

Lara Glass: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Lara Glass: Welcome to morning prayers. Please stand as you are able to join in a responsive reading from your black Appleton Psalter. It's actually number 154, apologies, 154, found on page 78. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that obtaineth understanding.

Congregation: For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

Lara Glass: She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Congregation: Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand are riches and honor.

Lara Glass: Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

Congregation: She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that holdeth her fast.

Lara Glass: The lord by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding he established the heavens.

Congregation: By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the skies drop down the dew.

Lara Glass: My son, let not them depart from thine eyes. Keep sound wisdom and discretion.

Congregation: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

Lara Glass: Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thou shall not dash thy foot.

Congregation: When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid. Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

Lara Glass: You may be seated.

Choir: (singing)

Getzel Davis: This past Shabbat, Jews around the world read the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. For review; God decides to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. According to the Jewish tradition it's not because of their sexual proclivities. In fact, according to the Jewish tradition, the true sin of [inaudible 00:05:17], the quality of Sodomy, is the failure to graciously welcome strangers. After the cities are condemned to destruction, God sends the angels to save

Abraham's nephew Lot and his family. A riot forms as the citizens of Sodom congregate to amuse the angels because they are foreigners. Lot, his wife, and two daughters leave the city under the cover of darkness, and are warned not to turn back to witness the utter destruction behind them. Why this prohibition against turning back? What is so dangerous about reflection, nostalgia, hesitation? Regardless, Lot's wife cannot resist. She looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. To this day, there stands a bizarre rock formation by the dead sea said to be her remains, which what seems to be a face looking longfully backwards over her shoulder from where she came.

Getzel Davis: Many women throughout the Torah are left anonymous, including Lot's wife and daughters. The Talmudic rabbis however give Lot's wife a name; Edith, which means rich soil. They also give her a rich back story. Edith was raised and born in Sodom. She lived there with her parents, her husband and her four daughters. She had many local relatives. Her two eldest daughters had already married local men, and the two youngest were still single and living at home. She turned back because she could not resist searching the crumbling landscape and cityscape for her two married daughters consumed by the destruction of Sodom.

Getzel Davis: Can you imagine it? A mother fleeing everything she knew, leaving her home, her family of origin, and worst of all only having two of her own daughters. Of course she wasn't able to restrain herself, of course she wasn't able to move on. The problem was that in becoming frozen as she did, not only did she die, but in her absence she abandoned her two living daughters in their own grief. And in the verses that follow, those daughters attempt to fill the hole in the family system by sleeping with their father. Is this pillar of salt a warning of a life un-lived, or a monument of the excruciating pain of unbearable loss? Of course, the answer is both. Thankfully, most of us will never mourn the loss of a child, such loss is the epitome of suffering and something that is hard and unbearable. I want to suggest though, that Edith's pillar is not just about her personal loss, but a larger mythical paradigm representing everything that we cannot bear to move on from.

Getzel Davis: There are parts of us that are so stuck in the past that we cannot turn our backs on them and move forward. They're unable to re-metabolize, they're unable to bend, we're unable to move forward because it would mean abandoning those parts of ourselves and our histories. At the same time, we can't keep living in Sodom, a place that does not exist. What's so heartbreaking to me, when I feel into these parts of myself, is that I learned, and I think most of us did, these patterns, these sense of self because they actually used to serve us. The parts of ourselves that we can't let go of are what helped us survive the bruises and abuse of childhood, the loneliness and awkwardness of adolescence, the slings and arrows of everyday life.

Getzel Davis: We learned our habits, our patterns, our addictions and our senses of selves, because we found that they were the best ways to protect ourselves from something that we seemed and we feared was far worse. We humans are

incredibly creative and resilient in meeting our emotional needs. The problem is that time passes, we are often still stuck in the patterns that were necessary to protect us from the world and wounds of our childhood and young adulthood, and adulthood, that hold us back from becoming the full person who lives a life of integrity and vibrancy.

Getzel Davis: Remember the Talmudic rabbis called her Edith, nourishing soil. They knew that salt poisons our fields and water supplies. By naming her Edith, of all the other possible names, they highlight to us the consequences of her actions. She is the epitome of nourishment and potential, but she's frozen. Those frozen, salty parts of ourselves still hold so much potential for wholeness and self-actualization. What does it take to let go of those ego pillars? Prayers, community, and courage. It also requires tears. Tears are the melting of the edifices of salt, the releasing of our past, and they welcome the relief that follows. Thank you.

Lara Glass: Please join me in offering the Lord's Prayer, printed on the reverse of your order of worship. Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Congregation: Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Lara Glass: Please stand as you are able to sing hymn number 12 in your crimson memorial church hymnal, The God of Abraham Praise, hymn number 12.

Congregation: (singing)

Lara Glass: In the words of John O'Donohue, may we live this day compassionate of heart, clear in word, gracious in awareness, courageous in thought, and generous in love. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.