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Box

2

Folder

3

Sermons and notes, 1962.

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Rosh Hash. Eve <sup>Sept 28</sup> 1962

DIVINE GUIDANCE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

This (is our) <sup>of ours</sup> New Year's Eve. (It) is an evening altogether different in mood and spirit from the secular New Year's Eve on December 31st. Thank God for that difference.

I remember last January receiving a number of New Year greeting <sup>cards</sup> not all of which were in the best of taste.

One greeting card said simply:

OFF  
THIS IS TO HELP YOU START THE NEW YEAR RIGHT:

and taped to the card with scotch tape was an aspirin pill.

The idea was that the future was likely to give us one big headache.....

My friends, we are gathered tonight not ~~only~~ merely to deplore the state of affairs in the world, but to do something about it. *and we believe that there is help from God we may count on more than our own resources.*

We believe that what ails us is not the missile lag, nor the economic slump. .... The source of our troubles runs deeper than diplomatic misunderstanding, deeper than politics.

And Without belittling the value of economic and social reform.... Without downgrading institutions such as the United Nations, without neglecting the need of educating people and finding jobs for them, WE SOLEMNLY MAINTAIN TONIGHT that there is a moral and spiritual side to the problems of the world, ---that no plan, no project, no social reform, no expenditure of money will work, if the character of people is not improved, if their attitudes are not changed.

You must understand <sup>my friends</sup> our High Holidays as one tremendous spiritual rally, a great effort to produce a moral change within ourselves and through us in the wider world....

WHAT IS THE OVER ALL THEME OF THESE HIGH HOLIDAYS ?

I think it is:

Divine Guidance in Human Affairs

Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur are like 2 posts holding up a big sign; that <sup>reads</sup> ~~says~~ GOD STILL RULES IN OUR LIFE

Now, I must grant you that it is not easy <sup>always</sup> for us to maintain such faith <sup>especially</sup> in these terribly troubled times.

When you see the way people are behaving, you wonder whether God hasn't abandoned us.

~~Rosh Hashonah is, by our tradition, the birthday of the world. Basic to Judaism is the majestic vision of a Creative Power making order out of chaos.... The Bible opens with this awe-inspiring universal theme of creation~~

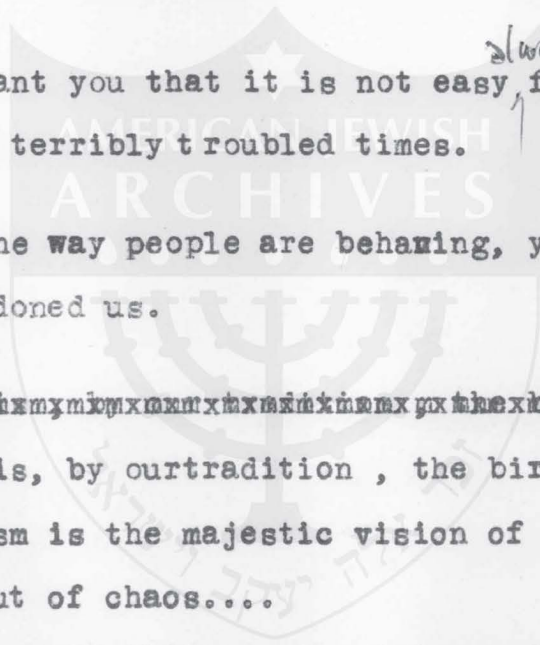
Rosh Hashonah is, by our tradition, the birthday of the world.

Basic to Judaism is the majestic vision of a Creative Power making order out of chaos....

The Bible opens with this awe-inspiring universal theme of creation

"In the Beginning God.... created"

You could stop right here ---this is one of the great themes that runs through the entire Bible and is basic to all of Judaism; **LIFE IS NOT AN ACCIDENT...IT HAD A BEGINNING AND A DEVELOPMENT AND IT HAS A PURPOSE.** Of course, the creation story leaves out a great deal. It doesn't tell us, for example, by what method God created.....The Bible doesnot say, and we shall never know, how many other worlds were created and destroyed, before this one was made.



out

out



It gives us the chills to think that, regardless how this world was created, MAN NOW HAS THE MEANS OF DESTROYING IT. Our irresponsible palying with nuclear fire makes you and me wonder about Divine Guidance.

*My friends,* My faith in divine guidance is also disturbed by what I see people do to each other in daily life.

I can somewhat understand brutality between enemies, but how shall we understand the pain people, who are close, inflict upon one another?

I sometimes, many times, wonder whether God has really endowed us with enough decency and goodness to live successfully with one another, --when I observe the torments people suffer under the same roof, people who ought to be loving each other because of common blood and family: parents & children, husband & wife, brother & sister ---- how they abuse and torture each other ! When I see those heart-broken ones whose love goes unanswered, whose generosity and sacrifice remain unappreciated, I, too, wonder whether God has really given us this moral guidance package known as the CONSCIENCE ?

Whatever your profession or ~~experience~~ <sup>station</sup>, enough happens to all of us in the course of a year, to shake our basic assumptions and beliefs ---and we need to re-examine our religious fundamentals. That's what the high holidays are here for: A season to make us reconsider the evidence for divine guidance in human affairs.



DIVINE JUDGEMENT

1. The first great idea Rosh Hashonah proclaims is that history is the record of the judgments of God.

The ancient legend tells us that on Rosh Hashonah God reconvenes the heavenly Court, and the case of every human being is reviewed, some for rewards and some for penalties.

Remove the snell of childish imagination and what you have is the basic idea of RETRIBUTION.

Our actions are subject to moral laws that operate in human relations as relentless as the physical laws in the material world.

Think of a bullet in flight. <sup>At first</sup> it seems to escape the law of gravity, but not for long. Gravity catches up with it. It must come down. Often we see people act in defiance of the moral law and, temporarily, they seem to move ahead awefully fast, /// but not for long. Eventually, the moral law will bring them down.

Robert Louis Stevenson said:

Everybody, soon or late, sits down to a banquet of consequences.

Individuals may not live long enough to see justice done, and retribution measured out. Sometimes the evil done in one generation, must be paid for by another, — the children suffering for the sins of the fathers.

A current example is our trouble with Castro in Cuba. We can't understand why "the bearded one" bit our hand that fed him. We ~~now~~ say that Castro isn't any better than the dictator Batista whom he overthrew. That may be so, but we conveniently forget that Batista was our buddy for a long time. We were indifferent to exploitation, vice and corruption in Cuba for a long, long time when we were still in a good position to use friendly influence for reform. We missed the boat in those years. Do you know why Castro is still able to whip up a Hate America campaign among the Cubans? Because several decades ago there was an invasion of Cuba by American troops. The gun-boat diplomacy of generations ago is still haunting us and paying us back in hate and suspicion south of the border.

Or take this massive problem of integration.

Federal troops are poised to march into Mississippi.

*As fate observes*  
~~They~~ say that the real crisis point in the South is yet to come, and then anything can happen. So far our success with integration barely scratched the metropolitan southern surface: New Orleans, Atlanta and Little Rock. But now comes Oxford, Miss. and all the little towns with their deep seated racial hate.

A hundred years ago, Abraham Lincoln with the tragedy of civil strife weighing heavily upon his heart, made a terrible prophecy. He said that there could be no escaping heavenly retribution which would demand from America every drop of blood which the lash of the slave-holder <sup>chew</sup> [had drawn] from the backs of black men brought to these shores.



Now, a century has passed, and we still have not finished paying the price retribution is extorting from us. The sins of the past have mortgaged the civil peace of today and who knows of how many future years.

Yes, there is retribution. It is one of the guideposts of the moral law by which divine guidance enters into human affairs.

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### THE INDIVIDUAL COUNTS

2. The second idea which is mightily stressed during both high holidays is the thought that every individual counts.

My friends, this is a very difficult truth <sup>forms</sup> to confirm by our own experience. Our civilization emphasizes the exact opposite. We come to think of people as mere cyphers. We are appalled by the population explosion. The masses of humanity make us feel lost in the shuffle. Just stand on a subway station platform in New York during rush-hours as the trains disgorge their human cargo, and you know what I mean.

~~If you operate~~ <sup>in</sup> a business, you will soon come to think of people as so many accounts. If you supervise a plant, you'll picture them as a labor force. Millions and millions of people are classified on cardfiles and IBM punch-cards. Statisticians are having a field-day talking of people in percentages.

There was an outcry recently when the telephone company in the interest of greater efficiency, began to abolish names from telephone numbers and substituted more numbers for them. Instinctively people don't want to let go of these last shreds of individuality. We have a horror of sinking completely into the namelessness of statistics.



Have you really considered the implication of the traditional Rosh Hashonah greeting : LESHONAH TOVA TIKOSEVU ?

" May you be inscribed for a good year" INSCRIBED, WHERE ?

Again legend supplies an image: Up in heaven are 3 books.  
 2 are very thin, the 3rd is a great big book.  
 The 2 thin books contain the names of the perfectly righteous and the perfectly wicked ---very few fall in either category.  
 But the great big book is for the rest of us who are both good and bad in various mixtures.

There is an entry for every person, there is a record of every event, all actions are remembered, no deed is lost, nothing is forgotten.

And God opens the book on Rosh Hashonah to weigh each case and writes next to each name the sentence he deserves for the coming year.

A fancy-ful tale but a dep truth it does convey.

Curiously, modern psychology corroborates this great idea:

No experience, no impulse is ever lost. Everything that happens to us is either stored up in our conscious ~~mmmsubmmmsconscious~~ mind or pushed down into the vastness of the sub-conscious

remaining as an item to be reckoned with. *Is it really so far fetched to conceive of a Universal Mind - God - who registers and Remembers every event by whatever system of recording?*

~~My friends, perhaps~~ The idea of the Book in Heaven, of an eternal record kept of all lives and all deeds *is very old - and was first* ~~was inspired by the~~ ~~words of the Psalmist:~~

WE BRING OUR YEARS TO AN END AS A TALE THAT IS TOLD

*out*

*suggested by*

Every life is a story recorded on the fabric of time. Some lives are like a great work of art, long and complete. Others are short and beautiful, like a poem. And many of us are perhaps no more than a paragraph or a sentence in the ever growing narrative that fills God's Book of Life.

But, even if we were no more than a punctuation mark, we are still important in the context.

We count as individuals and we count as part of the whole.

Benjamin Franklin, perhaps the wisest and wittiest American that ever lived, was at heart a deeply religious man.

His will included the inscription he wanted placed on his own tombstone.



The epitaph he chose for himself was:

The Body of  
Benjamin Franklin, Printer,  
Like the cover of an old Book, its contents torn out,  
And stript of its lettering and gilding,  
Lies here, food for worms.

But the work shall not be wholly lost.  
For it will, as he believed, appear once more,  
In a new and more perfect edition  
Corrected and amended  
by the Author

THE HOPE

3/ This leads us to the third idea -- the hope~~ful~~ kindled by  
this high holiday season.

The Author of life wants to see his work corrected and improved  
--not annihilated.

Again the legend puts it in a way even a child can understand.  
On Rosh Hashonah God calculates the sentence, but not until  
Yom Kippur is the sentence actually passed and sealed.  
God is not only the stern Judge, but the compassionate father  
who gives us a second chance....

Man can change his case, by changing his moral caliber  
We can create new circumstances by a spiritual change  
which may perhaps suspend the consequences of our  
wrong-doing in the past.....



This is Repentance.

Everything is done to arouse in us the will to repentance.

Tomorrow We <sup>shall</sup> sound the ~~Shofar~~ <sup>Shofar</sup>, The ancient ram(s) horn.

Why do we still use this ~~ancient~~ barbaric instrument with its piercing, screeching, sound of alarm?

Why More than once well-meaning people have asked if we couldn't use the more melodious French horn?

They miss the whole point of the ~~Shofar~~ <sup>Shofar</sup> ritual.

The sound of the horn is not to entertain us, not to sooth our feelings with sweet harmonies ---- Its original purpose, explained the great Moses Maimonides, is ~~to excite in us the will to fight.~~ <sup>to excite in us the will to fight.</sup> ~~the Shofar sound says:~~

Awaken ye sleepers; fight against sin  
eradicate wrong,  
do battle against corruption.

And the dissonance of the shofar sound is symbolic of our own morally divided <sup>of our half-heartedness in all good resolutions, our ambiguous nature</sup> and dissonant heart <sup>--torn by conflict</sup> between good and evil intentions.

The object of our high holidays is not to give you peace of mind or to furnish you spiritual comfort pills, but to create a spiritual disturbance within us, a deep discontent with ~~ourselves~~ <sup>ourselves</sup> ~~the way we are~~ so that we might do some housecleaning within.

But such is not easy. It is the most painful experience in the world to try to get rid of a moral weakness.

The self-inflicted hunger on Yom Kippur, our fast, is a cruel pain --though it leaves no lasting harm --~~it~~ it is a token of our willingness to make sacrifices / for our self-improvement.

And the greatest of all sacrifices, perhaps, is that of crushing <sup>our</sup> personal pride.

We Jews are not required to make private confession before clergy, but we must participate in the public confession before God. The public confession, I believe, is a psychological device by which we encourage ~~one~~ another to get into the confessional mood so that each of us, might privately in the secrecy of his heart, come to think of himself as he really is.

If at any time during these high holidays you really experience your moment of truth when you have the courage to see yourself with all your faults, at that very moment a miracle of divine intervention occurs. God helps you and supplies to you the spiritual power for regeneration, for moral rehabilitation. God helps the repentant sinner:

A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART, O GOD, THOU WILT NOT DESPISE

But our repentance must be a true letting go of the evil.

Say our sages: The man who takes a bath while holding in his fist a lump of dirt, cannot wash himself clean no matter how much water is poured on him. He must let go of the dirt.



out

No amount of prayer will cleanse us if we do not let go of the moral filth which stains our life. A change of mind means nothing without a change of action.

We should thank God for the discipline of pain and suffering/for without it, we might not have the incentive to remove evil and evil would become the permanent condition of life.

So despite all the troubles and imperfections we see <sup>in ourselves &</sup> in the world about us, we still believe that God is working with us and guiding us --that he has not abandoned us, in view of the threefold evidence which we considered:

First, the evidence of His judgement in history: retribution

Second, The indelible mark every creature makes on the total fabric of life persuades us that God cannot be indifferent to individual destiny.

Third, Our hope for the future is based on man's God-given ability to overcome evil if only he sets his face against it

Robert Oppenheimer, the great atomic scientist once compared the cold war situation between America and Russia to 2 deadly scorpions locked up in a small bottle.

The analogy is terrifying only if men must act like scorpions whose nature is to destroy. But why can't we act like men in whose nature is also the moral potential for cooperation ?

Instead of dealing death to each other, we might by the full employment of God's spiritual gifts, become partners and together break the shrinking confines of this small earth and conquer new worlds for man to dwell in peacefully.

This we can do, as Moses said in his final message:  
LIFE AND DEATH ARE IN YOUR HAND --THEREFORE CHOOSE LIFE.



Rosh Hashonah Morning Sept 29 1962

WHY BELIEVE IN GOD ?

I should like to raise this morning the most basic question in religion:

WHY BELIEVE IN GOD ?

Perhaps we have no good answer, but it is a good question.

Religion without God is like playing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. Whether religion is to be a hypocritical bow to convention or a vital experience, hinges on our belief in God.

It seems to me that there are 2 kinds of listeners to whom ~~this~~ topic WHY BELIEVE IN GOD? may be possibly meaningless.

1st, the complete and total believer who already believes everything and ~~needs~~ <sup>doesn't need</sup> more evidence.

2nd, the confirmed atheist who ~~conviction is so strong that~~ <sup>doesn't want</sup> ~~has~~ stopped thinking ~~about it~~ and (therefore) ~~needs~~ more evidence.

To both these listeners I apologize, though not profusely, for wasting their time.

There is a 3rd type of listener whose attention I am most eager for: it is the honest open-minded <sup>thinker &</sup> doubter who enjoys an argument, though I don't promise them equal time today.

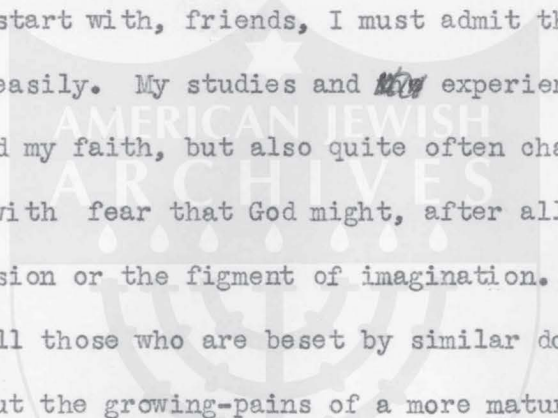
My friends, this summer, one of my children asked:  
"Tell me daddy, ... no fooling, ... is God real?"

I was slightly taken aback by the "no fooling" part of the question. It seemed to suggest a suspicion that I might be following <sup>official</sup> some propaganda line in my teaching ~~as~~ <sup>different from</sup> ~~against~~ my own honest beliefs,

and I gathered that what my child wanted was a strictly personal statement.

Please forgive me if in this discussion on WHY BELIEVE IN GOD ? I shall be speaking in strictly personal terms. It is not because of an excessive exhibitionism, but because this subject demands personal commitment and personal conviction.

To start with, friends, I must admit that faith in God did not come to me easily. My studies and ~~my~~ experiences ~~often~~ often enough strengthened my faith, but also quite often challenged all I held dear and filled me with fear that God might, after all, be only a magnificent hoax, a useful illusion or the figment of imagination. I therefore feel deep kinship with all those who are beset by similar doubts. In my case, these doubts were but the growing-pains of a more mature faith.





What's my definition of God?

There was a time when my belief in God stood or fell with ~~his~~ <sup>the</sup> definition. I remember how impressed I was as an adolescent when I first heard the philosophic definition of love attributed to the great Hegel:

<sup>he said</sup>  
"Love is the ideality of ~~of~~ the relativity of the reality of an infinitesimal portion of the absolute totality of the infinite being."

Some years later I discovered that knowing the <sup>kind of a</sup> definition ~~had~~ not conveyed to me the reality of love.

It is no different with the various definitions of God: <sup>Whether you call</sup> God the First Cause.....Immovable Mover.....The Power, not yourself, that makes for righteousness ~~— does it make a real God~~

Not that these are false, but ~~that~~ even being right they would not convey much of a sense of the reality of God.

This was impressed upon me ~~some years ago~~ <sup>once</sup> when during a college lecture engagement I gave a talk on the Jewish concept of God. ~~At~~ In the discussion period, one of the students asked me for my definition of God which I gave as best I could.

The student listened attentively and then said politely:

"Rabbi, I liked your definition of God, but my question is: 'Is there any reality that corresponds to the <sup>at</sup> definition?'"



My friends, it is for <sup>those of</sup> us who believe, to show what reality corresponds to the God we define in creed and worship.

We have millions of Americans quick to verbalize their God concept with a recitation of the Shema or the Trinity, but this does not prove God. The only persuasive proof of His existence would be a demonstration of His power over the conduct of our daily lives.

In Albany Ga, a group of Christian Negroes tried to attend church on a Sunday morning this summer. In all but two churches they were physically prevented by the ushers who explained that if they let those Negroes in, the congregation would walk out. I say, though all these so-called ~~Christians~~ Christians recite a thousand times in unison "God is Love" and "All are one in Christ, white, black, Greek, Roman, Hebrew, Gentile..." despite all these lofty quotations and proclamations, their action proves that there is no reality of God in their lives.

And though Billy Sol Estes attend church twice each Sunday and once during the week in Pecos, Texas, and though he recite with his congregation the 8th commandment "Thou shalt not steal", the record of his manipulations denies the power that makes for righteousness.

Synagog (Temple) and Church going people who trample upon truth in advertising, who deal dishonestly in business, who featherbed and goldbrick in their labor and bow every day and in every way before the almighty Dollar.

"Business is business" they say --which means

DON't LET ~~THE~~ ETHICS ~~DESTROY~~ SPOIL OUR PROFIT.

"You've got to be practical in politics" ----which means

DO WHAT YOU WANT---GOD ISN't LOOKING.

Many people who say they believe in God, have only developed a fondness for a definition of God, for certain words and phrases, but obviously feel no reality corresponding to that definition. The God I believe in is a jealous God ..... who will not leave unpunished the idol-worshippers of today who worship money, bow before power, and do not honor in their own lives the Creator whose will should become our will.

My greatest personal difficulty with belief in God was not His existence, but His character. Is God an impersonal cosmic Force, that cannot possibly care what happens to man?

Or, is God a Being, sensitive to human needs and responsive to our cry?

Long before I was able to think through a question as big as that the example of my grandmother left with me a deep impression of

the nature of God. When I, then a little boy, watched her during her daily morning prayers which she knew by heart and recited with great feeling, swaying back and forth, her eyes filling up with tears, her voice breaking into sobbing, it was easy, while watching her, for me to think of God as a personal Being with whom we can have a heart to heart talk.



But, when a half hour later, on my way to school in Vienna I had to watch out for young Nazi hoodlums who used to waylay us on street corners, I wondered why the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, was not taking better care of His people. Then it was hard to think of God as a Being Who knows what is going on here on earth.

*Ye are my witnesses - says God - according to Israel  
We draw conclusions from the conduct & character of human beings  
reproducing the nature of their Maker.*

The question became most sharp and agonizing many years later when, on my day of Ordination <sup>as a Rabbi</sup> in 1945, I had to bear the full impact of six million of our brethren slaughtered & I wondered how I could go forth as a Rabbi in Israel and preach faith in a God who let out people die.

This is the theological problem of our generation and, I must ~~correctly~~ confess to you, I am still wrestling with it. Increasingly though, as I study the historical literature and the many documents that have been published since the end of World War II, I have come to feel that the key to the riddle of this horrible Nazi period must be sought, not in the nature of God but in man. Why blame God for man's <sup>mis-</sup>deeds?

William Shirer's scholarly, epoch-making book, "The Rise and Fall of the 3rd Reich" I believe, furnishes convincing proof that Hitler could never have played his tragic role without a huge supporting cast in and outside of Germany. The fact that he was an evil-doer in his own right should not blind us to his function as the representative and executor of evil forces accumulated by many generations.

He did not invent war. He did not invent aggression.  
" " invent lying propaganda.  
" " antisemitism  
" " race-hatred

He found it all and carried on where others had left off and succeeded largely because of the apathy of statesmen and citizens who were perfectly willing to do business with the devil himself. Hitler rose to power in a generation that ~~readily~~ sold out great principle for small gain, <sup>who broke every promise they made</sup> ~~who~~ didn't care what happened to others as long as they themselves were left alone:

The Pope himself led the line of foreign leaders making deals with Hitler. Stalin struck his opportunistic bargain with him. And even so valiant a man as Winston Churchill could bring himself to say, only months before the outbreak of the war, that if ever England were in peril, he would pray for a leader like Hitler to come to her rescue. *There was a measure of collective responsibility for which collective penalty became unavoidable.*  
The moral climate created by mankind made Hitler possible.  
For decades and centuries they sowed the wind, and finally reaped the whirlwind.



Sometimes we can understand a big problem better on a smaller scale.

An actual court-case in Penna may throw light on our discussion. One snowy day in March 1958 a snow-laden telephone pole crashed under its weight and fell on the automobile of a Pennsylvania motorist. The vehicle was damaged and ~~injured~~ the driver suffered personal injuries. He promptly sued the Telephone company <sup>and</sup> ~~in~~ a Lancaster County Court awarded him compensation in excess of \$10,000. The Court held that the telephone company ~~was indeed at fault because~~ had indeed been negligent because it had not inspected the pole in question for 15 years. The company thereupon appealed to the Higher Court claiming that the pole fell because of "an act of God." The case then came before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and Justice Michael A. Musmanno delivered the majority opinion. Judge Musmanno rejected the company's argument of "An act of God" ordered full payment of the claim, and

Said the Judge:

"There is something shocking in attributing any tragedy or holocaust to God. The ways of the Deity so surpass the understanding of man that it is not the province of man to pass judgement upon what may be beyond human comprehension....In any event, no person may find exoneration for his act of negligence by asserting that it was not he but the Supreme Being Who inflicted the wounds and hurts of which the plaintiff complains."

*My friends it seems to me that*  
 This is not only good justice but good theology.

Too often we use God as a scapegoat.

Too often we blame Him for our negligence, for our ~~malice~~ malice and misdemeanor.

It is an act of God that the physical universe operates by reliable laws....

It is <sup>indeed</sup> an act of God that we were given the ability to understand these laws....

It is also an act of God that the relations between human beings are subject to moral principles ...

~~And again, it is an act of God that we were <sup>given</sup> such moral discernment~~

But it is decidedly not an act of God, but our own human folly when we conduct ourselves in violation of the moral sense with which God has endowed each of us.

And so, summing up my reasons WHY I BELIEVE IN GOD, I would answer

1st because the Universe appears to me more like a mind than a machine.

2nd because I cannot possibly conceive order without a creative Cause..... If I could bring myself to say to every flower, there is no seed and to every song, there is no composer and to every painting, there is no artist, and to every poem, there is no poet,

then, I might perhaps, with the same lack of logic say to this world with its intricate order : YOU HAVE NO CREATOR!

And 3rdly, friends, I believe in God because I cannot imagine that intelligence, justice, love and this miracle of personality, exist only in tiny man. With so many millions of mental receiving sets in operation, there must be corresponding to all of these human minds, ONE CENTRAL SENDER OF SPIRITUAL SIGNALS, ONE SUPREME COSMIC MIND.



Yet, when all is said , God still seems so remote,  
invisible by definition, so far above us ,....how can we  
draw near Him ? *how can we be sure of His presence & experience Him*

Maybe a picture will make this thought clearer.

Focus your mind on this scene. A wide, sandy beach.

At the edge of the beach , the blue ocean. The water quiet  
and reaching as far as the eye can see. *And* on the beach a little child  
digging a well in the sand.

Must the child beg the sea water to enter that well?

Of course not. The mere digging of the well brings the ocean in.

...Now you see hundreds of children on that beach.

Each one is digging a well. Within each well the sea-water  
is rising ---silently, inevitably. ~~Now~~

Now hold that picture in your mind as you listen to these words:

Out of the vastness that is God  
I summon the power to still me...  
It comes from inner deeps divine  
With destinies that thrill me.

Out of the vastness that is God  
I summon the power to heal me....  
It comes with peace ineffable...  
Out of the vastness that is God  
I summon the strength to keep me  
.....

And let the infinitues of it  
Flow through me....

# THE MEANING OF SIN

315-544

Vol. No. 1  
1962

A colleague told me of his experience a few days ago when he walked into one of his Sunday School classes and asked the children questions about Yom Kippur.

"Now, children, tell me, what do we have to do to repent?"

One eager girl quickly raised her hand <sup>up</sup> and replied:

FIRST, RABBI, I GUESS, WE HAVE TO SIN.

The child was right. <sup>We would feel no need for</sup> ~~There is no~~ repentance without consciousness of sin. BUT WHAT IS SIN ?

We cannot answer that question until we first form an opinion on the nature of man.

Is man naturally good or evil ?

HOW FAR CAN WE TRUST HUMAN NATURE ?

Judaism, in contrast with all the other ancient religions, sees man not in harmony but in conflict with nature

The Bible tells us that God, <sup>after</sup> in creating Adam and Eve said to them:

"Let them have dominion over fish, fowl, cattle, over all the earth --- now be fruitful and multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it...."

SUBDUE IT, CONTROL IT .



*Nature is not altogether friendly & cooperative. Man*

Nature is not altogether friendly and cooperative. *to survive;*

Man must struggle to survive; and so the Bible says:

IN THE SWEAT OF THY FACE SHALT THOU EAT BREAD  
"IN THE SWEAT OF THY FACE SHALT THOU EAT BREAD"

*You can put it down as one of the basic principles of Judaism that it is man's task;*  
You can put it down as one of the basic principles of Judaism that it is man's task;

- To Subdue nature outside and inside ~~of you~~.
- To Suppress the primitive and instinctive
- To Gain self-mastery.



The Jewish ethical value "to be good" does not mean to act naturally, but to rise above natural impulse to a higher standard of conduct.

What is civilization? Isaiah tells us in tomorrow morning's Haftarah: CIVILIZATION IS PUSHING BACK THE WILDERNESS  
Civilization is cutting a way through the trackless jungle.

Build up, build up (2) 180 180 (1)

---

Prepare the way על ענין

---

Remove the stumbling block out of the way of my people. 1557.14

Understand it figuratively and symbolically:

Your task is not merely growing along with nature, but building and creating. Progress does not happen --- it is an artificial product. Culture is a break-through of order into chaos, a treading out of paths in the wilderness.... for "NATURE RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW" knows no law and <sup>no</sup> order.

*central task Biblical Religion*

PREPARE THE WAY: The mission of Judaism is to mark the main roads for the good life. HALACHA IS THE KEYWORD of Judaism) and HALACHA means "A way of walking" <sup>A PATTERN</sup> a way of life.

But there is a difficulty:

REMOVE THE STUMBLING BLOCK OUT OF THE WAY OF MY PEOPLE.

What is the stumbling block?

What is the major obstacle in the way of human progress?

When Isaiah gave that famous address, his audience understood immediately what he meant:

THE STUMBLING BLOCK ?            IT WAS SIN !

Do we understand the meaning of sin ?

Let us admit that this word has become a tired, meaningless expression.

It seems to belong to a different age. There was a time when sin was a frightening word. It suggested deep-rooted evil in man, an offence against God with horrible consequences in this life and the next. <sup>nowadays</sup> If anyone refers to "sin" in this sense, we would likely react with a nervous smile. Most of us who use "sin" in daily speech,

use the word casually and empty of conviction, like Nikita Khrushchev's references to God in "God bless you" or "God forbid."

For example, an angry husband might say to his wife who has brought home a new dress: *With a glance at the price tag of his wife's new dress*

*part name*  
"It's a sin to pay \$95 for such a dress,"

meaning no more than it's a mistake or error.

WHO WAS IT THAT TOOK THE STING OUT OF SIN?

It happened 200 years ago in one of the great intellectual revolutions of all time. Jean Jacques Rousseau, in the middle of the 18th century, changed our evaluation of nature and led us into an estimate of man which did away with the whole idea of sin.



In his justly famous autobiography "Confessions" he tells us with a warmth and frankness that was unprecedented about his troubled youth, how at the age of 13 he quit school, at 16 ran away from home and became a tramp roaming about , never holding on to a job, observing everywhere social injustice. At the age of 29 , he arrived in Paris where he was shocked by the artificiality and unfairness of society.... After years of study he wrote his "Social Contract" which made him famous overnight. Some sentences of that book became the slogans of the century such as:

MAN IS BORN FREE, BUT EVERYWHERE HE IS IN CHAINS

The stumbling block was re-defined by Rousseau.

Man he said is not sinful by nature, but being naturally good, he would remain so if only society did not corrupt him.

The stumbling block was not in man but in social institutions.

The answer , therefore , was social reform, which later came to mean social revolution.

Well, friends, if Rousseau returned to the scene today, he would find society radically altered. Material standards of life risen above all dreams. The mental blight of illiteracy almost eliminated. The normal life-span extended in this century alone fully 25 years.

YET , WITH ALL THIS SOCIAL PROGRESS, HAS THE MILLENNIUM COME?  
Has man reached the perfection <sup>of</sup> which Rousseau held him capable?

Why do you lock your door at night ?

Why is it that at this very moment the key to your automobile  
is in your pocket?

Why do you want a [redacted] policeman to patrol your block?

Why won't you loan money to just anybody?

WHY Don't you trust human nature ?

Because underneath your theories and abstractions [redacted]

[redacted] about noble human nature, you have made a realistic  
estimate of man. On the basis of your day by day experience  
you know that there remains a [redacted] big stumbling block,  
a major obstacle to good relations and confidence between man  
and man.

There is overwhelming evidence of our moral failure :

Despite all external improvements, ---

[redacted] We have an unimproved  
man. Someone said; The Neanderthaler man has not disappeared,  
he has learned to wear a (Homburg.) Tweeds.

In one single year the US counts ~~700~~ 700.000 children  
brought into court for delinquency....nearly [redacted] broken } check  
2 million } figures  
(in a single year (1/2 divorced and 1/2 separated) 500.000 from any children  
marriages...1 million ~~illegal~~ abortions ..... criminal

A century ago, in Boston, Horace Mann said Crime could be  
eliminated by increasing the size and number of schools in America.  
Well, surely Princeton Univerisyt is a fine school with students



from excellent backgrounds. The Princeton University Bookstore lost \$200.000 in the last 4 years due to shop-lifting by a large number of students. Could it be that, despite vast improvements of the social environment, the natural goodness in man just won't come out automatically? Was there something wrong with Rousseau's formula? What is the stumbling block?

I suppose many of you still hesitate to call it SIN.  
I suppose many of you, upon seeing wrong or misconduct in a man or woman will blame it on a complex, a neurosis or frustration.  
I suppose you prefer to call the unmanageable youth "maladjusted"  
I suppose you'll <sup>identify</sup> ~~designate~~ the cause of marital friction as incompatibility and a case of infidelity as "indiscretion" or "emotional immaturity."

Any good psychiatrist can sell you one of these words for \$5 per hour

In olden days when people heard  
Some swindler huge had come to grief,  
They used a good old English word,  
And called the man a thief;  
But language such as that today  
Upon man's tender feeling grates  
So they look wise and simply say,  
He re-hy-po-the-cates.

*My friends,* We have performed a neat semantic trick. We have found new labels for the old evils.

Why all this verbal masquerade? What are we trying to hide?

I tell you what we are trying to hide:

RESPONSIBILITY

Nobody should get the blame. We are resisting responsibility with might and main. We are resisting the idea of sin, which would locate the stumbling block of evil <sup>with</sup> ourselves.

*We are constantly looking for excuses and scapegoats. Did you hear... Oklah...*

My friends, it is easy enough to fake the observance of Yom Kippur. We can all put on a terrific show of piety tonight and tomorrow. We come into the Temple, we grow sentimental at the tuneful Kol Nidre; we diligently turn the pages of the prayerbook, and heroically, endure the long fast.

BUT IS THIS YOM KIPPUR ?

If it goes no farther, it is the greatest scandal of spiritual hypocrisy we can commit this year. THE REAL YOM KIPPUR should be a major character re-building job. But first, you have to do some wrecking, and destroying and tearing down ---and the thing to be destroyed is the STUMBLING BLOCK OF SIN.

I have seen many hundreds of people in all kinds of trouble.

Many of them made a terrible mess of their lives.

*But,* Not one of them has ever said:

Rabbi, I have sinned.

The most I have heard anyone admit is: "Rabbi, I made a mistake"

The dishonest clerk, who short-changes you --calls it <sup>just</sup> a mistake."

The student caught cheating, apologizes for his mistake.

The unfaithful husband or wife, regrets the mistake

The ever too busy parent who never took the time to understand and never took the trouble to build character in his child, later is sorry for the mistake....



Even adolf Eichmann , in his memoirs, admits that Germany by killing 6 million Jews made a "mistake" ---but these are not just little error and slip-ups --- calling them MISTAKES is a monstrous evasion of responsibility.

These are not mistakes, but SINS OF COMISSION AND OMISSION! SINS involving guilt, SINS of self-centeredness, SINS of violation of trust, SINS against the moral law, ~~SINS AGAINST GOD.~~

There is another evasion of responsibility of which we are all guilty. I see it everythime I try to break up a fight between kids---- and what do I hear: HE STARTED IT!

You can't get a child to say: "It was my fault!"

We grow bigger but not better in this respect.

How often have I listened to the painful chronicle of a family quarrel or doemstic strife; and what is the immediate reply if I propose a move toward reconciliation?

HE STARTED IT, LET HIM MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.

And what about our statesmen and diplomats?

We are exploding, I believe, the 38th atomic device in the current series of tests, each of which pushes the world another degree closer to the brink and poisons the atmosphere... and what is the argument both the Us. and Russia use to justify atom testing:

THEY STARTED IT !.

Will the dazed survivors crawling out of a few <sup>shelters</sup> ~~holes~~ and stumbling over the charred bodies in ~~metropolitian~~ the hot ashes of metropolit an ruins <sup>really</sup> ~~even~~ find out who started it ?

*I suggest friends that you* Watch yourself closely during confessional prayers and you'll see how much subtle resistance we <sup>all</sup> put up to any suggestion that it is we who ought to change. We reject the idea of self-criticism and self-blame;

We pray: Guard my tongue from evil.

But aside we say: Not my tongue, O God needs guarding;

It is my friend's tongue that needs it badly...

Mine isn't half as bad as his

We pray: "And keep my lips from speaking guile"

But aside we say: Not my lips, O God. No lie would ever cross my lips, if only the people I deal with, were honest and truthful.

We pray: I have dealt perversely.

But aside we say: Not I, O God, it is my competitor who deals perversely.

THE SINS WE CONFESS, WE REALLY SEE IN OTHERS, NOT IN OURSELVES.

A divorced middle-aged business man developed a strong attachment to his private secy and seriously thought of marrying her, but in view of his bad previous experience, he decided to be careful this time. So he arranged, without revealing his identity, for a private-eye agency to investigate the young lady.

A few weeks later he received the confidential report and it gave him quite a shock, for it said in substance, that the young lady was of good family and excellent character and without blemish except for her close association lately with a businessman of *questionable* doubtful reputation.



THE PERSON WE SHOULD BE MOST SUSPICIOUS OF AND INVESTIGATE MOST THOROUGHLY IS THE ONE INSIDE OF US.

Yom Kippur speaks to us in the first person:

"my sin"      "our" sin      that we must search out and eradicate.

\*\*\*\*\*

My friends, recognize tonight Judaism as the voice of your conscience and the conscience of your fathers ---the ethical judgement of many generations *speaks out of our prayerbook*

Judaism's view of man is not despairing.

Our religion does not advise you to despise this life and yearn for a perfect hereafter.

Salvation is in this life. You must be your own savior.

Despite your evil potential, you have been given the capacity to subdue it and rise above it.

The glory of man is his <sup>task</sup> ~~purpose~~ to redeem the world from the power of evil, to build the good society ---and the place to start is yourself which is the basic battle-ground between good and evil:

Here a little child I stand

Lifting up my either hand,

One is dirty, one is clean

I am the problem in between.

Ours is the choice to lift up the hand of evil and besmirch with it all that is good, --- or to lift up the clean hand --the Yetzer Hatov our moral potential and wash away all that is ~~evil~~ *wrong & sinful*

Build up, build up

Prepare the way

Remove the stumbling block out of the way of my people.

THE ONE WE SHOULD BE MOST SUBVICIOUS OF AND INVESTIGATE MOST  
THOROUGHLY IS THE ONE INSIDE OF US



Remember you fight against us in the first person  
your sin that we must reach out and eradicate.

1944

My friends, recognize tonight Judaea as the voice of your conscience  
and the possession of your fathers -- the ethical judgment of  
many generations.  
Judaea's view of man is not a view of man but a view of God.  
Our religion does not ask you to believe in life but warns for  
a perfect revelation.  
Salvation is in this life. Looked at your ownavior.  
Despite your evil intentions, you have been given the capacity to  
eradicate it and rise above it.  
The glory of man is his capacity to rise above the world from the power of  
evil, to build the good society -- and the place to start is  
yourself which is the basic battle-ground between good and evil;

Here a little child I stand  
lifting up my right hand,  
One is fifty, one is clean  
I am the problem in between.

One is the choice to lift up the hand of evil and fight against it  
all that is good, to lift up the clean hand -- the Yotzer Hatov  
our moral potential and grow away all that is evil.

... have the ability to look out of the way of my people.



MORAL DESERTION  
THE BATTLE AGAINST SIN No. 11, Dec 1962(?)

On one of Edward Murrow's most memorable T.V. programs, Carl Sandburg was asked to select the ugliest word in the English language. Almost instantly the great American poet replied: "The ugliest word ~~in the English language~~ is the word exclusive. It expresses everything I despise".

I wish I could reproduce for you ~~now~~ the expression on Sandburg's face as he pronounced "exclusive". I can never forget the revulsion and disgust which he showed so clearly. If you object to snobbishness & vanity, ~~looking down on other people~~ if you are against walls of division within humanity, then you, too, will appreciate the ugliness of the word "exclusive". Yet, is it not true, that the word enjoys enormous popularity? Is it not synonymous with distinction and with many of the privileges people are pushing hard to get?

I wonder what Carl Sandburg would have answered if he had been asked not for the ugliest but for the ~~most~~ <sup>least</sup> popular word in the English language? I have a notion that the word REPENTANCE would be in line for the unpopularity prize. Although repentance has the stamp of approval of every religion, people shy away from it. What a forbidding, old-fashioned gloomy word! Yet it is the key word of our most solemn and sacred day. Yom Kippur is wasted if we don't understand and experience repentance.

A ~~young~~ colleague told me of his experience when ~~shortly before~~ <sup>a few days ago</sup> Yom Kippur he walked into one of his Sunday School classes and asked the children a ~~question~~ <sup>question about y.k.</sup>

"Now, children, tell me what <sup>do</sup> we have to <sup>in order</sup> do to repent?"

One eager ~~little~~ girl quickly raised her hand and replied: Rabbi, I know, I know

"First, ~~Rabbi, I guess we~~ have to sin".

The child was right. <sup>there is no</sup> Repentance ~~is~~ meaningless without consciousness of sin,   
But what is sin?

Sin is another word which has almost disappeared from ordinary speech. There is a conspiracy of avoidance and silence regarding the word sin with its grave implication of personal guilt. A chronic alcoholic, ~~we are told nowadays,~~ is not morally wrong but ill; a criminal, it is argued, needs ~~psychiatric~~ treatment, not condemnation; the delinquent child is not a moral but an emotional problem; the adulterer is called indiscreet or immature, but not sinful. If a person makes a mess of his life, he is only maladjusted. Weaknesses and faults of character are attributed to the environment. Crime is explained and almost excused as the consequence of slums, lack of playgrounds, unemployment, and all sorts of economic and social conditions -- but not sin.

Instead of SIN and REPENTANCE most people speak of MISTAKE and CORRECTION.

Do you know the difference between SIN and MISTAKE?

"Mistake" is doing the wrong thing by error or accident, just a slip-up or unintentional deviation. When we say a man has made a mistake we imply that he was well-meaning but temporarily clumsy, at worst incompetent, in other words more or less a shlemiel, but basically without guile and without guilt.

Would you say, friends, that we are gathered here tonight merely to consider the mistakes we have made innocently, without guile and without guilt?

Recently my wife returned from the store with groceries and discovered that the little adding machine slip had 13 entries as against only 11 items she had bought. She was shocked by this clear case of cheating, quickly returned to the store and asked for an explanation. The grocer said it was all a mistake, but his red face suggested something more serious. - just a mistake?



did not believe him. No one considered it possible that a human being could be so mad. Public opinion simply was not prepared for such a monstrous display of the evil in human nature. As a result, most of his victims remained like sitting ducks, thinking that it was all propoganda, that these evils would never happen. Why did it take so long for the world to realize the ghastliness of the Nazi menace?

The answer is that the Western World in the past several centuries had gradually become hypnotized by a mis-judgment of human

nature. A Utopian optimism, inherited from the period of enlightenment, inspired people to ~~profess with dogmatic certainty faith in inevitable~~ <sup>believe in progress as an escalator going always up and up.</sup>

~~progress~~: They could see the Kingdom of God approaching. By wiping out illiteracy with education, replacing superstition with science, ~~and misunderstanding with more ample information,~~ the natural goodness of man would somehow come out. This naive optimism was all based on Rousseau's blind confidence in human nature. Romanticizing the noble savage, Rousseau theorized that man was at his best when least restrained, <sup>when least</sup> restricted and inhibited. So intense was Rousseau's faith in uninhibited nature that Voltaire once remarked:

"Rousseau, you make us want to go out again on all fours in nature".

Today the pendulum of opinion has swung into the opposite direction. Two world wars and the stalemate of the cold war have enveloped us in a mood of extreme pessimism. The contemporary view of man is disgust and despair and fear of the savage element in human nature.

A biologist recently defined man as the missing link between the ape and <sup>the</sup> human being. It is hard to adjust to this new estimate of human nature. <sup>It will take a while to get used to</sup> In Washington, they recently found a man standing before a stone statue with his arms extended as though he were asking the monument for alms. Someone came by and asked: "Why are you begging alms of a statue?" The man replied: "I am practising disappointment".

What is the Jewish view of human nature? Judaism, my friends, has never idolized nature. Our sages consider physical nature and human nature unfinished products. We pray to God the Father, not to Mother Nature. Judaism recognizes that good and evil forces operate in <sup>the</sup> whole realm of nature, especially in human nature. Disease germs, cancer, poison snakes, and cannibals are all part of nature -- and what's <sup>so</sup> good about ~~that~~? Nature is not a paradise, but a battlefield, and man's task is not to be "natural" but to rise above his nature. (Remember, moral goodness is an artificial creation insofar as it does not naturally arise, but must be slowly cultivated within the limits of man's potential.)

The Jewish doctrine of sin avoids both extremes of naive optimism and cynical pessimism. It is based on three truths about man.

1. That there is a basis of moral power in man, "The Yetzer Hatov", the good urge, by which we comprehend that which is right and good and are drawn toward it.
2. That there is also a center of corruption in man, "The Yetzer Hora", the evil urge.
3. That man has free will and the power of decision in favor of the "Yetzer Hatov" or the "Yetzer Hora".

The human condition, according to Judaism, is ambiguous, always between good and evil

"Here a little child I stand  
Lifting up my either hand,  
One is dirty, one is clean  
I am the problem in-between".

(Robert Nathan)



Our task tonight is to recognize that part of ourselves which has become morally filthy. The sin of all sins is the refusal to see sin in ourselves, to remain defiant in self-righteousness, to belittle our transgressions as mere mistakes, as accidental errors or to blame others for the sins we have committed.

It has been said "more battles are lost in human hearts for the simple reason that they have never been fought". Tonight, we are called upon to make confession of sin but most of our confessions are empty gestures not from the heart, and full of mental reservations:

*For example,* When the prayerbook says:

"Guard my tongue from evil"

are you not tempted to look away from yourself and say aside: "Not my tongue, O God, needs guarding, it is my friend's tongue that needs it badly.

And when it says:

"Keep my lips from speaking guile."

Are you not thinking of the falsehood and deception others, not you, have committed?

And when you come to the bitter words:

I have dealt perversely

don't you really mean,

Not I, O god, -- it is my competitor who deals perversely .....

The battle of repentance cannot be won if you do not fight it in your own heart, if you do not feel the sharp stab of <sup>SIN, of</sup> personal guilt, if your heart is not heavy with shame and remorse.

The Hebrew word for repentance is Teshuvah. It means turning, conversion, a complete break with the past, a soul-wrenching dis-association from bad habit, lust, ~~deceit~~ and self-centeredness.

Teshuvah is turning ~~not to one's normal and natural self, but to~~ the higher self which recognizes the good as the sole principle of conduct. Teshuvah means ~~voluntary~~ submission to the yoke of laws and commandments. It means moral discipline, suppression of impulse, control of our baser human nature. ~~MA~~

The venerable Robert Frost, out of the ripe wisdom of more than 80 years of intellectual labor, said recently:

"Life is tons of discipline ... never give a child the choice. Don't give him a choice of believing in God or not. He can start having choices when he goes to college. They have the elective system there, you know ...".

The most tragic mistake we can make is to conduct a home without authority and raise children without discipline. We Jews have never believed in electives when it comes to moral values. Ever since the Ten Commandments were given at Sinai, we have considered the moral life mandatory, not optional, and 3500 years of experience have convinced us that those who escaped the yoke of the Commandments find not freedom but death.



Open unto us the gate  
"REGET"

YIZKOR

1962

Th's

Very soon, Yom Kippur, ~~is~~ spiritual summit of the  
in our religious year, will be over. All that remains is to linger  
with moments of memory devoted to our beloved departed, and then comes  
Neila, the <sup>magnific</sup> ~~closing~~ <sup>final magnificent</sup> portion of the day's observance.

The word Neilah <sup>literally</sup> means "closing". It refers to the impressive  
custom in ancient times of <sup>closing of</sup> the ~~huge~~ <sup>golden</sup> doors  
of the Temple at the moment of sunset on Yom Kippur.

Try to picture this in your mind!---  
a <sup>vast multitude</sup> ~~large~~ throng of people <sup>hundreds &</sup> tens of thousands, the sun is setting  
and sinking. Suddenly a hush falls upon the crowd as those 2 doors  
of gold, bathed in the redness of the sunset, slowly begin to move

~~But~~ At that very moment the congregation  
breaks forth in a cry:

Open unto us O God the gates  
at the time of the closing of the gates.  
The day vanishes, the sun is setting;  
let us enter Thy gates.

אֲפֹתַי יִפְתָּח  
בְּעֵת סִגְרֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם

U.P. II p.344

There is a ~~debate~~ discussion in the Talmud  
<sup>concerning the</sup> ~~as to what~~ <sup>mentioned</sup> gates are meant in this prayer:

The gates of the Temple -- said Rabbi Johanan. <sup>the reference must be to</sup>  
No, argued, Ra. Abba, <sup>They could not be the gates of the Temple because</sup> "once closed, the Temple gates cannot be  
opened again that day, the gates mentioned in the prayer  
<sup>on</sup> <sup>must be heavenly</sup> the gates of heaven....

"Open unto us the gates ( [redacted] ) at the time of the closing of the gates...."

~~messianic~~ interpretation  
~~amplification~~  
than The ~~message~~ of Rabbi Abba has provided the theme --and a most profound theme it is --for the entire Neilah ritual [redacted] in our prayerbook ----

When all doors on earth close, when every opportunity is gone, and [redacted] all seems lost, there is still a chance with God --- the finality which may apply to our material condition <sup>here on earth</sup> does not apply to spiritual life <sup>for opening unto us,</sup> --there is always another <sup>Spiritually,</sup> there is always the possibility for <sup>for rebirth</sup> correction --- ~~in~~ The heavenly portals of Repentance are never closed.

(Cont. p 4)

\*\*\*\*\*

My friends, ] we all live with regrets.... There is no man on earth whose life is not darkened here and there by the shadow of regret: Mybe acts of omission, serious or minor ones; favors we failed to do, an interest or concern we neglected to show, a responsibility or sacrifice of duty we evaded, and the deed left undone remains indigestible in our guilt-laden memory --and we regret it.

Or maybe acts of commission: a sharp cutting word that slipped off our tongue and wounded like a knife and severed a fine relationship ---we regretted it the moment it happened and the regret is still alive in our hearts.



Or was it perhaps the wrong move, the wrong decision which cut off our ~~mbest~~ opportunities, and to our everlasting regret, determined our whole career?

And some there are who know the most painful of all regrets, the dark deep secret in our heart, an act of shame, a betrayal we have never disclosed to anyone, the unrelieved sense of guilt ---

These may all be deeds that cannot be undone, wrongdoings that can no longer be corrected, THE DOORS HAVE CLOSED leaving behind the sadness of regret in our hearts.

For of all sad words of tongue or pen  
The saddest are these: "It might have been"

(Whittier)

Popular opinion has little use for such regrets.

We are told to forget it; don't cry over spilled milk.

Don't waste your heart and pain on the past that should be forgotten.

Yet popular opinion is not necessarily a wise opinion.

A small but important minority of thinkers and poets hold REGRET in high regard:

"There is nothing in the world to me

So dear as my regret"

says an English poet.

And David Henry Thoreau, while still a young teacher in Concord, Mass. spoke as a man of experience :

"Make the most of your regrets

To regret deeply is to live a fresh

(Nov. 13, 1839)

Sensitive, ethical people constantly re-live their past, review their record and re-examine their life. Though an event has passed and the case is, so to speak, closed, our conscience may re-open it.

*Repentance leads to new life.*  
TO REGRET DEEPLY IS TO LIVE A FRESH.)

When our guilt-laden heart cries out:

*re. 1/8 1910*

Open unto us the gates of the past,

I cannot live with the action taken

My conscience will not accept it, --and though outwardly the situation may be unalterable, inwardly, under the force of regret, I may revise the spiritual record of my life in terms of what I should have done and would do if ~~but~~ given another chance.

Is this vain? Is this futility?

It is vain and futile only insofar as the past is concerned, but

*Repentance,* REGRET may change my future.

The past action may be beyond change, but in regretting it I can change myself, my attitude, my aims and goals and way of life.



A J. Cronin was a physician in England until his health broke and then he became a writer. He told the story of a young nurse in charge of a little boy brought to the hospital of which he was director. The boy was desperately ill with diphtheria; his throat was choked with membrane and he had only a slender chance to live. A tube was inserted to give him breath, but ~~the~~ the nurse ~~was~~ on duty dozed off, <sup>&</sup> went to sleep, ~~and~~ suddenly awakened by a gasping sound, she found the tube had become blocked <sup>then she</sup> and lost her head. Instead of clearing the tube, a matter of simple routine, she hysterically called the doctor --and by the time he got there, the child was dead.

He was angry beyond all words that a child should die so needlessly, by such blundering, inexcusable negligence. That same night, the doctor took pen in hand and wrote out the report which was to break the career of the nurse, demanding her immediate dismissal. He called her in and read to her <sup>it</sup> ~~with~~ with all the resentment and contempt he was capable of...while she stood there in silence, crushed by shame and regret.

Well, have you nothing to say for yourself?

She whispered: "Give me...give me another chance."

No, the doctor wouldn't hear of it. <sup>It</sup> was a case of unpardonable ~~in~~ incompetence that had to be punished. He sent her away, sealed the report

and went to bed. That night he couldn't sleep. <sup>never</sup> A voice <sup>demanding that</sup> ~~to~~ open one more door of opportunity for that unhappy nurse... Next morning he went back to his desk tore up the report..... <sup>and</sup> the story ends with the slim, nervous girl becoming the head of a large hospital and one of the most honored nurses in England.....

(J. Wallace Hamilton, "Horns and Halos" p. 94-95 )

*of course it could not bring the dead boy back to life, but it could raise her to a new and to a higher level of life. Repent*

Remorse created in her a new will, reorganized her whole personality and became the chief incentive for an excellence she might never have achieved otherwise

*Repentance leads to new life*

TO REGRET DEEPLY IS TO LIVE AFRESH

There are ~~actually~~ 2 kinds of regret as there are two kinds of mourning. The wrong and unproductive kind of regret is the ceaseless wallowing in the sins of the past.

The right and creative kind of regret is the gradual turning from the past to <sup>be explicit about</sup> apply its lessons to the future.

~~My friends, what we have said of regret applies significantly to our sorrows.~~ <sup>So it is with</sup> The wrong kind of sorrow is to live forever in the past in ~~one~~ ceaseless ~~form~~ of lamentation. But the right kind of sorrow is to take all that was good and beautiful in the life of our beloved as a model and transform the memory of a beloved into an incentive for our own future life.

Indeed we may say then, that to mourn deeply and nobly <sup>leads to new life</sup> ~~is to live~~ ~~afresh.~~ It is to turn the love for a departed toward everything that was dear and precious to him or her and to act as a substitute for our beloved, making the ~~departed~~ <sup>span</sup> live ~~afresh~~ in our deeds.

Now it should be clear to us why the memorial service has been incorporated into the ritual of the Day of Atonement:

~~It is because~~ <sup>Repent</sup> Regret and sorrow are both magic keys that open new spiritual doors for us. A wrong deed should not be buried and forgotten, but ~~it should~~ be dissolved in the moral cleansing of regret and repentance.



A beloved dead should not be buried and forgotten, but the memory of our departed should <sup>generate within</sup> activate in ourselves new powers for good so that we might <sup>turn our remaining years into</sup> live afresh as a blessing for the living:

*וְעָלְמָא דְכַּוְנָא*

OPEN UNTO US O GOD THE GATES AT THE TIME OF THE GOING OF THE GATES....

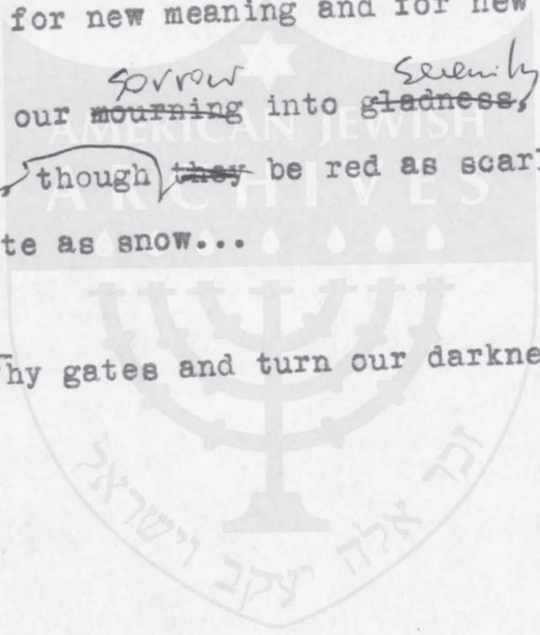
Even when death shuts the door ---new gates of life are opening up. <sup>*וְעָלְמָא דְכַּוְנָא*</sup> Though all doors be closed, in our sorrow or in our shame, <sup>*אָפְתַח*</sup> thou <sup>*אָפְתַח*</sup> openest the way for new meaning and for new <sup>*אָפְתַח*</sup> joy. <sup>*אָפְתַח*</sup> life and new joy

Thou turnest our <sup>*sorrow*</sup> mourning into <sup>*serenity*</sup> gladness,

And our sins, though <sup>*they shall be*</sup> they be red as scarlet, thou dost make them white as snow...

*וְעָלְמָא דְכַּוְנָא*

Open ~~mamam~~ unto us Thy gates and turn our darkness into light. Amen.







Y. Zher 1962

Feb 1962

Theme "The legacy we leave"

After one children outgrow the direct control of parents,  
it is time for parents to determine what legacy, in memories  
they will leave behind.

e.g. French mother pre writing letters to her  
son in army to be mailed after her  
death so he would not know of her  
death until end of war

[ see file Mother's Day ]