

Jeff Shulkin
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A Jewish grandmother is watching her grandchild playing on the beach when a huge wave comes and takes him out to sea. She pleads, "Please God, save my only grandson. I beg of you, bring him back."

And a big wave comes and gently washes the boy back onto the beach, good as new. She looks up to heaven and says: "He had a hat!"

Buried not so deeply in this story are three key points:

1. Witnessing God
2. Trusting God and God's intent
3. Our expectations

The first point, witnessing God, consider the grandmother's actions. That she immediately turned to God in desperation, trusting God's power, God's will, that God would respond, and that God was available. She witnessed all, as in these words we recite this afternoon:

*You are My witnesses, says the Eternal One,
And My servant whom I have chosen,
That you may know Me, and trust Me,
And understand that I am the One.
...And besides Me there is no savior.*

The grandmother trusted God, witnessed God, and knew God as the savior. God's presence was known to her through God's action.

How do I witness God? How do I know that God is there when I ask?

I listen, but I may not hear. I look, but may not see. As indefinable and amorphous as God is, I **do** experience a not-so-coincidental awareness of God's work, a subtle, almost energy-like presence lying deep inside some internal anatomic Siberia deep within my heart that the anatomists have never discovered.

It's said that Life must be lived looking forward, but can only be understood looking back. I detect God's fingerprints on my personal experiences, most-often only after the fact. This brings us to the second point, regarding trusting God and God's Intent. To this I say to God, *I don't understand the intent of your waves that crash on the beach. Are you taking or giving?*

- I experienced a tragedy that, paradoxically, brought with it great gifts of enlightenment, strength and love, of which I spoke right here ten years ago today.
- I have sailed with great ease and comfort into what turned out to be rather dangerous waters.
- I have experienced challenges, clearly so unfair, but that, quite unexpectedly, resulted in unimaginable rewards.
- I received a divine gift, only to have it taken away.

In the slightly modified words of Ricky Ricardo, “God, you have some ‘splainin’ to do.” I obviously don’t have the wisdom to know of what to ask of God. So, life and prayer require a different approach - a partnership in which I figure out how to best detect God’s presence, trust God and God’s intent and let myself be guided. I relinquish finding the right answers and search for the right questions.

That is how I persevere through life’s continuously ambiguous paths. That is how I persevere through personal pain. How did this approach come about? Well, while I’d like to think that this approach is my crafted decision, perhaps, by the definition of my partnership with God, it is exactly what I am being guided to do.

And, lastly, what of our expectations? We are immersed in our partnership with God in this, the 11th hour of our prayer. Our prayers specify our hopes and expectations of God. The grandmother’s expectations of God were clear: save my grandson. Ah, but she didn’t stop there. He had a hat.

Well, each of us is asking this very day about a hat that is critical to us. What is the outcome of our prayers for those hats? The answer?

May God see to it that each of us assemble in this sanctuary next year, reflect on 5769, account for the hats, and partner with God on life in 5770.