

Okay, I might be hooked. In general I've never been too keen about these serial television shows like "24" or "Lost" that require you to watch week to week to be able to follow the details of the storyline. I'm just not that dedicated of a viewer nor does my schedule permit much luxury of setting aside a fixed time for a television show. But I suppose an intriguing promo coupled with internet viewing convenience has led to my watching the first few episodes of the new television series "Flash Forward". If you haven't become a fan of the show then permit me to share a bit of the premise: At a single moment the entire world population becomes unconscious for a couple of minutes during which time every person experiences a vision of what their future will be on one particular day in the not too distant future. Solving the mystery of what caused the world-wide blackout along with the puzzle of if those visions are true becomes the mission of the shows characters to solve.

As I've watched these episodes it has occurred to me that the question of seeing one's future is indeed interesting. What if we could see what the future held in store for us? Would it change our behavior? Would we act exactly as we act now assuming that there is no changing of the future for us? Or would we try to take control and affect change in our lives so that we would have a different future? What about our faith – would it be strengthened by knowledge of the future or would we be so assured of what will be that we no longer feel the need to reach beyond ourselves to seek spiritual comfort?

The concept of envisioning the future is very appealing. I recall the 1964 World's Fair where visitors were treated to multiple future scenarios of life forty and fifty years forward. I suppose that a few of those scenarios contained kernels of truth but in general even the best minds of the 50's and 60's could not accurately see the exact shape that the future would take. Flying cars are not yet part of our life but nevertheless what does exist today is equally fantastic if viewed from the perspective of those early futurists.

In many ways it would natural for us to wonder about our own future. What will next year bring? Great fortune? New friendships? Exciting opportunities for travel or personal growth? While it should be natural for us to think of the future it is often difficult, too, because the great unknowns of the future are just plain scary! Will we have health? What will happen to the economy? Will we be able to cope with the changes that will occur both positive and negative? How will our children fare?

Far too often we think that Judaism is only concerned with the past: celebrating holidays of events that happened long ago or recreating experiences of our ancestors. Taking note of the past is important in Jewish life but I believe that much of our tradition wants to teach us about the future as well. You see our tradition wants us to understand that the choices we make in life are the biggest determiners of the kind of life we will live and the kind of people we will be. Within Jewish life we are handed a tradition that wants to teach us that we can make the most of the life that is yet ahead of us – if we choose we can live a future with certainty, satisfaction, centered values and the fullness of enjoying all the gifts that life can provide us.

The tradition presents us with a system of mitzvot and life choices that are meant to bring depth to the uncertainty of the life that surrounds us. Judaism is meant to touch every facet of our lives – from the moment we wake until the moment we fall asleep; from birth to death; from secular pursuits to wholly

spiritual ones. When we choose a way of living life that is full of meaning we literally change the future – if not in actuality then certainly in our perception of what that future will be. We bring certainty to that scary future in the knowledge that we will live our life to the very best of our ability. A Jewish life is meant to deepen the colors of life to bring worth to whatever will happen in the years to come.

The real problem comes in trying to figure out what it means to live a Jewish life. How do we inculcate Jewish values in our life? With the multitude of traditions how do we decide which ones we will be capable of including within our own busy lives? Often the smallest changes have the possibility of making the biggest impact in our lives. Let me suggest just two examples of Jewish living that have great power to deepen life: Shabbat and Tzedakah. Setting aside one evening or one day or even one hour in a regular Friday night or Saturday Shabbat observance – gathering together with friends, family and community on a regular basis every week is one way of changing the landscape of our lives in a dramatic way. Candles, wine and a sumptuous meal in the intimate company of people we enjoy (a description of a real Shabbat meal) was described by the rabbis as a taste of heaven – a taste of the ultimate future. Making a regular place in our lives for Tzedakah can also affect us to our very core for when we turn ourselves outward away from the concerns of our own life to the concerns of the world that surrounds us we renew our appreciation for the lives that we are living.

May you be blessed with a future of great goodness, deep peace and lasting happiness.

B'virkat shalom,

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