

Friday Evening Message – 23 October 2020

Shabbat Shalom (Shabbat Shalom to all my American friends)

Is there anybody there?



I mean is there anybody 'upstairs'? I am no theologian nor a philosopher. I don't know. No-one knows. Someone may say that they are certain, but they don't know.

God is described as 'good' and as being 'the Almighty'. Why then is there so much evil and suffering in the world? Why did the Holocaust happen? Does this mean that God is not good or is not almighty or that there is nobody there? Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith said that he had been asked how a good and all-powerful God could allow the world to be like this. He said that he had no answer. He could not know what was in God's mind.

Perhaps it is a test for humanity as a whole and for us as individuals. But we do not and cannot know. So we are stuck with a rotten situation. Or are we? Look at the suffering, illness, poverty, malice, prejudice and lack of concern around you. Not your fault? Nothing to do with you? No? What if you were the one suffering or sick or hard up? You'd be grateful for someone reaching out to you. Have you no imagination, no empathy, no shame? If you are able to, put your hand in your pocket. (If you haven't yet contributed to the Kol Nidrei appeal, now is the time.) If you are not able to do that then talk to someone who needs support, smile at someone, put a hand on their shoulder to show you care or restrain yourself from saying the harsh word. All of this applies under your own roof, and with friends and family, and with complete strangers. You can also make a difference by doing something for your community, either the wider

community or for NLJC. We do need your help. Please don't leave all the work to the Council, the rabbi and a few other members.

Hillel said "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn."

One day it will be time to go upstairs. What will you have done that really matters? What will you have achieved that really matters? Will your time here have been wasted? The only way your time can be meaningful is if you've made the world a better place. Most of us are not going to improve things on a global scale, but if you improve one life then you will have improved the world. And if there is someone there then I reckon you will have clocked up some credit. Remember – I'm watching and She may be watching too.

Chaim, still of Cromer

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