

Friday Evening Message – 10 July 2020

The world is in a state of unprecedented change and flux, with news bulletins everyday about the suffering of others, and things to worry about. On top of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have also been confronted with the murder of George Floyd.

My hardships have been minimal. I feel as though my lockdown experience has been blessed. Initially, there were some difficulties in getting food, and not being able to drive anywhere to walk, and then later the walk had to be longer than the drive. But visiting farm shops to buy groceries cannot be called a hardship, and the walks in our beautiful spring were a sheer delight.



The beauty of nature, Bawdsey, Suffolk

It is all part of a revolution, a type of reawakening. It was horrific to hear about the murder of George Floyd, but I actually felt that the events that followed were heralding in a new age, a time when the suffering of Black and Minority Ethnic people are to be taken more seriously. Black Lives Matter. I realised I knew very little about the history of Black people in this country, and almost felt as though I wanted to take on the campaign to change the school curriculum to include a more serious discussion of the contribution of Black people in this country. I watched the TV series that David Olusoga produced, 'Black and British: A forgotten history', based on his book.

Stereotyping, prejudice, and hate are not entirely related to education, but education can help relieve people of their ignorance. As Jews, and members of a cultural and religious group that has experienced such damaging prejudice and hate, this helps us to

appreciate that the narrative needs to change and BAME people given more dignity, more acknowledgement of their strengths, skills and contributions to our community.

There has also been the reawakening of awareness about what matters and who matters. Initially, the forced separation from loved family and friends helped me to realise how important they are to me; I experienced a deep sense of sadness at not being able to meet up and desperate to do so on Zoom. I have felt grateful for the virtual Seder and Shabbat services and online family gatherings. I had a 70th birthday celebration online, and it was not a second-rate experience. It was truly celebratory. I attended Limmud online and the LJ Biennial too.



An ancient tree, Freston Wood, Suffolk

We have come to appreciate the role of key workers more and seen how much we depend on their steadfast commitment to our wellbeing and keeping us alive, sometimes at the cost of their own life. It is all very humbling, with the attention away from media personalities and directed towards staff on Covid-19 wards, cleaners, nurses, doctors, and staff in supermarkets. As we move out of lockdown, I am sure we can remember the intensity of daily news bulletins with ever higher numbers, the weekly clapping for NHS workers resounding along the street, bringing us all together, and the surge in volunteers reaching out to the more vulnerable members of our community. Compassion and kindness have been seen in bucketloads. People reaching out to others, despite the requirement to socially distance. I must not forget to mention the limelight given to statisticians and epidemiologists, those most sober of professions. Never thought of as being glamorous, but now it is appreciated how important they are.

Lockdown has been a time of reflection, as though I am on a retreat, with walls around me, beyond which there is anxiety about the outside world. This retreat has also been a time of online opportunity: enjoying events and recordings, playing music; even attended a yoga retreat and a Tango course (instrumental, not dancing).

Empty days, with no structure. A breeding ground for mental health problems, a time when anxiety can be heightened as the future is so unsure, and we are unsure that the world will reconstruct in the way we knew before. Indeed, would we want this?



An unspoilt coastline, Bawdsey, Suffolk

The news producing industry continues to bombard us with new things to worry about, the threat of unemployment for people of working age, a recession. I have my balm,

things that make me feel better about life, things that distract me and elevate me, and mainly these are family and friends, nature, and music. The gentle pace of baroque music, with its simple harmonies. So calming. The glory of spring walks around a wooded spot, through the local park, along the beach, by the side of a river. The beauty of trees, their aged trunks, the sun shining through the leaves, the swaying of grasses in the wind. Not corny, just beautiful. Who is in charge? Not us. The opportunity to express thanks to the unknown source of beauty and goodness also provides solace and peace.

Shabbat shalom,

Beverley

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