



Congregation Ner Tamid

on the Greenspun Campus for Jewish Life, Learning, and Spiritual Renewal

Light and Dark in the Time of Corona

This week I was so honored to have noted writer, publisher and scholar David Suissa as my guest on Compelling Conversations. Ira Sternberg who serves as moderator, is real a wonderful partner in bringing the vision of this idea to fruition and raising the bar every time we produce it. Our topic was trying to look into the future as to what “post Covid” Judaism will look like. I hope you will take time to listen to our lively discussion which is posted on Facebook. At the end, Ira asked us for final thoughts. David immediately recounted the challenges he has had as a publisher of Jewish Journal that was delivered through synagogues (now closed) and being in the news business where daily between Covid, the elections, antisemitism, the middle east, etc. he has been challenged to keep up. And then he concluded by saying he viewed this year of 2020 as the balance of light and dark. In other words, he struggles, like many of us do, with remaining positive and optimistic when confronted with daily headlines that often make us shudder.

When it came time for me to respond, I couldn't help but reflect upon the *midrash* concerning this past week's Torah portion. It is an unfamiliar but powerful *midrash* which describes how 7 things were created before this world was created. One of them was “the Torah written with black and white fire!” Upon deeper reflection I understood the symbolism of the black and white fire. The Torah letters themselves are written with a special black ink. But the letters would not be visible without the white parchment that surround them! The *midrash* sought to teach that light and dark are part of the same process of discovery, learning and living.

We live our lives in a balance. Good and evil. Light and dark. Hope and despair. It is not good to focus too much on that which brings us down; nor to let our life get so unbalanced that when bad things do happen, we are thrown for a loop beyond which we cannot recover.

This time of Covid has been quite the ordeal. And while we look for glimmers of hope, we know that it will be a while more until we are in brighter pastures. How long, none of us know. So, we must not let ourselves become fatigued, distraught or disgruntled. We are defined not by how we behave when times are good, but how we respond when times are tough.

Leonard Cohen, the great singer/song writer expressed similar thoughts in his own unique way:

There is a crack in everything (there is a crack in everything)

That's how the light gets in

That's how the light gets in

That's how the light gets in

Don't forget: We are stronger together and we need each other.

Rabbi Sanford Aksehrad