

## Rabbi's Column

If you do not know the story of "Beauty and the Beast", feel free to take some time to read or watch one of the newer versions first, and then read this. Spoilers and commentary abound.

The palace and its inhabitants become enchanted. The Prince appears as his psyche seems to be inside, and everyone else becomes one of the items they normally would use in fulfilling their duties. There is a sense that time is passing, slowly, with each day mostly the same, until SOMETHING happens. The opening song indicates that during each day, many things are "the same, like always." In the live version, this is a bit more important than it appears. When the spell is lifted, some villagers remember family and friends who work in the castle, and are suddenly appearing as people again. People remember what each other look like - so not that much time has passed. Or, as this is fantasy, time has passed and nobody has gotten older, and nobody (even from the outside) realizes that nobody is getting any older.

Belle and her father Maurice are from outside the village. It is unclear in this version whether Gaston is also from the outside or not. The odds are that he is from the outside, as if he grew up there than everyone would know to disbelieve him instead of disbelieving Maurice. The outsiders are the ones who move the plot, who find a connection between the village and the palace in the first place, and then get both to act.

[Some of the lessons implicit in the narrative I am uncovering as I type.]

First lesson - it is the rare individual who can look at their lives and see what changes might yet be made (either for good or ill) - that is part of why the right psychologist/psychiatrist is useful in helping you see what you could become.

Second lesson - it is easy to convince people to stop thinking and destroy anything different.

Third lesson - Destruction leads to self-destruction.

Fourth lesson - the internalization of actual loss followed by any kind of meaningfulness will lead to a sense of appreciation, love and joy. The Beast dies. Everyone in the palace becomes the things they had been known for, with no more sense of self. When Belle says the magic words (and they are not petrificus totalus, in this universe) then the enchantress/sorceress/fairy godmother restores everyone.

Fifth lesson - sometimes, you are too late, or you are otherwise powerless to save the ones you love. The task then is to protect the ones who are left.

Sixth lesson - it is never too late to rediscover your humanity, even if you grew up in an abusive environment.

Seventh lesson - what we experience shapes us.

Eighth lesson - we are part of one another's story. We sometimes have an idea of our parts in our own particular stories - we rarely know the parts we play in somebody else's story.

There are probably more, but eight is a good number to conclude with. The moral for the week is: be kind to one another - you never know who is Belle, who the Beast, and which charming person should be given a mirror and renamed Gaston.