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## Living the Truth of Who You Are

Jehan Semper, 11/11/2018

*"From the way in which you treat your spouse, how you speak to your children, the way you perform your job, the way you manage sorrow, the way you perceive the world and the way you perceive yourself, consider how your behaviour could inspire someone to evolve to something better."*

After 10 years of austerity and solitude, investing the majority of my time, literally, in the midst of a conversation with myself, I believe I know who I am.

Well, that's sort of true. I believe that I know who I am within the scope of this particular life that I have as a human who believes their name to be Jehan. Who I am beyond the scope of this human life is a truth I am working on understanding.

What I have managed to understand is that I am Jewish. I have always been Jewish. Most people would likely say, "How could you not know that you are Jewish? Wouldn't that be something that you would know?" Not necessarily. You would only know such a thing once you have an experience that gives you an opportunity to fully realize it.

What was that experience? That's a topic for another day.

However, the topic for today is: Living the truth of who you are. How do we do that? Well, first you would learn what it means to be who you are. In my experience, that is learning what it means to be Jewish. What are the practical acts, efforts and tasks of being Jewish? During the days since Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur I have kept kosher, studied Hebrew, started learning prayers, reciting prayers and studying the philosophical aspects of Jewish reasoning, thinking and decision making.

These practices are actually very comfortable to implement, because I have so much experience. The most influential people in my life during my childhood and adolescence are Jewish. Every decision I have ever made in my life that lead to anything good is directly related to my internalizing and implementing the advice and wisdom provided to me by my Jewish mentors.

At this time, as an adult, with the blessing of having lived 10 years as a Buddhist, immersed in austerity and solitude, I have achieved the required level of peace and acceptance of myself that gives me the mind and heart to accept and live in truth.

The theme of my childhood and adolescence would be accurately stated as, "To whom much is given, much is required". This is literally true. Confirming that life is truly filled with humour, this quote from the New Testament was very prominently featured in the decor of Phillipa Schuyler, School for the Gifted and Talented, which I attended for middle school. From the first day I attended Phillipa Schuyler, this quote

was reiterated to me ad infinitum. The constant reiterating of this quote continued while I attended Stuyvesant High School where in the midst of my persistent truancy, my teacher, Ms. Lichtenstein, shouted in frustration, "You're wasting that brain of yours." As I made my way through my first years at college and became an adult, I always believed it to be a strange truth that this quote has continued its ubiquitous placement in my life and thoughts.

During many of these years since middle school, the very idea that somehow I am required to do more, to achieve more, to be better than others is an idea whose influence I truly refused to allow to affect me. I resolved that I would simply live my life, choosing to do what *I would like* on the basis of what would be most enjoyable and interesting in *my sole opinion*. I resolved that I would not allow a series of words painted on the wall of a middle school to influence what *I would choose to do*, nor would I allow it to decide *how well I would choose to do it*.

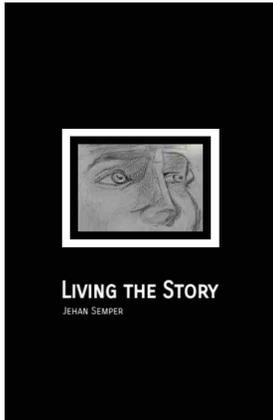
As I started observing my first kosher Rosh Hashanah and during the days leading to Yom Kippur, I invested much of my time pondering what would be the true and practical meaning of living my life as a Jewish person. What would I achieve by "professing" that I am Jewish that I would not achieve by simply continuing to apply the advice and wisdom I have received and continuing to observe the commandments provided in the Torah?

How truly interesting and joyous it is to learn, after all of these years, that the very idea that somehow it is my path in this life to utilize this "brain of mine" to do more, to achieve more, to be better, to inspire fellow humans--an idea that I have refused to accept for many years--is precisely what it means to be Jewish.

What is the meaning of being Jewish? The practical effect of being Jewish is that I have a responsibility. I have a responsibility to live a life that has the potential to inspire my fellow humans to evolve to something better. I have a responsibility to utilize my life to assist others in achieving their goals and living a life that honours the blessing of having been born in this world as a human. The practical result of living up to this responsibility is the very path to achieving the goal of Judaism, which is translated as making certain that all is right with the world. This goal can only be achieved when the commandments are observed, the wisdom is practiced and Jewish identity is professed.

Many people would say, "Well, shouldn't we all behave at a level that would inspire fellow humans?" Yes. Living a life with the potential to inspire humans to elevate themselves to something better is something that everyone *should* do. However, for Jewish people, living a life with the potential to inspire is a task that we *must* do, because it is the very meaning of what it is to be Jewish.

The work that we have been blessed to do in this world, the work that provides the opportunity to inspire, is comprised, literally, of every sort of task, effort, objective and activity that exists within the world. Every activity, every task, however mundane and modest it may seem, is an opportunity to inspire. From the way in which you treat your spouse, how you speak to your children, the way you perform your job, the way you manage sorrow, to the way you perceive the world and the way you perceive yourself, consider how your behaviour could inspire someone to evolve to something better.



Jehan Semper's book, [Living the Story](#), is available now at [Amazon](#) in paperback and Kindle editions.

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