

A married couple had been out shopping at the mall for most of the afternoon.

Suddenly, the wife realized that her husband had "disappeared".

The somewhat irate spouse called her mate's cell phone and demanded: "Where in heaven's name are you?"

Husband: "Darling, you remember that jewelry shop where you saw the diamond necklace and totally fell in love with it and I didn't have money that time and said, 'Baby, it'll be yours one day'?"

Wife, with a smile, blushing: "Yes ***I remember*** that, my love."

Husband, "Well, I'm in the bar next door to that shop."

Well I begin with that joke today because of course a major theme on Yom Kippur for many of us, especially right now at this moment, is the theme of remembering.

After the end of this sermon we will begin the service which brings more people into the synagogue than any other service during the year – The Yom Kippur Yizkor service.

As defined even by its very name, this Yizkor service is all about remembering.

And the truth is, there are many ways to remember something.

In the joke, the husband knew his wife would remember the jewelry shop.

But all the while, he had his eye on the bar next door.

Today so many of us are remembering our closest relatives, some of the most precious people in our lives.

A verse we read from the Torah not too many weeks ago caught my eye, and helped me think about the process of remembering that many of us use, inevitably and helpfully, on this day if not all the time.

The Israelites are on the brink of entering the promised land, and Moses is reviewing the history of their journey up to this point.

Deuteronomy chapter 8 first half of verse two –

וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת-כָּל-הַדֶּרֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר הוֹלִיכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ זֶה אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה--בְּמִדְבָּר

And you shall remember (Kol HaDerech) *all the way*, which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness.

So it was the phrase, Kol Haderech, which caught my attention this year when we read this verse.

How literally could we actually take this directive – that the Israelites should remember Kol Haderech - the whole way, the entire journey which has already taken nearly 40 years?

It seems obvious that not every detail was remembered and that there were many aspects of the journey that were probably overlooked even in the most comprehensive review.

Even those of us with good memories, excellent memories, can't remember everything.

And sometimes that is actually helpful.

I began to think that this is a helpful metaphor in our lives as well – that to remember “Kol HaDerech - the whole journey” is literally impossible.

And yet there are critically important, key events that we can never forget which we must keep with us from year-to-year, and review especially when we are ready to begin a new year.

The popular statement many of us use is, "how can I remember that – I can barely remember what I ate for breakfast yesterday."

Remembering Kol Haderech, the whole journey, means for most of us, that we remember not only the special experiences of our lives, the milestones – we also remember the people with whom we share those experiences and milestones.

We remember the people who have been with us Kol Haderech, and the people we want to continue to be with us as we move further into the future and extend Kol Haderech, whether they are still alive or whether they have passed on.

Either way, both ways, they are part of us and connected to us as we travel kol Haderech in life.

Today of course is a very sad day as we remember our parents, our siblings, our spouses, our children, our friends and our teachers.

But it is not and should not be a day of despair.

We remember that in our life's journeys, there have been moments of great loss with powerful mourning and lingering grief.

That is where many of us have been, but that is not where most of us have remained.

I have learned that lesson in my own life this past year as it has now been almost exactly a year on the secular calendar since my beloved sister, Jackie Anthone, passed away.

Of course today I am sad on this first Yom Kippur in my life's journey when I observe the requirement to recite Yizkor as a participant and not only as an officiant.

But I, and I would imagine and hope that most of us, don't come to this day in despair.

I learned why we should not be overcome with despair from a Jewish writer whose name is Mark Nepo.

I heard an interview with him on a Sunday this past summer.

On Sundays, the Oprah radio station devotes hour after hour to interviews with spiritual seekers from all walks of life.

It is called Super Soul Sunday.

How wonderful it would be if this day turns out to be Super Soul Atonement Day for many of us?

Mark Nepo shared how several years ago he was diagnosed with a very unusual and serious form of cancer.

On one of his most miserable nights during the treatment, he and his wife were at the hospital and he was in great pain.

His wife, exasperated for him, and hardly being able to continue to see him suffer, asked Mark, rhetorically, "where is God?"

And Mark Nepo says that late that night, in the hospital emergency room, waiting for treatment, and in great pain, he heard a voice and in turn whispered to his wife, "God is here – right here, with me, right now."

He told Oprah, he was able to say that and mean it because he realized, in the midst of all this pain and difficulty,

"to be broken is no reason to see all things as broken." (repeat)

I saw an example of this in my own family this past week.

My 92 year old father underwent surgery to repair his broken hip on Rosh Hashanah.

I flew to Florida to be with my parents and sister last Sunday.

While I was there, and in the midst of our family brokenness, with my father literally lying in the hospital bed, broken, I saw all around me many examples of how not all things were broken.

There were the many medical personnel, especially the nurses, who provided exceptional care to my father.

And there was my 89 year old mother standing and feeding my 92 year old father, still trying to help them and nurture him after more than 68 years of marriage.

I mention this not to necessarily praise my parents, but rather to emphasize that even in the midst of this brokenness, healing and light came through.

Mark Nepo elaborates on this powerful thought when he writes, "though it's understandable to be consumed with what we are going through, it's essential to remember that all of life is not where we are.

In fact, this is when we need the aliveness and vitality of everything that is *not us*.

When closed, we need to open.

When fearful, we need to trust again.

When feeling lost, we need to remember that we are in the stream of life, which is never lost."

Perhaps that is one way we can understand what it means to remember life "Kol Haderech - all the way."

Remembering the whole journey doesn't mean remembering every detail.

It means, remembering that the whole journey has great depth and breadth.

We can't be any place other than where we are right now, yet where we are right now can't be divorced from where we have come, and can't be ignored as we determine where we need to go.

And all of us here today, should realize, that we have arrived to where we are right now, only with the love, companionship and commitment we have shared with the special people we remember today.

Let me share with you one more teaching related to the lesson and theme of this sermon.

This I picked up from a brief D'var Torah I heard offered by Rabbi Yosi Levine while he was visiting Annapolis this past summer.

Rabbi Levine is senior Rabbi of the well-known synagogue in Manhattan on W. 86th St. called "The Jewish Center."

Rabbi Levine spoke on the day after the saddest day in the Hebrew calendar year, Tisha B'Av, the ninth of Av which commemorates among other things, the destructions of both the first and second temples in Jerusalem.

The 10th of Av is a complicated day because on the one hand we have already moved into the theme of Nechama, which is usually understood and translated as comfort.

Yet, according to tradition, the Temples began to be destroyed on the 9th of Av in the afternoon and the destruction continued until the afternoon of the next day, the 10th of Av.

So while the 10th of Av is clearly intended to move us toward comfort - N'chama, mourning for the destruction of the temples lingers until the middle of that day.

It is as if to say, the transition from avelut to nechama - from mourning to comfort doesn't happen automatically and instantaneously.

It doesn't happen in a straight line.

Rather as we move from one to the other, they overlap one another and the experience is more that of a wave, or curve and not a line.

Now the most powerful aspect of Rabbi Levine's lesson came when he accurately stated that in the Torah, the word Nachem, does not usually mean comfort.

Actually, the word Nachem seems to indicate, change, as in a change of perspective.

Both in the flood story and in the Golden calf episode, God's perspective is changed, and the word used to indicate that change is the same word as Nachem, or Nechama.

And this is a very important lesson for us.

When you visit a mourner in the week of shiva, or when that mourner comes to the Friday night service during the week of shiva, it is customary for us to say:

HaMakom Y'Nachem etchem ... Usually translated as

May the Lord comfort and sustain you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

We say this to the mourner because perhaps we are seeing something a little different and maybe even a bit more clearly than is possible for the mourner at that moment.

Perhaps what we are offering the mourner is the understanding of the faith that God will help the mourner to see things differently, to have different perspective, To change sooner or later from the position of mourning in which he or she is presently found.

Not everything and not always will things look and feel as they do at that moment for the mourner.

"To be broken/is no reason to see all things as broken."

The loss has broken in obvious ways, the life of the mourner, but being around people during shiva, and all the acts of kindness performed on behalf of the mourner, are like little candles that sooner or later will provide illumination enabling the mourner to see things *differently* than they are right now.

An unveiling ceremony can take place anytime once 30 days has passed since the funeral.

But in America, the custom has developed to often hold the unveiling many months and sometimes approximately one year after the funeral.

There is wisdom in this practice.

I remember an unveiling at which I officiated for one of my parents friends.

The funeral for this man took place in the dead of winter, in Buffalo.

It was a beautiful winter day, which in Buffalo means there was a blizzard.

I did not attend the **funeral** but I volunteered to officiate at the unveiling which was going to be scheduled in the summer.

The deceased had three sons, the oldest of whom is a couple of years older than I.

What I remember from the unveiling is **what he said** –

he told us that on the day of the **funeral** there was indeed a blinding snowstorm.

And he and everyone else had trouble seeing, physically and metaphorically what was happening to them on that day.

He was confused and the weather typified how he felt.

When we gathered for the unveiling, on a beautiful sunny summer day, he realized that *now he could see clearly*, physically and metaphorically,

what his father meant,

the relationship he so enjoyed with him,

how his father was with him, and will always be with him, Kol Haderech - for all the journey, of his life.

I conclude where I began – not with that joke, but with that verse from the book of Deuteronomy: On this Day of Remembrance

וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת-כָּל-הַדֶּרֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר הוֹלִיכְךָ ה'הוָה

And you shall remember (Kol HaDerech) *all the way*, which the LORD your God has led you...

"Even when we are broken, we must remember, that not everything around us is broken."

HaMakom Y'nachem - *God will lead us* to a new Makom, a new place of change, a new perspective, and a new way to view Kol Haderech, the ongoing journey of our lives.

Amen