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Yizhar Topic
2001

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Before the Closing
of the Gates

It is not too late
to — — —

THE WAYS OF SELF-RENEWAL

by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

Rosh Hashanah, Sept.18, 2001

At Washington Hebrew Congregation

We have all been in shock since Sept. 11 and mesmerized by all the TV pictures and reports of the terrorist assault on our country. Horror and pity filled our hearts as the number of victims swelled from the hundreds to the thousands; but after all the groaning and hand-wringing and spasms of fear, the fact remains that, as individuals, we can do nothing against such attacks. The individual's scope of action is extremely limited. The notion of changing the world or influencing world affairs, as an individual, is an adolescent fantasy. As we mature we find out that the individual can have an effective influence only on his own family, a circle of friends and less so on the community or a wider circle of people. But, there is one person whom you can influence the most and that is yourself, by shaping your own personality. A lovingly critical partner can be a great help. My own dear wife, Maxine, in the 57 years of our marriage, never missed an opportunity to make suggestions for my improvement.

With the exception of a rare genius, like Albert Einstein, or great inventor or explorer, the rest of us can improve the world just a tiny little bit to the extent that we can improve ourselves. Therefore, my theme today is self-renewal, the remaking of yourself.

The challenge of Rosh Hashanah is to make a new beginning. When the Torah is returned to the Ark, we chant the words "chadesh yameynu" "renew our days." Every day can be a time for self-renewal. Think of a new beginning in the way you spend your time, a new beginning in your marriage, in how you relate to your children, in your career and in the cultivation of your mind.

Superficially, we all engage constantly in some kind of self-renewal: changing clothes, dieting, exercise and contributing to the multibillion dollar cosmetic business to improve our appearance.

On a more profound level, self-renewal is forced upon us. The psychologist, Gordon Allport of Harvard, in his study "The Individual and His Religion" wrote a few pages about our changing self-image and aspirations at various stages in life. I was struck by his comparison of youth in the twenties with adults in their thirties and older. The average college graduate in the twenties is bursting with eagerness to try his or her own way, free of parental control and their code of conduct.

At that point of life, the young man or woman has not yet had the rude shock that comes to nearly all adults when they first realize that their abilities are not likely to equal their aims and pretensions.

It is often in the thirties and forties that one decides that the parental model is, after all, not a bad one to follow. Then, the task of self-renewal boils down to accepting one's limitations and making the best of it. But you can't do it unless you are brutally honest with yourself.

The founder of the Chassidic movement, known by the acronym "the Besht" was once visited by a follower with the complaint "I have labored hard and long in the service of God. Yet I see no improvement. I am still an ordinary and ignorant person." The Besht answered: "You have gained the realization that you are ordinary and ignorant, and this in itself is a worthy accomplishment."

The confessional prayers of our high holy day services are meant to prompt us to make an honest self-appraisal as pre-condition for self-renewal. But I fear that the recitation of the printed confessions is for most of us more of a mumbling routine, lip-service rather than a heartfelt expression of our feelings. Do you recognize your shortcomings, failings and hypocrisies? Are you serious about discarding that part of yourself which you must despise? Are you ready for decisions that lead to a new and better self?

Shakespeare admonishes us in Hamlet through the mouth of Polonius: "To thine own self be true" – a noble motto for life, -- but there is a problem: Which self shall we uphold? The human self is a composite: There is the violent self, the submissive self, the altruistic self, the greedy self and the vain, self-inflating self, --to mention but a few.

This suggests the major task, perhaps the very purpose of our life: to create and maintain the best possible self, and keep in check all the forces, impulses and temptations which would degrade us. Jewish tradition is very much aware of our human corruptibility. In my daily morning prayers, there is one in which I ask God not to let us fall into the power of error, transgression and sin nor let the evil inclination rule over us. We ask God to help us cling to our good impulses. We all walk on the brink of evil. Every day we must strengthen ourselves in resistance to wrong doing. We are bidden to immerse ourselves daily in the study of Torah so that we can make "informed" choices in life and renew that part of ourselves we may call good. This always involves the rejection and discard of that other part of ourselves which stands in the way of our new vision of the kind of person we want to be.

Some surprising changes may result from such self-renewal. Who could have imagined that the former queen of the flower-girls of the 60s, adored by admirers and reviled by others as "radical chick," the thrice married actress Jane Fonda would move from far left

politics to profitable body culture and to an even more profitable marriage with the multibillionaire, Ted Turner. But then, after the break-up of that marriage, to the surprise of many, Jane Fonda became a born again Christian.

How typical is the return to religion at the final stage of life, from the 60s to the 80s and beyond? Although many elderly are seen at worship services, one must not generalize. I have known oldsters who were skeptics, even atheists. However, the stage of life we call "old age" brings to us insights conducive to a religious perspective in life.

Consider just one aspect of self-renewal, from childhood to old age: The will and ability to control: As young children we submit to parental control. Then come the rebellious adolescent years in which we assert our own will in clashes with one or both parents.

As young adults, we take control of ourselves and even try to control others. At times we fight to have our way because "having our way" spells freedom.

With maturity comes the realization of limits to our freedom and power. It becomes clear that we can't get all we want and often what we get is not what we want. Slowly and painfully, we learn to submit to circumstances not of our choosing, to the will of others, the will of a spouse, an associate or superior in the work place. We come to appreciate the adage of Jewish

wisdom: "Don't be like an oak tree, rigid and unbending but rather like the willow. Comes a storm, the unbending oak tree will be overturned but the willow will sway unharmed with the wind.

Set-backs in health and chronic illness teach us the bitter lesson of submission. Self-renewal for the elderly must begin with the acceptance of greatly diminished power and control. It is only at that late stage in life that some of us realize the truth of that ancient prayer: "What are we? What is our life? What our power, our might? The famous as though they had never been and the wise as if without knowledge?" As bereavements,, losses and pains outweigh pleasures, it will dawn upon you that your existence, such as it is, was not your idea but that you were put into this world by a will other than your own and under conditions not of your choosing and for a purpose you cannot fathom. You are subject to the Creator and there is no alternative to submission.

I have referred to the losing streak that goes with aging. However, at every stage of life, even in old age, we incur not only losses but also score gains. What are some of the compensatory gains of old age to be integrated in a new self?

It is the time to sweep out of your life trivial pursuits and re-enter the halls of learning. The journalist I.F.Stone, after his retirement in his mid-seventies took up the study of Greek at American

University so that he might read Aristotle and Plato in the original. Mature Jewish adults throughout the world are now filling the gaps of their Jewish knowledge in classes taught by master teachers. The elderly are uniquely qualified to act as the center of their extended family whose members are scattered from coast to coast and abroad. Grandparents usually are the principal contact with all the branches of the family tree and strengthen the ties that bind you together.

No matter how old you are, you are never a finished product. Life demands the constant re-making of yourself to meet new situations and needs. If there is a purpose to life, self-renewal must come close to it. For, remember, you are one of a kind; God created you to become fully YOU, refined, improved, developing the best there is in you.

Benjamin Franklin, wrote this epitaph to be inscribed on his graveside:

“The body of Benjamin Franklin (like the cover of an old book, its contents torn and stripped of its lettering) lies here..it will (as he believed) appear once more in a new and more elegant edition, revised and corrected by the Author”

Our task and purpose in life is to do the revising and correcting of the self as we go along, day by day and year by year, until God chooses to return us for new life in a new edition.

1st draft

BEFORE THE CLOSING OF THE GATES

YIZKOR-YOM KIPPUR

Sept. 27, 2001

At Washington Hebrew Congregation

by Joshua O. Haberman

The mood of this hour is unlike any of our various holidays and festivals. It is a mix of nostalgia, as we remember dear ones, but also of dark and somber thoughts as we face the mystery of death. There is anxiety in contemplation of the inevitable but also a measure of hope and consolation in speculations about the hereafter ~~in which~~ ^{will always} reason and faith wrestle with wishful thinking.

Whatever our age, we are moving toward "neilah," The closing of the gates, the phrase which gives the final portion of Yom Kippur its name: Neilah, the end, the conclusion.

The Neilah mood is broken in a remarkable, brief prayer

“Open unto us a gate at the time of the closing of the gates.” When one door is closed usually another is opened. You may not at the age of 60 run as well as you did at 20 but you have a far better understanding of people, wider knowledge and deeper insight that make for wisdom. The Nobel laureate Hermann Hesse wrote: “Aging is not just decline and deterioration; every stage of life has its own magic, its own wisdom, its own sadness.” If at this point in your life you must part with certain interests, new challenges may open up for you. It is not too late to redirect your life toward new goals; it is not too late to dust off undertakings and projects on which you once set your heart but had to put on a shelf. It is not too late to do what you once wanted to do.

Grandma Moses in her eighties developed the long suppressed artist within her. The mother of Rabbi Gunther Plaut of Toronto entered college at the age of 96 and fulfilled her dream of a college degree a the age of 100.

As we grow older we accumulate satisfactions but also regrets. Most painful among these are our mishandled relationships, the ill treatment of a child, parent or other family member. Who is to be blamed is notis not important . What matters is the will to heal the hurt and end the estrangement. Repair relationships before the closing of the gates. It is never too late to show generosity and love to those whom we neglected in their hour of need.

Much to be pitied are those who embitter their latter years with thoughts of settling scores or getting

even. Resentment is a self-destructive poison. Forget and forgive. Reconciliation is not a gift to the other but to yourself. It ^{is} the gift of serenity and inner peace.

You might well review your opinion of others before the closing of the gates. Perhaps you were mistaken in your disapproval or under-estimation of the other person; I had a class mate in high school whom many of us considered the dumbest kid in class. When I saw him again after the passage of some 20 years, I found out that he had earned his PhD and developed a highly successful pharmaceutical company.

Very often we wrongly suspect someone of evil motives and intentions or hold much too low an opinion of that person. It is not too late to change your mind and develop a better relationship with that person.

It all adds up to the one freedom that is ours to the last moment of our life and that is the power to change ourself, our attitude, our thoughts. It is the ultimate challenge of Yom Kippur: “T’shuvah,” literally meaning, “turning around.” You still have time before the closing of the gates to correct mistakes, to undo wrong, to wipe out guilt, to mend and restore relationships, as Longfellow put it:

Nothing is too late

Till the tired heart shall

Cease to palpitate

For age is opportunity no less

Than youth itself.

BEFORE THE CLOSING OF THE GATES

Yizkor-Yom Kippur, Sept. 27 2001
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There are prayers whose relevance does not strike us until we are shaken by events that turn our world topsy-turvy.

One such prayer is the “Unetaneh tokef” which means “We mightily affirm.” It speaks of the uncertainty and vulnerability of life. This truth burst upon us on that fateful day of September 11. As the prayer says, we do not know from one day to the next “Who shall live and who shall die, who shall see ripe age and who shall not; who shall perish by fire and who by water... who by earthquake and who by plague.... who shall be secure and who shall tremble....”

Usually this hour is given to our most private memories and concerns. Today, our thoughts reach out in compassion to the more than 6,400 sorrowing families, suddenly shattered by an unimaginable atrocity.

What happened to so many inescapably turns into a very personal question about our individual existence. Each of us must cope with dark and somber thoughts as we face the mystery of death. We listen to words of consolation; to reassuring hopes of some continuation in a hereafter, even as our reason wrestles with faith –or is it wishful thinking?



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The logo for the American Jewish Archives is a shield-shaped emblem. At the top center of the shield is a five-pointed star. Below the star, the words "AMERICAN JEWISH" are written in a serif font, and "ARCHIVES" is written in a larger, bold serif font below that. The shield has a decorative, slightly scalloped top edge.

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

What remains of those we loved so much? A beloved spouse, a precious child, a parent? Shall we meet again in that mysterious “beyond” we call the “hereafter”? What kind of meeting can spirits without body have? How will they identify each other? What feelings or emotions are spirits capable of?

In the interview with the novelist Cynthia Ozick, as recorded in my book, The God I Believe in, we talked about belief in the hereafter which she categorically denied. But, then, she added these touching words: “It’s a fantasy of paradise. I would like so much to have my mother catch up on things. I would like to sit with my mother and tell her everything.” (p.167)

Don’t we all, at times, wish our parents were still alive to see what we have made of ourselves and

celebrate with us the important life cycle events in our family? And when facing a crisis, don't we invoke the memory of parents wondering how they would have handled the matter ?

A friend of ours tells us that she talks to her deceased mother every day. Is hers a monologue or dialogue? We shall never know. Death ends a presence but not a relationship. In remembrance, the survivor continues to build and rebuild the relationship with the departed.

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September 26, 2001

Redemption: A Classic Reconstructionist Perspective

A few moments ago we recited u'netaneh tokef, the centerpiece of our Yom Kippur liturgy. It depicts God as writing each of our fates during the coming year in the Book of Life. If u'netaneh tokef had not leapt off the page for you in the past, surely it did this year. Our hearts are riven with grief for the men and women whose lives were snuffed out without warning, indeed, without any visible rhyme or reason by men who apparently draped themselves in the garment of fundamentalist Islam.

For the moment, these demons have robbed us of our sense of equanimity, our comfortable expectations for the morrow. We have been afforded a glimpse of Armageddon, some of us in person, and the rest of us over and over again through the "magic" of television. You don't need me to underscore the Biblical text, woven into the liturgy of this day, that compares life to the grass that withers, to the blossom that fades, to the shadow that passes.

Like the holocaust, the horror perpetrated upon Lower Manhattan and the Pentagon from which we are only now beginning to recover is an example of absolute moral evil. Everyone in America, except Susan Sontag, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell, sees that and so do many, many others throughout the world----including some who are decidedly hostile to the United States. Does our faith, our Jewish heritage, offer any consolation in a moment like this? I think so.

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Our people has always expected redemption, and we still celebrate that hope. When Shabbat or a holiday ends with Havdallah we sing of Eliyahu Ha Navi, Elijah the prophet. [sing portion] Translated, it means Elijah the Prophet, may he come with the Messiah soon and in our day, which, given the context, means in the coming week. On Passover, too, we open the doors of our homes and sing Elijah's song, symbolizing our hope that we may once again be redeemed as we were at the Reed Sea.

In the Biblical story Elijah is a miracle worker. He marvelously healed the sick and saved a starving widow, among other things. In medieval Jewish folklore, he mysteriously appears at critical moments to rescue the poor and the imperilled. More important, Elijah did not die. Rather, a chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire parted him from his disciple, Elisha, and Elijah "went up by a windstorm to the sky." Because he was lifted bodily up to heaven, at some point Jews began to imagine that he would one day return to herald the Messiah.

Elijah also appears in a prayer in our Reform High Holiday prayer book. Significantly, however, we did not recite that prayer, and it remains in the Gates of Repentance only as part of an "alternative" set of haftarah blessings. Apparently, the idea that God will one day send a messiah, an anointed one, to redeem mankind is no longer as central to our faith as it once was. Nevertheless, we cannot live without hope. So I want to suggest an alternative reading of the Elijah narrative which may help us continue to draw strength from him as a

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symbol of our hope for the redemption of humankind, a redemption in which we firmly believe.

Just before Elijah died, Elishah, his disciple, begged Elijah to confer a double portion of his spirit upon him. When Elijah was snatched up, Elishah saw Elijah's mantle on the ground, the same mantle with which he had earlier parted the Jordan river, and placed it upon his own shoulders. Elishah then became a great prophet in Israel. To me, the meaning of this story is that the spirit of Elijah, the spirit of the prophets, lives on, but that is for us, the living, to pick up the prophetic mantle.

Let me tell you another story, a contemporary one. Last August, in the midst of the Intifada, a forty-seven-year-old American born Israeli doctor and his teenage daughter went on a vacation in Tanzania. He was determined to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, and he did. But, alas, on the way down he suffered a heart attack and, sadly died. His body was flown to Ranana, Israel, for burial. After the funeral, the family and his close friends were gathered for the meal of consolation, when there came a knock on the front door. When the door was opened there stood a Palestinian man, his wife, their son, a toddler, and a Christian missionary from Gaza. They had journeyed from Gaza to attend the funeral, but they had been delayed at the Erez checkpoint and had just now arrived in Ranana. In Arabic, haltingly translated, they explained that six months before the doctor, whose name was Ami Cohen, had operated on the gravely ill child's heart, and given him an

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incomparable gift: life. The child's parents, with their son, and the missionary who had arranged for the operation, had come to pay their respects to this modern day Elijah. For Ami Cohen, who was born in Silver Spring and graduated from Johns Hopkins College, had created a team of heart surgeons, mostly in Israel, to operate without fee on children from around the world who needed heart surgery. He also founded the "Save A Child's Heart Foundation" to provide transportation to Israel and an administrative structure to support this lifesaving work. Since 1995 Ami Cohen and his colleagues have operated on more than 700 children from Vietnam and China through Europe and around Africa, to Ecuador, including, among other places, Palestinian administered territories and Jordan. Ami Cohen is one of those who picked up Elijah's mantle.

And then there is Felicia Bryn, a south Florida woman in her sixties and a teacher of high school math and computer science. In 1993 Russian Jewish immigrants began to arrive in South Florida. Some of the middle-aged Russians had been professionals but were unable to practice their professions here for all the usual reasons. The organized Jewish community lent the Russians a hand for six months after their arrival, but after that they floundered.

Moved by their plight, Felicia Bryn decided to switch to part time status so she could help them. She and a friend who owned a health care agency developed a course, which Felicia Bryn, who

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speaks Russian, could teach to enable Russians to obtain certification as home health care aides. None had ever done this menial work which paid \$6.00 an hour or less. The new immigrants were afraid they would be unable to pass the written exams and to get and hold jobs in strangers' homes, but Bryn's passionate enthusiasm won them over. At the end of the training, she administered the exams and translated the questions. Not surprisingly, everyone passed. With some friends, she set up a volunteer employment service (which she and they maintain to this day) to match the home health aides with Americans who need them.

Their immediate income needs met, the doctors and engineers among the immigrants worked nights to take courses and become licensed here. At the same time, Felicia Bryn raised money for scholarships for the youngsters at a local Jewish Day School where they could get better educations, and, not incidentally, learn how to be Jews, something they had not learned in the Soviet Union. She also arranged seders, holiday foods, and religious services for the immigrants. She still does.

Today, Felicia Bryn told me, the average income of the 300-400 people she has helped is between \$80,000-100,00, buoyed by those now working as doctors, engineers, registered nurses, automobile mechanics. Some of the brighter children have now gone off to College. She and the others are still helping the older immigrants with social security, welfare, and immigration problems. They do all of this

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without pay.

This true story is even more remarkable because Felicia Bryn did not have a normal, happy childhood. She is a Warsaw holocaust survivor. Her earliest memories are terrifying. She recalls learning of her mother's death from typhus when Felicia, at the age of four, was taken to see her mother's naked body lying on a board, surrounded by hundreds of other dead Jews whom there had been no time to bury. Later on, when the Nazis came for everyone in her block, she recalls her aunt pushing her and her screaming brother into an air tight coal box, closing it, putting a jar of water on top, and then running away to hide herself. Felicia, who was four at the time, rammed her fist into her brother's mouth as the Germans approached. They did not search the coal box. Imagine the terror she felt!

Felicia Bryn inherited two priceless gifts from her father, a physician, and her mother, the daughter of a famous rabbi. She had a quick mind and blonde hair. After the Nazis came, her father had slipped into Aryan Warsaw and started a black market business to get food for his family, who with the other Warsaw Jews, were being systematically and deliberately starved to death.

As the Nazis began exterminating the remaining Warsaw Jews, Felicia Bryn's father managed to arrange her escape. Felicia's aunt told her that she must go to her grandmother in a town where Felicia knew she had no relative, that she was to assume the family name Garbarczyk and that she must quickly learn Catholic prayers. The

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aunt asked her if she remembered Shirley Temple, the bright, cute little blonde American child actress who was about Felicia's age. Her aunt said her life depended upon her assuming the role of a smiling and cute child, becoming Shirley Temple. Though only five, Felicia understood.

Shortly thereafter, a stranger came for her, and guided her out of the ghetto. Later, on the train to her new home, the Nazis came with vicious dogs to sniff out Jews. When they found one, the Nazis would loose the dogs upon him or her while the rest of the passengers laughed. Bryn, remembering she had to act her part, laughed too. Eventually, she reached her destination, the home of a childless Polish farm couple to whom her father had promised great wealth if they shielded his daughter. The family was Catholic, and she was taught to be a Catholic with the other children her age in the area. In time, they came to love her. Because she looked so Aryan, the German soldiers never dreamed the child was Jewish.

Felicia Bryn maintained her Shirley Temple disguise throughout the war and during the Russia occupation until 1957 when an Israeli official, alerted by a distant relative, contacted her and offered her an opportunity to emigrate. By then she was nineteen, and, despite the entreaties of her loving guardians made aliyah so that at last she could come out of hiding. It was not so simple. Among other things, she spoke no Hebrew and arrived wearing a cross. She remained an outsider. Nevertheless, despite having to be hospitalized for depression

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and her haunted past, Bryn eventually married another survivor, bore three children, and came here.

When asked why she devoted the waning years of her working life to helping immigrants, she replied: God helped me. He saved me during the holocaust, and I wanted to give something back.

Astounding. Felicia Bryn, like Ami Cohen, picked up Elijah's mantle.

The lives of Felicia Bryn, Dr. Ami Cohen, and millions of other good people testify eloquently that the yetzer hatov, the impulse to goodness in human beings is a reflection of God's presence or, if you prefer, of godliness in our world. But the rabbis understood that we humans have another impulse, the yetzer hara, the evil inclination. Our minds and hearts are filled with the image and the reality of the immense destructive power of the yetzer ha ra when it is freed, as it was in those nineteen demons, from the struggle with the yetzer ha tov. In the teeth of such an outrage it seems almost too much for us to ask for forgiveness for our sins. In moments like this in the past, indeed, some of our greatest figures have cried out to God on Yom Kippur, demanding that He atone else how could we? To quote one of them, "Is this the fulfillment of some divine purpose? "That humans should share the chance fate of fishes caught in nets by fishermen?", fishermen who are nothing but a wild horde of brute men"?

I believe the answer is "no." Rather, I believe with every bone in my body that the yetzer ha Tov is God's gift to humanity and that it

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is stronger than the yetzer ha Ra, and that, as Mordecai Kaplan wrote when the awful dimensions of the holocaust were just becoming clear, “the impious men, their powers shall fail them if they who profess righteousness will live by their faith.” The powers of love and empathy, could redeem the suffering of the human race if we could but free it from the struggle with the yetzer ha ra. And I believe we must and that we will. I cannot prove that assertion, although there is some evidence for it, and the remarkable story of Felicia Bryn, who rose Elijah-like out of the ashes of the holocaust and stretched out a helping hand to flailing Russian immigrants is surely suggestive. No, belief in the possibility of redemption is a statement of faith, grounded in amazement at the goodness that appears unexpectedly in the lives of human beings and in human history, but going beyond observation, and entitled to the same respectful attention as faith in a supernatural Messiah. Like Felicia Bryn, I do not focus on the horror of slavery, but on the godly determination of our American ancestors from the outset of our union to put an end to it. And just as Elijah symbolized the faith in redemption for our Jewish ancestors, so Elisha’s picking up his mantle does for me.

If we Americans draw upon God’s gift of goodness in the years of struggle ahead we shall remain united and be able to forge essential alliances, and thus eventually destroy our elusive, malevolent, and cunning foe. May God give the American people and its leaders the strength to act upon the best that is in us and not to succumb to the

September 26, 2001

temptation to emulate the demonic example that our enemies have set.

Which brings me back to the fundamental theme of our Yom Kippur fast. Our self-examination, our determination to seek forgiveness from our neighbors and from God for the wrongs we have committed, our firm resolve to do better in the year ahead is the intimate aspect of the same struggle that we must wage world-wide, the struggle to free the yetzer ha tov, the inclination towards goodness. In the year ahead we will need to comfort one another, to assuage each other's fears, to strengthen each other's resolve, as we Jews have always sought to do. For that, we must earnestly repent and not repeat the sins that estrange us from one another, the sins listed in our prayer book and for which we have asked forgiveness. May our resolve to *live* by our faith in the year 5,762 be strengthened by our prayers and by the fellowship we have shared this day so that when, please God, we assemble to re-enact these sacred rites again next year, whatever our trials, we will be more righteous and more loving than we have been in the year just ended. Ken y'hi ratzon, may it be God's will—and may our descendants see the redemption our ancestors fervently sought when they bade Elijah come speedily and in our day.

L'shanah tovah techateimu.

BEFORE THE CLOSING OF THE GATES

Yizkor-Yom Kippur, Sept. 27 2001
At Washington Hebrew Congregation
by Joshua O. Haberman

There are prayers whose relevance does not ~~strike us~~ ^{sink in,}
until we are shaken by events that turn our world topsy-turvy.

One such prayer is the “Unetaneh tokef” which means
”We mightily affirm.” It speaks of the uncertainty and
vulnerability of life. This truth burst upon us on that
fateful day of September 11. As the prayer says, we do
not know from one day to the next “Who shall live and
who shall die, who shall see ripe age and who shall not;
who shall perish by fire and who by water... who by
earthquake and who by plague....
who shall be secure and who shall tremble....”

Usually this hour is given to our most private memories and concerns. Today, our thoughts reach out in compassion to the more than 6,400 sorrowing families, suddenly shattered by an unimaginable atrocity.

What happened to so many inescapably turns into a very personal question about our individual existence. Each of us must cope with dark and somber thoughts as we face the mystery of death. We listen to words of consolation; to reassuring hopes of some continuation in a hereafter, even as our reason wrestles with faith –or is it wishful thinking?

What remains of those we loved so much? *A beloved spouse, a precious child, a parent?*

Shall we meet again in that mysterious “beyond” we call the “hereafter”? What kind of meeting can spirits without body have? How will they identify each other? What feelings or emotions are spirits capable of?

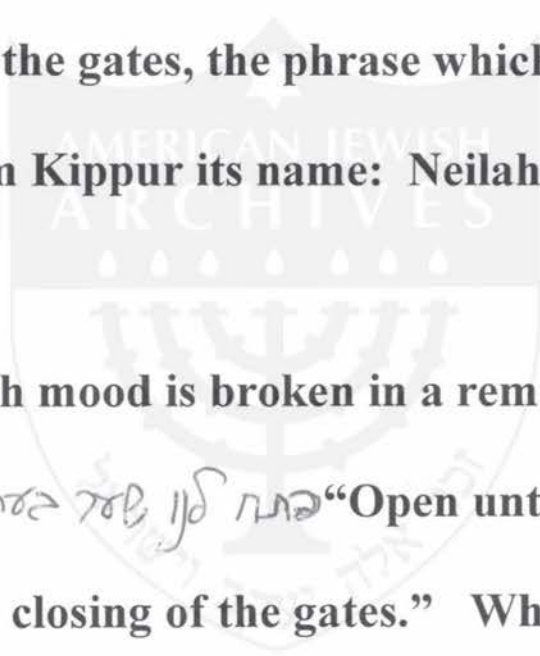
In the interview with the novelist Cynthia Ozick, as recorded in my book, The God I Believe in, we talked about belief in the hereafter which she categorically denied. But, then, she added these touching words: “It’s a fantasy of paradise. I would like so much to have my mother catch up on things. I would like to sit with my mother and tell her everything.” (p.167)

Don’t we all, at times, wish our parents were still alive to see what we have made of ourselves and celebrate with us the important life cycle events in our family? And when facing a crisis, don’t we invoke the memory of parents wondering how they would have handled the matter ?

A friend of ours tells us that she talks to her deceased mother every day. Is hers a monologue or

dialogue? We shall never know. Death ends a presence but not a relationship. In remembrance, the survivor continues to build and rebuild the relationship with the departed.

Whatever our age, we are moving toward "neilah," The closing of the gates, the phrase which gives the final portion of Yom Kippur its name: Neilah, the end, the conclusion.

The Neilah mood is broken in a remarkable, brief prayer  "Open unto us a gate at the time of the closing of the gates." When one door is closed usually another is opened. You may not at the age of 60 run as well as you did at 20 but you have a far better understanding of people, wider knowledge and deeper insight that make for wisdom. The Nobel laureate Hermann Hesse wrote: "Aging is not just

decline and deterioration; every stage of life has its own magic, its own wisdom, its own sadness.” If at this point in your life you must part with certain interests, new challenges may open up for you. It is not too late to redirect your life toward new goals; it is not too late to dust off undertakings and projects on which you once set your heart but had to put on a shelf. It is not too late to do ^{much of} what you once wanted to do.

Grandma Moses in her eighties developed the long suppressed artist within her. The mother of Rabbi Gunther Plaut of Toronto entered college at the age of 96 and fulfilled her dream of a college degree a the age of 100.

As we grow older we accumulate satisfactions but also regrets. Most painful among these are our

mishandled relationships, the ill treatment of a child, parent or other family member. Who is to be blamed is not important . What matters is the will to heal the hurt and end the estrangement. Repair relationships before the closing of the gates! It is never too late to show generosity and love to those whom we neglected in ~~the~~^{their} hour of need.

Much to be pitied are those who embitter their latter years with thoughts of settling scores or getting even. Resentment is a self-destructive poison. Forget and forgive. Reconciliation is not a gift to the other but to yourself. It^{is} the gift of serenity and inner peace.

You might well review your opinion of others before the closing of the gates. Perhaps you were mistaken in your disapproval or under-estimation of the other person; I had a class mate in high school whom

many of us considered the dumbest kid in class. When I saw him again after the passage of some 20 years, I found out that he had earned his Ph.D. and developed a highly successful pharmaceutical company.

Very often we wrongly suspect someone of evil motives and intentions or hold much too low an opinion of that person. It is not too late to change your mind and develop a better relationship with that person.

It all adds up to the one freedom that is ours to the last moment of our life and that is the power to change ourselves, our attitude, our thoughts. It is the ultimate challenge of Yom Kippur: “T’shuvah,” literally meaning, “turning around.” You still have time before the closing of the gates to correct mistakes, to undo wrong, to wipe out guilt, to mend and restore relationships, as Longfellow put it:

Nothing is too late

Till the tired heart shall

Cease to palpitate

For age is opportunity no less

Than youth itself.



Y3 her 02

- ① The most avoided subject is death - but today, in this hour it cannot be avoided
- ② Close eyes in remembrance - (Krauss)
- ③ Before we seek to understand meaning of death we need to learn to let go (Krauss)
- ④ Story of "big wheel" - when a loss brings a person to losses we suffer through dying -
Could it be that in that final surrender we call death, there may also be a poem?
- ⑤ What is death? Reflection based on David's "I shall go to"
- ⑥ Andee f. de. "When one door closes, another opens, Don't keep looking in" at the closed door
- ⑦ Preparat. f. death - losses painful
- ⑧ We resist the thought of death - non-acceptance Poem "I am not resigned"
- ⑨ Prepare f. death - how? R. B. Brown (also Socrates)
- ⑩ Edna St. V. Millay - Meritonus - Resist - Non-accept. death
- ⑪ At 70 you've had 70 bodies
- ⑫ How Prepare - Schopenhauer - Appoint when we start
- * Counting our years not from birth but backward from death
- ⑬ Acceptance - p B Shaw
- ⑭ Fresh proverb - Make peace w. death
- ⑮ Denial - Poem, there is no death - only change
- ⑯ Tired w. Morrie - The Whole
- ⑰ Jonathan Swift's quote on death
- ⑱ I walked a mile with Pleasure
- ⑲ Shakespeare - Our revells are ended
- 20 Hummer - Streetcar - Central St. to Cemetery - and Back

①



Hilton

Yizhar - World is
commonly mis understood
as we remember when
In reality it says May
God remember their
lives & merits

② As for us it is
not what we can
do for the dead but
what they can do for
us through their example

② Don't be prisoners
of the past —

We believe in resurrection
ie daily renewal of
life. — Each day
you may start life
anew.

Yizkor means
He will remember, ie He
still cares for us — we
shall not be annihilated
in death

Memorial Service

①

UP. p. 518

Open the gates for us even now at the time of
the closing of the gates

②

Paul Weiss - at various ages we must jettison
some hopes & dreams in exchange for others

③

H. Hesse. Every stage of life has its own values, its own
charm, its own wisdom & its own sadness



9

A
① & ③ Yourself your life's course
Paul Weiss 1st §

Continuing activity
eg Paul Weiss
Mrs Plant entered University at 96
& received her degree at 100

B
Your family
② ~~③~~ ⑦

C
About ^{you} People
& Community

④ ⑧ ⑨ ~~⑩~~ ⑥

D
Thinking, learning

⑤



THE MEANING OF DEATH

Yizkor Sermon 2002
Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

In this hour of remembrance each of us wants to linger with very private, personal memories of those most dear among our departed. I invite you to close your eyes while I speak and name in your heart the deceased mother, father, child, husband, wife, brother, sister and friend and sense their presence in your thoughts. As you bring him or her to life again in remembrance, try to recall what was most meaningful in your relationship with them.

After 9/11 an unknown author circulated a poem wondering what if this were the last chance to tell a dear one "I love you":

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I would give you a hug and kiss
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If I knew it would be the last time,
I could spare an extra minute
to stop and say "I love you,"
instead of assuming you would know I do...

There will always be another day
to say "I love you,"
And certainly there's another chance
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But just in case I might be wrong,
and today is all I get,
I like to say how much I love you
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Tomorrow is not promised to anyone
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And today may be the last chance
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Take time to say "I'm sorry,"
 "Please forgive me," "Thank you," or "It's okay."
 And if tomorrow never comes,
 You'll have no regrets about today.

There are all kinds of losses in life, but death is a radically different kind of loss. We can make up other losses; objects can be replaced. But what we lose to death is irreplaceable.

With heightened watchfulness, we can prevent losses, but not death. It is the one absolutely inescapable, inevitable and irretrievable loss we must suffer.

Grief-stricken king David put an end to his wailing and mourning over the death of his infant son, saying: "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." (II Sam. 12.23)

And so we must say in our hearts, our dear ones will not return to us. We shall go to them. There is something odd about thinking of one's own death. We either never think of it, or we think about it all the time.

Does death have any meaning? Is there a way of quieting the fear of it? Many panic at the thought of it, and then rage against that prospect. Dylan Thomas wrote:

Do not go gentle into that good night
 Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
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Edna St. Vincent Millay protested with even greater fury against death:

Withstanding Death.....
 I shall treasure my breath, I shall linger on.

I shall bolt my door with a bolt and a cable;
 I shall block my door with a bureau and a table;

Missing The Point
of GZher

Human memory is
very limited. We
remember only those we
knew most intimately
- 2 spans of 60-70-80

~~Tom, Mike~~

~~644-70455~~

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

or even 100 years. But
who can remember these
billions of people who
lived in all the centuries

With all my might my door shall be barred.
I shall put up a fight, I shall take it hard.

With his hand on my mouth he shall drag me forth,
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You don't have to go that far and become obsessed with death, but you'll be on the right road if on occasions, you talk about it aloud as you review, from time to time, your life insurance, your will, buy burial ground and write out funeral instructions even when there is no sign of an imminent demise.

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Objectively speaking, for mankind as a whole, I may agree that nature is unthinkable without death, but subjectively and emotionally such reasoning does not take the sting out of death. We could reconcile ourselves to the death of everyone else, but not our own death.

The French novelist Andre Gide found reassurance by questioning the finality of death. Obviously something is ending at death. But, covertly and unknown to us, death may also mark the beginning of something new:

“It is one of life’s laws that as soon as one door closes, another opens. But the tragedy is that we look at the closed door and disregard the open door.”

What could Andre Gide have meant by the other door opening at death? Some other form of being? What, if anything, is there in the so-called “hereafter” ? Is it some kind of ongoing existence? Perhaps a different kind of being altogether? The trouble is that the idea is so vague, so unimaginable. -- and we have no proof of anything in the hereafter..

If you are looking for certainty, face the fact that there is no sure thing in our understanding of death and whatever existence may follow it. The mystery is impenetrable. As life, the origin and the why of life, is beyond our understanding so is the meaning and necessity of death. The intellectual road to the understanding of death is -- excuse the pun -- a “dead”-end.

How about the emotional level in coping with the idea of death? Before we can condition ourselves for the acceptance of death, we must come to terms with our own aging, -- and I may now speak from experience. Socrates said: “**Life is a teacher in the art of relinquishing.**” Sooner or later, we must let go, first some of our possessions, then, little by little, some part of ourselves, -- the decline of physical fitness and, one by one the loss of some of our capacities; we must get used to unfavorable changes in appearance and health and, then, more and more, we must let go of dear ones.

How pathetic and futile is clinging to what must be released. Instead of staring with nostalgia at the door that is closed, pay attention to the new doors that may open up, new opportunities for living meaningfully at every stage of aging.

Shel Silverstein, in his lovely children's story, *The Missing Piece*, tells about a big wheel, a champion runner ahead of all other wheels. One day, a bad thing happened. It hit a bump and lost a piece of itself. Now, as the wheel kept rolling along, it felt a bump at every turn, grew tired and lay down in the grass. For the first time, it looked straight up and saw the the white clouds against the blue sky and heard the songs of birds. "Oh, this is wonderful," said the broken wheel, "I never had these experiences before."

That wheel learned an important lesson --- that you may gain even when you have lost, that you may add some new range of experience and appreciation to your life, even when you let go a part of yourself. Only when you let go of what can no longer be retained, will you open yourself for new experience, new friendship, new learning and new pleasure.

The one frightening aspect of death most difficult to deal with is the fear of the ultimate severance from all you know in what seems to us the absolute loneliness of death. But are we really cut off from everything in death ?

In Mitch Albom's luminous account of conversations with a dying man, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Morrie gives his view of death by way of a parable: A little wave bobbing along in the ocean is having a great time until it notices the other waves crashing against the shore. "My God, how terrible;" the frightened wave cries out, "look what's going to happen to me!" Then along comes another wave and says: "stop crying, you don't understand, you are not a wave, you are part of the ocean."

As we all approach the other shore, we must say to ourselves: I am not a wave, I am not an isolate being. Dead or alive, I remain part of the infinite ocean of existence as are all those who have

departed before me. We all remain connected under God in the world which is forever.



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What could Andre Gide have meant by the other door opening at death? Some other form of being? What, if anything, is there in the so-called “hereafter”? Is it some kind of ongoing existence? Perhaps a different kind of being altogether? The trouble is that the idea is so vague, so unimaginable. -- and we have no proof of anything *in the hereafter*.

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How about the emotional level in coping with the idea of death? Before we can condition ourselves for acceptance of death, we must come to terms with our own aging.

Socrates said: “**Life is a teacher in the art of relinquishing.**”

Sooner or later, we must let go, first some of our possessions, then, little by little, some part of ourselves; one by one we must learn to accept the loss of some of our capacities; we must get used to unfavorable changes in our physical appearance and health and, then, more and more, we must let go ~~the presence~~ of dear ones. *P*
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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES
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How about the emotional level in coping with the idea of death? Before we can condition ourselves for ^{the} acceptance of death, we must come to terms with our own aging. *and I speak from experience!*

Socrates said: **"Life is a teacher in the art of relinquishing."**

Sooner or later, we must let go, first some of our possessions, then, little by little, some part of ourselves; ^{the decline of physical fitness,} ~~one by one we must learn to~~ ~~accept~~ the loss of some of our capacities; we must get used to unfavorable changes in ~~our physical~~ appearance and health and, then, more and more, we must let go of dear ones.

How pathetic and futile is clinging to what must be released. Instead of staring with nostalgia at the door that is closed, pay

attention to the new doors that may open up, new opportunities for living meaningfully at every stage of aging.

Shel Silverstein, in his lovely children's story, *The Missing Piece*, tells about a big wheel, a champion runner, ahead of all other wheels. One day, a bad thing happened. It hit a bump and lost a piece of itself. Now, as the wheel kept rolling along, it felt a bump at every turn, grew tired and lay down in the grass. For the first time, it looked straight up and saw the the white clouds against the blue sky and heard the songs of birds. "Oh, this is wonderful," said the broken wheel, "I never had these experiences before."

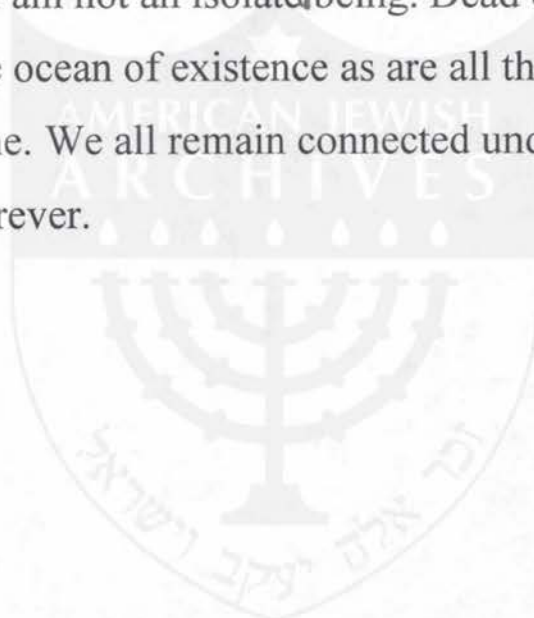
That wheel learned an important lesson --- that you may gain even when you have lost, that you may add some new range of experience and appreciation to your life, even when you let go a part of yourself. Only when you let go of what can no longer be retained, will you open yourself for new experience, new friendship, new learning and new pleasure.

The one frightening aspect of death most difficult to deal with is the fear of the ultimate severance from all you know in what seems to us the ~~ultimate~~^{absolute} loneliness of death. But are we really cut off from everything in death ?

In Mitch Albom's luminous account of conversations with a dying man, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Morrie gives his view of death

by way of a parable: A little wave bobbing along in the ocean is having a great time until it notices the other waves crashing against the shore. “My God, how terrible;” the frightened wave cries out, “look what’s going to happen to me!” Then along comes another wave and says: “stop crying, you don’t understand, you are not a wave, you are part of the ocean.”

As we all approach the other shore, we must say to ourselves: I am not a wave, I am not an isolated being. Dead or alive, I remain part of the infinite ocean of existence as are all those who have departed before me. We all remain connected under God in the world which is forever.



Heinrich Heine (1877-1962)

Briefe

p. 299/301 An einen Studenten, Feb 12 1950

Re: Meditation and suggested readings
in Indian thought & relaxation
through breathing (see p 253)

p 256: H. Prefers D.I. to N.T.

p. 300 Reference to Albert Schweitzer
"Die Weltanschauung der indischen
Denker", München 1935

p 388 § 2 "Jewish ethics is nearer to life
and more practical than Christian
ethics with its stress on otherworldliness"

p 411 § 2 The difference between Marx
& me : "M. will die Welt ändern
ich aber den einzelnen Menschen"

p 467 "Imperfect mankind is a
§1 Hopeless task... Only the individual
can be educated and capable of
improvement"

p 489 §4 "Still being around"
"Ich lebe seit langem so am
Rand des Nichtseins"

p 543 §2 To ≥ 16 year old Japanese:
"Unanswerable questions"
"The essence (Wesen) of God
& of Life (Lebensweisheit)
Origin of World & Life"

"You were put into world without
knowing why"
Everyone must seek self knowledge
& fulfilling his own self. So doing, we
save mankind

Anfahen und an Mängeln annehmen
"Ja" dazu sagen, und versuchen
das Beste daraus zu machen, fällt
hat mit jedem von uns etwas
gemeint, etwas versucht, und was
Sind seine Gegner verstanden
nicht annehmen und ihm
helfen, es zu bewirklichen

[of 1770, 70 "don't hold to a low
in opinion of yourself"]

p. 486 §4 - Recommended books
Oskar Lörke "Geschichte u. Prosa"

Hesse "Briefe"

Novels Peter Camenzind (1904)
Steppenwolf, Demian
Narziss und Goldmund (1930)

Das Glasperlenspiel (1943)

p 143 § 1

"Den Leiden und dem Tod zu weichen
sein ist die Aufgabe des Alters"

p 162 § 3

~~AGAINST Self-Correction~~

Das Altwerden ist ja nicht bloß

Rei-
stages
of
Life

ein Abnehmen u. Hinwelken, es hat
wie jede Lebensstufe seine eigenen
Werte, seinen eigenen Zank, seine
eigene Weisheit, seine eigene Träne."

p 199 § 2 "leben Sie sich nicht

abschätzig gegen Selbstprüfungen
und Selbstkritiken hin... Man soll
nicht sich selber, so wie man in die
Welt gestellt werden ist, abschätzen
beurteilen. Sondern erst einmal
das, was man von Gott mit bekommen hat

Long fellow

Nothing is so late,
Till the fired heart shall
Cease to palpitate

For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself



Before the Closing of the Gates

- ① You have still time to review your life and consider any major task to complete, or goal to reach
- ② You have still time to show love & generosity to family members & friends whom you neglected or whose need you ignored
- ③ You may still change direction and embark on projects or experience what you had always wanted to do (Journalist who past age 70 started fresh. Mrs. Plant who at 95 went back to college & graduated at 100 etc)
- ④ Time for settling scores? No, rather for forgetting scores & seek reconciliation & inner peace
- ⑤ A time to explore & seek answers to some of the big questions of human existence, i.e. questions of faith
- ⑥ A time for giving - for "you can't take it with you"
- ⑦ A time to strengthen the unity of your family (e.g. spouse reunions, family crises etc)
- ⑧ A time to screen your opinions about people issues etc - perhaps you were mistaken & you should change your mind.

9) Still time to turn around דור א
to correct, to wipe out guilt, do restitution
"A ^{wicked} person may find heser in a moment's repentance"



ANTI-ZIONIST by *Miriam Dworkin*

TORAH TRUE JEWS, INC.

(Asublet. signed)

Oct 5, 03

September 21, 2003

DEAR HONORABLE PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH,

We are writing to you because of your deep and abiding interest in the suffering of the peoples of the Middle East and your desire to finally bring an end to all the bloodshed and violence there. We pray for peace and brotherhood.

However, we would like to respectfully bring to your attention that although you are aware that there are many Jews who support the State of Israel, what you may not have heard about is that there is a silent majority of Jews opposed to Zionism who remain ignored by the media, and who remain steadfast in loyalty to the teachings of our rabbis that the ideology of Zionism is in utter opposition to our religion. For more information there are a number of websites on the Internet that discuss this subject, e.g. www.jewsagainstzionism.com, which we know you will find most interesting as it includes historical documents and photographs relating to the long-time opposition of revered rabbis to Zionism.

Ever since the destruction of the holy Temple in Jerusalem and the exile of the Jewish People some two thousand years ago, we have been enjoined to be scrupulously loyal to the countries we reside in, and never seek to undertake to establish independent sovereignty in the Holy Land or anywhere throughout the world. One of the great biblical prophets, Jeremiah, in chapter 29 of his book proclaimed G-d's message to all the exiled; verse seven reads, "*Seek out the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray for it to the Almighty, for through its welfare will you have welfare.*" This has been a cornerstone of Jewish morality throughout our history to this very day.

The Zionist movement rejects all of the fundamental principles of our Torah and rabbis. Jews do not need a state of their own. The very establishment of a "Jewish" state is a grave violation of Jewish tradition and law.

Therefore they don't represent the Jewish people in any way whatsoever. They have no right to speak in the name of the Jewish people. Therefore, their words, declarations and actions are not in any way representative of the Jewish people. We deplore acts and policies carried out by those who - misusing the name of Israel - have substituted the ideal of nationalism for the teachings of the holy Torah.

Therefore, Mr. President, it is of the utmost urgency that the State of Israel should not be referred as a Jewish State, but as the Zionist State. The foundation of its existence is not Judaism, but the Zionist ideology. We are extremely concerned that referring to it as a "Jewish" state endangers the welfare of Jews worldwide by linking Jews and Judaism to the actions of the Zionist State. The Zionist state with its supporters worldwide seeks to take all measures possible, including provoking hatred of Jews through Israeli policies, in order to convince Jews to move from their native countries to the State of Israel!! Indeed, hatred of Jews is the very lifeblood and oxygen of the Zionist movement and their state, which are stand in total opposition to Judaism.

Throughout history when persecution resulted in expulsions, there were always other nations who opened their doors to the Jews, and were blessed by G-d for doing so. We believe that our country would even welcome those Jews who would wish to leave the State of Israel, and bring great blessings onto the United States..

Your good intentions and kind consideration in relation to Jews is greatly appreciated, but we strongly believe that G-d's blessings upon the United States will grow if there is greater understanding and different policies in relation to this issue of the difference between Judaism and Zionism.

We await the days when all the world will recognize the sovereignty of the Creator, and the words of the prophet Isaiah will yet be fulfilled: "*And they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. No nation will lift its sword against any other, nor will they learn warfare anymore.*" We Remain, Yours very truly,

The Silent Majority American Jewry

For more information please visit: www.jewsagainstzionism.com

Re: Living w. Uncertainty

You have not fully matured
until you have gone thru
a life threatening situation or
illness. From that point on
you want to be your existence
for granted!



~~Memories that inspire us~~
Memories that inspire us
show us

teach our souls
that are painful
but whether painful
or happy - memories
inspire us

Memories - can be put to rest
to new direction in our
life -

Memories can show us to
act on, to ~~change + learn~~
to ~~repentance~~

Memories can be

depressing if you remember
mostly what you've lost

- eg Lehigh University family
photo album - and
you compare yourself
to that handsome picture
of long ago! Nothing is
for keeps!

The May 10 de 13 to count

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Also what you gained **Adria** *

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what you still keep

Be grateful for this day!

Yesterday's the past,
Tomorrow's the future,
But today is a GIFT.
That's why it's called the present.

Memories are only the long shadows
of a reality that has gone.
Visit your memories but do not
live in the past.

All life is in the present
we must
Walk out of the shadows into
the life of today!

Thanks for the Memory (title of song with Ralph Rainger - 1937)

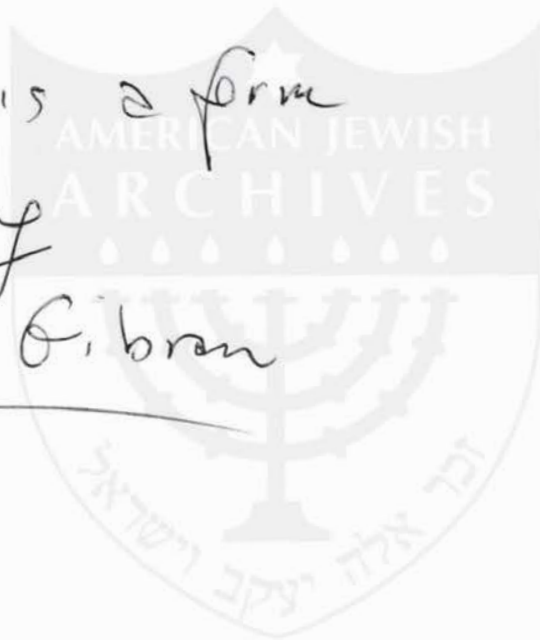
Ira Gershwin

The way you wear your hat,
The way you sip your tea,
The mem'ry of all that —
No, No! They can't take that away from me!
(from Shall We Dance?)




The things we remember
best are those better
forgotten
Baltasar Gracian

Remembrance is a form
of meeting
Kahlil Gibran



Just well down
Memory Lane
or
Transferring
Memories



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Passive &



The Mysteries of
Good & Evil

Gavel Service



~~Dynamic~~
Memory

~~Delectum~~

Let Lyrics of one of Bob Hope's

These songs Thanks for the Memories

Memories are a gift for which
to be grateful for many
reasons!

Passive and Dynamic Memory

How yizhor differs from other times when we remember
more focused
more judgmental

Benefits: Reasserting our identity
Waying what's causing
Regrets

Apologies - we wish, we could & undo

Memories that move us to ^{us to act on} ~~action~~
Resolve to change something within ourselves
Inner Peace

Obtaining forgiveness - giving forgiveness

The word "remember"
is often on our lips
Thurs day -

What does memory
do for us & what
do we do with our
memory.

memory plays
tricks on us.

We keep remembering

things we try hard
to forget.



Call Bill Klemens
Definite function
No

Memories

- ① are linkages ^(a) with our past
(b) with our selves
(c) with people - relationships
(d) with the great moments of our life

② With every remembrance enters
some kind of judgement

③ Resolution for change

What matters is how we deal with our various memories.

Memories of resentment

Forgive

Memories of grievances
grudges

"

"

Memories of guilt

Repent

Therapeutic memories - a more mature understanding

Memories of might-have-beens

We remember what others owe us for better than what we owe to others

"Creditors have better memories than debtors"

Travel memories from mother's favorite soup

Memories - What do you do with them?

We don't just remember people ^{& events} - but
the essence of remembrance is
our relationship with them.

How
Would we act differently today, if we had to do it over
again?

Memories are much more than recall of persons
or events. In memories, we continue, even develop
relationships and reconsider our own life.
To remember leads to evaluate, judge ourselves
and others anew.

Memories move us to wrestle with problems

Memories prompt the question, could I, should I
have done or lived differently?

If I had my life to live all over again

20-70 Aug 12 01 Wash Post

What Memories Are Made of—Soft, Soft TP

What will I miss most when I return to Vienna (Austria, that is) after 6½ years of living in the Washington area as a foreign correspondent?

Not Bill and Monica, or the ubiquitous ice water or the breathtaking humidity. My wife and I won't even miss the cheap gas (until my first fill-up in Vienna) or the overgrown SUVs.

The two of us discussed this question and thought about it long and hard before agreeing: We'll miss the toilet paper.

The soft, smooth toilet paper of the United States is so different from the abrasive stuff in Austria that I even used it to clean my glasses. Try that with the Austrian version, and your glasses would be scratched all over.

A close second among American products that have become dear to our hearts and will be greatly missed is the morning paper.

I will have to go without those in-depth reports ranging from anxiety in Albania to zealotry in Zimbabwe. I wasn't so confident, though, that I could trust the American media in their reporting about Austria. I'll never forget Dan Rather's overheated announcement on the day that Austria formed a new government:

"An echo of the Nazi and anti-Semitic past sets off fear and anger in Europe . . . [as] a former fan of Hitler gains power in Austria." Looking at the recent group photos of the European heads of government,

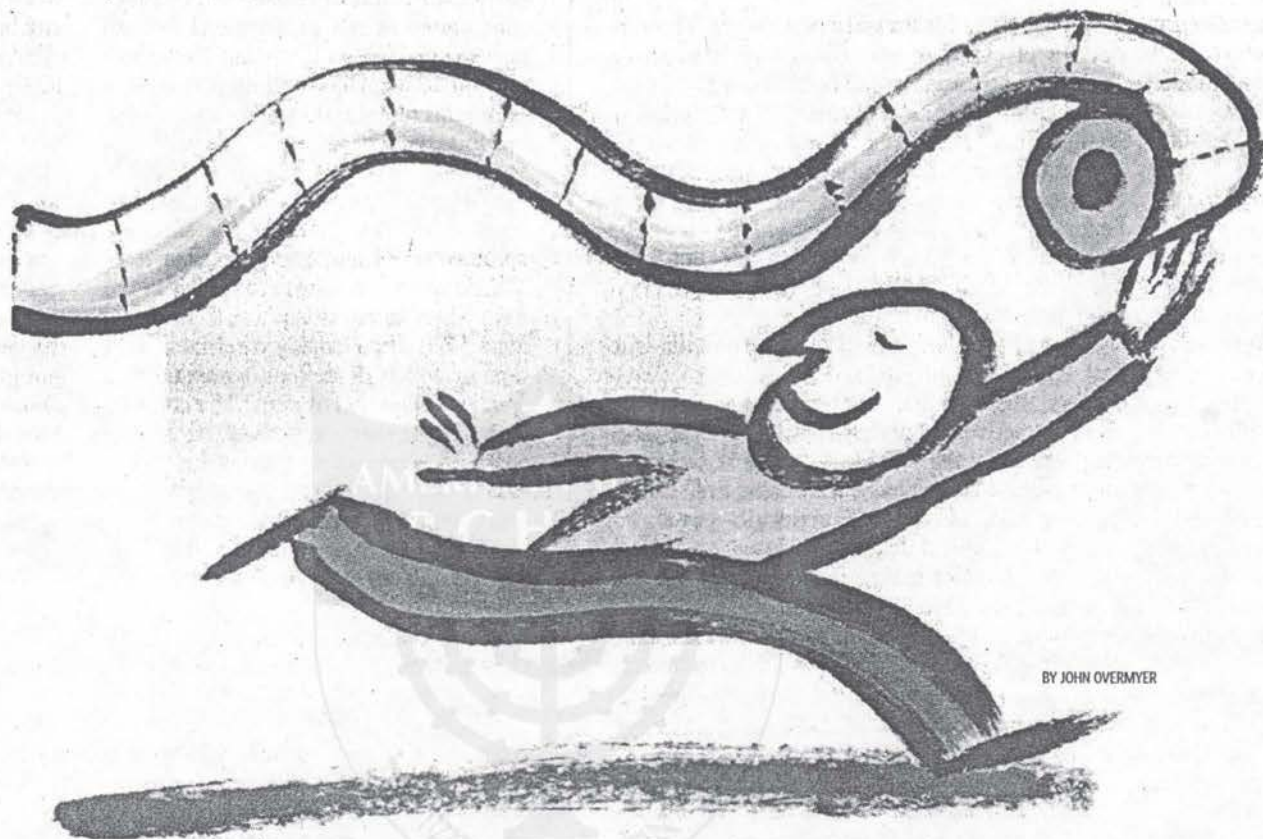
with the Austrian smiling in the middle, I muse: Some putsch!

I'll miss the plastic bag the newspaper came in too. It was perfect for cleaning up after our dog, Jackie. In Vienna, home delivery of newspapers is spotty, and plastic bags are verboten (you know now how environmentally crazy those Europeans are). Paradoxically, the habit of cleaning up after your dog has never been part of anyone's routine in Austria.

Before moving to the States I always had wondered why the Viennese walk so slowly with their heads bowed, while

Americans seem to be in a rush, looking straight ahead or even up. Now I realize the Austrian posture is not caused by the depression Sigmund Freud tried to analyze out of our countrymen but by something far more practical: Only by looking down and walking gingerly can the Austrians avoid the ever-present dog pooh littering their country's sidewalks.

That will be less of an issue when we have to cope with the Austrian version of winter, a far different thing from the Washington winter, which, with a few snowflakes, can close schools and bring the last



remaining superpower to a halt.

What else will I miss?

American humor. Only in America could one deliver eulogies that make people laugh. In Europe everything is so dead serious that I'll be hard pressed to find anything funny even in a cabaret.

It will also be difficult to part with another American peculiarity: the privacy craze. In an American supermarket, even before we realized that another person happened to be anywhere nearby, we'd often hear an apologetic, "Excuse me."

Back in Austria the experience is quite different: When someone bumps into me there he or she usually gets angry and shouts, "Hearns, hams kane Augn!" ("Listen. Don't you have eyes?")

We also will miss National Public Radio, the ability to return everything to the store, opulent parking spaces, the smoke-free restaurants, our children's wonderful liberal teachers, and, yes, the fluffy toilet paper. Of the last, we were able to sneak a supply into our shipment home—it will also come handy when it is time to dry the tears of an Austrian family, homesick for the United States, warts and all.

—Eugen Freund

The Memory of Greatness

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time

The gift of
Memory is a suggestion of immortality

To remember is to relive your life
but not quite; no way of
changing what was done!

Memories can be destructive
& constructive

Time for Teshuvah

Rabbi Susan Shankman - Rosh Hashanah 5763

“A prince assigned to a group of workmen the gigantic project of constructing imposing buildings and a spacious palace, among other edifices. Before turning the completed structures over to their owner, they carefully and patiently inspected every nook and cranny to make certain that nothing was overlooked and that the prince would find nothing lacking.

Our preparation for the High Holy Days is much like building a palace. At this solemn season it is fitting for us, too, to search our ways and to take stock of our behavior. On Rosh Hashanah it is incumbent upon us to inquire into, and evaluate in retrospect, our dealings during the past year (so that we may repent lest God find that our performance was incomplete).”¹

As part of our personal preparation for the Yamim Noraim, the High Holy Days, each person conducts a personal *heshbon nefesh*, an accounting of our actions. We take the time out of the usual hustle and bustle in our lives to look back in self-examination and retrospect as we reflect on our lives, as is illustrated in the following legend.

“On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, Mordecai of Nadvorna, a nineteenth-century sage, stopped a cantor who was obviously in a great hurry.

“Why are you rushing so?” the rabbi asked.

The cantor politely replied:

¹Rosh Hashanah Anthology, ed. by Philip Goodman, p. 127

“I must examine the *mahzor*, the prayerbook, and put the Rosh Hashanah prayers in the proper order.”

Mordecai paused momentarily and said with a smile:

“You know well that the *mahzor* has not changed since last year. Better examine your heart and your deeds of the past year and try to put yourself in proper order.”²

Many of us are similar to the cantor in this story. We are constantly running, whether physically moving from place to place, or rushing from finishing one assignment to starting another, without taking much of a break for ourselves, or for others in our lives. Just think about all we went through getting here this morning. Many of us raced to Temple to find parking, hurried to the shuttle bus, and at the end of the day we will rush home for a family meal. By that time, we are already planning ahead for how we will accomplish the same tasks in even less time on Yom Kippur. We just started services, and already we can barely catch our breath! The beginning of a new year on the Jewish calendar focuses our attention sharply on the relentless passing of time. Time can be either friend or foe—it depends on **how we approach it, how we perceive it, and how we use it**. This is our quest during these ten days, this period of time marked at either end by special days—periods of twenty-four hours of sixty minutes each. At this moment there is a sense of urgency in the words of the Psalmist: “Teach us to number our days, so that we may attain a heart of wisdom.”

Time is something with which many of us are concerned—we use the term often in our daily lives:

Time is money

Have a good time

Some people have 'plenty of time' while others are 'strapped for time'

Our parents wish we would 'take the time' to visit

We talk about 'killing time', wasting time, using time

Different people perceive time in different ways:

Prisoners 'serve time'

Musicians 'mark time'

Lawyers 'charge for time'

Referees 'call time'

Historians 'record time'

But what do we actually do with our time? A survey was compiled by a group of efficiency experts. They discovered that in the average lifetime we spend

20 years sleeping

14 years working

7 years in the bathroom

6 years eating

5 years waiting in line

4 years enjoying life's pleasures

4 years cleaning the house

3 years dressing and shaving

3 years at meetings

3 years just waiting around

1 year on the telephone

1 year searching for misplaced objects

8 months opening junk mail, and

6 months waiting at lights

²Ibid, p. 140

Our lives sound like a laundry list of activities when scrutinized in this way. The number of days we are given is not within our control, but what we do with them is. How we choose to spend our time is up to each and every one of us. In the coming days, as we reflect on how we have spent our time during the last year, what are we going to find?

Judaism has always been a religion that places a high value on time--In the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel, "Judaism is a religion of time, aiming at the sanctification of time." There is a unique concept in Judaism of sacred time, as well as sacred space. In most religions, as in Judaism, space is sanctified—the Western Wall, churches, mosques, synagogues—all are considered holy places. Jews have always searched for and developed ways in which we can sanctify time as well—to make time holy. We do not have to look beyond tradition and ritual: Shabbat is holy time, every week! Rosh Chodesh comes every month with the new moon... The festivals come every year—a part of the cycle of time, which we mark with prescribed rituals, just as we do spiritually—each in our own personal way. Our God is even the God of time, often called the "Eternal One."

Judaism goes further than that—each and every moment in time can be holy and sanctified if we choose to make it so, whether through rituals, or with b'rachot, blessings. Whether it is how, or with whom we observe that makes these moments holy and sacred, we have the power to shape them. Think about it—if a person lives to the age of 70, one seventh of his or her life, or TEN YEARS is Shabbat! Shabbat is time that is set aside, marked as holy. But is it only on Shabbat that we can make time holy?

We have the power to make moments of each day holy by making the best use of its potential—by visiting the sick, caring for others, helping those less fortunate than we,

taking the time to speak to someone who is lonely, making peace with our enemies, forgiving those who have wronged us, by seeking forgiveness from those we have hurt, by studying and learning, but most of all, we can make every moment holy by taking the time to think and care for others. We can make use of our time by embracing life--by finding the joy in each and every day.

This past year has brought that message to us in a very visceral way. A little less than a year ago, our world, and our personal lives, were shaken by the events of September eleventh. Through those horrific events, our entire nation began to re-evaluate the very fabric of our society. Americans noticed a marked difference in the way its citizens interacted; people were actually polite on the roads and on the metro. The range of ways in which neighbors and strangers reached out to help each other reaffirmed our hope and trust in our fellow human beings. People took the time to make a difference, and to remind each other, in very basic ways, that life is holy and sacred. Yet more recently, I have heard many commenting that we have lost that sense—that it seems as though our society has returned to pre-September eleventh ways. In the last couple of weeks I have witnessed more instances of road rage than I had in the entire year. It is troubling to think that it is only a catastrophic event that can bring about such appreciation for our fellow human beings.

We make ordinary time holy when we recognize what is important; when we are able to offer care and support when it is needed; when we make ourselves available to others, when we do the work of God on earth. It is then that we can truly appreciate the value of time—embrace each minute, live it to the fullest, and sanctify it with our actions.

Jewish tradition teaches us that once a year, we must set aside time for the most important and sacred act in our spiritual lives, *teshuvah*. We are even given a deadline, so that we will set aside the time for personal growth or else we might not use our time wisely at all. Even the shofar serves as a reminder that it is time to act.

One of the clearest explanations of *teshuvah* is expressed by Eliezer Berkovits and is included in Philip Goodman's Rosh Hashanah Anthology:

"*Teshuvah* is that uniquely Jewish concept which literally translates as meaning "response" or "return." Repentance and renewal of faith are one phase of *teshuvah*. The prophet Isaiah said: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts; and let him return unto the Eternal and Adonai will have compassion on him, and to our God, for Adonai will abundantly pardon" (55:7). The return to God is not merely "a change of heart," but a change in one's way of life. The prophet Ezekiel dealt with *teshuvah* by declaring "As I live, says God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, that you may not die, O house of Israel!" (Ezekiel 33:11). *Teshuvah* is a turning away and a turning toward--a matter of believing and of altering one's daily living. This is exactly what this season of the Jewish calendar is dedicated to--it provides us with the opportunity to renew ourselves, starting with a turning away.

The turning away begins with a realization of having sinned. At times, that realization and confession of sin are enough to bring God's forgiveness. When King David confessed to the prophet Nathan, "I have sinned against the Eternal One," the prophet reassured him: "The Eternal has put away your sin; you shall not die" (II Samuel 12:13). David demonstrated his greatness by renouncing royal dignity and pride in his confession of sin."

This scene has been repeated throughout history, and through modern media, many of us have been witness to the struggle which confronts those confessing their sins. Being in the public eye only compounds the difficulty.

If we look a bit closer to home, many of us have probably experienced the road rage of which I spoke just moments ago, whether as perpetrator or victim. It seems as though everyone is in a hurry to get somewhere, and those who might delay our arrival

become the object of our impatience, and just as often, we become the focus of another driver's irritation.

Whether we have been provoked to expressing anger and animosity, or we have been at the receiving end of another driver's ire, both sides share the experience of one victimized by our own impatience. A colleague of mine is the rabbi of a large suburban congregation. He is amazed and more than a little disturbed by the phenomenon of road rage that occurs in his own Temple parking lot as members wait in line to exit onto a small yet busy two lane road. Even after he addressed this concern one Rosh Hashanah, reminding congregants of their obligation to show patience towards each other, there was such hostility as they maneuvered their cars out of the lot that afternoon, that it seemed as if his words had already been forgotten.

What goes on in our own homes? Many of us lose patience with our loved ones and friends. Impatience expresses our desire to make time pass more quickly, leaving us with little time for personal growth. True *teshuvah* is impossible if we are impatient. All too often, we take out our frustrations on those we care about the most, since we know that they will have to forgive us. When we are feeling stressed out or overwhelmed by the outside pressures of work and school, we tend to show less patience to the ones who deserve it the most for putting up with us. I admit that at times I have been guilty of committing some of these very acts--of being short tempered and impatient. Of putting my own sense of urgency ahead of the needs of others.

But realization of guilt is not enough, according to Berkovits. The sinner must also forsake his way, as the verse from Proverbs (28:13) tells us: "He who covers up his faults will not succeed; He who confesses and gives them up will find mercy."

Jewish tradition recognizes four conditions necessary for *teshuvah*: regret for the past, desisting from objectionable conduct, confession, and the firm resolution never to backslide. Repentance is the first phase and renewal the second. The first is only the preliminary condition necessary for leading a person up to the second, the turning toward God. Every sin undermines the spiritual strength of the one who has sinned, and therefore a total overhaul is required.³

There are stages one must undergo in order to fulfill the requirements of repentance. First one must feel guilty. The second step is to stop the action that has caused those feelings of guilt. The third is to admit that wrong has been done, and finally, one must resolve to never again engage in such action. Berkovits concludes:

“*Teshuvah* is thus an experience of personal transformation. When performed out of fear, it lessens the burden of sin but does not remove it; intentional transgressions become unintentional ones. *Teshuvah* undertaken out of love accomplishes a fundamental transformation, in which healing and purification are complete. Intentional sins of the past function almost as admirable deeds in their impact and significance for the new personality. Past failures may serve as new sources of spiritual strength and security for the person who has returned.”⁴

This time of *teshuvah* can be a powerful period. It is often difficult to take a good hard look at who and what we really are. Simultaneously, it is important to realize that as we continue to forge our own identities, it isn't necessary to discard the values and ideas that played significant roles in our earlier development. During this process of transition and personal growth, it is crucial to keep a clear perspective of our identity. Once the necessary adjustments have been made, one is truly ready for the final stage of the process.

The conclusion of true *teshuvah*, returning to God, is not self-rejection or remorse for our past deeds, but rather the healing that comes as a result of our being honest with ourselves. When we can tell ourselves the truth about our real intentions, and accept that

³ adapted from Eliezer Berkovits' article in Philip Goodman: The Rosh Hashanah Anthology, pp. 159-160

truth, then we begin to take responsibility for our own actions. After we have made sincere apologies for our actions, and have come to terms with our own inner being, it is only then that we can truly stand before the ultimate Source of Being ready for *teshuvah*. If, after making peace with others, we can forgive ourselves for our wrongful or misled deeds, then surely God will forgive us.

We read throughout the liturgy for the High Holy Days, that the Day of Atonement atones for transgressions committed against God, but the Day of Atonement does not atone for transgressions in people's relationships with one another, until they have made peace with one another. Truly, no one has avoided sin this year, and we need only turn on the television or open the newspaper to read about people who are publicly admitting and asking forgiveness. We read about CEO's of major corporations, Enron and WorldCom, and we know that repentance is required equally, regardless of status or title.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch said:

“We all stand in need of *teshuvah*; for who can say that he has never departed from the path of the law, that her life has been a flawless realization in practice of the model presented in the Torah--who can say that he or she has never sinned? We all need *teshuvah*; the one means for rehabilitating our communal life in the future is *teshuvah*, nothing but *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* is the goal of our thousand years of suffering and trial among the nations, that at last Israel should return to God and to itself, and should not, through aiming at something other than the real goal, make it a matter of chance how far this path leading elsewhere coincides with walking with God; but that at last great and small in Israel should look upon walking with God as the highest and supreme goal for everyone, to which everything else should be subordinated. We all need *teshuvah*. Therefore we cling to one another in order that the path to return which is traveled by one may stimulate another by its example. This is also one of the reasons why our confession of sin, the *Vidui*, is pronounced in the plural, collectively.

⁴Ibid, p. 159

“The sages recommend that we beware particularly those sins which are not sins in the eyes of most people, for it is not easy to take the first step in freeing yourself from such sins. That first step is recognition of the sin. The sages also tell us to beware those sins the temptation of which come your way only too frequently and may easily become a habit, for with them the last and greatest step in self-purification is difficult--genuine reform for the future.”⁵

I learned the true power of making time sacred through *teshuvah* very vividly just over a month ago, when my cousin David narrowly escaped serious injury while sitting in the cafeteria of Hebrew University as it exploded around him. His wife Laura, who was in another room of the same building at the time, wrote the following to me:

“If there is a lesson in all of this that I can share, it is perspective. There are only a couple of things that really matter in this life: health, family, friends, love. Be patient with each other’s imperfections. Don’t spend energy being mad at an SUV that cuts you off in traffic. Don’t gossip about people at work. Don’t hold grudges. Spend time with your family. Don’t waste your precious life. It’s all too short.

I pray that my own anger dissipates, that I am able to really see the humanity in everyone, even those dancing in the streets of Gaza. I pray that I can hold on to my perspective. And I celebrate love.”

Keeping all of this in mind, let us join together over the next ten days in truly dedicating our time to the tasks of self-examination and introspection. May we be strong enough to make *heshbon nefesh*, an accounting of our sins. Let us remember to be open-minded enough to forgive those who come to us seeking forgiveness and atonement. And may this be the beginning of a year in which each one of us has an awakened sense of awareness of ourselves and others.

⁵Ibid, p. 156

From now until the end of Yom Kippur, we have nothing but time to think, consider, and reflect. We now have the opportunity to wipe the slate clean, to start over, to renew our lives. If we use our time wisely, we will be blessed with a lifetime of moments—a lifetime of sanctified moments. But we have to make the time.



Re: Memories

- ① Constructive & Destructive Memories
 - ② Memories thru judgemental
 - ③ Oscar Wilde: re parents & children
 - ④ Memories prompt self-judgement - renew sense of pri:lt
 - ⑤ ^{Some} Memories Shame us. Remembrance is a form of remembering
 - ⑥ Baltasar Gracian. "The things we remember best are those better forgotten"
 - ⑦ Ps 105 Reflect. My book p189 §.1-12
"Memory is more than a storehouse of experience,
It is a school"
-

Remembrance (of Mother)
especially poignant are certain images that
remain fixed in our minds — such as
tender moments of parting —

Wynne's poem Remembrance
recalls her mother ~~lingering~~ lingering at
the door to watch her child leaving
the house

This memory of my mother stays with me
throughout the years: the way she used to stand
framed in the door when any of her band
of children left... as long as she could see

"
In Memory Seeman

Refers to ~~for N. 100~~ ^{some of} our
~~Reports~~

How true are 05120
Wilde's words about
Parents & Children

Children begin by loving their parents;
as they grow older they judge them;
sometimes they forgive them.

Re: Repentance-Guilt?

Memory

Old Age

* * *

"If I had my life to live again, I'd make the same mistakes, only sooner."
— TALLULAH BANKHEAD

"Happiness is good health and a bad memory."
— INGRID BERGMAN

"The ideal wife is the person you want with you in Intensive Care."
— KIRK DOUGLAS

"Adolescence is perhaps nature's way of preparing parents to welcome the empty nest."
— KAREN SAVAGE and PATRICIA ADAMS

Remorse is a form of
remembering things we would
rather forget

Death, Memories and Immortality

Death somehow generates memories, all kinds of memories – good, bad, loving, sad, nightmarish – death provides adrenaline to the memory cells in the brain. It brings to the fore - events and persons long buried in the deep recesses of the memory cells. The memories rush out like the stream running down the mountain to the river below. The memories are not sequential, they are not orderly, they are not in any chronology. They pop up - like the popcorn kernel in the microwave.

Through memories, our lives pass in review. We are standing on the review stand as the memories pass in quick review. They appear in a blinding flash and then recede, they fade out to be replaced by another memory.

Memories seem to appear when we are alone, lost in thought or in grief or looking out of the airplane window in the dark night - the memories jump out against the dim lights of the cities below. The space outside the window of the plane is like a movie set for the memories to appear and then disappear.

Death seems to activate memories - memories of childhood, of school days, of military service, of parents, and of family. The memories take on life-like qualities if even for a split second.

Memories seem to be an integral part of death. I do not know why this is so. Maybe it is the finality of death. Maybe it is our own fear of death or our own frailty.

On the ride to the cemetery behind the hearse, memories become our companions. The memory of the rides decades ago to the cemetery to bury a brother, a father, and a mother and then three sisters, and now more recently another brother. There is the realization that I am the last of a family unit that has existed as a unit for more than four decades. There are causes of death; some we understand and some we do not understand. We do not know the timing of death.

The ride to the cemetery recalls the solemn prayers recited for centuries on the Jewish New Year and again on the Day of Atonement. Who shall live and who shall die and the many causes: who by fire, who by disease - and then we ask for forgiveness for the sins we have committed. Death forces a review, a reexamination and a revisit.

Memories have a very unique characteristic - they are very personal. They can only be experienced by the individuals recalling the memories. Of course, family members and friends can share memories but not the peculiar uniqueness that the individual has with respect to his or her memories.

Memories enable one to relive even for a brief moment, events of the past. Memories are rooted in the past, they are not future-oriented. We do not have memories of the future. We can have hopes, fantasies and day dreams about the future. Memories are episodes and events that can span a lifetime. They are events and episodes that have happened in the course of our human experience.

Memories have a useful purpose. They are our link to the past. They enable us to recall events, situations and persons that are important. They enable us to revisit the past - yes to recall and to relive the past, both good and bad.

Memories can also be a teacher. We reflect on memories and on the situations which generated the particular memory. The memory of a given situation may help us to avoid certain behaviors. We may take resolve not to act that way again. Memories can also reinforce certain behaviors. Memories enable us to reflect on given situations to give us new insight, especially over time. Memories can motivate us to take certain actions: to say a prayers, to go to church or to the synagogue, to pause and reflect.

Memories are an integral part of living for older individuals. Older individuals are those in their 60's, 70's, and 80's. Memories recall events, situations, occasions to be relived. These individuals have a built in "TV Channel Changer". The memories can be quickly changed over a wide time spectrum.

Memories for the aged are good companions, and a source of "enrichment" to a sometimes "bland" existence. Memories help the aged pass "the time of day", especially if the aged are confined or unable to move about in the community. Memories give reality, at least for a moment. Memories help individuals to cope with loneliness. They are like going to the movies to see the films of yesteryear. It matters little if the same memories are frequently recalled. They rarely lose their attentiveness. Memories are a very important part of growing old and to keep active, warm and loving, the recollections of dear ones who have died. In the darkness, memories console us.

Memories have another important role: memories, in my view, give life and meaning to this thing we call immortality. We do not know what happens to persons after death. We do not know about heaven or hell. We may have notions about heaven or hell, but only notions. We give persons we have loved immortality through the precious memories we are able to recall. Memories give "life" to individuals when they are recalled. The individual becomes alive.

Jews give immortality to their loved ones through the recitation of the Kaddish during the mourning period and on the anniversary of their death. We honor our departed loved ones through the precious memories we have and in honoring them, we give them a very special kind of immortality.

Daniel H. Kruger
December 1996

To Carol
with Love
Dan

THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

Joshua O. Haberman
Yom Kippur 2003

We share this hour with a very large assembly of fellow worshipers, with dear ones, with friends, and yet, in some way this is the most private hour of this day. In moments of reflection different and disconnected scenes from early childhood, youth and our adult years ~~flash before our~~ *come to* mind's ~~eye~~. We are ~~completely~~ alone with these memories. No one else knows what ~~we~~ ^{you} are thinking. ~~Only~~ ^{we} few of our memories deal with places and events; most are about relationships -- with parents, siblings, lovers, friends and foes. ~~Spread before each of us is an album of memories which illustrate our life in its various stages. Most of the pictures in our memory album show us together with persons who had a role in shaping our life.~~

This is not the only time when memories cross our minds. Memories pop up all the time, --most often when we are alone, at night before we fall asleep, any time, any place.

In such moments of musing and day-dreaming we recall, without any particular order, faces of people, words they spoke and things they did. Many of these are recurrent memories --- only today these memories have a way of turning into judgments. How did they treat us and how did we treat them? Some of us bore resentments toward a parent, sibling, spouse or child. Were those feelings justified? Was he or she insensitive, inconsiderate and selfish? Or was I? We so much wanted to be understood. But did we try to understand the other?

We think of people we love and beloved ones who are no more. But love is not static and fixed. It is forever changeable, fluctuating between ardor and alienation, intimacy and remoteness. If we recall episodes of conflict, ruptures in the relationship, this is the time to reconsider. Who is to blame? Did I rush to judgment too hastily?

When we say time is a great healer, it is not the mere passage of time that heals but a new understanding that lessens the hurt and helps us shake off resentment. Thus memory can change our feelings and relationships with person ~~still~~ ^{still} alive or gone.

In all my memories, "I" am central. For this reason, memories redefine my identity. Memories remind me where I came from and what I did with my life; in memories we re-live our dreams and ambitions and form judgments about ourselves, what we did and what we should have done.

As this hour prompts us to review our life, it challenges us to change what ought to be changed. It is a time for the most personal decisions. It is never too late. And so, we turn from memory to ^{the present} ~~this day~~ and the possibilities of the future. Yesterday cannot be undone, but today is still *for us* ~~in our hands~~ to shape and so is tomorrow, as the poet said:

Not heaven itself upon the past has power;
But what has been, has been,
And I have had my hour.

Happy the man, and happy he alone,
He who can call to-day his own

John Dryden (poem begins with last stanza)



THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

Joshua O. Haberman

Yom Kippur 2003

In this hour we rise above concern with ourselves. We reach out to dear ones who are gone. Our hearts ache as we think of beloved ones who used to be at our side. How we miss them. If only we could speak with them. There is so much to tell.

This is an hour of remembrance. With our minds' eyes we see those with whom our lives were intertwined; we recall their gestures, their characteristic sayings; their laughter and special words of endearments. We have come to respect what was right and good in their lives. In many ways we wish we might resemble them.

We share this hour with a large assembly, with dear ones, with friends, and yet, this is the most personal and private hour of this day. In moments of reflection different and disconnected scenes from childhood, youth and adult years come to mind.

You are alone with your memories. No one else knows what you are thinking. What does memory do to us, and what do we do with our memories?

THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

¹
~~Computer File~~
Word

Joshua O. Haberman

"Memorial '03"

Yom Kippur 2003

We share this hour with a ~~very~~ large assembly of fellow worshippers,
with dear ones, with friends, and yet, ~~in some way~~ this is the most ^{personal &} private
hour of this day. In moments of reflection different and disconnected
scenes from ^{your own} ~~early~~ childhood, youth and our adult years come to mind.

^{you} ~~We~~ are alone with our memories. No one else knows what ^{you} ~~we~~ are
thinking.

What does memory do to us - and

what do we do with our memories?

Insert my Ps 105 Reflection 2.1-12

Few of our memories deal with places and events; most are about
relationships -- with parents, siblings, lovers, friends and foes. We each
have our own album of memories which illustrate our life in its various
stages. Most of the pictures in our memory album show us together with
persons who had a role in shaping our life.

"Remembrance," said

Kahlil Gibran, is a form of meeting

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We have come to respect what was right and good in their lives.

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Each person, this afternoon

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You are alone with your memories. No one else knows what you are thinking. What does memory do to ~~you~~, and what do ~~you~~ do with your memories?

Every person’s identity is built upon memory. Take away your memory, and you could not function. Memory is more than a storehouse of experience. It is a school. Memories of pleasure and pain, success and failure can teach us what to do and what not to do.

Few of our memories deal with places and events; most are about relationships --“Remembrance,” said Kahlil Gibran, “is a form of meeting.” And so, in memories we meet again with parents, siblings, lovers, friends and foes. We each have our own album of memories which illustrate our life at various stages. Most of the pictures in our memory album show us with persons who had a role in shaping our life.

This is not the only time when memories cross our minds. Memories pop up all the time, --most often when we are alone, at night before we fall asleep, any time, any place. In such moments of musing and day-dreaming we recall, without any particular order, faces of people, words they spoke, things they did.

Bob Hope’s favorite theme song was “Thanks for the Memory.” In it he recalled, sometimes facetiously, things to be grateful for. Many of our memories turn into thanksgiving. We only wish we could press the hand of friends and teachers who helped so much and say, “I thank you”. If only we could hug and kiss again dear ones who gave us love.

I think of Margaret Brunner's poem:

This memory of my mother stays with me
Throughout the years: the way she used to stand
Framed in the door when any of her band
Of children left.....as long as she could see.

Some of our memories have a way of turning into judgments.

How did they treat us and how did we treat them? Remembering can be painful when mixed with resentment toward a sibling, spouse, child or even parent. "Children begin by loving their parents" said Oscar Wilde; "as they grow older, they judge them; sometimes they forgive them."

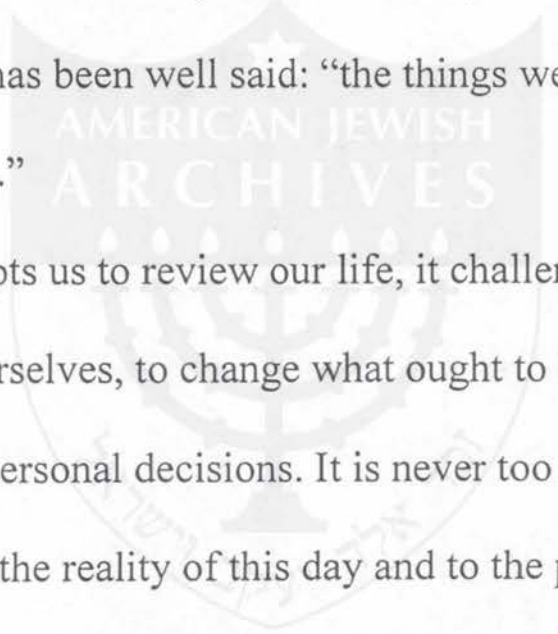
This is a time to reconsider troubled relationships. Was I without fault? Was he or she insensitive inconsiderate and selfish,? Or was I? I so much wanted to be understood. But did I try to understand the other? If you now recall episodes of conflict, this is the time to think it over. Did you rush to judgment too hastily?

When we say time is a great healer, it is not the mere passage of time that heals but a new understanding that lessens the hurt. Memory can change our feelings and relationships with persons still alive.

As our understanding grows, we see others and ourselves in a new light;

As our attitude changes, we have the makings of reconciliation with those from whom we have been alienated.

In all my memories, "I" am central. For this reason, memories redefine my identity. Memories remind me where I came from and what I did with my life; in memories we re-live our dreams and ambitions and form judgments about ourselves, what we did and what we should have done. Yes, there are memories that put us to shame, memories we would suppress if we could, as has been well said: "the things we remember best are those better forgotten."



As this hour prompts us to review our life, it challenges us to repair and reconstruct ourselves, to change what ought to be changed. It is a time for the most personal decisions. It is never too late. And so, we turn from memory to the reality of this day and to the possibilities of the future. We take from this hour lessons about life. New understanding helps us make a fresh start. We can change; so can others. Yesterday cannot be undone, but today is still for us to shape and so is tomorrow, as the poet said: Not heaven itself upon the past has power; But what has been, has been, And I have had my hour. John Dryden
Remember this: Yesterday's the past; Tomorrow -- the future;
But today is a gift to cherish; that's why it is called the "present."

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Joshua O. Haberman

Yom Kippur 2003

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Some of our memories have a way of turning into judgments.

How did they treat us and how did we treat them? ^{Remembering can be} ~~Some of our memories~~
~~are painful as we remember~~ ^{when mixed w. th} resentment toward a sibling, spouse, child or
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 "as they grow older, they judge them; sometimes they forgive them."

~~If we now remember some of those lingering resentments,~~ this is the time to reconsider. ^{part resentments)} Were my ^{the} resentments justified? Was I without fault? Was he or she insensitive, inconsiderate and selfish,? Or was I? I so much wanted to be understood. But did I try to understand the other? If you now recall episodes of conflict, a ruptured relationship, ~~this is the time to~~ reconsider. Did you rush to judgment too hastily?

When we say time is a great healer, it is not the mere passage of time that heals but a new understanding that lessens the hurt, ~~and helps us shake off resentment.~~ Memory can change our feelings and relationships with persons still alive ~~or gone~~, ^{but also w. th those who are gone,} ^{As our understanding grows, attitude change, ~~and~~}

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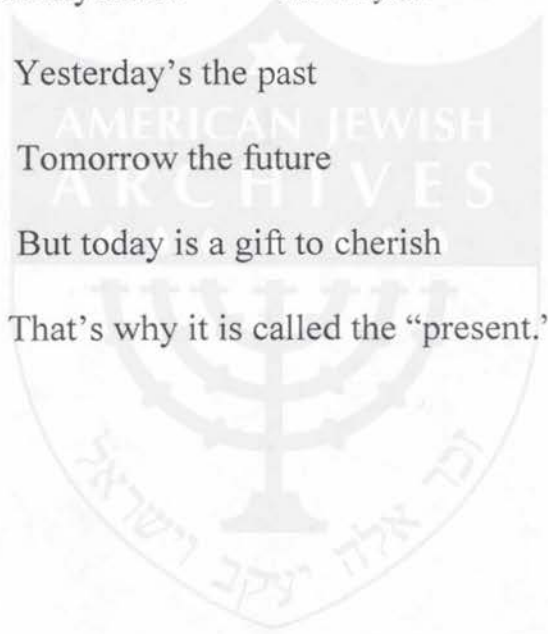
Not heaven itself upon the past has power;

But what has been, has been,

And I have had my hour. John Dryden

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 Tomorrow the future
 But today is a gift to cherish
 That's why it is called the "present."



*We take from his lesson about life new understanding leads to
 & fresh start.
 As we can change
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time that heals but a new understanding that lessens the hurt and helps us shake off resentment. Thus memory can change our feelings and relationships with person still alive or gone.

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As this hour prompts us to review our life, it challenges us to ~~change what ought to be changed~~ *reappraise & reconstruct ourselves*. It is a time for the most personal

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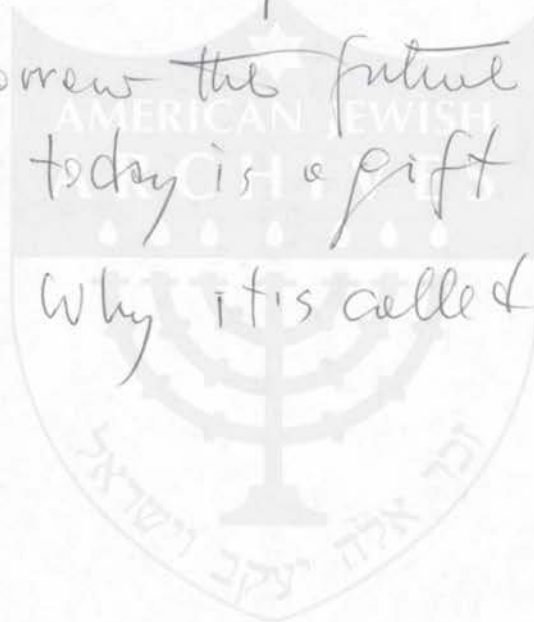
John Dryden (poem begins with last stanza)

Yesterday is the past

Tomorrow the future

But today is a gift to cherish

That's why it's called the "present"!



THE DR. JEKYL AND MR HYDE IN EACH OF US

Joshua O. Haberman

Yom Kippur 5764 - Oct 6 2003 at Washington Hebrew Congregation

In the year 1886, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a gripping psychological allegory which has terrifying relevance to the human condition. The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde tells of a respected physician in London, who had overcome certain evil inclinations in his youth to turn into a kindly, decent man. During experiments with drugs, the doctor happens to produce one which enables him to change his appearance to that of a repulsive dwarf, the embodiment of evil, whom he calls Mr. Hyde. With a similar dose, he can revert to the personality of the benevolent doctor. I won't go into the details of the story familiar, I am sure, to most of you, except for the conclusion: After changing his identity several times, doing good in the form of Dr. Jekyll and evil as Mr. Hyde, the drug loses its potency; he commits a brutal murder as Mr. Hyde, and unable to return to his former self, he commits suicide.

Stevenson may well have gotten the idea for his bizarre story from Goethe's classic drama Faust whose hero, unable to reconcile his inner conflicts, exclaims: "Two souls alas ! dwell in my breast."

Stevenson's story is a parable of human nature with its fateful contradictions of good and evil impulses, tender love convertible into the will to murder. But is not the notion of a murderer within each of us a wild exaggeration? In an interview with Agathy Christy whose dramatic output topped all records, the conversation turned on marriage.

There had been some ups and downs, she admitted. Did you ever think of divorcing your husband? "Divorce," she said, "NEVER, but murder, YES."

Very few, who resent, despise or hate someone, would actually plot the murder of that person, but they could very well wish him dead.

The human soul is torn by a civil war: good and evil wrestle within us from earliest childhood on. Just watch a playground. For a

while the sweet little children play happily together, but any moment one will beat up on another, and if the kid could, might kill him.

Romantic lovers, are shocked to discover drastic mood changes in their sweethearts; love seems to vanish in an outburst of nastiness. Nearly every married couple passes through a crisis in which one or both tearfully wonder, what has come over my partner?

What is man? is not just an academic question for anthropologists and theologians. If we need to get along with any other person; if we want to be more understanding as marriage partners, more effective as parents and educators, better comprehend social relationships and political behavior, we must have a realistic understanding of human nature.

The capacity or rather the will to hurt and destroy is the most important, underlying cause for war which has the potential of exterminating all human life. Our security, our survival, hinges on our ability to tame the beast in man and curb his capacity for destruction.

The issue before us is: How do we cope with the contradictions inherent in human nature? What must be done to suppress and control man's evil impulse and what can be done to magnify his potential for good ?

Before we attempt to cope with our evil impulse, we must ask ourselves, how did we get to be that way? There are as many answers as there are different religions, schools of philosophy and psychology. I shall single out the Biblical view which has dominated Western culture and is still echoed by many modern thinkers.

After the deluge God decides never again to destroy all life because of sinful man. God takes some responsibility for having created man the way he is. In the words of the Bible, "man is evil from his youth." Gen. 8.21

The rabbis explain: The human being is born with a *yetzer ha-ra*, the evil urge. Only at the age of 13 does he develop the *yetzer ha-tov*, the good urge. It does not grow naturally. It is acquired by steady cultivation through education, discipline, wholesome association and good examples. (see Bereshit R. 9.7). The point is that raw human nature is not benevolent. John Stuart Mill, in his essay, Nature, wrote that nature "impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, starves them with hunger, freezes

them with cold...and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve.” He further observed that there is no evidence of mercy or justice in nature. What is most evident is “that a large proportion of all animals pass their existence in tormenting and devouring other animals.” Tennyson summed it up in 6 words: “Nature, red in tooth and claw.”

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What happened bore out Machiavelli’s warning: “It is necessary... to presuppose that all men are evil and that they are always going to act according to the wickedness of their spirits whenever they have free scope.”

The founders of our Republic had no illusions about mankind. Alexander Hamilton declared before the Constitutional Assembly in 1787: “Take mankind in general. They are vicious.”

John Jay, president of the Continental Congress wrote to George Washington: “The mass of men are neither wise nor good.” (June 27, 1786)

Good-natured, corpulent Alexander Woolcott agreed:
 “All things I really like to do, are either immoral, illegal or fattening.”

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Morality has to be cultivated in human nature through steady indoctrination and right association. Note: association comes first. Avoid contact with morally defective persons. Seek the company of the good and the wise. The Talmud says: If you walk into a tannery, you’ll come out smelling bad. But if you step into a perfumery, even if you do not buy anything, you’ll take with you some of the good fragrance of the place.

Apply that to your stepping into a house of worship. Even if you are a skeptic and don’t “buy” the beliefs conveyed in some of the prayers, you will benefit in a subtle way from the reverence and spirituality of the environment.

The 2nd point made in Psalm 1 is the stress on the Torah in which the Psalmist takes delight. To be effective, it has got to be more than a casual and sporadic reading. For Bible reading to penetrate the debris of trivia which blocks out mind, we need to do our Torah study with intense concentration and continuity, day after day and preferably in the stimulating company of other learners.

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Aristotle, who gave ideas the highest priority, stressed action above doctrine in moral education:

“The virtues we develop by doing the acts.... People come to be builders by building; harp players by playing on the harp; exactly so, by doing just actions we come to be just.” *Nichomean Ethics*

If the bad news is man’s deeply rooted impulse for evil, the good news is our mysterious capacity for good. Goodness, as we have pointed out is not inherent in nature. It is an “artificial product” something we develop out of something that comes to us from a source other than nature. Perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of the good urge is the act of repentance. People can and do change. Sinners can turn into saints. Yom Kippur is our celebration of the human capacity for change, for reform and renewal.

It may be difficult this year to be a radiant optimist but but we must not drown in the flood of bad news and swallow a lopsided view of human nature. The dismal recital of evil can be matched by an honor scroll recording amazing acts of human goodness. After decades of secrecy and silence, we hear more and more about the so-called “righteous gentiles” who risked their lives in rescuing Jews during the holocaust.

Best known is the story of the French Protestant village of Le Chambon whose 3,500 inhabitants saved the lives of 6,000 Jews, mostly children whose parents had been deported and murdered. They hid these children in their own houses and in dwellings built just for that purpose.

Or, take the case of Wladislaw Bartoszewski, twice Polish foreign minister, who in 1942 organized the underground Zogota operation

specifically for the rescue of Jews. They saved 4,000, including 2,500 children, helping them escape, providing forged documents, shelter and food.

A film has been released about a village of Whitwell, Tenn. counting no more than 1200 souls. A few years ago, the principal of its middle school was shocked to learn about the holocaust. In the course of her research she came across a Norwegian anti-Nazi symbol showing a paper-clip across a swastika. That inspired the paper-clip project. After teaching all classes about the holocaust, she proposed to collect 6 million paper-clips in memory of the murdered Jews. The children responded with enthusiasm, wrote letters to people all over the world and ended up with a collection of 25 million paper-clips and the donation of a German cattle car that had been used for death camp transports. They converted the wagon into a mini-holocaust museum which was solemnly dedicated by all the townspeople and children. There is a footnote: There is not a single Jew in Whitwell nor did any live there in the past.

What are some of the practical applications of this inquiry into human nature?

- (1) Mindful of everyone's capacity for evil, scale down your expectations of people. Don't be utterly surprised if a loving and beloved person at times turns hateful and repulsive. Expect less and you will spare yourself the pain of disillusionment.
- (2) Don't assume that a highly intelligent person is also of superior moral quality. The most brilliant are capable of great cruelty. By the same token, the simplest can be the kindest person.
- (3) On the other hand, no one is beyond redemption. Even the vilest can redeem himself. Ben Azzai is quoted in the Sayings of the Fathers:

"Despise no man, and deem nothing impossible, for there is not a man that has not his hour, and there is not a thing that has not its place." Abot 4. 2

I'd like to illustrate this statement with a newspaper report about a man who died in Medford., Oregon at the age of 87. Wesley Howard was reputed to be the meanest man in the county.

He used to chase children off his 68 acre farmland with shotgun in hand. After his death it was revealed that he bequeathed his entire estate, worth over \$11 million, for the creation of a youth sports park on his land. So, the one believed to hate children turned out to be their generous benefactor.

We must not rush to judgment about a person's character. The best may have an evil streak and the worst some hidden goodness.

If you cannot believe that goodness might assert itself against all odds in the very person who offended you, you'll find it difficult to forgive.

Having spent all this time considering the good and evil urge, I must confess my own puzzlement over this question: If God is our all-wise and all-powerful Creator, could He not have rendered us so benign as to be incapable of evil? I found my query well expressed by Sue Monk Kidd in her recent book, The Secret Life of Bees:

"If I ever managed to get to heaven after everything I'd done, I hope I would get just a few minutes for a private conference with God. I want to say: Look, I know you meant well creating the world and all but how could you let it get away from you like this? How come you couldn't stick with your original idea of paradise? People's lives are a mess." Penguin Books, 2002, p.171

The rabbis acknowledge that God allowed evil to come into being but they assure us that He also prepared a remedy for every ill. As Ben Azzai said: Everything is possible --- even the day when evil will be overcome. It is the messianic hope. Dare we hope it in view of the mounting perils to human life and the succession of historic catastrophes of ever greater magnitude? Could there be a yet unimaginable outpouring of the power for good, sufficient to overwhelm evil? Can we share the hope Alfred Lord Tennyson voiced in his poem,

The Larger Hope?

*O yet we trust that somehow good
will be the final goal of ill.
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, taints of blood*

*That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,*

*Behold, we know not anything:
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.*

*So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night
An infant crying for the light
And with no language but a cry*

*I stretch lame hands of faith and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope* *In Memoriam LIV.LV*

“TWO SOULS ALAS ! DWELL IN MY BREAST”

by Joshua O. Haberman, Yom Kippur 2003

In the year 1886, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a gripping psychological allegory which has terrifying relevance to the human condition. The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde tells of a respected physician in London, who had overcome certain evil inclinations in his youth to turn into a kindly, decent man. During experiments with drugs, the doctor happens to produce one which enables him to change his appearance to that of a repulsive dwarf, the embodiment of evil, whom he calls Mr. Hyde. With a similar dose, he can revert to the personality of the benevolent doctor.

After changing his identity several times, doing good in the form of Dr. Jekyll and evil as Mr. Hyde, the drug loses its potency; he commits a brutal murder as Mr. Hyde, and unable to return to his former self, he commits suicide.

Stevenson may well have gotten the idea for his bizarre story from Goethe's classic drama Faust who, unable to reconcile his inner conflicts, exclaims “Two souls alas ! dwell in my breast.”

^{is story is a parallel of human nature with its fateful contradictions}
~~Both, Goethe and Stevenson, focus on the duality of human nature.~~

~~We are all endowed with good and evil impulses, differing from one another only in the degree to which either the good or bad in us gains the upper hand.~~

We observe this alternation of good and evil impulses in our children; Romantic lovers, often ~~discover to their~~ ^{are} shock ^{ed by} drastic mood changes ~~in their~~ sweethearts; Love seems to vanish in an outburst of nastiness. Nearly every married couple passes through a crisis in which one or both tearfully wonder, what has come over my partner?

The capacity or rather the will to hurt and destroy is the most important, underlying cause for war which, with weapons of mass-destruction, has the potential of exterminating all human life. Our security, even our survival, hinges on our ability to tame the beast in man; to curb his infinite capacity for destruction.

What is man? is not just an academic question for anthropologists and theologians ~~to debate~~. If we need to get along with any other person; if we want to be more understanding as marriage partners, more effective ~~as~~ as parents and educators, better comprehend social relationships and political behavior, ~~it is essential that~~ we ^{must have} ~~gain~~ a realistic perception of human nature.

The issue before us is: How do we cope with the contradictions inherent in human nature? What must be done to suppress and control man's evil impulse and what can be done to magnify his potential for good?

Before we attempt to cope with our evil impulse, we must ask ourselves, how did we get to be that way? There are as many answers as there are different religions, schools of philosophy and psychology.

I shall single out the Biblical view which has dominated Western culture and is still echoed by many modern thinkers.

After the deluge God decides never again to destroy all life on account of sinful man. God takes some responsibility for having created man the way he is. In the words of the Bible, "man is evil from his youth." Gen. 8.21

The rabbis explain: The human being is born with his *yetzer ha-ra*, the evil urge. Only at the age of 13 does he develop the *yetzer ha-tov*, the good urge. It does not grow naturally. It is acquired by steady cultivation through education, discipline, wholesome association and good examples. (see Bereshit R. 9.7). The point is that raw human nature is not benevolent. John Stuart Mill, in his essay, Nature, wrote that nature "impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, starves them with hunger, *freezes* them with cold....and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve." He further observed that there is no evidence of mercy or justice in nature. What is most evident is "that a large proportion of all animals ~~should~~ pass their existence in tormenting and devouring other animals." Tennyson summed it up in 6 words: "Nature, red in tooth and claw."

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Perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of the good urge is the act of repentance. People can and do change. Sinners can turn into saints.

Yom Kippur is our celebration of the human capacity for change, for reform and renewal. ~~This was brought out recently in a story about a young Israeli woman and an Arab physician in Israel.~~

The possibility of radical change of attitude and of human relationship was illustrated by the case of

Who could have imagined that modern medicine would become a destroyer of Amity? ...

When Michal Halevi-Harris gave birth to her first child at the Shaarei Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, she insisted that in addition to the gynecologist, another physician from the hospital staff, the Arab Dr. Salah Awadalla also be present. Someone objected: "But he is an Arab, a Palestinian." Then, the following was revealed:

had been
In 1996, Michal ~~was~~ a soldier, and left Jerusalem on bus # 18 to return to her base. When she opened her eyes a month later at the Shaarei Zedek Hospital, they told her what had happened. An Arab suicide bomber had blown up the bus, killing many passengers. Michal was among the critically wounded who were rushed to the hospital. The half-dead soldier girl was assigned to Dr. Awadalla a veteran member of the hospital staff. He could barely discern a pulse. Her chest was opened and revealed two crushed lungs and a damaged heart. Considering her case hopeless, some suggested that her bed be vacated for much needed room in the intensive care section. But Dr. Awadalla refused to give up. He ordered massive, continuing blood transfusions. The response was

very, very slow but Dr. Awalla was persistent.

One month later Michal regained consciousness. After she heard what had happened, she told her first visitors to kill all Arabs. But when informed that an Arab doctor had saved her life, her attitude changed. 7 years later, when due to deliver her first child, Michal insisted that Dr. Awadalla be present at the delivery to be done by the gynecologist. When the time came, Dr. Awalla slept over at the hospital so as to be on hand. He held the baby in his arms even before Michal had seen it. She said: "He is like my father and now he is the grandfather of my daughter." It is a case of hatred turning into love, of people surmounting hostility, of good prevailing over evil.

~~Character personalities take place all the time~~

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"Let not the evil inclination dominate us. Distance us from an evil person and an evil companion. Attach us to the good inclination..."

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Apply that to your stepping into a house of worship. Even if you are a skeptic and don't "buy" the beliefs conveyed in some of the prayers, you will benefit in a subtle way from the reverence and spirituality of the environment.

The 2nd point made in Psalm 1 is the stress on the Torah in which the Psalmist takes delight. To be effective, it has got to be more than a casual and sporadic reading. For Bible reading to penetrate the debris of trivia which blocks out mind, we need to do our Torah study with intense concentration and continuity, day after day and preferably in the stimulating company of other learners.

Unlike any other reading, most every word of the Torah is a call to action. The Torah speaks to us for the most part in terms of commandments. The *mitzvot* translate beliefs into a way of life, not in isolation but in community.

But note: a study of ethics will not make you an ethical person unless you practice habitually the values you verbalize. When Israel accepted the Torah at Mt. Sinai, they said "*na-aseh v'nishma*" we shall do and obey. The doing comes first; then the beliefs and reasons for doing.

Aristotle, who gave ideas the highest priority, nevertheless stressed action above doctrine in moral education:

"The virtues we develop by doing the acts.... People come to be builders^s by building; harp players by playing on the harp; exactly so, by doing just actions we come to be just." Nichomean Ethics

If the bad news is man's deeply rooted impulse for evil, the good news is our mysterious capacity for good. Goodness, as we have pointed out is not inherent in nature. It is an "artificial product" something we develop out of something that comes to us from a source other than nature. Perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of the good urge is the act of repentance. People can and do change. Sinners can turn into saints. Yom Kippur is our celebration of the human capacity for change, for reform and renewal. This was brought out recently in a story about a young Israeli woman and an Arab physician in Israel.

When Michal Halevi-Harris gave birth to her first child at the Shaarei Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, she insisted that in addition to the gynecologist, another physician from the hospital staff, the Arab Dr. Salah Awadalla also be present. Someone objected: "But he is an Arab, a Palestinian." Then, the following was revealed:

In February 1996, Michal was a soldier, and left Jerusalem on bus # 18 to return to her base. When she opened her eyes a month later at the Shaarei Zedek Hospital, they told her what had happened. An Arab suicide bomber had blown up the bus, killing many passengers. Michal was among the critically wounded who were rushed to the hospital. The half-dead soldier girl was assigned to Dr. Awadalla a veteran member of the hospital staff. He could barely discern a pulse. Her chest was opened and revealed two crushed lungs and a damaged heart. Considering her case hopeless, some suggested that her bed be vacated for much needed room in the intensive care section. But Dr. Awadalla refused to give up. He ordered massive, continuing blood transfusions. The response was very, very slow but Dr. Awalla was persistent.

One month later Michal regained consciousness. After she heard what had happened, she told her first visitors to kill all Arabs. But when informed that an Arab doctor had saved her life, her attitude changed. ⁵ years later, when due to deliver her first child, Michal insisted that Dr. Awadalla be present at the delivery to be done by the gynecologist. When the time came, Dr. Awalla slept over at the hospital so as to be on hand. He held the baby in his arms even before Michal had seen it. She said: "He is like my father and now he is the grandfather of my daughter." It is a case of hatred turning into love, of people surmounting hostility, of good prevailing over evil.

What are some of the practical applications of this ~~morning's~~ inquiry into human nature?

- (1) Mindful of everyone's capacity for evil, scale down your expectations of people. Don't be utterly surprised if a loving and beloved person at times turns hateful and repulsive. Expect less and you will spare yourself the pain of disillusionment.
- (2) Don't assume that a highly intelligent person is also of superior moral quality. The most brilliant are capable of great cruelty. By the same token, the simplest can be the kindest person.
- (3) On the other hand, no one is beyond redemption. Even the vilest can redeem himself. Ben Azzai is quoted in the Sayings of the Fathers: "Despise no man, and deem nothing impossible, for there is not a man that has not his hour, and there is not a thing that has not its place."

Abot 4. 2 ~~If you cannot believe that goodness might assert itself against all odds in the very person who offended you, you'll find it difficult to forgive.~~

~~Having spent all this time~~ ^{After} considering the good and evil urge, I must confess my own puzzlement over this question: If God is our all-wise and all-powerful Creator, could He not have rendered us so benign as to be incapable of evil? ~~I found my quandry well expressed by Sue Monk Kidd in her recent book, The Secret Life of Bees~~ ^{raised my question:}

"If I ever managed to get to heaven after everything I'd done, I hope I would get just a few minutes for a private conference with God. I want to say: Look, I know you meant well creating the world and all but how could you let it get away from you like this? How come you couldn't stick with your original idea of paradise? People's lives are a mess." Penguin Books, 2002, p.171

The rabbis acknowledge that God allowed evil to come into being but they assure us that He also prepared a remedy for every ill. As Ben Azzai said: Everything is possible --- even the day when evil will be overcome.