

Once upon a time, there was a peaceful town where everyone was happy. The town's residents would play, rest, and enjoy what they have. They had enough!

But one day, a visitor comes to town, called the *Wanting* Monster. At first, no one notices. But then, the Wanting Monster whispers something into one person's ear (pst!). Suddenly, that person, who was perfectly happy beforehand, starts thinking: Maybe I *want* more. More stuff. More things than I already have.

That's not all. The more one person wants, the more the whispers of the Wanting Monster spread:

- (pst) One person wants a pool. Then another wants a pool, a bigger one. And another. And soon, all the water in the town is gone.
- (pst) One person wants flowers just for themselves. Then another wants flowers for the neighborhood. Soon everyone wants flowers, and the fields are empty.
- (pst) One person wants the stars. And another. Then everyone does, and the sky becomes dark.

And the town that once had everything... now has nothing.¹

I wonder if any of us knows what that feels like? Not the monster part, of course! But the *wanting* part?

Sometimes I'll be perfectly fine... and then I see something that catches my eye. Maybe something a friend has. Maybe something on Amazon, something I didn't even know I wanted five minutes beforehand. And I'll think to myself: "Hm... I want that. My life would be better if I had that." And just like that (pst), the contemporary culture of "always wanting more" has hired the Wanting Monster to whisper in my ear, too.

Wanting... can be tricky. It can take over and make us feel like our lives are incomplete, even when nothing is actually missing in the first place.

I want to suggest that the antidote to the whispers of the Wanting Monster can be found in the wisdom of Yom Kippur. Here's why:

¹ *The Wanting Monster*, by Martine Murray (Author), Anna Luisa Read (Illustrator)

All year long, we *want*: we want screen time, the newest jibbitz, more minecraft or roblox, more dessert, snacks, or soda, or the new flip iPhone that I feel like will snap in half after two FaceTime calls!

And then, today, Yom Kippur asks us to do something very different: for one day, we do *not* want. We stop eating as much as we'd eat any other day. Same with drinking. Same with technology. The ancient rabbis say it's even more than food and drink: it's about all those things in our lives that make us more comfortable: we stop washing our hands (for one day--please wash your hands tomorrow!), we stop using lotions that smell and feel good, and we wear less comfortable shoes.²

Why? Why would Judaism prescribe for us a full day to *stop* focusing on getting what we want?

When we *want* throughout the body of the year, it can be easy to forget what we already have. It's easier to forget the people sitting next to us. That our families can be there for us when we need them, and that friendships can fill our lives. It is all too easy to forget that, in so many ways, we might already *have* enough. And so, for one day, Judaism invites us to recalibrate our hearts and our souls toward what really matters... not "stuff" or that extra dessert or the nice pair of cleats that I don't need but I really do want... but the relationships that can make our lives meaningful.

So. What might it look like to live, even just a little bit, with less "wanting" and more "enough?"

- Maybe it's noticing when we say, "I want... I want... I want..." and pausing.
- Maybe it's saying: "I already have what I need right now,"
- Maybe it's looking around at friends, family, this community, and realizing that it is people, not stuff, who matter more than anything I could ever want.

No, Yom Kippur will never ask us to stop wanting things altogether. Of course we will! Trader Joe's "All Mixed Up" ice cream will remain, and I will want it. But today, Yom Kippur teaches that we don't always need to "want," and that we can, more often than not, be grateful for what we already do have.

May this new year be one where we experience joy and gratitude, where we have dreams, where we pause and take stock, and where we gently quiet the Wanting Monster around us (pst), knowing that we are already surrounded by love.

Shana tova!

² *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Ta'anuyot 5, Maimonides.