

Shabbat Shalom With A Side of Torah - Lekh-Ikha

Objects in the rearview mirror, they appear closer than they are." These are words that flowed from the musical (if a little offbeat) talents of a guy named "Meatloaf." His ballads are full of incredible imagery, and each verse of this song stirs up memories from my own youth. Looking back, at "the magic and the mystery of love," the racing soldiers of fortune," and even the hand that grabs me from behind and it pulls me back," each make me look at the journey of how I got through the death of one of my best friends, the first exotic love of my life, and a host of issues at home. And I hope that what I have most to show through it all is perspective. Certainly life is never about a single moment. There moments that have greater defining effects on our lives than others, but whether the incredible blessing or the horrendous curse, they are my history, but not necessarily my present or my future. And, I guess that one of the things that I hate most about elections are the ways we drag out a candidate's past and try to judge him or her today for something they did or did not do some thirty years before. I am a very different person now than I was. For some that is a good thing, for others, a tragedy, others just scratch their heads in wonder, and of course, there are a whole lot more that did not care then and do not care now. But, what I know is that it has been an incredible journey and I learn more, each day about the vastness of what is out there – over which I am clueless.

Even when it comes to my own life, I know what I know and have no idea what most everyone else thinks. People make assumptions about what I know and what I do. Sometimes I benefit from their mistaken judgment and sometimes I suffer from their presumptions of my intention and guilt. But as I look back, thus far, I know that most of the time I gave it my best effort and have to believe that even where I have fallen short, there was a next day wherein I could try harder. I expect that this tradition will continue. But this reflection on life is important for perspective. Too often we fail to look at the broader picture, dealing with only the immediate influence on our long term decisions.

We begin reading of Abraham's spiritual journey this week. He is not yet even called Abraham; he is Avram. According to the text, he becomes Abraham after proving himself worthy. Avram is father of many. Avraham is father of the many – a specific many – us; the people who trace their spiritual inheritance back to this book's story line. And over the next many weeks, we will read of his exploits as the Torah presents the story of his journey. There are several really difficult events in Abraham's story, yet somehow we still call him "Avraham Avenue." He is our chief ancestor, the patriarch, and the metaphorical father of three different western religions. Where we look at those moments that cause us grave concern in his life story, we accept and understand that there is more to the man than the pieces of story that we got. We understand that we have judged him worthy of our admiration even where we did not like "this" or "that" choice or behavior. But what makes us accept Abraham, while at the same time we reject each other? We get caught up in defining value in our lives and in the lives of others based this event or that circumstance, and fail to see the forest for the sake of the one blighted or over abundant tree. We place and lose long term trust over temporal moments that we then let color every future engagement, even to the point of irrational attack or defense. And yet, when we are the object of this over-reaching judgment, and it is negative, we call fowl.

We need to spend less time judging and more time engaging. Where we find disdain for another, yet watch other's love and admire the person, perhaps it is we who are missing out, and not them who are "snowed." Where we look to find the good in each other harder than we look to hold an event against another, we all win. Let's commit to this victory more often. Shabbat shalom.