

## Still Dreaming Through the Tears After All These Years

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Have you ever felt yourself given to unrealistic visions or great dreams? If so, have you noticed how more often than not you are out of step with those around you? Pursuing unrealistic dreams makes us “quixotic” —just like the chivalrous yet inept titular character, Don Quixote as dreamed up by Spanish writer, Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616). If you look around the world today, at the condition that it, and we, are in, it may be hard to find hope or dream of an abundant future. When we dream impossible dreams, we are quixotic. Yet if you are labeled as “quixotic” then you are simply written off as chasing windmills—a cynical comment upon your quest usually delivered with a healthy dose of dismissiveness of the value of any dream whatsoever.

I returned from a recent sojourn in Jerusalem where I was studying at the Hartman Institute and visiting with Hebrew poets. I was reminded of the power of dreaming by the remarkable Hebrew poet, Yonadav Kaplun. Despite not having seen him since our last encounter when I was working on translating his epic poetry cycle about the Three Weeks leading to the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, called, “Scent of Darkness,”<sup>1</sup> still somehow our connection was immediate, still alive and strong because we shared a dream— that poetry and stories offer a bridge to bring our dream lives into our real lives. As he handed me new edition of his book of stories, he told me about a newly blended family of two divorcees with children remarrying who were struggling to become a unified family. It seemed the kids had nothing in common – until they got around the Sabbath table to read their favorite stories that first appeared as a serial in the local papers of their respective communities. Each of these families realized they both had dog-eared copies of Yonadav’s book and what drew them closer was a shared love of reading these same stories.

We all have a story and a dream. As I begin my tenure as your rabbi, I am eager to hear your stories and your dreams. I am also eager for us to dream together about a vibrant future for Beth Abraham. Community allows us to dream bigger and, in supporting each other, to galvanize hope. This month we will be marking a day of destruction and hopelessness in Jewish history with 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. Our world may feel similarly broken. But the story doesn’t end there... Six days later is the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av, aka Jewish Sadie Hawkins day—when hopelessness is transformed into the hopefulness that will rebuild this world through love.

In my waking dreams I find myself returning to an inspirational book to dream and rebuild before the New Year is upon us. In *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey of Transformation* (2003), my Conservative colleague, Rabbi Alan Lew, z”l, shows us with great clarity that there are times in life when we are utterly unprepared: a death in the family, the ending of a relationship, a health crisis, (and especially this pandemic he never lived to see)—all those moments when the solid ground we once stood upon disappears beneath our feet, leaving us reeling and heartbroken, as we stumble forward trying to find our way home. The High Holidays in Rabbi Lew's waking dream really start with the destruction of our Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temples at Tisha B’Av and culminate with the rejoicing in the personal sukkah each of us dwells in upon the ruins. In this Jewish dream cycle, we are being asked to release our cynicism and hopelessness and travel together towards the companionship and joy of Sukkot’s hospitality by inviting in the *ushpizin*, and appreciating the simple gifts of life—even in its merest breaths.

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<sup>1</sup> For an excerpt of Yonadav Kaplun’s “Scent of Darkness” see here: [https://www.poetryinternational.com/en/poets-poems/poems/poem/103-7262\\_SCENT-OF-DARKNESS-I](https://www.poetryinternational.com/en/poets-poems/poems/poem/103-7262_SCENT-OF-DARKNESS-I)

How in 1945 a German-Jew exiled to America could renew his hope remains an abiding mystery and inspiration to me. I often think of him, Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), that exilic philosopher and pianist who struggled to find hope in utterly hopeless times right after the *Shoah*, but even in the ashes of Auschwitz he felt that it is “above all this, **hope**, powerless, alone, which permits us to draw another breath.” To live “**like dreamers**” really means that “[t]hose who sow in tears, will reap in joyful song.” (Psalms 126:5). If it be Your Will...