

Cracks, and Stories for a "Great Transition"

Forget your perfect offering
Ring the bells that still can ring
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

(From Leonard Cohen's "Anthem") <https://thebirdsings.com/forget-your-perfect-offering/>

As we look around at our country, and the world!, we can see cracks growing and becoming fissures. Some of us may wonder if and when they will tear our country and us asunder.

We are living through a most vulnerable crossroads - not only in this country but in the evolution of the human species. More than any other year we poignantly ask- who will die, when, and in what way? Some of this death is beyond our power to control. Yet a surprising amount indeed lies within our grasp, if we choose to engage.

What will determine our engagement? The story we tell about the present as well as the pathways to different future possibilities. 2000 years ago, Onkelos, who offered the first standard translation of the Torah, explained G's breathing of a "nefesh khayah" into Adam's nostrils at the very beginning of our sacred Creation story, as a "ruakh m'mal'la"- a spirit of speech. 1000 years later Rashi expounds upon this by explaining that our human souls are particularly "alive"/ chayah because we are able to speak.

Especially over these holy days, when we immerse ourselves in so many words, we can challenge ourselves: For what purpose are we using this gift of speech today and beyond so that we are more "chayah"/ b'chayim/ alive? What are the stories we tell, and how do they acknowledge complexity while bringing forth life?

This is actual life and death we're talking about. Who will live and die this year? And next year, or over the next decade, or 5 decades, because of our actions, or inactions starting **this year**.

Yes- you, me, our children. Our grandchildren.

Our sacred Jewish story has us wandering in the desert for 40 years. Imagine those youth born just 40 years from now (assuming humans last that long). What stories might they tell about each one of us- the ones that lived at this great pivotal time?

The stories we tell directly affect the future. Not only that, but we have more power than we admit or often know how to access. So will we step into our power and choose life-for us, for loved ones, and for the generations to come?

It is the Divine, together with us human partners, that will determine who will live and who will die. Let us unequivocally and powerfully choose life!

We know: the world is in tumult, and things are intensifying. Leading up to and following the election will likely not be so smooth, and it seems very possible that there could be increased violence in the coming months.

And that's just the very near term events of our presidential election. Then we have all the other related issues that have been surfacing especially since spring: COVID, racial injustices, historical wildfires sweeping the west coast, droughts, storms.

The reality of the world today can make us want to crawl into a hole and hide with our loved ones, letting ourselves be lulled to sleep by the very real challenges and immediacy of simply getting our most basic needs met. And at any rate, if we're telling ourselves the story that there's nothing we can do except vote, why mull over things?

Not only that, but some of the issues- like COVID and climate change make us exceedingly uncomfortable because around the globe we are all in this together *and there is no way out*.

But perhaps there **is** a future story that not only makes sense of the chaotic and frightening times we are living through, but gives us hope, reminds us of our power, and can unify humans around the world to activate the unique communal power we can wield.

Join me “on the 10,000’ balcony” as we look at the intensity of these times from a different perspective.

Perhaps the unrest, uncertainty, and vulnerability of these times is actually a sign of great development potential for humanity. So- a question for you to reply to via a Zoom poll! Please respond with your answer.

When you consider the evolution of the human family, which developmental stage would you use to describe humanity overall?

- a) Infancy
- b) Toddler-hood
- c) Adolescence
- d) Adulthood
- e) elderhood

Duane Elgin, the author of Choosing Earth, asked this question of numerous audiences when giving speeches around this world, and the results were consistent: 75% of the respondents chose “c- adolescence.”

Adolescence: a time period marked by a lot of confusion, tumult, and -if one can get through it- a lot of potential at the other end.

Plead put your responses into the chat:

As we think for a moment about adolescence:

- a) what would you say characterized this time for you and others you know?
- b) What helped you grow and mature?

It is far from easy to develop new perspectives and create new habits. Yet perhaps each one of us came into this world at our respective birth time for this particular purpose: to help guide our species through the craziness of adolescence!

Elgin has been researching “The future” since the ‘70s as a senior social scientist. Whether working for the Presidential Commission on the American Future looking at the 1970s-2000s, or the Stanford Research Institute- where he co-authored a study with Joseph Campbell looking at the deep archetypes drawing us into a more promising future, or his work on a study for alternative futures of the EPA for the period of 1975-2000, he has rich experience.

Since 1978 he has been writing and speaking about the decade of the 2020s when humanity would “hit an ‘evolutionary wall’ and begin making a pivotal turn as a species. An ‘ecological wall’ emerges when we run into the physical limits of nature to sustain humanity. In contrast, “an ‘evolutionary wall’ emerges when we run into ourselves- when we run into the limits of our adolescent behavior and are pushed to turn toward more mature ways of being and living on the planet. An evolutionary wall presents humanity with an identity crisis as great as our ecological crisis: Who are we as a species and what is the larger journey we are on?”(p. 8).

“... We are challenged to wake up together and rise to a higher maturity and responsibility as a species... or else continue our rush toward ruin.”

It’s of course not so simple, though. Even if we choose to mature, so very much will perish.

Much is in fact already lost, even before the “Great Burning” that began last year with the fires in Australia and the Amazon, and which has of course continued on our very own western coast this past summer. We must - in return- make space to feel the pain and to grieve. To feel the love we have for life. The deep love of life.

To feel and taste the richness of *being alive* that no money can buy, and that allows us to be held in love as death surrounds us and threatens to descend even more intensely.

To ground ourselves in life and love so that we can continue to work for life – responsibly and powerfully putting our own lives on the line so that no moment is wasted.

That is the way to choose life today.

As our liturgy calls out to us:

U'tshuva, u'tfillah u'tzedakah ma'avirin et ro'a ha'gzerah!

T'shuvah- Turning from harmful pathways to life affirming pathways

Tefillah- hard, yet compassionate, self assessment that reaches deep into our hearts

And *tzedakah*- strong, powerful actions of justice

Together **these pathways can transform** “how bad” things get.

According to Elgin, 3 possibilities exist for the unfolding of humanity as we go through adolescence: chaos, authoritarianism, or great transition to an early adulthood as a regenerative, planetary civilization. Yep. Some of those are pretty bad.

And - assuming we'd prefer the “great transition” pathway, unfortunately all our work during our lifetimes cannot assure us of seeing the results we pray for. In fact, I'm personally **not** counting on seeing these final results.

What we DO have the power to do, however, is to help determine which of these three pathways will become most influential for orienting our journey into the future.

We also have the power to develop habits of reflection and resilience to guide our steps.

Did you know that legislators supposedly change their opinions after just 3 phone calls?

Did you know that geese fly 70% faster when they are in formation?

As a unified, powerful community – especially when we unite with others locally, around our country, and around the world in ways that were inconceivable in the past- we can be unstoppable!

We no longer have the luxury of complacency. We no longer can count on Ruth Bader Ginsburg and John Lewis to speak and act for us. The time to step into our own power and to fully enter into our partnership with God for life, love, and wholeness is now!

Reach out to me if you'd like to be part of the team asking how we- as an Oseh community- can engage more deeply together.

What is the story that we will tell ourselves in 5781? Will we get hung up in perfection and an inability to know exactly what to do at this uncertain time? Or will we help the old world meet this new world, not only letting the light come through the cracks but helping

to grow its strength? What bells can we ring now, and what will we - or the future generations- be able to ring just several decades from now because of the choices we each are making at this very time?

Gmar hatimah tovah. Together with the Divine, may we each write ourselves into the Book of Life, for our own sakes, and for all that we love.

Amen.