

## March 1, 2022 Tuesday Evening, The Eden Project

On Ukraine; Who or what is “the snake”? Is the snake something “other than”? How do we relate to the snake?

**Barbara:** Good evening. I’ve been on “retreat” now—and I put that word. in quotation marks—for two weeks. Tomorrow starts Week Three, so it will be two and a half weeks.

It’s been a totally different retreat for me. I really have empathy for those of you who sit a retreat with us from home, having to take care of family members, having to work. It’s a very different retreat experience—a good one, but definitely not a quiet experience.

But I know it’s just the experience I needed. I’ve had profound experiences of the Unconditioned in my life. What I really needed for this retreat was this experience integrating those deep experiences in stillness with the chaos of daily life.

Mostly it’s been controlled chaos. But Hal’s bed broke, and I had to have an emergency person come in and fix it. This or that, needing some groceries. I’ve been able to look at these so-called disturbances and, instead of tensing up—“This! This!”—and contracting, to be able to see each one, take each one (at a time).

When the bed needed repair, I just came here and sat for half an hour before I did anything, instead of freaking out. Ah, okay, just sit. Just breathe. Being able to attend to all the things that needed attendance from a place of center was wonderful; the bed and also, inevitably, caregivers who for some reason could not come.

I stopped experiencing these things as one more burden to carry, and have been able to take them lightly, put them down on my altar, and offer them up to the heart of love. Wait until I was very uncontracted, and then say, “Okay; how shall this be attended to?”

So, it’s been a different retreat than I expected, but it’s been a good retreat. I see myself grasping; I only have four more days—I want another two weeks! Actually, I’m thinking next week I have a lot of meetings and a lot of things on my calendar. The week after I may take another quiet week. In fact, I’m thinking of altering my calendar in such way that I only offer private meetings alternate weeks, and only schedule appointments for me or for Hal, like medical appointments, on those same alternate weeks. A quiet week; a busier week; a quiet week; a busier week.

So, I’ve been looking at how can I live my life more sanely. Last week was the anniversary of four years since Hal’s stroke. It’s been a crazy four years. This few weeks is the first time I’ve had any semblance of quiet, in those four years. We need that. We all need a time just to come home.

We've been talking about the bridge. Unless we have some reminder of the Dharmakaya, how can we balance between Dharmakaya and nirmanakaya?

I was hanging on to the nirmanakaya end of the bridge, falling off of the nirmanakaya and grasping at it, and trying to figure out how to live out there in the nirmanakaya, two fingers grabbing the end of the bridge. Coming home. Coming back to ourselves.

I've also, especially this past week with what's happening in the Ukraine, spent a lot of time with the path of sacred darkness, looking at anger at what's happening, fear, sadness. The feelings of helplessness that what's happening in the Ukraine evoke in me the feelings of being a victim.

When I was a young girl, I was born in 1942 so WWII was happening. I can remember probably at age 5, maybe, 1947, maybe age 4, early memories I have are of my parents talking about the Holocaust and word they had gotten that family members had disappeared or were confirmed killed, of who they knew had died in concentration camps. This is one of my earliest memories. It struck horror in me then. So, I think this is touching a very sore spot in me. One nation as aggressor. But it doesn't have to be a nation; it can be a person, too.

My dad's mother came from a town, Nizhyn, in the Chernihiv oblast near Kiev. According to a NY Times map, today Russian soldiers were just outside that city or maybe already destroying it. One of my sons, a photojournalist, spent several years in the Ukraine and just said, "I can't get over seeing places I've lived now in the news, on fire or destroyed or filled with tanks and soldiers." But perhaps these personal connections are less important than just the tragedy of brutality and violence.

I've been watching occasional news with Hal. And I watch maybe an hour of a movie with Hal, not the whole movie. We just watched a powerful movie called *Joe Bell*, about a man whose son was gay and was bullied, and finally took his own life. It brought up the whole question of bullies in our world and what we can do to protect ourselves and others against bullies. It's a hard movie to watch. It's a well-done movie, I recommend it.

When we look at the question of aggressor and one who is aggressed against—victim and aggressor—the third piece of the triangle is the rescuer. We all seem to have this cycle going—victim, perpetrator, rescuer.

I found myself reflecting a lot, as I watched the news this week, seeing the move to be a rescuer come up. What is my part in this triangle? In what ways do I keep it going?

I'm not a victim. I'm not an aggressor. But if I still believe that people need to be rescued—let's separate being rescued from offering help. Nobody needs to be rescued

but people do need support offered to them, the tools that they need to say no to aggression of any sort, to bullying of any sort.

But as soon as I believe in somebody else's helplessness, and that I need to rescue them, I'm part of that triangle and energetically keeping it going.

So, I've been exploring that quite a bit in meditation. Going into that sacred darkness, I see the bully in myself. I see the victim in myself. I see the rescuer in myself. What keeps these going?

I could see how much unnoticed anger there was still about the Holocaust. I spent two weeks in Germany in maybe early 1990s. A Deep Spring student, a good friend, invited me to visit Mother Meera in Germany with her. She didn't want to go alone. She said she would pay for my plane ticket and my room; all I would have to pay for was my food and expenses along the way. She had a double room booked. Actually, then a third person came with us and we had a triple room. We traveled together.

We stayed at the home of a German couple who ran a local history museum. This couple had lived in that town in Germany at the time of the Holocaust. They were young at that point, so they were a lot older than I was when we visited.

They were very kind people. It was like a B&B. They were gracious hosts. But an anger kept coming up in me: What were you doing then, at the time of the war?

Interestingly, in the center of the town there was a war memorial, and it listed all the local inhabitants who had died fighting for Germany. It didn't list anyone who had died of Jewish descent—not just of Jewish descent, but anyone who had been taken prisoner and taken into concentration camps. It brought up much anger in me.

I was meditating then, walking around that memorial, looking at the names and seeing the rage that came up. Then going in the evening for darshan with Mother Meera, who projected loving kindness, much like when I channel the Mother. Very loving energy.

I see I still haven't resolved that. I'm still caught in this duality and I imagine many of us are. I'd guess that for many of you, what's happening in Ukraine is bringing up a lot of strong feeling. I know it is because a number of you are emailing me. And I ask your forgiveness that I have not emailed back, but I am trying to respect my retreat to that degree. I sent out one email just saying I'll be talking about it tonight, and dropped it there.

How do we protect anyone, ourselves and others, from our own fear that leads to bullying of others, that leads to aggression from our own vulnerability, from our own pain?

I've been doing a lot of practice with sacred darkness. Finding the edges of the darkness and just sitting there. Aaron gave me the image of walking into a cave. He said it came from his final lifetime where he would often meditate in caves. He said he could easily walk into the cave, even knowing that there might be snakes and scorpions and bats; even a tiger or some other animal of that sort. But he could walk in as long as he could see, where there was light. He would sit comfortably and meditate for hours. Get up and walk out, walk in, come in, sleep near the entrance.

But as soon as he walked further into the cave, there seemed to be an invisible line. Still some light making it through, but darker into the cave, deeper into the cave, he could not easily sit anymore. There would be a lot of agitation. He realized eventually that it was not about the sunlight or darkness, but it was about his inner darkness, that going deeper into the cave provoked the darkness in him.

What is our relationship with that darkness? This movie, *Joe Bell*, brings up some of that. He realizes that although he loves his son and has told him he loves him, he never really told him he unconditionally loved him and accepted him completely, gay or not gay. He never did that. He had to examine that darkness in himself, that place of holding himself separate from something.

I see the ways I've been holding myself separate from Hal's stroke. I saw something this week that I had not realized before, which is that Hal's helplessness scares me, because that could be me. Unable to stand up. He can feed himself with his left hand; he can bring food from his plate to his mouth. But he can't bathe himself, toilet himself. He can't stand up. He's basically helpless.

Helplessness is a scary thing to watch. So, I see the places where I have not been totally connected, lovingly connected to Hal's helplessness as not just *his* helplessness but that helplessness of us all. The place where it touched deep vulnerability in me. "I have to be strong." But if I must be strong, what does that do for Hal? What if I give him a chance to be strong?

I've been snuggling up to him sometimes this week, and he can bring his good left arm and wrap it around me. I've been telling him there's so much pain in the world, I really need a hug. And this was honest; I wasn't trying to create a situation. But it felt really good for him to be the strong one and hug me.

We're all helpless, and we're all powerful beyond measure. What is the darkness?

So that's some of where this retreat has led me. And I'm catching up on sleep, which is a blessing.

From the emails I've gotten from you, the bullying of Russia against the Ukraine is a primary item that's provoking pain in people. It's one thing if we discuss how do we deal with an external bully, but how do we deal with a bully in ourselves? This is the bully in me that says, "I should be kind. I should be patient. I should be strong." Even "I should be happy."

How do we literally hear that bully; not take it in as truth, not push it away? Hear it not as *my* pain but as the pain of all of us? Because there is this force of darkness in us that speaks out. It's fear. How do we relate to it when we are the force of darkness and knowing we are also the light? Right there, when the bully is speaking, "I should take care of Hal. I haven't spent enough time with Hal today. I should go in." Or he's in some pain, "I should be able to fix it for him." That's the bully in me speaking.

Obviously I'm not going to leave him lying there in pain. But I don't have to fix it for him, either. There's a middle ground. Just to be present with it, to witness. So I've been exploring that also.

So as I said, it's been an interesting retreat. That's enough from me. I'm going to give you Aaron, at this point.

**Aaron:** My blessings and love to you. I am Aaron.

I don't need to ask if there is anyone here who is not agitated about world events.

The question is not whether or not you're agitated, or even the source of the agitation, but how you are working with that agitation.

Barbara put it in a very clear way. What part of me is the bully, and how do I relate to that bully?

Can there be unconditional love for myself, for the old stories that come up, for the pain that comes up, when I am being the bully?

I'm not talking here about actual physical or emotional bullying of another person. We each hope we've moved beyond doing that.

But it still comes up in one's thoughts. Anger at the other person. Wanting to fix or change something or somebody.

How do we affect the world without moving into the position of rescuer or bully, or without accepting ourselves as victim?

It does help when you have had some deep experiences of the essence of your being, because essence of your being is the essence of Being itself. When you are there in your core, you're in the core of everything. It's a place wherein killing another person becomes impossible, hatred of another person becomes impossible.

But when you still contract around that feeling of antipathy for another or for the situation in which the other is involved, and feelings of blame, of anger, of shame, of helplessness still arise, and there is not willingness to look deeply at those experiences, then separation occurs.

I saw something on the television through Barbara. A young Russian. I don't think he was a soldier; probably would become a soldier or would be forced to become a soldier. He lived just on the other side of the national border, living in Russia, not Ukraine.

He said he had cousins in the Ukraine just 15, 20 miles away. He was going to be called into the army, going to be forced to take up weapons and go and shoot at his cousins. How could he do that? But he did not know how to say no. He would probably be shot if he said no.

How many of us does it take to know that the whole world are our cousins, our brothers, our sisters, our mothers and fathers—nobody is separate?

Now, those of you who have a consistent meditation practice, you've developed an ability to be more honest with yourself and to open your heart not just to your pain but THE pain of all sentient beings.

When we can open to that pain, we find the courage to say no to attacking our brothers and sisters because to attack the brother is to attack oneself.

And to allow oneself to be attacked by the brother is to attack the brother and oneself.

It takes enormous courage to face the world from a perspective of unwillingness to commit violence to any other sentient being. But if your world is to survive, this is where you must go.

There's a book Barbara has read numerous times, *The Fifth Sacred Thing*. The author is a woman named Starhawk. A very beautiful book. There are those attacking from the big city, sent there by the rulers, the army somewhat powerless to say no. I think in the book situation the army are being given kind of a drug with their food. And if they say no and the drug is withdrawn, they will be very sick; they will die. So, they are puppets. They must do what the army asks. They must go in as aggressors to places that are peaceful to try to take them over.

The people of that peaceful area are deeply forsworn to non-violence, to non-harm to any being. Instead of trying to shoot and kill what is a much larger military power, they come to the soldiers as they arrive and they simply say to them, “There is a place for you at our table, if you would care to join us.”

Where the soldiers come from, there is extreme overpopulation, starvation. Water is rationed and the government controls people by controlling the water. Here in this city the water flows freely.

The soldiers come in and say, “Water is just running down the hillside! Enormous wealth! Who owns it?”

“No one owns it. We all own it. You cannot own the water, or the land, or the air, or the earth. And the fifth sacred thing is spirit.”

“We all own it. There is a place for you at our table, if you would care to join us.” And many of them do. Word gets out that they have an antidote to this drug the soldiers have been given, and although they may feel sick for some days, they will be able to withdraw from it and they will be fine.

But when they offer, “There is a place for you,” often the response is just a gunshot. Then the next person, seeing his brother dead on the ground, walks up and says, not with hatred but with compassion, “There is a place for you at my table, if you would care to join me.” Bang! The next, “That was my brother that you just shot. He was so good to me. He used to tell me stories and take care of me. There is a place for you at my table, if you would care to join us.”

It finally breaks down these angry and frightened men and women, breaks them down into tears, opens their heart to the truth of compassion.

What would happen in a place like the Ukraine if there were tens of thousands trained to do that with these tanks coming in? What would happen if there was an army of grandmothers and grandfathers coming out to where the tanks are—where the word is that they are running short of food and supplies—if they came out with bowls of soup instead of guns, and said, “You are breaking into our country and it’s hurting us. But here is soup for you.”? What kind of strength does it take to do that? What kind of love?

But I really see this as the only hope for the world, that people will come to a point of befriending their own fear and ancient prejudices, their own feelings of powerlessness that turn them into aggressors. To be deeply present with the darkness. The darkness of vulnerability. The darkness of personal weakness. The darkness of old mind with its stories. The darkness of duality.



I'm going to lead us in a guided meditation. We'll have a short break and then a chance for people to share their experiences and questions and so forth. So please join me.

Here we are in the hills. A jungle kind of setting. There are of course wild animals. It is not a safe place, in conventional terms.

You approach me out of the woods dressed in your monk's or nun's robes, carrying your alms bowl, and with a thin covering of some sort on which you can sit to protect you from the ground or to cover yourself. A robe, that's all you have.

You have not had water for 24 hours, not been able to find water or food. You are exhausted. And you see me there, standing in front of the mouth of a cave. You are so happy to see another human being, as you have been lost in the woods.

You come running up to me. "I am lost. I am hungry. I am thirsty. I don't know where to go. Please help me."

I hold my hands out to you. "Of course I will help you. You are welcome to whatever I have."

I bring you up to the mouth of my cave. I give you some water that I have there in a bowl. I have the food I had been eating from my alms round and I give it to you. It doesn't occur to you to ask, "What will you eat?" You just eat because you are so hungry, and that's fine with me. Of course, I can go a day without food. And tomorrow we will go on alms round together.

You lie down near the front of my cave and take a nap, exhausted. Then, get up and we meditate together. Then it is time to sleep. It is fully dark.

"Where do we sleep?" you ask. I lead you into the cave.

You've asked me how long I've been there. Two months, I've been living in this cave.

"Is it safe?"

"What is 'safe'?" I ask you.

"Well, are there dangerous animals? Snakes? Scorpions? Things that could kill?"

"Everywhere you go in this world there are things that can kill. Come in, and let's go to sleep."



I lead you to an area where the ground is more level. You lie down on your robe, wrap yourself. I lie down a ways away from you. It is dark. You close your eyes, and you begin to hear slithering noises.

“What is it?” you ask, with alarm.

“Just one of the snakes that lives in the cave?”

“Is it safe?”

“What is ‘safe’? Go to sleep.”

We awaken at daylight and, looking across the cave where I am sleeping on the other side 10 or 15 feet from you, you see a large snake curled up on top of my body as I sleep, and you scream. Your scream awakens me.

I open my eyes and become aware of the snake. I do not see the snake as an aggressor. The warmth of my body has drawn him. He’s made himself comfortable. Yes, he has a poison in his fangs; he could kill me. But his intention is not to kill; his intention is to simply find a comfortable place to sleep.

You sit up abruptly, and I say, “Please be still. Please do not alarm this brother who is sleeping on me. Get up quietly, if you must, and walk outside. But please be still and gentle.”

You sit there, eyes big, fascinated. “What are you going to do?”

“Just lie here until he wakes up and decides to leave.”

And so, I close my eyes and I breathe.

Yes, one puncture of his fangs and I would die a very painful death. He does not have the consciousness yet to understand not to harm me, but simply to react to his impulses. But I, as a more awakened human, have the choice not to be reactive.

And so I lie there, meditating, offering metta to this snake, until, as the light draws deeper, more light coming into the cave, the snake wakes up and begins to move, and slithers off me and back into the cooler depths of the cave. And then I get up.

How do you learn to live with the inevitable snake who will curl on your chest? How do you make peace with it? Where is the place of peace and non-harm within you, of compassion for sentient beings, within you?

I'm going to give us ten minutes to meditate now. Please join me in my cave. If a snake slithered onto your chest, feel how it is to be with him, just to feel his presence. If none slithers onto your chest but you see him on me, feel that.

Where is the awake part of you that can be compassionately and fully present with what is happening?

I'm going to be quiet now for ten minutes.

*(sitting, break)*

**Barbara:** Please come back together and let's talk a bit, various things that I invite you to share. Your experience in this guided meditation, did you have a snake sitting on you? What happened? Did you see somebody else with a snake on them, Aaron is asking, and did you have to save them? What happened?

The other sharing Aaron is inviting is, he said he knows many of us have been deeply moved by what's happening in the world right now. Feel free to share anything you want to. How have you been working with this catalyst of war? Sharing, asking questions, whatever you feel moved to talk about...

*(sharing not transcribed)*

**Barbara:** Thank you, Q. I think I would be helpful for you to keep doing this meditation. Just being there with the snake, in whatever form it takes. And also, to do some compassion/karuna meditation with the snake. Just wishing it well. Wishing yourself well. Holding compassion for both of you. See where that takes you.

John, I know you have told us the story of when you were a monk being in a cave with a snake, waking up with it there. Would you like to share that?

*(John has not reviewed his portion)*

**John:** In Thailand, in Southeast Asia in general, in Sri Lanka, there are a lot of snakes. Something you kind of have to learn to live with on a day to day basis. They don't hear but they can feel vibration on the ground. So when you walk through the monastery at night you have to have a staff. And as you walk, you have to pound the staff on the ground so that if there are any snakes ahead, they could feel the vibration and get out of the way.

However, it was a very different experience living in caves with snakes because it's their home. The monk is the visitor to the cave. I remember in monsoon season when the rains would start, the snakes would approach the cave, wanting to get into the cave.

I was scared of them, and I would throw rocks at them trying to dissuade them from trying to go into the cave. But water on the ground is a very uncomfortable situation for snakes so they want to get to a higher level and into the cave.

I didn't know enough about the snakes to know which ones were poisonous and which ones weren't. So I had a fear of snakes because I had to essentially share the dwelling with them. I was very wary of where they were when I was awake. But of course when I was asleep I didn't know where they were.

So I felt a lot of separation between myself and the snakes. In fact, one time I visited a snake farm in Bangkok to study them, to learn which ones were poisonous and which ones weren't.

I was on a tudong trip to the north of Thailand, walking through the forests up there and staying in a cave. I stayed in a cave that was way up on the top of a mountain. It took a lot just to get up to the cave. In order to get into the cave I had to get down on the ground and kind of scrape myself in. There was a bamboo cot inside the cave that a former monk had built, or someone had built.

So, I was sitting on this bamboo cot, reading a book. I had a package of small candles about this size, and I was reading a book. And all of a sudden I heard a strong scraping sound. I looked through the slots of the bamboo cot and there was a huge snake there. It was a boa constrictor.

My body just leapt from the cot onto the ground. Just instinctively— my body just moved. There was a staff in the ground. The snake was coming out from underneath the cot and I was trying to protect myself with the staff, which wasn't really much!

The snake just kind of looked, he came out and looked around, looked at me, and I backed up. I backed up to the back of the cave. There was a ledge there and I got up on the ledge, and that's where I spent the night. I didn't sleep the whole night. I would sit in meditation and light a candle until it burned down to the very end, then I would light another candle, do the same thing. I was meditating all night. I was completely aware, especially of any sound of the slithering of the snake. There was just a lot of fear, tremendous fear. Tremendous feeling of separation between myself and the snake. And that fear, that separation, was causing me suffering.

But I spent the whole night that way. I didn't sleep one wink all night. I was just sitting in meditation with my eyes open. I figured, if it's going to get me, it's going to get me when my eyes are open. I can't sleep.

At the top of the cave there was an opening, and in the morning when the light came through that opening I knew that it was daybreak, and I went down the side of the

mountain, back down to where somebody else was staying at another cave down by a river.

I was caught in the fear, in the stories, in the projections of what would happen here. As a result of that, I was very much in dual consciousness. I was not able to open my heart to the snake. I was not really able, and at that point I didn't even really think... (*John loses audio*) ... a long process for me in looking at duality and separation and how fear creates a sense of separation inside of myself.

I see it in terms of the Ukrainian situation, that a lot of it is the fear of not knowing. Not knowing what's going to happen. Not knowing, is the snake going to wrap itself around me and take me? I didn't know, because I hadn't studied snakes enough to know that a boa constrictor doesn't usually attack a human, it attacks small animals.

But that fear of not knowing and the separation that it created for me is something that I was looking at today in relationship to the Ukrainian situation, and with Russia, and also with the meditation that Aaron just did. Recognizing that this sentient being, the snake that's lying on Aaron's stomach, doesn't have any harmful intent.

Looking at any fear, any discomfort that I have that is creating the sense of duality and separation and making me the aggressor. The snake is not the aggressor. The snake in the cave that I lived in was not the aggressor—I was the aggressor. I was throwing rocks at them, trying to keep them away. This is what Barbara was talking about earlier.

So it was helpful—in the guided meditation that Aaron led it was more of a sense of non-separation with the situation, with the snake, with the presence of it on Aaron's body, on the whole situation. So that was my experience with this particular meditation.

**Barbara:** Thank you, John. I'm reminded of a very different, yet similar, situation. This is probably 1961. I was in the deep South in a small church basement, spending the night there with others before a Freedom Ride the next day. We had been told that the Klan had threatened that they were going to break in and burn the church. We heard people outside. We heard car doors opening and closing. There was really no way in the dark to know what was happening. Obviously, it wasn't somebody friendly. They weren't coming up and saying, "Hi, do you mind if we come in?" There were just ominous sounds in the background.

We had been told earlier in the evening that we could move elsewhere, that they would get us out safely and move us to wherever we could choose lodging, but out of the church basement. But there weren't that many of us, and we all chose to stay there—a dozen of us, maybe, plus the church members.

Like with the snake, I didn't sleep. I could hear all the sounds and my imagination was going wild. I was creating so much duality. I was down there for a Freedom Ride to say we're all the same. Don't create separation. Compassion for us all. But sitting there through that night, hearing the sounds that sounded ominous to me, I didn't sleep.

That night, as the sounds grew louder and there were more angry noises, threatening noises, it was clear that somebody who did not love us was out there. The people whose church it was, whose basement we were in, they just began singing hymns—beautiful spirituals and some civil rights songs and hymns of different sorts.

I remember how hard it was to let myself relax into that atmosphere, though. So much fear; so much separation. So, that was my 'snake'.

And the next day the Freedom Ride was, I won't say uneventful, but not terribly eventful. We were not attacked on that particular Freedom Ride.

Who else would like to share? Anything related to the meditation, to your feelings about the Ukraine, to anything else.

*(K shares an original poem)*

### **Kiev**

There are days  
when the price of waking  
seems too steep

There are nights  
that take too long to end

How can I walk with  
angels of mercy  
on the eve of destruction

when the urge to kill  
rises  
a gorge in my throat

and humanity recoils  
from the anger  
I have become

**Barbara:** Thank you, K...

*(sharing)*

**Barbara:** Who or what is the snake? Is the snake something other than? How do we relate to the snake?

*(sharing)*

**Barbara:** I'm reminded here of the story of a member of our Deep Spring sangha who was sitting and reading in her living room with her cocker spaniel sleeping on her lap. It was a hot evening. The door was open.

She looked up because she saw motion, but the dog was on her lap. She saw a skunk there in the living room. She knew if the dog woke up, heard the skunk, chased the skunk, it was all over. The skunk was going to fill the house with its fumes.

She was terrified. She said she just very carefully stood up and, holding the dog against her, walked over and opened the screen door so the skunk could get out, and walked upstairs. Closed her bedroom door and went to sleep.

The next morning the skunk was gone, but all night she was picturing the skunk climbing the stairs, coming up to her bedroom to find her.

So, it's the same question: who is the skunk? Who is the snake? Who do we assign to that role? Why do we so easily push somebody into that role, or push ourselves into that role?

Other things people would like to share?

*(sharing)*

**Barbara:** Thank you, Q. We are all Putin; we are all Trump; we are all the Ukraine; we are all ourselves. And we have the free will choice to hold all this pain in the light, or to keep it locked in darkness.

So, look during the week: what helps you to invite it more fully into the light? What parts of yourselves are you condemning? How do you bring that more fully into the light?

I hope you've all received that Group of Five transcript that was sent out a day or two ago. If you have not had a chance to read it, I hope you read it because I found it very helpful, hearing spirit discuss this. There was so much love. It wasn't just the words, it was the energy. They were opening so lovingly to us as humans, really compassionate to our pain. Just taking our hands and saying, "Yeah, you can do this. This is what you



came for, to find compassion for all of this pain and dissolve the pain in that way.” Not even to dissolve; Aaron is saying it’s not so much to dissolve the pain but to transmute the pain into love.

Okay, everybody, the State of the Union message starts a 9pm and I know some of you want to hear it. I would like to hear it with Hal, too. So, we’ll end here and give you chance to move on to that, if you wish. Or just to go and meditate. Perhaps some of you, instead of watching it, will just hold loving space around it. It needs that too.