

Being with Love
Erev Rosh HaShana
5783
Rabbi Julie Greenberg
Leyv Ha-Ir~Heart of the City

Good evening and a warm warm welcome from me and our community. On this very first evening of our New Year, I picture us as a community not just here in person and here in the zoom room but also a community through time: generations of our ancestors and fellow travelers who streamed through the open gates of the New Year and also I picture us as a community in space, all around the world, as Jews and our families and friends greet the New Year. Take a moment to feel this intersection of time and space, inside You, right here, right now, uniting..... Each of us carrying a deeply rooted history of ancestors, and each of us part of a world wide web of connection today.

Grounded in this time/space location, the first day of a New Year!, I want to reflect on our theme this year “V'ahavta ~ You Shall Love!” We will share these words many times over the next ten days and beyond, because they immediately follow the Shema in many of our services.

I heard a story about someone who is now in our Philadelphia Jewish community, who grew up in an ultra-orthodox family and neighborhood in Israel, B'nei Brak. He says in all the congregations, the tradition on these Holy Days is for the very oldest people in the congregation to sit in the first row, facing the congregation. Can you picture that? Not facing the bimah, not up on the bimah in front, but in the first row, **FACING** the congregation. This is where the real elders, the very aged sit, looking out at the faces of the community. Meanwhile the next generation would be up on the bimah leading the services. What do you make of that?

To me it sounds like a representation of the sole and major job of that oldest generation, simply to beam love into the *kahal*, the community. They have already done their work of having livelihoods, maybe raising families, supporting their communities, doing lifelong learning and mitzvot. Now their purpose is to Be with Love, to hold that space towards the end of the life cycle. It's about giving and receiving love. When a little baby is in a state of Being with Love, nothing is expected, nothing is judged, we just all know that baby deserves the flow of our love and we are so delighted to offer it -- they hold the potential of the future. When an elder is in a state of Being with Love, nothing needs to be expected or judged, we can just appreciate that person exactly as is because they hold the past, they got us here. I think the seating arrangement in Bnei Brak for the holy days reflects this awareness.

Over these holy days I will be looking at what life needs to look like for us to arrive at a destination of Being with Love. The *ultimate* Being takes place after we are no longer embodied in human form here on this earth, after death we all join the Eternity of All that Is, where literally our minerals re-mingle with the whole. While we are here in embodied form or in the words of Tielhard de Chardin, while we are “spiritual beings having a human experience,” let's live towards readiness for that eternity. How can each of us *practice* Being with Love, giving and

receiving along the way so that we are ready to be those elders beaming love into the community?

I guess we all know it's harder than we might think. Easier said than done.

I saw a tee shirt the other day: Reality is a Challenging Lover!

Through everything we encounter in life -- the demands of being in or out of particular relationships, the challenges of each era such as identity quests, finding the right work for you, multi-generational interaction, and handling the losses we inevitably face, yes reality is a challenging lover. As Archbishop Tutu says, "It takes time for us to become fully human." Spirituality can sustain us on the journey.

In evolutionary terms, spirituality is good for survival. It contributes something. Spirituality got invented everywhere, in every culture, all through time. The survival of the "fittest" actually meant the survival of people who could not only be inventive and creative technically such as by discovering the uses for fire or inventing the wheel but who could also hold their troubles with the biggest consciousness, with faith and hope, with the greatest human resources and the most solidarity between people who created meaning and connection out of hard times. The survivors are people who have discovered something about Love. During these holy days we will be mining our own Jewish tradition for teachings on what it means to be commanded, inspired, to live into Love. V'ahavtah ~ You Shall Love.

Take a moment to look around at your fellow travelers for our journey into 5783. For a moment of visual access sharing I will say

I see presence, people showing up, being here, in person and on zoom.

I see willingness, intention, good will.

I see resilience because every life has its hard hard times and every life has its enormous blessings.

I see longing for a good life, to be good, to have it be good for others.

That's what I see in this room and this zoom.

So look around, take it in.

You might want to offer yourself a prayer of intention for your time in these sacred services.

What are you wanting to have happen here? Today, for this holy day, and also for your time on this planet between birth and death: What do you want to have happen here? This is your own prayer that you can carry through our time here together.

Let's co-create a time that is nourishing and challenging, reassuring and inspiring as we enter the holy gates of the New Year.

Welcome.

(Gratitude here for Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer, my weekly chevrotah/study buddy partner, and for the privilege of engaging in text study and fascinating discussion together.)