

David Weiner – Unetanetokef

2nd Day RH 2022 Intro

There's probably good reason that my family isn't thrilled about my passion for cycling. My birthday is on March 1st, but I truly celebrate my life every year on February 4th. That was the date of my first collegiate bike race... when I crashed head on with a van while racing down a winding descent going 35 mph. I remember the excruciating pain, being laid out on the rough pavement, screaming, waiting for help to arrive. In the ambulance, my mangled bike accompanied my broken body to the nearest trauma center.

I am lucky to be here.

The physical wounds from my crash were quicker to heal than the mental ones. My legs eventually learned to pedal again, but I remained paralyzed by fear. (Fear of activities that once felt so normal? I had to shift my focus from thinking about the dangers in life, to thinking about the opportunities in life?)

I decided to keep the remnants of that twisted and shredded bike frame. I even hung it on the wall in my office. Not to relive the pain... but as a reminder to really live.

It sort of looked like a piece of art – a creative metal sculpture that loosely resembled a bicycle. Sometimes I would sit and stare at it, and sometimes it would just blend in with the furniture. But it often triggered reflection.

The unetone tokef is a head on crash with our own mortality...the Truth that we don't get to live forever. That there is finality to our story, and we generally don't get to decide our own ending.

But this heavy Truth doesn't need to be paralyzing.

When my mom died, almost 5 years ago – way too soon, and way too sudden - I was comforted by something I read – probably from this same prayer book - that the point of life isn't to live forever, but to live a good life.

The unetone tokef ... like my bike frame... is not just to remind us how lucky we are to be here, but also to encourage us to live a good life. A life of purpose.

Every February 4th I make sure to get out for a ride, or a run. It's sort of like my own personal prayer – engaging me both physically as well as spiritually. And I gather with my family for a celebratory meal. Acknowledging and appreciating those closest to me.. (add an example or two more about living a life of purpose, connected to Feb 4)

These are some of the ways that I have decided to “temper judgement’s severe decree.”