



Torah for Turbulent Times: **"Time Out"**

It's something we give our kids when they need a breather. A coach takes one to regroup or strategize with her team. And, it's a period of time we all need at some point from scurrying along the endless hamster wheel of time. If only, it hadn't become mandatory because of this global pandemic. If only, so many lives weren't being lost, and so many more lives being endangered. For now, it seems to be helping with healing and preventing more illness and death. Yet, it's also so very isolating. Whether we're stuck at home, with family or alone, just going from home to work and back again, we all feel it in some way. Let's face it, there's not much silver lining when it comes to isolation and the current "time out."

This past week's Torah portion, Tazria-Metzora, speaks about the reality of isolation when it comes to preventing the spread of disease. Upon being afflicted, the ancient priest and patient went through three steps: examination, quarantine and purification/healing by means of isolation. We learn, "When a person is considered contagious...that person shall dwell alone; dwelling outside of the camp." (Leviticus 13:46) Remaining in isolation and taking a time out from daily life, in this case, protected others from infection until the disease healed.

Beyond preserving the community and getting well, I wonder in what other ways taking a "time out" might have proved beneficial to the individual? Was there healing in the process of sheltering in place in isolation? Given all that time alone, would it become natural to become more introspective? Was it a time not just to consider one's physical condition and portfolio, but to take stock in the metaphysical and spiritual one as well? Or, did it all just feel too hard, overwhelming, and, well, lonely!? Some have suggested that despite the difficulty, this period of biblical solitude promoted time for reflection and reevaluation. I wonder if that old adage may turn out to be true? Absence, or in our case, quarantine, makes the heart grow fonder (be it for

human contact, work, school, shul, a proper haircut, sitting in a restaurant, or fill in the blanks here: _____, _____, and _____).

Time out can be complex. It draws us closer to the family we're stuck at home with. At the same time, it creates a desire for a break from those very same loved ones. (Don't get me wrong, I love my family very much:) And, if we're alone, this is all that much harder. Whatever situation we're in, loneliness lingers and a need for healing abounds. Perhaps this was the power of the biblical ritual. Time(out) allowed for change. The potential for healing is present when there's separation from that which we want to be a part of. After all, we are not meant to remain in time out indefinitely. It's not a permanent state of being. We are meant to return, to feel less lonely, eventually.

We pray each Shabbat, "hadash yameinu c'kedem, renew and return our days like they were before." May each of us alone, use our time out wisely for self reflection, and acts of kindness and generosity. And may we stay connected, together as a community and a spiritual team, while remaining in the game.

-Rabbi Mark