

TRANSFORMATION, LOVE, AND OUR DEEPEST SPIRITUAL WISDOM

"GIVING AND RECEIVING"

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This talk was given on Yom Kippur afternoon, the final day of the 10 Days of Awe, a time of self-reflection and soul searching. Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the Jewish Calendar, and the tradition is to fast for the 24 hours of Yom Kippur. One experience I have often had on Yom Kippur afternoon (20 hours into the fast) is of being TIRED, HUNGRY, AND GRUMPY! Is this really the best time to give and receive a talk!

Clearly I believe the answer can be "YES!"

Why might this be such a good time? Because one important spiritual understanding of the Days of Awe is the recognition that Yom Kippur may be our last day on earth. Thus, this holy day is an opportunity to face our mortality. Death helps focus the mind and heart in a way like no other on what is important, valuable, and meaningful about life.

In that spirit, this talk is offered as if it is my final opportunity to share with others in a public forum the wisdom that I have been grateful to receive during my life.

I invite you to come to this sharing when you are willing to commit an hour of uninterrupted "chronos/chronological" time; and when you feel yourself psychologically and spiritually in a place where you are willing to be open to "awaken," and "fill" yourself in "kairos/infinite/transcendent" time.

Using Hasidic tales, Kabbalistic Shalom chants, Shema as a guided meditation journey, gentle tai-chi/ yoga dyad dances, and haiku poetry, this sharing seeks to help open us to receive (and therefore "take") full advantage of the final hours of the Days of Awe.

Let us share these final hours of "life" together opening to our deepest wisdom, our sense of gratefulness, our highest expression of compassion and love.

Bring as empty a stomach as you are able, , a full heart, a mind and spirit open to forgiveness of self and other, awe, gratefulness, love, and a sense of the cosmic chuckle.

TALK OUTLINE

KEEP BREATHING: DETAILS TO FOLLOW

SEVEN WISDOM LESSONS FROM BREATH

- 1) GRATITUDE, THANKFULNESS (AS IN FIRST INBREATH OF LIFE)
(START OF IN BREATH; INSPIRATION)
- 2) COURAGEOUS, POSITIVE ASSERTIVE CONTROL
(VOLUNTARILY CONTROLLING INBREATH)
- 3) POSITIVE CONTROL WILL TURN TO OVERCONTROL
(IF IT'S THE ONLY STRATEGY)
- 4) POSITIVE YIELDING, LETTING GO....AHHHHH
(ANTIDOTE TO OVERCONTROL, GIVING, FORGIVENESS)
- 5) BLENDING COURAGEOUS ASSERTIVENESS AND POSITIVE LETTING GO
(USING THE ENTIRE BREATH CYCLE AS WISDOM)
- 6) THE PAUSE AND TRANSITION: OPPORTUNITY FOR TRANSFORMATION
(AT END OF INBREATH, END OF OUTBREATH)
- 7) IMAGINING THE FINAL OUTBREATH, FINAL LETTING GO.....
(OPPORTUNITY FOR CLARIFYING WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN LIFE)

NOTE ABOUT CD.

THERE ARE 3 TIMES WHEN THE CD GOES RELATIVELY SILENT.

GAP 1. INTRODUCTION (The cd begins a couple minutes into the talk). Here is the beginning minutes of the talk:

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At a conference on stress a couple decades ago, there was a poster behind the speakers which said (in telegram format):

START WORRYING, DETAILS TO FOLLOW....

Although a joke, each of us, in some way, plays a similar memo to ourself. Each of us has several "stressful or fearful" areas of life that we can easily access at a moments notice, and once accessed, allow our minds to run with worry and anticipation.

So, we need an oasis, a means to create tranquility and centeredness, especially in times of turbulence. Like the samurai warriors coming in from battle to the tea ceremony. "With a sip of tea, I stopped the war." We need to pause and re-strengthen ourselves for the "battle." One of many advantages of focusing on our "breath" is that it can help us create this oasis. This afternoon's talk will focus on the 7 wisdom teachings that can come from focusing on breath. Thus, here, beside the arc, we might have a sign which says:

KEEP BREATHING! DETAILS TO FOLLOW....

This afternoon is going to be structured like the mystical tradition's suggestion for reading the Talmud.....simple, complex, simple. The Talmud is a complex document, involving a multi generational dialogue between Rebbes over questions of how to live. On each page there is a text in the center, then commentaries that literally wrap around the central text expressing different views. It is challenging, and often mentally confusing. So, the mystical tradition says before you begin to read the Talmud, one should look at a plain, simple, white piece of paper. In meditating on this paper, one should feel the intention of oneness, simplicity, wholeness, clearness, emptiness. The Ein Sof, the unity of God. Then one is ready to begin the complex study. At the end, when the mind is whirling and abuzz, one shuts the Talmud, and remeditates on the single sheet of paper. This afternoon, as we focus on breath, we will begin with a simple inbreath; then see that breath can be viewed and experienced in a more complex way; and then we will end with a simple outbreath. (Talk now begins on CD)

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2nd Gap. (This occurs toward the end of Breath Lesson Five):

This yoga dyad exercise is about the process of giving and receiving. Two partners face each other, with hands down, palms toward the partner. On an inbreath through the nose, each person

bends their arms at the elbow, and brings their palms forward and up to waist level. , so that the palms eventually face the sky. This movement is about RECEIVING ENERGY.

Then each person turns their palms over, and bends the hand at the wrist, so the fingertips face the sky, and the palms now face the partner. Each person moves their palms toward the other until the palms touch. This movement is SHARING ENERGY WITH OTHERS.

Then each person raises their hands skyward (left hand toward 10:, right hand toward 2: of an imaginary clock); and opens the palms to the heavens to RECEIVE ENERGY.

Then the palms are turned toward oneself, the right wrist is placed in front of the left wrist (palms still facing self; several inches from one's face. Then the elbows gently drop towards the ground, and the palms, starting at ones face, gently share that energy along the length of the body, face, neck, heart, stomach, groin, and then return to the side of the body--the starting position. This movement is about SHARING ENERGY WITH ONESELF.

The exercise is an illustration that all of need to receive energy. Some take in energy, like the inbreath, but forget (or need to learn the lesson) of sharing with others. Others give very well to others, and need to learn the lesson of sharing energy with themselves. This exercises embodies both.

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GAP 3. This occurs during Breath Lesson Six:

A simple yoga toe touching exercise is illustrated. The intention in demonstrating this exercise is to model that in yoga growth, change (stretching), starts from a centered, calm place.

*) from that centered place, we then try to see and feel, in a gentle way, how far we can stretch and grow, while keeping our initial centeredness.

*) when we gently find a point of resistance, that is a time to pause, and take an inbreath, to recenter.

*) on the outbreath, we can then see if we can ease gently into a little more stretch, perhaps even a 1/4 or 1/8", just gently releasing, breathing out into the tension and resistance.

f) we then pause, and retake an inbreath to center, and when ready, return to the original position.

The importance of this exercise for the talk today, is that it physically embodies a mental principle of seeking to change ourself. Rosh HaShannah goal of growing in skillful habits, and decreasing unskillful habits is superb. However, we need to honor where we are, and allow ourselves to be gentle in how we stretch and grow. In yoga, if you stretch too fast, your muscles will tighten, resist, and reflexively contract to protect us. The same resistance occurs with mental and behavioral habits that we seek to change too quickly. Realize that small changes, 1 or 2 degrees, can be quite significant! Just think of the difference 1 or 2 degrees makes with your body temperature! If each of us can become one or two degrees gentler, kinder, more compassionate, more grateful, more forgiving each day, think what a blessing of positive energy this room would unleash on the world.

(The CD then continues with breath lesson 7 and ends with AMEN)