

TWENTY FIVE YEAR RELOOKING AT ARTICLE☺

In June, 2017, twenty five years after we wrote this article (1992), we took the opportunity to relook at it, just past our 47th anniversary. In the following material are some “author comments” at the time (1992) about midlife relationship: Deane thanking Johanna for her leadership in the article, and how inspired he was by her applying Jewish wisdom to “relationship”. Below also is a brief dialogue from 2017 over coffee about a passage toward the end of the article.

THE PASSAGE:

What wisdom and understanding do we want to carry forward from this period? We want to be able to learn acceptance of the other, and ourselves in relationship; to recognize the essential beauty and unblemished nature of the other. We want to see the truth that our relational other shares with us, no matter how hard that truth sometimes is to hear. We want to continue our efforts toward generativity and sharing; and to understand, from our encounters with demons and death, the meaning of suffering, and the value of healing. Finally, we hope to stay focused on, and yoked to God, that highest Source of meaning, compassion, and wisdom in the universe; and *to recognize that our love toward each other can be an important vehicle for becoming close to God.* We want to acknowledge and deepen our trust in God as our "Ultimate Owner," and to be appreciative and thankful for the blessings in our life; and to be willing to learn from those sufferings which, though not sought, can "become "opportunities" for growth and deepening understanding.

OUR COMMENTS

D's comments on the sentence above (italics mine) of our love being vehicle for becoming closer to God. What I'd say now is there is a truth in that, but to nuance it when I hear Johanna sing Shabbat songs, I feel she is channeling God. I become closer to her, (feel God in and through her) as she seems to be Shekinah- spiritual energy). I feel blessed to join in (occasionally) like Hava Na Shira, which we sing as a round. Let us all sing “Hallelujah!” What a joy that when we first wrote the article (married twenty two years, about midlife relationship— with three children 18,16,8), we can now look back, in love, at the last 25 years we've had together, with children now 43,41, and 35 and five grandchildren. And still singing Shabbat Songs and blessing the children and grandchildren in that singing. And singing with them on their visits, surrounded by the radiant “golden tree” of love....

J comments. Thank you for such a lovely acknowledgment. Through no power of my own, I do feel that in singing Jewish songs, God is present. And your love for me is channeled through appreciation for my singing, so that love makes you feel closer to God. I think about the line a little differently. In loving each other, we are practicing a very intimate, and sometimes complicated kind of love. Loving sometimes comes easily, but sometimes requires us to struggle. While I must admit I don't usually think of God in moments of actively feeling deep love for you, I think just having the opportunity to love draws us nearer to all that is good and meaningful in life – and thus, indirectly, closer to God, since these things are manifestations of God. This is not a conscious process or decision, but I think is something that is happening every time we engage in any kind of love; but especially the intimate love between two soulmates.

Dear J,

I have gone through your draft of the couple's article, and I was quite inspired by it. Basically, after a 2+ page intro, you spend the next 6 pp. on Judaism, looking at how it (can) apply to (our) relationship. That seems an excellent way to approach this paper; interestingly, in our BHN article, we use the story of Naciketas (from the Hindu) to convey the message; in our JHP article, we use the Zen message (three stanzas) and here we would be using Judaism. I was excited by the idea of looking at how Judaism fosters and enhances relationship.

I feel that this is an area that at least I have not really carefully thought about. My approach to Judaism thus far has been individual and/or societal. Your draft makes me see how the interpersonal dimension is one I have not paid sufficient attention to. But therefore, it seems that perhaps the article should differentiate between "vision" and reality. What we are striving for, and where we are. I also feel that the article should address some more practical aspects of our relationship (or from cases) to ground the "theory" (e.g., how we fight, money, sex, etc). And finally, I feel that we should try to pull out the "universal themes" that are involved as headings (yearning for closeness; not always feeling it (e.g., exile), Israel as struggling with God relationally, etc) and within that see how the particular of Judaism can be helpful.

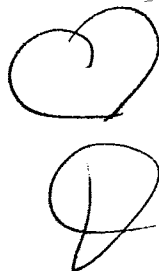
Finally, I think we can't too easily dismiss the sex roles and control issues that we have previously discussed. Perhaps we could look at them within the Jewish context: e.g., how is God viewed (male, female, dominant, kind); how is the religion set up (male dominated, patriarchs,) and the move to matriarchs; separate places for men and women, to same to differences.

I'd like to see lots of lovely quotes surrounding the article, --e.g., song of songs, Buber, Fromm, Talmud, Nachman; and maybe use something like the mid-life fairy tale article as the context (along with the song of songs.). I sensed that your material might go after my initial two page introduction.

I've made a few notes and comments in the enclosed, which can perhaps be further integrated into the introduction, and serve as an outline for the paper.

I've also commented on your draft.

Look forward to your reactions.

A handwritten signature consisting of a large, stylized heart shape above a cursive letter 'J'.

Issues of service and tikkun olam

~~comment~~: its harder in relationship to totally devote yourself to a cause. Sharansky, wondering if it was fair to his family what he was doing, etc

Conclusion: Interestingly Shapiro comes from the root Spr, from which sefirat comes, meaning blue sapphire, the connections toward God, many different combinations of love/mercy; unlimited visions with refinement; intuitive understanding with more careful thoughtout knowledge; and their balance. Also, this draft was done on the days of the omer of yesod/tiferet (communication, intimacy within balance; and malkut, grounded holiness within balance. during counting of] the Omer between Passover and Sinai.

Buber &

Abraham Heschel have stressed that it is only relationally that one comes to know G-d. While relationship with all persons should be treated with love and respect, relationship in marriage brings special joys and problems because of its depth and intimacy, its continuity, and its multi-faceted nature. Precisely because of these dimensions, there is great potential to approach this primary relationship as a way of drawing closer to G-d, as well as to each other.

Loving!
I'm inspired!!!

May HaShem guide us in this article to help ensure that, as best we are able, we share our journey as a couple in a way which can be of benefit to others, and open them to the interpersonal love between them, to the expression of God that can exist within that love, and to the way that intimacy and bonding can be enhanced by a couple working with a spiritual context of trying, individually and together, to bring God's love to the world.

prayers of thankfulness, blessing, and forgiveness. The morning prayer in particular contains words of wisdom which are applicable to our relationship almost daily. For example, it thanks G-d for giving the heart "the ability to distinguish between light and darkness." This can become

I've never done this except when you're a million!!

toward the other: are these thoughts and emotions in the service of G-d, or are they a reflection of one's own darker demons? Later, this same prayer acknowledges G-d, "Who provides for my every need." It is easy in relationship to focus on how the other might better meet one's needs - by being more attentive, more loving, less self-centered. Once a day, it has been helpful for us to adopt the perspective that our relational needs are being fully met at this very moment; that the relationship, while seemingly in disarray and fragmented, is in fact complete and whole.

I do this more often than I realize.

Good - grateful to God for my soul & for soul of my companion (you!) I'm glad to spend every day with you!

vision for me. 3x day also after meal... feel complete... really?!

Throughout the day, there are also occasions to express gratefulness and appreciation to G-d: for a beautiful flower, upon seeing wonders of nature. This habit also reminds us at times to express appreciation to G-d for the gift of a thoughtful, loving spouse. Finally, the nightly prayer provides the opportunity to forgive any person who many inadvertently or intentionally harmed us during the day; and to seek forgiveness from this individual (s) as well. Often, we find each other's names on this list. We are then able to use the structure of our religion to help us build bridges of forgiveness and understanding back toward one another.

I've never made this comment before! Do you?

really?!

The Sabbath, which occurs every 7 days, in the Jewish tradition is a time of rest and spiritual replenishment. It is a time to focus on being, not doing. Many of its prayers stress the intimate, loving relationship between G-d and His people. We have found the Sabbath helpful in terms of our own relational growth to remind us to appreciate and enjoy the other person. One of the benefits of spending 24 hours at a quieter, more contemplative pace is that it frees up energy to devote to family and marriage. It is even a special mitzvah (good deed) to making love to one's spouse on the eve of Shabbat.

more family feel, except for bless you. 24? 12? 2?!!

Probably the single most important transformational event in our personal lives over the past several years has been our return to a spiritual exploration of our Jewish roots. This deepening and reinterpretation of the spiritual quest which we embarked on early in our twenties has provided an important context and means of understanding our descents of relationship become understandable and meaningful. Also, we see that we are not simply learning to get along with each other, or consoling each other in loneliness, but working on bringing to fruition a small piece of G-d's divine plan. Relationally, we can follow the spiritual map G-d has given us.

Nice!

Feels like we're re-picking up the spiritual

How would you define it. I'd say it is a miracle, but how, at deepest level, we are to be together?

Lovey!!

Of course, this spiritual journey too became a mirror for whatever personal and interpersonal demons we were struggling with at the time. Issues of control, dominance, authority, leadership, competition made the spiritual search at times fraught with pain and ugliness for both of us. However, through all the difficult times, the spiritual path provided an opportunity for the kernel of goodness in each of us to express itself in the world and toward each other. Slowly, we became a bit more adept at seeing God in the other. Of course, one goal of spiritual practice is to ^{see} God in the other

Good <

more recent development! -

do we? yes, on Sabbath Shabbat! when do we?

If there is one consistent thread that has sustained and nurtured us over the past 20 years, it is our desire to pursue a spiritual path. The nature of this path has varied over time. Early in our marriage we explored Buddhism, and practiced and studied with varying degrees of commitment (Deane more, Johanna less so) for over a decade. There was next a brief flirtation with Christianity. (1) And over the past several years, a returning to our Jewish roots and an increasing involvement with and love of Islam for Jud-

Perky's Bio
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How to
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In those moments when we understand and experience the Oneness, the unity of the world, we are able to recognize and reconcile self-control and control by a benevolent Other; doing and being; freedom and commitment; the secular and spiritual; the experience of both offering and receiving forgiveness; the complementary masculine and feminine parts of our being; the transformation of our suffering and stagnation into generativity and a healing energy which "never stops flowing."

1 Oct
1984

Simultaneously, however, we have become aware that in the specifics of our learning to get along with each other in a more spiritually elevated and noble fashion, we also have an opportunity, in a small way, on a daily basis to contribute to the repair of the world.

Spiritual Wisdom
?↓

SPIRITUALITY AND "A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP"

A COUPLE'S MID-LIFE PERSPECTIVE

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July 4, 1989

J: As you can see, I've gone over your new draft on mid-life, and have tried to incorporate it, plus your earlier Jewish draft, with my two earlier comments. The above is the title I currently like. (Its minuses = no use of the word psychological. But it does seem pretty accurate. Other titles on next two pages!) (See #2) next page)

I believe the first 11 pages of this are very well written. (Maybe not always necessary, but at least well thought out!!) You need to decide what you think of pp. 2-6 regarding our views of spirituality; general views of psycho-spiritual; our relationship; general views of relationship/spirituality. Also, you need to see how you feel about the exile section: general views of exile; our exile.

I ran out of gas at yearning; and reconciliation. Mainly intellectual gas. Also, I feel the Jewish material fits best in reconciliation/transformation, but have not integrated that.

1. Introduction → (3 pp + Figure).
 - 1.1 Views of universe and person
 - 1.2 Views of relationship
2. Overview: → (6 pp)
 - 2.1 Psycho/spiritual views of universe/person
2.1 Our views
 - 2.2 Psycho/spiritual views of relationship
2.2 Our views
3. Mid-Life Issues → 6 pp.
 - 3.1 Loss of Magic/Exile
 - 3.2 Yearning for return--
Transitions,
 - 3.3a Sex roles
 - 3.3b Control
 - 3.3c Evil
 - 3.4 Transformations--Spiritual lessons
 - 3.4a acceptance
 - 3.4b non-duality
etc.