

Decide

We change when we decide to change, and we grow when we decide to grow. Decision is the consciousness that we must try another way. When we decide to be better, we are. When we decide to embark on a path of greatness, we do. When we decide to live another way, we can. When we realize that every day we are once again invited to live a life of beauty, then we need only say yes.

I wonder, what if I remove the thin gray film that has covered my eyes? I wonder. And if I became determined, really resolved, what would I know, what would I see?

And I wonder, how is it that inertia is more powerful than transformation and why do I constantly settle when anything could be, and how is it that risk frightens me, because staying the same is so un-extraordinary.

And I wonder...

if I dare to be.

Today I decide
to turn my eyes toward wonder,
so that I may see the expanse before me.

Today I decide to see the possibility of my life,
so that I may open my mind to greatness.

Today I will do one kindness,
so that my heart may become more loving.

Today I will pause to consider,
so that my life may become more deliberate.

Help me, dear God, to step
firmly upon a path of consequence,
so that I may make my life a prayer
of goodness and mercy, splendor and light.

I ask for a life of meaning,
a sense of purpose.

Today I decide.

Discern

And Moses asked, *When they ask me, "What is God's name?" What shall I say?*
And God answered, *Tell them that Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh, I am and I will be, sent me to you.*

Exodus 3:13-14

Discernment is not once-and-for-all decision making at critical points in one's life (should I take this job? Whom should I marry? Where should I live and work?), but a lifelong commitment to "remember God" (memoria Dei), know who you are, and pay close attention to what the Spirit is saying today.

Henry Nouwen

Why should we be in desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.

Henry David Thoreau, Walden

Choose

I wonder how it would be if I answered the call, if I allowed myself to hear the call, if I believed that I was called? Out of the confusion, clarity, out of the daze, wonder; out of the mundane, purpose, out of the darkness, light.

And now the morning light falls upon the trees. And the leaves toward the east are illuminated. Those leaves that face west wait patiently.

Hope

We say in our prayers: God sustains the world with grace.

In Hebrew, the word for "sustain," *m'chalkeil*, is rooted in the word "everything," *kol*, and related to the word "vessel," *k'li*.

How beautiful the metaphor! How affirming the prayer...

The world is a crafted vessel, made of light, overflowing with grace, abundantly sustained, by God.

And you, and you.

Imagine

God declared that the land was flowing with milk and honey. But it was not. The land had date palms, tall, ready to yield their fruit that could become honey. And it had goats grazing peacefully on the side of mountains, ready to give milk. And we bless God who brings forth bread from the earth. But God does not. Rather, the fields are abundant with golden grain, waiting for harvest, waiting for human endeavor. The sustenance from milk, the satisfaction from bread, the sweetness of honey all require us to see what is, imagine what could be, and create what we can.

This is the secret of our power: To see the invisible! To pull back the veil that obscures all that is good. To bear witness to what is possible despite what others believe is merely probable. To look at what is and see what could be. To see the path to hope, courage, meaning, and purpose.

Magnificence is possible, and joy is possible.

This is the secret to our power: To imagine! And then to create!

To step out of the darkness that blinds us to possibility. To see that our accomplishments begin with potential, with an idea, with thought. To envision ourselves as capable of so much more. To behold and then to make manifest.

Courage

And Moses, afraid, pleaded, *Please O my God,
I have never been a man of words...
I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.*

And God simply said to him,
*Who gives humans speech?
Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind?
Is it not I, the Eternal?*

Exodus 4:11

Though I have fallen, I rise again;
Though I sit in darkness, God is my light.

Micah 7:8

Pray

This is the great journey: To refine our lives. To become strong and resolved, to have meaning and purpose, depth and commitment. To live in awe and to bear witness to life's grandeur. Have an active conversation with the invisible: doubt and argue, dream and beg, ask for help, ask for forgiveness, offer gratitude. Shout at the heavens when you despair, and raise your voice in song when you rejoice. Sit still through the silences of the spirit; do not run from what cannot be known or understood. Life is mystery. Anything we truly want to know and understand is, by definition, mysterious.

Decide. Choose. Discern. Hope. Imagine. Have courage.

Pray. When we pray, we bow in humility to the Greatness of it all. May our lives become a prayer to all that is good and important.

And know: life is given meaning, texture, purpose when, meekly, we utter amen to the mystery and magnificence of life.

Bird tracks in the sand on the seashore
like the handwriting of someone who jotted down
words, names, numbers and places, so he would remember.
Bird tracks in the sand at night
are still there in the daytime, though I have never seen
the bird that left them. That's the way it is
with God.

"Gods Change, Prayers Are Here to Stay"
in Yehuda Amichai, *Open Closed Open: Poems*,
translated by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

God: I am that which is not.
Search and you shall find
about your universe of thought
only My shadow; grasp
only to hold the measure of your grip.
So am I god – therefore let go!

Jacob: I will not let you go.

"The Struggle" by Amy K. Blank, in *The Struggle and Other Poems*

CCAR Webinar – May 10, 2022

Omer: A Counting

Rabbi Karyn Kedar

May I see the spark of holiness in all that I do.
May the light of God guide me through darkness.

May my prayers strengthen me,
urging me to be present for those who are suffering.

May I become a messenger of caring and compassion,
a partner with God in the work of healing.

May I be guided to fight injustice
and to love peace and harmony.

May God's blessing be with those who are in my heart,
as I utter this prayer.

May all that is good in life lead me to passion and radiance.
By Your light, O God, may I see light.