

## YK 5776 Day The Sabbath of our Lives

Dr. Oliver Sacks was a world renowned neurologist. We know him as the person who wrote the book *Awakenings*. This was made into the movie the late, great Robin Williams starred in of the same name.

A month ago Oliver Sacks, wrote in the *New York Times* about his imminent death:

“And now, weak, short of breath, my once-firm muscles melted away by cancer, I find my thoughts, increasingly, not on the supernatural or spiritual, but on what is meant by living a good and worthwhile life — achieving a sense of peace within oneself. I find my thoughts drifting to the Sabbath, the day of rest, the seventh day of the week, and perhaps the seventh day of one’s life as well, when one can feel that one’s work is done, and one may, in good conscience, rest.”

He died two weeks later from his cancer after an incredible life and career where he left an indelible impression on this world with his life’s work.

If our death is the Sabbath of our lives, the Shabbat we all reach at our end of days, what do the other six days of the week represent? Does each day of creation represent thirteen years of our life? Imagine if it did.

On day 1, God creates the heavens, everything beyond the earth and the earth itself, nothing formed, chaos, water everywhere. God speaks light into

existence and differentiates the light from the darkness, creating, differentiating and naming Day and Night.

Day one of our lives encompasses so much chaos that is slowly formed into the moldable human we will become and grow into. Our first thirteen years of our existence we are truly formed by God, our parents and the world around us. We go from a guppy swimming in our mother's belly, a sea of controlled chaos forming cellular structure after cellular structure, multiple organized systems all in agreement to keep us alive and shape us. Our in utero development literally reflects the days of creation as well. We are born into this world unable to really take care of ourselves until we are almost twenty (some mothers might say, until we are sixty). The first six months we are held and rarely if ever put down except perhaps to sleep or be chauffeured around town (I mean we aren't born completely stupid. Who doesn't like to be chauffeured around town? Although for young parents listening to an unhappy baby cry while you drive, it is a good reminder why you are so glad you aren't an Uber or taxi driver).

At twelve months we learn to walk and say our first few words. By 18 months we rarely look back at crawling, and at 24 months we are a walking champ. It is hard to fathom how quickly we move from being completely dependent on our adults to beginning to relish our first taste of independence. Each day we learn to see more, ask more questions, strive to walk taller, faster, more surely. We move from home to pre-school, kindergarten, through grade school until we reach the age where we are

ready to become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. As parents, we blink and our little babies we held in our arms now tower over us and can reach the top shelf. It is evening and it is morning, Day 1.

On Day 2 God creates the sky as a barrier between the water upon the surface of the earth and the near reaches of heaven. The atmosphere stands as a barrier that keeps earth safe from the cold vacuum of space where nothing we know of can live.

Day two of our life history we move from being a teenager into early adulthood, from the time we are 13 to the time we are 26. We move from the beginning of thinking of ourselves as a Jewish adult, through high school, entering and graduating college and moving through our first few jobs. We move from dating our first serious crush, to falling in love for the first time, from our first kiss to reaching an age where we will potentially meet our soulmate, the person of our dreams. We've gone from middle school to surviving/thriving in High School, entering college, choosing a major, graduating and deciding whether to enter the workforce or continue with graduate school. For many of us here we might have even had our first child by the end point of our Day 2. Life moves so quickly, we blink and we've left the bima where we read our first Torah portion to a time where we might find ourselves on that same bima beneath our wedding chupah. It was evening and it was morning Day 2.

On Day 3 God brings forth dry land and parts the waters with these land masses. He names the large bodies of water seas and the dry ground land.

God creates all of the many types of plants, large and small, food bearing and able to reproduce themselves in their cycles.

In our Day three if we haven't accomplished this already, we hope to find our soulmate and begin having kids of our own.

Day 3 we traverse across our years 26-39. We find ourselves crossing the challenging terrains of seeking, finding and marrying our soulmate. Some of us work hard and stay or leave jobs until we find ourselves in the safe places where we feel we can achieve our dreams and goals at work and home. Some of us finish graduate school first and then seek the career we feel was calling us all our lives hoping to remain passionate about the whatever career path we chose.

In love and partnership, if lucky, we remain together and begin having children of our own. We begin new creation stories, start new family histories. Great grandparents, Grandparents and parents all join in celebrating these new universes that shift the balance of our lives as we know it. We explore this vast world of ours and try to find time to walk among the trees and plants, savor all the foods and spices this world has to offer and glory in God's creation. We all know the potential glory and pain we might experience on this day. We are all time travellers, we just move much slower than we imagine with our messages from the past and the future. We look at our children as they grow, these smaller versions of us, messages we send into the future and we wonder where we came from and where they are going. It was evening and it was morning day 3.

On Day 4 God creates all the stars and the heavenly planets and sets them in their orbits to be signs for the seasons and for days and years indicating how different time must have been for God during creation compared to what we consider to be a day and a year in our lives. While God creates eternal light on Day 1 to have some work light, the Sun and the moon are not created until Day 4.

Day 4 in our lives we travel the years 39-52. Oh how much we have seen at this point and how much more we hope to see. We still look up at the moon and stars with awe. We respect the sun (and what it can do to our skin) and imagine the billions of years it has stood at the center of our universe.

While many of us will see these days with ease. Others of us will suffer loss, illness, transition from a partner we can no longer live with, face the challenges of young children struggling against their own health, growth, identity and travels through their life. While every year holds the potential for us to face great adversity, these years especially test what we are made of as our grandparents die and our parents age, as family members or friends face illnesses and a few might die. As children we thought our parents were so old and now we stand looking up at them so much further down the road, and look at ourselves and wonder where did all the time go? We look with young eyes at our grown bodies with minds as young and sharp as ever still dreaming of running and playing as much as we did when we were young and had all the time in the world to play and dream. We look at our children and mark how much we know they don't know while we stay silent much of the time to allow them to discover so much of life on their own. It was evening and it was morning Day 4.

On Day 5 God begins creating life, creating all the creatures of the sea and air and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply.

On Day 5 in our lives we see the years 52 through 65 if we are so blessed. If we are lucky our parents are in their seventies and eighties and still thriving. We look towards retirement, spending more time with the people we love most in our lives. Our children are grown, going to college, graduating college, getting first jobs. Some will be getting married, some will be having their first children. We will revel in their joy and watch them in wonder as they hold babies in their arms as small as they once were held in our arms. It was evening and it was morning day 5.

On Day 6 God creates all the animal life on the planet and as one final act of creation creates the first humans in God's image, and places them over the rest of God's creations as stewards to care for it all. God also indicates what the humans have to eat from the fruit bearing trees.

Day 6 in our lives we feel truly blessed for every day we have. Grateful for the years 65 through 78, retired or semi retired, we watch our grown children raise children of their own and grown grandchildren beginning to blossom in their understanding of their identity and taking ownership of their unique personalities. We look back and think about what we would have changed and what we would leave the same. We look in the mirror with young eyes and our young hearts and cannot believe how we have changed and aged. We cannot believe how much we have seen and how we

feel that we have hardly seen anything yet. Aches and pains assail us.

Doctors have a greater role in telling us how to live our lives to maintain the quality we cherish. Our children, so concerned about our health, watch after us as if we are children again, just as we once watched after them. Time has swept past us in the blink of an eye as if we were standing still. It was evening and it was morning day 6.

On Shabbat God rested from all the work of creation. God looked back on all that was accomplished in such a short time, only a few billion years give or take a few, and with Awe, God rested and dedicated the seventh day as a day of reflection, rest, love and gratitude.

On our Shabbat, on our day of rest we hope to be blessed with living from 78 years to 120 years if we are so blessed as the Torah blessed Moses.

During the our Sabbath days late in our life we rest, having seen so much and still wishing we can see more of all the lives and futures surrounding us. Some of you are in your 90s and talk about times that few 8 year olds could even comprehend. No computers, no cell phones, no televisions in every home. You talk about all the innovations that help make our lives easier and longer. But all good things come to an end. All of us, like Moses, reach our Mount Nebo where we can only look down on the promised land knowing we cannot enter.

Our Sabbath of Sabbaths, our death finally arrives and we gain the rest we never quite achieved in our lives. We close our eyes for the last time and witness the eternity we can never quite comprehend while we live. Our Divine Spark returns to God while our living family and friends surround

our body and hold on to each other as they share all the memories and stories that made us who we were in their life. From last Sunday to today I have officiated at 4 funerals. Not one family member felt they ever had enough time with their loved ones. All longed for one more conversation, one more story, one more hug, one more laugh. On this Yom Kippur we examine our lives and think of what day of creation we are in. We look at the people in our lives and see them as the blessings they all represent. We look inward and see the person we wish to be and mark the changes we wish to make in order to live the Days of Creation as they were intended to be lived. We were all created in God's image. We all house the Divine spark within us. We all represent all the days of creation. On this Yom Kippur may we see the Divine within us and learn to continue sharing that Divine Spark with the world in order to make it a better place. May you all be written in the book of life for a sweet year of blessings, health, love and laughter.

It was evening and it was morning Day 7.