Time Heals All Wounds

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Sometimes I am more aware than ever before just how different my world is from that of my parents and grandparents. I don't mean with regard to technology and economics. This is not a sermon about how expensive things are today, or the wonders of the Internet. And for those who are wondering this is not a sermon about my grandma's Kugel. We expect things to change over time, we expect technological advances, we expect things to cost more, we even expect the Kugel to not be as good from one generation to the next (I couldn't help myself). The other night I went the movies and the price had gone up another $.50, nobody in line was happy about it, but speaking for my fellow line standers we were not surprised either.

I guess what I don't expect to change, or what always surprise me when it does is opinions and values, mine and those of society. When my opinion of something changes, when society's values change I do take note, I am surprised. When long held beliefs and convictions get over turned or abandoned for something else I look for the cause, the reason for the change, I want explanation for how something so staunchly defended over the years could be thrown out in favor of something different, or as is often the case something completely opposite.

Sometimes these changes are a result of scientific discovery, or historical insight. Scientists map the human genome and we get a better understanding of how human beings work. If it was your long held conviction that eating fiber was good for you and science comes to show that it does not have the benefits we presumed, then of course our

convictions about fiber will change, we have three unopened boxes of bran flakes on top of our refrigerator at home to prove it.

But there is still a more startling values and opinion change, those that are not based on scientific fact or historical evidence, but a values change that seems to be rooted in nothing more than the fading memory of time, the notion that time heals all wounds. Perhaps it is this generational distancing that tells one generation that the convictions so strongly held by our parents or grandparents, can ultimately be thrown out and overturned. I would hope that it is more than a fading memory that causes us to abandon those views both as individuals and as a nation, in exchange for something different, often times something wholly contrary, but I am not so sure that it is, it may just be that we have a hard time remembering something that was not actually done to us.

As I drove to the temple today I passed a billboard on Santa Monica Boulevard. The billboard proudly proclaimed in a gazillion point font, 'We've Got Chutzpah', pictured beneath this chutzpadik headline on the billboard was the new Volkswagen Bug. Indeed this past year we bought our first new car and it too is a Volkswagen. What has changed in the world that Volkswagen uses Yiddish in its advertisements, that Jews drive German cars? Has this company's apology for its role in the holocaust finally been accepted, or has time healed that wound?

This past week the United States, returned a child to his homeland in a communist country, a country that we will not establish diplomatic relations with and that we will not permit our citizens to travel freely to. Yet by most standards our nation was acknowledged by the world for doing the good and just thing, in returning Elian to Cuba.

Has communism become more humanitarian, dictatorships more acceptable, or has the march of time made what was once abhorrent now tolerable?

This weekend the British Social Club of Los Angeles will hold a Barbeque in honor of America's birthday. While on movie screens across the nation we will discover the savagery and the cost of that independence and root for Mel Gibson and his band of American Revolutionaries to destroy the British armies, seek vengeance for their barbarianism. Time must indeed be a pretty powerful force if it can heal the wounds of the holocaust, the cold war and the American Revolution all in the same weekend.

To greater and lesser degrees, these changes in values and convictions are acceptable to many of us, at the very least some will say that they see the other side of the coin, that while it might not be our personal choice to drive a German car, or live in a Communist country, or even forgive the British for taxation without representation, people have a right to do so.

But now what about Judaism, politics and ideology are one thing, but theology and religious belief is often something different, held more deeply, defended more fervently. Our tradition is, our sense of people hood is entirely based on our collective memory as a people. We sit at the Seder table and proclaim that we were once slaves in Egypt. We gather at Purim and Hanukah and tell of the great tragedy that was averted when God saved our people from destruction. As a people we study and pray in an ancient language, through ancient ritual, largely because we want to maintain our connection with our past, not forget our inheritance. In a months time Jews throughout the world will observe the 9th of Av, the day that the first and second temple were destroyed by the Babylonians and then the Romans. Some will give up food for the day,

sit on low stools in mourning, the plaza in front of the Western Wall of the same destroyed temples in Jerusalem will be filled with Jews bewailing the destruction of the Mikdash, the holy place.

Why do we hold onto these convictions, these deep emotions and not to others? **It is not a matter of time but of distance.** Judaism has kept us close to the story of our slavery in Egypt, Judaism has kept us close to the miracles of Purim and Hanukkah, for those of us here we can even say that Judaism has kept us close to the value of Shabbat and praying together as a community. It has done so by story, by connection, but illustration. Every time we sit at that Seder table the message of the past is brought forward to another generation, the ticking clock on our memory is reset so that it will not expire. Should we hold onto hatreds and enemies for eternity, certainly not, and those ill-gotten beliefs and opinions, bigotry, racism, sexism they should be allowed to expire and we should help that process along. But the converse is true as well, those conviction and opinions that we find central to our identity as a people and indeed as a nation must be shared and shared again across the generations, in more and more intimate ways in order to be maintained.

And so here is our challenge, on a Holiday weekend that has become more about freedom from work than freedom from tyranny, on a Shabbat that may indeed be more about the Kugel than the holiness of the day. If we want these things to matter to us and those that come after us, then we must to pay them more than lip service, more than passing regard, convenient attention. It is incumbent upon us as the guardians not only of the traditions and convictions of the past but also as the shelichai tzibbur the delivers of that message to the future generations to not be wishy-washy about what we believe

and hold to be true and certain. We have no right to expect that future generations will maintain our customs, uphold our values if we are not advocates for them ourselves. It is my prayer on this Shabbat that every conviction we hold be a strong one, that every belief we profess be heart felt, that every judgment we make about ourselves, others and our world be just and fair, and about all it is my hope that we as passionate in our actions as we are in our opinions, may this be our blessing on this and every Shabbat.