

When we read about the journey of the Israelites in the wilderness, we might recall the miracles: the manna that fed the people, the water that came from a rock. We could remember the kvetching and the misjudgments: the constant refrain of “let’s go back to Egypt, at least we had fish and cucumbers there,” the Golden Calf, and the scouts who decided that it wasn’t worth entering the Promised Land after all, followed by 40 years of wandering.

Perhaps we also remember the high point of hearing the voice of the Divine. For the Israelite community, that once-in-a-millennium event took place in thunder and lightning and shofar blasts at Mt. Sinai.

But after leaving Mt. Sinai, the Torah tells us  
*The Eternal One spoke to Moses in the wilderness.* (Num. 1:1)

Wandering in the wilderness is one of my favorite Biblical images, because we never actually arrive in the Land (within the 5 books of the Torah). The forty years of wandering applies to our individual lives, which are all about the journey, and not about the destination.

As Rabbi Chaim Stern described the Promised Land:  
“a land that must have seemed far away, almost mythical, as our own far-off destinations may sometimes seem...”

And when we feel we’re lost in a wilderness, we can remember that Moses in the wilderness heard the voice of the Eternal; perhaps we can too.”

After a year of dramatic changes in our journey, we have a long way to go to reach the Promised Land. Indeed, at this point, we are like our ancestors in our Torah portion in the Book of Exodus who are still encamped at the Mountain. Like them, we are waiting for the signal to pack up and start the journey again. Before we do, let’s consider what we have lost and what we have gained in this encampment. What do you want to take with you when it is time to begin to set out?

This past Shabbat morning, we considered these questions, as we read poetry by Maya Angelou, Adam Fisher, and Ruth Brin, and discussed key words to describe our feelings and experiences this past year. We concluded with “A Reflection for Receiving the Coronavirus Vaccine.” Please look at these resources and consider how you are reflecting on the year that has passed. As a group, we each expressed gratitude for this community and for our ongoing connections despite the distance.

In the words of Maya Angelou,  
Alone, all alone  
Nobody, but nobody  
Can make it out here alone.

Perhaps we, like Moses, can hear the voice of the Eternal as we make our journey.  
*Rabbi Barbara Penzner*

# Alone

Maya Angelou - 1928-2014

Lying, thinking  
Last night  
How to find my soul a home  
Where water is not thirsty  
And bread loaf is not stone  
I came up with one thing  
And I don't believe I'm wrong  
That nobody,  
But nobody  
Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone  
Nobody, but nobody  
Can make it out here alone.

There are some millionaires  
With money they can't use  
Their wives run round like banshees  
Their children sing the blues  
They've got expensive doctors  
To cure their hearts of stone.  
But nobody  
No, nobody  
Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone  
Nobody, but nobody  
Can make it out here alone.

Now if you listen closely  
I'll tell you what I know  
Storm clouds are gathering  
The wind is gonna blow  
The race of man is suffering  
And I can hear the moan,  
'Cause nobody,  
But nobody  
Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone  
Nobody, but nobody  
Can make it out here alone.

A Sweet Side of Life

by Adam Fisher

Loneliness  
is the dark side  
of solitude  
which is a  
sweet side  
of life.

Life is like playing a violin solo in public and learning the instrument as one goes on.

*Samuel Butler*

No one ever told me the coming of the Messiah  
Could be an inward thing.

No one ever told me a change of heart  
Might be as quiet as new-fallen snow.

No one ever told me that redemption  
Was as simple as springtime and as wonderful  
As birds returning after a long winter,  
Rose-breasted grosbeaks singing in the swaying branches  
Of a newly budded tree.

No one ever told me that salvation  
Might be like a fresh spring wind  
Blowing away the dried, withered leaves of another year,  
Carrying the scent of flowers, the promise of fruition.

What I found for myself I try to tell you:  
Redemption and salvation are very near,  
And the taste of them is in the world  
That god created and laid before us.

*Ruth F. Brin*

**Acceptance**  
**Anger**  
**Awe**  
**Compassion**  
**Creativity**  
**Faith**  
**Fear**  
**Forgiveness**  
**Gratitude**  
**Isolation**  
**Patience**  
**Loneliness**  
**Loss**  
**Perseverance**  
**Resilience**  
**Solitude**  
**Stress**  
**Suffering**  
**Trust**  
**Wonder**  
**Worry**

## **A Reflection for Receiving the Coronavirus Vaccine**

As we move from darkness to light  
May we take this vaccine as a sign of what is to come  
A world reopened and renewed  
Embracing family and friends  
Gathering together in joy  
May we also be mindful of what has been  
The lives lost  
The sorrow felt  
And may the past and present intertwine  
Giving us hope for the future.

*Rabbi Rebecca Kamil*