GOOD YOM TOV!

Today is the Birthday of the World!

In the beginning G-D created heaven and earth …..and on the sixth day G-D blew a breath…and “poof” …here we are… **evolved** lumps of clay whose **consciousness is G-D’s breath.** But, in the beginning we lumps weren’t very conscious nor were we very self-aware, as a matter of fact **when we woke up** the first thing **we were** was **hungry.**

…Do ever wake up like that??? before your feet hit the floor you’re jonesing for that bagel…a bissel cream cheese, lox, red onion, tomato……

Lately I’ve been waking up like that… before I’ve even finished that sesame bagel of bliss, I’m already checking my emails, and my news feeds…then I rush into the shower and before I know it… I’m at work… I get out of my car and think…How did I get here? seriously some days I don’t even remember the ride there…

One recent morning as I parked my car and got out, one of the nurses I work with pulled up at the same time next to me…I said good morning and she said …**not really** I just went to Dunkin Donuts to get my coffee, and when I came out I got into someone else’s car…I was so embarrassed and confused I ran out of the car and left my freakin coffee…but I don’t know where I left my brain…

Some of my friends too have been expressing increased symptoms of depression and/or anxiety and are feeling over all more fatigued, disconnected, spacey, detached, and confused in reaction to the current state of our country and the globe.

In the Viddui section on Yom Kippur morning we confess our sins, and in our mahzor **there’s that list** andthe last sin we confess on that list is **succumbing to confusion**. Each year, I am preplexed…why is being confused be a sin?

Asa clinician with a specialization in the treatment of trauma and a survivor of childhood trauma I now am sadly seeing the symptoms of trauma **collectively**. Many of us actually feel triggered and traumatized by the current unpredictable state of our country and the world at large. This causes us to function as if we are being threatened. Many of us are in **survival mode,** the essence of which is a feeling of powerlessness and lack of **self-agency aka** **self-generated actions.**

As a result we grow unaware that our bodies are speaking to us of a “speechless terror” and in response our nervous system creates intense physical survival responses which are designed to protect us from harm.

\*\*When in survival mode, our nervous system **essential hijacks us**. **As if on automatic pilot** our brains and bodies attempt to make sense of our environment, as well as the images, thoughts, emotions, body sensations, and movements from our internal state. In a millisecond, through complex operations our brains compare incoming current data to memories of our past experience in an attempt to assess threats or danger and prepares our bodies to take an adaptive physical action.

\*\*This is what is referred to as fight or flight and or freeze reactivity. What we expect to happen in the very next instants determines the immediate action we make. Our predictions of what will happen next are predicated upon the sense we make of what is occurring in the present.

The overarching purpose of our nervous system making meaning and predicting the future is to assure that the immediate actions we **make** will preserve our survival. **But surviving is not the same as thriving.**

In a recent session with one of my clients who is also a psychotherapist and a survivor of childhood trauma announced that she was changing her name to Christina…when I asked why, she referred to an essay entitled \*“The Disembodied Lady”, wherein Oliver Sacks describes the devastating effects of **proprioceptive** loss afflicting one of his patients, Christina. Because of a virus that attacked her proprioceptive nerve fibers, Christina’s sensory control loops had broken down. On the physical level, Sack’s notes that her body lost all position and tone. She couldn’t move, sit or stand, her body would collapse.

\*We have language to describe our 5 senses, taste, touch, smell etc. but Sacks says, “no language exists to describe what it feels like to live without a proprioceptive sense of our bodies.” When asked to describe how she felt, Sack’s Christina borrowed the language of emotional trauma, she said she felt empty, unreal, disembodied and inauthentic…

Initially my client and I both chuckled…but then she became tearful and began to express how she **“feels inside out”,** that she has lost an **embodied sense of herself** and that her ability to “propreocept” feels like it has been truncated because the world seems so broken and frightening and she has become frozen and stuck.

\*The word Proprioception comes from the latin proprius, **meaning one’s own.** Just as our 5 senses takes in information about the outer world, what we see, touch, smell, taste and hear and transmits it to our brains, the little known 6th sense of proprioception also gathers and processes information, but from the inner world of our bodies, **the world we alone inhabit.**

\*Through Proprioception, we are also able to synthesize emotion and imagination. When we watch a bird in flight for instance, and “feel” in ourselves, in our muscles and our bones uplift, glide and soar with the movements of that bird…that is the feeling of proprioception. When we dance and sing by feel…that’s proprioception too. So, proprioception is viewed as the interface of body and mind, as well as the source of emotional expression…we react to what we see, hear, smell touch and taste and **“feel bodily**” as well as mentally healthy and whole.

As I was preparing for this D’var…**I got it**…the sin of **succumbing… succumbing,**  which **can lead** to a profound and utter state of a kind of dissociative fragmentation, far, far from **G-D whose breath is my consciousness.**

Martin Buber defined Teshuvah “as the name given to the **act of decision in its ultimate intensification”.** He says it denotes the decisive turning point in a person’s life, the renewing and total reversal of their normal course of their existence. To Buber **decision-less-ness is a sin.**

He concluded that “in the midst of this decision-less-ness, the will to **decide awakens**, the cover of routine life bursts open, and our primal forces break through, storming heavenward.”

“In the one who returns, creation begins anew, in their renewal the substance of the world is renewed.”

When we think about the cycle of our autumnal holidays which we have now entered…we are called to turn and return, we do this by **going inward and reaching upward,**

***“turning inward is a gesture,* not a place”,**

**and to make it, we need to “*feel”* connected to our bodies, mind, spirit and soul.**

\*\*When our feelings match our thoughts, when the information we receive from our senses is congruent with our sensations and movements, we feel at one with ourselves. Our inner experience constitutes an integrated whole and our behavior emerges from a sense of alignment, integrity and integration, appropriate to our current inner and outer reality.

During these days of awe, we return to our quintessential self…**who we really are**. Teshuva implies that we all have within us a reference point for wholeness to which we can always return. As we say in our morning prayer, the soul you have given me is pure, and no matter what damage has been done to us in life, to our sense of self, to our personal dignity-no matter what damage we ourselves have done we can always return.

Jews too have a legacy of trauma…throughout history they necessarily and innately lived more in “time” than in space.

But their hearts held **that secret place,** that had no affinity with places or things. Yet they seemed to have embodied an inner richness of “being” while their souls were always on the way to “becoming”.

I wish for all of us and every living being on this planet a joy filled, healthy, safe and embodied New Year. A year within which we will regain our self-agency… to rise above and beyond confusion and turn inward and outward with heartfelt compassion. To reunite and reconnect our body with our mind, our spirit and our soul…and return to love…love for ourselves and love for one another for deep, deep, deep personal healing and global transformation.

Also, I hear that Sharon and Michael will be serving Ben and Jerry’s latest flavor… IM-PEACH-MINT for dessert today.

**L’Shana Tova!**

\*\*Sensorimotor Psychotherapy: Ogden, Fisher

\*Trichter Metcalf, Simon