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Selichot  
Sat., Sept. 18, 1976

"THE CONFESSION"

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation

The word "confession" does not sound Jewish. Many of our people associate it with the confessional of the Catholic church, unaware that the theme of confession is the oldest theme in our own religious tradition. The Bible begins with the refusal of Adam and Eve to properly confess their transgression. Scattered throughout our Scriptures and traditional prayerbook are many great prayers of confession. My favorite is the one of Talmudic origin which is part of the daily early morning meditations to be recited privately before the public worship service:

NOT IN RELIANCE UPON OUR OWN MERIT

Lord of all worlds,  
Not in reliance upon our own merit  
Do we pour out supplications before You  
But trusting in Your great mercy.  
For what are we?  
What is our life?  
What is our goodness?  
What is our power?  
What can we say in Your presence?  
Are not all the heroes as nothing before You?  
And men of great renown as though they had never been?

The wisest as if without knowledge,  
And men of understanding as if without discernment?  
Many of our works are vain,  
And our days pass away like a shadow.

(Talmud, Yoma 87b, mentioned as a Yom Kippur prayer)

This classic prayer is a confession of powerlessness, a humble acknowledgement of the human condition with all of its limitations:

Our life -- a mere flicker in time!  
Our goodness -- how inadequate!  
Our power -- a passing shadow!  
Our wisdom -- how deficient!  
And most of our works -- a futility!

The technical Hebrew word for confession is VIDDUI. It means verification, acknowledgement of the truth.

Confessional prayers were institutionalized as fixed custom in the daily morning service, in preparation for Yom Kippur, by the bridegroom before the wedding and by the sick in the face of death.

These four occasions, the early morning hour, the time before Yom Kippur, before one's wedding and before one's death have one thing in common: they represent thresholds of transition to new status. This is clear with regard to Yom Kippur, the day when we are challenged to reassess our lives and hopefully begin the New Year with a new slate. It is also clear why the bridegroom should enter marriage with full awareness of his own shortcomings and why

the dying should stop at last the silly game of pretense in a so-called final hour of truth. But, what function does the confessional element have at the start of each normal day? What is the new status we acquire in the morning? It is, of course, the chance to begin anew, to turn a minus into a plus, to abandon wrongdoing and give our life a new and better turn.

What is the moral and spiritual gain through confession? I see not one but three important moral achievements attainable by way of confession. The first two are so obvious as to hardly require further explanation.

The confession of sin is certainly, in the first place, proof of moral sensitivity. Unless I know my faults I shall never be able to correct them.

The second gain is equally obvious. The ability to confess one's weakness is a mark of humility. The confession of sin is incompatible with arrogance and self righteousness.

What is the third gain which we might score by way of confession? I would like to answer with a story. A gentleman and lady with an infant child and nurse once travelled through a remote area in the north and were caught in a snowstorm. Their carriage broke down and they were forced to find shelter in a poor shepherd's hut. Luckily they were welcomed and invited to warm themselves by the open fire. As the refugees from the snow storm looked about, they were struck by the utter simplicity of the place. There was no stove but a kettle in the fireplace; no beds but merely mats on the floor. The shepherd and his wife were very poor and eyed with



amazement the costly furs and jewels they saw on the gentleman and his wife. Since the baby began to cry pitifully, the parents began quickly to remove its costly clothes while the admiring shepherd and his wife watched. They <sup>silently</sup> gazed at the fur-lined little coat which was carefully placed next to the baby; his silk suit, his laced shirt and soft undergarment and then watched as the child's naked body was placed a little closer to the fire so as to be kept warm. Suddenly the shepherd and wife exclaimed in surprise: "Why, the baby's exactly like one of our own children."

When we have stripped away the trappings of so-called status, rank, memberships, the academic degrees, money, even race and creed -- we find that we all are exactly alike in our common humanity.

The most telling and perhaps the most valuable effect of the confession is that it levels artificial barriers and distinctions between human beings. <sup>It strips us down to one naked humanity</sup> This is surely one of the most soothing and comforting fringe benefits of the High Holy Day experience. The Jew who joins his people at the Kol Nidre, which is a classic confession of moral breakdown, namely our failure to keep promises, and recites together with the Congregation the many other confessions of sin, is made to feel at the end of the day that we are all essentially alike in our human fallibility. That is why we have this indescribably warm sense of oneness with our people when we leave the synagogue on Yom Kippur. We have together touched the innermost ground of our common humanity.

Because we have looked more deeply into ourselves, we have come to understand ourselves better -- and that helps us understand our fellow man.

Because we have acknowledged wrongdoing in ourselves, it is easier to forgive the wrongdoing of others.

Thus, the confessional mood and its prayers at this season of the year prepare us for reconciliation, with ourselves, with our fellow man and with God. It is the highway to peace, a response to the prophetic call: Peace, peace to those that are near and to those that are far.



INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FOR

"THE PROCESSION"

Rosh Hashanah Eve Sermon, by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

Tonight we all share an overwhelming consciousness of our togetherness. We came as individuals and now we are transformed into a congregation, a community.

Among those seated near us are the people we love most dearly, with whom our lives are intertwined. Our thoughts are also with dear ones who are either geographically remote or who used to worship with us in the yesterdays that have passed and have been gathered up into that heavenly congregation in which all creatures will be reunited.

As your rabbi, I have the feeling of being in the midst of a huge family. Maxine and I have been with you through many of your life's important events, family celebrations of joy and also sorrows. I am very mindful and grateful for the friendship and comradeship of men and women with whom I have studied and prayed or worked together for the good of our congregation in the year that has ended.

"Togetherness" -- you can inscribe this as the theme, the imperative of the whole course of human history: the gradual, painfully slow realization of people that we must learn to walk together rather than jump at each other's throats. More than any other people, we Jews have been taught the lesson of interdependence and thus feel so deeply our belonging to one another tonight.

## THE PROCESSION

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation  
Rosh Hashanah Eve  
September 24, 1976

Is there a Jew tonight who does not feel part of that mysterious procession through the centuries which is called Jewish history? Where is it going? What is the goal or purpose of our long journey throughout time?

A great contemporary artist, Elbert Weinberg, tried to say something about the meaning of Jewish history by way of a set of four giant sculptures, called "The Procession." You have hurried past them many times on your way through the Kreeger Lobby of this Temple. Have you ever stopped to think what they mean?

Of heroic size and faceless, and each holding something in his hands, these statues are symbolic figures. Symbolic of the Jewish people upholding their principal treasures or values.

### 1. Menorah, the Sacred

The central figures is raising up a seven-branch candelabrum -- the menorah. In all of the historic sanctuaries of Israel, the menorah was always kept inside the most sacred place, day and night. It stands for The Sacred. What is the place of the sacred in our life?

There are many reasons why we join the crowds on the High Holy Days. Even those who absent themselves from the synagogue with unfailing regularity all through the year, feel an almost irresistible pull, an inner mandate, to be in the synagogue on this night. Why?



All sorts of social and psychological explanations have been offered, -- nostalgia, the need for Jewish identification, guilt feelings,--

All these alleged motives miss the deepest reason.

Those who come to the synagogue at this time of the year, deep down in their hearts, have a craving for something that gets lost, or is always in danger of getting lost, in our ordinary, daily lives. Indeed, recent decades have accelerated the loss of what I am referring to. We have been passing through a steady process of vulgarization and self debasement. After stripping away more and more of the dignity and respect from our way of life, we are nearly at the point where nothing is sacred any longer.

The trend appeared at first outwardly and somewhat superficially in a drastic decline of manners. Politeness became obsolete. Combined with crude speech and coarse clothes, a new life style emerged, epitomized by an abundance of four letter words and such things as the bride in jeans running down the aisle with hair unkempt. The new ideal called for human beings to be plain like bare walls. All the arts turned from the glorification of the beautiful to masochistic concentration upon the ugly, the perverted and the absurd. No wonder that one of the most expressive songs of the era asked plaintively: "where have all the flowers gone?"

Yes, where are now the flowers of civilization -- beauty, gentleness, goodness, love?



Consider what the loss or extinction of reverence, which is the human response to the sacred, has done to our most vital concerns.

#### A. Parent-Child Relations

In Jewish tradition of former times, the parent came close to being sacrosanct. Father and mother used to function as priests in the Jewish home. The modern Jewish parent, however, after disqualifying himself from religious leadership either by disinterest or ignorance, has turned from family priest to domestic "pal." Our typical young father today, instead of studying Bible and Commentaries with his son, takes pride in shooting a few baskets or playing a game of tennis with the child. I grant the importance of this quest for more comradeship between parent and child and the sharing of more leisure time on the level the child can appreciate -- but woe to the parent who does not also lift the child up to his own higher level of sacred values!

There should be warmth and intimacy between parent and child, but there is no need to foster the false notion of equality nor should we be blind to the tragic consequences of the loss of reverence for parents which in the long run is more disabling to the child itself than to the parent. You can be sure of this: If the parent fails to function as a worthy authority figure, other less worthy persons or

peers will fill the gap.

#### B. Respect of Old Age

Directly related to the frittering away of reverence for parents is the loss of the dignity of old age. More Medicaid and better retirement villages for the elderly are no substitute.

The bitter truth is that without the grace of spirituality, without sanctity, the old is but a creature in ruins, -- the object of neglect or at best pity.

#### C. Love and Marriage Without Reverence

In this age of realism that wants no part of old fashioned romanticism, love and marriage are no longer associated with the sacred -- but we better have another look! There is a widespread impression that the gap between the sexes has been bridged. There is more open and candid communication, more plain talk between the sexes. There is certainly more sexuality, but is there more love?

In his classic philosophic work, "I and Thou," Martin Buber already in the 1920's called attention to the growing eroticism of the age, yet questioned its value for the betterment of inter-personal relationships.

"Subtract from the sexual encounters everything that is egocentric -- in other words, eliminate from these relationships those in which each merely uses the other for self enjoyment -- what would remain?"

What is love without respect for personality? <sup>Far from</sup> ignoring the new social and economic conditions which put a severe strain on marriage, I urge you to look for the deeper spiritual crisis which turns many a love and marriage relationship into heartbreak. Without mutual reverence, partners turn into mere consumers of each other's affection. Such so-called "love" quickly deteriorates into an ego-centric relationship constantly threatened by the question, what can I get out of it now? We must never forget that the Hebrew term for the marriage ceremony, kiddushin, means "sanctification," that is, the consecration of man and woman, and their love, as co-workers with God, partaking of His holiness in the creation of new life. Spouses in Judaism are partners in a home that must be reflective of the spirituality of Judaism with all of its sacred values.

To the extent that these sacred aspects of sexuality have been lost, it has been cheapened and vulgarized, destined to turn the life of lovers and spouses into bitterness of soul.

How can we recover the reverence and dignity of the human being in his various stages of life and relationship, the respect of parents, the dignity of old age, the reverence that must sanctify love and marriage?

Let me suggest an answer through the medieval legend of the golem. Legend tells of the miracle-working rabbi, Judah Loew, of Prague who once secretly shaped a giant out of clay, a mighty robot, the golem, to defend the ghetto in time of need and to do all sorts of labor for



his people. This golem would come alive and act like a human being only after RABbi Loew inscribed upon its forehead three Hebrew letters, אמת, this, Emet, Truth. The golem was a great help and all went well for many years. The ghetto prospered and its Jewish community was well guarded, until one day when the golem malfunctioned and turned violently against the Jews of the ghetto. In this crisis, Rabbi Judah Loew rushed toward the golem, stretched out his hand and erased from the golem's forehead the first letter, א, thus changing the word אמת, "Truth," to ,מת, which means "dead." Instantly the golem fell to the ground and disintegrated.

The point of the legend seems to be that when truth or meaning is removed from our lives, we disintegrate and die a moral and spiritual death. Many of us live and work like robots and come dangerously close to the point when the Emet, אמת, the inner truth, the deeper meaning of our life, is wiped out of our consciousness. When a human being thinks of himself as a machine and no longer as God's holy creature, he has been de-sanctified, degraded, debased -- and no longer sensitive to the sanctity of his fellow man, including spouse and aging parents. When I become a machine, all other human beings are tools.

No one is in greater danger of this loss of meaning and dignity than we Americans whose frantic, hyper-active life keeps us going without respite. It is an unwritten dogma of Americanism that action is salvation -- that, if in doubt, do something!

The good side of our action-mindedness is that we Americans quickly tackle our social and political problems. Unlike other peoples, we consider no problem insoluble if only we try hard enough.

This is part of the secret of the American success. But, like all extremes, this one also carries its penalty. We make insufficient allowance for thought and reflection. If parents see a young child just staring into space, they are likely to become worried, unable to appreciate that day dreaming, the meandering of imagination, has its place, indeed is necessary for inner growth.

Compulsive workers know, of course, that one must occasionally relax and simply think. Yet, when we finally find the precious moments to do so -- it turns into an impossible task. In a spasm of guilt, because we are not active, because we are not doing something, we pace back and forth, scribble memos and finally rush to the telephone, the electronic narcotic for the compulsive activist.

We do we so desperately want to run away from ourselves? Because we hold ourselves in contempt. Because we are poor company for ourselves. Because we are inwardly empty.

This explains, at least in part, the retirement trauma of men, or the "empty nest" syndrome of women in middle age. If a person has found no meaning in life higher than his job or function, he is headed for spiritual collapse. It is horrible to be left staring into one's inner emptiness.

With higher truth and meaning erased from our consciousness, we then disintegrate like the golem.

This leads us to the other two symbols upheld by the statues in the procession.



## 2. The Torah Scroll: Authority

You must have noticed that held aloft by the figure left of the menorah is the Torah scroll. It is not a book like any other book, It represents God's commandments. It stands for a higher authority, for a higher will. For the authentic Jew the essential meaning of life is to obey God. We are more creatures than we are creators. More is done to us than we can ever do by our own will. We have been put on this earth without our volition and we shall part from it without our consent. In the true perspective of life, submission and obedience are far more realistic than all our plans, decisions and resolves. What is our life, what our power, what our goodness, what our wisdom? Important as it is to be doing things, ultimately God is the Creator and Lord and nothing can prosper if it is not according to His will.

After all is said and done, we must silently wait for God.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav and his disciples tried to restore this awareness of God as the supreme power, to whom we need to list in the silence of obedience, by recommending that we set aside once a day a so-called "dead hour." During that hour we should be "dead" to the world, unavailable for business or social obligations or family duties or small talk. If not an hour then a half hour or at least some time. Every person needs, each day, a little time for silent introspection, for quiet probing, for remembering that we are God's handiwork, for maintaining our connection with God. Without this spiritual connection, life becomes unintelligible, as unintelligible as when President Ford and Governor Carter, after the great cut-off in the

debate last night. They kept talking and gesturing, but it was all futility after they became disconnected from the power-line. So are we -- futility -- when disconnected from eternal Power.

### 3. The Open Book: Education

I wonder how many of you have ever looked closely at the remaining two statues on the right side of the menorah bearer. They are less eye catching, less prominent. They are actually fused together and together they are holding something in their hands. What is it? Many, perhaps the majority, who have seen this group of sculptures, fail to notice the object held up by these two figures. Or, even if they see it, they do not associate anything special with it. It is a book. Have another look, after services, and consider the interesting fact that these two figures have their backs somewhat turned to the others who are upholding the menorah and the Torah. It is as though to suggest that their concern is essentially different. They're not performing a ritual but are absorbed in the communication of ideas, in lessons to be learned from books. Clearly they represent education, the study of our literature essential to the preservation of our tradition.

The task of Jewish education is to convert fleeting enthusiasm, fervor and ecstasy into solid conviction and commitment. The religious impulse and the moral urge have to be anchored within the realities of life and developed and applied to the commonplace situations of daily existence.

Education is the only way by which the sanctities and values, represented by the menorah, and the faith in God as our supreme authority, symbolized by the Torah, can become effective in the lives of our people. Moreover, as you can see, it is the couple with the book, not the figure with the menorah or the one holding the Torah, that is leading the procession. Without knowledge, Judaism and our people would be moving in the dark. Without learning there would be no procession, no continuity, no tradition from father to son and mother to daughter, no survival of the Jew.

As you know, Washington Hebrew Congregation has completed plans for a new educational center. It will be the finest building short of extravagance. It will cost us three million dollars. Its elevation in a large open area of beautiful surroundings will be an expression of our full freedom and strength as <sup>American</sup> Jews in this great land. Its aesthetic beauty will match the fine quality of the homes and neighborhoods to which the vast majority of our children are accustomed.

You probably know by now why we made this move: The need to provide education and a youth program, with the supporting social, organizational and educational activities



involving parents, reasonably close to the homes of some 80% of our membership.

But, I would like to furnish you tonight one <sup>special</sup> reason which has not yet been stated by any of us:

The eye witness of the following account is still alive and here in the United States. It happened in the city of Drohobycz in 1942. The Germans were stepping up the destruction of our people. Various roundups, concentrated sometimes on young men, sometimes on women, or old people, or children. In one house were nearly fifty families -- including a mother with two young children. She frantically sought to hide them and keep them out of the Germans' reach. From the kitchen floor she removed a few wooden planks, then dug a pit in which to hide the children. She covered the pit with the planks, and on the planks she spread a blanket in which <sup>she</sup> tore tiny holes so that the children might have air to breathe. As soon as any noise was heard, the mother would thrust the children into the pit, cover it and wait. . .

One day several SS men made a search in the area and stormed into the kitchen where they found the mother standing.

"Where are the children?" The frightened mother answered, "The children have gone outside and haven't come back."

"You're lying, Jewess!"--said the <sup>officer</sup> and ordered his men to search the house. They ran through every room, banging their rifle butts on walls and floors and, after hearing the hollow sound of the boards over the pit, investigated, pulled off the boards and dragged the children out of there: *Two little girls, pale and grimy and faint from long confinement in the dank darkness of the pit.*

"Take them away!" the German officer told his men who promptly began leading the children outside.

The mother threw herself on the floor, grabbed hold of his feet and started screeching: "I'm not letting you go. Give me back my children!"

After a few moments the German said,

"All right, I'll tell you what I'm going to do for you. I'll make a deal. I'll leave you one child, and I'll take only one, but -- you must make the choice. Otherwise, I'll take both of them. You have five minutes to decide."

With these words he pulled out his watch and started marking time.

Paralyzed with fear, the mother just stood there while the seconds ticked away. Her eyes bulged with terror as the dreadful offer of the German sank into her mind. Which of her two children should she rescue and which should she sacrifice? Four minutes were gone and the fifth was passing. Only a few seconds remained, and at the very moment when the mother's torment reached a climax, the German suddenly pulled out a camera and photographed her terrified face. A snapshot of terror, perhaps to show to his superiors or his sweetheart. He gave her a few more seconds and said -- "Well?"

"I'm not choosing," the mother cried. And since she refused, — — he shrugged his shoulders, and took both children to die. . .



The only possible response to what happened in Drohobycz in 1942 is for us to make the Jewish child our top priority. We must build new schools as living memorials to the one million Jewish children who died in the holocaust. Their mothers' agony must not be in vain. Compared with their sacrifice, ours is insignificant -- but whatever the sacrifice, each of us should be proud to make it. We must build our school so that we not lose our own children by benign neglect. *it is a matter of survival.*

Conclusion

Jewish history, if seen in its totality, is a procession toward the highest goal any people has ever aspired to reach. Wherever we go, we take along our supreme values, symbolized by the menorah, our sense of the sacred, -- the Torah, our faith in a law no human being may set aside, -- and the book, our ideal of universal moral education.

Your true purpose in life, your destiny as a Jew, is to *take* your place in this procession.

AMEN

## THE BOY WHO HATED EVERYBODY

A Rosh Hashana Story sermonette by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

September 25, 1976

In a little town upon a hill lived a boy, John, who had a younger sister, Betty. They lived in a small house at the edge of the town. The mother worked hard all day, washing, cooking, cleaning house. The father was a mailman, who delivered letters and packages in the villages all around and when he came home, late afternoons, he was usually very tired.

The boy was not happy: "Why don't people treat me in a nicer way?" he thought everybody liked his little sister more than him. "They always make such a fuss about Betty ---"how cute, how pretty!" All she does is play ---and I get all the work.

John was angry and jealous. Whenever his mother asked him to help: "Take the garbage out" or "Johnny, go to the store and bring me a loaf of bread" ---he would complain: "Why don't you ask Betty?"

"Don't be silly," the mother answered. "She's too young to do these things."

Then, Johnny would mumble to himself: "I never get to finish my games. It's not fair. Nobody bothers Betty ---It's always me. Johnny do this and Johnny do that."

In school Johnny also believed that the teacher was picking on him. "Johnny you are day-dreaming. Why don't you pay attention!" Or, Johnny, how come your book-cover got so dirty?"

Johnny shot back: "I'm not the only one with a dirty book-cover. You should see the other books that are ~~more~~ more spotted than mine."

That day, the other ~~kids~~ children in his class stopped talking to Johnny: TATTLE TALE they called him.

One day, Johnny's father came home very tired and threw himself on the couch to rest. J. was outside bouncing a ball against the wall. Betty was in her room playing records. After a while Johnny heard his father shouting: "J. stop bouncing the ball. I can't sleep."

J. answered: "Betty is making more noise than I with her records." Immediately, his father stormed outside, grabbed J's ball and said: "No more playing for you. Get inside and stay there!"

J. ran up to his little room, slammed the door and started crying and kept saying: I don't like anybody..... I hate them all..... I hate them all."

There and then J. decided to run away from home. When his mother called him for dinner, he shouted back "I'm not hungry!" That evening, after dark, J. ~~quietly~~ put on his boots, a sweater and coat and ~~quietly~~ <sup>quietly</sup> slipped out of the house and began walking downhill the road to the next village. It was a very cold night and J. was glad he had his coat and boots on. After a while, he looked back and could no longer see his house, not even the village. Now, it was pitch/dark, not even the moon or stars could be seen--- and then, it began to snow...at first just a few flakes ---but soon ~~it turned into~~ a snowstorm. A heavy carpet of snow covered the earth. Was he walking on the road or through a snow/covers field ?  
icy  
The wind blew the snow into his face....His fingers and toes froze- Johnny became frightened. He thought of turning back ---but which way was it? Where was the road? He was lost and felt getting weak, and so tired. His feet sank ever deeper into the snow and he had a terrible wish to lie down and go to sleep ---but he knew that if he fell asleep out in the open, <sup>snow</sup> he would soon freeze to death



He could just barely drag himself forward when  
~~At this very moment~~ his foot struck against something heavy on  
the ground. He bent down and found that it was a human body,  
someone else who had grown tired and fallen asleep in the snow.

~~The next moment~~, J. raised up the man's head,  
kept rubbing his face and even breathed into his mouth --and  
suddenly the man opened his eyes, awake. J. quickly got under the  
man's arm and pushed with all his strength, trying to help him on his  
feet again. While doing all this, J. got very warm himself and  
in the effort to save the other man, J.'s own strength returned.  
*Helping the stranger kept Johnny himself alive.*  
Soon, J. and the man were walking together, arms  
slung over each other's shoulder, leaning on each other, and pulling  
one the other, and keeping each other awake ----They trudged back  
to the village where they finally arrived very late at night,  
very tired but alive.

Johnny's parents, worried about their missing son,  
were outside the house searching all over in the snow and when  
they spotted him, hugged and kissed him and brought him into the  
house.

From that time on, Johnny was a different boy.  
Helping the stranger was the means that saved both, the man and  
himself. Now he knew how much people need each other, that  
~~helping others is good for the other, but also good for ourselves.~~

*Amen. to help someone else is always good -  
good for the other and good for you.*

*We Jews have always known this - whenever  
we have helped our brothers & sisters in need - we  
have ourselves grown stronger.*

THE PERFECT CRIME

Judgement by Hanley

by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

I would like to tell you a story. ~~The name of my story is~~ *called*  
"The Perfect Crime." But, before I tell you the story,  
I just want to ask you a question:

Have you ever done a wrong in secret and thought that  
nobody would find out? Do you really think you could  
do something bad and get away with it ?  
Don't fool yourself. The Bible says: YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT.

I want to tell you a story about a man who believed that  
he could do something that was very wrong and that no one  
would ever find out. So listen to my story: The perfect crime.

Long , long ago, in Ashkelon, lived a poor woman,  
named Rachel: widowed, no children. Worked her own little  
field; kept a few chicken and goats. She proved <sup>well</sup> for herself  
and even saved a little . Every week, before Shabbes, she  
dropped a few coins into her big clay pitcher --her saving-bank  
As the years passed, the pitcher got fuller and heavier.

Whenever she put a few coins into it, she said to herself"  
"Some day, this pitcher will keep me alive. When I get  
old and can no longer work, I shall buy food with the  
money I am saving up now."

One day, Rachel decided that she would go to Jerusalem  
for Pesach and pray in Solom's beautiful Temple together  
with all the Jewish people.

But, what ~~w~~ about the treasure in her pitcher ?  
Was it safe to leave it home ? What if some stranger, or maybe  
a thief, came into the house and found it and took it ?



Rachel decided to do something that would make it difficult for a thief. She poured some ~~golden~~ honey into the pitcher. The honey on top of her coins would fool the thief. Now the coins would not clink any more inside because the honey would make the coins stick together (just like syrup)

There was only one trouble. If you looked inside the pitcher---the honey was very clear-- you could see right through it. No,--it wasn't safe.

Rachel had another idea. She decided to take her pitcher to her neighbor Ruben and ask him to keep it in a safe place for her until she returned. Ruben was alone in the house. Rachel explained and he agreed to keep the pitcher in a safe place.

"Don't worry, Rachel," he said, "Enjoy your visit in Jerusalem. I'll take good care of your pitcher."

As soon as she had left, Ruben became curious about the pitcher. It was so heavy? What was in it? He looked and through the honey he saw lots of coins shining through. "I wonder how much money she has in this pitcher?" said Ruben to himself. Slowly, he poured out the honey and then put his hand into the pitcher-----and pulled out all he could hold; and again and again, until the pitcher was all empty and big pile of coins scattered in front. He counted all the widow's life's savings --and then he thought, who would <sup>ever</sup> know if I took all this money and kept it for myself? No one saw Rachel ~~give~~ put money into her pitcher.. I could say there was nothing in it. Without witnesses, her word against mine would prove nothing. It's perfect. No one will ever know. And so he kept the money --but was careful to fill the pitcher with honey all the way to the top.

Rachel returned. Immediately she came to Ruben's house and Ruben gave her back the pitcher.

When she arrived home, she looked inside to see if her coins were still there -----and imagine her <sup>Surprise</sup> ~~shock~~ when she found all gone. Right away she ran over to Ruben's house and cried out: There must be a mistake. The pitcher I asked you to keep for me in a safe place was almost full of money. This one is just full of honey.

Ruben looked at her pretending not to know what she was talking about: What money? You must be dreaming, Rachel, You gave me a pitcher with honey, not money.

She begged, pleaded, cried ----for Ruben to return the money to her. But it was of no use. He denied everything and repeated: Honey, not money.

Rachel with heavy heart went to see the old, kindly judge of Ashkelon, a good man who knew the laws of Torah. He listened as she explained what happened. Then the Judge said: Rachel, I really believe you, but it is your word against his. The Torah says that any who is accused of a crime is innocent until two witnesses say that they have seen him do the wrong of which he is accused. Do you have two witnesses ?

No, cried Rachel, I but God knows. "yes," said the kindly Judge. God knows but not I..... There is only one thing you can do. Go to King Solomon. He is the wisest Judge in Israel. Perhaps he can help you find justice. I shall command Ruben to go with you to the court of Solomon.



King looked at both standing before him---and listened to both  
His heart told him that Rachel was ~~w~~right but not even a king  
could break the law of the Torah.. Two witnesses were  
needed to prove what this woman said that there ws money  
in the pitcher.King Solomon held his face in his hands.. He  
was trying hard to think and he prayed for God to show him  
the way. Suddenly his face lit up with a smiled

Tell me, Ruben, ---do you at least admit that this  
pitcherfilled with honey was given to you by Rachel to keep  
in a safe place for her?

Yes, said Ruben, but ~~there was~~ only honey ~~in it~~ --no money.

Solomon: This we shall soon see. and with these words,  
Solomon took the pitcher into both of his hands and smashed  
it on the ground.. It fell apart into many pieces. Quickly,  
King solomon bent down to examine the clay pieces ~~wh~~ich were  
still sticky with honey inside. He picked up the hollow  
handle of the pitcher --and just as he had thought-----stuck to  
the inside of the hollow handle were two small gold coins.d  
They were in a hard-to-get-to place inside and Ruben, when  
emptying the pitcher had not seen them ---and the honey  
had kept them sticking to the side of the pitcher.  
THESE ARE OUR TWO WITNESSES said Solomon as he held up the  
two coins. They prove that this woman has spoken the turht.  
There was money in the pitcher. Now, I order you , Ruben,  
to pay the thief's penalty. You will fill up the pitcher  
5 times with money all the way to the top and give it to Rachel  
----and remember the word from our Torah: YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT.

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So it is in life. We sometimes think we can hide our wrong-doing.  
W say nobody saw us. Nobody will ever know. Bud don't



kid yourslef. The truth always comes out in the end.  
Secret sins come out into the open. God sees to it that  
justice is done. The wrong must be set right again.  
It always is ---even if it takes a little extra time.



INTRODUCTION TO KOL NIDRE NIGHT SERMON

October 5, 1976

A short story tells of a lady and her six-year old son walking through a crowded department store. Suddenly, a voice over the loud speaker announced that a very little boy had lost his mother and that the boy did not even know his name. When hearing this, the six-year old boy pressed his mother's hand and looked up to her with a big, somewhat triumphant smile -- as though to say, " I know my name. I wouldn't be lost."

Every Jew on Kol Nidre night is pressing the arm of his people. We are not nameless. We have the oldest continuous sense of identity of any people in the Western world.

In tonight's service, we underscored symbolically the unity and equality of all Jews. The rabbis, cantor and some of the officers of the Congregation entered through the same door as everyone else, in keeping with the idea that we are equals in our moral delinquency, equals in the need to purge ourselves of guilt, equals in our yearning for forgiveness, equals as petitioners who come in from the outside, so to speak, eager to return, to be received into the brotherhood of Israel.

First complete  
draft

## A DAY OF PRAYER

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Yom Kippur Eve  
Sunday, October 3, 1976  
Washington Hebrew Congregation

There is one issue in the current national election campaign which has a direct bearing upon the foremost item on the agenda of this most prayerful day of our New Year. It is, as far as we can remember, the most peculiar issue ever to arise in a national election: the feeling on the part of a number of voters that one of the candidates for the Presidency prays too much. Some have expressed concern that this candidate, if elected, might, in crucial decisions, be consulting God rather than other experts, or take too much time off his presidential duties in order to indulge in prayer. For my part, I'd rather have him yield to this than some of his other temptations.

During all these broodings about the devotional propensities of Jimmy Carter, it came as a surprise to many when a national poll reported the fact that well over one third of the American people had gone through a religious experience very similar to that of Jimmy Carter's religious awakening known as "born again" -- a powerful feeling of personal transformation, usually triggered off by private or public worship. To a degree hardly realized by the sophisticated urbanized Jew, grass root Americans are a praying people.

From time immemorial, prayer has been the most prominent feature of our High Holy Day observance. We come here primarily for the purpose of prayer. But, do we, of our generation, really pray? Can we pray?



In Perryville, Kentucky, the local church once had a sign outside that read: "Our auditorium is prayer-conditioned." It suggests that the comfort to be found in the sanctuary is that of prayer.

Many of our people, however, are acutely uncomfortable with prayer. For them, prayer is not a solution but a problem. To our forefathers, daily prayer was as natural and necessary as daily food. Why has this appetite declined? Why is the right mood for prayer so rare and hard to come by?

We live in an age that is not geared to quiet meditation. In the mad rush of this jet age, we race through life like a speeding motorist. We don't take time to watch the scenery or read the road signs. We don't linger with life's beautiful moments and we give no heed to the warnings posted by our wisest teachers of past centuries. In our reckless speed to get ahead, we often take the wrong turn. No wonder so many lives are smashed up.

Even in our so-called leisure time, we are too accelerated and over stimulated to enjoy peace and serenity. Therefore, our vacations are usually no different in tempo from our work day. Every one of our days is action-packed. We either keep going, or "go to pieces" with boredom.

I know that this description does not fit all of us. Yet, it reflects the prevailing mood and pattern of life. At last, these High Holy Days bring the tempo of our life to a slowdown. We stop and begin to reflect. What do we seek in life? Are the things we do worthwhile? Do we approve of ourselves? How can we do better? As we

think of our personal concerns and problems we wonder: are the prayers we are saying tonight relevant to our personal needs? Let us examine together the value of prayer for the conduct of life. What really is prayer? How does it help us?

### 1. The Problem: Lack of Conviction

The chief problem with prayer in our time is that we lack conviction about it. We are much too preoccupied with our business, professional or domestic affairs to ever think through in depth our own religious beliefs. We have time for almost everything except religious and philosophic thought. Most of us have a religion which is second hand, a hearsay religion, not gained from personal study, insight and experience, but more or less indifferently accepted from the past. With it, we have taken over prayer as a religious form or convention, but without deep conviction. So, here we are, taking, I hope, a more serious look at prayer and asking: what is it really all about?

### 2. Our Difficulty With Prayers of Petition

Claude Montefiore, England's foremost liberal Jewish thinker, once said: "To pray, is not the same as to pray for."

There are basically two types of prayer: the petitional and the non-petitional. It is a common misunderstanding that prayer is always a begging ritual. Those who think of worship primarily as a liturgical slot machine in which we insert coined words to bring forth miracles, will be surprised to find upon closer analysis that the

majority of our prayers do not ask for anything.

Among the most meaningful prayers are those "thank-Gods" we sometime utter in true thanksgiving, or those confessionals we make in the silent pangs of conscience, or the mood of adoration that overcomes us when alone under a starlit sky or when, on the beach, we listen to the pounding waves of the sea and experience an intimation of an eternal rythm of immeasurable power, the pulse of the universe.

Some of our most memorable prayer moods are inspired by life cycle experiences, such as the mystery of childbirth, or the sense of utter dependence which we feel in illness, or the inner certainty of salvation by a higher power we sometimes have in recovery and the awe that comes over us in the approach and presence of death.

And then, there is Leo Baeck's profound statement: "The purpose of prayer is to leave us alone with God." The central meaning of prayer is not to get something, but to be with someone, the search for contact with the Supreme Being, a spiritual craving as real as physical hunger, as the poet said:

"In Thy plan  
Thou has put an upward reach  
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None of these prayers to which we referred are petitions. Often these prayers are unrelated to a formal worship service or prayerbook. They come right out of the book of life,

These life inspired prayers are never forgotten.



But, now let us have another look at the much maligned prayer of petition which so many find rationally objectionable. What logical answer can we give to the question: How are our petitions answered by God?

There are people who have lost faith in prayer because their most sincere and solemn prayers in time of need were not answered. How then, can we on this Yom Kippur offer prayers with any confidence that such worship is effective?

In the Bible, we find many examples of answered prayers. But, you might object: "Oh, the Bible! Of course, all prayers are fulfilled in the Bible." But, this is not true. The Bible is no unrealistic Hollywood script with a happy ending to everything. The Bible also includes many examples of unanswered prayers:

David, in Psalm 22, cries out: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me, and art far from my help at the word of my cry?"

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And Jeremiah grows despondent: "Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through."

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Evidently there is no assurance. But, should all prayers be granted? Are we able to determine what is best for ourselves, what is best for humanity? Dare we substitute our wish for God's will?

The novelist, A. J. Cronin, said:

"If the good Lord had been weak enough to give me what I wanted, He would have ruined me."

"YES" is not the only answer. Sometimes "NO" is a better and more kindly answer to our prayers. The theologian, Spurgeon, said:

"I would shrink from ever praying again if I were absolutely sure God would answer all my petitions."

Man's prayers are often self contradictory and cancel themselves out. On Sunday, we want hot sunshine for our picnic and on Monday, rain to water our lawn. We want our children to excel in everything, but then again we want them to be unburdened and cheerful. There is much wisdom in one of our prayers:

"When we pray for new blessings, may we come to Thee in the spirit of humility and submission, remembering that we cannot know whether what we ask is really for our good."

If that is so, what then is the point of petitional prayer? Does it help us in any way at all?

### 3. The Benefits of Petitional Prayer

Yes, in the following two ways every petitional prayer brings results:

First, a prayer which expresses our deepest wish or aspiration has a moral and psychological impact. Prayer is answered not only when

we are given what we ask, but when we are challenged to become what we can be. Prayer is a step on which we rise from the self we are, to the self we ought to be. True enough, God only sometimes answers the petition, but He always answers the petitioner. No matter what our petition, in the famous words of George Meredith:

"Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered."

The second benefit from petitional prayer is this: The mere expression of our need, the lifting up of our heart's desire before God, helps us focus our will and hastens our readiness for the good we seek and prepares us to play more of a part in its fulfillment. For example, we Jews had been praying for almost 2,000 years for the return to the land of Israel. The time was not ripe. Centuries passed and our prayers were not granted, yet without them our people would have lost the will to return long ago. The answer to our prayers was not delivery of the land, but more strength, more patience, more perseverance.

In a way, every expressed wish is self-fulfilling. You cannot receive anything unless you first open your hand. The petitional prayer is opening our hand in expectation. It has its impact upon us.

But, when all is said and done, we must admit that we only know the human side of prayer. We have some inkling as to what it does to us, but what it does to God -- nobody knows.

#### 4. Appreciation of Prayer Comes With Practice

There are limits to the power of any rational argument in convincing us of the value of prayer. Study and discussion alone does not enable us to pray meaningfully. It is like swimming. No matter how much



you hear or read about it, you cannot learn how to swim until you get into the water.

A favorite parable of the Baal Shem was of a fiddler who played so sweetly that all the people in the room who heard him began to dance. Then, a man passed by on the outside, looked through the window and, without seeing the musician, concluded that the people jumping about inside must be madmen not knowing what they were doing.

We cannot appreciate the world of prayer from the outside. We must step in and expose ourselves to the actual experience of prayer before it can truly affect us. A few occasional experiments with prayer are not enough. We must not be like children on Hallowe'en who ring a doorbell and run. But, that is exactly what the High Holy Day Jew does. He comes Rosh Hashanah, and after Yom Kippur he runs.

How long does it take a human being to learn how to walk? Would you say, 12 to 18 months? Wrong! It takes a lifetime, because if you are bedridden for a few months, you won't be able to stand on your feet until you practice walking all over again. As our physical capacities depend on their uninterrupted exercise, so our spiritual capacities. "A lapse of one day sets you back two days," said the wise Hillel. The less we pray, the less meaningful prayer becomes.

#### 5. Our Spiritual Malnutrition

We invest enormous energy in material accumulation, in the building of social relations, in our business and professional careers and family life, with only minimal attention to spiritual needs. In the pursuit of so many tangibles, our anxieties have grown, our tensions

have increased, our mental health has deteriorated. At least 20% of our urban population are judged to be mentally ill and in need of institutional treatment. We have reached the paradoxical situation in which we use our health to gain our wealth, and then our wealth to regain our health.

This rather frightening trend is the price we must pay for our spiritual malnutrition.

#### Summary

But, thank God, we see signs of a wholesome reaction. If anything has sunk into our consciousness in the last few decades of unparalleled prosperity it is the truth that affluence is not enough. "Man does not live by bread alone."

One of the most exciting new developments in the Jewish world is a very real religious awakening. We are in the early stages of a profound Jewish religious revival -- in Russia, in Israel and most of all in the United States.

The college campus is always a good barometer of future trends. Reports from all over the country tell of Jewish students spontaneously organizing religious services, with more attending High Holy Day services than ever before. By no means coincidental is the publication of an unbelievable number of new, creative religious services and newly revised prayer books by all major Jewish movements including that of American Reform Judaism. We have just come out with a brand new prayerbook which will be officially introduced here at Washington Hebrew Congregation in three weeks from now. A reconsideration of our personal attitude to prayer is most timely. If you, too, sense a new readiness on your part to re-examine your religious

potential, consider the following steps in developing more of a spiritual life this year.

1. Re-examine your budgeting of time. How many hours do you set aside to think? Prayer is largely thought, reflection, meditation. Are two hours for worship each week really excessive?

2. If your chief problem with prayer is intellectual, that is, a lack of conviction -- ask how much serious reading or study in Jewish thought you have done since your Bar Mitzvah. Would you presume to judge problems in nuclear physics if you can bring to them no more than a sixth or seventh graders level of scientific knowledge? Take advantage of the adult Jewish study programs and prayer and study retreats which are being offered ever more abundantly by Washington Hebrew Congregation and other institutions, including all of the universities in the area. The most sophisticated, academically sound and intellectually respectable Jewish study program is now available to anyone who wants it. More attractive books than ever on every aspect of Judaism are rolling off the presses and some have become best sellers. Adult education is ready if you are.

3. Above all, open the possibility for meaningful prayer experience by personal participation in worship, even if your beliefs and prayers are in need of lots of repair. Don't stop the practice of prayer while waiting for the intellectual correctives.



Conclusion

The story is told of a small, isolated village to which a watchman would come only once a year in order to fix all grandfather clocks that had gone out of order. One year, the watchmaker did not come, nor the second, nor the third. After a number of years had passed during which most of the clocks were way off, either too fast or too slow, no one in that village knew the right time any longer. Most people stopped winding up their clocks.

When, finally, the watchmaker returned to the village, the only clocks he could repair were those few that had been wound up each day regardless. Though not showing time accurately, the movements of these clocks were still in good order while all the others that had stood still for so many years had become rusty beyond repair.

So it is with prayer. Prolonged neglect will take you beyond the point when new insight or reason or philosophic argument can change your way.

Keep praying in spite of present problems of belief and, when some day the right answers come to you, it will be much easier for you to set your spiritual house in order.

AMEN

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Yom Kippur Eve  
Sunday, October 5, 1976  
Washington Hebrew Congregation

### A DAY OF PRAYER

This is a year when not only Jews but all Americans are in a mood for soul-searching and stock-taking. On the eve of the election, the national conscience is highly sensitized.

There is one issue in the current national election campaign which has a direct bearing upon the foremost item on the agenda of this most prayerful day of our New Year. It is, as far as we can remember, the most peculiar issue ever to arise in a national election: the feeling on the part of a number of voters that one of the candidates for the Presidency prays too much. Some have expressed concern that this candidate, if elected, might, in crucial decisions, consult God rather than other experts, or take too much time off his presidential duties in order to indulge in prayer. For my part, I'd rather have him yield to this than some of his other temptations.

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I am not at all troubled by Mr. Carter's love of prayer but by our neglect thereof.

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This rather frightening trend is the price we must pay for our spiritual malnutrition.

#### Summary

But, thank God, we see signs of a wholesome reaction. If anything has sunk into our consciousness in the last few decades of unparalleled prosperity, it is the truth that affluence is not enough to solve our social problems, to reverse the decline of family life, to bring us contentment and inner peace. "Man does not live by bread alone."

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Keep praying in spite of present problems of belief and, when some day the right answers come to you, it will be much easier for you to set your spiritual house in order.

AMEN



Draft - <sup>not</sup> given

Ref: Process of <sup>22125</sup> Submission

DOING GOD'S THING

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation  
Kol Nidre Night  
Sunday, October 3, 1976

In one of the most awesome geographic regions of the world, reminiscent of the lifeless, barren lunar landscape, the Sodom region south of the Dead Sea, stands the famous pillar of salt, known for thousands of years as "the wife of Lot." Most tour busses stop there for a few minutes and, as you look around, it is easy to visualize the spectacular devastation which is recorded in the Bible. Usually, the guide retells the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, from which only the family of Lot escaped alive, except for Lot's wife. Her momentary hesitation as she turned backwards for another look at the doomed city was her undoing.

The rational point of that ancient biblical myth is that in one's turning away from evil there must be no hesitation or compromise. The break with a corrupt environment or past must be complete and final.

The goal of this most solemn Day of Atonement is not merely remorse and penitence, ~~(the word "penitence" is related to penalty and penitentiary and carries the thought of punishment and pain, -- the real goal of Yom Kippur is~~ <sup>but</sup> t'shuvah, turning. What kind of turning? The English word "turn" could mean anything from a little deviation of a few degrees to a total turnabout. ~~The Hebrew concept of t'shuvah means precisely the latter, a total turnabout, a reversal,~~ in two steps: First, a turning away from, and then a turning toward

something or someone. First, there must be a negative action, a radical abandonment or rejection of the old way. This must be followed by the positive action, a turning about toward the adoption of an entirely new way, a new posture, a new way of life.

In the true t'shūvah process, no compromise is possible. You cannot arrest your remorse at a given point, look back with nostalgia, like Lot's wife, upon a discredited mode of behavior with the thought in mind of disavowing most, but not all of it. Something like, "Dear God, forgive my adultery. From now on I shall be faithful -- most of the time!"

T'shuvah has got to be a reversal all the way!

The most brilliant of all our post-biblical poets, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, expressed it in the verse:

When all within is dark,  
And I my soul despise  
From me I turn to Thee  
And find love in Thine eyes.

"From me I turn to Thee. . ."

From me, the usual ego-center of all my hustle and bustle, the tiny axle around which I spin all my wheels, I turn to Thee, the true center of the universe.

From me, the passing shadow, a speck of moist protoplasm among billions of equally transient organisms that will pass like configurations

(see V P II p 125)

of the fog, I turn to Thee who is the rock of ages, from eternity to eternity.

From me, the babbling idiot whose ignorance is almost co-equal with the entire universe, I turn to Thee, the all-knowing God.

From me, the chronic moral delinquent, I turn to Thee, the absolute perfection of holiness and goodness.

From me and my <sup>will</sup> ~~world~~, I turn to Thee and Thy <sup>will</sup> ~~world~~. THIS IS WHAT YOM KIPPUR IS ALL ABOUT.

*But we would be blind to reality if we did not face the fact that the surrender of one's own will and submiss. on to a will other than our own is completely out of step with the most powerful trend of the times.*

There is one sentence in the daily Jewish morning prayers which comes shortly after the Shema, which some time ago persuaded me personally to put my tallis back on whenever I prayed. It is the explanation for wearing fringes:

"When you look upon the fringes, remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them; and that you go not about after your own heart and your own eyes." (Numbers 15.39)

This is the most explicit statement in the Bible of the psycho-ethical root of all transgressions. We seek to follow the urging of our own hearts; we instantly lust for the things we see with our eyes. We want to do our own thing!

All sin starts from this, the basis of all rebellions: the assertion of our own human wish against God's will, our lust against law. Like Oscar Wilde we will resist anything but temptation.

We are just emerging from a decade in which ardent advocates of a new life style tried to replace the so-called conventional moral



code with the new liberating doctrine of "do your own thing." *The emphasis is not on suppressing but rather expressing your true inner self.*

Many of the external characteristics of the new life style have phased out, but the cardinal principle of the new morality, "do your own thing," remains as an alluring ~~substitute~~ *alternative to* for the Decalogue

and all the rest of the 613 commandments and prohibitions in the Torah, ~~because this~~ *The new* doctrine *is attractive because it* actually corresponds to man's ~~age old~~ *deepest* drive *for self-assertion*

preference for what he wants to do, against what he ought to do.

Let us examine a little more closely and not altogether without sympathy, the real meaning and logic of the cry, "do your own thing."

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES











Let us now see  
the other, the objective  
side of Day you own they  
as we relate it to high  
level of concerns in  
this present decade

Added to page B

~~But this is no~~ ~~with I doubt my will~~  
If indeed ~~the~~ surrender of one's own will and submission to ~~the~~ will  
~~of this unique day of spiritual cleansing~~ ~~we~~  
~~we ought to be aware of the fact that~~ ~~rather~~ ~~see~~ ~~up to the fact~~  
that we are bridging the most powerful trend of the times.

## ② Day you own they Revolt Against Discipline of Standards

① Day you own they and the  
Ground for ~~identity~~

You don't disown your true identity  
by jumping out of your skin  
or by ~~transposing~~ yourself into  
a totally different & novel environment  
Would a horse become more conscious  
of its own directivity by. Why has swan  
been a / she 2.

# THE TIME OF LIFE

*Yizkor - Yom Kippur*  
~~Sept 29, 1963~~  
Oct 4, 1976

This is an hour of ~~profound feeling~~ with an almost mystical quality. It is an hour of reunion with the past. ~~Somehow the past is reborn.~~ Years of long ago melt into the present. People who have gone, are here again in spirit. We remember their features, their favorite expressions, their love for us and our love for them; and we wonder how there can be so much tender feeling in our hearts for those who are no longer among the living.

It is humanly impossible to contemplate the death ~~of others without mental~~ <sup>subject of, intensely, immediately, the top-c becomes</sup> ~~reference to oneself and so, inevitably, we are driven to think about the end of our~~ <sup>intensely personal and we</sup> own life. Is it sound, is it normal, is it helpful to think about death?

~~It is the contention of our faith that~~ **T**o face death realistically is a mark of wisdom. The Bible says:

"Oh that they were wise, that they would consider  
their latter end." (Dt. 32.29)

We are not to turn away from such thoughts, but seek to profit from the contemplation of death no less than we would from the contemplation of life. Rabbi Bunam, on his deathbed turned to his weeping wife and said: "Why weep? All our life has been given to us so that we might learn to die."

Out of such thoughts may come some very helpful ideas for living.

## I. LIFE IS NOT LENGTH OF DAYS

First, the realization that life's significance is not in <sup>the</sup> mere length of days.

The word "important" comes from the Latin "importare" meaning "to bring something along" "to have consequences". What makes a thing important is the influence, the effect, the consequences it has. Some of the most important writings in the world are very short:

Lincoln's Gettysburg address, only 266;

The 10 Commandments, less than 300 words.

What makes these documents important is not ~~their~~ length but ~~their~~ quality and far reaching influence.

A sun-dial in Florida bears this inscription:



TIME IS too slow for those who wait,  
 too swift for those who fear,  
 too long for those who grieve,  
 too short for those who rejoice;

But for those who love, TIME IS NOT.

Time is relative.

Time is but a blank space, absolutely worthless unless we write upon it with our deeds. Our book of life is sheer waste-paper unless there are in it pages worth remembering.

2. MAKING TIME COUNT

Frederick H. Ecker <sup>Former Chairman of the Board</sup> of Metropolitan Life was asked at the age of 90 if he feared death. He answered: "I'm not worried about dying, only about living too long and becoming useless." And so, another lesson we must learn is that there is more than one death---it is not only the flesh that dies, our <sup>we</sup> ~~flesh~~ might live and yet part of us might die, love may die, confidence, ambition, joy may die---

The Talmud says: The wicked, even in life, are called dead

But the righteous, even in death, are called alive.

~~Whether life is short or long is not the point, it is the quality of our deeds which preserves us as a living influence and as a blessing. The real tragedy in life is not dying, but wasting so much of the life which is given to us. ~~The dissipation of time is not only a matter of doing nothing, but putting time to wrong uses.~~~~ How we waste the days of our years--crying over spilled milk, perpetuating feuds--long after the original offence has become irrelevant, cutting ourselves off from people ~~we love and respect~~ on a petty point of wounded pride. Another form of dissipation is an empty sort of busy-ness missing the purpose of life by an excessive pursuit of the means:

The prince of commerce spent his days  
 in crafty calm and busy strife,  
 He thus amassed a million pounds  
 And bought a penny's worth of life.



How we spoil our days and fritter away the opportunities for fulfillment and happiness by a misspent zeal for trifles, by having the wrong scale of values, by not knowing which are the first things, the priorities of life.....

3. THE VALUE OF THEIR EXPERIENCE

If only we could start life with the experience we have at the end. Horace Walpole said:

"The more experience we gain, the more it comes to us at the wrong end of our life when we can no longer use it."

This memorial hour is invaluable if it imparts to those <sup>who</sup> are still in the prime of life the ~~lessons~~ <sup>lessons</sup> of a life-time of our departed, for our own experience may come to us too late for us to profit by. In his parting message, Moses said:

Remember the days of old,  
Consider the years of many generations;  
Ask thy father, and he will declare unto thee,  
Thine elders, and they will tell thee. (Dt. 32, 7)

The voices of our departed have been silenced, but their lives speak to us in these moments of memory; they issue to us warnings not to repeat their mistakes; they plead with us: "make peace, ~~xxxx~~ strengthen the ties of family, remain worthy of love, earn the respect of <sup>your</sup> children, win an honorable name in the community."...

Mankind makes progress like a man rowing a boat. He goes forward by looking backward. As we <sup>look back in</sup> ~~save the~~ memory ~~to~~ our departed, we <sup>advance on the road of life, propelled by</sup> ~~save~~ the lessons of their experience. From their graves our elders tell us that man needs so little---  
A little love and a little friendship, ~~health~~ and a home, and you are rich.

\*\*\*

MILLERS FALLS  
ERASE  
COTTON CONTENT

4. DISCOVERY OF THE PERMANENCE OF SPIRITUAL VALUES

This hour, my friends, offers us also a unique religious opportunity. It is impossible to think rationally when we stand at the open grave, overcome by the sharp anguish of a fresh grief, conscious of a final severance. But with the passage of time, sorrow mellows into a deepening understanding of the reality and permanence of spiritual values. You cannot see the stars at day-time, while the sun dominates the sky. Night must fall and then <sup>you</sup> we see ~~the moon and the stars.~~

So it is with our dear ones. While ~~they are~~ <sup>material and external</sup> alive, their ~~physical presence,~~ <sup>concerns</sup> their needs and demands, ~~the day by day conflicts, agreements and conflicts~~ <sup>and</sup> interactions of daily life absorb all our attention--but when the darkness of death falls upon them, we <sup>recognize more</sup> suddenly see clearly the shining light of their inner spiritual qualities. Their wisdom and goodness of heart continue to bless us, <sup>Dust returns to dust, but the spirit remains</sup> ~~intimating to us the possibilities of spiritual reality...~~

Yes, the flower fades--physical life must end, yet it is ~~connected to~~ roots ~~which~~ <sup>are</sup> forever <sup>in</sup> the realm of the spiritual, <sup>is</sup> the permanent ground of all existence which is in God.

*Oh that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end" (Dt. 32.29)*

Considering their latter end, we have considered ours too and we take from this consideration the truths, that

1. Life's value is not in its length
2. That to use our time well is surely as important as to prolong it
3. That the memory of dear ones is not mere indulgence of sentiment but the departing of their experience for the guidance of our life
4. And ~~fastly~~ <sup>as</sup> we acknowledge the influence of our departed upon our hearts and minds, we discover the reality and permanence of THE spiritual, and find in it our deepest consolation.

EZERASE



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By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation  
Yizkor - Yom Kippur  
October 4, 1976

This is an hour of an almost mystical quality. It is an hour of reunion with the past. Years of long ago melt into the present. People who have gone are here again in spirit. We remember their features, their favorite expressions, their love for us and our love for them; and we wonder how there can be so much tender feeling in our hearts for those who are no longer among the living.

It is humanly impossible to contemplate the subject of death in general. Immediately the topic becomes intensely personal and we think about the end of our own life. Is it sound, is it normal, is it helpful to think about death?

To face death realistically is a mark of wisdom. The Bible says:

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Frederick H. Ecker, former Chairman of the Board of Metropolitan Life, was asked at the age of 90 if he feared death. He answered, "I'm not worried about dying, only about living too long and becoming useless." And so, another lesson we must learn

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The Talmud says, "The wicked, even in life, are called dead. But the righteous, even in death, are called alive."

The real tragedy in life is not dying, but wasting so much of the life which is given to us. How we waste the days of our years -- crying over spilled milk, perpetuating feuds -- long after the original offense has become irrelevant, cutting ourselves off from people on a petty point of wounded pride. Another form of dissipation is an empty sort of busy-ness, missing the purpose of life by an excessive pursuit of the means:

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*in which we experience the mystery of time & memory*  
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Y3ken 1976

HOW TO VIEW DEATH AS A JEW

Our <sup>general</sup> society has taught us to live a lie in the face of death. I mean we have participated in a conspiracy of silence, in a systematic cover up of death as a rock bottom reality in life. There are more euphemisms relating to death and burial than there used to be to see.

We say a person passed on instead of he died  
We pay our last respects in a funeral parlor instead of the grave side

We speak of Memorial gardens or Memorial parks instead of Cemeteries or burial places

When death is likely to occur we whisper the news although it were something indecent and offensive

All this is sharply contrary to the attitude of authentic Judaism

You hippur calls on us to wear white. <sup>there are 2 reasons for it</sup> One reason, and the familiar <sup>one</sup> is to request our stringer purification. Mishal: "If your sins are as scarlet - they shall be whiter than snow"

The other reason, forgotten by most of us, is that white is color of shrouds. In fact Mishal: "You were there killed (which is the shroud) and you are to be mindful of our brief existence on earth and the certainty of death."

5591  
Avisity Jind Soble, a year ago, made 3 suggestions for a more meaningful absence of Y. Hi — and all Senelaw relate to death ~~to~~ but in a meek way but rather in a creative manner which could benefit us in life

(1) As you consider the limited term of life, oh yourself what purposes justify your continued existence. Can you list 10 reasons why I should survive?

1. Because you are a parent needed by children?

2. " are a son or daughter needed by a parent?

3. " needed by spouse?

4. " your work is helpful to others

5. " a friend(s) depends on you

6. " you are doing some good — are you

7. " God may have a reason or purpose for you — are you even mindful of it?

8. Because you enjoy being alive — are you truly grateful to the power that lets you exist

9. " you have not yet developed your best potential — are you still sincerely concerned with self-improvement

10. Because you can correct wrong — first your own wrongs; second, the alleviation of evil & suffering of the world



(2) (2 or 3) few <sup>to have</sup>  
Which words would you wish inscribed  
on <sup>a</sup> your tombstone next to your name?  
What would you identify as your most important  
achievement?

~~Could you claim to be in truth~~  
Are you living the kind of life that would make  
you deserving of the description as  
→ Beloved husband or wife  
→ Cherished father or mother  
Helper of the Needy  
Lover of God  
Loyal son or daughter of Israel  
Dedicated Teacher

(3) What ethical Will would you leave  
behind for your family?

After citing examples: (include David's instruction to Solomon  
to settle old scores)

Which principles have you lived by?  
What work of philanthropy would you wish to have supported in  
your name?

What special values would you want to see strengthened  
by your family?

What advice do you have that would <sup>pass on to your survivors</sup> ~~help~~ the lessons  
of your experience?



1976

# Accountability

{ Do My Own Thing - authentic  
Hang Loose  
Say it like it is

In library of Congress stands a column which is dedicated to Religion.  
When a search was made for a brief statement which might  
be the highest expression of religion, the choice fell on a sentence from  
our Hebrew Bible Psalm 6-8

It has been told you what is good  
and what the Lord requires of you

— only, to do justly, to love mercy and walk

humbly with the Lord your God.  
Penitence confers in the back of your mind. It expresses that  
of André Malraux had entered into an argument about what it takes  
to be a good Jew. In giving his answer, he perhaps could not suppress  
Detect a touch of sin ~~in Malraux~~

It has been told you what God wants of you

~~You know it all about~~  
The problem is not knowing <sup>that</sup> the <sup>highest</sup> ideals are justice, love and  
humbleness before God — but doing so seriously  
living up to these ideals.

① Decalogue speaks to us in singular - ie. The individual is the moral & spiritual nucleus of society

\* MORALITY NOT NATURAL

② Silence of nature when Decalogue was revealed - Why?  
1. Decalogue not natural. Nature stood still

RETREAT

2. Make yourself ~~off~~ first deaf to world - then you'll hear God's voice. Need for retreat from busy market place.

③ Torah was turned down by others who refused to sacrifice their life style

\* SACRIFICE

④ UNIVERSALITY \* Real. given in desert, not land of Israel & proclaimed in 70 different languages.

⑤ The subtitle of Decalogue suggests Why we are to obey: I am the Lord. Out of faith in God

⑥ ACTION, FIRST - then TALK

ראשון מעשה

DECISIVENESS COMMITMENT:  
The imperative to act is first - rationalizing comes later.

⑦ Positive - Negative To say "yes" to some a "No" to other things!

Story of Monument for Danish Resistance "NO"

8) Do - with or without good intent

9) Freedom & Obligation

Life on Narrow Ridge  
Conformity vs Non-Conformity

Is the wild animal that  
tears another apart in ferocity  
free — or rather subject  
to its unmanageable drives?

10) The Need to Sacrifice for Liberty - Pride & Price  
Need to endure.

We want the order & security of lawful life  
but fret when we are curbed by laws that protect us  
(e.g. mandatory seat belts)  
and when free, we suffer because we feel  
unprotected & — illust. Lelyvelt story of  
painting dog who pants with or without load.

11



on Watergate — Was not  
another Seduce & proceed

A prompt & candid confession  
would have changed history  
of us

M. Z. an inability to concede  
mistake even a s.m.

Repentance is the marvelous  
freedom of man to change  
himself & thereby his condition

Don't look back like Lot's wife  
when it's too late . . . . .

Repent or did I feel in reconciliation  
with Esau . . . . . etc .

# High Holidays

1976

Pre-Holiday Service

Should We Establish  
An American Yom Kippur?

Make 3 points:

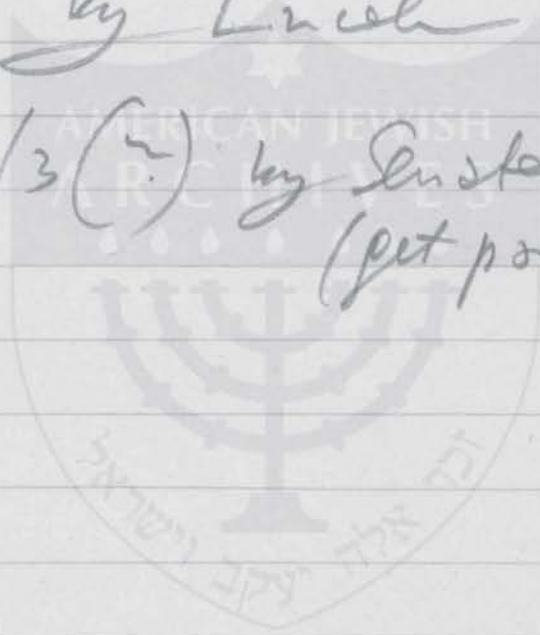
- 1) Need for American Yom Kippur (sense of national guilt is unrelieved)
- 2) Previous attempts to establish American Y.H.

3 times proposal was made:

In 1775 by Adams (A national day of  
contrition & penitence)

In 1863 by Lincoln

In 1972/3 (73) by Sister Hatfield  
(set particulars)



Holiday Sermon: "IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD"

Is. 2.5 ויד' ויכח ויב' יס' אר' ו'א

Let us walk in the light of the Lord

See homiletical application of Isaiah ch. 2  
in "THE PROPHETS" by William G. Chantry  
Abingdon - Chesbury Press p. 36/7

The prosperity which gave Judah a sense of security  
appears quite different as seen by Isaiah "in the light of the Lord"

A shameless materialism  
freed leading to dishonest gain, to the exploitation  
of the poor . . . .

Let us re-examine our prosperity in the light of the Lord

How ambitions have taken a purely materialistic tone  
the day-dream of average person is  
the big house, the luxury automobile

Where is the social idealism <sup>the mid-winter Cruise</sup> of a former generation?  
We work hard - avowedly to raise our families "proper"  
but actually we can't wait to pass on the job of  
child rearing to nannies & nannies & private boarding schools  
to be relieved of responsibility which interferes  
with our pleasure & diversions . . . .



High Holy Day Shema 1976 Rosh Hash: The New Jew  
Y. Kippur: The New Jew  
for Judaism

The Invisible Jew has become  
an mechanism today.

reference (1) Sunday School Lecture of Oct 26, 1975  
(2) The New Jewish Militancy &

New Self. identification of Jews  
is accompanied by a disorientation of  
Jews with the American Dream (struggle!)  
Democracy no presence — art & culture  
Jews, <sup>look to</sup> collective practice of art, physical culture  
— education of children —

The Public School has <sup>JOH</sup> become the Problem School

Yet there culture did not add up  
to mere moral values. The possibility

is arising now that <sup>Western American</sup> culture for from re. influence  
may be destructive of our  
High Intellectuals — Ethical action vs  
Biblicalness in Marriage — opportunities  
The Family Bond — A Sewer Community  
attitude vs the Pleasant cult

Are Jews coming to see that  
our values and those of the  
majority are coming apart?

Is there developing now a  
Swish Rejection Front?

Why am I hung up on being a  
"Kensch"?

The Jew is returning to  
himself because he is rediscovering  
that

Dear Fellow Congregants,

ROSH-HASH MESSAGE 1976

When I was installed as your Vice-President I read this beautiful message on the affirmation of life by Davis and Ratner. There were many requests for it then. I would like to share it with you now.

## Affirmation of Life

from "Birthday of the World" by Davis & Ratner

A human life is like a single letter in an alphabet.

It can be meaningless  
Or it can be part of a great meaning.  
And we do not want to be meaningless.

How, then, do we find meaning?  
We may look at such things  
As power, money, the great and special talents of the artist, the scientist, the statesman.  
And always we will see someone who has more power, more money, more talent than we have.  
Do we then say: "His life has more meaning than mine?"

If we do, we have made a familiar mistake.

We have forgotten the profound democracy of Creation  
in which the deepest delights the most enduring meanings of our life come to us from the things all of us are given  
not from those only a few are given.

For all of us are given these things:  
We have been given life itself:  
the edifice of our body and mind  
our senses and spirit.  
No two of us are alike yet each of us has the awareness of being made in the image of God.

We have been given the talent to love:  
the gift of sharing ourselves with others of belonging to them, living on in them:  
the capacity to love and receive love.

We have been given the talent to serve:  
the talent to seek out the needs of others  
without seeking reward,  
to know the delight which comes from the act of service itself.

These delights are the birthright and inheritance of each of us.

They are so close to us we often fail to see them.  
And often we seek them where they are not.

Yet always they are waiting for us to claim them,  
to take possession of the gifts of life. They are given to us freely.  
And we are always free to reach for them.

When we do we find the way to the fullest meaning in our lives  
and to a oneness with God  
Who endowed all men with these gifts which endure forever.

May the coming year bring to you and yours all the blessings of health, joy, happiness and peace.

Shalom, L'shanah Tovah

*Henrietta Chernie*

President



Introduction To Kol Nidde Night Service

Oct 5, 1976

A short story tells of a lady and her 6 year old son walking through a crowded dept store. Suddenly, <sup>a voice over</sup> the loud-speaker announces that a very little boy had lost his mother and that the boy did not <sup>even</sup> know his name.

When hearing this, the 6 year old boy, pressed his mother's hand and looked up to her with a big <sup>somewhat triumphant</sup> smile

— as though to say: "I know my name. I would not be lost"

Every Jew on Kol Nidde night is pressing the arm of his people. We are not nameless. We have the oldest continuous sense of identity of any people in Western World.

In tonight's service, we underscored symbolically the unity and equality of all Jews. The rabbis, cantor and some of the officers of the Congregation entered through the same door as everyone else, in keeping with the idea that we are equals in our moral delinquency, equals in the need to ~~purge~~ <sup>purge</sup> ourselves of guilt, equals in our yearning for forgiveness, equals as petitioners who come in from the outside, so to speak, eager to return, to be received into the brotherhood of Israel.