

Thoughts From THE HEART

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1900HRS.

## THE LONG JOURNEY BACK HOME - STILL LEARNING PART III

When our destination is blocked by the shadowy figure of our inner doubt it is easy to get detoured off our path. The Mishna gives us sober encouragement in the words of Rabbi Tarfon: "The day is short and the work is great... We are not responsible to complete the work; nevertheless, we are not free to desist from it." My journey back home has been a long journey, one filled with enlightenment. My former alienation from Judaism has also served to shape my thinking and coming home. I had no mystical experiences or cosmic revelations. Instead, a most wonderful sensation of inner peace came over me, filling me with deep belief and joy. As I sat at my seat, during the first Chanukah service that I had attended in a long time, the outside Jewish volunteer's from Columbus, Ohio

WARMLY EMBRACED ME. THEY LOOKED BEYOND THE COLOR OF MY SKIN AND SAW A FELLOW JEW. THEY DIDN'T ASK ABOUT MY JEWISH ROOTS, BUT I EXPLAINED TO THEM, HOW MY ORTHODOX MOTHER, FOLLOWED HER HEART AND MARRIED MY BLACK FATHER WHO WAS RAISED CATHOLIC. AS I EXPLAINED, IT BECAME CLEAR TO ME THAT THEY WERE GRATEFUL TO HEAR ABOUT MY JEWISH ROOTS, BUT IT WAS NOT IMPORTANT HOW I WAS JEWISH JUST THAT I HAD COME BACK HOME TO MY PEOPLE. AS I SAT THERE, WHILE HOLDING EACH OTHER'S HANDS, RABBI TARKEN'S WORDS BECAME INCREASINGLY POIGNANT, INDEED THE DAY IS SHORT AND THE WORK IS GREAT. INDEED THE DAY IS SHORT, AND I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A FINISH LINE, NOR EVEN A FINAL GOAL. THE WORK OF BECOMING WHOLE NEVER ENDS. LOOKING BACK ON MY JOURNEY SO FAR, I SEE HOW THE YEARS HAVE SOBERED ME. I'VE FINALLY DISCOVERED THAT I CANNOT CHANGE EVERYTHING I SET OUT TO CHANGE IN THE WORLD, THAT I MUST LEARN TO LIVE WITH THE LIMITATIONS OF BEING JUST HUMAN, AS WELL WITH MY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AND MY UNHEALED WOUNDS. YET I AM STILL AN INCORRIGIBLE IDEALIST. I STILL BELIEVE IN OUR ABILITY AS HUMANS TO LIVE WITH ONE ANOTHER SIDE BY SIDE, REGARDLESS OF OUR DIFFERENCES. THE CHALLENGE IS TO HONOR AND GIVE AN EAR TO

ALL VOICES, EVEN TO THE MOST UNPLEASANT AND CRITICAL, INSIDE AND OUT. THE STILL ANGRY ANCESTORS, RESISTANT SPOUSES, AND EVEN ONE'S OWN FLESH AND BLOOD WHO RAIL AT US FOR GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN, I SAY TO EACH AND EVERY ONE THEM "SHAMATI" (I HAVE HEARD YOU). ALL VOICES REQUIRE RESPECTFUL TOLERANCE, BUT ONLY ONE VOICE MUST BE FOLLOWED. THIS IS THE VOICE OF OUR HEART. THIS VOICE OF OUR HEART WILL IN THE END, KEEP US ON OUR LIFE PATH, GUIDING US TO OUR SOUL'S SECRET DESTINATION.

Shalom Aleichem  
[PEACE BE UNTO YOU]