



Patience in the Time of Corona

"When do you think things will get back to normal?" is a question I am asked almost every day. I am not sure if it is simply "small talk" or if people think as a rabbi, I have a celestial crystal ball. But I do know that the question is asked in earnest. We all want things to go back to the way they were before the corona virus took over our lives. There is a certain amount of impatience that we are all experiencing. We want to get back to our normal lives. When we see hoards of people at the beach or in large crowds without masks and mutter "tsk, tsk, I can't believe they are not social distancing or wearing masks" it is a reflection of our disappointment that we just want everyone to tow the line so we can get out of this mess. At the same time those gathering and acting as if nothing is wrong have reached the end of their patience and feel that somehow after following the rules for months, its time to let loose a bit.

Patience.

Perhaps there is some wisdom in the Hebrew word for patience "*Savlanoot*." Each Hebrew word has a core meaning. The core meaning of "*Savlanoot*" is "*Lisbol*"...to suffer. In the Hebrew mind there is a connection between patience and suffering. Patience requires something from us. Patience is not easy. Patience changes us. Patience is uncomfortable.

Patience.

Perhaps we are a bit more on edge. A bit sadder or depressed. Or we've grown weary of binge-watching TV and have lost our appetite to try something new because we want to do that "something" with others. Of the many things asked of us perhaps social distancing is one of the hardest. We are by nature social creatures and we long to find opportunities to be together. And while social media and zoom and phone calls all help a bit. There is no substitute for the face to face encounter. Even if we must wear a mask. A reminder that things are still not normal, as if we needed such a reminder.

I do not have a crystal ball. Nor am I a prophet or the son of a prophet. But my gut tells me that one day when this is all over, "normal" will look different. It may even feel different. This experience will have changed us. So perhaps instead of looking backwards as to what we have lost, we need to look forward to what we have learned. Perhaps, as hard as it is to be patient, this virtue will come in handy throughout our lives. Little things and big things that bother us will seem insignificant in comparison. Adversity will be faced with a new weapon in our emotional arsenal...patience. And the things in life that we really, really want will be worth waiting for. And given what we have gone through, perhaps we *will* have acquired that patience to wait.

In the words of the poet Violet Fane (1843-1905), in her poem *Tout vient a qui sait attendre*:

ALL hoped-for things will come to you

Who have the strength to watch and wait,

Our longings spur the steeds of Fate,

This has been said by one who knew.

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