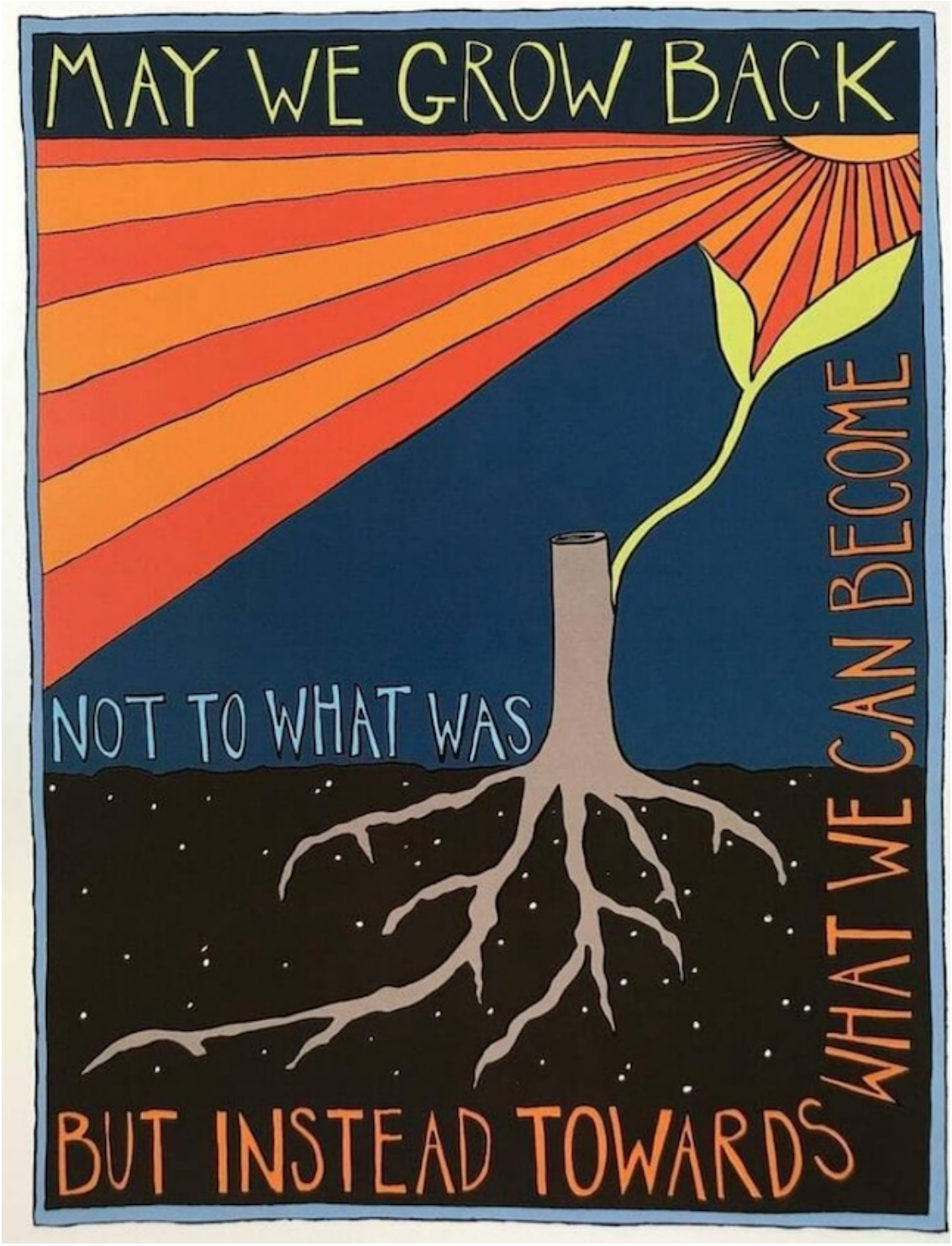


Post-Election Thoughts
November 11, 2020

This blog is dedicated to all of the U.S. troops who gave their lives defending our country.
May their memories be for a blessing.

I knew that I was stressed when I started eating cookies for breakfast, granted they were molasses ginger and I tried to rationalize that they were somewhat "healthy," made with organic ingredients, including spelt flour and coconut palm sugar but I knew the truth.

It was not healthy for me to eat cookies for breakfast on a daily basis.

The stress and uncertainty of this past week in America has been overwhelming. Having spoken with numerous friends who were also stress-eating, not sleeping well, and not able to focus on work, it is clear that this election had taken over our lives. For many, regardless of one's political stance, it felt as if the future of our county hung in the balance.

At the end of the day, the majority of Americans chose decency, character, empathy, and truth--

but nearly fifty percent of Americans did not make this same choice. For many, this election was not about character and as I have learned from those who voted for Trump, the election for them was about policy, the economy, and foreign policy.

While they may have their talking points, I can't help but reflect back to an article in Forbes magazine where Alison Durkee shared that "more than 700 economists, including multiple Nobel prize winners, urged voters not to re-elect President Donald Trump in an open letter blasting the president's "managerial incompetence" and failed economic policies.[1] And "a bipartisan group of 489 former national security officials endorsed Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden."[2] With numbers like these, from both Republican and Democrats, it seems hard to ignore that many experts professed who our next president should be.

And yet, we have nearly 70 million Americans who voted for Trump.

Our nation is clearly divided.

How did we get here? The answer to that question is most certainly not under

my purview. I leave that to those more knowledgeable than me in those areas. However, I want to look toward the future and ask the question—how will we live together? Or perhaps more accurately: (how) will we ***choose*** to live together?

In his acceptance speech, president-elect Joe Biden spoke of the need to heal America, to come together in unity. I believe that many Americans agree with this message in theory—but how will we actually work to accomplish this in practice? In times of despair and trouble, I turn to my faith to guide me. It is from this place that I offer you some suggestions.

1. Judaism teaches that we are all created in the image of God—all of us—regardless of political affiliation, sexual orientation, race, creed, religion—all of us means ALL of us. How can we—how can you—work to see the Divine in another? How can we learn to listen to one another's stories? Organizations like Resetting the Table give me hope that we can work to truly see each other and work toward reconciliation and compromise.

2. Judaism also teaches not to speak evil about one another, not to demonize, not to dehumanize. Words matter; words have power. Jews, along with so many other minorities, know too well what happens when this kind of language is used in political, social, and cultural discourse.

During this past week, I came across two Facebook friends who had shared inaccurate, false videos meant to express their outrage over the injustices perceived in the election process. Both videos involved either ballot manipulation or destruction; both videos were meant to sow seeds of mistrust in our election process. Sadly, each video was shared hundreds of times with thousands of views each. Each showed election "fraud;" each, later discredited by multiple media outlets. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, a nonpartisan law and policy institute, extensive research regarding voter fraud is very rare.[3]

Friends, we must do better.

Please think carefully before sharing posts and videos, or forwarding articles. Do your research. If you feel outraged when you see something—stop—check in with yourself and ask, "What about this is triggering me?" Remember that our minds are wired to see the negative first; we are wired for safety and security. Even though most of us no longer have to fear an attack by a wild animal,

our neurobiology doesn't differentiate between that threat and the threat of misinformation.

Perhaps most importantly, we need to stop engaging in on-line conversations and instead have actual face to face conversations with those who have differing beliefs. As Brené Brown teaches, "People are hard to hate close up. Move in. Speak truth to bullshit. Be civil. Hold hands. With strangers. Strong back. Soft front. Wild heart." Real change comes from real people having honest and civil conversations.

3. Judaism honors minority voices. Our Talmud records both the majority and the minority voices. The Rabbis teach us that we can hold opposing views simultaneously. So, while I will not permit lies or racism, misogyny, homophobia, etc... to be part of this equation—we as liberals, independents, and conservatives can work to find common ground while continuing to espouse different beliefs and perspectives. We also must be aware of the incredible power social media has over what we read and what appears on our feeds. If you have not watched The Social Dilemma, I highly recommend it.

We must work to expand and break free from the echo chambers in which we find ourselves and our viewpoints.

A fascinating New York Times article shared that last year 526 Americans of all political affiliations came together to dialogue in Dallas. The findings of this endeavor: political scientists, James Fishkin and Larry Diamond found that voters become more informed, and even moderate their views, when they're pulled into a room together and given neutral information to discuss.[4] I truly believe that we have to decide how we are going to live together. How will we get our neutral information and how will we be able to discuss it?

For it is in these discussions that we will have to tackle hard questions about how we want to live. Will we choose to honor our planet and our beloved Mother Earth in the economic, cultural, and societal decisions that we make? Will we once and for all agree that racism, anti-semitism, white supremacy, homophobia, misogyny--and all the other -isms and -phobias no longer have a place in our country? Will we choose to work together as one human race, to

share our resources, striving toward the common good for all and not the common good for some?

Our country has some very serious problems that we must address. Perhaps looking to the natural world can remind us about the reality of our interconnectedness. If we look to nature, to the places where biodiversity thrives, we learn that all forms of life thrive with a natural sustainability where there is greater species diversity.

I believe it is so with human beings—let us live together as a biodiverse nation, lifting each other up—not tearing each other down—honoring the divinity in each other, and working for a more perfect union.

It will not be easy but if we choose wisely and lovingly, we can do it together. In the words of President-Elect Joe Biden,

"And there has never been anything we've been unable to accomplish when we've done it together."

As always, I like to hear your thoughts and comments. Please hit respond to share them.

Until next time,

Amy

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[1]https://www.forbes.com/sites/alisondurkee/2020/10/22/more-than-700-economists-beg-americans-not-to-vote-for-trump-open-letter/?sh=4b2c5e0d297c

[2] https://thehill.com/policy/defense/517938-nearly-500-former-national-security-officials-formally-back-biden

[3] https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/ensure-every-american-can-vote/vote-suppression/myth-voter-fraud

[4]https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/10/24/upshot/these-526-voters-a-year-later.html

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Amy Grossblatt Pessah graduated magna cum laude from Washington University in St. Louis with a double B.A. in History and Jewish Near-Eastern Studies. She continued her education by attending Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion where she graduated with honors and received a Master's degree in Jewish Education. In January 2019, Amy was ordained as a rabbi by ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal.

A spiritual seeker since childhood, Amy has sought both experiential and intellectual paths on her quest for a deeper understanding to life's most pressing questions such as "Why are we here?" and "What is our purpose?"

Throughout the years Amy has studied a variety of religions, participated in interfaith work, and has been a student of mindfulness and Jewish mysticism. As well, she has been trained in Spiritual Direction, Jewish energy healing, Reiki, Integrated Energy Therapy, and has completed 400 hours of chaplaincy hospice training. Whether in a classroom setting, a Spiritual Direction session, or in a hospital room, Amy strives to help individuals connect more deeply to their own inner wisdom and to the Source of All.

Amy has recently published her first book, *Parenting on a Prayer: Ancient Jewish Secrets for Raising Modern Children* (Ben Yehuda Press, March 2020) which has received national praise.

Visit http://www.asoulfuljourney.com to learn more.

Upcoming Events:

Jewish Meditation at Temple Beth El
September 23, 30
Wednesday evenings
8:00-8:45 p.m. ET

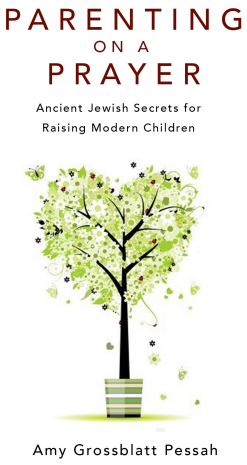
JKid Philly
September 22, 2020
"Finding Blessings in the Mess!"
Register here: https://jkidphilly.org/event/blessings9-22-20/?instance_id=14298

Can't join Rabbi Amy on zoom?
Click on the links below to listen at your convenience:

Click here to listen to Rabbi Amy discuss gratitude and grounding practices during this challenging time with Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer

Click here to listen to Rabbi Amy discuss parenting with Amy Breeze Cooper of Soul Path Parenting

Click here to listen to Rabbi Amy as she discusses prayer and its connection to parenting with Janet Conner



To order Amy's new book,
Parenting on a Prayer:
Ancient Jewish Wisdom for Raising Modern Children
(Ben Yehuda Press, March 2020)
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