



EXISTENCE, MEANING AND FOSTER CARE

An Exploration of Being Human

Second Nurture Adult Education for Sukkot

Searching for Seeds of Meaning

Kohelet 1:2

הבל הבלים אמר קהלת הבל הבלים הכל הבל

Utter vanity!—said Kohelet— Utter vanity! All is vanity!

- "All is utter vanity"
 - How do you understand the Psalmist's claim?
 - How do you hear the tone (ie the repetition of the word "vanity")?
 - How do the meaning and the tone shed light on each other?
- The Psalmist seems to say that there is no evidence of meaning in the world—even as the soul longs for meaning.
 - Is it possible to have a deep longing for that which does not exist?
 - For that which we cannot see or know intellectually?
 - If so, could our longing create/elicit the reality we seek? How?
- How might the dissonance between the sense that "all is futility," and the passion found in the expression of that sentiment, be experienced by a kid without a family?
 - Have you experienced that dissonance? Others you know?
 - How did it ebb and flow for you/them?



Kohelet Rabbah 1:2

הבל הבלים... כי מי יודע מה טוב לאדם בחיים ויעשם כצל. באיזה צל, אם כצלו של כתל יש בו ממש, אם כצלו של דקל יש בו ממש

Vanity of vanities...For who knows what is good for a human being in life when [life] is like a shadow. But which shadow? If it's the shadow of a wall then there is something important in that, if it's the shadow of the palm tree, there is something important in that.

- How do you understand the question of “what is טוב לאדם—good for a human being” when life is “like a shadow?”
 - What is the poet searching for? What are you searching for?
 - How did you learn to respond to that question?
 - How might this be difficult for a child in foster care to learn?
 - How might a new family, through adoption, help a child—especially older children and teens—engage this?
- The rabbis read shadow as shade (same word in Hebrew) and claim that for some shade יש בו ממש—there is value in them, depending on the source.
 - How do you understand the metaphor of life being כצל—“like a shadow/shade?”
 - If we’re hot, do we consider the source of the shade?
 - What’s the difference between the shade of a tree and the awning of a Walmart? Physically? Spiritually and emotionally?
 - If children are homeless or hungry, do they consider the source of the “shade”—housing, food, clothing, etc?
 - What’s the difference between the “shade” of a family or a group home? Physically? Spiritually and emotionally?
 - How might the transition from the “shade”/protection of a group home to that of a family frighten, challenge and/or “grow” a child in their relationship with such questions?



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- Families are supported before, during, and after the licensing and adoption processes
- Foster and adopted children have peers in our community with similar backgrounds
- The values of foster and adoption are integrated into our community culture
- Our whole community wraps around the families in support as they become foster and adoptive parents
- We partner with the best and most well-aligned local social service partners
- We are all enriched—both by our new, young members and our growing capacity as a synagogue to support our foster and adoptive families



Second Nurture creates a community within our community — and expands our vision of what family and belonging truly mean.
- Cohort Member