

Good Morning

To American poet Langston Hughes' question
'What happens to a dream deferred?...It explodes..'

A citizen of Ferguson adds:

'What happens when one desists from dreaming,
when the very exercise of dream seems futile?' He answers: 'Despair'.
Dreams are necessary for hope. Dreams need unencumbered space and time
for contemplation and new ways of seeing, that the dreamer,
may begin to heal himself, and to mend the world: tikkun olam.

Dream is creative process conceived in exile:

exile, in time, as is Shabbat, or in space,
exile from the exigencies of daily life,
exile from the ethical determinants of the dominant society.

'God walks, man dreams, and the work begins': says Portuguese poet
Fernando Pessoa

That work is the development of moral judgement which begins in Exile
from Eden.

The indignity of exile inspires the potential nobility of tomorrow.

Eve, mother of humanity, precipitates exile from Eden.

Through that exile we become freely human.

Freedom means being subject to our own moral discipline,
to discover and be beholden to our higher image,
with the strength to try to live accordingly.

The discovery of moral codes is the true work of creation.

In the perfection of Eden, good is given.

Not so on earth. Searching for, choosing good, is not easy
in the chaos of daily circumstance.

We imperfect humans need the calm, the space, the time, to dream..
the indeterminate panorama of Exile.

We remember Sarah, whose name connotes essence, particularly today,
Rosh Hashanah, the birthday of the world, because Sarah is mirror to the
creation of the world, where, as the midrash, TZIMTZUM, limns,
God exiles part of himself from omnipresent space/time so that there may be
room for creation.

Without space, no thing can be.

Without the dream, there is no reality.

Sarah endures two literal exiles:

the first with Abraham as they feel commanded by god to leave home,
family, familiar land.

Then, famine forces them forward into yet another exile.

I suggest that these Exiles may be the experience needed for Sarah's

daring dream to find its voice, the challenging voice of God within:
Her third, vital, inner exile.
How does Sarah conceive after years of infertility,
doubting her promise of motherhood, the promise of generations?

In nod to scholar Aviva Zornberg's intuition:
an intimation of absurd faith bursts forth.. Sarah laughs.

Pro-creation.

Sarah's laughter unlocks herself. The gates of her womb part,
even as the constriction of her throat is released..
Sarah, says the scribe, 'laughed within herself'.
Laughter is Sarah's defenseless dream of motherhood,
exiling knots of logic, opening the unbounded, irrational delight of creativity.
A space within arises.

"God has brought me laughter', she calls, when she can speak again,
'All who hear will laugh with me'.
An eleventh commandment may well be the psalmist's post script to
'be fruitful and multiply':
'make a joyful sound' Listen. Generations of laughter.

Sarah is the only Biblical woman whose name is changed:
given a silent letter, a space, before, for, the conception of Isaac.
With the birth of her son, Isaac, named 'he shall laugh',
Sarah becomes our Mother, Mother of the family of Jews.
Each birth is an exile from protection, dependence, and limitation,
to potential, to independence, to freedom to interpret, and reinterpret
the good as we envision it.

Sarah seemingly harsh demand that Hagar and Ishmael be exiled
from her and Abraham's home, can be, must be, reflected by a glass
less darkly.
Their exile is necessary that they may fulfill their dream,
as is the exile of Adam and Eve, and of Abraham and Sarah.
Yes, it is treacherous. Responsibility is risky, no guarantees,
But permanent safety is bounded, static, demeaning.

Exile is not an easy thing to ask, nor easy to experience.
Yet, exile is a necessary step out of our comfort zone.
Through its endurance we are strengthened,
through its void we learn to sustain our life and lives of others.
Our Hebrew name: IVRIT means crossing a border.
We are a family in motion, moving through unfamiliar
landscapes, life-scapes, to face untried contests and charges.
Home, to restate the cliché, is not where you make your bed,
but where you take a stand.

Not the 'cutting edge' but The 'GROWING edge' of tradition,
Solomon Schechter says, is the tradition of Judaism.

Moses' formidable dream is our exile from Egypt, from our slavery.
Through unwelcome terrain, and inconstant faith,
we complain and suffer, and struggle, and err, yet we walk, we do,
we listen. We are born into, we become, a people. We live.

Would Abraham and Sarah leave all they knew without believing
that they hear a command from God to do so?
Would we be here today if they do not walk that alien path?
Would Abraham heed Sarah's demand did he not believe that God tells him
to do as she says? Would we be here today had he not ?

Sarah's voice is the word of God. Abraham listens, and does,
despite disquieting doubt.

'In dreams begin responsibility': says Irish poet William Butler Yeats.
Taking responsibility calls for the courage of optimism.
Courage does not supplant fear. Fear distorts, making meaning malleable,
problematic.
We must open ourselves to hear truly what Sarah asks of Hagar and Ishmael,
and why.

In the house of Abraham and Sarah, Hagar is neither wife nor sister.
Ishmael is neither fully son, nor fully brother.
In such a society, within the forced immaturity of slavery,
no individuals can become what Hagar and Ishmael might become,
what Abraham and Sarah become: responsible for themselves, and for a culture.

Exile is Sarah's profound, paradoxically essential **gift** to Hagar and Ishmael,
offering them, and us, through her son, Isaac, space to dream.

**That dream is the true inheritance:
the opportunity to be answerable to our own ideals.**

Syrian poet Kahlil Gibran sings:

'they have exiled me from their society, and I am pleased.'

May Hagar and Ishmael, Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac, Our family,
journey with Gibran's music, be healed, and laugh.

The parsha in which Sarah dies is called "the life of Sarah",
not the death of Sarah.

Sarah is, I believe, the only woman in the Torah whose years, 127,
are numbered. Every year, every word, must be counted, must count.
Perplexing as it seems,

Sarah's decree of exile Of Ishmael and Hagar may be what completes
Sarah's life— what makes Sarah as whole as humanly possible: a prophet:

one whose words are recorded, and live, for all time.

May this Rosh Hashanah be a dream which exiles us forward
to our own work:

the fulfillment of generous, generating, possibility.

May we, each and communally, celebrate the sacred gifts of this dream:

the duty, honor, joy, of being, even as Sarah is,
an instrument of continuous creation.

L'Shana Tova

Joann Green Breuer
Rosh Hashanah - 5775