

Holiday Dreaming
Kavannah for Yom Kippur
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It is Erev Yom Kippur. Since August 27, the 1st of the Jewish month of Elul, Jews (and not a few non-Jews like me) have been anticipating “the holidays”.

Elul is called *chodesh hacheshbon*, “a month of accounting”. It is a time of taking stock of the previous year, repairing relationships, examining mistakes in order not to repeat them. The month is also a time of preparation. The two themes – accounting and preparation - interweave. How we account for the past is related to how we prepare for the future.¹

It’s a strenuous time. Soul examination is something I would prefer to avoid. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks reminds us that evading responsibility for our mistakes is a thing we humans do. Still, wiser voices than mine remind me that going through the process of identifying mistakes, apologizing for them, moving forward with the intention of not repeating them again, are all part of the process of both creating and moving into a future more whole than the past has been. I am glad I have many companions on the way.

The wave of energy we call Yom Kippur began its flow in Israel a little more than 7 hours ago. By the time it completes its movement, it will have encircled the entire planet. For a few moments, I want to invite us to close our eyes and just bring to mind our friends and relatives, even the multitudes we will never meet all around the world (in Israel, Eastern Europe, South America, Canada etc.) who are engaged in the energetic liturgies of Yom Kippur – the prayers, the teshuva , and the commitment to greater expressions of tzedaka – millions of Jews and not a few non-Jews joining the wave as it rumbles on.

We are not alone in the work of this day and we are caught and surrounded and embraced in the movement of the prayers and energy of so many people who are already well into the process of the day. As we join our energies, all that we do here in the next 25 hours will also move forward to those who join us as the wave moves across the various time zones.

The 24 hour news cycle constantly peppers consciousness with the violence we humans are capable of inflicting on one another. It is tempting to wonder what difference does it make whether or not I try to make amends with others, whether or not I ask for forgiveness, whether or not I offer forgiveness when it is sought from me? Doing teshuva takes energy. Searching and examining the dark shadows is exhausting - - a little like being in a dark cave when the flashlight batteries are giving out. But the ever present news points to the necessity for this process of accounting and preparation - - and puts a glaring spotlight on what happens when humankind is unwilling to do the necessary work of seeking out and owning responsibility for the actions and attitudes that have brought us to where we are. What kind of miracle would it be if we created a moratorium on all violence for a

¹ 60 Days –A Spiritual Guide to The High Holidays by Simon Jacobson Kiyum Press, NY. p. 12.

month? If as a species we agreed to do the accounting? To face into our responsibility? To own all that we have contributed to the estrangement that results in so much of the pain that assaults us in the morning news? What would we be like if we recognized that we have the ability to stop hurting one another, to refuse to make the same mistakes again? What if we could take into a new year the intention to reconcile, to let go of anger and resentment, to heal the wounds of the past. What if we could summon a corporate will to create a more intentional and merciful future for ourselves as a species.

A little nagging voice says "Dream on, fool!"

But the wave of Yom Kippur energy is powerful and full of hope. What we do here together in the next 24 hours matters. I am not willing to give up the vision for a more harmonious future. The traditions of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur have carried the vision for untold generations – a vision of a humanity with swords of every size and shape beaten into ploughshares, a vision of justice, of love and mercy, of walking humbly with The One who calls us to choose life, a vision of accountability for the past, and of hope and forgiveness and reconciliation for the future.

A fool's dream? So be it. It is Yom Kippur. Let us dream together.