



Shalom Maker

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Notes from the illustrated fringe...

Living is a spiritual art form. Living with a sense of completeness opens one to the multi-dimensioned world of the sacred.

A friend once said to me while hiking the hill country of tribal Thailand: “expect to be winded after walking a trail that winds up a mountain. That’s not what’s important. What is significant is how quickly you recover your breath and how well you overcome fatigue and how soon you climb the next one.” That’s trekking raised to an art.



So it is with our daily routine and with the inevitable surprises we meet along the way.

There is an emotion, feeling or lesson associated with every experience under

the sun. Some, we would like to repeat, some, avoid. But always, we know there will be another and another after that. A good tour guide helps us to frame those experiences so that we might recover our breath, overcome our fatigue and prepare ourselves to climb the next hill.



From my perspective, if I pack a camera and a lunch, the trip is better remembered, its difficulties minimized and I can live the process of making art as I walk toward the horizon.



It's About Time

Erev Rosh Hashanah
2006

Time dominates our experience. We live by clock and calendar. We stand in the midst of time streaming by hoping to block or impede its inevitable currents. Thank goodness for instant reply, for the camera's ability to freeze frame, for the recorded preservation of sound, for antiques, archives and museums and for memory, recall and recollections. Thank goodness for hopes and dreams to escape the gravity of time.

This is the Eve of the Rosh Hashanah: happy New Year to all of you. May this New Year be a healthy one, a comfortable one, a safe one, filled with moments of love and affection, enriched with many instances of joy and satisfaction and perspective and continued contribution. Shanah Tovah to you and to those you love and to those who receive your care and concern and support. Shanah Tovah to the generations that you have set into motion. Shanah Tovah to all who roam this earth for a place to dwell, who strive to find in the passage of time a moment of sweetness and a sense of completeness. Shanah Tovah to all who seek the soul-satisfying experience of Shalom.

Rosh Hashanah is not about a first month, a seventh month or even a New Year. It's about time!

But wait a minute...have you ever asked yourself the question: what is time?

You could say: we know it when we see it. It's the hands on the clock moving forward propelled by some mysterious force, flowing relentlessly, nuclear powered and kept in perpetuity in Greenwich, England. By the way, scientists haven't a clue about what time is. It flows. It propels us forward from second to second. It might be made up of physical elements not yet discovered or universal laws still to be determined according to the timetable of the Divine and by the instruments of science. That's it.

In the early part of the 20th century, Albert Einstein revealed that the passage of time depends on circumstance and environment. He showed that the wristwatches worn by two individuals moving relative to one another, or experiencing different gravitational fields, tick off time at different rates. The passage of time, according to Einstein, is in the eye of the beholder.

Once time was determined to be relative by Einstein who was a clerk in the patent office in Switzerland...that young man had such a vivid imagination...time was no longer objective...oh No, time was rendered subjective. Let me tell you what that means. This realization shatters our

comfortable sense that the past is gone, the future is yet to be and the present is what truly exists. I know, I know, it doesn't make much sense. How can our concept of conventional time be merely an illusion?

But wait, remember what the Passover Haggadah says: the wise person sees himself/herself as if he or she actually experienced the Exodus from Mitzrayim, from Egypt. And remember what Deuteronomy says: You (meaning all of us in this and in every sanctuary) are standing this day at Sinai. And not only are we here but also those yet to be are here as well. And don't we say when a friend or loved one dies that his or her spirit is still with us, empowering us, inspiring us, motivating us, affecting us? See, the past, present and future are all mixed up. That's why Einstein had to be Jewish.

So what does it all mean to us? What religious question, what sacred search, what spiritual journey lays at the heart of our lunar calendared Judaism?

I suppose we can ask the questions about the meaning of time this way: Did we use our time wisely? Do we have purpose, a meaning and a direction? Are we relevant?

Yes, says Torah. Yes, says Talmud. Yes, say the rabbis, prophets and saints. Yes, say those who preceded us in life who opened the door for us that we may enter into existence and into the realm

of experience. Yes, say we. Yes, say those who love us. Yes, say those who care for us and who are concerned about our well being. We are important. We are significant. We are needed and necessary. We do have relevance.

King Solomon, the first existentialist, according to our tradition, wrote the Book called Ecclesiastes. He wrote that some times are sweet and some times are surprising and difficult. He understood that a finite amount of time was given to each of us to experience life, to add to life, to contribute to life, to pass on to others insights and knowledge and to link life to life. We are the living, sensing, creating transmitters of the future, of the time to come, passing treasures on to the next generation and to the next and the next. We are the past, the present and the future. Time is all mixed up in every one of us.

This we know regardless of what time it happens to be. And this knowing is that which makes us relevant... We have walked this earth in pursuit of love and to soften longing. We have blessed our children and our bread. We have linked the generations with life and endowed them with the future. We have welcomed the home born and the stranger. We have learned much and we have forgotten some of what we learned. We have made a little history and we have retired from the hustle and bustle. We have made a few changes and we have accepted some of the

conditions. We have ventured out and returned home. We have laughed till we cried and cried because it hurt. We have circled the planet in planes, trains, ships and automobiles ...with distances seeming shorter and with time seeming to speed up. We have been useful, productive and helpful and we have stood by and watched and waited. We have sung songs of praise and hymns of gratitude and recoiled when taken for granted. We have rallied our spirits to the light and we have walked at the edge of the narrowing, darkening, maddening fog. We have created memories. We have inspired others. Our footprints in the trail are forever identifiable. We have crawled then walked then sprinted then walked quickly then walked slowly forward. Forward, says time, always forward toward the horizon. Moving forward with a hand full of belongings, with a pocket full of love letters, with a mind full of memories and with a heart full of awe and wonder at the privilege of having the time to experience so much.

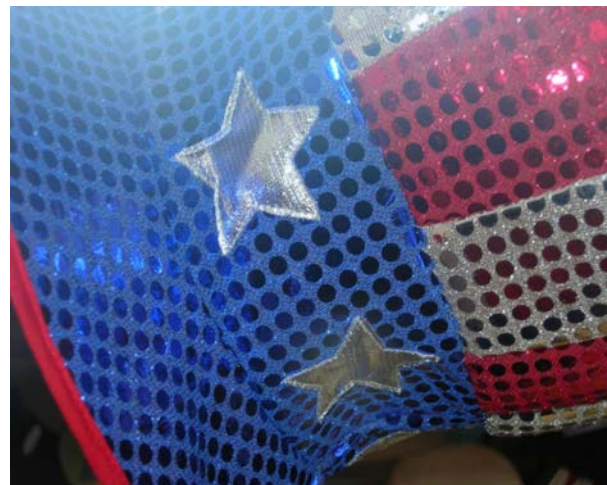
The world exists in a visit, in a phone call, a letter, a gift, a small consideration. The solar system is present in a blessing, a prayer, a hope, and an insight. A galaxy is present in a child and grandchild and in a great grandchild. The universe is present in a lesson learned and a lesson passed along. The cosmos is present in a touch, in a word of thanks, in a look of love. All are time bound.

We call the Sacred the Infinite, Eternal All. We strive to connect with its indefinable likeness. We listen for the voice in the fiery bush. We are willing to wrestle with angels, hoping our hand will be stayed when standing at the altar on Mount Moriah. We wait for the divine's reappearance. This search is eternal. Our search is time bound. So is our reunion with the Infinite, Eternal All.

The Rosh Hashanah is about time. It is about rethinking time. It is about seeing ourselves as time. We are the face of time. We are the space of time. We are the content of time. We are the relevance of time.

So on this Rosh Hashanah it is a sacred duty to have a good time.

Shanah Tovah!



Pages from A Visual Prayer Book

Novato, California
August 2006



Bless the essence, the core and the ground of being. Bless the sacred and the Holy and the precious. Bless the design that reveals essence. Bless the unseen particles that make up existence. Bless the designer, the maker, the sculptor and poet.

Bless the matter and the material that contain every form imaginable and forms that are not yet ready to be imagined. Bless the one who liberates essence from clay, from a tube of pigment, from the letters of the alphabet, from numbers on a digital palate and from the heart and soul. Blessed the art of freeing the form, of bringing essence to life.

Fairfax, California
August 2006



Bless the snowfall outside my January window covering the earth with frosty powder. Bless the magnolia tree flowering outside my April window. Bless the watching for my Father's return from works and endeavors through my Shabbat window. Bless the wind and the wet and the taste of flavored Kool Aid powder on a toothpick while sitting in front of the porch windows and looking out on to the storm. Bless the sight of my newborns through the nursery's window. Bless the unfurling of a fishing net on the water below the trestle outside a speeding Thai train's window. And bless the window opened to call to a loved one.

Bless the perceptions and bless the reflections when we are window wondering.

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