

Rosh Hashanah 5781 reflection - X.Lorenzo

Thank you, Rabbi Leora and Stuart, and Shana Tova and thank you to our Kahal. It's an honor to share these words with you today.

Over these past few months we have experienced that a great deal of what makes up our humanness - such as our close interactions with each other, our physical embraces, or even the most minor cough - are what make us most vulnerable to the scourge of this global pandemic. More than ever, we understand so clearly that our humanness is our intrinsic vulnerability.

Because of this, I wouldn't begrudge any of us if, in a moment of magic, a single wish could be made to extract all that makes us vulnerable so that we could survive this moment. However, I would encourage you to consider that these vulnerabilities are actually the sources of our collective strength.

Often the telltale traits of vulnerability are portrayed in our dominant culture as less than valuable or perhaps even a show of weakness. These include engaging in meaningful communication, sharing deep emotion, having compassion, and listening, among others. As we collectively reflect on the past 4 years, and even going back way beyond then, we know that none of these behaviors are inherently a sign of weakness or are particularly easy for anyone to do. Rather, there is a fundamental lack of these traits at the highest levels of our country's leadership and a commitment to using fear to drown out these capabilities.

What boils down in all of these traits are the singular, fundamental questions of "Did you consider me? Did I matter?" During this time of so much uncertainty, the answers to these questions have reshaped our relationships to each other. Each time we wear a mask or wash our hands, we are indicating "I am doing this in consideration of not just myself but of others." Whether we call to check on each other, run errands for each other, comfort each other, or make sure to communicate clearly - we are saying "I want to consider your needs alongside my own." We won't always get it right, but taking each other into consideration, even when we may not completely understand each other's experiences, fundamentally puts us forward even if we feel as though we are moving in any direction but.

To do any of this, means seeing ourselves as connected to each other and our ability to be vulnerable as a critical enabler to healing from the many pandemics upon us at this time.

As Rabbi Leora highlighted yesterday, be gentle with yourself and others. As we embark on this new year, I am wishing those in this community the following: deep Hope, the kind you need in order to rebuild after loss, as well as deep, connected Joy, the key to navigating collectively out of what is holding us down and is the source of our freedom.

Shana Tova.