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ROSH HASHANAH - DRAFT #1

Exactly 15 years ago, prior to my first Rosh Hashanah service in Washington, a number of our members were kind enough to welcome us as newcomers. We received many greeting cards and letters of congratulations and good wishes upon assuming my duties as the new Rabbi of WHC.

I responded to everyone of these messages with the following brief note:

JOSHUA O. HABERMAN, D. H. L.  
Rabbi

Rosh Hashanah 5730 - 1969

My dear New Friends:

Facing Rosh Hashanah, we are all newcomers, all beginners, on the newest stretch of life's journey, equally subject to the surprising turns of the unknown, for health or sickness, for joy or sorrow, for better or worse.

May our merciful Father so deal with us that ~~Israel's faith in the~~ triumph of goodness over evil be justified.

May the new year be a year of peace and plenty, a blessed year, for you and your loved ones.

A few days later, one of my reply letters was returned to me by a past president of our Congregation with an objection to one sentence in the later. He encircled the words: "May our merciful Father so deal with us," and scribbled the following comment on the margin:

"Part of the old ritual taboo, many of us no longer accept or believe in."

Well, this comment showed me right away that there was a job cut for me here at WHC.

I am certain that the gentleman with whom later on I became quite friendly was not alone in his religious scruples. He was just more blunt than most others about his ~~dis~~ beliefs which are central in Judaism and provide the rationale for worship.

If we classified all those who are here tonight according to their real motivation for attending this service, we would find a divided house or, if you will, a pluralistic constituency.

Most of us would give reasons such as:

"I am here because I want to publicly affirm my Jewish identify, at least once a year."

Others would add:

"I observe the High Holy Days because I like the togetherness with my family and friends."

How many of us are here primarily for strictly religious reasons? How many of us are not just mumbling these prayers but saying them with conviction in the belief that our lives and fortunes are subject to a higher power? How many of us truly believe that it is important to communicate with this power, or with God, and <sup>how many believe that we may</sup> ~~to~~ derive significant benefits therefrom?

I have no idea how many would make such claims but my best guess is that only a minority would affirm a strictly religious motivation for the observance of this Holy Day.

For those who do not share these beliefs, rituals of submission and prayers are at best ~~polite~~ expressions of courtesy to our tradition. For them the prayer part of this night could never be too short, although a good many find it tolerable or pleasant enough because of the aesthetics -- the beautiful phrases and the emotionally moving, soothing and often stirring music.

I suppose there are quite a few in our Congregation tonight who recited before dinner this evening the Shechayyanu blessing, thanking God for keeping us alive, sustaining us and bringing us unto this day. Dipping apple slices into honey, we wished one another "Shanah Tovah Umetukah," the traditional New Year's salutation, <sup>which</sup> President Regan with ~~some~~ valor and dexterity mixed into his address before the International Conference of B'nai B'rith a few weeks ago.

Now, stop and think, be honest: Do you really believe that a higher will, God's will, prevails in the world? That you personally owe your life to God and that your survival depends on him?

There is no need to prove that only a fraction of our Congregation takes this belief seriously. The majority demonstrate their disbelief by year-round absence from the synagogue and the neglect of the prayer tradition and the blessings at home and in daily private life.

Occasionally a sympathetic friend will ask me: "Isn't it depressing for a Rabbi to face a congregation most of whom are neither religious believers nor practitioners?"

My response is:

"It's more of a challenge than a cause for depression, a challenge which must not be ignored tonight."

A recent nationwide Gallup Poll on the importance of religion in the lives of Catholics, Protestants and Jews showed Jews, all Jews, Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, at the bottom of the scale with only 25% of our people crediting religion with being a major influence in their lives. This Gallup Poll is both revealing and misleading.

It is revealing insofar as it points up a sharp difference in the way Christians and Jews perceive their identity. But it is misleading in suggesting that Jews care little about their Jewishness.

That is really not so. The fact that must be borne in mind when looking at some comparative religious statistics is that Judaism, being much more complex than Christianity, permits Jews to relate to their people in several different ways.

If a Christian wants to identify himself as a Christian, he has only one way to do so, that is, affiliate with the Church. Therefore, Christians perceive themselves primarily as religious believers and in statistic rate high in this respect. Jews, on the other hand, have various options in asserting their Jewishness. To the majority of Jews, Judaism is most meaningful as an ethnic belonging. Others see their Judaism primarily as a distinctive moral value system rather than a religious commitment. If the Gallup Poll had asked Jewish respondents whether being Jewish was important to them, with an opportunity of checking out either of the following responses:

"It is important for me, as a Jew, to identify with Israel;" or,

"It's important for me to maintain social and organizational ties with other Jews;" or,

"It is important for me to make a significant charitable contribution to my community;" or,

"It is important for me, as a Jew, to practice my religion through study, prayer and ritual;"

chances are that the overwhelming majority of Jews would have

indicated the importance of their Jewishness in <sup>at least</sup> one or the other category, <sup>which after adding it all up would</sup> indicating a very high level of attachment to <sup>one or the other</sup> ~~the various~~ dimensions of Judaism.

Still, it is a fact that the strictly religious dimension of Judaism plays a relatively minor role in the life of the majority of our people. Why so?

I used to think that Jews, being a very intellectual segment of the population, were negatively affected by the skeptical spirit in the academic world of the campus community. This may have been true 40 to 50 years ago. But, it no longer holds true today. One by one, the objections to religious faith of an earlier stage of popular science have been dropped. Today, the predominant mood of the scientific world is either neutral or very open and hospitable to religious ideas. The internationally recognized astro-physicist, Robert Jastrow, ended an address to the Academy of Science with these words:

"After the scientists climbed to the very top of the mountains of their ignorance -- they found the theologians waiting for them there."

Astronomers, space scientists, physicists, and social scientists, especially sociologists, historians and therapists, have come to realize that science and religion refer to the same realities with different terms. Not all, but many of the world's leading scientists in all fields now embrace core beliefs of the major religions.

(transcendence and expect a moral renewal based upon that belief.)

The tide has turned long ago from atheism or agnosticism in the scientific world to a respectful exploration of religious belief as underlying or complimenting our knowledge of the physical world.

Why are we Jews, in this age of ~~the~~ return to religion, so much slower in the recovery of our religious faith?

We cannot yet speak of a mass movement back to Judaism as a religion, but with us, too, the tide is turning and a new spirit of faith has arisen. However, there is a big difference in the Christian and Jewish return to religion. Jews are coming back to religion not as a result of fiery sermons. We need something much stronger to turn us on. History has proven again and again, what we are seeing right now happening in America and Israel: Jews in ever-increasing numbers are now finding their way back to faith in the old, old way of Torah.



(9/21/84)

ROSH HASHANAH SERMON

For many centuries, until quite recently, the ten days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur were called not High Holy Days but Yamim Nora-im, Days of Awe, or Days of Fear. Such a designation is all but incomprehensible to the average Jew today. My grandmother still repeated the old Jewish proverb that starting one month before Rosh Hashanah even the fish in the water begin to tremble.

The modern Jew may feel a certain excitement in welcoming Rosh Hashanah -- but fear or awe? What for?

I would like to explain to you why a certain measure of fear and trembling is, indeed, appropriate for this night.

We celebrate Rosh Hashanah as the beginning of a New Year. Every beginning gives us a happy feeling: We are here, we made it. But it also raises questions about the ending. What begins must ends. Although we hope to be here again next year, no one can be sure.

This is unsettling when you stop to think about it. We don't like to be confronted with a situation out of our control and the extension of life is very much out of our hands. It is enough to ~~shack~~ us out of apathy, enough to ruffle our composure, our self-assurance, our take-it-all-for-granted attitude with which we

ordinarily live out our days. We go from one day to the next without much concern until the shock of an accident, illness or so-called "close call" reminds us of our uncertain hold on life -- enough to give us a little tremor of fear trembling.

It would help us get into the proper moods for the real message of Rosh Hashanah if we sent each other not only cheerful New Year's greeting messages such as "May you be inscribed in the book of life for a New Year of health, wealth and happiness" -- but also the actuary tables from our insurance company which would tell us that our probable life expectancy has been reduced by one year from last Rosh Hashanah to this. A wit once suggested that we should reverse our method of counting birthdays. When you are 20 don't say, "I'm 20 years old but rather say, I have another 55 more years to go." When you're 40, say there are 35 more years to go; at 60, count on 15 more years or, as the 90th Psalm says, "By reason of strength four score years," that is, you might reach 80 years of life.

This way of counting would inspire sobering thoughts, most of all, the idea that time is running out. It's a little scary but realistic and helpful.

How would it be helpful? The philosopher, Bertrand Russell, remembers, in his autobiography (page 30) how, as a child growing up in his family's aristocratic estate, he was taken to a

neighborly estate to see Sir Moses Montefiore, an old and very much revered Jew, intimate friend of Queen Victoria. This financier had amassed a considerable fortune by the time he reached his forties and, contemplating the diminishing years ahead, retired from business to devote the remainder of his life with all of his wealth and talents to help people all over the world wherever there was need.

Sir Moses Montefiore, it is said, had a butler who was instructed by his master to knock on his door every hour and say with<sup>a</sup> lugubrious voice: "Sir Moses Montefiore, another hour of your life has passed."

It kept Sir Montefiore on his toes and certainly did not hurt him because the old gentleman reached the age of 103.

Thinking about the swift passage of time and the limit each of us is inevitably approaching, will help us better appreciate a startling statement by Jeremiah:

"Thus says the Lord:

Let not the learned glory in his learning,  
Neither let the mighty glory in his might,  
Let not the rich glory in his riches;  
But let him that glories glory in this,  
That he understands and knows Me,  
That I am the Lord who acts with mercy,  
justice and righteousness in the earth;

For in these things I delight,  
Says the Lord." (Jer. 9.22-23)

Jeremiah's statement flies in the face of most everyone's working philosophy in the Western world and especially in America. He somewhat belittles what most of us have been pursuing energetically as the most widely accepted formula of success: intellect, money, and power.

When we are young our best energies are devoted to our education, to intellectual growth and the acquisition of professional know-how.

Then, comes our career, largely aiming at financial independence and, if possible, wealth.

By middle-age, many of us concentrate on status, influence and some clout of power in the community.

Why should we listen to Jeremiah's negative assessment of these goals?

"Let not the learned glory in his learning,  
Neither let the mighty glory in his might,  
Let not the rich glory in his riches. . ."

Jeremiah was an upper class person of aristocratic standing. He was born into a noble family of priests; he had wealth; he was

a frequent guest in the palace and he was a prophet of high intellectual power. Why would he downgrade those very values or qualities, or attainments which are of such obvious benefit? Please note, Jeremiah is not rejecting these values altogether. What he is saying is that there other things even more important in life:

"But let him that glories glory in this,  
That he understands and knows Me,  
That I am the Lord who acts with mercy,  
Justice and righteousness in the earth;  
For in these things I delight,  
Says the Lor." (Jer. 9.22-23)

I am well aware of the fact that I am addressing, tonight, people most of whom have been practically addicted to the very values Jeremiah is telling us that they should not be our top priority. You may not be convinced by my argument, but I shall ask you to at least consider it:

We Americans are, without doubt, the best educated, most powerful and wealthiest nation on earth. How much peace of mind, how much security, how much contentment do we enjoy?

We have the highest rate of violent crime of any major nation; the largest percentage of broken families; 60% of babies born in the U.S. are illegitimate; and nearly one-third of known pregnancies were aborted in 1981 and 1982. A vast number of our people are

in mental institutions or private therapy. Drug addiction and alcoholism are epidemic, hypertension, anxiety and depression afflict countless others.

If anyone seriously assumed that if we had more money in our pockets, more college degrees displayed on our walls and more material benefits of every kind, the social and moral decay of our society would stop and the level of general happiness reach greater heights?

Sometimes children see a truth more clearly than sophisticated adults. A Jewish summer camp newspaper edited by the children recently came into my hands. I spotted two poems by teenage girls which were remarkably alike in their perception of an American characteristic:

"People, people, people,  
All going somewhere --  
In a hurry.  
If they would all  
Stop  
And look around  
They might realize  
That  
Life is too short  
To waste,  
Running." (Abby Breslow)

Now listen to the second poem:

"Run and run  
and never try  
To face yourself  
Or know your mind.  
Walk and walk,  
Or sit in calm,  
You'll still be there.  
You were before.  
Yesterday and tomorrow  
Are all the same  
As today  
Where you are,  
You'll stay there,  
And never try  
To face yourself  
Or know your mind.  
Just run and run." (Erica Lerner)

Both children reflect a restlessness in our lifestyle. Everybody is in a hurry with lots of busyness, on which the first girl comments: "Life is too short, to waste, running." In the absence of higher meaning or purpose there is the feeling of life going to waste. All too familiar to psychiatrists is the phenomenon of high-powered achievers thinking into depression about the

pointlessness of their existence. What is lacking in their life? What conveys to them the feeling of having wasted life?

The other girl's poem also perceives life as a race but it isn't getting anywhere. There doesn't seem to be a goal -- it is "run and run" like on a treadmill without provision, as she puts it, "To face yourself, or know your mind," -- just "run and run."

These children are recording with prophetic clarity the inner emptiness which afflicts the lives of adults as well as youth.

A few months ago I happened to tune in on an interview of Tom Landry, the famous coach of the Dallas Cowboys. His team had won two out of 15 super bowl games and played in 17 out of 18 play-offs. In the world of sports, that's success! Yet, said Tom Landry, that despite these spectacular achievements, he always felt an emptiness after every victory until he once listened to a Bible reading which included this sentence:

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and all else will be given unto you."

It made him think and then his chronic restlessness and unease ceased when he realized that there was something higher than his work, wealth and success and in submission to that



higher power, the emptiness within vanished.

Is not this the very point Jeremiah is trying to make? Learning, riches and power will not avail unless you seek, above all, to understand and know God.

To understand and know God? A national Jewish magazine in its current lead article says flatly:

"One of the central problems in Jewish life today is that we have, to a large degree, lost the inner life, the development of personal spirituality and a way to share it with others."

Most Jews who are highly articulate about every topic under the sun are embarrassed to talk about their inner world of beliefs. They're embarrassed to ask questions about the purpose of life and death; They're embarrassed to speculate aloud about the possibilities of a life hereafter; they're embarrassed to talk about the soul, about God and certainly they are too tongue-tied to talk to God.

How do you get to know God? There is a tendency among the alienated and secularized to over romanticize the discovery of God. They think it's comparable to the mystique of falling in love. They imagine that religious faith comes to us mostly in a secluded setting at a mountain top or a quiet lakeside. I want to tell you

that God can become just as real to you right here and now. Begin with the most obvious truth which is underscored on Rosh Hashanah: Many of us, prior to dinner this evening followed the old Jewish custom of dipping a slice of apple into honey and reciting the Shecheyanu blessing: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Thou has kept us alive, sustained us and brought us unto this day." This, my friends, is the heart of the Rosh Hashanah message: You, yourself, your life, this world -- all of it is given. It is the giving of everything you see.

What ever is, yourself included, need not exist, but you do exist. This life wasn't your idea. You were put into it. Think of what or who it is that wanted you to be. It's that very same power that also wanted your parents to be and your ancestor all the way back to the beginning of all things.

Rosh Hashanah connects the whole universe -- every part of it with the beginning of time and the Creator of it all. Never forget that the Jewish calendar begins with the date of creation. We do not now have this creature feeling, this absolute certainty that you owe your existence and therefore an account unto a higher will and power, you haven't begun to observe Rosh Hashanah.

Our tradition makes the point graphically with the allegory of the book of life in which your name is inscribed, --"if for life you will live; and if for death, you will die." In other words, it isn't up to us. We are dependent upon the powers other than our own for life and cannot by our own volition of power prevent death.

This is the first step. It may not yet bring you to God, but it should dislodge any illusions you may have in your head about powers of self-determination. It should cut us all down to size. Was Jeremiah perhaps right in proposing that we not exaggerate our cleverness, our learning, the importance of our power or wealth because we and all we have are like a passing cloud?

There is a second step. What do you think is the purpose of the shofar sound? Rabbinic law makes this the absolute minimal requirement for the observance of Rosh Hashanah -- namely, to actually hear the sound of the shofar. What does it represent?

It is symbolic of a voice other than our own to which we must listen. One of the great prayers our Rosh Hashanah service explains the shofar as a reminder of the voice which was heard at Mount Sinai, the voice the Decalogue, the voice that revealed the Torah to our people.

The Jew who wants to know God and understand God as Jeremiah

asked us to do, will want to hear the echo of that voice in the Torah, in our Bible. One hour of Bible study will bring God closer to you than ten hours at the mountain top or lakeside looking for inspiration.



## "TO REPLENISH OUR SPIRITS"

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
(Rosh Hashanah, 1984)

Marked  
Corrected  
(9/25)

We are not in any way diminishing the importance to us of this Rosh Hashanah if we acknowledge that for ninety thousand Washingtonians the big Yom Tov was last Friday and Saturday night <sup>at</sup> People are still ecstatic about it, Michael Jackson's concert. Many who stayed in line for hours or paid a month's salary <sup>for tickets and sacred objects such as the glove that glitters</sup> ~~to take their family to the concert~~ came out <sup>of the concert</sup> as though they had been through a religious experience. It made me think of my own, one-and-only, religious experience triggered by a popular song. I can no longer remember the singing star who led this song to first place in the hit parade. I have long forgotten the lyrics of the song but not the title: "Open the Door Richard." The constant repetition of that one line, "Open the Door Richard," when I first heard it, made me realize how many doors were opened for me from childhood on: parents who held my hand as I ventured my first few steps; my grandmother who first opened for me the door to religious faith; teachers who opened up many mansions of knowledge; my aunt in Brooklyn with whom I had never even corresponded, whose affidavit opened to me the door of freedom in America; friends who opened gates of happiness; strangers who opened doors of opportunity. There have been hundreds, if not thousands, of doors which were opened for me often by unknown, invisible hands.

I am certain this holds true of every person. All throughout your life, all kinds of people have been standing at <sup>some</sup> a door ~~allowing or~~ encouraging you to pass through, toward <sup>new</sup> some benefit or growth experience, ~~which was waiting~~ ~~for you.~~

Tonight, in a supreme sense, God is opening the door for all of us, the door to another year of life. Here it is. It's yours, a gift for which you paid nothing.

There is only one trouble with this gift of life. It need not be continued or renewed -- and it can be cancelled any time. This explains the mingled mood of joy and anxiety with which we celebrate this holy season.

We celebrate Rosh Hashanah as the beginning of a New Year. Every beginning gives us a happy feeling: We are here, we made it. But it also raises questions about the ending. What begins must end. Although we hope to be here again next year, no one can be sure.

This is unsettling. It is enough to shake us out of apathy, enough to ruffle our composure, our self-assurance, our take-it-all-for-granted attitude. We go from one day to the next, without much concern, until the shock of an accident, illness or a so-called "close call" reminds us of our uncertain hold on life -- enough to give us a little tremor of fear and trembling. Will it also give us some wisdom and help straighten out our priorities?

We send each other ~~cheerful~~ cheerful New Year's greetings such as "May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a New Year of health, wealth and happiness." It would help us get <sup>a more balanced view of the human condition</sup> ~~into the proper mood for the real message of~~ <sup>received out</sup> ~~Rosh Hashanah~~ if we also ~~got the~~ <sup>the</sup> actuary tables from ~~our~~ insurance

company which would tell us that our life expectancy has just been reduced by one year from last Rosh Hashanah to this. <sup>P</sup>A wit once suggested that we should reverse our method of counting birthdays. When you are 20 don't say, "I'm 20 years old but rather say, I have 55 more years to go." When you're 40, say there are 35 more years to go, and so on; when you celebrate birthdays, don't add up years, but make          a count down! ↻

This way of counting would inspire sobering thoughts, most of all, the idea that time is running out. It's a little scary but realistic and helpful.

How would it be helpful?

Many of us have suffered bereavement during this year. Some mourn for a son or daughter, perhaps the most painful loss of them all. "If a parent dies," it has been wisely said, "You have lost your past but; if a child dies, you have lost your future." Maxine and I lost four family members this year. This <sup>Succession</sup> ~~session~~ of death has <sup>shaken</sup> ~~shook~~ us up. It made us realize more sharply than ever that very few things in life really matter. I challenge you: Do you remember what you did yesterday or last week? Now, make a mental list of the things you worried, <sup>or</sup> ~~argued~~, got excited about; think of arguments or quarrels you had; try to remember the various little setbacks or petty concerns, delays, disappointments or frustrations which infuriated you and spoiled your day. In all probability not one of them was worth the emotional, and mental strain of your reaction. Most likely, in another day or so, whatever happened yesterday or last week won't make a bit of difference

in your life.

Think now of the absolute essentials without which you couldn't live. They are very, very few: health, shelter, food, clothes, a living income and a few people you care about and who care about you. These few things you must have. Everything else is of a much lower priority, ~~and~~<sup>M</sup> most of the things we fret about are ~~really~~ totally unimportant in the long run.

Sometimes children see a truth more clearly than sophisticated adults. A Jewish summer camp newspaper edited by the children recently came into my hands. I spotted two poems by teenage girls remarkably alike in their perception of an American characteristic. The first by Abby Breslow:

"People, people, people,  
All going somewhere --  
In a hurry.  
If they would all  
Stop  
And look around  
They might realize  
That  
Life is too short  
To waste,  
Running." (Abby Breslow)



Now listen to the second poem by Erica Lerner:

'Run and run  
and never try  
To face yourself  
Or know your mind.  
Walk and walk,  
Or sit in calm,  
You'll still be there.  
You were before.  
Yesterday and tomorrow  
Are all the same  
As today  
Where you are,  
You'll stay there,  
And never try  
To face yourself  
Or know your mind.  
Just run and run." (Erica Lerner)



Both children <sup>express the</sup> ~~reflect~~ a <sup>to</sup> ~~a~~ restlessness <sup>of</sup> ~~in~~ our lifestyle. Everybody is in a hurry, with lots of busyness, a fact on which the first girl comments: "Life is too short, to waste, running." In the absence of higher meaning or purpose, there is the feeling of life going to waste. All too familiar ~~to~~ ~~psychiatrists~~ is the phenomenon of high-powered achievers sinking into

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depression about the pointlessness of their existence. What is lacking in their life? What conveys to them the feeling of having wasted life?

The other girl's poem also perceives life as a race and it isn't getting anywhere. There doesn't seem to be a goal -- it is "run and run" like on a treadmill, without provision, as she puts it, "To face yourself, or know your mind," -- just "run and run."

These children are recording with prophetic clarity the inner emptiness which afflicts the lives of adults as well as youth.

Most of those who get caught up in the frenzy of ambition and materialistic obsessions are not even aware of their folly. I wonder how you reacted to the story in the Sunday paper a few weeks ago about a Jewish couple, Barry and Renee Trupin in Long Island? This couple have been embroiled four long years in a bitter litigation with the Village Council of Southampton over violation of the building code. The couple set out to build the most expensive house ever in the history of New York state, a \$25 million dollar castle by the sea, with 63 rooms <sup>and</sup> with gothic towers and a 30-foot waterfall cascading into an indoor pool. <sup>Among</sup> ~~Only one of~~ the medieval decorations in this castle is <sup>one</sup> ~~a~~ suit of armor, which was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Trupin for \$3.2 million dollars. Their home, <sup>which many would call</sup> ~~which by whatever description we have~~ ~~is a true~~ monstrosity, is fittingly named "Dragon Head."

True, they can afford everything they are doing, including a fleet of 7 Rolls Royces. But, isn't it a pity that this 48-year old business genius, Barry Trupin who, in less than 10 years made a fortune of \$300 million dollars in the computer business, has found nothing better to do with his cleverness and wealth?

I wondered what I would say to him if I met him face-to-face. I would say: "Mr. Trupin, imagine you have only one more year to live;-would you really give your all to "Dragon Head?" After your death, in all likelihood, everything you put into "Dragon Head" ~~at such enormous expense~~ will be disposed of in an auction at maybe one-tenth the price you paid. Instead of filling your house with expensive junk, shouldn't you furnish your mind with a philosophy of life? Think of the good things you could do for your people and mankind? Don't you want to be remembered as a benefactor?

It's a good question to ask yourself: What if I had only one more year to live? What would I single out <sup>special attention in</sup> for those precious few months? What would be worth spending my time and energy on?

If you have some wealth and want to dedicate it to a noble purpose -- have you ever wondered what is the most good that could be done with your money? What is the best you can do with your time? How can you employ your talents and your mind for the greatest benefit of yourself, your family and your fellowman? So, what would you do with yourself if you had only one more year to live?

I have a sneaking suspicion that very few ~~X~~ among us could answer that question. Why not? Because we are caught unprepared. We haven't taken the time ever to sort out our priorities. We are busy chasing tinsel. We <sup>are</sup> absorbed by our petty preoccupations and, as the teenage poet suggested, "Much too busy running, running and running, to face ourselves and know our mind."

*This year, the inventor of a new adult game really made a hit. People went from store to store to buy it and were turned away. The game - you guessed it -*  
~~The most popular game around these days is called, "Trivial Pursuits," --~~  
exactly what most <sup>of</sup> our lives are all about: <sup>trivial pursuits.</sup> We haven't even time to ask life's big questions, let alone to come up with well thought <sup>out</sup> ~~through~~ answers.

Most Jews are, actually, embarrassed to talk about their ~~the~~ inner world of beliefs. <sup>We are</sup> They're embarrassed to ask questions about the purpose of life and death; <sup>we're</sup> they're embarrassed to speculate aloud about the possibilities of ~~a~~ life hereafter; <sup>we</sup> they're embarrassed to talk about the soul and about God. Many are even embarrassed to pray. <sup>More than once I've been called by members in great excitement asking:</sup> They'd die if at a civic organization meeting they <sup>Robbi, give me a prayer, quick!</sup> were suddenly asked to offer a spontaneous prayer! How do you get to know

~~God?~~

How do you get to know God? There is a tendency among the alienated and secularized to over-romanticize the discovery of God. They think it's comparable to the mystique of falling in love. They imagine that religious faith comes to us mostly in a secluded setting, at a mountain top or a quiet lakeside. I want to tell you that God can become just as real to you right

here and now, if you ~~truly~~ want this to happen. *Some wonder: Isn't prayer just a monologue? Am I not talking to myself? Why don't I feel a response from God? God ~~sends~~ a message continuously, but we are not always receptive. Think of a broadcasting station which broadcasts its program over a wide area, but only those receive it who have their sets attuned in the right channel. Similarly in prayer we must properly prepare our mental receiving sets and attune our minds before we can receive God's signals. There is a whole branch of Jewish learning entirely devoted to the art and method of effective prayer. If you, too, want to grow in your prayer experience, join our Spiritual Fellowship which will soon resume their early Wed. morning sessions.*

Begin, as a first step, with the most obvious truth which is underscored on Rosh Hashanah: This life wasn't your idea. You were put into it.

Rosh Hashanah, the anniversary of the creation of the world, connects the whole universe, every part of it, with the Creator. You, too, should now feel connected. Don't you feel some kind of link or relationship with the Creator? Don't you have a ~~certain creature~~ feeling, the absolute certainty that you owe your existence to a higher will and power?

The vast majority of Jews, at least in this Congregation, are neither firmly committed believers nor convinced atheists. The vast majority, I find, ~~believe~~, are fence-sitters in religion, vague, uncertain, really not acquainted with the reasoning or the philosophy undergirding Jewish beliefs:

"Run, and run  
And never try to  
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Most of us are too busy with other things to get to the bottom of basic questions about life. A philosophy of life? A system of beliefs? Our ground for moral conviction? These things cannot be answered on the spot. You cannot have an intellectual, moral or spiritual capital on which to draw if you have made no deposits of time and thought for such purposes in the past.

I don't want to scold you for the neglect of the past, but rather challenge you to <sup>add a spiritual dimension to your life</sup> live differently in the future. The spiritual resources are available to you: the Bible which you have not studied, the master works of brilliant sages and philosophers, which remain unknown to you and ~~the~~ ~~spiritual life~~ of meditation and prayer, which you never really ~~troubled~~ <sup>bothered</sup> yourself to experience in the privacy of your home:

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The problem is not only lack of time because of "Trivial Pursuits," but intentional neglect. We are actually running away from our inner life.

#### Appeal

I am impressed by people of all ages who tell me about their physical fitness program, -- how they <sup>watch their diet: low cholesterol, high potassium, low salt, high calcium</sup> keep to a certain diet, and how they would let <sup>low animal fat, high protein, etc.</sup> nothing stand in the way of their daily jogging routine, their calisthenics, aerobics, their regular 30 laps in the swimming pool, or two hours of tennis twice a week. They proudly point to visible benefits of this physical exercise program.

Why is it so difficult to convince <sup>our people</sup> ~~them~~ also of the need for a regular ~~exercise program?~~ <sup>spiritual discipline?</sup> Why is it so difficult to set aside one hour of soul-

cleansing, prayer and Bible study a day and, if not daily, then at least twice or even once a week? The Bible is not a book to read but to study, to discuss sentence by sentence, with study companions and a teacher. I am happy that we've had something like an explosion of interest in such Bible study here at Temple with some 300 adults attending either our Wed. Bible Class or E.T., Early Torah Sessions on Saturday.

Physical neglect becomes obvious very soon. Believe me, spiritual neglect, likewise, becomes obvious. It manifests itself in any number of ways -- chronic worry, ~~the~~ loss of purpose, ~~abiding discontent~~ <sup>boredom</sup>, indecision, ~~#~~ permanent discontent, all sorts of excessive fears, even deep depressions, -- these are among the symptoms of the spiritual wasteland people carry within.

But I'm unhappy when I consider that over 3000 adults in our Congregation are total drop-outs from Jewish learning. Return to our precious legacy this year! Join any of the hundreds of Jewish study opportunities in the wider community and at every local university. Private Jewish study circles are mushrooming all over for men and women who are tired of wasting their minds on card games. <sup>Conclusion</sup> As a real turn-on I suggest you listen to Abba Eban's 10 part TV series on Public TV (Channel 26 beginning this Monday night at 9PM) a panorama of the Jewish experience and civilization!

For 98 years a giant statue, 151 feet high, holding a torch aloft has been standing on Liberty Island to welcome millions of immigrants and visitors. Of course this is the Statue of Liberty, known throughout the world as a symbol of the American dream of freedom. As seen from the outside, the Statue of Liberty gives the impression of colossal solidity and strength. However, the National Park Service announced that the Statue of Liberty is in grave danger of collapse because the invisible support structure has corroded. Emergency repairs are now underway at a cost of \$30 million dollars to save the Statue of Liberty by ~~erecting a new~~ <sup>rebuilding its</sup> internal support structure.

This should be a lesson to every person. Unless we are undergirded internally by a sound moral and spiritual support system, our external achievements are in grave danger of collapse. Little good will come from your success, from your career, from your financial power and social status in the community if you have no faith, no strong beliefs and no deeply rooted moral principles to uphold you from within.

Do not delay your spiritual repair work. ~~If you have suffered some moral and spiritual corrosion,~~ rebuild your internal support system through the uplifting words of God in our scriptures and the soul-cleansing habit of prayer. Amen.





"TO REPLENISH OUR SPIRITS"

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

Rosh Hashanah, September 27, 1984  
(1 Tishri, 5745)

Final Draft  
9/27/84

We are not in any way diminishing the importance to us of this Rosh Hashanah if we acknowledge that for ninety thousand Washingtonians the big Yom Tov was last Friday and Saturday night at Michael Jackson's concert. People are still ecstatic about it. Many who stayed in line for hours or paid a month's salary for tickets and sacred objects, such as the glove that glitters, came out of the concert as though they had been through a religious experience. It made me think of my own, one-and-only religious experience triggered by a popular song. I can no longer remember the singing star who led this song to first place in the hit parade. I have long forgotten the lyrics of the song but not the title: "Open the Door Richard." The constant repetition of that one line, "Open the Door Richard," when I first heard it, made me realize how many doors were opened for me from childhood on: parents who held my hand as I ventured my first few steps; my grandmother who first opened for me the door to religious faith; teachers who opened up many mansions of knowledge; my aunt in Brooklyn with whom I had never even corresponded, whose affidavit opened to me the door of freedom in America; friends who opened gates of happiness; strangers who opened doors of opportunity. There have been hundreds, if not thousands, of doors which were opened for me, often by unknown, invisible hands.

I am certain this holds true of every person. All throughout your life, all kinds of people have been standing at some door encouraging you to pass through, toward some new benefit or growth experience.

Tonight, in a supreme sense, God is opening the door for all of us, the door to another year of life. Here it is. It's yours, a gift for which you paid nothing.

There is only one trouble with this gift of life. It need not be continued or renewed -- and it can be cancelled any time. This explains the mingled mood of joy and anxiety with which we celebrate this holy season.

We celebrate Rosh Hashanah as the beginning of a New Year. Every beginning gives us a happy feeling: We are here, we made it. But it also raises questions about the ending. What begins must end. Although we hope to be here again next year, no one can be sure.

This is unsettling. It is enough to shake us out of apathy, enough to ruffle our composure, our self-assurance, our take-it-all-for-granted attitude. We go from one day to the next, without much concern, until the shock of an accident, illness or a so-called "close call" reminds us of our uncertain hold on life -- enough to give us a little tremor of fear and trembling. Will it also give us some wisdom and help straighten out our priorities?

We send each other cheerful New Year's greetings such as "May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a New Year of health, wealth and happiness." It would help us get a more balanced view of the human

condition if we also received our actuary tables from the insurance company which would tell us that our life expectancy has just been reduced by one year from last Rosh Hashanah to this.

A wit once suggested that we should reverse our method of counting birthdays. When you are 20 don't say, "I'm 20 years old but rather say, I have 55 more years to go." When you're 40, say there are 35 more years to go, and so on; when you celebrate birthdays, don't add up years, but make -- a count down! This way of counting would inspire sobering thoughts, most of all, the idea that time is running out. It's a little scary but realistic and helpful.

How would it be helpful?

Many of us have suffered bereavement during this year. Some mourn for a son or daughter, perhaps the most painful loss of them all. "If a parent dies," it has been wisely said, "You have lost your past but; if a child dies, you have lost your future." Maxine and I lost four family members this year. This succession of death has shaken us up. It made us realize more sharply than ever that very few things in life really matter. I challenge you: Do you remember what you did yesterday or last week? Now, make a mental list of the things you worried, or argued, got excited about; think of arguments or quarrels you had; try to remember the various little setbacks or petty concerns, delays, disappointments or frustrations which infuriated you and spoiled your day. In all probability not one of them was worth the

emotional and mental strain of your reaction. Most likely, in another day or so, whatever happened yesterday or last week won't make a bit of difference in your life.


Think now of the absolute essentials without which you couldn't live. They are very, very few: health, shelter, food, clothes, a living income and a few people you care about and who care about you. These few things you must have. Everything else is of a much lower priority. Most of the things we fret about are totally unimportant in the long run.

Sometimes children see a truth more clearly than sophisticated adults. A Jewish summer camp newspaper edited by the children recently came into my hands. I spotted two poems by teenage girls remarkably alike in their perception of an American characteristic. The first by Abby Breslow:

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If they would all  
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They might realize  
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Now listen to the second poem by Erica Lerner:

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and never try  
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Or know your mind.  
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Or sit in calm,  
You'll still be there.  
You were before.  
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As today  
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Just run and run." (Erica Lerner)



Both children express the restlessness of our lifestyle. Everybody is in a hurry, with lots of busyness, a fact on which the first girl comments: "Life is too short, to waste, running." In the absence of higher meaning or purpose, there is the feeling of life going to waste. All too familiar

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The other girl's poem also perceives life as a race and it isn't getting anywhere. There doesn't seem to be a goal -- it is "run and run" like on a treadmill, without provision, as she puts it, "To face yourself, or know your mind," -- just "run and run."

These children are recording with prophetic clarity the inner emptiness which afflicts the lives of ~~adults as well as youth~~. *so many.*

Most of those who get caught up in the frenzy of ambition and ~~with~~ materialistic obsessions are not even aware of their folly. I wonder how you reacted to the story in the Sunday paper a few weeks ago about a Jewish couple, Barry and Renee Trupin in Long Island? This couple <sup>has</sup> ~~have~~ been embroiled four long years in a bitter litigation with the Village Council of Southampton over violation of the building code. The couple set out to build the most expensive house ever in the history of New York state, a \$25 million dollar castle by the sea, with 63 rooms, gothic towers and a 30-foot waterfall cascading into an indoor pool. Among the medieval decorations in this castle is one suit of armor, purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Trupin for \$3.2 million dollars. Their home, which many would call a true monstrosity, is fittingly named "Dragon Head."

True, they can afford everything they are doing, including a fleet of 7 Rolls Royces. But, isn't it a pity that this 48-year old business genius, Barry Trupin who, in less than 10 years made a fortune of \$300 million dollars in the computer business, has found nothing better to do with his cleverness and wealth?

I wondered what I would say to him if I met him face-to-face. I would say: "Mr. Trupin, imagine you have only one more year to live, would you really give your all to "Dragon Head?" After your death, in all likelihood, everything you put into "Dragon Head" will be disposed of in an auction at maybe one-tenth the price you paid. Instead of filling your house with expensive junk, shouldn't you furnish your mind with a philosophy of life? Think of the good things you could <sup>be</sup> do<sup>ing</sup> for your people and mankind? Don't you want to be remembered as a benefactor?

It's a good question to ask yourself: What if I had only one more year to live? What would I single out for special attention in those precious few months? What would be worth spending my time and energy on?

If you have some wealth, ~~and want to dedicate it to a noble purpose~~ -- have you ever wondered what is the most good that <sup>you</sup> could be done with your money? <sup>(if you have free time)</sup> What is the best you can do with your time? How can you <sup>use</sup> employ your talents and your mind for the greatest benefit <sup>to</sup> of yourself, your family and your fellowman? So, what would you do, ~~with yourself~~ if you had only one more year to live?

I have a sneaking suspicion that very few among us could answer that question. Why not? Because we are caught unprepared. We haven't taken the time ever to sort out our priorities. We are busy chasing tinsel. We are absorbed by our petty preoccupations and, as the teenage poet suggested, "much too busy running, running and running to face ourselves and know our mind."

This year, the inventor of a new adult game really made a hit. People went from store to store to buy it and were turned away. *Some stores posted signs in their windows: "Sorry, We Haven't got it"* The game -- you guessed it -- is "Trivial Pursuits," -- *Isn't that much life is* exactly what most of our lives are all about; -- "trivial pursuits." *And* We haven't even time to ask life's big questions, let alone to come up with well thought-out answers.

*Our lifestyle suffers from an imbalance: ~~the~~ full of activity on the outside and no development within. We have lost sight of the inner life.*  
Most Jews are, actually, embarrassed to talk about the inner world of beliefs. We are embarrassed to ask questions about the purpose of life and death; we're embarrassed to speculate aloud about the possibilities of life hereafter; we're embarrassed to talk about the soul and about God. Many are even embarrassed to pray. More than once I've been called by members in great excitement asking, "Rabbi, give me a prayer, quick, I'm going to a meeting and I'll die if they call on me to give the opening prayer." *They are tongue-tied when it comes to prayer because God is a stranger to them.*

How do you get to know God? There is a tendency among the alienated and secularized to over-romanticize the discovery of God. They think it's comparable to the mystique of falling in love. They imagine that religious

We consistently sacrifice higher values for ~~lower~~ ones, even for trivia. We work overtime to better provide for our family, and end up losing the family relationship altogether because we are not there when needed. We spend our health to gain wealth and then ~~spend~~ our wealth trying to regain health. We seek satisfaction for a minor offense and pay for it with the major loss of a friend. Why can't we get our priorities straight? Because we take too little time to think. To review our way of life to take stock of ourselves. Our energies are exhausted in the mad rush and our time in trivial pursuits.



faith comes to us mostly in a secluded setting, at a mountain top or a quiet lakeside. I want to tell you that God can become just as real to you right here and now, if you want this to happen.

Some wonder: Isn't prayer just a monologue? Am I not talking to myself? Why don't I feel a response from God? God sends us a message continuously but we are not always receptive. Think of a broadcasting station which broadcasts its program over a wide area, but only those receive it who have their sets attuned in the right channel. Similarly, in prayer we must properly prepare our mental receiving sets and attune our minds before we can receive God's signals. There is a whole branch of Jewish learning entirely devoted to the art and method of effective prayer. If you, too, want to grow in your prayer experience, join our Spiritual Fellowship which will soon resume their early Wednesday morning sessions.

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But I'm unhappy when I consider that over 3,000 adults in our Congregation are total drop-outs from Jewish learning. Return to our precious legacy this year! <sup>There are</sup> Join ~~any of the~~ hundreds of Jewish study opportunities in the wider community and at every local university, ~~job at least one such program this year.~~ Private Jewish study circles are mushrooming all over for men and women who are tired wasting their minds on card games. *Participate in at least one such program this year.*

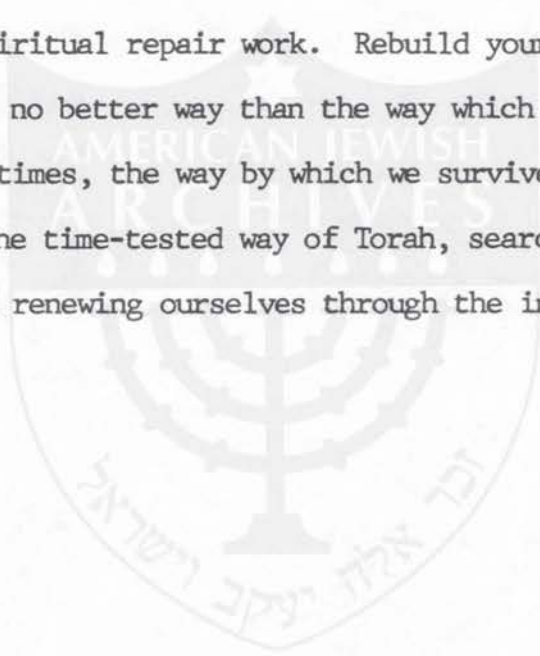
As a real turn-on I suggest that you watch Abba Eban's 10-part TV series on Public Television -- WETA, Channel 26 beginning this Monday night at 9:00 p.m., <sup>it is entitled "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews,"</sup> a panorama of the Jewish experience ~~and civilization~~ in Israel and among the nations.

#### CONCLUSION

For 98 years a giant statue, 151 feet high, holding a torch aloft, ~~has been standing on Liberty Island to welcome~~ millions of immigrants and visitors. Of course this is the Statue of Liberty, known throughout the world as a symbol of the American ~~dream~~ of freedom. As seen from the outside, the Statue of Liberty gives the impression of colossal solidity and strength. However, the National Park Service announced that the Statue of Liberty is in ~~grave~~ danger of collapse because <sup>inside</sup> the invisible support structure has corroded. Emergency repairs are now underway at a cost of \$30 million dollars to save the Stat~~ve~~e of Liberty by rebuilding its new internal support structure.

This should be a lesson to every person. Many of us are corroding from within and disintegrating -- and know it not. Unless we are undergirded internally by a sound moral and spiritual support system, our external achievements are in grave danger of collapse. Little good will come from our success, from our career, from our financial power and social status, if we have no faith, no beliefs and no deeply rooted moral principles to uphold us from within.

Do not delay your spiritual repair work. Rebuild your internal spiritual support system. There is no better way than the way which gave light to our people in the darkest of times, the way by which we survived, achieved greatly and lived nobly. It is the time-tested way of Torah, searching for God's guidance in the Bible and renewing ourselves through the inspiration of soul-cleansing prayer. Amen.



"TO REPLENISH OUR SPIRITS"

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

Eve of Rosh Hashanah, September 26, 1984  
W.H.C.  
1 Tishri, 5745

Final Draft

Connected  
B. Hill

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I wondered what I would say ~~to him~~ if I met him face-to-face. <sup>I know what</sup> I would like to <sup>if I could bring myself to do it:</sup> say "Mr. Trupin, imagine you have only one more year to live, would you really give your all to "Dragon Head?" After ~~your death, in all likelihood,~~ <sup>you're gone,</sup> everything you put into "Dragon Head" will be disposed of in an auction at maybe one-tenth the price you paid. Instead of filling your house with expensive junk, shouldn't you furnish your mind with a philosophy of life? Think of the good things you could be doing for your people and mankind? Don't you want to be remembered ~~as a benefactor?~~ <sup>for something worthwhile?</sup> "

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If you <sup>happen to</sup> have some wealth, what is the most good that you could do with your money? // If you have free time, what is the best you can do with your time? // How can you use your talents and your mind for the greatest benefit to yourself, your family and your fellowman? // So, what would you do, if you had only one more year to live?

I have a sneaking suspicion that very few among us could answer that question. Why not? Because we are caught unprepared. We haven't taken the time ever to sort out our priorities. We are busy chasing tinsel. We are absorbed by our petty preoccupations and, as the teenage poet suggested, "much too busy running, running and running to face ourselves and know our mind."

This year, the inventor of a new adult game really made a hit. People went from store to store to buy it and were turned away. Some stores posted signs in their windows: "Sorry, we haven't got it!" The game -- you guessed it -- ~~is~~ "Trivial Pursuits." -- Isn't that exactly what much of our life is all about, -- "trivial pursuits?" We consistently sacrifice higher values for lesser ones, even for trivia. We work overtime to better provide for our family, and end up losing the family relationship altogether because we are ~~never~~ ~~not~~ there when needed. // We spend our health to gain wealth and then our wealth trying to regain health. // We seek satisfaction for a minor offense and pay for it with the major loss of a friend. // Why can't we get our priorities straight? Because we take too little time to think, to review our way of life, to take stock of ourselves. Our energies are exhausted in the mad rush and our time in trivial pursuits. We haven't even time to ask life's big questions, let alone to come up with well thought-out answers.

Our lifestyle suffers from an imbalance: full of activity on the outside and no development within. We have lost sight of the inner life. Most Jews are, actually, embarrassed to talk about the inner world of beliefs. We are embarrassed to ask questions about the purpose of life and

death; we're embarrassed to speculate aloud about the possibilities of life hereafter; we're embarrassed to talk about the soul and about God. Many are even embarrassed to pray. More than once I've been called ~~by members in great excitement asking~~, "Rabbi, give me a prayer, quick, I'm going to a meeting and I'll die if they call on me to give the opening prayer." They are tongue-tied when it comes to prayer because God is a stranger to them.

How do you get to know God? There is a tendency among the alienated and secularized to over-romanticize the discovery of God. They think it's comparable to the mystique of falling in love. They imagine that religious faith comes to us mostly in a secluded setting, at a mountain top or a quiet lakeside. I want to tell you that God can become just as real to you ~~right~~ <sup>by</sup> *in your living room, in the doctor's waiting room*

*and right* here and now, if you want this to happen.

Some wonder: Isn't prayer just a monologue? Am I not talking to myself? Why don't I feel a response from God? God sends us a message continuously but we are not always receptive. Think of a broadcasting station which broadcasts its program over a wide area. ~~But~~ Only those receive it who have their sets attuned in the right channel. Similarly, in prayer we must properly prepare our mental receiving-sets and attune our minds, before we can receive God's signals. There is a whole branch of Jewish learning entirely devoted to the art and method of effective prayer. If you, too, want to grow in your prayer experience, join our Spiritual Fellowship which will soon resume their early Wednesday morning sessions.

The vast majority of Jews, at least in this Congregation, are neither ~~finitely committed~~ <sup>strong</sup> believers nor ~~committed~~ <sup>weak</sup> atheists. The vast majority, I find, are fence-sitters in religion, vague, uncertain, really not acquainted with the reasoning or the philosophy undergirding Jewish beliefs:

"Run, and run  
And never try to  
Face yourself  
Or know your mind. . ."

Most of us are too busy with other things to get to the bottom of basic questions about life. A philosophy of life? A system of beliefs? Our ground for moral conviction? These things cannot be answered on the spot. You cannot have an intellectual, moral or spiritual capital on which to draw if you have made no deposits of time and thought for such purposes in the past.

I don't want to scold you for the neglect of the past, but rather challenge you to add a spiritual dimension to your life in the future. The spiritual resources are available to you: the Bible which you have not studied, the master works of brilliant sages and philosophers, which remain unknown to you and meditation and prayer, which you never really bothered ~~to~~ to experience in the privacy of your home:

"Run and run  
And never try  
to face yourself  
Or know your mind."

The problem is not only lack of time because of "Trivial Pursuits," but intentional neglect. We are actually running away from our inner life.

### APPEAL

I am impressed by people of all ages who tell me about their physical fitness program, -- how they watch their diet: low cholesterol, high potassium, low salt, high calcium, low animal fat, high protein, etc. and how they would let nothing stand in the way of their daily jogging routine, their calisthenics, aerobics, ~~their regular~~ 30 laps in the swimming pool, or two hours of tennis twice a week. They proudly point to visible benefits of this physical exercise program.

Physical neglect becomes obvious very soon. Believe me, spiritual neglect, likewise, becomes obvious. // It manifests itself in any number of ways: -- chronic worry, loss of purpose, boredom, indecision, permanent discontent, all sorts of excessive fears, even deep depressions, -- these are among the symptoms of the spiritual wasteland people carry within.

Why is it so difficult to convince our people of the need for a regular spiritual exercise program? Why is it so difficult to set aside one hour of soul-cleansing prayer and Bible study a day and, if not daily, then at least twice or even once a week? // The Bible is not a book to read but to study, to discuss, sentence by sentence, with study companions and a teacher. I am happy that we've had something like an explosion of interest in Bible study



here at the Temple with some 300 adults attending either our Wednesday Bible Class or E.T., Early Torah sessions on Saturdays.

But I'm unhappy when I consider that over 3,000 adults in our Congregation are total drop-outs from Jewish learning. // Return to our precious legacy this year! There are hundreds of Jewish study opportunities in the wider community and at every local university. Private Jewish study circles are mushrooming all over for men and women who are tired wasting their minds on card games. Participate in at least one <sup>Jewish study</sup> program this year.

As a real turn-on I suggest that you watch Abba Eban's 10-part TV series on Public Television -- WETA, Channel 26, beginning this Monday night at 9:00 p.m.; it is entitled, "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews", a panorama of the Jewish experience in Israel and among <sup>the</sup> nations.

#### CONCLUSION

For 98 years a giant statue, 151 feet high, holding a torch aloft, has welcomed millions of immigrants and <sup>hundreds of millions of</sup> visitors: ~~Of course this is~~ the Statue of Liberty, ~~known throughout the world as a symbol of the American freedom.~~ As seen from the outside, <sup>it</sup> ~~the Statue of Liberty~~ gives the impression of colossal solidity and strength. However, the National Park Service announced that the Statue of Liberty is in danger of collapse because, inside, the invisible support structure has corroded. Emergency repairs are now under way at a cost of \$30 million dollars to save the Statue of Liberty by rebuilding it ~~again~~ internally, ~~support structure.~~

~~This should be a lesson to every person.~~ Many of us are <sup>also</sup> corroding from within and disintegrating -- and know it not. Unless we are undergirded internally by a sound moral and spiritual support system, our external achievements are in grave danger of collapse. Little good will come from our success, from our career, from our financial power and social status, if we have no faith, no beliefs and no deeply rooted moral principles to uphold us from within. <sup>if we see no meaning or purpose in life, if we have</sup>

Do not delay your spiritual repair work. Rebuild your internal spiritual support system. There is no better way than the way which gave light to our people in the darkest of times, the way by which we survived, <sup>the way by which we</sup> achieved greatly and lived nobly. It is the time-tested way of Torah, searching for God's guidance in the Bible and renewing ourselves through the inspiration of soul-cleansing prayer, <sup>in communion with God.</sup> Amen.

Studying and examining every word for its application to our life, reaching out for higher wisdom in these troubled times,

## "CHANGE YOUR MIND"

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation

Yom Kippur, Kol Nidre Evening Service  
9 Tishri, 5745 - October 5, 1984

At birthday and anniversary parties, family and friends delight in putting on a biographical review with dramatic skits and songs about the celebrant -- "This Is Your Life."

~~One of the best ways of getting into the spirit of this soul-searching day of Yom Kippur would be to improvise, in your mind ~~right now~~, your own "This Is Your Life" story. What would be its highlights? Which of your achievements and victories would be worth remembering? Which defeats? Who were the most unforgettable characters in your life? Who influenced you? Who gave you your biggest break? What obstacles or crisis did you overcome? What is the best and what is the worst thing you have ever done? What are you still proud of and what remains an embarrassment to you when you think of it?~~

As you take stock of your life, from earliest childhood to this day, ask yourself: If you had your life to live over again, how would you do it differently?

An 85-year old lady, Nadine Stair, of Louisville, Kentucky, thought about it and gave the following answer:

"I'd dare to make more mistakes next time.

I'd relax.

I would limber up. . . .

I would take fewer things seriously.

I would take more chances.

I would take more trips.

I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers.

I would eat more ice cream and less beans.

I would, perhaps, have more actual troubles but I'd have fewer  
imaginary ones. . . ."

"I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a  
thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I  
had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the  
spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more  
dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more  
daisies."

Very few of us have the courage or candor to tell what we would do if we had our life to live over again. Who knows how, with different decisions, you might have come out in the end? Maybe better, maybe worse. Anyway, fantasies about the might-have-beens of life are futile. There is no going back. The question you should ask <sup>is</sup> ~~tonight, the only useful question is:~~

~~How would you, in this New Year, live differently?~~

What changes would you make?

This is a time of teshuva, of turning around, of changing, correcting and improving our attitudes and character. One of our sages suggests that even God changes his mind, e.g., the way God changed his treatment of the child Ishmael. Abraham's other son, Ishmael, step-brother of Isaac, was a problem child. In the Bible's cryptic report of the problem in Genesis 21, we hear that the boy's behavior became so intolerable that Abraham, with God's approval, reluctantly decided to drive Ishmael and Hagar out of the house and into the wilderness, with only bread and water. Soon, mother and son lost their way and, having no more food and drink, faced the bitter end. Tears streaming down her cheeks, Hagar laid down the whimpering child in the shade of one of the desert shrubs and prayed for help. Then, in the Bible's words:

"God heard the voice of the lad." After opening Hagar's eyes so that she would discover a well of water, God promised a great future for Ishmael. "For God heard the voice of the lad where he is."  
(Genesis 21.17)

Our rabbinic commentators focus on the words "Where he is." Previously, in Abraham's house, Ishmael had been a troublemaker who brought upon himself expulsion. But now, God looking at him again in his misery, "Where he is," and seeing in him, no longer a troublemaker but a helpless child near death in the desert, God changed and responded to his need in his present situation. The point:

Always respond to another person, always judge another person not where he was but where he is. Always give your family and your fellowman a second look and be ready to change your mind in the light of the new situation whatever it is.

The other day I saw a bumper sticker: "I don't get mad, I get even." It made me think how full this world is of resentment, grudges and hatred. Too many people bristle with hostility. As a ship becomes encrusted with layers of barnacles, so we, too, in the voyage of life, become burdened by accumulations of negative feelings, resentments and grudges. The issue on this Kol Nidre night is not the Cold War but the cold human heart.

The highest objective of Yom Kippur is to scrape off the barnacles from our soul, to get rid of hostility in our hearts, to cleanse ourselves of sin, the sin of hatred, and sail into the New Year without hindrance and impediment. Where do we begin?

Begin by recognizing the enormity of the problem and the damage we do to ourselves when we nurse resentments and hold a grudge.

Whoever first spoke of "sweet vengeance" didn't know what he was talking about. Look at the price we pay for it! Vengeance is a terrible taskmaster. Who can count the number of people who are spending precious hours, hatching new schemes of revenge, sulking and nursing an old grudge?

What a liberation it would be for mankind if only we could draw the poison of revenge out of human nature.

Think of the embittered partners of a troubled marriage;

Think of the bitterness and resentment of those who go through the anguish of divorce, how they punish each other with sadistic delight which soon turns to pain for both parties.

Think of children tormenting playmates, teachers, even parents, in repayment of some offense, whether real or imagined; - and how

they, in turn, are made to suffer for their disruptive behavior in a chain reaction of vengeance.

Think of employees and executives, dreaming up reprisals against fellow workers and colleagues.

Think of business men waiting for a chance to settle old scores with competitors.

In family life, on the job, in the classroom and in our social relations, an evil instinct within us wants us to do unto others as was done unto us, to pay back in kind, to make them suffer as they had made us suffer.

Not only our private, personal relations, but tensions between nations are inflamed by resentment and the craving for retaliation. **How much greater would be our private and public peace and the sum total of human happiness if only we were successful in overcoming resentments.**

They say that time is a healer. But yesterday's slight is not easily forgotten. It festers like a malignant growth. A disturbed relationship grows worse, not better, with time. In order to overcome our resentments, we need, not more time, but more insight, more understanding. We need a new attitude.



How can we minimize our resentment when someone does us wrong? What alternatives are there to the instant and primitive cry for vengeance? How can we learn to cope with resentment?

Let me suggest three steps:

**1. Judge by the present record, not the past.**

The first was suggested by a hassidic master who said, "I take a lesson from my tailor: Whenever I order a new suit, he doesn't cut it according to the previous pattern but, each time, he takes a fresh measure of my size." In shaping our attitude toward people, we must likewise take a fresh measure of the person and not judge him by previous patterns of behavior.

How sad to see grown up siblings perpetuate childhood rivalries and feuds which may have been real enough in the past but now live on only in memory? Why can't we bury the past and relate to one another in the light of new realities? How tragic it is when a child carries into maturity youthful resentment of parental control or mishandling long after the aging parent has

lost both the power and desire to run the child's life. Why can't we see our parents as they are now, not as we remember them in the light of earlier conflicts?

I remember a dramatic incident at a wedding I once conducted for a young man whose father, I was told, would not attend and, therefore, was not invited. Why not? "Because," said the groom "We have had a complete falling out and I haven't spoken to him in 10 years."

"Do I have your permission to inform your father of the wedding?" I asked. -- "Do as you wish," answered the young man, "but it's a waste of time."

I called the father who listened in silence and then thanked me for the information. The wedding was set up in my study with only a handful of friends in attendance. The documents were signed, the bride and groom stepped under the chuppah and at that very moment, the door opened and an elderly man entered: the groom's father with a flower in his lapel. The groom just looked and fainted on the spot. He soon came to, was married, broke the glass and then embraced his father in a tearful reconciliation.

It is a tragic fact that we become emotionally locked into a certain perception or judgment of persons we have had a falling out with, especially a relative, a former friend, a business associate or professional colleague -- and then continue to judge them by words spoken long ago, by personality traits which were repulsive years ago, by actions which hurt us deeply in the past. Meanwhile, time has passed. We have changed, and they have changed -- and if we were to follow God's way, we should respond to a person where he is now not where he was long ago.

Would it not be grossly unfair if a teacher gave a 12th-grader a mark based on his work in the 9th grade? Every person is entitled to a fresh report card based on his conduct and performance at this point in time.

## 2. A More Balanced Judgment.

Consider a second approach to reconciliation: One of the greatest obstacles in personal relations is the loss of respect. When you have come to know a person in a situation or role which caused you to despise him, the loss of respect inhibits a decent relationship.

Among my most private confessions of sin this Yom Kippur, is the misjudgment of people. I have overrated very few, but underrated many. I remember the bad opinion I had of several classmates while we attended school

together. I thought they were misfits for the rabbinate. However, sometime later, I was forced to revise my judgment of their character and ability. Far from being inept, hypocritical and obnoxious, as I had once judged them to be, I learned, in the course of time, that each had become a highly effective and dedicated rabbi, widely respected and beloved in his community.

The one fellow student I most disliked later became my best friend and a prominent leader in our movement.

The point is not only that people change but that our judgment usually lacks balance. We are often ignorant of positive qualities which offset the negatives. Therefore, we all must have another look at the person and judge him anew at the point "where he is" now -- not where he was sometime ago.

### 3. Consider the Redeeming Virtue.

A third and final step in coping with our resentments and hatreds is the realization that it is almost impossible to find a person who is totally evil. Even the worst have some redeeming value. This fact was impressed

upon me by a story told publicly at the recent "Faith in Humankind" conference in Washington at which 74 Gentile rescuers of Jews were honored at the U.S. State Department for their decency and courage during the holocaust years.

This Gentile woman, Irene Gut, then barely 20, had come from a Gentile family in Poland. She wound up working for the German Occupation Army and was assigned to the home of a Nazi officer, a Major. At the same time she was given a job to run the laundry and prepare meals for German officers in a nearby factory. When she heard about the impending liquidation of all Jewish factory workers, 300 of them, she secretly passed word on to them and helped them escape to the forest. For eight months she secretly supplied food to the 300, stole ration cards for them, blankets and shoes.

Later she took in 12 new laundry workers, professional people, most of them medical students and businessmen. Knowing that they were also slated for execution, she smuggled them through a coal chute window into the cellar of the Nazi Major's own home. There she secretly maintained them for a while. One day she forgot to close the door and the Major walked in without ringing the bell. He found 4 Jewish women there in his own sitting room. Now let me quote you Irene Gut's own words about what happened:

"To this day I see his eyes. . . his cheeks shaking. "How could you do it?" he yelled, "you know what will happen to you. . ."

"That day I had just witnessed the hanging of four people in the market square, two Jews and the two Poles who had been hiding them.

Pointing to the 4 women sitting in the Major's living room, she said: "They are my friends, I don't care what happens. I saw the people hanged today and if that's the way it is, so be it." I was crying.

Tears came to his eyes. 'Irenea, I couldn't do that to you.' I was on my knees. I kissed his hands. So we went on, and he never asked how many people were in his cellar, he never saw them except the four women he had already seen. He got used to them, and left cookies and tea sometimes. They called him Grandpa after a while."

This story of the Nazi Major with a touch of compassion in his heart, suddenly awakened in me a personal memory which I had buried in my mind so eager to forget my own experience under Nazi Occupation. It was the dreaded knock on our door and when I opened it, a Nazi officer stood there with polished boots, pistols and the swastika armband. I looked into his face and blinked. This was the same young hoodlum who had no family or home but would sleep somewhere in the basement of our building, and hang around for odd jobs to earn a few pennies. He looked at me and my parents with his steel blue

eyes and said, "I have an order for your arrest." Instantly we thought of so many others who were arrested only to return as an urn of ashes. I was too stunned to say anything. Clearly, there was panic in the faces of my parents. The young man looked at us and then said to me: "Crawl into your bed and I'll tell them that you were too sick to be transported."

With these words he turned around, slammed the door behind him and was never seen again by us.

I don't know how many he killed before he himself perished but I must remember him as one Nazi who saved my life. There is some good in the worst of us.

### Conclusion

You and I will not have the privilege of participating in any summit conference for peace and international cooperation. But, in the immediate spheres of our lives, we can create small precincts of reconciliation and peace. The key is forgiveness. Justice is fundamental but not sufficient to heal the wounds of conflict. We need forgiveness to unlock gates of alienation and resentment and liberate us from animosity.

Forgiveness does not come easy.

Nevertheless, forgiveness becomes possible when we judge our fellowman not by his past but by his present condition;

When we renew our respect for our fellowman as we see his faults in the fuller context of positive qualities as well;

And when we assume that there remains a redeeming virtue even in the most extreme of wrongdoers.

No one is beyond rehabilitation.

The story is told that one stormy night a stranger appeared outside the tent of Abraham and begged to be given shelter. Abraham let the man in; he was old and poor. He invited him to his table, offered him food and when he had eaten and refreshed himself, Abraham suggested that he join in a prayer of thanksgiving to God. The stranger refused. "I am neither a believer nor a hypocrite," he said.



Greatly offended at the stranger's outburst and denial of God, Abraham grabbed him by the arm, shoved him out of his tent, and said: "I would not have a man such as you stay overnight in my tent."

No sooner had he done so, when Abraham heard the voice of God, "Abraham, Abraham, what have you done? This old man has denied and offended me daily, yet I tolerated him and provided food for him and kept him alive for 78 years -- and you would not give him shelter for a single night?"

Abraham rushed out into the stormy night and brought back the stranger to his tent and begged his forgiveness.

We, who impose upon God's indulgence, generosity and forgiveness all the time, every moment of our life, day-by-day, must show to one another at least a small portion of the love and forgiveness we receive so plentifully from our Maker.

May we go forth from this Yom Kippur night, determined to reach out to those who offended against us and, all the more so, to those whom we have offended. Let us show one another the love and forgiveness which make us most God-like. Amen

Connections  
made

"CHANGE YOUR MIND"

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation

Yom Kippur, Kol Nidre Evening Service  
9 Tishri, 5745 - October 5, 1984

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How would you, in this New Year, live differently?

What changes would you make?

This is a time of teshuva, of turning around, of changing, correcting and improving our attitudes and character. One of our sages suggests that even God changes his mind, e.g., the way God changed his treatment of the child Ishmael. Abraham's other son, Ishmael, step-brother of Isaac, was a problem child. In the Bible's cryptic report of the problem in Genesis 21, we hear that the boy's behavior became so intolerable that Abraham's principal wife, Sarah, demanded that Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, be expelled from their household. Abraham was reluctant to do so but in the end was persuaded by God, who sided with Sarah, to drive Ishmael and Hagar out of the house and into the wilderness, with only bread and water. Soon, mother and son lost their way and, having no more food and drink, faced the bitter end. Tears streaming down her cheeks, Hagar laid down the whimpering child in the shade of one of the desert shrubs and prayed for help. Then, in the Bible's words:

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The other day I saw a bumper sticker: "I don't get mad, I get even." It made me think how full this world is of resentment, grudges and <sup>hatred. Too many people</sup> ~~plain~~ ~~hated.~~ <sup>bristle with hostility.</sup> ~~As the a~~ <sup>ship</sup> becomes encrusted with layers of barnacles ~~harmful to its~~ ~~movement~~ so we, too, in the voyage of life, become burdened by accumulations of negative feelings, resentments and grudges. <sup>The issue on this Kol Nidre might</sup> <sup>is not the Cold War but the cold human heart.</sup>

The highest object of Yom Kippur is to scrape off the barnacles ~~from~~ our soul, to get rid of hostility in our hearts, to cleanse ourselves of sin, the sin of hatred and sail into the New Year without hindrance and impediment. Where do we begin?

Begin by recognizing the enormity of the problem and the damage we do to ourselves when we nurse resentments and hold a grudge.

Almost every day we pick up some new irritation or annoyance, mostly minor but also major ones. Every frustration, every setback, every rejection is likely to turn into resentment and a desire to get even. In order to relieve the pressure of hostile feelings, we strike back at the presumed cause of our distress or, find another target, a scapegoat for retaliation and vengeance.

Common examples might be:

We burst into our home fuming from rush-hour tension and making the whole family suffer the fury of our frustration, or

We've had a bad day in the office and promptly discharge our pent-up anger upon spouse and children.

*didn't know what he was talking about,*

Whoever first spoke of "sweet vengeance" <sup>ne</sup> ~~forgot to~~ look at the price we pay for it! Vengeance is a terrible taskmaster. Who can count the number of people who are spending precious hours, hatching new schemes of revenge, sulking and nursing an old grudge?

What a liberation it would be for mankind if only we could draw the poison of revenge out of human nature.

Think of the embittered partners of a troubled marriage;

Think of the bitterness & resentment ~~shown in the~~  
~~moments~~ if these who ~~separate~~ go thru the anguish of divorce, how they punish each other with sadistic delight which soon turns to pain for both parties.

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In family life, on the job, in the classroom and in our social relations, an evil instinct within us wants us to do unto others as was done unto us, to pay back in kind, to make them suffer as they had made us suffer.

Not only our private, personal relations, but tensions between nations are inflamed by resentment and the craving for retaliation. **How much greater would be our private and public peace and the sum total of human happiness if only we were successful in overcoming resentments.**

They say that time is a healer. But yesterday's slight is not easily forgotten. It festers like a malignant growth. ~~More often than not,~~ <sup>A</sup> disturbed relationship grows worse, not better, with time. In order to overcome our resentments, we need, not more time, but more insight, more understanding. We need ~~not only more but new understanding,~~ a new attitude.

Which? How can we minimize our resentment when someone does us wrong? What ~~better, more constructive~~ alternatives are there to the ~~instant and primitive~~ cry for vengeance? *How can we learn to cope with resentment?*

~~We are raising a central theme in Judaism. It goes to the core of our faith: the whole question of retribution and forgiveness, of justice and mercy -- and the nature of man. Basic to our discussion is the assumption that man can and must gain the upper hand over his instincts and act as a moral, rational being, guided by what is ethically right not by what comes naturally.~~

Let me suggest three steps ~~in coping with this plague in our personal relations:~~

1. Judge by the present record, not the past.

*The first was suggested by*  
A hassidic master <sup>who</sup> said; we should take a lesson from <sup>my</sup> ~~our~~ custom tailor:  
"Whenever I order a new suit, he doesn't cut it according to the previous pattern but, each time, he takes a fresh measure of my size." In shaping our attitude toward people, we must likewise take a fresh measure of the person ~~at this point in his development~~ and not judge him by previous patterns of behavior.



How sad to see grown-up siblings perpetuate childhood rivalries and feuds which may have been real enough in the past but now only live on in memory? Why can't we bury the past and relate to one another in the light of new realities? How tragic it is when a child carries into maturity youthful resentment of parental control or mishandling long after the aging parent has lost both the power and desire to run the child's life. Why can't we see our parents as they are now, not as we remember them in the light of earlier conflicts?

I remember a dramatic incident at a wedding I once conducted for a young man whose father, I was told, would not attend and, therefore, was not invited. Why not? "Because," said the groom "We have had a complete falling out and I haven't spoken to him in 10 years."

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It is a tragic fact that we become emotionally locked into a certain perception or judgment of persons we have had a falling out with, especially a relative, a former friend, a business associate or professional colleague -- and then continue to judge them by words spoken long ago, by personality traits which were repulsive years ago, by actions which hurt us deeply in the past. Meanwhile, time has passed. We have changed, and they have changed -- and if we were to follow God's way, we should respond to a person where is is now not where he was long ago.

Would it not be <sup>grossly unfair</sup> ~~scandalous~~ if a teacher gave a 12th-grader a mark based on his work in the 9th grade? Every person is entitled to a fresh report card based on his conduct and performance at this point in time.

How greatly you could enhance your peace of mind and happiness if you judged former enemies by their present attitudes and behavior only. Chances are that you could soon remove them from from your little black list and restore many broken relationships.

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I have overrated very few, but underrated many.

- 10 -

Among my most private confessions of sin this Yom Kippur, is the misjudgment of people. I remember the bad opinion I had of several classmates while we attended school together. ~~I thought they were misfits for the rabbinic time.~~ However, some ~~10 to 15 years~~ later, I was forced to revise my judgment of their character and ability. Far from being inept, hypocritical and obnoxious, as I had once judged them to be, I learned, in the course of time, that each had become a highly effective and dedicated rabbi, ~~who was~~ widely respected and beloved in his community.

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The point is not only that people change but that our judgment <sup>usually</sup> ~~often~~ lacks balance. ~~In our rash conclusions~~ we are often ignorant of ~~certain~~ positive qualities which ~~more than~~ offset the negatives. ~~A fuller knowledge would lead to a more favorable opinion.~~ Therefore, we all must have another look at the person ~~we once held in contempt~~ and judge him anew at the point "Where he is" now -- not where he was sometime ago.

### 3. Consider the Redeeming Virtue.

A third and final step in coping with our resentments and hatreds is the realization that it is almost impossible to find a person who is totally evil. Even the worst have some redeeming value. This fact was ~~unforgettably~~

impressed upon me by a story told publicly at the recent "Faith in Humankind" conference in Washington at which 74 Gentile rescuers of Jews were honored at the U.S. State Department for their decency and courage during the holocaust years.

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With these words he turned around, slammed the door behind him and was never seen again by ~~any of~~ us.

I don't know how many he killed before he himself perished but I must remember him as one Nazi who saved my life. There is some good in the worst of us.

#### Conclusion

You and I will not have the privilege of participating in <sup>any</sup> ~~the coming~~ summit conference for peace and international cooperation. But, in the immediate spheres of our lives, we can create small precincts of reconciliation and peace. The key is forgiveness, ~~which can~~ unlock gates of alienation and resentment and liberate us from animosity.

Justice is fundamental but not sufficient to heal the wounds of conflict. We need forgiveness to

May we go forth from this Yom Kippur night determined to reach out to those who have offended against us and whom we, too, have offended.

*Forgiveness does not come easy,  
Necessarily  
Forgiveness.*

~~Reconciliation~~ becomes possible when we judge our fellowman not by his past but by his present condition;

When we renew our respect for our fellowman as we see his faults in the fuller context of positive qualities as well;

And when we assume that there remains a redeeming virtue even in the most extreme of wrongdoers.

No one is beyond rehabilitation.

The story is told that one stormy night a stranger appeared outside the tent of Abraham and begged to be given shelter. Abraham let the man in; he was ~~very~~ old and poor. He invited him to his table, offered him food and when he had eaten and refreshed himself, Abraham suggested that he join ~~with him~~ in a prayer of thanksgiving to God. The stranger refused. "I am neither a believer nor a hypocrite," he said.

Greatly offended at the stranger's outburst and denial of God, Abraham grabbed him by the arm, shoved him out of his tent, and said: "I would not have a man such as you stay overnight in my tent."

No sooner had he done so, when Abraham heard the voice of God, "Abraham, Abraham, what have you done? This old man has denied and offended me daily, yet I tolerated him and provided food for him and kept him alive for 78 years -- and you would not give him shelter for a single night?"

Abraham rushed out into the stormy night and brought back the stranger to his tent and begged his forgiveness.

We, who impose upon God's indulgence, generosity and forgiveness, <sup>all the times,</sup> every moment of our life, day-by-day, must show to one another at least a small portion of the love and forgiveness we receive so plentifully from our Maker. ~~Amen.~~

May we go forth from this Yom Kippur night, determined to reach out to those who offended against us and, all the more so, to those whom we have offended. ~~and~~ ~~reaching out~~ show the love and forgiveness. ~~Amen~~  
Let us show one another ~~the~~ the love and forgiveness which make us most God-like. Amen.



see p 3 / 8 / 10

## "CHANGE YOUR MIND"

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation

Yom Kippur, Kol Nidre Evening Service  
9 Tishri, 5745 - October 5, 1984

"This Is Your Life," once a top-rated TV <sup>program</sup> entertainment, has long ago become a popular feature of American folk ways. Across the nation at birthday and anniversary parties, family and friends delight in putting on a biographical review of the celebrant's ~~life~~ <sup>stunt with the celebrant as primary character</sup> with dramatic skits and songs -- a "This Is Your Life."

One of the best ways of getting into the spirit of this soul-searching day of Yom Kippur would be to improvise, in your mind right now, your own "This Is Your Life" story. What would be its highlights? Which of your achievements and victories would be worth remembering? Which defeats? Who were the most unforgettable characters in your life? Who influenced you? Who gave you your biggest break? Which family member, teacher, friend or associate played a major role, for better or worse, in your development as a person? What obstacles or crisis did you overcome? What is the best and what is the worst thing you have ever done? What are you still proud of and what remains an embarrassment to you when you think of it?

As you take stock of your life from earliest childhood to this day, ask yourself ~~this~~ ~~tough question~~: If you had your life to live over again, how would you do it differently?

An 85-year old lady, Nadine Stair, of Louisville, Kentucky, thought about it and gave the following answer:

"I'd dare to make more mistakes next time.

I'd relax.

I would limber up. . . .

I would take fewer things seriously.

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I would, perhaps, have more actual troubles but I'd have fewer imaginary ones. . . ."

I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies."

Very few of us have the courage or candor to tell what we would do if we had our life to live over again. Who knows how, with different ~~sets of~~ decisions, you might have come out in the end? Maybe better, maybe worse. Anyway, fantasies about the might-have-beens of life are futile. There is no going back ~~in life~~. The question you should ask tonight, the question <sup>only practical useful</sup> ~~of profound practical value~~, is:

How would you live differently ~~in the future and especially~~ in this New Year?

*from previous years?*  
*What changes would you make?*

This is a time of teshuva, of turning around, of changing, correcting and improving our attitudes and character. One of our sages suggests that even God changes his mind, e.g.

~~quadal~~  
 A striking example and a good motto for us to follow is the way God changed his treatment of the child Ishmael, Abraham's other son, Ishmael, step-brother <sup>of</sup> Isaac, was a problem child. In the Bible's cryptic report of the problem in Genesis 21, we hear that the boy's behavior became so intolerable that Abraham's principal wife, Sarah, demanded that Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, be expelled from their household. Abraham was reluctant to do so but in the end was persuaded by God, who sided with Sarah, to drive Ishmael and Hagar out of the house and into the wilderness, with only bread and water. Soon, mother and son lost their way and, having no more food and drink, they ~~were~~ ~~exhausted and~~ faced the bitter end. Tears streaming down her cheeks, Hagar laid down the whimpering child in the shade of one of the desert shrubs and prayed for help. Then, in the Bible's words:

"God heard the voice of the lad." After opening Hagar's eyes so that she would discover a well of water, God promised a great future for Ishmael.

"For God heard the voice of the lad where he is." (Genesis 21.17)

Our rabbinic commentators focused <sup>//</sup> on the words "Where he is." Previously, in Abraham's house, Ishmael had been a trouble maker who brought upon himself expulsion. But now, God looking at him again in his misery, "Where he is" and seeing in him <sup>no longer a trouble maker</sup> ~~in his present situation~~ helpless child near death in the desert, God responded to his need. The point:

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Always respond to another person, always judge another person not where he was but where he is. Always give your family and your fellowman a second look and be ready to change your minds in the light of the new situation, whatever it is.

I see tremendous implications in this point for possibly radical changes in attitude which would, of course, produce major changes in our life.

The other day I saw a bumper sticker: "I don't get mad, I get even." It made me think how full this world is of resentments, grudges and plain hatred. As the ship becomes encrusted with layers of barnacles harmful to its movement so we, too, in the voyage of life, become burdened by accumulations of negative feelings, resentments and grudges.

Almost every day we pick up some new irritation or annoyance, mostly minor but also major ones. Every frustration, every setback, every rejection is likely to turn into resentment and a desire to get even. In order to relieve the pressure of hostile feelings, we strike back at the presumed cause of our distress and ~~if he or she is unavailable~~ <sup>in his or her absence or</sup> we find another target ~~to serve as~~ a scapegoat for retaliation and vengeance.

We burst into our home, fuming from rush-hour tension and make the whole family suffer our pent-up anger. Or, we had a bad day in the office and promptly discharge our venom upon spouse and children.

Whoever first <sup>o</sup>spike of "sweet vengeance" forgot to look at the price we pay for it. Vengeance is a terrible taskmaster. Who can count the number of people who are spending precious hours, hatching new schemes of revenge, sulking and nursing an old grudge?

What a liberation it would be for mankind if only we could draw the poison of revenge out of human nature.

Think of the embittered partners of a troubled marriage.

Think of children tormenting playmates, ~~and then doing the same to~~ teachers, even parents, in repayment of some offense, whether real or imagined.

Think of employees and executives, dreaming up reprisals against fellow workers and colleagues.

Think of business men waiting for a chance to settle old scores with competitors.

In family life, on the job, in the classroom and in our social relations, an evil instinct within us wants us to do unto others as was done unto us, to pay back in kind, to make them suffer as they had made us suffer.

Not only our private, personal relations, but tensions between nations are inflamed by resentment and the craving for retaliation. **How much greater would be our private and public peace and the sum total of human happiness if only we were successful in overcoming resentments.**

They say that time is a healer. But yesterday's slight is not easily forgotten. It festers like a malignant <sup>growth.</sup> sore. More often than not, a disturbed relationship grows worse, not better, with time. In order to overcome our resentments, we need not more time, but more insight, more understanding. We need not only more but new understanding, a new attitude. Which? How can we minimize our resentment when someone does us wrong? What better, more constructive alternatives are there to the instant and primitive cry for vengeance?

We are raising a central theme in Judaism. It goes to the core of our faith: the whole question of retribution and forgiveness, of justice and mercy -- and the nature of man. Basic to our discussion is the assumption that man can and must gain the upper hand over his instincts and act as a moral, rational being, guided by what is ethically right not by what comes naturally.

Let me suggest three steps in coping with this plague in our personal relations:

**1. Judge by the present record, not the past.**

A hassidic master said, we should take a lesson from our custom tailor: "Whenever I order a new suit, he doesn't cut it according to the pattern of previous but, each time, he takes a fresh measure of my size ~~and width to take care of all changes.~~ In shaping our attitude toward people, we must likewise take a fresh measure of the person at this point

in his development and not judge him by previous patterns of behavior. *How sad to see grown-up sibling perpetuate childhood rivalries. Why can't we bury the past and relate to one another in the light of new realities? How tragic it is when children carry into maturity their resentment of excessive parental control long after the parent has lost all sense of the child's life?*

I remember a dramatic incident at a wedding I once conducted for a young man whose father, I was told, would not attend and, therefore, was not invited. Why not? "Because," said the groom "We have had a complete falling out and I haven't spoken to him in 10 years."

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wedding was set up in my study with only a handful of friends in attendance. The documents were signed, the bride and groom stepped under the chuppah and at that very moment, the door opened and an elderly man entered: the groom's father with a flower in his lapel. The groom just looked and fainted on the spot. He soon came to, was married, and broke the glass and then embraced his father in a tearful reconciliation.

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Would it not be scandalous if a teacher gave a 12th-grader a mark based on his work in the 9th grade? Every person is entitled to a fresh report card based on his

conduct and performance at this point in time.

How greatly you could enhance your peace of mind and happiness if you judged former enemies by their present attitudes and behavior only. Chances are that you could *soon* *remove them from* ~~take most of their names off~~ your little black list and restore many broken relationships.

## 2. A More Balanced Judgment

I would now like to urge you to consider a second approach to reconciliation: One of the greatest obstacles in personal relations is the loss of respect. When you have come to know a person in a situation or role which caused you to despise him, this loss of respect inhibits a decent relationship.

Among my most private confessions of sin this Yom Kippur, is the misjudgment of people. I remember the bad opinion I had of several classmates while we attended school together. However, some 10 to 15 years <sup>later,</sup> ~~afterward we all had scattered to different parts of the country,~~ I was forced to ~~totally~~ <sup>1</sup> revise my judgment of their character and ability. Far from being inept, hypocritical and obnoxious, as I had onced judged them to be, I learned, in the course of time, that each had become a highly effective and dedicated rabbi who was widely respected and beloved in his community.

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A third and final step in coping with our resentments and hatreds is the realization that it is almost impossible to find a person who is totally evil. Even the worst have some redeeming value. This fact was unforgettably impressed upon me by a story told publicly at the recent "Faith in Humankind" conference in Washington at which 74 Gentile rescuers of Jews were honored at the U.S. State Department for their decency and courage *during the holocaust years.*

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*Should you hear: ~~You are an older brother or sister who as a child used to put you down as a young child. You should not~~*

*Forget the situation. Do you still see yourself as a victim when you are together? Do you still get upset when you get together? Do you still have a sense of another's humiliation? Your parent is getting old and not the best of health but if you still bristle with anger when for more than 20*

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Whoever first spoke of "sweet vengeance" forgot to look at the price we pay for it. Vengeance is a terrible taskmaster. Who can count the number of people who are spending precious hours, hatching new schemes of revenge, sulking and nursing an old grudge?

What a liberation it would be for mankind if only we could draw the poison of revenge out of human nature!

Think of the embittered partners of a troubled marriage;

Think of children tormenting playmates, and then doing the same to teachers, even parents, in repayment of some offense, whether real or imagined;

Think of employees and executives, dreaming up reprisals against fellow workers and colleagues.

Think of business men waiting for a chance to settle old scores with competitors.

In family life, on the job, in the classroom and in our social relations, an evil instinct within us wants us to do unto others as was done unto us, to pay back in kind, to make them suffer as they had made us suffer.

Not only our private, personal relations, but tensions between nations are inflamed by resentment and the craving for retaliation. **How much greater would be our private and public peace and the sum total of human happiness if only we were successful in overcoming resentments.**

They say that time is a healer. But yesterday's slight is not easily forgotten. It festers like a malignant sore. More often than not a disturbed relationship grows worse, not better, with time. In order to overcome our resentments, we need not more time, but more insight, more understanding. We need not only more but new understanding, a new attitude. Which? How can we minimize our resentment when someone does us wrong? What better, more constructive alternatives are there to the instant and primitive cry for vengeance?

We are raising a central theme in Judaism. It goes to the core of our faith: the whole question of retribution and forgiveness, of justice and mercy -- and the nature of man. Basic to our discussion is the assumption that man can and must gain the upper hand over his instincts and act as a moral, rational being, guided by what is ethically right not by what comes naturally.

Let me suggest three steps in coping with this plague in our personal relations:

**I. Judge by the present record, not the past.**

A hassidic master said, we should take a lesson from our custom tailor: "Whenever I order a new suit, he doesn't cut it according to the pattern of previous but, each time, he takes a fresh measure of my size and width to take care of all changes. In shaping our attitude toward people, we must likewise take a fresh measure of the person at this point

*Siblings perpetrate childhood crimes*  
*memories of humiliation whenever*  
*childhood*  
*How sad to see siblings still feeling threatened by their brother or sister who may have put down the problem or not sister in early childhood. Why can't we bury the past and relate to one another in the light of new realities?*

in his development and not judge him by previous patterns of behavior.

whose father, I was told, would not attend and, therefore, was not invited. Why not?

"Because," said the groom "We have had a complete falling out and I haven't spoken to him in 10 years."

*New trip when he sees into maturity resentment at excessive parental control long after the fact. parent has mellowed and no longer wants to ruin the child's life.*

"Do I have your permission to inform your father of the wedding?" I asked.

"Do as you wish," answered the young man, but it's a waste of time."

*Why are we so blind to how we see the parent as he is, not as he was?*

I called the father who listened in silence and thanked me for the information. The wedding was set up in my study with only a handful of friends in attendance. The documents were signed, the bride and groom stepped under the chuppah and at that very moment, the door opened and an elderly man entered: the groom's father with a flower in his lapel. The groom just looked and fainted on the spot. He soon came to, was married and broke the glass and then embraced his father in a tearful reconciliation.

It is a tragic fact that we become emotionally locked into a certain perception or judgment of persons we have had a falling out with, especially a relative, a former friend, a business associate or professional colleague --and then continue to judge them by words spoken long ago, by personality traits which were repulsive years ago, by actions which hurt us deeply in the past. Meanwhile, time has passed. We have changed, and they have changed -- and if we were to follow God's way, we should respond to a person where is is now not where he was long ago.

Would it not be scandalous if a teacher gave a 12th-grader a mark based on his work in the 9th grade? Every person is entitled to a fresh report card based on his

conduct and performance at this point in time.

How greatly you could enhance your peace of mind and happiness if you judged former enemies by their present attitudes and behavior only. Chances are that you could take most of their names off your little black list and restore many broken relationships.

## 2. A More Balanced Judgment

I would now like to urge you to consider a second approach to reconciliation: One of the greatest obstacles in personal relations is the loss of respect. When you have come to know a person in a situation or role which caused you to dispise him, this loss of respect inhibits a decent relationship.

Among my most private confessions of sin this Yom Kippur, is the misjudgment of people. I remember the bad opinion I had of several classmates while we attended school together. However, some 10 to 15 years afterward we all had scattered to different parts of the country, I was forced to totally revise my judgment of their character and ability. Far from being inept, hypercritical and obnoxious as I had onced judged them to be, I learned in the course of time that each had become a highly effective and dedicated rabbi who was widely respected and beloved in his community.

As a matter of fact, the one fellow student I most disliked later became my best friend and a prominent leader in our movement.

The point is not only that people change but that our judgment often lacks balance. In our rash conclusions we are often ignorant of certain positive qualities which more than offset the negatives. A fuller knowledge would lead to a more favorable

opinion. Therefore, we all must have another look at the person we once held in contempt and judge him anew at the point "Where he is" now -- not where he was sometime ago.

### **3. Consider the Redeeming Virtue**

A third and final step in coping with our resentments and hatreds is the realization that it is almost impossible to find a person who is totally evil. Even the worst have some redeeming value. This fact was unforgettably impressed upon me by a story told publicly at the recent "Faith in Humankind" conference in Washington at which 74 Gentile rescuers of Jews were honored at the U.S. State Department for their decency and courage.

This Gentile woman, Irene Gut, then barely 20, had come from a Gentile family in Poland. She wound up working for the German Occupation Army and was assigned to the home of a Nazi officer, a Major. At the same time she was given a job to run the laundry and prepare meals for German officers in a nearby factory. When she heard about the impending liquidation of all Jewish factory workers, 300 of them, she secretly passed word on to them and helped them escape to the forest. For eight months she secretly passed on food to the 300 stole ration cards for them, blankets and shoes.

One day she took in 12 new laundry workers, professional people, most of them medical students and businessmen. Knowing that they were also slated for execution, she smuggled them through a coal chute window into the cellar of the Nazi Major's own home. There she secretly maintained them for a while. One day she forgot to close the door and the major walked in without ringing the bell. He found 4 Jewish women there in his own sitting room. Now let me quote you Irene Gut's own words about what happened:

"To this day I see his eyes. . . his cheeks shaking. "How could you do it? he yelled, "you know what will happen to you. . ."

That day I had just witnessed the hanging of four people in the market square, 2 Jews and the 2 Poles who had been hiding them.

Pointing to the 4 women sitting in the Major's living room, she said: "They are my friends, I don't care what happens. I saw the people hanged today and if that's the way it is, so be it." I was crying.

"Tears came to his eyes." Irene, I couldn't do that to you." I was on my knees. I kissed his hands. So we went on, and he never asked how many people were in his cellar, he never saw them except the four women he had already seen. He got used to them, and left cookies and tea sometimes. They called him Grandpa after a while."

This story of the Nazi Major with a touch of compassion in his heart, suddenly awakened in me a personal memory which I had buried in my mind so eager to forget my own experience under Nazi Occupation. It was the dreaded knock on our door and when I opened the door stood a Nazi officer with polished boots, pistols and the swastika armband. I looked into his face and blinked. This was the young hoodlum who had no family or home but would sleep somewhere in the basement of our building, hang around for odd jobs to earn a few pennies. He looked at me and my parents with his steel blue eyes and said, "I have an order for your arrest." Instantly we thought of so many others who were arrested only to return as ashes in an urn of ashes. I was too stunned to say anything. Clearly, there was panic in the faces of my parents. The young man looked at us and

then said to me: "Crawl into your bed and I'll tell them that you were too sick to be transported."

With these words he turned around, slammed the door behind him and was never seen again by any of us.

I don't know how many he killed before he himself perished but I must remember him as one Nazi who saved my live.



## "CHANGE YOUR MIND"

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation

Yom Kippur, Kol Nidre Evening Service  
9 Tishri, 5745 - October 5, 1984

"This Is Your Life," once a top-rated TV program, has long ago become a popular feature of American folk ways. Across the nation at birthday and anniversary parties, family and friends delight in putting on a biographical review with dramatic skits and songs about the celebrant -- "This Is Your Life."

One of the best ways of getting into the spirit of this soul-searching day of Yom Kippur would be to improvise, in your mind right now, your own "This Is Your Life" story. What would be its highlights? Which of your achievements and victories would be worth remembering? Which defeats? Who were the most unforgettable characters in your life? Who influenced you? Who gave you your biggest break? Which family member, teacher, friend or associate played a major role, for better or worse, in your development as a person? What obstacles or crisis did you overcome? What is the best and what is the worst thing you have ever done? What are you still proud of and what remains an embarrassment to you when you think of it?

As you take stock of your, life from earliest childhood to this day, ask yourself: If you had your life to live over again, how would you do it differently?



An 85-year old lady, Nadine Stair, of Louisville, Kentucky, thought about it and gave the following answer:

"I'd dare to make more mistakes next time.

I'd relax.

I would limber up. . . .

I would take fewer things seriously.

I would take more chances.

I would take more trips.

I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers.

I would eat more ice cream and less beans.

I would, perhaps, have more actual troubles but I'd have fewer imaginary ones. . . ."

"I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies."

Very few of us have the courage or candor to tell what we would do if we had our life to live over again. Who knows how, with different decisions, you might have come out in the end? Maybe better, maybe worse. Anyway, fantasies about the might-have-beens of life are futile. There is no going back. The question you should ask tonight, the only useful question is:

How would you, in this New Year, live differently?

What changes would you make?

This is a time of teshuva, of turning around, of changing, correcting and improving our attitudes and character. One of our sages suggests that even God changes his mind, e.g., the way God changed his treatment of the child Ishmael. Abraham's other son. Ishmael, step-brother of Isaac, was a problem child. In the Bible's cryptic report of the problem in Genesis 21, we hear that the boy's behavior became so intolerable that Abraham's principal wife, Sarah, demanded that Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, be expelled from their household. Abraham was reluctant to do so but in the end was persuaded by God, who sided with Sarah, to drive Ishmael and Hagar out of the house and into the wilderness, with only bread and water. Soon, mother and son lost their way and, having no more food and drink, faced the bitter end. Tears streaming down her cheeks, Hagar laid down the whimpering child in the shade of one of the desert shrubs and prayed for help. Then, in the Bible's words:

"God heard the voice of the lad." After opening Hagar's eyes so that she would discover a well of water, God promised a great future for Ishmael. "For God heard the voice of the lad where he is."  
(Genesis 21.17)

Our rabbinic commentators focus on the words "Where he is." Previously, in Abraham's house, Ishmael had been a troublemaker who brought upon himself expulsion. But now, God looking at him again in his misery, "Where he is," and seeing in him, no longer a troublemaker but a helpless child near death in the desert, God changed and responded to his need in his present situation. The point:

Always respond to another person, always judge another person not where he was but where he is. Always give your family and your fellowman a second look and be ready to change your mind in the light of the new situation whatever it is.

The other day I saw a bumper sticker: "I don't get mad, I get even." It made me think how full this world is of resentment, grudges and plain hatred. As the a becomes encrusted with layers of barnacles harmful to its movement so we, too, in the voyage of life, become burdened by accumulations of negative feelings, resentments and grudges.

Almost every day we pick up some new irritation or annoyance, mostly minor but also major ones. Every frustration, every setback, every rejection is likely to turn into resentment and a desire to get even. In order to relieve the pressure of hostile feelings, we strike back at the presumed cause of our distress or, find another target, a scapegoat for retaliation and vengeance.

Common examples might be:

We burst into our home fuming from rush-hour tension and making the whole family suffer the fury of our frustration, or

We've had a bad day in the office and promptly discharge our pent-up anger upon spouse and children.

Whoever first spoke of "sweet vengeance" forgot to look at the price we pay for it. Vengeance is a terrible taskmaster. Who can count the number of people who are spending precious hours, hatching new schemes of revenge, sulking and nursing an old grudge?

What a liberation it would be for mankind if only we could draw the poison of revenge out of human nature.

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We are raising a central theme in Judaism. It goes to the core of our faith: the whole question of retribution and forgiveness, of justice and mercy -- and the nature of man. Basic to our discussion is the assumption that man can and must gain the upper hand over his instincts and act as a moral, rational being, guided by what is ethically right not by what comes naturally.

Let me suggest three steps in coping with this plague in our personal relations:

1. **Judge by the present record, not the past.**

A hassidic master said, we should take a lesson from our custom tailor: "Whenever I order a new suit, he doesn't cut it according to the previous pattern but, each time, he takes a fresh measure of my size. In shaping our attitude toward people, we must likewise take a fresh measure of the person at this point in his development and not judge him by previous patterns of behavior.

How sad to see grown up siblings perpetuate childhood rivalries and feuds which may have been real enough in the past but now only live on in memory? Why can't we bury the past and relate to one another in the light of new realities? How tragic it is when a child carries into maturity youthful resentment of parental control or mishandling long after the aging parent has lost both the power and desire to run the child's life. Why can't we see our parents as they are now, not as we remember them in the light of earlier conflicts?

I remember a dramatic incident at a wedding I once conducted for a young man whose father, I was told, would not attend and, therefore, was not invited. Why not? "Because," said the groom "We have had a complete falling out and I haven't spoken to him in 10 years."

"Do I have your permission to inform your father of the wedding?" I asked. -- "Do as you wish," answered the young man, "but it's a waste of time."

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eyes and said, "I have an order for your arrest." Instantly we thought of so many others who were arrested only to return as an urn of ashes. I was too stuned to say anything. Clearly, there was panic in the faces of my parents. The young man looked at us and then said to me: "Crawl into your bed and I'll tell them that you were too sick to be transported."

With these words he turned around, slammed the door behind him and was never seen again by any of us.

I don't know how many he killed before he himself perished but I must remember him as one Nazi who saved my life. There is some good in the worst of us.

#### Conclusion

You and I will not have the privilege of participating in the coming summit conferences for peace and international cooperation. But, in the immediate spheres of our lives, we can create small precincts of reconciliation and peace. The key is forgiveness which can unlock gates of alienation and resentment and liberate us from animosity.

May we go forth from this Yom Kippur night determined to reach out to those who have offended against us and whom we, too, have offended.

Reconciliation becomes possible when we judge our fellowman not by his past but by his present condition;

When we renew our respect for our fellowman as we see his faults in the fuller context of positive qualities as well;

And when we assume that there remains a redeeming virtue even in the most extreme of wrongdoers.

No one is beyond rehabilitation.

The story is told that one stormy night a stranger appeared outside the tent of Abraham and begged to be given shelter. Abraham let the man in, he was very old and poor. He invited him to his table, offered him food and when he had eaten and refreshed himself, Abraham suggested that he join with him in a prayer of thanksgiving to God. The stranger refused. "I am neither a believer nor a hypocrite," he said.

Greatly offended at the stranger's outburst and denial of God, Abraham grabbed him by the arm, shoved him out of his tent, and said: "I would not have a man such as you stay overnight in my tent."

No sooner had he done so, when Abraham heard the voice of God, "Abraham, Abraham, what have you done? This old man has denied and offended me daily, yet I tolerated him and provided food for him and kept him alive for 78 years -- and you would not give him shelter for a single night?"

Abraham rushed out into the stormy night and brought back the stranger to his tent and begged his forgiveness.

We, who impose upon God's indulgence, generosity and forgiveness every moment of our life, day-by-day, must show to one another at least a small portion of the love and forgiveness we receive so plentifully from our Maker. Amen.

Marked

THE GOLDEN FEATHER

A Story Sermonette for Yom Kippur

Retold By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation  
Yom Kippur, October 6, 1984

*Yom Kippur is a time when we do a great deal of listening. We learn when we listen. My story this morning will tell you about a boy who was saved from real trouble because he listened. It is the story of "The Golden Feather"*

The story is told about a wealthy man who had 12 sons. Eleven were clever but the 12th, the youngest, was considered to be simple and some even called him a fool. One day the father wanted to give to each of his sons a horse. He had 12 horses, 11 were handsome but the 12th was ugly. He allowed his sons to pick according to age. Naturally, the 11 older brothers chose each a handsome horse and the ugly, smaller horse was left for the youngest. He started to weep because of his bad luck but to his surprise, the horse suddenly talked to him: "If you will stop crying and listen to my advice, I will show you how to make me handsome too."

Now the boy was happy that he had a talking horse: "Of course I shall listen to you." he said.

"In that case," said the horse, get on my back let us ride together into the forest."

After a while they came to a fountain in the forest and the horse said: "Let me get wet under the waters of this fountain and then dry my coat and comb it, and I will become the handsomest horse of them all." The boy did as

told and was amazed how the horse came out of this treatment completely changed, a beautiful strong horse. Riding back to his home, the boy saw something on the ground that sparkled. He stopped the horse, dismounted and picked up the object and to his amazement, it was a golden feather.

*"Be careful. If you*

Just then the horse spoke up and said: "~~Don't~~<sup>^</sup> take that feather, ~~leave~~  
~~it where it lies, or~~ you will have many troubles."

For a moment, the boy hesitated. He had come to respect the wisdom of the horse but, on the other hand, he marvelled at the golden feather and how it reflected the brilliant sunlight. He had an idea: "I shall not keep this feather for myself but give it as a present to the King. He will be pleased and show it to all his friends in the palace."

He returned home, went to bed, dreamt about his golden feather and bright and early the next morning he rode to the palace, told guards that he had a special gift for the King and was quickly given permission to enter. The King's face lit up at the sight of the golden feather.



"Where did you get this from?" asked the king. The boy told him the truth that he had found it on the ground while riding on his horse. The King accepted the gift and to show his gratitude he said: "You are still very young, maybe 14 or 15 years of age, but I have people as young as you in my army and as your reward, I shall now make you Captain of my palace guards."

The boy was happy with his appointment and proudly appeared in his new uniform the very next day as Captain of the palace guards. But, the former Captain who was now replaced by this lucky boy, was very angry. He hated the boy and swore to get even with him. One day he had an opportunity of seeing the King and said: "Your new young Captain has given you a beautiful gift, the golden feather. But, how much more wonderful would be the bird from which it was taken? Isn't it strange that this young boy gave you a mere feather and kept the precious bird for himself?"

These words sowed suspicion in the mind of the King and made him angry. He called the boy and said to him: "I thank you for the gift of a feather, but now I want the bird. I am sure you have it hidden somewhere. Bring me the bird and you will receive an even greater reward. But, if you don't, your head will come off."

Now ~~for the first time~~ the boy realized how true were the words of his wise horse warning him against picking up the feather. But, it was too late now; how could he get hold of the bird?

~~That very night~~ <sup>The next day</sup>, as he combed the horse's mane and stroked its neck, the boy sighed and the horse realized that he was unhappy. "What happened to you?" asked the horse. The boy told everything as it happened and the horse said: "Did I not warn you against picking up the feather? But, don't lose hope, I know where the golden bird can be found."

The boy was happy to hear this and jumped for joy and said: "Let us waste no time. You will lead me to the golden bird and I will try to capture it, but let us hurry, for I must be back in three days or I will lose my life."

Then, the boy ran into the house, picked up a net and some food, hurried back to the stable, mounted the horse and went on his ride into the unknown.

The horse took him on a pathway he had never seen before. He rode a long, long time through the dark forest and then suddenly there was a wide open plain and in it a beautiful garden. There the horse said: "You must now get down and open the gate to this garden which is the home of the golden bird. In the middle of the garden there are two trees. One is the tree of life and the other is the tree of death. Both trees bear delicious apples which look alike. You must be very careful and pick the right tree and once you have found it, you must climb it. There, in the top of that tree of life, is the nest of the golden bird. Wait there and be very still, and when the golden bird comes, throw the net over it. But make sure that you do not let the golden bird escape because you will never have a second chance to capture it."

The boy listened carefully and then asked: "But how can I tell the tree of life from the tree of death if they are both alike?"

"You have asked a very good question," said the horse. "Look where the stem of the tree comes out of the ground and see if you can find another golden feather. Wherever you find the feather, that is the tree of life." . .  
"But, do me a favor, bring me one of those delicious apples when you come down from the tree."

The boy thanked the horse, walked over to the gates of the garden. In the middle of the garden he found the two trees just as the horse had said, each bearing beautiful apples. He approached both trees, looked carefully at each and could see no difference between them. Then he looked at the ground and, indeed, next to the stem of one of the trees he found a single golden feather glittering in the light. This was the tree of life. Quickly he climbed it, got to the top, saw the nest, held his net ready for the golden bird to arrive.

Suddenly there was a flash of light and the sound of beating wings and the golden bird landed on it, on a branch over the nest within reach of the boy. He remained very still, not even breathing, holding the net and suddenly the bird began to sing and the song was more beautiful than any he had ever heard. He didn't want the bird to stop singing and almost forgot why he was up there on the tree. Just as the bird was about to fly away again, the boy threw the net over it and captured it and brought it down. On the way down from the tree he remembered the horse's request and pulled down a beautiful apple. He hurried back to the horse and quickly mounted it and begged the horse to ride as fast as possible because time was running out. Then, he promised he would give the horse the apple as its reward. As soon as they returned to the palace. The boy, holding the golden bird in his net, got off the horse, stroked its neck and gave him the apple as promised. What happened now was hard to believe. The horse ate the apple and as he ate it was

transformed into an old man with the appearance of a prophet. The boy was surprised beyond words and asked the old man who he was, and he said that he was a rabbi who had been enchanted by a witch but that the apple from the tree of life had broken the spell.

Then the old man wished the boy good luck and walked with him to the gate of the palace. "Please wait for me," said the boy.

The boy was again admitted to the throne room and said, "Here, my King, is the golden bird." The King was overjoyed when he saw the gorgeous bird. It glistened. It was beautiful beyond words. He congratulated him and said: "Your reward for this beautiful gift will be a place in my family. I have a daughter your age, the Princess. When you are a little older, you may take her to be your wife."

The boy thanked the king, left the room, ran down the palace stairways and looked outside for the old man. He found him still standing and waiting.

He told him everything and then said: "Don't leave me. I need your good counsel and advice. You have helped so far and I know you will help me again."

And so it was. A few years later, the boy, now a fine young man, married the Princess and became the Prince. With the help of the old rabbi he did so well that before long he was called upon to become King himself. He always listened to the advice of the old rabbi. He ruled the land with wisdom for many years and gave his people a happy time of peace and plenty.

The people loved him and said: "Our King listens to everyone big or small." The old rabbi praised him with these words:

"When you were a boy and I was still a horse, you listened to me. You were <sup>modest</sup> ~~honest~~ enough to ask questions ~~when you don't know~~ and you patiently listened; that is how you have become wise, just as our rabbis have always said: "Who is wise? He who learns from everybody!" ~~Amen~~.

## "THIS HOUR OF MEETING"

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman  
Washington Hebrew Congregation

A Yom Kippur Yizkor Address  
10 Tishri, 5745 -- October 6, 1984

If our sacred calendar did not provide for such an hour of memorial, we would soon have to create it because we need this time to reflect on our memories. We need to understand better -- and if understanding fails us -- to accept better the mysterious law of life which takes back everything it gives. We need to be reassured that death and destruction shall not prevail; that the passage from life, which we call death, is not a final destination but a station on a journey which leads us back to the Source from which we came.

It was on an autumn day perhaps such as this one that the lyric poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, observed leaves falling from a tree and it saddened him. Are falling leaves a metaphor of life? Is a person just like a leaf, which ages and becomes brittle until a gust of wind twists it off the twig and it falls to the ground? In his poetic imagination, Rilke saw everything in the universe falling down, even stars after their seemingly endless orbits will, we are told, slow down and descend into some abyss. Is the whole world but one big disappearing act? Where does it all end?

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infinitely softly in His hands. (R.M. Rilke)

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For all of us this is a Memorial Hour, but our memories differ very much in quality.

For some, memory is painful, the equivalent of sorrow, laden with tears. They experience memory as the acknowledgement of a great loss and reminder of the void, the emptiness, the irretrievable loss.



Miss you, miss you, miss you;  
Everything I do  
Echoes with the laughter  
And the voice of you.

Miss you . . . .  
Everywhere I go  
There are poignant memories  
Dancing in a row,  
Silhouette and shadow  
Of your form and face

Substance and reality  
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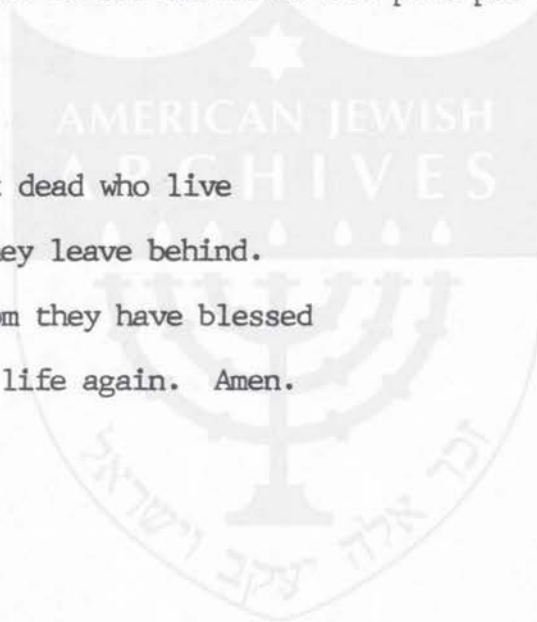
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~~Marked &  
Circled~~  
Done  
Baker

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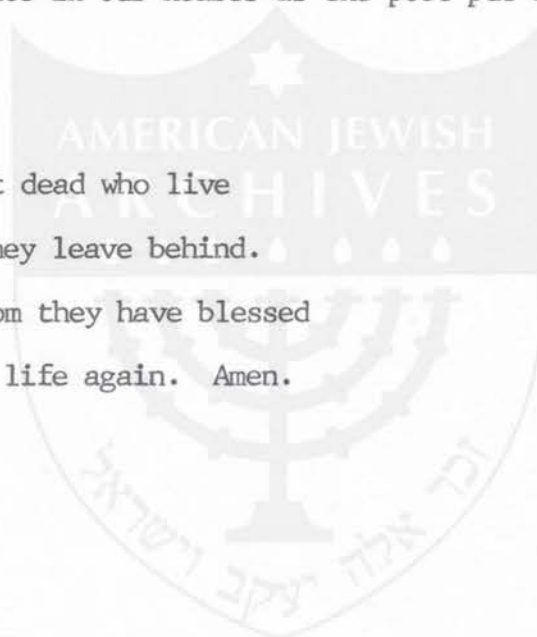
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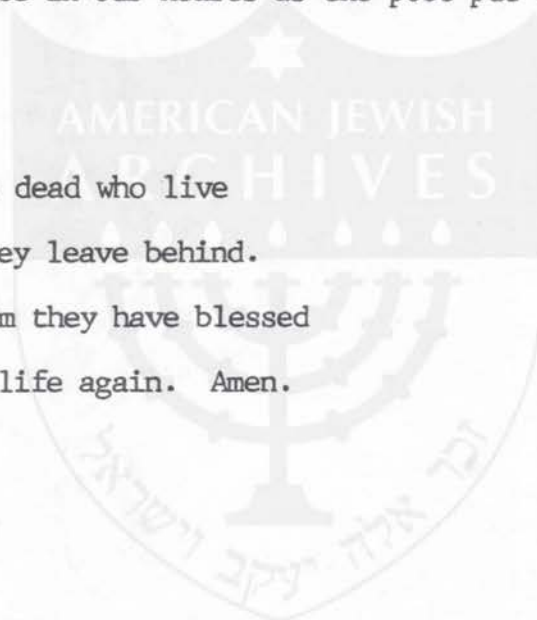
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Gosh Hosh or  
Jom Hippien Serun 1984

WHO IS A GOOD JEW?

None of our sages <sup>not</sup> even the most religious  
could dare say of themselves

"I am a good Jew"

① A good Jew is good  
A good Jew must also be a good person  
but is not always <sup>ethical</sup> so

not because Judaism is not voluntary  
him to be a good person but because  
even the best of Jews <sup>being human</sup> afflicted with

<sup>The shame</sup> of religiously scrupulous & ethically lenient  
the weaknesses of the flesh & the spirit

② A good Jew must be a believer  
Spiritual

③ A good Jew recognizes his people's claim  
on him

A good Jew must love his people  
— not for mankind less but

surely he must care for his people  
& feel responsible for them & show it  
in (a) generosity & (b) active sharing of community life →

He wants his people to survive —  
keep alive the tradition —

e.g. Stand in Silent Vigil etc  
Read Jewish News  
have opinions & assert  
them on Israel etc

Also a good Jew must respect  
fellow Jews of other branches

---

Q #2: How does one  
become a moral person?  
How is the "good" determined?

---

Agood citizens votes —  
So a good Jew asserts preference  
for a certain way in every  
situation — i.e. a good Jew  
votes every day & many times each  
day — he throws his weight on the  
side of what he perceives to be right  
against wrong.

# Step-by-Step Rejudazing

## How do you become a real Jew?

Not just a "proud to be a Jew" Jew

Not just a Jew by soc. association  
an "one crowd" Jew

but one who believes and practices  
a distinctively Jewish way of life

① Identify - if orthodox, by yarmulke; others  
by star-of-David, mezuzah  
Mark home with MIBN

② <sup>Jewish</sup> Consciousness raising —  
Not just adopting a few ceremonial routines  
- e.g. - light Sabbath candles - or (C'ZIM)  
but turning all of life into a search for

③ Study - regular and with guidance  
of teacher you respect -  
Through study you gain spiritual  
Companions from among the sages of  
Israel

④ Pursuit of MIBN



WILLIAMSBURG CONFERENCE CENTER

⑤ The Company you keep - Community

# How Do I Renew Myself as a Jew?

① Begin with an attitude - i.e. that you cannot properly live by your own, limited experience & wisdom, that you need to plug in on your people's mind & historical experience

② Get a companion - and a teacher  
Assoc. with fellow seekers  
& throughout life draw near a teacher - just as honestly as you pick a family doctor

To study as to appropriate the  
Memory of Israel



# High Holy Days 1984

## ① Commitment

Why was Kafka so frustrated as a Jew?

Kafka's Letter to his father: Judaism is NOT A SALUTE <sup>Polite</sup>  
Judaism is NOT A SPECTATOR'S  
SPORT

What kind of Judaism did Kafka hope for?

What Commitments are we talking about? Commitments to what?

## ② WHO IS A GOOD JEW ~

## ③ WHY TORAH WHAT IS TORAH?

Commitment - Who is a <sup>good</sup> Jew?

A good Jew may be defined by his  
Commitments - ie one who rises  
above level of being Jewish by birth (chance)  
& turns it into a matter of choice  
privilege & pride

Commitment to Torah  
you & the Bible

Commitment to our History: not to betray reality  
of our past - to live up to dignity of Israel  
to uphold Jewish honor - to live up to great  
Jewish models -  
Therefore a Jew must know his people's  
history

Story : I've got a bigger surprise  
then they had heard

Jewish news  
(ATP ~~what~~ on I'm  
a ~~unpublished~~ set)

Today they assert  
their Jewish news to not  
they have nothing to  
assert in the  
Content



~~Retirement~~

~~I reached my goals  
— and now I have  
a different set of  
goals~~

~~R H Slomer~~

Why would many people who  
read work 2 Because the  
Because the Jew who  
is like O'Donnell 13 & 14 are





Holy Theme Seminar 1984

---

What is TORAH?  
What is a MITZVAH?

A Torah-law

In Orthodoxy &  
In Reform

Which commandments  
are still binding

# Who is A Good Jew?

He is either religious - or acts & lives as would the religious Jew, i.e. he follows his people's way of life.

A good Jew brings to his people's culture - way of life - the passion & curiosity of a collector. Whatever he finds out about his people becomes part of his mental collection.

Education A Good Jew commits his family - esp. children to his people.

A Good Jew is God's Witness - not neutral but spokesman, promoter of God's will for man.

A Good Jew is reverent Openy of 2178 / 1016:  
"Consider yourself in presence of King of Kings always"

High Holy Days 1984

WHAT IS TORAH?

Commitment / or Who is A Good Jew?

TO TRADITION - Declaration refers to

"a decent respect for the opinion of mankind..."  
ie recognition of a certain moral order in world  
— the Jew has a decent respect for the opinions of  
his (ancesters) posterity

In asking which is the right way? he will not  
answer purely by giving his own opinion off the  
top of his head — but try to recall the way  
of his people their experience & the words of  
that higher inspiration or Higher Will which was  
experienced by prophets & sages as God's word

"Study of Torah is Thinking God's Thoughts"  
an informed

TORAH is the search for conscience.

How easy it is to declare something right or wrong  
yielding to one's own <sup>self</sup> interest, preference or desire.  
The Jew does not follow his own conscience only  
but his & his people's conscience  
Torah then, is a knowledge of his people's experience  
It is recognition of our belonging, identity, to <sup>Jewish</sup> Community

Study of Torah is not just education, the  
search for knowledge in general

There is a big difference between going to the library

to read something for the expansion of  
your knowledge — and study of Torah

True mind enrichment is the pursuit of knowledge  
without any obligation to act by it or be  
influenced by it — After reading 2000  
books in the Public Library you can say  
"very interesting" — and that's that.

Study of Torah is study with commitment to  
be guided by it.

Torah is not just a book it is a  
program — and the Torah Jew wants  
to be programmed

Holds

**FAITH**

The Jew brings to Torah the faith  
that either it is word of God (Revelation)  
or that man it is word of God (Revelation)

Torah implies belief in a God-man (Moses)  
i.e. Revelation

Saying: When I pray, I speak to God but  
When I study Torah God speaks to me

10 Why I am a Jew What have we got that Muslims & Christians Don't have? Don't the Bible also belong to them?

11 Yes - they can read. Anybody can read it but it (speaks) is addressed directly only to us - and indirectly to others in so far as others are free to listen. It is addressed to us & our children & children's children to it forever.

12 We are the only people in history to have actually shaped a morality & way of life

Christians read the Torah as we do - but more is made today for the NT says Follow me.

13 Bible (it) True?

14 Does God speak - how?

15 Does God speak to us today (Babel - yes)