

When I first started working at the synagogue, I would often hear people calling from the front office, *anyone printing anything?* Now they weren't asking because they needed to print, but instead, because they were about to put their lunch in the microwave. Lest anyone believe that the synagogue is in possession of an innovative new form of technology that is both copy machine and microwave in one, the reason why this question was asked was because the use of the copy machine and the microwave at the same time would blow a circuit and all the power would go out in the office. And as someone would scurry out to the circuit breaker to get the power back, all of us would hope that we had saved whatever it is that we were working on before the lights went dark.

I was reminded of this while reading a piece from Nadia Bolz-Weber. In it, she suggests that all of us are currently being asked to do more, be more, and feel more than our personal circuit breakers can carry. As she shares, "I just do not think our psyches were developed to hold, feel and respond to everything coming at them right now; every tragedy, injustice, sorrow and natural disaster happening to every human across the entire planet, in real time every minute of every day." The situation in Afghanistan, systemic racism, the treatment of the Indigenous, climate change and the fact that our country has been quite literally on fire, all with an election just days away. And these examples ignore all of the COVID-related problems in our lives. Will my children be able to go to school and if so, for how long? Will they be safe there? Will I be left alone again this winter? Is this the new normal or is this, hopefully, just a blip on the radar? When am I allowed to be done with my work day and, now that you mention it, what day is it today, anyway? Will I get COVID? Will it be asymptomatic? Will I give it to someone else? It is all, just too much to bear. Some of us have fuse boxes that can handle all of this at the same time, but I imagine many of have been running back to that internal circuit breaker over the last year and a half, finding it blown, wondering what we need to do to just keep going.

In the end, it's just *a lot*. On a personal note, Jenny Smith wrote a piece for clergy called *The Second Marathon*. It was called that because she suggests that clergy were asked to run their first marathon when COVID hit. Learning new technologies and figuring out how to serve their

communities in unusual and trying times. And now, as soon as we (maybe, hopefully) are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, we are being asked to run yet another one, totally different than the last. This year's high holidays and last year's high holidays were the two hardest collection of services any synagogue has been asked to run in decades, each in their own unique ways. As I struggle to call everyone who needs a call, connect with everyone desiring connection, while simultaneously being present for my family, I know there are things that are not getting done, just to make sure my fuse box doesn't blow.

And I know I am not alone in this struggle. While most of us will answer, that we are doing okay (all things considered), I know that even though that might be true, it also true that we are all missing our friends and family, constantly worried about whether we are making the right and safe choices, and living with the uncertainty that we cannot answer for how long our world will be this way.

When struggling in these challenging times, when trying to figure out how to navigate a world and a life with often overwhelming struggles, it should come as no surprise that our tradition provides us with answers. When we were working ourselves to the bone every week. When we were so busy providing for our families, that we weren't being there for our families. When we were working harder but not better. Our tradition told us to stop, to rest, to reflect, and to celebrate Shabbat. When we were so eager to provide for the needs of our families and communities that we were literally destroying the land that fed us, our tradition told us to stop, let go, and let the land rest so that it can continue to provide for you. This is called the Shemitah year, which occurs every 7 years and coincidentally (or not) begins this year.

It's remarkable how, when I reflect on what I miss the most during the pandemic and pair that with the silver linings of the pandemic, it all leads back to Shabbat.

What I miss is being with people, singing and eating together. I miss the clarity of time on and time off and the routine and familiarity that we used to have. What I have appreciated is the

fact that I have had dinner with my family more over the last 18 months than I did the entire rest of my son's life. Things have slowed down and people have realized that some things are more important than the daily grind. Sounds like Shabbat to me.

Famously, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote in *The Sabbath*, "To gain control of the world of space is certainly one of our tasks. The danger begins when in gaining power in the realm of space we forfeit all aspirations in the realm of time. There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord. Life goes wrong when the control of space, the acquisition of things of space, becomes our sole concern."

On this Yom Kippur, also known as Shabbat HaShabbaton, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, we are reminded to learn the lessons of this pandemic; to appreciate and maximize all that Shabbat is and all the Shabbat can be. Making sure that there is time that is separate and apart from the rest of the week, but together with and in the warm embrace of the people that mean the most to us. Shabbat is a day to recharge our batteries and assess the state of our fuse boxes. I know we are planning for Shabbat to be a key focus of our work within the congregation over the next year. And no matter what the future holds, and no matter what our COVID lives may look like, let's all work together to make sure that we continue to take to heart what the famous Jewish thinker Achad HaAm taught us, more than the Jewish people have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jewish people.