



Temple Rodef Shalom

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Rosh Hashanah Older Family Service 5780/2019

Carrot, Egg and Coffee - *adapted and retold*

I don't think it was ever easy to be a teen or a young adult. But in this fragmented world plagued with polarization, and worry over issues like gun violence and climate change, and even just trying to navigate the new world of gender identity – it's far more challenging now. My heart goes out to all who are in their formative years trying to figure out who they are and where they stand in this world.

What I do know is this – we need to support each other. We need to bring more connection and love into the world. We need to persevere, one foot in front of the other.

Here's a story about a teen named Sarah, who kept encountering adversity:

Sarah was struggling with her life, one problem after another. (It happens!) She felt frustrated and miserable. [To congregation:] Who has felt like that at some point in their life?

Sarah felt defeated and went to her grandfather, whom she called Papa, for advice. He was a wise man and the two had a special loving relationship.

Sarah and Papa sat next to each other and Sarah unloaded, telling Papa all about her problems, her face full of tears. Papa listened with compassion. Then, without saying a word, he took out three pots [take out pots], put water in each, and put them on the stove, boiling the water.

[take out back of items and put into pots as describing]

Into one pot he put a carrot. Into the next he put an egg. Into the third pot, he put some coffee beans. After boiling them for a while, Sarah, frustrated, exclaimed, "Papa, what's all this about?" Papa turned to Sarah and asked, "From boiling these items in water, what has changed about each?"

[To congregation:]

What will happen to the carrot after it's boiled a long time? [get their response: mushy]

Papa explained: "The boiling water is the adversity that we face in life. It gets like that for everyone Sarahleh (he liked to call her that). But people react differently. Some people are like the carrot. While they may begin strong and unrelenting, when faced with adversity, they will end up weakened, in pain, and unable to move forward...mushy"

[To congregation:]

What happens to the egg after it's boiled a long time? [hard in middle]

Papa explained: "The egg, which began with a soft and liquid interior has been hardened. Some people, like the egg, who may have started with a malleable heart and a fluid spirit, become hardened, bitter and tough when meeting life's challenges." [To congregation:] Maybe you know people like that...

*[To congregation:]*

And the coffee beans?

Papa explained: "The coffee, which began with its own unique character, changed the surrounding adversity into something special by releasing its fragrance and flavor." Sarah smelled the beautiful aroma and smiled. "Some people," Papa continued, "are like the coffee and will make the best of an adverse situation, maybe even changing the situation around them for the better."

Sarah gave her Papa a big hug and smiled.

"Sarahleh – there will always be adversity in your life, hopefully less than you're experiencing now. But you have a choice as to how you respond. Do you want to be the carrot, the egg or the coffee? Be like the coffee Sarah. Bring change to the world, one foot in front of the other, knowing that you are not alone, knowing that you are surrounded by love. You will face life one heartbreak at a time and one victory at time. You have so many gifts my beautiful child. Bring those gifts to the world around you."

*[To congregation:]* And so, these choices are yours as well. When adversity knocks on your door, how will you respond?

As Jews, we know adversity. Our history is filled with it.

Jewish teachings abound: In the Book of Proverbs we read, "A righteous man falls down seven times and gets up." [Proverbs, 24:16].

There's also a famous Rabbi from the Talmud, Nachum Ish Gamzu, who was known for saying "*Gam zu l'tova*" for every challenge he faced in life – "*Gam zu l'tova!* - This too is for the good!" [Taanit 21a]

[cue] As Kol Machar prepares to sing, I'd like to conclude with a quote from author and professor Joan Marques [mar-KEZZ], who teaches, "When it rains, it pours - maybe the art of life is to convert tough times to great experiences: we can choose to hate the rain or dance in it."

On this Rosh Hashanah eve, let us commit to countering life's challenges with resilience, by bringing to this world our love and our unique gifts. Be the coffee – change the world around you and dance in the rain. One foot in front of the other, may this be a year of connection and love.

Amein

**Kol Machar Teen Choir:**

One Foot In Front Of The Other

*From the album, I Will Not Fear, by Dan Nichols and Eighteen*

One foot in front of the other

With our hearts wrapped around our sisters and our brothers

One foot in front of the other, one heartbeat at a time

One foot in front of the other

We all live the hopes of our fathers and our mothers

One foot in front of the other, one daydream at a time

Three steps forward on my path  
My heart is in my hands  
Three steps forward, no turning back  
My heart is in my hands, my heart is in my hands

One foot in front of the other  
With our heads bowed down, runnin' for cover  
One foot in front of the other, one heartbreak at a time

One foot in front of the other  
We're all lookin' up for new worlds to discover  
One foot in front of the other, one victory at a time

Open up my lips and I will sing to you  
Open up my lips and I will sing, sing, sing, sing

One heartbreak at a time  
One victory at a time