concurrent ability to be fully present. The
ability to drop into moments where life is no longer just a
time of running and returning – no longer a time for
becoming. Life must transform into a time for being.

(Epstein, Living in the Presence, Pg. 60)

**The Sukkah is the space
and Sukkot is the time,
within which,
we feel what it feels like to strive towards...
while also being embraced within.**

Our practice during Sukkot of
intentionally living within embracing Presence,
is a truth, we can live by,
any place and any time.

“Letting go is not giving up;
It is the graceful walk between
continuing to put effort into making our preferred reality come true
and
not allowing our happiness to be controlled
by something we do not have”
(Yung Pueblo)

**Sukkot teaches us that wellbeing
and joy are not only our destination,
but that wellbeing and joy
are the actual mechanisms
that bring us to where we want to be.**

**To be present,
in harmony
and in wellbeing
each step along the way –
is our journey home.**

Freedom is a function
of a clear mind within a feeling self.
And,
freedom is much more than that as well.

**To truly be free is to powerfully
express our unique selves into
the reality within which we exist.**

Aaron and Moshe,
who respectively personify
the inter-subjective qualities
of Hod and Netzach,
are the ones who
ultimately led us
out of Mitzrayim
into freedom.

The frequency of these qualities
can be met and resonated with
during the imprints in the calendar, we will explore next,
Channukah and Purim.

Consciousness: Channukah



Thought: You are not a drop in the ocean.
 You are the entire ocean in a drop. (Rumi)

Transform yourself and you transform the whole
 world. The world exists within you.
 Just as you exist within the world.
 That is the nature of One.

Our development spirals
 through levels that are

- at times focused on agency,
- other times communally oriented,
- and stages that transcend and integrate the two.

We examined this pattern
 when we explored the time period
 that includes:

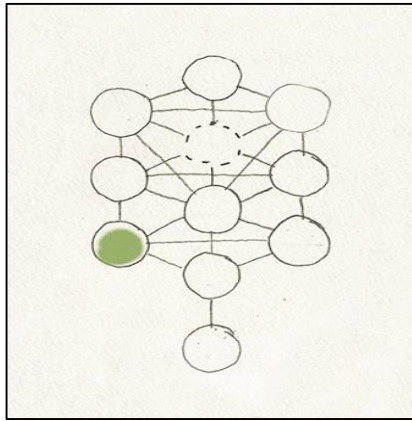
- Rosh Hashanah (agency),
- Yom Kippur (communion),
- and Sukkot (integration),

which, taken together are known as the Days of Return.

The holiday of Channukah is understood
 to express the quality of Hod.

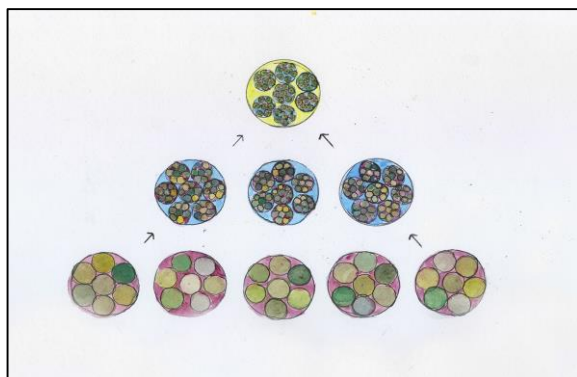
In the diagram below,

it is on the left side that represents individuation,
 and within the lower triad that represents intersubjective relationships.



Basically, Hod is a quality that emphasizes individual expression that is witnessed by, and impacts, the greater community.

We have briefly explored Hod and understood it as: a striving to transcend, an inclination for freedom.



Within the context of personal development, Hod is the unique expression of a young adult.

In the octave of cultural evolution, this stage can be imagined as the initiatives of creative entrepreneurs pushing the envelope.

Hod can be understood as the light of **One** expressed uniquely through **one**, while being witnessed by the whole.

When any of the developmental stages, that we have covered, are out of balance, they can thwart the progress of the melody as a whole. For instance, an unhealthy expression of Netzach might be a religious zealot who violently suppresses individual freedom to protect an ideal that refuses to evolve with the rest of the world.

The quality of Hod, taken out of context, can get pretty crazy as well. I could attempt to get closer to the One by being the one, by being at the top of the pyramid or in front of the spotlight, or by beating another in a race.

I might think that light is a limited commodity,
and the more someone else gets,
the less is available for me.

Chanukah was a time in our history
when we battled the Greek Empire,
both physically and philosophically.

**The victory that we had over Greece
was, in essence, a struggle about
the true meaning of Hod, glory.**

The Greeks saw individual glory
as the product of approaching
(their understanding of) perfection.

For the Greeks,
one deserves glory
as a result of
what one does or accomplishes.

Light shines **upon me**
as a result of my accomplishments.
If my results are better than yours,
then more light will come my way.

**The Torah sees individual glory
as a radiant spark,
a personal expression of the Whole.
My glory is not a result of my actions.
My actions
are a result
of God's glory
uniquely expressed through me.**

And so too,
light doesn't shine upon me
as a result of my accomplishments.

**My accomplishments
are
my unique expression
of God's light into the world.**

We shine the hidden light
of the One
through our unique expression
of that light.

The Glory of Chanukah is not the result of the victory over
Yavan [Greece] – it is the source of the victory. It is not
significance that engenders Hod – it is Hod that gives birth to
significance. (Weinberg, 292, 298)

The Greek understanding of glory engenders competition.

**From the Torah's perspective,
there is no competition,
because each one of us
is a unique, radiant spark of the whole.**

By living life powerfully and expressing our individual potential
we radiate the spark of light uniquely latent in each one of us.

When shining the light of
One
through
one,
as opposed
to competing
for a limited dose of “success”,

envy is replaced by inspiration.

Moments of Hod are the moments that everything else exists to serve. For those moments the world was created; within those moments exists the blaze of Glory that was the Light from which the cosmos was formed. (Weinberg, 298)

Chanukah was and continues to be a time when Hod - Glory, or individual light and radiance – defeats darkness and jealous competition.

Chanukah was not a time when we were exiled from our land, but a time when many of us experienced an exile from our internal personal power and freedom.

As long as he never demeans it, the glory of all of creation shines through him; as long as he never confuses the darkness of Greece for the light of the menorah. For Glory - Hod is the opportunity to be most beautifully ourselves, and the praise and the thanksgiving [also Hod, from Le'hodot] are the deepest expression of an opportunity which shines with the reflection of the Hidden Light. (Weinberg, 292)

In Kabbalistic tradition, Aaron personified the quality of Hod. He was Moshe's older brother who led the Jewish people before Moshe was appointed by God to return to Mitzrayim and lead us to freedom. We are told that Aaron experienced true joy and not jealousy when handing over the leadership to his younger brother.

We are also told that Aaron was a man who pursued peace amongst his people. He did not facilitate peace between the parts by homogenizing distinction. Aaron was able to see the radiant spark of the whole hidden in each individual's potential. His acknowledgment of the unique glory, that each one of us embodies, removed jealousy from the equation.

To recognize unique expressions that are not competing against each other is to ultimately promote unity.

Aaron was also the one who merited the title of Cohen Gadol. It was his job to express our nation's gratitude.

Appreciation, glory and recognition are all words, in Hebrew, that are rooted in the word Hod

Each of us has the potential to radiate the light of One through the unique expression of who we are. Every time our individual candle shines fully, the hidden light of the Infinite becomes more revealed.

You are clothed with Hod and beauty, wrapped in Light as with a garment. (Tehillim 104:2)

Hod tells us that each individual note is not just a part of a greater symphony. Hod is the quality that tells us that the greater symphony is expressed through each individual note as well.

Each individual becomes a small prism through which the
larger (whole) of heaven shines. (Lowrey, 17)

Unique individual expression,
as well as cooperation,
are necessary qualities for us to embody
when participating in evolution's unfolding:
transcend as well as include.
And often the impulse to transcend
is expressed through competition
as opposed to unique self-expression.

Yes, competition exists with most forms of life,
whether it's competition for food or market share.
But the flip side of cooperation is not necessarily competition.
To quote what I think is a possible misconception regarding this point:

Increased cooperation is an observable direction of cultural
evolution, this is not the only direction or even the main
direction. [So far so good.] It seems clear that as culture
progresses; cooperation interacts with competition, and that
both of these forms of relationship are necessary for a healthy
society. (McIntosh)

By juxtaposing competition and cooperation,
McIntosh is suggesting that they are the same fundamental dynamics of evolution,
as are transcend and include.

I believe this is a misunderstanding.
In a purer sense,
the flip side of cooperation is
not necessarily competition,

but
free, unique, self-expression.

This may sound like a minor distinction.
But if I allow competition
to be the balancing force of cooperation
unique self-expression can go into shadow.

If I write a book,
and I derive glory as a result of my book being on the Time's bestseller list,
I cannot root for you to be totally successful
and for your book to be an even bigger bestseller.
In the paradigm of competition,
your success would cast a shadow on my accomplishment.

However, if both endeavors
are simply our unique expressions
of God's light,
then my success can become your inspiration.

[The glory that was Greece] was the opposite of Hod. Where Hod can
only blaze forth in the achievement of Man, Greece seeks to glory in
what was given by God. Where Hod shines only in the personal, Greece
searches for glory in the competitive. Where Hod allows no
measurement of Man but the individual's own application of will and
potential, Greece measures all men by the same yardstick. Where Hod
has nothing but contempt for jealousy, Greece built a civilization on the
idea of winning. Where Hod gives each and every individual a personal
world within which he is measured according to what he might have
been, Greece gives all people together one pie, and the slices keep getting
thinner and thinner. The man who walks with Hod knows neither
jealousy nor competition. He sees in the gains of others only the
opportunity to learn to live as much as he is capable. (Weinberg, 299)

A necessary stage in evolutionary development is to transcend and shine our unique light.

We fight for simple individuation at the stage of the “terrible twos.”

That is a stage of individuation (Gevurah)

before we have internalized relative value (Netzach).

Later, after passing through the stage in which we recognize relative value and orchestrate our lives to promote meaning, (Netzach)

we again desire to express our individuality,

but this time within a value context of our choosing.

If the autonomous should not be given scope to express itself, then whatever may be acquired from the outside will be of no avail. This spark must be guarded in its purity, and the thought expressing the inner self, in its profound truth, its greatness and majesty, must be aroused. (Kook 215)

This radiant, unique expression of the divine light

is no less than the very quality that was injured

when Yaakov battled the angel

who wounded him in his thigh. (Genesis 32:28-33)

Glory, Hod is the thigh about which it is said of Yaakov, ‘And he was limping on his thigh’. (Zohar Breishit 26b)

When we are not radiating the full expression of our inner soul, the klal remains incomplete.

We must, as Rav Kook says; journey towards the inner light of personal freedom. (Olat Hare’iyah 2, p. 245)

**Hod is the freedom
to express God’s light
through each unique candle.**

Hod is inspiring others.

**Hod is shining the light,
not competing to be the one
upon whom the light is focused.**

**Hod is fully stepping
into my unique expression
of the One.**

**Hod is appreciating the opportunity
and expressing gratitude for that opportunity.**

The uniqueness of the inner soul, in its own authenticity - this is the highest expression of the seed of the divine light, the light planted for the righteous, from which will bud and blossom the Tree of Life. (Rav Kook)

Making internal distinctions,
whether in my mind or within my feeling self is,
to say the least, extremely critical.

Moshe and Aaron,
Netzach and Hod,
both qualities of inter-relationship,
are the ones who actually led us out of slavery
and into freedom.

Ultimate freedom entails
freely and powerfully
manifesting ourselves in the world.

As we mentioned before,
Netzach and Hod are embodied through the holidays of
Purim and Channukah.

Both of these holidays were instituted by the rabbis after the time
that Moshe and the Prophets codified the Written Torah.

In other words,
our spiritual journey is not just a function of
perfecting the practice of what we have been given.

Like the Mida of Hod itself,
we need to express our own, unique light
into the tradition that has been passed down to us.

As we said:
Consciousness is good.
Internal wellbeing is good.

However,
true freedom,
ultimately radiates through
the unique, creative expression of who we are
into the world of which we are a part.

True belonging is the spiritual practice of believing in and
belonging to yourself so deeply that you can share your most
authentic self with the world and find sacredness in both being
a part of something and standing alone in the wilderness. True
belonging doesn't require you to change who you are; it
requires you to be who you are. (Brene Brown)

Consciousness: Purim



Thinking: Wellbeing is not contingent on circumstance.

Purim is the last Yom Tov in our yearly cycle.
We experience freedom and independence on Pesach,
our first Yom Tov.

**Purim, the last Yom Tov in our cycle,
is our opportunity to experience unity consciousness.**

The ability to make distinctions (name the animals)
and choose between relative value (eating from the Etz HaDaas)
are the conditions necessary for free choice.

Free choice is a necessary capacity for a free, conscious other.

And the point of creating a free, conscious other is so that he or she
can co-create, experience, as well as, appreciate
loving intimacy.

Therefore, the most fundamental purpose
of good and evil
is not to make
the world more good.

**The most fundamental purpose
of good and evil
is to create an arena
of relative value.**

**And
relative value
is needed for meaningful, free choice
and therefore,
conscious individuation.**

Yes, in our world good and evil are real.
We do need to choose one over the other.

But again,
an arena of relative value (good and evil)
is necessary for free, meaningful choice.

And, free choice is necessary for the creation of
conscious individuals, who can
co-create, experience and appreciate
loving intimacy (the ultimate value).

Because we chose to eat from the Etz HaDaas,
we could discern relative value.

We can choose to form relationships that create
more evolved forms of organization in the spectrums of life that we touch.

Because of this newly ingested capacity,
we can also recognize patterns through time,
and try to manifest that which is more desirable.

We compose songs, invest in stocks, build homes, get in shape, etc.

However,

**having the ability to project a better tomorrow
all too often seduces us away from
the present moment,
the only time in which intimacy actually takes place.**

We are lured into
being better
or feeling better
or looking better.

And those become our gods.

And there is always a better possible go(o)d
just over the horizon.

We wait for the objects of our love to improve, or for our own capacity to be loving
to increase.

The fact that evil exists and that it sustains itself from good is a
result of the secondary elements in creation. The purpose of
evil is to allow free choice to exist and thereby bring about the
primary purpose, which is man's attaching himself to God. By
way of analogy, evil is like the peel of a fruit or the shell of a
nut. In themselves, they are useless, but they serve the
secondary purpose of preserving the fruit until it is ready to be
eaten. The same is true of evil. It does not serve God's primary
purpose of bestowing good, but it does fulfill the secondary
purpose of making it possible [by creating relative value,
meaningful choice and therefore conscious individuation].

(Kaplan 77)

Planning and improving based on learning from the past, allow us to create a more
evolved future.

All good.

However, good and evil need to be understood within the greater context of why
they exist.

**The principal purpose for the existence of evil
is to put us in an arena of relative value
in order to give us a real opportunity
to make meaningful choices
and therefore, experience freedom.**

However,

being able to see the vista of a better future
often seduces us into thinking
that simply making things better
is the essential value.

When we buy into the endless pursuit of getting better,
our relationship with God is always in the future
(neechaysh/questioning the future - nachash/snake),
when we become good enough.

We can be so obsessed with becoming
slimmer,
richer
and better
that we zoom right past our relationship to Now.

**Evil is simply,
and no more than,
a tool for the greater good - freedom,
the freedom
to create, experience and appreciate love.**

In the very beginning of the Torah;
in the presence of the King,
Chava was seduced by the snake,
in a garden.
King, woman, snake, garden.

We were seduced away from a womb that nurtured us unconditionally.
We ingested evil.
We could discern relative value.
We individuated.

The story of Purim, the last holiday in the yearly cycle,
is the story of a woman, Queen Esther.⁵
Haman, a powerful subject of the king,
requested the king's permission to kill all of Esther's people.
Haman, we are told, is once again the same influence
as the snake from the original garden.

Haman is sourced in the beginning of the Torah,
in the original garden, where it says **ha'min** ha-etz, "from the tree" –
the beginning of free choice.

At the end of the story,
Esther invites the King and Haman
back to a garden.
Woman, king, snake (Haman), garden.

Esther exposes Haman
for whom and what he truly is: evil.
She distinguished him as the very evil
created in order to allow for the possibility of meaningful choice
and therefore freedom.

In the first garden
the woman was seduced by the snake.
In the second garden,
the snake, Haman,
is invited to the party and is identified before the King as the seducer.⁶

⁵ The name *Esther* means "hidden," as in the subjective presence (consciousness) that can never itself be seen or identified. Try looking for the part of yourself that chooses to look for yourself.

⁶ In the story, Mordechai, Esther's uncle, chose not to bow down to Haman, recognizing him to be nothing more than a servant for a higher purpose.

Haman helped us evolve until we reached the level of awareness from where we could distinguish him for who he is.

On Purim we evolve to the level where we recognize evil as a creation, which allows us the opportunity for meaningful choice.

We witnessed Haman hung by the same noose he had set for us. He built a tower of fifty ‘amot’ high from which to hang Mordechai.

In the end, the King had Haman hung from that same noose. Fifty, in Kabbalistic terms represents the quality of Bina, the womb from which the distinction of good and evil is born.

From this level of awareness, we transcend and distinguish evil as nothing more than the necessary tool that allows us free choice.

Pesach is the beginning of the yearly cycle, when we experienced freedom and individuation.

During Pesach we are challenged to make distinctions and ask questions regarding relative value. Pesach teaches us how to attain freedom.

Our effort on Purim, on the other hand, is to transcend to a state from which we have no need to distinguish good from evil – because the mechanism of individuation (distinguishing between good and evil) does not serve a purpose on that day.

Purim is our opportunity to experience unity consciousness.

We spend the day giving and taking without judgments, often without knowing who the givers or receivers are,

often without knowing who is deserving or not.

We exercise random acts of kindness.
We mock the separating identities behind which we normally hide.
We wear costumes and masks, with joy.

**On Purim
one (love)
trumps
two (good and evil).**

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing
there is a field.
I will meet you there.
(Rumi)

The word purim means “random chance.”

Purim is chaotic.

Purim is hidden.

God is hidden.

Esther’s name means hidden.

All the events that take place in the story seem random and seemingly coincidental. Yet we are told that the quality of Netzach is the standing frequency with which we can resonate at the time of Purim.

And we have seen that Netzach is the quality of orchestrating the details of life around the attainment of a recognized value, as well as, victoriously fighting for the manifestation of that value.

Netzach is not “Oh well, whatever happens is for the best.”
 Netzach is about clarity,
 organization
 and striving
 to manifest that which we choose to be our highest value.

So how does the story of Purim, whose name is random
 and whose plot seems to develop by chance,
 help us resonate with the quality of Netzach?

**Let us remember that the ultimate value-
 the reason for creation-
 is for us to experience intimacy with One’s Loving Presence,
 which is never not here
 and never not now.**

And, as we have said many times;
 the recipient of the experience of intimacy with One
 first needs to individuate.

And, because of the need for freedom,
 One also shows up in our lives
 as evil and darkness.

All to provide an arena for meaningful choice.

But, again, the ultimate value is to experience intimacy with Presence.

And that opportunity is, as we just said,
 never not here
 and never not now,
 whether life presents itself as
 dark or light,
 chaos or perceived patterns.

**The opportunity to experience Presence
 is never contingent on circumstance.**

When living in an arena of relative value,
 we do try to make things better, to evolve.
 We strive to improve our situations.
 We yearn to be more good –
 all appropriate.

However, often,
 we become frustrated and angry when circumstances do not go as planned.

**We get lost in the secondary value,
 of making circumstances better.**

Moshe personified the Midah/quality of Netzach.
 When Moshe was leading us through the desert,
 he was told by God to
 “Speak to the rock before their eyes that it shall give its waters” (Bamidbar 20:8)
 Moshe, instead, struck the rock.

“Hashem said to Moshe and Aaron, because you did not believe in me
to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel,
 you will not bring this congregation to the land that I have given them”

Purim comes to rectify this.
 Netzach is the quality that distinguishes a hierarchy of values.
 If the ultimate value was for the community to behave
 and for Moshe’s intentions to be fulfilled,
 then we can understand Moshe’s frustration.
 However, if the ultimate value is God’s reason for creation,
 which, from our understanding,
 is for us to experience One’s Presence and Love, then:
that opportunity is never contingent on circumstance.

One is not just present
when life makes sense or when things work out.

One is Presence, always.
There is nothing else.
If One is indeed Presence,
Presence is Presence,
and is never contingent on circumstance.

If Moshe did in fact lose that state of connection because circumstance was not working out according to his plan,
then Moshe, at that time,
lost sight of the ultimate value “in the eyes of the Children of Israel.”
And as our leader
and the personification of Netzach,
it was Moshe’s job to hold that perspective for us.

I had a good night’s sleep.

I woke up.

I stretched a bit.

I meditated for a while.

I needed to address something on my computer.

The internet didn’t work.

When something of that nature happens to me: the computer doesn’t work, I can’t start the lawnmower, I have trouble with a simple balancing exercise, the internet provider technician said he would call back in 5 and hasn’t... – I get really aggravated and impatient and obsessed with what is not working the way I think it should work.

Let me yell at something.

Let me hit something.

Eat something.

Something!!

What is my main value?

What is my higher priority?

*Having the lawnmower kick over or
being present and humble and grateful?*

I know, it sounds simple, but for me, it’s difficult.

My body is tense. I feel almost violent.

I’m not totally clear what the root of my frustration is.

Maybe it comes from an old fear of others seeing my inability to perform.

Others expressing frustration that “I can’t do this.”

Honestly, I don’t know. I don’t have a clear connection.

*However, the practice of aligning with simple presence and consciousness
as opposed to,*

*being lost in - how I think things should be and my intense feelings when they don’t,
is, exactly that - a practice.*

*Not so dissimilar to holding an uncomfortable yoga pose or
not eating something that I crave in the moment or
being OK with not coming up with the right answer or
staying present with my body and breath while traveling to God knows where during
an ayahuasca ceremony.*

*And in times like these, the distinction between
embracing, conscious, presence*

and

*impatient, chaotic thinking and fearful feelings in my body -
is particularly clear.*

The opportunity
to experience Dvekut, or intimacy with One is,
by definition, never not now.
The opportunity to experience intimacy
with Presence
is not, as the snake convinced us,
only when a new and improved future (neechaysh)
decides to show up.

Choosing good over evil is necessary.
It is both the opportunity and the responsibility of a conscious other.

So yes, we try to comprehend patterns in order to make good choices and improve
circumstance.

**The ultimate value, however,
is to be in relationship with Presence, in whatever form Presence shows up
in our lives.**

Purim as the standing frequency
of Netzach (value, victory, eternity)
offers us the opportunity
to resonate with the ultimate value,
in chaos, in not knowing, in failure, in all circumstance.

Nothing stands in the way of attaining consciousness
of the divine in this moment. (Epstein, Pg. 62)

At one point in the story Mordechai told Esther to approach the king
and possibly alter how history would play itself out.

His words to her were;

Who knows whether it was just for such a time as this
that you attained the royal position. (Esther 4:14)

This was Esther's opportunity to play her role in evolution's unfolding.
However, as Mordechai also pointed out.

Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone
of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time,
relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place,
but you and your father's family will perish.

(Megillat Esther; 4, 12 - 14)

The Creator's intention will unfold.

Failure is always a possibility, but it can never be fatal
to the purpose of the Creator. (Berkovitz 83)

What's at question is our role in that unfolding.

Purim asks us
to align our highest value
with our understanding
for creation's purpose,
even amidst the chaos
that inevitably cycles through our lives.

**We spend so much time and energy
confusing the conditions for freedom
with the conditions for intimacy.**

I know I'm repeating myself, but this is a biggie.
Relative value, good and evil
exist so that we can exercise meaningful free choice.

We get seduced into thinking
that experiencing true intimacy
is contingent on
how well we perform with our decisions.
'If only...',
'why didn't I..,

'look at him compared to me...'
 blah, blah, blah...
 That's Haman.
 That's the snake.
 That's the Nachash,
 neechaysh – in the future, when, if only...

**Choice in this world is meaningful.
 But, again,
 meaningful choice exists
 for the sake of allowing for conscious individuation.**

**God's Loving Presence
 is not
 contingent on
 how well we perform.**

Fear that I'll make a mistake.
 Despair because I'm not sure.
 Hopeless because I don't know when...
 That's all in the category of bowing down to Haman.
 All in the category of being seduced by the snake.
 Yes, good and bad in this world is an illusion,
 an illusion within which we need to make the best choices we can.
 It's our reality, within which our choices matter.

But **not** at the expense
 of experiencing
 God's Loving Presence
 in this moment.

Evil does need to be recognized and dealt with.
 Haman needs to be defeated.

**And possibly evil's ultimate defeat comes when we transcend
 to where we understand evil's function –
 simply an option that allows
 for meaningful choice.**

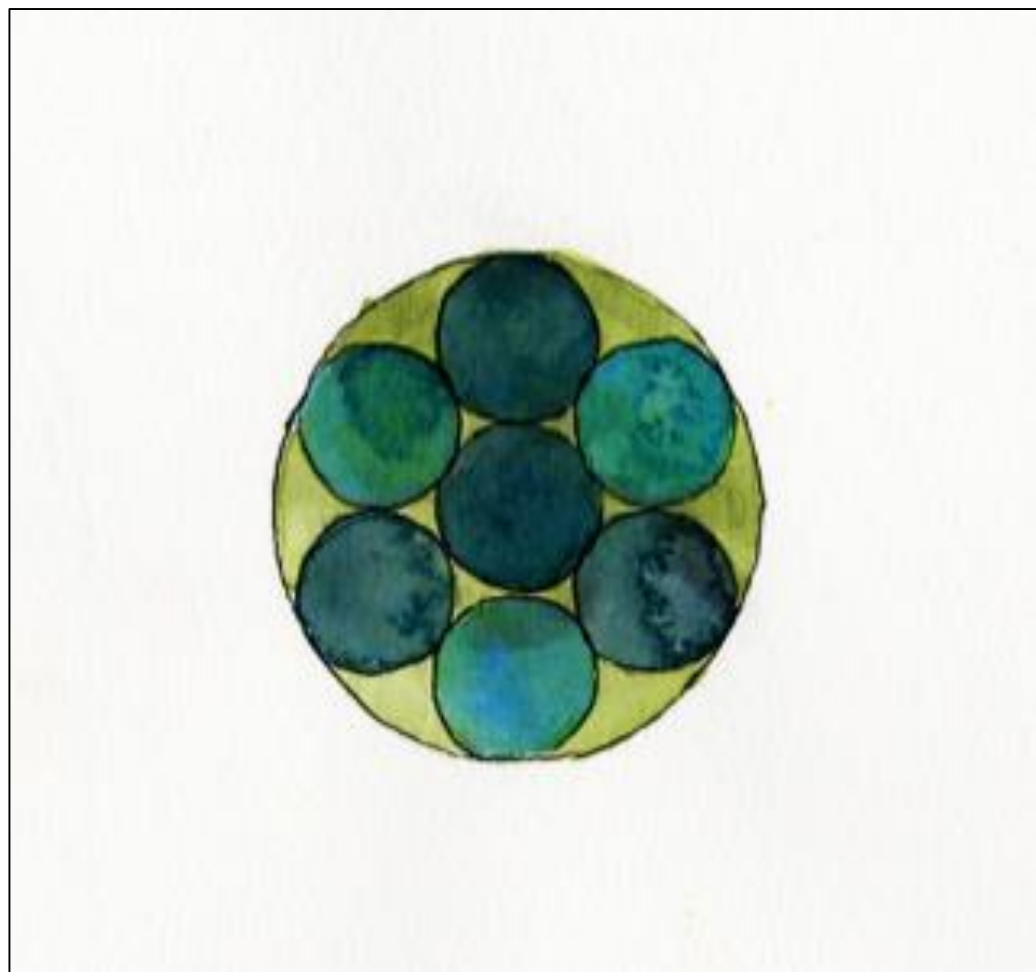
**Do we really want to be seduced
 by the argument
 that we are not yet worthy
 of Loving Presence?**

**Is that something
 to which
 we want to bow down?**

Now is the time to understand that all your ideas of right and wrong were just child's training wheels to be laid aside when you can finally live with veracity and love.
 Now is the time for the whole world to realize that every thought and action is sacred.
 Now is the time for you to deeply understand the impossibility that there is anything but grace and the sacred.
 Now is the season to know that everything you do is sacred.

(Hafiz)

Consciousness: Shabbat



Thinking: Superficially, creation is characterized

by the concept of plurality.

The six days of the week thus parallel the diffuse nature of the six Spherot from Chessed to Yesod.

It is only on the Shabbat that the essential unity of creation is realized. This is when creation is unified with God. The Shabbat is thus called the “mystery of Unity,” when all creation returns to its Source.

(Zohar 2:135a)

We have explored the holidays as standing notes in the repeating melody of the year.

Some standing notes have daily cycles,
some yearly,
some monthly
and some weekly.

Shabbat is a note that repeats weekly.

So much can be said about Shabbat.

It is called a brit, a contract.

Shabbat is referred to as Meayn Olam HaBa, “a taste of the world to come.”

It is called our Queen.

In the Torah’s portion of “Ki Tisa,” we are first given the commandment to keep Shabbat.

You must observe My Shabbat for it is a sign between Me and you for generations, to know that I am God.
 For all generations it is an eternal covenant (bris) between us.
 For six days God created the heaven and the earth,
 and on the seventh day (Shabbat) God rested [the word Shabbat] and was refreshed [the word for soul].

Shabbat occurs every week and yet it is considered our holiest day.
 During the six days of the week,
 we work on our relationships.
 We prepare for intimacy.
 We become familiar with the desires of the other.
 We work on being present.
 We learn to show up from a place of wellbeing.
 We complete all our business.
 We set up our homes in a way that is conducive for rest and intimacy.
 Shabbat is the time for which we prepare.
 It is our time to be together.
 It is our time to just be.
 We're no longer preparing to get together.
 We're no longer getting better at being together.
 On Shabbat we are together with as few distractions as possible.
 That is the note of Shabbat.

The practice of undistracted intimacy on Shabbat is tasting the reason for creation.

When we were traveling in the desert from Mitzrayim to Israel we were told to build a portable structure that travelled with us called a Mishkan. It was a structure within which we were able to commune with The Divine with greater intimacy than when outside of this structure.

We were given instructions how to construct the Mishkan. From these instructions, which are written in the Torah, the rabbis distinguish specific categories of labor: cutting, dying, marking, creating fire and so on.

These were the processes used to construct and prepare the place in which we engage in intimate connection.

They are the same activities we are told not to do on Shabbat.

The thirty-nine categories of creative labor prohibited on Shabbat are derived from the construction of the Mishkan.
 (Shabbat: 49B)

On Shabbat we are not preparing for intimacy.

We are no longer building the space.

We're not arranging the furniture or preparing the food or the candles.

We're not writing checks or checking our balance.

We are not traveling to a better place.

On Shabbat we are

being in

and enjoying

the intimacy for which we have prepared during the previous six days.

Shabbat is a fence around time to remind us of what life is all about.

The frequency of Shabbat is that fundamental;

to remind us why we are created.

There are do's and don'ts on Shabbat.

But the do's are there to enhance Shabbat,

and the don'ts are there to protect it.

The purpose of creation was Shabbat. Although last in the order of creation, Shabbat completed and was the goal for which God brought everything else into existence. Shabbat is thus “closer” to God’s original thought than anything else that preceded it in creation. [In] the world of the Eternal Shabbat, there will be nothing to obstruct or obscure our perception of God. (Likutey Moharan I :18, II:39)

By honoring the boundaries that protect Shabbat and engaging in the joy and intimacy that fills Shabbat, we tune ourselves so that we resonate with a time and space that is conducive for us to experience the purpose of creation.

From earliest antiquity she was honored,
Last in creation, first in intention. (Lekha Dodi)

I used to play the acoustic bass.

The bass is responsible for anchoring the music to the basic chord progression.

The drummer is responsible for holding the beat or the time.

A soloist, like a saxophone player, has the freedom to improvise off of the melody line, beat, or chord progression because the bass and drums are staying on course.

The bass and drums can certainly improvise as well, but they are responsible to hold the structure together as it flows away and back again to the tonic.

Within the melody of the yearly cycle the repeating note of Shabbat is the bass line.

Shabbat is a weekly imprint in time to remind us that intimacy and joy and love are why we do what we do during the other six days.

Shabbat helps us remember.

Shabbat reminds us to slow down.

Shabbat allows us to abstain from building the container, so that we may peacefully enjoy the intimacy within.

Shabbat is our opportunity to experience the joy of unity. It is a break from our striving and a taste of what we’re striving for.

I was recently working with a young man who shared with me a behavior of his. His sharing brought something to light for me.

When he is alone and has time on his hands, he obsessively listens to lectures or fantastical stories through his phone. When he is alone with time on his hands and does not listen to lectures or fantastical stories, an anxiety vibrates through his body. While sharing this with me and getting in touch with his feeling of anxiety, he realized it was the same feeling that he had as a child, when he simply had time on his hands.

At those times he was often confronted by his parents with a barrage of negative judgements: he wastes time, he’s slow, he’ll never amount to anything...

To simply be, without accomplishing, was not a safe space for him.

Understandably, simply being present without getting better, as an adult, brought a feeling that resonated with his old fear-based conditioning.

An image came to my mind.

I envisioned a medieval castle surrounded by a moat that had been invaded by enemy forces. What was a home for one people, was now occupied by a foreign army. Our young man’s home of presence and calm is thrown into turmoil and fear by toxic judgements that have penetrated the walls that protected the sanctity of his peace and quiet. When not conscious of the dynamics of what is taking place, our friend

habitually abandons his inner sanctuary and runs to satisfy the demands of his, now self-initiating inner critic, and fills his head with earbuds full of - “see, I’m busy doing something”.

*When conscious, it comes down to a choice; either fight back the toxic invaders and reclaim lost territory that is simply and rightfully his,
or*

relinquish his home of simple presence and flee to the noise that satisfies the judgements that insist he get something done.

Yes, it’s a fight. It’s reclaiming lost territory.

Rather than unconsciously satisfy the demands of destructive, foreign invaders by accommodating their own self-serving demands, it takes a powerful force to secure the walls around what really is precious and holy;

*a holy space within which to simply be with what is
and not have to be more or other or better.*

It’s the snake in the garden all over and over and over again.

God’s love is not for you.

God’s love is not for now.

First you need to...

Then, maybe...

It’s a warrior’s mission to secure the walls around the sanctity of the present moment.

It’s a warrior’s mission against the invading voices of: not now, not you, get smarter, be more successful, be thinner, richer, more accomplished...

It’s a fight worth having.

It’s a fight to reclaim our home.

It reminds me of sitting in certain ayahuasca ceremonies where the real growth seems to take place during extended periods of silence. The fantasies come. The fireworks are amazing. The serpents and magnificent geometries come to distract our consciousness from our simple breath, our simple bodily presence.

Can we stay with our breath?

Can we stay in our bodies?

Can we stay in the moment?

It’s the most sacred place in which to possibly be.

It’s our castle.

It’s our Shabbat.

In certain meditation practices, there is a distinction between: focused attention and embracing awareness. (Prat and Klal)⁷

In very simplistic terms:

focused attention can be thought of as being able to maintain attention on a specific thing, idea or process,
focusing exclusive attention on the breath for instance.

While

embracing awareness can be thought of as having a general, broad, inclusive perspective to my present circumstance, including to where my attention might be in the moment.

Shabbat is a fence around time,
within which,

the intention of our embracing awareness (this fence around time) is to *protect* and to *direct*

our attention -

to remember and to experience

the loving intention behind creation.

⁷ This distinction is ultimately unified, the second Klal.

“She (Kingship) is called Shabbat when she becomes united in the secret of Oneness so that God’s Oneness may rest upon her.” Malchut.

Just as they (all six Spherot) unite above in Oneness, so she (Malkut) unites below in the secret of Oneness so that it may join those above, the Oneness below paralleling the Oneness above. The Holy One, Blessed is he, Who is One above, does not sit on His royal Throne of Glory until (kingship below) is made over in the secret of Oneness like His, that they may be a Oneness parallel to a Oneness. Thus, we have set forth the secret of The Name (above) is One and His name (the manifestation of His kingship below) is One. This is the secret of Shabbat: She (Kingship) is called Shabbat when she becomes united in the secret of Oneness so that God's Oneness may rest upon her. (Zohar, Terumah 163-6)

**On Shabbat we are tasked to
embrace and recognize a reality,
where there is nothing more to do and
no other place to be.
(Epstein, Pg. 227)**

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