

June 14, 2022 Tuesday Evening with Aaron

(This talk not yet reviewed by Barbara and Aaron)

What Does Waking Up Mean?; Q&A on Practice, Money and Generosity, Weeding

Barbara: We've been talking about the longevity of this program since 1989. As I set my alarm and was about to take a nap, I asked Aaron, "What are you planning to talk about tonight?" And he said, "Waking up." So, I went to sleep, and before my alarm went off---I hate to wake up to my alarm; it's a vibrating sound, very unpleasant. So I came awake five minutes before it was to ring, and Aaron said to me, "Wake up! Wake up! We're going to talk about waking up. You need to wake up!" He reminded me of a poem by Rumi, and I was just looking for it on the internet, but I couldn't find the whole poem. It goes something like: "Wake up! Wake up! The morning breeze has secrets to tell you. Wake up! You have slept for thousands and thousands of years. Why not wake up this morning?"

Okay, I'm out of here and Aaron will come in...

Aaron: My blessings and love to you. I am Aaron. Barbara has had three weeks now of speech therapy. We've been looking at the sounds that are awkward in her mouth because she doesn't hear them. The therapist says she swallows endings of words, but also the sounds, like 'sound', the 'o-u-n-d' sound, and the way she has habitually gradually come to mispronounce such words because of not hearing. So, we're trying very hard tonight, I'm trying hard to pick up on what the speech therapist has been teaching Barbara, since I'm using Barbara's body, and making an attempt to speak more clearly. We'll see how it goes.

Waking up! That's what all of you really are here in incarnation to do—to wake up. A little later in the evening we'll discuss why you might want to wake up. Let's begin with what does 'waking up' mean?

Imagine yourself first coming into some degree of awareness, lying face down in a circle of earth. You are wearing glasses that magnify, so all you can see in front of you is this one circle of earth. Things are a little blurry if you look anywhere beyond this circle.

The thought comes, "Ah, here I am, and here I am within this circle. I must be a circle dweller. This is my home."

You look at the bits of dust, little bits of glitter, of tiny bits of rock, maybe even a few blades of grass. You just lie there with your chin on your hand, looking, looking. "This is my world," you will think. "There is nothing else, nothing beyond this." It's interesting. You watch for minutes, for an hour, for two hours, and then you fall asleep. You wake up again in the same circle of dirt. "Ah, yes—this is what I woke up to before. This is where I live. I don't know who I am, but this is where I exist."

So, you pay attention. You sleep again. You wake up again. About the fifth time through this you see a little ant crawl across the dirt. "Oh, what is it? I've never seen anything like that before. Where did it come from? Where is it going?"

So, instead of keeping your eyes straight ahead on the circle of dirt, you begin to follow the ant. You see it move out beyond the easy circle of your vision, so you turn your

head. And you see beside you that there is another, bigger patch of dirt. "Ah, my world is not the only world. There is more." And you watch the ant.

You notice that there are many ants where that ant has gone. Now you have learned something. "There is more to the world than I thought, not just more than one circle but more than one being, because *I* am here and the ant is here."

And then many ants are here. You watch them come and go. Curious, you begin to follow that first ant. It comes home carrying a tidbit in its mouth, and then it turns around and begins to move out again through your circle and somewhere else. "Oh, there is still more—not just *my* circle and the ant's circle, but somewhere else."

Gradually, you open your vision from this small area of focus into an ever larger area of focus, becoming aware that there are many sentient beings. You continue to lie here on the dirt watching the ants come and go, bringing food home, seemingly taking care of each other.

You look at yourself. You don't have a mirror, but you look at your hand and you think, "Well, I am not an ant. So, there are at least two species here."

You follow the ant one day out and out, just a little distance, but you can focus like this, with blinders. You come to the base of a tree. "Ah, here is another being." The ant climbs up the tree, and that leads you to lift your eyes, going up and up—it's big.

You start to notice that there are leaves on the ground. You notice a squirrel. You notice an acorn from the tree that is on the ground and sprouting, cracked open, small roots coming out.

Gradually, you become aware that your world is inhabited by many beings in relationship to each other. So, your perspective has opened from narrow, just self, to self and the ant, self and the tree, and the squirrels, and the birds, and ever so many beings.

You are back resting in your original circle, eyes closed, when you feel something rush by you. You open your eyes, and there is another human just like you. That human sleepily opens its eyes, is a bit startled to see you, and asks, "Who are you, and where are we? Is there only the two of us?"

You reply, "No, there are ants, and trees, and squirrels, and birds—ever so many beings."

"I don't see any."

"Well, you will when you wake up a bit."

We keep waking up. First, we discover the "other," and then evolving to the reality that there is no other; there are only the myriad faces of self expressing as tree, as cloud, as sunbeam, as raindrop, as squirrel, as caterpillar and butterfly, as human.

So you begin to understand, "These are all expressions of something, I don't know what. But I can feel that we are all interactive with each other. I will learn more about the others who dwell on Earth."

You begin this study getting to know the Earth around you and all the beings who dwell on her. You gain some reassurance in your understanding that things come into being and seem to grow and live, and then eventually they die.

But you see from the world around you that nothing really dies. You see it in the giant tree on the forest floor decaying and the new sprouts from the seeds of that tree growing in the decayed matter. You see it in the generations of squirrels and rabbits. You see it in the metamorphosis of the butterfly. Everything growing and passing away and then becoming again.

It may lead you to ask, "Then who am I?", and lead to a deep reassurance that you too are connected to everything.

Gradually you are waking up, becoming more aware of who you are and of the world around you. You have developed the habit when you rise in the morning to sit quietly and just breathe and be present.

One day, as you are doing this morning habit of breathing and presence, everything around you seems to slow down. The breath slows down. The mind slows down. You begin to see the world in a new way, to see each moment awakening out of prior conditions, blossoming and passing away, over and over.

In that moment of insight that everything is arising out of conditions and passing away, you acknowledge, "I also have arisen out of conditions. When those conditions cease, I will cease. But I have also seen that nothing ever ceases; it just takes a new living place a new place of expressing. I am not born. I do not die. How amazing! I simply am, expressing in one form or another. I am."

The friend who was with you at the beginning, and who has gone back to sleep, he opens one eye and says, "Are we done yet? What's happening?"

"Ah, I have so much to tell you. You are a human right now, and you have come into this form expressing a radiance, if you will allow it. And when this human form is done, you will move back into that totality of everything and express again in another way."

This one looks at you—"Are you crazy? All we're doing here is lying in the dirt under this tree. Well, I don't see it your way."

So, you say to your friend, "You have not yet started to wake up."

And the friend asks, "Are *you* awake?"

"I don't know. Am I awake? I'm more awake than I was last year. In other words, I have deeper insight into the nature of being and how I co-create that being. I have greater understanding of the power I have to live with love, with loving kindness, not with fear and hatred. I have greater understanding of the essence from which I express. So, I guess I am a little bit awake."

Can one be a little bit awake? Is that like the old saying that one cannot be a little bit pregnant? Can one be a little bit awake?

One is *always* awake, but not yet aware of that awakens. So it's not the awakens but coming to know the experience of the awakens and the power of the awakens. The power to do good in service to all beings, or the power to destroy. The power to love and hold that ground of love, or the power to hold a ground of fear and destruction. The power to know your inter-being with all else, or to refuse to acknowledge that connection, still believing that you are separate. You are unique, yes; but separate, never. So, all of these are part of waking up.

For thirty-four years I've been talking to you all about waking up. And the wonderful news is, you *are* waking up. You've picked your head up out of the dust. You've observed the world around you. You've been willing to see your interconnections with that world, both the wonder of those connections and the responsibility of those connections. You have begun to deeply understand the nature of suffering and what causes it, and where freedom lies. You have chosen that path to freedom.

Then you ask, "What is the next step?" There is no next. This is a *non-linear* experience. There is only this moment.

What next is more the peeling of onion; going deeper and deeper to find that you *are* what you have been searching for. You are love. You are light. You are joy. You are connection. You *are* that. There is nothing else.

Is there not a Ground, a Source, for these? Yes, and you are part of that Source. "And when that Source ends?" you ask. That Source is unlimited. It is enduring. It does not end. It simply expresses itself in many different ways.

So then you come to me in recent years, saying, "The Earth is destroying itself. Will the Earth die? Will we all die?"

If the Earth destroys itself, it will be sad because the Earth has the potential to be such a beautiful school. But if the Earth dies, the divine essence that is expressed through the Earth and its innumerable beings, that divine essence will continue. You *are* the expression of that essence, right here, right now.

So, some of you tell me, "I don't feel like an expression of the Divine. I feel afraid, and lost, and angry." That, too. The Divine, the Infinite has no duality. Right there with light is darkness. Right there with expansiveness is contraction. Right there with love is fear. Right there with understanding is \langle ness and confusion. How would you know the light if you never experienced darkness? How would you know spaciousness if you never experienced contraction?

This waking up business, it's a long, slow process. Each time you open your eyes, literally or perceptually, and look around and say, "Who am I? What is the greater truth of my experience?", you wake up a little bit more.

Each time you look at the darkness around you, the hatred, the environmental destruction, the wars, and you say, "I don't want that!", and you put your face down into the dust again, you close off the possibility of learning, that learning for which you came; that opening to that which I call the Divine, the Essence. It expresses through you so magnificently, if you would give it a chance. That lovely poem, "I am the place where God shines through."

"What is God?" you ask me. That which is shining through you right now.

"But anger is coming through me," you might say. Ah, yes. And right there with anger, can you find the love, the spaciousness, the joy?

"Sometimes I can find it, and sometimes not," you say. "So does that mean that only sometimes is God expressing through me?"

God is infinite and non-dual, so it expresses through joy and also through darkness, through sorrow and through every seeming dual expression. Whatever you are experiencing, even hatred, or greed, or fear, this also is an expression of the Divine.

There is no duality. That means that whatever is expressing through your endless <moment> can take you back into the heart of God, if you do not fear and hate whatever is present but open your heart, your mind, your eyes, and say, "What is this? What is this fear, this darkness, this confusion? I hold it and look for the Divine." So, you look around you at beings who are caught up in seeming darkness and gradually you begin to find there is also love in these beings. You drop away the dualities. Now you are waking up.

Are you ever fully awake? Well, yes, but you nod off again. You're awake, you're present, and then it becomes a little overwhelming and—gone. And then something shakes you and you wake up again. "Oh, I fell asleep."

"I choose to live my life awake, so I will explore what puts me to sleep and what helps me to remain awake," because you are so deeply committed to living your life in non-harm to others and with kindness. You pay more and more attention. You get caught in the darkness far less frequently. You are more settled in light and spaciousness. But there's still attachment, and the preference, "I like the light. I don't like the darkness." The next stage of awakening is to drop the duality. You like the light. You prefer the light. What is darkness? When you look into the darkness, is there anything there but light and other expressions of light, such as contraction and darkness? The light is radiant, but right there with light is that which is not light.

There is no duality, because you have to look into the darkness to know the light in the darkness. When you look deeply in the places of darkness within yourself, the places for which you have condemned yourself, feeling jealousy, or pride, or greed—when you look in you see a human being that wants so badly to love and to serve others, and is disturbed because, as part of humanness, fear arises and thus grasping arises.

In this process of waking up, great waves of compassion come for this human that goes through these cycles of love and of discordancy, of light and of darkness.

Each time there is a place of seeming darkness, you'll find that you come out of it a bit faster, not held there so deeply, because you *are* waking up.

This is really all I have taught for thirty four years, that if you pay attention, you will find that essence of light and love right here in your own heart, and then you will find it in those around you.

You will also find not an essence, but the fear-based expressions of anger or greed here in yourself, and you will find it in those around you. You will have come to a place of compassion for yourself and those around you, and for others, and then cease to judge them, that these kinds of experiences arise within them.

You'll be able to nod at them and say, "Oh, you're having an angry time right now. I know how hard that is. I hear you. I'll sit here with you and help hold space for your anger."

The other person may feel you're being false, in a sense, judging, and may say, "Well, don't you get angry?"

"Oh, yes. Anger arises in me also. I understand, and it's so painful. So I will sit here and keep you company with your anger. It will pass."

What you're saying may anger your neighbor to the point that he comes over and starts hitting you. You want to hit him back. But a great wave of compassion for both of you for entering into this human experience, this compassion sweeps over you. Love sweeps over you. You are waking up.

You are not caught in the recurrent cycle of anger, fear, attack, closing down, but instead, "Anger, fear, certain catalysts have come. They are uncomfortable. Ahhh, I am awake. I will hold the place of compassion for myself as I move through this experience of pain. I will see that it grows out of conditions, is impermanent, and watch it pass away, leaving only the compassion, only the light."

When you do that over and over again, eventually you begin truly to understand the essence of love expressing as light, as joy, as generosity. That is the heart of everything.

As time passes and you ask, "Who am I? What am I?" you will begin to be able to answer yourself with increasing certainty: I am an expression of the Divine in all aspects.

"Why am I here?" you ask yourself. "I am here more fully to express this divinity and raise the vibration of this world where I and others are experiencing these things, until the high vibration of this world raises to a point that that which is highly negative and contracted finds it an unsuitable place to be and releases itself, moving the Earth into a higher density, a higher vibration."

And on this new Earth, you may ask, "Will there never again be hatred or fear?" Well, of course there will, but they will not have a resting place. They will not be able to flourish. I cannot predict the future. I don't know what the Earth of a thousand years hence will be like. But if all beings have come to a higher vibration, truly knowing their non-dual nature with each other, truly grounded in compassion and loving kindness and in awe of their diversity, then I think that much that is negative on Earth will have ceased to look for a home here.

And then you might ask, "Won't they just have gone someplace else?" Yes, and some other world will have the opportunity thusly to evolve."

But of greater importance, there will be this orb that we call Earth shining, radiating light, truly a beacon of high vibration of love and light to the whole universe. A proof that beings *can* wake up, *can* hold the intention for positive polarity to live in love, to live with connection, with respect, with reverence.

Imagine if there were another planet where that had happened and it was pointed out to you, do you think that you would feel a bit more hopeful about your human situation?

So, you have the opportunity to demonstrate this. You demonstrate it not by avoiding your humanness but by holding this humanness as precious, that you have physical sensations, you have thoughts, you have emotions, and that you are not slaves to these things, but rather there is the opportunity moment by moment to choose to be the radiance that you truly are. To be awake. To live that awakens from <>.

"Wake up! Wake up! You have slept for millions of years. The morning breeze has secrets to tell you. Wake up! Why not wake up this morning?"

So, it's the end of thirty-four years of speaking about this over and over. I love you so much for your persistence and commitment to waking up. You are beautiful, and I love you.

It's not easy to wake up here on Earth, but it is very important, very valuable work. You are beloved.

Don't tell me you can't do it, because you are doing it. Wake up!

We look at the various meditation methods that support awakening. People ask me, "Can I wake up without such practices?" Basically, no. There's a variety of practice; it doesn't have to be this one or that one. But if you are not paying attention, how can you wake up?

The practices are simply tools to presence, tools to finding the innate love, wonder, joy, deep within the human self, and cherishing it. And then, going deeper to find the Source from which you are expressing, the Source of that wonder, joy and love. Who is it?

What is it? The Divine is the best name I can give it, Love.

Thank you, and I love you. I am Aaron.

(break)

Q: *(Recording is not clear)* My question is, how can we set healthy limits when you are sometimes <> by rage, without doing harm to others? In my case, I used to regret rage. But as I've learned to listen to my body as an expression of my soul, I've learned to speak my <>, my rage, all the things like that. But <> when I find someone is not expressing with love or is doing harm to myself or to others, sometimes I'm <feeling> rage and sometimes I'm doing harm, sometimes not. So I'm not sure how to do it with love, or if there is a way of doing it without doing harm. <> until I find there is no need to express need in a harming way. <>

Aaron: You have expressed yourself clearly. Thank you. You don't want to suppress anything, nor do you want to enact it. There is a middle ground where you know that rage has arisen. You feel separately from the rage the desire to enact it because it's powerful, or the desire to suppress it. You become aware of these movements in yourself. And with practice, you become much more at ease with holding space for any emotion, recognizing, "Because of conditions, this emotion has arisen. Because of my deep intention to do no harm I choose not to enact this emotion on other people. I will simply sit and hold space and breathe with it until it dissolves." Because since it's arisen from conditions and your kindness and patience help it to dissolve, eventually it will dissolve.

But if you say, "No. No rage," that's just more rage. That contracted energy helps keep a fire burning under the rage. The more you are able to hold compassion for yourself, knowing that out of these conditions—strong anger, or fear, or greed, judging mind, hate—these have arisen. "I am human and so these continue to arise in me, but I will hold space for them until they dissolve, and then I will not feel the impulse to enact them on others."

It's important to remain aware that saying no to somebody who has been hurtful to you, setting limits, is not an expression of anger but of kindness and love.

So, my suggestion here does not mean that you let other people run over you and harm you. But you ask yourself, who and what is saying no in this moment? If it's fear, if it's anger, or rage, maybe I to just need to sit and breathe and be present with that emotion for a bit until it's not so powerful. Until I can find, right there with rage, loving kindness and compassion, and then allow the compassion to say, "No. You may not beat me. You may not hate me. You may not hit me. No." But it is said with kindness.

That beautiful line from the Dhammapada, the Buddhist scripture, says, "Hatred never resolves hatred. Only love resolves hatred. This is the truth, ancient and immutable."

So, we find the place of compassion in the self right there with the rage by being compassionate to the self, not judging the self. You'll find that the anger does dissolve. I hope that's helpful to you. Other questions? (No.) So, if no questions, then just tell me, any of you: Are you more awake than you were ten years ago? Yes. Does that give you hope that you'll be more awake in ten years than you are now?

That's it. People ask me about— pow! —awakening experience. But you still have to live it. The experience is just the opening of the door. What do you *do* with that door once it's open? The whole world comes through the door. How do you *live* that awakening experience?

Q: I have a question regarding how I feel more awake now than I did ten years ago. Being more awake does not automatically eliminate my experience of human suffering, of feelings of failure, feelings of regret and remorse, feelings of making mistakes, feelings of fear.

And I look around at other people, especially the ones who are experiencing very challenging conditions. Even in a general sense, we can look at the recent conditions of the stock market and the bitcoin environment, where people are losing vast amounts of money, day by day by day. And they may easily be thinking, "What a fool I was to invest. What a fool I was to put my savings there. What a fool I was to believe in this. And now my life is in ruins. I'm not going to be able to pay my rent, or live in a better place, or help my mother with her health care." There are so many ways that the conditions in the world are, in a sense, offering new ways for us to suffer all the time. And so, while I'm very much more awake with my practice and my studies and the teachings that I receive from you and others, I'm much more aware of what is going on with my thinking. I'm much more aware of how to practice observing thought and realizing that there's this identification with the mundane self and that identification with the self is generating suffering. I'm awake more so than I was even a few years ago, or even six months ago. But yet I still have these experiences where I can have a grinding in the pit of my stomach that says, "You really screwed up."

So, it isn't really a question for myself, but really a general question for all of us. In a sense, my little self is saying, what good is it to be more and more awake if I still have all these problems? Thank you.

Aaron: Thank you, Q. What good is it? Because, as one keeps practicing, one eventually says to that self-blame, to that judging mind, "Oh, you again. Come, sit and have tea." It just becomes the same old familiar story. And you're onto yourself. And you see how if I take this path, I am going to suffer. If I watch how this whole story arises out

of conditions again and yet again, and I find the love in my heart to say, "No. I will not go there. No."

Every being has their own unique karmic patterns. A big part of liberation experience is coming to clearly see those patterns, and just say, "No, I'm not going to do it again."

It's like somebody who is addicted to gambling. They see the casino sign lit up and say, "Oh, I'll just play one game. I'll play two games. I'll play twenty games. I'll stop." But they can't stop because they're addicted.

You are addicted to the judging mind, all of you, to the comparing mind, to the negative mind. And it leads to suffering.

Each time you notice this and make the clear decision, "I am not going there," there's more freedom, and you learn that there *can* be freedom.

This does not mean to cease to reflect, "In some way I did harm to myself or to others, and I have compassionate regret for that harm. I will see clearly into what pulled me into actions and speech that created harm, so as not to get pulled into that path again." This is different than blame. It is wisdom.

Your example, about the ones losing money. Your world is set up so that there are investments, or, I guess you could put the money under your mattress where it continues to lose money because of inflation.

Basically, money is energy. What if everybody who had some excess money turned around and said, "I will give this money out to support others' well-being." Not that I will go out and feed people, although maybe that also. But I will go out and help people learn how to feed themselves. I will help people learn how to avoid illness. I will help people to take the different kinds of classes that can help them not get so caught up in anger. To learn how to meditate, for example. I will support whatever systems of belief call to me that can help others. In other words, I will work in the world to offer with generosity to help support the release of suffering.

Well, clearly they would not have lost all of their money in the bitcoin or stock market. They will see an increase in well-being in the world and think, "I am not rich in money, but my life has been well spent."

But that's now how people are. They're caught up in, "I need more. I need more." I can only quote Yeshua's parable of the lilies of the field.

So, for those who are caught up in these things, the decline of the stock market becomes a good opportunity to ask yourself, in what do I put my own value of my deepest self worth?

I'm looking at Barbara, here, who took a look at these headlines and some of the retirement savings that they live on and hopefully will live on for the next ten or fifteen years. This is in whatever kinds of investment the retirement association has it invested in.

She said to Hal, "It looks like the market is dropping down. Do you want me to get more details about what has happened to our investments?" And he said, "No." And she said, "I agree. Just let it be; it will go down and it will come up. We are not in control of it. Just let it be."

But one does not put the money under the mattress. So, if one has some retirement plan—it's not a lot of money for Barbara and Hal, but it will be invested in something, because that's what the University did with it, with their approval. You can't hold onto this. It has no substantial reality. It comes and goes.

But genuine loving kindness does not come and go. The deep intention for the highest good of all beings does not come and go. One learns to expect that the money will come in. There will be times when the market is big and when it's poor.

Where is the love? I'm thinking of that lovely song, "Give me love in my heart. Keep me praising. Give me love in my heart, I pray. Give me love in my heart. Keep me praising. Keep me praising 'til the end of day." Because love is the only thing that always <increases> in value.

My friend, I hear more from you than just this question, the example of the stock market and people losing money. Negative self-belief. This is very much a part of the core of one's spiritual practice. Asking oneself, who am I? In what ways do I value myself? In what ways do I truly love myself? What are the loving things I have done in the past six months, in the past ten years, in this lifetime? In what ways has the value gone up because of the kindness that I have shown to others and to myself? Because of the unconditional generosity, both of the golden coin and of the loving heart?

Don't look at the negative, but at the positive. In what ways have I truly cherished myself and others? Rest in that space of self-appreciation and respect. Once you are settled there, turn around and look at those places that believe, "I am no good. I should have known this. I should have done that." Can you see these as stories?

You understand what I mean by story. There are certain repetitive stories that each of you have. What is the story? What do I get out of keeping that story running? If the story was not there or was not strong, what might I be experiencing?

I asked somebody a week or two ago about a story of negating the self. And that person answered me, "I really feel joy, and I feel like the world is in such a harsh place right now I should not feel joy. So, I keep the negative story running, because I feel ashamed of feeling peaceful and joyful." That may resonate for a few of you.

It's okay to be joyful, even with war and stock market crash and environment crashing. Joy is holding the world afloat. Be grateful to yourself that there's some degree of joy and peace within you and offer it out to the world, and to those who are just this week losing money in the stock market. I'm not quite sure what the bitcoin is. I have heard of the term but don't know much about it.

But take stock of your situation. "I won't have the money for this or that." Take a good look at what you have of value, and then make a large, generous donation to someone or some organization that is truly in need and can truly help others, maybe truly save lives with that money. Instead of focusing on, "Look what I'm losing!", focus on, "Look what I have, and I still have the power to be generous with it." Not to impoverish yourself, but to look around for, this energy that is money, where is it really needed, these golden coins? How can they change the world in a positive way? I will be happy to speak further on this question to Q or anyone else.

I'm reminded of a time when as Nathaniel I was walking in the countryside with Yeshua and a small group of people. Robbers attacked us during the night, taking everything, even our sandals and our clothes. We had our undergarments; that was about all. The robbers left, taking the pack animal that we had. We were all awake. They had not taken the wood for a fire, so we had a fire.

We said to Yeshua, "What will we do? We have no clothes. We have no food."

He said, "If you had food and clothes, what would you do this morning?"

"Eat breakfast and walk on down the road."

He said, "Well then, I suppose without eating breakfast you will need to just walk on down the road."

"But we're in our under garments."

"Well, we'll still need to walk on down the road. Perhaps we'll find others who are not even as warmly dressed as we are."

So, we walked down the road. We came to a village and they asked, "What happened?" They were told about the robbers. There was some food given to us. People were poor in that town, but they still offered us cloaks or something to keep us warm, an old pair of sandals for our feet.

We walked down the road. We walked all day on just that meager breakfast. We approached what Yeshua knew to be a leper colony. As we approached, we could hear singing. Yeshua said, "I intend to go in. Please join me if you wish." And of course most of us followed him. A few held back.

We came in, and they had a large pot of stew cooking over the fire. They were singing. People were wrapped in blankets. The moon was shining brightly. Mothers were holding children. These people were sick, were maimed, were losing limbs and sight, and yet they were joyful. They could not do enough for us. They offered us stew. They offered us a place to spread blankets. They offered us the blankets. They looked amongst them, they who had so little, and found appropriate clothes for each of us. And we sat by the fire with them and sang with them, filled with the blessing of their abundant generosity and love, they who had so little in the material world. I will never forget the beauty of that night, of sitting with these brothers and sisters affected by leprosy, and yet whose hearts were so open with love.

Are there further questions?

Q: I'm more awake now than ten years ago. I'm increasingly able to be in the silence and watch my mind. But I find this practice very lonely because I don't have many like-minded practitioners in close physical proximity to encourage each other. So, how do I not sometimes dwell on this factor, this sense of loneliness?

I understand that there should be someone, to be understanding of others and of myself and not to <> understanding as much. But <>.

About the story you just shared on generosity. Recently I needed to make a move because I'm renovating my place. And also, I'm not working. <I'm referring to the stock market,> and of course my stock <portfolio> fell. I told this to some of my friends and relatives and none of them offered a place to let me stay, despite having space in their house. So, of course I need to rent from a friend who is kind enough to <half> the rent.

So, this makes me feel despair, like I'm the only one practicing. Why is it so hard for people to show empathy, charity, and love?

Aaron: I hear you, Q. You would like it to be different. We all would like everyone around us to be deeply understanding, and loving, and generous. But let's face it: most people are not yet awake. They are bound in fear. They have not yet learned how to be loving, understanding and generous.

You cannot base what you do on what others do. There's a beautiful statement from Mother Theresa, and I cannot state the whole thing. But she says something like, "People will be angry and jealous. Be kind anyhow. People will hurt you. Be kind anyhow." Et cetera. People will be as they will be. We still all each have the choice to be kind or not to be kind, to be generous or not to be generous.

I would like to express two thoughts, Q. One is to ask, if there is anybody here listening who would like to become a dharma buddy to you, short or long term, to put it on the Chat, or reply to you on Chat, and say, "I would like to help." And you could email each other or Zoom each other. "I'd like to be a support to you and invite you to be a support to me." If there is nobody in the group who responds in that way, that does not mean that you are not lovable, only that nobody in the group is in a situation to offer that right now. But you can ask. You can invite.

The second is, busy though your life may be, stress though you may have, find some place—a soup kitchen where you can go and serve, or perhaps a hospital where you can go and read stories to hospitalized children, or a nursing home where you can go and read or sing or play games with somebody who is very old—find some way to give of yourself. Do it mindfully. Find the joy in that giving and in that loving connection, because this is a loving connection, even if it's with a child or a very old person. It doesn't have to be with a dharma practitioner. See how that works for you.

I want to say something here about those who have lost money in the stocks or the bitcoin. Barbara and Hal lived carefully through their life. They raised three sons and sent them to college. They saved money carefully. Hal worked many years at the University, with a retirement account.

But, after his stroke, the nursing home cost something like fifteen thousand dollars a month. He could not get on the Medicaid that would pay for the nursing home until the money that he had in the bank went below quite a low amount. The eldercare attorney that they hired said, "Take the money. Put it into the necessary renovations for the home so that Hal can live in the home, which will mean that you'll have very little money left, but you'll have a home."

It was a scary thing for them to do; Hal less involved in it at that point than Barbara. Now, four years later, his mind is sharp, and he can say 'yes' and 'no' and can understand things very well. But back then, when the stroke was new, it really fell on Barbara to make decision.

She was looking at this money. How many years could we live with this money? But of course, at a \$180,000 a year for the nursing home, plus whatever other expenses, in a year or two it would be gone. Just fix the home. So, it's a beautiful home, and when it's time to sell it in a year, in ten years, they will sell it. But for now, it's a beautiful home.

So then, hearing about the losses, as I said, she has papers here on her desk. The mail has been coming in, saying, "Your account is worth this much.... this much..." She opened it the first day, "Oh!" And I said, "Were you using that money?"

She said, "Not now."

"Do you need it this month?"

"Not now."

"Will you need it this year?" "

Yes, it will pay for Hal's caregivers. But this month, no, it's okay."

"Okay, then just ignore it. Let it go. There's nothing you can do about it. So, just hold that intention. Use the imaginal cells to imagine the well-being for yourself and all others. Know the place that knows your needs will be met. Somehow, you're going to find the money to continue Hal's care, or some other way that his care will be arranged. Let it go."

Now, this is not the answer if there's something you can do, like make a change of some sort. But for right now, just let it go.

What keeps you going back to the question, "What will happen? What will happen?" Ah, hello, fear. That old song, "Hello, darkness, my old friend. I've come to talk with you again." How many times are you going to go back? "Hello, darkness, my old friend." Repeat, repeat, repeat.

"In this moment, I choose to set down the darkness. I choose not to be drawn into the stories of darkness, of the world that is despairing, filled with war and environmental disaster, disease. I will take care of these things in my own life and in the world in the most loving way I can to myself and others but not be drawn into stories of darkness." I believe that song has the line, "The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls..." I have often found that to be a very powerful line. The subway walls---the tunnels through the darkness.

Q: This morning I was out riding my bike and I saw a man spraying chemicals on the weeds in the cracks on his driveway. I felt my sadness at the poisoning and knowing how detrimental that is to the environment, to the bees. I found myself instantly feeling that remorse.

And suddenly a voice came into my head—the weeds along my Zen walkway, that I always ask permission, and I thank them for giving the oxygen to the air, to the Earth, and ask them if they are willing to have me pull them so that the walkway can be without weeds. I only pull the ones that say yes and they fly right out. So, immediately after the thought about the poison, the voice of the weeds came through and said, "Do you really think it is more kind to pull us out by the roots than it is for the man to spray the poison on his weeds?"

And then there was silence for a few moments, maybe. And the voice said, "It's all just judging mind, just comparing mind." And in this entire talk, saying, think about a chemistry class, or a chemistry set. Each one of the chemicals has a particular action and reaction. And it's not that some are bad and some are good; everything has an action and a reaction. But the judging of it is just the judging mind, just comparing mind.

Aaron: Thank you, Q. And yet one has the right. Barbara has a very small but lovely garden. She's made the decision that she wants flowers to grow there. She has what started as a sprig or two of mint, which took over.

So, each spring she says to the mint, "I am sorry, you can grow anywhere else in my yard, but not in my garden. If you arise in my garden, I'm going to pull you out. You have free-will choice to come up here and know I will pull you out, or to go elsewhere." And then as she plucks it, she says, "May you be well." And she pulls it out. She doesn't judge herself for doing that.

In a similar vein, she has told the ants that come into her house every spring, "You may not be here. If you come in, I am going to set out ant traps, because you cannot be in my food. But I have a whole yard out there and you're welcome to be in my yard. Please go, or please know that there will be poison."

I've noticed that as she does this with much clarity and without judgment of herself, fewer and fewer ants appear in her house. Those who do come, they have been given an option to go into the yard where there is space and food for them, or not.

I think that it's important here that, if you set out the ant trap, you are not *killing* the ant; you are giving the ant the free will choice to eat of that poison or not.

It can be done without hatred of the ants but with compassion for the ant and compassion for yourself.

This is really part of the movement of waking up, to see the judging mind. It arises out of old habit and conditions. You acknowledge it, but you don't have to make it active in your life.

But still, living in the human body, you must make choices. Do you use this product or that, eat this food or that? What do you say to the person who is throwing rocks at your dog, or—I'm trying to think of some kinds of offensive behavior—just the drivers who plow through too fast, creating a dangerous condition. You don't have to judge them. You don't have to hate them. But the more you can within your heart acknowledge the anger, wish them well, wish them diminishment of their fear, of their aggression, so that they may calm down and not suffer so much—the more you can do that, the less you will suffer.

Perhaps it's time to stop. I think we've covered the ground pretty well.

My love to you all. I will look forward to seeing you again in September. I wish you a beautiful summer filled with love and sunshine, with fresh rain which the flowers need to grow; with everything good, and all the challenges you need also to grow. May you be happy.

I am Aaron. I will release the body to Barbara.