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## ***Counting Our Days With Wisdom***

By

Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

Yom Kippur Yizkor

Sept. 22, 2007

At Washington Hebrew Congregation

In this hour of memories, we close our eyes for a moment and scenes of our life come to mind. We see images of dear ones; we remember their characteristics and recall their sayings. We re-live our relationship with a parent, grandmother, grandfather, sister or brother and others.

We think of their role in our life. Some were models to love and admire. Others, the opposite, examples of what not to be and not to do. Even those we loved were not saints. They were all humans, each with a set of virtues and faults.

Some of our memories are mingled with regret, grievance, even smoldering resentment. With some we had a complicated, love-hate relationship. As we compare ourselves with our departed to whom we were closest, we wonder if we could match their abilities and best characteristics? Or, do we now find within ourselves some of the very faults for which we faulted them?

Memories are teachers and this should be an hour of learning. Psalm 90 teaches us one of the most important lessons we should learn about life and death :

למנוחת ימינו, ימינו כעפר, וימינו כעפר, וימינו כעפר

***"So teach us to count our days that we get us a heart of wisdom"***

Think of life not in years, but in days. (Ps.90.12)

Whatever your plans for the next month or next year, today is what counts. Today you are alive. Who knows what tomorrow will bring, let alone the weeks and months to come ?

How do we count our life time? Usually, we say "I am so and so many years old. But, there is a more realistic way of counting.

When you start on a trip, let us say, Washington to New York, you'll see a sign "250 miles to New York." As you keep driving, toward your destination, the miles listed on signs become fewer and fewer. So should we count our years on life's journey. Rabbi Lustig, in his Rosh Hashanah sermon, alluded to this fact: as our age goes up, the number of years to go, goes down. Our remaining life time diminishes. It is sobering to count your age not by the years you already lived, but by those still to be expected. That's how the insurance actuary determines your age, your life expectancy rather than your actual age.

This way of counting will make you think of what is important for the remainder of your life; it will make you re-think your priorities; how to put your remaining years to their best use: Not to waste precious life time.

Jewish ethical writings warn us against the sin of "Bittul Ha-sman," which means "waste of time." What is a waste of time?

Hours of idleness, doing nothing, is not necessarily a waste of time. We need to get off the treadmill of busy-ness. We need pauses of inactivity. We need to think and re-think our agenda. We need to reconsider the goals we are striving to reach, our tasks, so many of which are self imposed . If we took time to think, we might discover that much of what we do is



unimportant and not worth our time --- and that is "Bittul Ha-sman," a waste of time.

Some of our heart aches are "Bittul Ha-sman" – such as crying over spilled milk, regret over some missed opportunity. Instead of bemoaning the past look forward to every new moment which may bring a new opportunity.

A more serious "Bittul Ha-sman" is harboring grudges for injuries suffered some time ago. Such smoldering resentments are unproductive, wasteful of our life time. As we grow older, we should not only remember but also forget some of our painful experiences.

Most important is the avoidance of new conflicts. Youth is ambitious for success and victories. Part of the wisdom we learn with age is that you can't win them all. Life is a succession of winning and losing. If you must always have your way, if you must win in every situation, you are bound to run into conflict. Take to heart the example of father Abraham. When conflict broke out between his herdsmen and those of his kinsman, Lot, over certain pastures on which to graze their flocks, Abraham said to Lot:

"Let there be no strife between you and me...let us separate...  
if you will go left, I shall go right, and if you go to the right,  
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Conflict avoidance may seem like yielding. But most often it is the decision to change directions, to go a different way ---and there is no shame in that.

One of the many Biblical phrases, which became common English idioms, is the expression "to set your house in order." (II Sam. 17.23)

This is the task for the latter portions of life. It should be far more than ordering your financial affairs, known as estate planning. Setting our house



in order should be life's culminating achievement. It includes reshaping relationships, seeking reconciliation with alienated family members; reaching out to old friends of long ago somehow neglected in the course of time; paying non-monetary debts we owe to persons whose kindness, generosity and crucial help we may never have sufficiently acknowledged or rewarded.

"Setting your house in order" also means fulfilling aspirations, the classics you wanted to read, the language you hoped to learn. The journalist, I.F Stone, after retirement in his 70's, took up the study of Greek to read Plato and Aristotle in the original.

Mature people, and more so those advanced in age, need to revisit some of those deep, ultimate questions we may have tackled and dropped in earlier years. Is there a purpose to our existence? Why life? Why death? How do I know there is God? What kind of relationship and communication can you have with God? Does God hear and answer prayers?

Being Jewish means to study Torah daily. Why? To re-think our faith and the obligations – the mitzvot or commandments— our ancestors perceived as God's demands. It is not too late to become a student of Torah, not too late even for learning Hebrew to pray with understanding.

I would urge the resumption of an old Jewish custom as part of "setting one's house in order." I mean the writing of an ethical will summarizing lessons one has learned, to pass on to children and grandchildren for the conduct of their own lives.

Old or young, we should count our days and reflect on the lessons gained from experience. This is wisdom, gained with age, to share with others.

There are age limits to physical growth but not to intellectual, moral and spiritual growth.

It took me a long time to understand and appreciate Robert Browning's famous poem, to which he gave a Jewish title,

Rabbi Ben Ezra:

Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be.

The last of life, for which the first was made...

Considering the aches and pains that come with age, how could Browning say of old age that the best is yet to be? Was he serious or sarcastic?

Re-reading the full, very long poem, I found clues to his meaning in these lines:

Learn, nor account the pang...

How good to live and learn

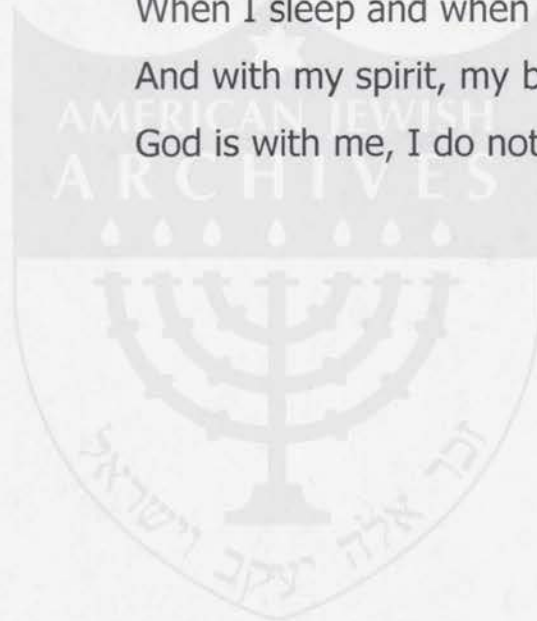
Amend what flaws may lurk.

Browning expressed the supreme Jewish ideal which is a life of learning for the purpose of amending "what flaws may lurk"; in other words, life is a journey of self-improvement fulfilled in old age.

Could Browning's expectation, "the best is yet to be" refer to another stage of existence, to something after life that will be superior to the life we have lived? Could this life be just one of many stages of existence, leading to some unimaginable culmination of being?

This takes us from knowledge to the realm of faith. For my part, I leave this question open but recite each night this Hebrew affirmation of trust:

In His hand I entrust my spirit,  
When I sleep and when I wake  
And with my spirit, my body too,  
God is with me, I do not fear. Amen





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Browning expressed ~~the Supreme Jewish ideal~~ which is a life of learning for the purpose of amending "what flaws may lurk"; in other words, life is a journey of self-improvement fulfilled in old age.

~~It is the Jewish ideal: Live and learn so that others may learn from your life. Make it the best yet to be. Amen~~

Could Browning's expectation "the best is yet to be" refer to another stage of existence, superior to the life we know? Could this life be one of many stages of existence, leading to unimaginable forms of being? This takes us from knowledge to the realm of faith. For my part I end each day with this Hebrew affirmation of trust

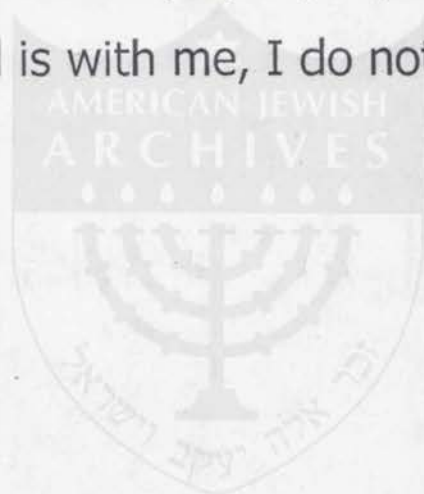
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ב'רו אופק'ר כוה'י "In His hand I entrust my spirit,  
ב'ג'ת א'ו'י'ן ו'א'ו'ר'א When I sleep and when I wake  
ו'ר'א כוה'י א'ו'י'ת'י And with my spirit, my body too,  
ה'י ע'י ו'ע'א א'ו'ר'א God is with me, I do not fear." Amen



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And the final one -- Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge.

The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child.

The winner was a four year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife.

Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there.

When his Mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said,

*"Nothing, I just helped him cry"*

*Often that's all we can do — but it's a lot!*

\*\*\*\* Ed Glick \*\*\*\*

*The most caring friend*

On Country

Einsteim -

Not everything that can be  
counted, counts.

Not everything that counts  
can be counted.

"Country things left undone"  
or yet to do

Poems That Touch the Heart

THE SIN OF OMISSION ✓

It isn't the thing you do;  
It's the thing you leave undone,  
Which gives you a bit of heartache  
At the setting of the sun.

The tender word forgotten,  
The letter you did not write,  
The flower you might have sent,  
Are your haunting ghosts tonight.

The stone you might have lifted  
Out of a brother's way,  
The bit of heartsome counsel  
You were hurried too much to say.

The loving touch of the hand,  
The gentle and winsome tone,  
That you had no time or thought for  
With troubles enough of your own.

The little acts of kindness,  
So easily out of mind;  
Those chances to be helpful  
Which everyone may find—

No, it's not the thing you do,  
It's the thing you leave undone,  
Which gives you the bit of heartache  
At the setting of the sun.

MARGARET E. SANGSTER



# *Rowling Cried as She Finished Harry's Saga*

Reuters

LONDON, July 6 — Best-selling author J.K. Rowling revealed how she broke down in tears during the completion of her final book in the Harry Potter series.

She also says she changed the last word in "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" at the eleventh hour.

"When I finished one chapter near the end, I absolutely howled," she told the BBC.

She finished the book alone in a hotel room.

"I was sobbing my heart out — I downed half a bottle of champagne from the mini-bar . . . and went home with mascara all over my face. That was really tough."

"The Deathly Hallows" is the seventh and final book about the schoolboy wizard Harry Potter and his Hogwarts friends.

The plots have taken a darker turn and Rowling has in the past revealed that she would kill off at least two of the main characters.

When asked whether the word "scar" was still the last word in the book, as had been reported, she said: "Scar? It was for ages, and now it's not.

"Scar is quite near the end, but it's not the last word."

Harry Potter has a lightning bolt scar on his forehead as a result of a failed curse by the wicked wizard Lord Voldemort.

Rowling also said that the character Harry Potter was "totally imaginary" and not based on anyone.

More than 325 million copies of the first six books have been sold worldwide, helping to turn Rowling into the first billionaire author.

The Poignancy of  
Goodbyes!



# HISTORIC INSULTS

*In our time, insults have been reduced to four-letter words or ethnic and/racial slurs. Here are some examples from previous eras, when substantive human beings used the power and value of the English language to skewer, gut and vanquish the objects of their various venomous vexations.*

"I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure."

**Clarence Darrow**

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it."

**Moses Hadas**

"I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But this wasn't it."

**Groucho Marx**

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play, bring a friend ... if you have one."

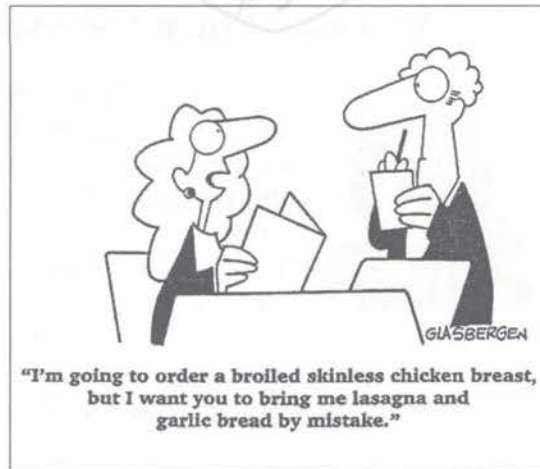
**Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill**

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second... if there is one."

**Winston Churchill, in response**

"He inherited some good instincts from his Quaker forebears, but by diligent hard work, he overcame them."

**James Reston (about Richard Nixon)**





# FOCUS

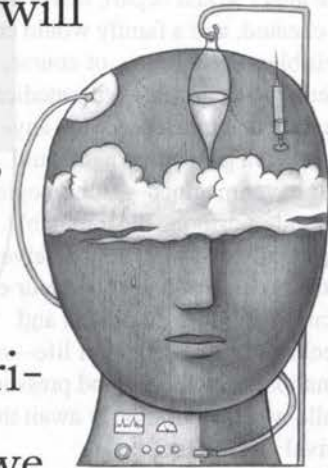
## END-OF-LIFE DECISIONS



“There are few things more painful than to watch a loved one slip away,” writes Rabbi Jonathan Kendall. “Ask any care giver, any spouse, child, sibling, or parent, and they will

tell you that waiting for the other shoe to drop can suck the marrow from your bones.”

In this Focus section, we look to Jewish tradition and the lessons of personal experience to help us realize how the decisions we



make during such times can, for better or worse, affect the rest of our lives.

We hope that these perspectives will bring a measure of comfort and healing to all who face or have faced the loss of a loved one.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEPHANO VITALE

# The Last Dance

*Knowing that the angel of death is standing in the wings can either strengthen or splinter a family.*

BY JONATHAN P. KENDALL

In the days when every illness posed a fatal threat, our ancestors practiced the ancient ritual of changing the name of an ailing family member in the belief that when the *Mal'ach haMavet*, the Angel of Death, arrived, no one present would be on his dreaded list. The angel would depart, death would be cheated, and a family would count their blessings. Today, of course, we attempt to defy death with medical marvels that transcend what anyone even a generation ago could ever have imagined—technologies that only postpone the inevitable. Eventually, we will find ourselves at the bedside of a dear one, our eyes focused on those numerical and mechanistic quantifiers of life—oxygenation, heartbeat, blood pressure—while we subconsciously await the arrival of the angel.

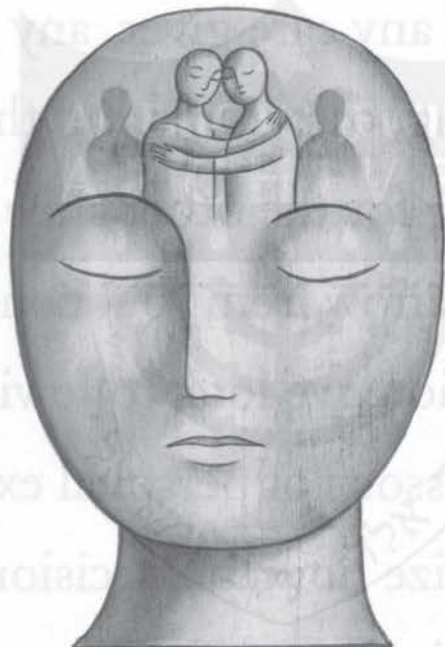
Physical decline, ominous symptoms, intensive care units, nursing homes, hospices...these stops and steps along the way test our mettle, our families, our faith. There are few things more painful than to watch a loved one slip away. Ask any caregiver, any spouse, child, sibling, or parent, and they will tell you that waiting for the other shoe to drop can suck the marrow from your bones. What may have been of earth-shattering importance yesterday is reduced to the trivial in the light of a fresh diagnosis.

And so begins a startling dance in

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*Rabbi Jonathan Kendall is spiritual leader of Temple Beit HaYam in Stuart, Florida. He also writes a bi-weekly column for the Scripps Howard Newspapers.*

which we let go and hold on, sometimes simultaneously. We perceive glimmers of hope, slight improvements accompanied by setbacks that



eclipse the optimism so fundamental to our human and Jewish character.

Over time, a part of us—that place where our most private fears reside—begins to wonder: *How long will this go on? How much am I going to have to suffer to make it through? I can't wait for it all to end!* Then comes the guilt for harboring such thoughts. After all, something cosmic is taking place amidst the drugs and tubes: an entire universe of experience, thought, passion, love, accomplishment, disappointment, success and failure, laughter, and companionship is about to be extinguished. Impending death can be a relatively straightforward path for the patient; for

family it is often a moral maze, especially when it becomes a crucible for unresolved familial conflict. Skirmishes do bubble to the surface at weddings and b'nai mitzvah, but in times surrounding death and dying family members are apt to fully “act out” repressed resentments.



Sylvia\* was a sprightly, bright, well-educated 84-year-old woman. Until last year, she had lived a remarkably full life. Then, quite unexpectedly, her husband of almost sixty years died. Not long after, Sylvia suffered a series of physical setbacks culminating in congestive heart failure. Over the course of only several months, she went from being an entirely “with it” woman to a frail, dependent, sometimes disoriented and confused soul. The odyssey began at home, passed through an assisted living facility, and ended in a nursing home.

Sylvia's daughter, who lived nearby, watched her mother's rapid decline with alarm, but with an understanding rooted in daily exposure to her condition. In contrast, Sylvia's other two adult children, who lived long distances away, arrived only during times of crisis, one child feeling resentful and impatient, the other angry.

The resentful child had always felt cheated, deprived of an equal measure of parental attention. It was too late to articulate these sentiments to Sylvia, who now needed the attention and was

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*\* All case histories are composites, and no real names have been used.*

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHANO VITALE



certainly in no position to reciprocate.

The angry child—the “baby” who had received a great deal of attention—felt enormous guilt for having “abandoned” her mother. She lashed out at everyone—the physicians, the hospital, the nurses, the rabbi—accusing them all of indifference and neglect.

Everything came to a head when the cardiologist pronounced: “There is nothing more that I can do.”

The daughter who lived nearby wanted only that her mother be spared unnecessary pain as nature took its course. By her lights, mom was ready.

Child number two—the resentful one—immediately inquired about a “do not resuscitate” order (DNR). While voicing concern about his mother’s suffering, he wondered aloud if her morphine drip might be increased, knowing full well that the drug would compromise her respiration and hasten her death.

Child number three—the guilty one—insisted that everything possible be done to keep her mother alive.

And so began a primal negotiation among the siblings. It was not a question of “who shall live and who shall die” as voiced in our High Holy Day *unetane tokef* prayer, but how and when this passage from life to death would occur. Each of the adult children now played a supporting role in this final act, this denouement of their mother’s life.

Sylvia had already slipped into unconsciousness when I arrived, my *Rabbi’s Manual* in hand. The first child asked me to recite the *vidui*, the final confession. The third child was horrified at the thought and demanded a prayer for a *refuah sheleimah*, a complete healing. The bedside conflict raged on even as I offered the prayer that as Sylvia’s life came to a close, she would be blessed with a gentle and humane passing, to which the second child added: “...and sooner, rather than later.”

At the funeral, the children sat apart, much as they had lived their lives.



Not every family finds itself in conflict for the same reasons. Sometimes the “conflict” has its origins in love, not fragmentation.

Robert\* was a young physician.

Three years ago, while holding a Torah during the chanting of *Kol Nidre*, he suddenly tired and had to pass the scroll to another temple leader. Startled by his weakness, he immediately underwent blood work and received a diagnosis of a particularly aggressive lymphoma. Every imaginable treatment was tried at a prestigious cancer facility until, finally, nothing more could be done. Only transfusions were keeping him alive, but prolonging his suffering. He pleaded for an end to the treatments. His wife, however, could not bear to bring her husband’s life to a merciful end.

Finally, at Robert’s request, a family meeting was called. On one side of the divide stood Robert’s mother and wife. They pleaded the case for continued transfusions because any extra time was worth the suffering to them, and to the couple’s three children—as long as breath was drawn and there was some recognition, some connection, as long as the children could venture into the bedroom and receive a kiss, a nod, a hand held, dad was still dad and he was still there.

The other contingent consisted of Robert, Robert’s brothers, and me—his rabbi. We understood that the transfusions had decreasingly palliative value. Robert was tired, exhausted from procedures and invasive efforts to keep him alive. He was ready—as ready as a young parent can be—to go to his eternity. He understood his mother’s entreaties, his wife’s insistence, his children’s fears and growing sense of loss—but he was not able to continue on. He also knew that these transfusions would likely result in a much more difficult death. As painful as it was, we agreed with Robert that “it was his time.”

In this family no hidden agendas or unresolved conflicts hovered beneath the surface—only the heart-wrenching dilemma of both wanting to keep Robert alive and wanting his suffering to end. And so we spoke, softly, quietly, compassionately, about love, about holding on and letting go, about life and death as two sides of the same coin. I discussed how, according to Jewish tradition, while we may not hasten death, we also must not prolong it. This was not a debate; there were no

points to be scored. This was about fulfilling Robert’s wishes pegged to our Jewish sensitivities.

Robert’s request was finally honored with grace, understanding, and equanimity. The transfusions stopped. Robert died five days later. At the funeral, the family sat together, much as they had lived their lives.



This month will mark twenty years since I sat at my father’s bedside for the last time. I was the rabbi of a congregation in California; my parents lived in Ohio. I spent a good part of the end of that summer of ’85 shuttling back and forth. The last visit—between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur—is a memory etched in my consciousness. Dad was completely lucid, though he would periodically drift off to sleep. We reminisced about vacations, his parents, family history, laughable times, some poignant moments. We both said the “right” things to each other.

My father’s cancer was so advanced that he refused all treatment, save for the analgesic. I confess, it wasn’t easy to sit there, hour after hour. My father, once robust, strong, and vital, had turned into a mirror image of Gandhi. The container, the vessel, had become unfamiliar and alien. But the heart and soul were still front and center.

I was leaving the next morning and asked him to try to hold on until I returned after Yom Kippur. It felt like a selfish request, but he reacted with a weak smile and said, “I’ll try.” We embraced. I told him that I loved him, that he had been a great father. I made my way slowly from the room and I turned at the door. He blew me a kiss—the last movement of his hands I would ever see—and he said, “Jon, it sure goes fast.”



The imminent and looming death of a loved one is an uncharted emotional precinct for us all. Some of us will be deeply aggrieved, some angry, some withdrawn, some sad, some relieved, some a combination of the above. There will be differences of opinion, driven by old animosities, shaped by real or perceived slights, guided by philosophies



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fashioned by ours and others' religious traditions. There may be one family member who, on the strength of having given greater time and care, will "take command," much to the dismay of others who also claim "ownership." The issue of inheritance—of who gets what and how much—can also color the scene.

What is often lost in this confrontation with human finitude is that the central character of this drama is our loved one, not us. The scenario of family members at each other's throats mocks the sacredness of the moment. While years of alienation, anger, estrangement do not evaporate overnight, hatchets must be set aside. This is not the time to be an *am kashev oref*, a stiff-necked people. This is instead a time for a hierarchy of priorities that allows, with some visionary alchemy, our narcissistic impulses to surrender to the precious values of forgiveness, love, respect, dignity, decency, compassion, and selflessness.

We are taught in Psalm 90:12 to number our days so that we might receive a heart of wisdom. Here's the real wisdom: End-of-life issues are never simple. They are complex and unsettling, sometimes discomfiting and contentious. In this age of managed care, we often find ourselves acting as advocates for our loved ones, lest their treatment "by the book" fall short of what we believe they deserve. At some point, hope and reality collide and our emphasis shifts from being champions of every imaginable medical course to becoming partners with the Holy One in devising a gentle and humane path leading to the shelter of God's wings. While this elemental drama unfolds, we may find ourselves buffeted by currents long submerged but still powerful and diverting. Our task is to navigate these waters with a singleness of purpose, shaped and molded by our values.

I think of my dad's last words to me. They have become, after twenty years, more than just an astonished observation about the swift spinning wheel of time. Life, he was saying, is both precious and finite. Make sure that the things you do move in cadence with your Jewish heart. And please do not presume that these things can be postponed or avoided, because it sure goes fast. □

When of my, think of what you do if your funds were reduced to a small amount would you not want to use it? I think it is most important to be prepared to a small amount

\* Samuel Johnson's famous response to Lord Chesterfield



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What kind of wisdom can you receive in reflect: on upon life's limitations? **REFORM | 56 | JUDAISM** Stop funding Roset priorities. Act before it's too late. What really matters? Don't do too little late

May 12, 07

Re: YIZKOR

At my age of 88 plus, talking about death is not an academic exercise or theological speculation but an existential matter. I am not thinking of death in general but of the certainty of my own death, the death of my dear ones, the death of people I know. It is a reality I must come to terms with in almost daily reflection on the subject.

I wonder if living another generation is really desirable?

In this century of unbridled nuclear armament, the so-called "dirty bomb"

Is bound to happen sooner or later.

I worry about my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

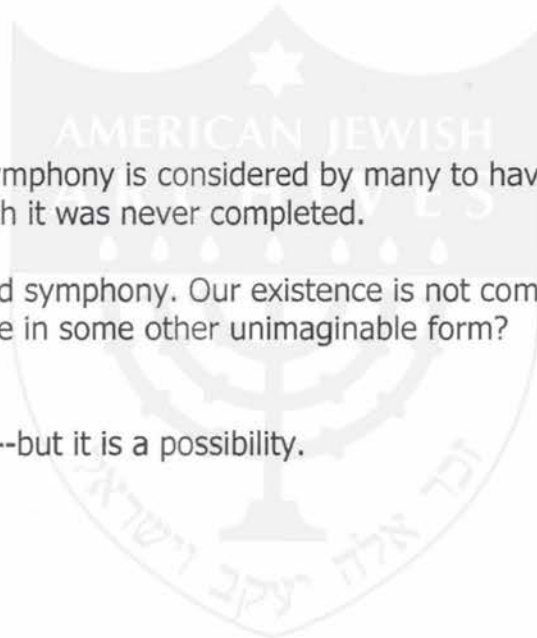
So what is there to do?

Live day by day !

Schubert's Unfinished Symphony is considered by many to have been his very best composition, even though it was never completed.

Every life is an unfinished symphony. Our existence is not completed here on earth; Maybe elsewhere? Maybe in some other unimaginable form? Maybe superior to anything we know?

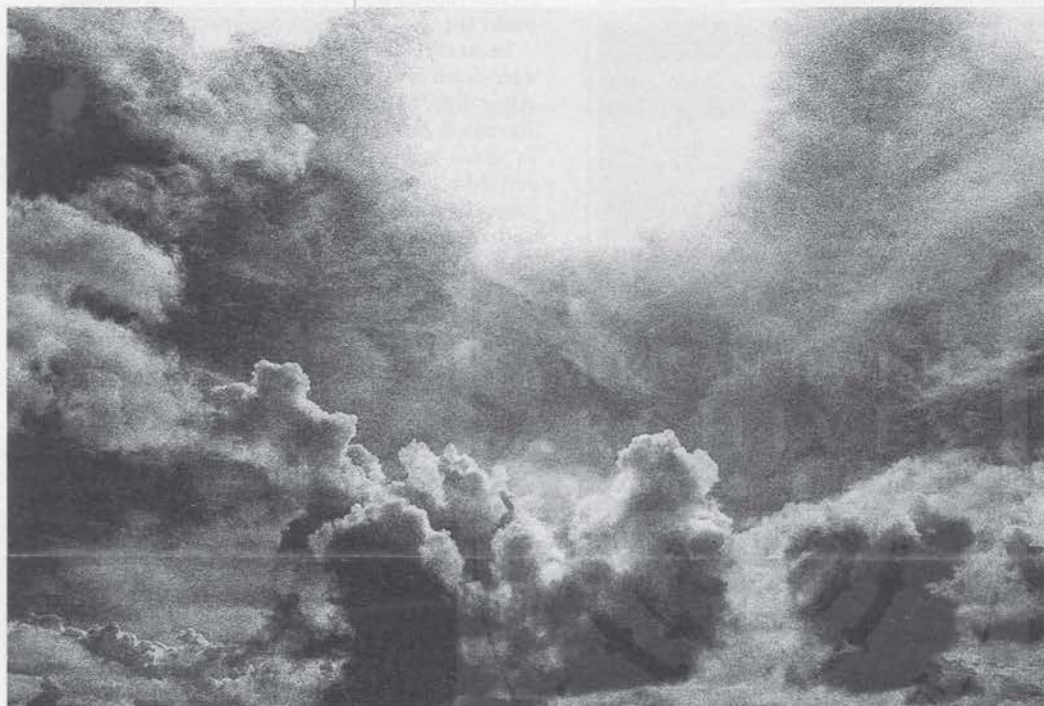
No one knows for sure ---but it is a possibility.





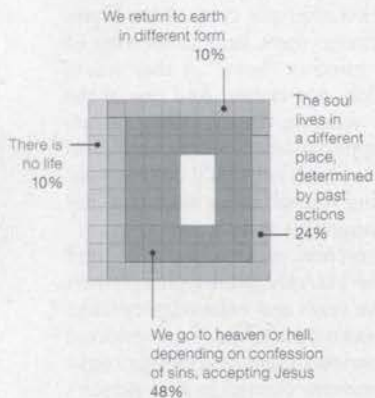
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The Way We Live Now



## WHAT'S NEXT

Percentage of Americans who believe that after death ...



Source: The Barna Group, 2002  
Chart by Charles M. Blow

## Eternity For Atheists

Is God necessary for immortality?  
By Jim Holt

**If God is dead**, does that mean we cannot survive our own deaths? Recent best-selling books against religion agree that immortality is a myth we ought to outgrow. But there are a few thinkers with unimpeachable scientific credentials who have been waving their arms and shouting: not so fast. Even without God, they say, we have reason to hope for — or possibly fear — an afterlife.

Curiously, the doctrine of immortality is more a pagan legacy than a religious one. The notion that each of us is essentially an immortal soul goes back to Plato. Whereas the body is a compound thing that eventually falls apart, Plato argued, the soul is simple and therefore imperishable. Contrast this view with that of the Bible. In the Old Testament there is little mention of an afterlife; the rewards and punishments

invoked by Moses were to take place in this world, not the next one. Only near the beginning of the Christian era did one Jewish sect, the Pharisees, take the afterlife seriously, in the form of the resurrection of the body. The idea that “the dead shall be raised” was then brought into Christianity by St. Paul.

The Judeo-Christian version of immortality doesn't work very well without God: who but a divine agent could miraculously reconstitute each of us after our death as a “spiritual body”? Plato's version has no such need; since our platonic souls are simple and thus enduring, we are immortal by nature.

The Platonic picture may be pleasing, but it is hard to square with what we have learned from neuroscience.

Everything that gives each of us our personal identities — consciousness, character, memories and so on — seems rooted in the electrochemical processes of our brains. As Bertrand Russell observed, “A virtuous person may be rendered vicious by encephalitis lethargica, and ... a clever child can be turned into an idiot by a lack of iodine.” The dependence is most cruelly apparent in cases of Alzheimer's disease, where the dissolution of the self proceeds in direct proportion to the physical deterioration of the brain.

Where does this leave those who, while secular in outlook, still pine after immortality? A little more than a century ago, the American philosopher William James proposed an interesting way of keeping open the door to an afterlife. We know that the mind depends on the physical brain, James said. But that doesn't mean that our brain processes actually produce our mental life, as opposed to merely transmitting it. Perhaps, he conjectured, our brains allow our minds to filter through to this world from some transcendent “mother sea” of consciousness. Had James given his lecture a few decades later, he might have used the radio as a metaphor. When a radio is damaged, the music becomes distorted. When it is smashed, the music stops altogether. All the while,

*Jim Holt is a contributing writer for the magazine.*

Photograph by Ralph Gibson



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however, the signal is still out there, uncorrupted.

James's idea of immortality may sound far-fetched, but for him and other scientifically minded thinkers of his time it had one great virtue. It explained the existence of what were thought to be psychic phenomena: ghostly apparitions, communications from the dead at séances and seeming cases of reincarnation. Alas, little of this supposed evidence for an afterlife has held up under the scrutiny of rigorous investigation.

In the 1970s, a new hope for survivalists emerged: the near-death experience. In the best-selling book "Life After Life," a doctor and parapsychologist named Raymond A. Moody Jr. presented a number of cases in which patients who had flat-lined and then been revived told of entering a long tunnel and emerging into a dazzling pool of light, where they communed with departed loved ones. In 1988, the atheist philosopher A.J. Ayer had such an adventure when he choked on a piece of smoked salmon and his heart stopped for a few minutes. Soon afterward, Ayer reported that his near-death experience, in which he saw a red light that seemed to govern the universe, "slightly weakened my conviction that my genuine death ... will be the end of me." But he later dismissed it as a hallucination caused by a temporary lack of oxygen in his brain.

The most interesting possibilities for an afterlife proposed in recent years are based on hard science with a dash of speculation. In his 1994 book, "The Physics of Immortality," Frank J. Tipler, a specialist in relativity theory at Tulane University, showed how future beings might, in their drive for total knowledge, "resurrect" us in the form of computer simulations. (If this seems implausible to you, think how close we are right now to "resurrecting" extinct species through knowledge of their genomes.) John Leslie, a Canadian who ranks as one of the world's leading philosophers of cosmology, draws on quantum physics in his painstakingly argued new book, "Immortality Defended." Each of us, Leslie submits, is immortal because our life patterns are but an aspect of an "existentially unified" cosmos that will persist after our death. Both Tipler and Leslie are, in different ways, heirs to the view of William James. The mind or "soul," as they see it, consists of information, not matter. And one of the deepest principles of quantum theory, called "unitarity," forbids the disappearance of information. (Stephen Hawking used to think you could destroy your information by heaving yourself into a black hole, but a few years ago he changed his mind.)

If death is not extinction, what might it be like? That's a question the Harvard philosopher Robert Nozick, who died five years ago, enjoyed pondering. One of the more rococo possibilities he considered was that the dying person's organized energy might bubble into a new universe created in that person's image. Although his reflections were inconclusive, Nozick hit on a seductive maxim: first, imagine what form of immortality would be best; then live your life right now as though it were true. And, who knows, it may be true. "Life is a great surprise," Vladimir Nabokov once observed. "I do not see why death should not be an even greater one." ■

: enjoy, enjoy

- > Imagination is more important than knowledge. (Sign hanging in Einstein's office at Princeton)
- >
- > Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.- Albert Einstein
- >
- > We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.-Albert Einstein
- >
- > Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school.-Albert Einstein
- >
- > Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe.-Albert Einstein

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Subj: **FW: Some after thoughts from Last nights Ateedenu on the High Holidays**  
 Date: 9/13/2007 8:56:15 PM Eastern Daylight Time  
 From: pinsonvine@verizon.net  
 To: JHabe92073@aol.com

Dear Josh and Maxine,

As promised, here is the piece from John Rosove. He has something to say. We all thought Joui did her best job ever today with a message that was worth hearing as a new year begins. May it be a healthy and successful one for us all. Thank you for the delicious jam and beautiful note—a sweet start to the year!  
 xxmarsha

---

**From:** Jrosove@aol.com [mailto:Jrosove@aol.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 29, 2007 8:22 AM  
**To:** Jrosove@aol.com  
**Subject:** Some after thoughts from Last nights Ateedenu on the High Holidays

Dear Ateedenu and Board and interested others:

Keri Hausner wrote to me a very thoughtful question below following our session last evening on the High Holidays to which I responded. I wanted to share her question and my response with you all as we head through Elul and into the Yamim Noraim.  
 Bivracha,  
 John

Dear John,

Good session tonight. A question I wanted to ask you and Michelle, but there wasn't enough time is; what are your goals for the congregation to walk away from the HH services with and do these goals change from year to year? I'm also curious about the people that go to Temple once a year on the HH's, many who are terribly uncomfortable with the literal "God as all-powerful" liturgy – what do you think keeps them coming back every year?  
 Keri

Dear Keri:

I have a number of concurrent goals, and I believe that both Michelle and Aviva share them:

1. Regardless of whether someone comes once a year or all year, the experience of the holidays has to be of the highest quality - excellent - poetic - beautiful - musically enriching - moving ritually - warmhearted - thought provoking - embracing - participatory - awe-inspiring - different than any other experience people have throughout the year - rich in Jewish tradition and learning - and happy;
2. That people (especially those who come once a year) will believe paying dues even for once a year HH experience is worth it because they need it, love it, and can't get it anywhere else;
3. That the panoply of what the Temple offers the rest of the year will induce people to want to be involved more and that within the Temple community they can find themselves wherever they are in the life cycle - that the Temple is there for them from the cradle to the grave;
4. That the gestalt of the Temple continually plants seeds in everyone's heart and soul so that even if an individual doesn't come more often or do "more Jewish" or participate in any of what we have going on at this time, that one day he/she will be so moved to "return" and test the waters more intensely;
5. That people not only struggle with God, spirituality and faith and what that might mean to them, but that they realize that being Jewish is far more than just the religion - it is cultural, ethical and social justice oriented, Israel-oriented, connected with world Jewry, and transformative personally;
6. Re: sermons - I know how important these are and I work very hard to make them speak to where we are personally and communally - I really feel the sermons should set the stage for how we might think about all the great issues facing us as a people, as individuals, as Jews. That's why (for better or worse) I spend so much time on each one - perhaps 20-30 hours of thinking, writing, rewriting, throwing away, starting over - and that's why I dread the beginning of August when this all starts and am so damned relieved when they holidays are



over. I may not always strike oil, but when I do, I feel dayenu.

I really don't believe my goals change all that much from year to year. We have certain projects we want to start, but all of them feed the great goals of our community as a whole. Just as the High Holidays are a simulated microcosm of life from birth to death (RH to Yom Kippur), what we do must reflect that truth not only during the holidays but all year.

I hope this helps.

Much love,  
John

|

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Sept 15, 07

Michael's question

Do you think God even listens  
when we pray?

Y 13 kor 2008

The Mystery of Suffering (Grief)

The Sin of Pride

What is the most important lesson death teaches us:

Humility

Start "I am not a humble man yet presumed to talk about humility!"

Develop the theme of humility

What is it?

Who is ~~strong~~ <sup>there</sup>?

How do we acquire humility

He who conquers himself!

mention Carl Sandberg's opening words of a national radio address "My fellow worms!"

Yielding - Curbing ambition, Ambition, Greed.



Humility motivates  
Counting, politeness is a bi-product

of Humility

אורח חיים — Rashi Be first to extend

The thought of one's mortality can be beneficial

One of ~~its~~ <sup>its</sup> benefits is that it inspires  
humility — refer to the burial

of Austrian Kaiser

"Noted you come & noted you leave early"

Also related to Humility is "resignation"  
"acceptance"

# Early Death Hartley Coleridge

She passed away, like morning dew,  
Before the sun was high;  
So brief her time, she scarcely knew  
The meaning of a sigh.

As round the rose its soft perfume,  
Sweet love around her floated;  
Admired she grew - while mortal doom  
Crept on, unfeared, unmoted.  
Love was her fondness & her bliss,  
But love to death resigned her;  
Tho' love was kind, who should we fear,  
But holy death is kinder?

## Science & Religion.

Said the preceptor of all Scientists - Sir Isaac Newton

"I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself

I seem to have been only like a little boy playing on the seashore  
and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother  
pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great  
ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.

## Memorial

"The heart has its  
Reasons, which reason  
does not know"

Blaise Pascal

## OMIT

Story by Amable France

"The History of Mankind"

Prince Zémire of Persia upon  
Succession to the throne, commissioned  
all his scholars to compile  
detailed history, to be culminated  
by post experience

After 12 yrs, caravan - 500 vol.  
carried to each - total 6000 vol.

Proposed for condensation

After 20 more years - 1500 vol.  
Abridge!... After 10 yrs, elephant

with 500 vol. Abridge! After  
5 yrs - scribbling on antlers.

Wily king is dying - disapproves  
condenses it into 3 sentences:

They were born, they suffered,  
They died.

Thus lay lessoned history of mankind.

## HIGH HOLY DAY SERMON SEMINAR

N.Y. Board of Rabbis 09-03-'08

by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

I am honored to be your guest this morning in the company of distinguished colleagues. With 7 rabbis in my own family, 3 Reform, 2 orthodox and 2 conservative, I have my own mini- Board of Rabbis and I am glad to say, our disagreements have never become disagreeable.

Looking back on my 65 years of pulpit experience, it seems to me that preaching has dropped to a low priority. A considerable number of rabbis find life-cycle ceremonies more rewarding, for 2 reasons: First, because these events meet the needs of congregants and develop closer relations of families with their rabbi. And, secondly, because they feel that the poor attendance at services does not justify the time and effort invested in sermon preparations. The result is a downward spiral of cause and effect, -- a chain reaction of declining standards of preaching and still less attendance.

However, there is no escape from preaching on the High Holy Days. It remains a challenge for every rabbi and an ordeal for many.

I want to share with you a few points about the making of a sermon.

(1) I begin my sermon preparation with a question: What's on the mind of the people to whom I shall be speaking? I make a list of what, I assume, are their concerns: economic problems, fear of war, questions of religious belief and personal concerns, such as career success or failure, self-development, family relations, illness, aging, chronic discontent etc.

(2) I wonder do I have anything significant to say on any of these topics ?



(3) I ask myself, what does a Jew, coming to the synagogue these days, expect from his High Holy Day experience?

Generations ago, Jews brought to the synagogue belief in God Who hears and answers prayer. They came to express this faith. Now, most Jews come to the synagogue to be impressed, to be turned on to the faith they are lacking. Leonard Fein wrote a memorable piece about what the rabbi faces on the High Holy Days:

"He looks at a sea of people... who sit there and say 'Show me.' There is less an air of expectancy than a brooding skepticism.... This is the poor rabbi's annual opportunity to work a piece of magic ; he must charm, educate, inspire, convert. 'Be charismatic,' the audience says: 'you've got two hours, or three, to defeat the massed forces of secularization, of modernism, alienation and assimilation. Make it happen.'"

To which Fein adds: "And that's the best of the assembly; the rest just want out as quickly as possible."

Leonard Fein gave us the worst scenario. It does not apply to all baale-batim of all congregations but rings true enough for a considerable number of people we are to preach to.

This is no argument against preaching. It only makes for a bigger challenge. My answer to Leonard Fein is Rabbi Tarfon's (Pirke A. 2.21)

עלך בנתפאכה לא יצאך ולא אתה אף חזקין עבדת מנהיג  
 "You don't have to *succeed*,  
 [accomplish the task] but you must keep trying."

Now, 7 practical suggestions for effective preaching:

First, learn from social workers to meet people on the level where they are.

Speak to their present state of mind. On the High Holy Days our people are in

the mood for hope, for a new beginning; this is not the time for depressing lectures; our people yearn for the vision of some good, of light at the end of the tunnel, of something to be grateful for and a basis for hope.

Always appropriate and, I should say, very much needed, are sermons in the spirit of chizzuk emunah. This Yom Kippur I shall deliver a lecture sermon entitled: CONFRONTING OUR DOUBTS about God's Existence, His Response to Prayer, and Intervention in Human Affairs.. I shall not give text-book theology but deal with these themes in terms of my own faith after wrestling with doubt.

Second, whatever your message, don't deliver an essay ---whether theological, psychological or historical. Don't make your sermon into a classroom lecture. Don't follow the custom of Israeli preachers who pick a text and then anthologize the mephorshim, heaping commentary upon commentary from Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Kimchi, etc.

Third, address the people in front of you. Let the word "you" be your most frequent pronoun. Ask questions as you would in conversation with a friend: What do you think about this? How important is this or that to you?...

Fourth, don't hesitate to give your personal opinion about certain matters. Leo Baeck said "the word "I" never crossed my lips in a sermon." He was a profound thinker and dealt with ideas, but he was not a fiery preacher. I advise the contrary. Don't hesitate to speak in the first person. Your people want to know what you, the rabbi, is thinking and believing, what you are troubled by, how you are wrestling with problems.

Fifth, bring into your sermons persons whose example or sayings

illustrate your point. Nothing catches more attention than incidents in the life of persons.

Sixth, once you have chosen your topic, make every part of your sermon relevant to it. Don't preach a smorgasbord of all kinds of themes and ideas. Harry Emerson Fosdick advised preachers to make the sermon a spear, hitting one target, not a broom whose many fibers point in many different directions.

Seventh, as you begin to compose your sermon, know how you want to end. What will be the appeal of your sermon? What do you want your people to do?

I shall now illustrate some of my points by sharing with you the making of a sermon on which I just happen to work. My object is to motivate the congregation for enrollment in an adult Torah study program. This is how I shall get around to it:

I begin with a comment about the popular hunger for songs; we see countless people in the subway, or walking on the street with their ears plugged into their I-pods. Not all of these songs are trash. Some have a real message. Many years ago, a song which rose to the top of the Hit-Parade made a deep impression on me. I wonder if any of you is old enough to remember that song, "Open the Door, Richard"?

I then recall several turning points in my life --- and everyone's life --- in which someone opened for me doors of help or opportunity---a grandparent or some other family member, a teacher, a friend, even a stranger whose advice, lesson or rebuke profoundly affected my life and career. I would not have gotten very far if these doors had not been opened for me. Think for a



moment of people whose help or intervention opened a door of opportunity for you.

This truth changed my mind about the favorite poem of my younger years, INVICTUS by William Ernest Henley. As a young man, I thrilled to Henley’s bravado: “I thank whatever gods may be, For my unconquerable soul” ----- ending with the ringing declaration:

I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.

This anthem of the self-made man sounds great but is an illusion. No one has ever lived or grown exclusively on his own resources. We are far from mastering our fate. All of us depend on others in more ways than we realize. We do not sufficiently recognize and credit those many people, known and unknown, alive and dead, who opened doors for us to new opportunity, new insight, new understanding.

Among the most important gate-keepers to benefits are our teachers, including people of all walks of life from whom we’ve learned something as has been said: HA-LOMED ME-CHAVERO.....”Give appreciation to anyone from whom you have learned even a single sentence or expression.

(Pirke A. 6.3) גיטומה תחבדו פרק אהרן א || יהלכנו אמת || עינינו תפוח אהרן ||

We Jews have survived because we are a people of learners.

Every morning our Siddur calls upon us to open the doors to Torah, the world’s greatest treasure of wisdom: S’EU SHEARIM ROSH-EY-CHEM

“Lift up your heads , you ever lasting gates.” (Ps.24.7)

This text leads me to my appeal on behalf of Torah study. The gates to a better way of life, to a clearer understanding of right and wrong and to a

more meaningful existence, are open for every Jew. The Torah calls on you. Come and enter my gates for a better, more meaningful life.

---

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Subj: **HIGH HOLY DAY SERMON SEMINAR. HABERMANdoc.doc**  
Date: 8/28/2008 9:29:44 AM Eastern Daylight Time  
From: kdubrow@nybr.org  
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CC: JPotasnik@nybr.org, JPotasnik@aol.com

Thank you.

Sermons will both be posted on the member website and distributed. Feel free to phone if I may of assistance.  
Karen

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**HIGH HOLY DAY SERMON SEMINAR**

N.Y. Board of Rabbis 09-03-'08

Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

I am honored to be your guest this morning in the company of distinguished colleagues. With 7 rabbis in my own family, 3 Reform, 2 orthodox and 2 conservative, I have my own mini- Board of Rabbis and I am glad to say, our disagreements have never become disagreeable.

Looking back on my 65 years of pulpit experience, it seems to me that preaching has dropped to a low priority. A considerable number of rabbis find life-cycle ceremonies more rewarding, for 2 reasons: First, because these events meet the needs of congregants and develop closer relations of families with their rabbi. And, secondly, because they feel that the poor attendance at services does not justify the time and effort invested in sermon preparations. The result is a downward spiral of cause and effect, -- a chain reaction of declining standards of preaching and still less attendance.

However, there is no escape from preaching on the High Holy Days. It remains a challenge for every rabbi and an ordeal for many.

I want to share with you a few points about the making of a sermon.

(1) I begin my sermon preparation with a question: What's on the mind of the people to whom I shall be speaking? I make a list of what, I assume, are their concerns: economic problems, fear of war, questions of religious belief and personal concerns, such as career success or failure, self-development, family relations, illness, aging, chronic discontent etc.(2) I wonder do I have anything significant to say on any of these topics ? (3) I ask myself, what does a Jew, coming to the synagogue these days, expect from his High Holy Day experience?

Generations ago, Jews brought to the synagogue belief in God Who hears and answers prayer. They came to express this faith. Now, most Jews come to the synagogue to be impressed, to be turned on to the faith they are lacking. Leonard Fein wrote a memorable piece about what the rabbi faces on the High Holy Days:

"He looks at a sea of people... who sit there and say 'Show me.' There is less an air of expectancy than a brooding skepticism.... This is the poor rabbi's annual opportunity to work a piece of magic ; he must charm, educate, inspire, convert. 'Be charismatic,' the audience says: 'you've got two hours, or three, to defeat the massed forces of secularization, of modernism, alienation and assimilation. Make it happen."

To which Fein adds: "And that's the best of the assembly; the rest just want out as quickly as possible."



Leonard Fein's gave us the worst scenario. It does not apply to all baale- batim of all congregations but rings true enough for a considerable number of people we are to preach to.

This is no argument against preaching. It only makes for a bigger challenge. My answer to Leonard Fein is Rabbi Tarfon's (Pirke A. 2.21) LO ALECHA ..... "You don't have to succeed, but you must keep trying."

Now, 7 practical suggestions for effective preaching:

First, learn from social workers to meet people on the level where they are. Speak to their present state of mind. On the High Holy Days our people are in the mood for hope, for a new beginning; this is not the time for depressing lectures; our people yearn for the vision of some good, of light at the end of the tunnel, of something to be grateful for and a basis for hope.

Always appropriate and, I should say, very much needed, are sermons in the spirit of chizzuk emunah. This Yom Kippur I shall deliver a lecture sermon entitled: CONFRONTING OUR DOUBTS about God's Existence, His Response to Prayer, and Intervention in Human Affairs.. I shall not give text-book theology but deal with these themes in terms of my own faith after wrestling with doubt.

Second, whatever your message, don't deliver an essay ---whether theological, psychological or historical. Don't make your sermon into a classroom lecture. Don't follow the custom of Israeli preachers who pick a text and then anthologize the mephorshim, heaping commentary upon commentary from Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Kimchi, etc.

Third, address the people in front of you. Let the word "you" be your most frequent pronoun. Ask questions as you would in conversation with a friend: What do you think about this? How important is this or that to you?...

Fourth, don't hesitate to give your personal opinion about certain matters. Leo Baeck said "the word "I" never crossed my lips in a sermon." He was a profound thinker and dealt with ideas, but he was not a fiery preacher. I advise the contrary. Don't hesitate to speak in the first person. Your people want to know what you, the rabbi, are thinking and believing, what you are troubled by, how you are wrestling with problems.

Fifth, bring into your sermons persons whose example or sayings illustrate your point. Nothing catches more attention than incidents in the life of persons.

Sixth, once you have chosen your topic, make every part of your sermon relevant to it. Don't preach a smorgasbord of all kinds of themes and ideas. Harry Emerson Fosdick advised preachers to make the sermon a spear, hitting one target, not a broom whose many fibers point in many different directions.

Seventh, as you begin to compose your sermon, know how you want to end. What will be the appeal of your sermon? What do you want your people to do?

I shall now illustrate some of my points by sharing with you the making of a sermon on which I just happen to work. My object is to motivate the congregation for enrollment in an adult Torah study program. This is how I shall get around to it:

I begin with a comment about the popular hunger for songs; we see countless people in the subway, or walking on the street with their ears plugged into their I-pods. Not all of these songs are trash. Some have a real message. Many years ago, a song which rose to the top of the Hit-Parade made a deep impression on me. I wonder if any of you is old enough to remember that song, "Open the Door, Richard"?

I then recall several turning points in my life --- and everyone's life --- in which someone opened for me doors of help or opportunity---a grandparent or some other family member, a teacher, a friend, even a stranger whose advice, lesson or rebuke profoundly affected my life and career. I would not have gotten very far if these doors had not been opened for me. Think for a moment of people whose help or intervention opened a door of opportunity for you.

This truth changed my mind about the favorite poem of my younger years, INVICTUS by William Ernest Henley. As a young man, I thrilled to Henley's bravado: "I thank whatever gods may be, For my unconquerable soul" --- ending with the ringing declaration:

I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.

This anthem of the self-made man sounds great but is an illusion. No one has ever lived or grown exclusively on his own resources. We are far from mastering our fate. All of us depend on others in more ways than we realize. We do not sufficiently recognize and credit those many people, known and unknown, alive and dead, who opened doors for us to new opportunity, new insight, new understanding.

Among the most important gate-keepers to benefits are our teachers, including people of all walks of life from whom we've learned something as has been said: HA-LOMED ME-HAVERO.....

"Give appreciation to anyone from whom you have learned even a single sentence or expression.

(Pirke A. 6.3)

We Jews have survived because we are a people of learners.

Every morning our Siddur calls upon us to open the doors to Torah, the world's greatest treasure of wisdom: S'EU SHEARIM ROSH-EY-CHEM

"Lift up your heads, you ever lasting gates." (Ps.24.7)

This text leads me to my appeal on behalf of Torah study. The gates to a better way of life, to a clearer understanding of right and wrong and to a more meaningful existence, are open for every Jew. The Torah calls on you. Come and enter my gates for a better, more meaningful life.

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I have one PS to my remarks. If you are lucky enough to have a spouse who's interested in your preaching, let your spouse critique your sermons. My Rebbetzin has made me tear up many a page, a real pain that always turned out to be a big favor.



CONFRONTING OUR DOUBTS: GOD'S EXISTENCE ? HIS ANSWER TO PRAYER AND INTERVENTION IN HUMAN AFFAIRS ?

by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

WHC Yom Kippur Seminar

Oct. 9, 2008

~~GOOD YOM TOV, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,~~

~~GOOD YOM TOV, FELLOW SURVIVORS:~~

William Buckley once said: "A sure way of not being invited again to a dinner party in Manhattan is to talk about God."

I shall take the risk and talk about God, ~~in this session because~~ ~~without belief in God this Temple, every synagogue, Yom Kippur and~~ ~~all other services are irrelevant.~~ But, before I get into my topic, let me say, it is good to see so many of our people observing this sacred day. I especially appreciate the reunion with those who, year after year, at this study session, join me in reflections on some major aspect of Judaism

Seeing ~~our~~ people crowding the temple on Yom Kippur raises the ~~obvious~~ question: Where <sup>will</sup> ~~are~~ those crowds <sup>be</sup> after tonight? Why do they desert regular Sabbath services? Why do only 2-5% of liberal Jews return to their pews on the average Shabbat?

What was it that made our great grandparents flock to the synagogue daily -- many even 3 times daily—and worship at home, reciting blessings for all kinds of daily functions? They needed no synagogue journal or inter-net web site to remind them of services; they did not have to be attracted to the synagogue by gimmicks, special events, concerts, entertainment and sensational guest speakers. "Interest" was not a factor. Interested or not, they came



to worship, motivated by faith and a sense of mandate. They did not come to be inspired or turned on; they came to pray, not looking to be filled with new faith but bringing their own deeply felt faith and eager to express it. What faith? That there is a God Who hears and answers prayer. Were there doubters among the mass of Jewish believers? Certainly, but they were few and worshipped anyway, doubting their own doubts.

The majority of Western Jews today no longer share the faith of our fathers. Ours is a generation defective in faith, riddled by skepticism. The God, affirmed by hundreds of generations with the Shema Yisrael exclamation, has become a question mark.

It is little comfort to us that Christendom has suffered a still greater decline in membership and Church attendance. The fact is that every religion has taken a beating in the Western world for the last 300 years. First, the enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century abrogated the divine authority of royal government, toppling monarchy after monarchy; then it challenged traditional morality and religion. Next came Charles Darwin's theory of evolution which contradicted the Biblical account of creation; then, the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach who declared the God idea to be nothing but a projection of human qualities, a mirror image of human nature --- in other words, a figment of the imagination. Sigmund Freud reinforced this denial of God's existence with his theory of God as a magnified father image, an infantilism to be outgrown by mature people.

Most destructive of faith has been the horror of 2 world wars, the holocaust and a seemingly unending chain of new genocide. How maintain faith in a benevolent, all powerful God Who rewards good and punishes evil? Who hears and answers our cry for help?

Modern artists of the theater of the absurd reflect the spiritual despair and emptiness of the human condition.

The playwright, Samuel Becket , was walking with a friend through a London park. It was a beautiful day. The friend, exuding great joy said: "Becket, on a day like this , isn't it good to be alive? Becket muttered, "I wouldn't go that far."

Your mood about being alive much depends on your beliefs—or doubts. Is there any meaning to human existence? Does a higher order or Intelligence operate in our life and history? Do events just happen, or do they happen just? Can we derive a sense of security from a God who watches the scene and does something about it?

The biologist Ernst Haeckel, one of the leading scientists of modern times, said, if God allowed him to ask a single question, he would ask: "Is the universe friendly?" In other words, what evidence is there that God knows and cares about human needs and suffering? What about the immense suffering in our world? Innocent children, wasting away with all sorts of diseases and adults brutalized, raped and massacred.

Where is He when we need Him?

Before I try to confront our doubts, I want to give skeptics and atheists their full due.

Alexander Dumas expressed his outrage in these words:  
"If God were suddenly condemned to live the life he has inflicted upon men, he would kill himself."

His compatriot, Stendhal, declared: "The only excuse for God is that He doesn't exist."

Woody Allen wouldn't go that far: "I don't think God is evil, but basically He is an Under-achiever."

Friedrich Nietzsche minced no words in announcing God's obituary: "God is dead !"

How can a believing Jew respond to this atheistic assault? What do we know about God?

Prof. Arnold Eisen, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in N.Y. was asked to discuss God in 300 words or less. At first he thought this limitation was absurd but then he realized that 3000 or even 300.000 words wouldn't do. The problem is not a limitation of words but man's limited mental capacity.

A child was digging a hole in the sand by the seashore. "Tell me kid" –said a man –"what are you digging for?" "I'm making a hole to pour the ocean into it," said the child.

Equally childish and futile is the attempt to get God, the Supreme Being and Source of the Universe, into that tiny web of tissues we call the human brain.

One of the leading Jewish thinkers of our time, Rabbi Louis Jacobs of England favored this prayer:



Lord, give us the grace  
To teach the whole race  
We know nothing whatever about Thee.

Pascal, a profound believer, said: "It is incomprehensible that God should exist, and it is incomprehensible that He should not exist." No rational argument can clinch the case for God.

Faith in God is not gained by logical evidence or knowledge but by hunches, intimations and intuitions, and most of all, by the example of persons of faith.

Believers do not know God like an object that could be understood and described.

Walt Whitman wrote in his Song of Myself (1855):

I say to mankind  
Be not curious about God  
For I, who am curious about each,  
Am not curious about God....  
I hear and behold God in every object  
Yet understand God not in the least.

I once conducted a wedding at which Tommy Corcoran, trusted advisor of President Roosevelt, was asked to give a toast to the bride and groom. He raised his glass and said: "To the bride, may you always try to understand your husband and love him. To the groom, may you always love your bride, but don't try to understand her."

We may have a sense of God's presence, we may somehow feel connected and relate to God; we may love God. But trying to understand God is futile.

The foremost modern Jewish thinker, Martin Buber, was asked by his friend, Pastor William Hechler, chaplain of the British Embassy in Vienna: "Tell me, do you believe in God?" Buber was caught short by the question and said something reassuring without really answering the question. Only later it occurred to him what he should have said: "If you want me to speak of God in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, what He is and how He acts, I'll have to say, no, I don't believe in a describable God. God is real for me only when I address Him as my You. God can be addressed but not expressed."

Addressing God, reaching out for God's help, looking for God's presence --- all this is wrapped up in prayer. However, for many prayer is a problem.

~~I remember a man who came to this seminar. I have come to a service. Some welcome! Maybe you'll change you, think about the value of prayer.~~

Can a person learn to pray with conviction? What could make prayer a satisfactory experience? Many of the 150 Psalms overflow with joyful enthusiasm. The anonymous authors, probably lay people, share with us their prayer experiences; some break into song and dance while they pray.

No doubt, there are pleasurable aspects of the worship experience --- the social fellowship, the music, the singing, the mood conducive to reflection. But all these are trivial compared to the real

purpose of prayer. What is that purpose? It is making contact with God.

This calls for a certain mind-set. What if you are not in the mood? What if you lack conviction that there is a God who hears and answers prayer? What if you feel like you are praying to a wall? Should you mumble words without conviction?

The prophet Amos said: PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD. <sup>What Amos 4.12</sup> kind of preparation?

The Hasidic Rabbi of Tzantz recognized serious obstacles to meaningful prayer. He said: "Before I pray, I pray that I may be able to pray."

Speaking for myself, I admit, I am not always ready to pray. What conditions, what feelings, what thoughts make me want to pray? High on my list of motivating, even compelling, reasons for prayer is a sense of powerlessness, of vulnerability. We all live on borrowed time. Our existence is precarious. Suddenly our strength is gone. None can be sure to make it to the end of the day.

How often have you answered a question about your well-being with a response like "Everything is under control !"

~~(not a show of pride, have you ever given such an answer?)~~

Do you realize that "everything is under control" is a blatant untruth? It is a bravado boast very much like William Henley's famous line

"I am the master of my fate  
I am the captain of my soul



The truth is that nothing is under our control. Nobody controls his own body, let alone his fate or destiny. We are all subject to instant extinction. This is the basic human condition which drives me to prayer. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." In our weakness, we turn to the Almighty for help.

Abraham Joshua Heschel defined prayer as "An invitation to God to intervene in our lives." But will He? I do not pray with any certainty of an answer but out of necessity, in view of my need. I have no idea what happens to my prayer once I have offered it up to God. Yes, I wonder, each time, if my prayerful petition will be granted.

The moment I apply reason to prayer, I am beset by doubts. I imagine the case of a woman who prays for God's help to conceive a child. Is it conceivable – no pun intended-- that the Creator of the universe, with its trillions of constellations and countless creatures, will intervene in the biological – sexual process of this one woman?

Was William James right in saying: "Religion is a monumental chapter in the history of human egotism."

The idea that God is on call, ever ready to intervene in our lives, can lead to frivolous demands on God. A new movement recently sprung up, called "Pray at the Pump." These people, encircle gas stations, hold hands, sing and plead for divine intervention to lower gas prices. This is on the mental level of

the 6 year old girl who wrote : "Dear God, thank you for my baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy."

What about serious prayers, such as recovery from illness, rescue from peril or guidance in a critical decision ?

Such prayers raise a question: How important are we that God should bother about our welfare? With billions of worlds whirling about space and unimaginable multitudes of living beings in the world, why should God reach down to any one of us to pull us out of the mud? Why would our paltry needs merit the attention of the supreme power of the cosmos? Human logic cannot make the case for God's intervention in our life.

Yet our inability to understand a thing is no proof that it cannot be. If something is inconceivable, that does not make it impossible. As Shakespeare reminds us:

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Hamlet I, v, 166

Tennyson, who shuttled back and forth between faith and skepticism, would not give up on prayer:

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of"  
and then he wrote :

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears  
and Spirit to Spirit can meet  
Closer is He than breathing,  
and nearer than hands and feet.

For me the most troubling question is God's non-intervention in those catastrophic disasters as earth-quakes or Tzunamis whose innocent victims are in the hundreds of thousands. If God, the Creator of nature, is loving, all knowing and all-powerful, why won't He intervene to save us?

Try to think through what God would have to do to save us from natural disasters. It would require no less than the suspension of the laws of nature. At God's command, flood waters would have to freeze, or run backward into the ocean or evaporate into the air. Under such conditions millions of fish and sea-animals would perish. Since that did not happen, I am forced to conclude that, much as human life may matter to God, it must be more important to let the forces of nature run their course. In other words, God has bigger irons in the fire than the salvation of every human being.

Still, most Americans, and many doctors, believe that God can intervene to save dying patients. The Archives of Surgery report that "57 percent of adults said that God's intervention could save family members even if doctors declared that treatment would be futile.....Nearly 20 percent of doctors and other medical workers said that God could reverse a hopeless outcome."

Think what you will, the ways of God are inscrutable. Isaiah got it right when he warned against applying human standards of thinking to God: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says God" (Isaiah 55.8)



The upshot is that any comment about God must be made in all humility such as the poet said:

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.

In Memoriam by Tennyson

It is fruitless to speculate just how our prayers move God. All we can talk about are the fringe benefits of prayer within ourselves. Every time we turn to God in prayer, we also turn inward and gain insight into ourselves. We sort out feelings, anxieties, needs and examine our conscience.

If your prayer is not answered, persist. The value of persistent prayer is not that God will hear us....but that we will finally hear Him. Above all, prayer gives me the feeling of a connection with God . If prayer gives you nothing but a sense of God's Presence, --that is no small gain. Judah Halevy made that point:

Longing I sought Thy presence;  
 Lord, with my whole heart did I call and pray  
 And going out to meet Thee  
 I found Thee coming to me on the way.

How can you meet God? How could you experience God's presence or closeness?

Countless people have moments of illumination with a sense of God's presence. Those experiences are unpredictable. Suddenly one is struck by the certainty of being with God. Others have that experience at the sight of the roaring sea or the immensity of the starry sky. And many are just amazed at being alive and feel connected with God.

I do not propose bizarre ways of mystic seclusion, breathing exercises or the recitation of some mantra. Personally, I get a sense of connection with God when reading the Bible, especially, the book of Psalms. Many of the 150 Psalms are spiritual autobiographies of ordinary people. Far from naïve, some were highly sophisticated who questioned God's failure to respond to prayer.

"why are you silent?" they complained. Why are you hiding?

Read the Psalms with pen and notepad; jot down any sentence or phrase that speaks to you and record your own thoughts that come to you as you reflect on the Psalm. Skip any Psalm or part of it that has no meaning for you. Don't get hung up on a sentence or word you don't understand. Just skip and look for the next sentence that has a message for you. The one thing common to all Psalms is that they are talking to God. Many claim to have gotten a response in dialogue.

My own faith leaves many questions unanswered. However, it gives me the one thing I most need: the assurance that life is not a

vanity of vanities, that there is more to life than the meaningless absurdity voiced by Macbeth:

Life's but a walking shadow, --- a poor player  
That struts and frets this hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing            Macbeth, V,v,17

I am impressed by the atheistic assault on God and our connection with Him -- but not convinced. I still believe in God as Creator and pray to God daily, when retiring for the night and upon awakening in the morning.

For me, the most moving witness to faith is an inscription found in the German city of Cologne, scribbled on the wall of a dark cellar in which some Jews had been hiding out during the war:

I believe in the sun when it is not shining.  
I believe in love even when feeling it not.  
I believe in God even when He is silent.



## IN CONTEMPLATION OF DEATH

by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

YIZKOR 2008 Oct. 9, 2008

This is an hour of tender feelings and heart-felt sentiments; an hour of reflection. We are all together, a large congregation. Yet, each is alone with his thoughts. It is our most private time, filled with deeply personal memories.

We think of dear ones who are alive and those who are no more. And, with everyone we remember, we instantly think of our relationship with that person.

The remembrance of your departed brings to mind scenes of your own life, your youth, even your childhood as the poet Thomas Moore expressed so well:

Fond memory brings the light  
Of other days around me;  
The smiles, the tears,  
Of childhood years,

The words of love then spoken,

The eyes that shone

Now dimmed and gone

The cheerful hearts now broken

"Oft in the Stilly Night"

Poets often speak of memories as fond and sweet. Indeed, many are, but not all. Some are bitter-sweet. No one is perfect, including those most important in our lives, parents, sisters, brothers and spouses. We remember their character and achievements and wonder, how do we compare with them? Would we want to be like them? Would we be different?

Our memories make us take stock of ourselves. We re-assess our own life and our relationships. Should we change our way of life and conduct? Have we been appreciative and grateful to those who were kind and generous toward us?

Some memories open old wounds, -- hurts we suffered and those we made others suffer. Be honest with yourself. Have you never hurt anyone? By neglect? By cutting words? By ingratitude? By refusal of help? How do we heal such hurts? How do we overcome old grudges and resentments?

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, said she never bore a grudge. A friend once reminded her of some wrong that had been done to her years earlier. "Don't you remember?" asked her friend. "No," – she replied – "I distinctly remember forgetting that!"

The only way to forget an old hurt is to forgive. What helps us forgive is to realize that the faults we see in others are also within us. "There is no man that sinneth not" –says our Bible.

Memories of our departed remind us that our turn must also come. Think of the haunting lines of Jane Kenyon's poem

"Otherwise":

At noon I lay down with my mate.

It might have been otherwise.

We ate dinner together at a table with silver candlesticks

It might have been otherwise.

I slept in a bed in a room with paintings on the walls  
and planned another day just like this day.

But one day, I know, it will be otherwise.

The uncertainty, precariousness and brevity of our existence should mellow our attitude toward all human beings who share the common lot of mortality.

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of Vienna's greatest poets, Richard Beer-Hofmann, wrote a poem which became the sensation of the literary world. His *Lullaby for Miriam* tells of random thoughts that come to him as he rocks his baby daughter to sleep. Ostensibly, he is talking to the infant. But, in reality, he is talking to himself – and to all of us – and, surprisingly, this lullaby is a contemplation of death.

Sleep my child, sleep....Look at the sun, the sun is dying.

Behind the mountains --- shrouds of red.

What do you know of the sun and death?

....Sleep my child, sleep.



....The evening wind blows.  
 Who knows whence it comes and whither it goes?  
 Dark and hidden are here our ways,  
 ....Blindly we go and we go alone,  
 Sleep my child, sleep; why listen to me?  
 What sense there may be is but sound in your ear,  
 Mere sound like running water or blowing wind  
 Words --- even life's fruit of many a year !  
 What I shall win will be buried with me....  
 Are you asleep, dear Miriam , my child?  
 We are but riverbeds. Through you and me  
 Runs the blood of our fathers, restless and proud.  
 They are all in us. Who feels alone?  
 ..... Oh, Miriam, my life, sleep well my child!  
 (1898)

The meaning of life is an impenetrable mystery:

"Dark and hidden are here our ways"

The trivia of day to day living shut out the deeper questions of life.  
 What is the point of our existence? Do we have a purpose other  
 than just exist for that brief spell of time allotted to us? Do you  
 agree with Macbeth's cynical view of life as "a tale told by an idiot,  
 full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" ? Richard Beer Hofman's  
 does not call life an absurdity. He does not deny that there is  
 meaning to life, only, whatever it is, it is not given us to know it.  
 "Dark and hidden are here our ways."

Each person goes through life, a distinct individual with his own destiny and must ultimately die his own death.

You are blessed if you have a companion who is at your side, with a listening ear and helpful arm as long as life lasts. But, it does not last. Each of us will have the one experience which will be ours alone. No other person can share our own experience of dying.

We do not know what awaits us in the end: "Blindly we go and we go alone.....What do you know of the sun and death?"

Philosophers revel in the contemplation of death. I have little enthusiasm to dwell on this subject --- but it is unavoidable. It is disquieting, morbid, anxiety-begetting. But, once you face up to it, there could be benefits from this contemplation. In the light of our mortality, we re-shuffle our priorities. Many concerns become unimportant. Things we fret about now, appear to be trivial. Is, what makes you angry or worried about, worth wasting the remaining days of your life? You become tolerant when you realize that most things don't matter very much one way or the other.

In the perspective of death, we unclutter our life and unburden ourselves of needless vexations and problems. Thus, the fear-begetting contemplation of death may actually calm you and give you a measure of serenity.

Another benefit from the contemplation of death is the gift of humility. We sometimes get obsessed with certain goals. We want to leap to ever higher levels of success, status or power. We become stressed out in this feverish pursuit . The thought of our mortality

could put a stop to it. Climbing down from the ladder of ambition is great relief. A humble self-estimate helps us find satisfaction in more modest circumstances.

But, the most positive gain from thinking about our mortality is to celebrate each day as a victory over death and be grateful for it.

After be-moaning the utter loneliness of death --"Blindly we go and we go alone " -- the poet ends with a change of mind: It occurs to him that, in a deeper sense, no one is totally isolated and alone. We are connected with our people. Countless generations are within us:

"We are but riverbeds. Through you and me  
Runs the blood of the past to those who shall be.  
...They are all in us. Who feels alone?"

We would go a step farther and recognize a still deeper belonging, our connection with the Creator of all Who allows none of His creation to vanish. Things come to an end but do not vanish altogether. Samuel Johnson developed this idea with regard to changes in nature: "Flowers, however beautiful, are only intended by nature as preparation to autumn fruits" Every stage of existence is preparation for another, higher level. Infancy to youth, youth to maturity and maturity to age --- and then?  
Shall this chain be broken? Our destiny is not termination but transformation, continuity in some other form.



In life and the hereafter, we remain with God, throughout all  
phases of being:

No soul can be forever banned,

Eternally bereft.

Whoever falls from God's right hand

Is caught into His left.

Tennyson



April 18 09

What Death Can Teach us about

(how to live) Life or

DEATH'S LESSONS FOR LIFE

- ① Life is a loan, not a gift
- ② Vulnerability - live with uncertainty
- ③ Humility - Pride is broken  
under the weight of forces we  
cannot master  
We must submit to terms not of our  
making
- ④ Death - the absolute equalizer

Death can teach us nothing about  
death

April 18, 09

# Introduction to Y3 her lectures

## Thinking About Death

There is a reason why thinking about death is ~~so sporadic~~ and usually abandoned within minutes. ~~Focusing on~~ <sup>Thinking about</sup> death itself and ~~after~~ existence there might be after death is to use a pun a "mental dead end"<sup>th</sup> - it is futile, it produces no knowledge because it is thinking about the unknowable.

However <sup>an altogether different</sup> matter is to consider how to <sup>I should say</sup> face the ~~fact~~ <sup>certainty</sup> of death ~~and shape our thoughts~~ <sup>on how to act - our behavior</sup> about life, our attitudes, our <sup>values</sup> ~~values~~ and priorities.



## OP-EXTRA: EXCERPTS FROM OPINION ONLINE



**OUTPOSTS** We are an overwhelmingly urban nation, especially the West — the most urbanized region of the country, according to the Census Bureau definition. But the will to till has never left us. At the same time, this recession is forcing local governments to abandon traditional services. Cities are becoming robotized and retro at the same time.

The last century saw the flowering of the City Beautiful movement — grand boulevards and parks, Parisian in intent, if not actual design. This century, hit with the worst economic slap since the Great Depression, has brought the self-service city — shrunken, less personal and meaner on one level, more neighborly on another. In the hardest-hit cities, where big clusters of foreclosed houses sit empty, entire blocks are being returned to nature — land banks, they call them. There is opportunity in this crisis, as more than

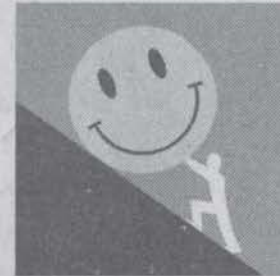
one mayor has proclaimed, paraphrasing Rahm Emanuel. City dwellers: this land is your land!

About **DEATH & HAPPINESS**  
— TIMOTHY EGAN,  
from "The Self-Service City"

**HAPPY DAYS** I am writing from Athens, doing what might loosely be described as "work," with some rather bad news. Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse — you've lost your job, your retirement portfolio has been exfoliated, Bernie Madoff has made off with your money, your pet cat, Jeffrey, has left you for a neighbor and economic recession has become psychological depression — you discover the awful truth: you're going to die.

Somehow, it was always expected, always certain, along with taxes. You'd even smiled weakly at that old dictum. Now and then you had heard time's winged chariot drawing near, but had put it down to street noise and returned to your daily round of labor, leisure and slumber. Now, stripped of the usual di-

versions and evasions of life, the realization begins to dawn: no matter how healthfully you eat, how much you deny your sedentary desires in the name of fitness, no matter how many sacrifices you make to the great God of longevity, you are going to die.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
STEPHEN SAVAGE

What, then, might be the relation between happiness and death? As is so often the case, the ancient Greeks had a powerful thought, which to us seems counter-

intuitive: "Call no man happy until he is dead." What is the meaning of this remark, often attributed to Solon, but different versions of which can be found in Aeschylus and Herodotus? The idea here is that one can only be sure that one's life is happy when it has come to an end.

**SIMON CRITCHLEY,**  
from "How to Make It in the Afterlife"

For more, [nytimes.com/opinion](http://nytimes.com/opinion)

June 29, 2009



# Clergy Corner



Rabbi Gil Steinlauf

## DOVER EMET CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

listening, and as I got to know them, I began to understand how the concept of God was difficult and even alienating for some of them. I noticed how some thoughtful and reflective people simply couldn't abide the God that the tradition was referring to—either in the biblical or in the rabbinic texts. I

noticed how extraordinary it was that, despite their doubt and discomfort, they were studying the text and engaging the tradition—even with the theistic language and concepts of Judaism. Finally, I noticed that doubting and even alienated people were becoming my own greatest teachers about how to believe and how not to believe, how to ask questions, how to doubt, and how to question everything, even the existence of God.

I began to ask myself: what do I *really* mean when I talk about God? Am I being intellectually, psychologically, morally *honest* with myself? Over the next several years, I explored and questioned what I truly believed. I read and studied what our tradition, and the traditions of others, had to say to us. I grappled with what I thought I already understood. I looked inside myself. I discovered things about myself and my relationship to the Ultimate issues of life that were terrifying, wonderful, horrifying, beautiful, transforming—and each new discovery shed new light on what I meant by “God.” I was able to grow so much because I learned from others who were uncomfortable with the “G” word. These teachers have energized me to struggle with and to discover a notion of God that is vastly more sophisticated than what I started out with in my career.

If you come to *shul* these days, you'll still hear me use the “G” word regularly, though not as casually as I used to use it. Moreover, the way I refer to God is now completely different from how I used to employ the term. I am very aware of how that word affects many people. I endeavor to acknowledge the many different perspectives on the existence of a God. Most important, that word emerges from a very different place in me from where it used to. Today when I talk about “God,” as I understand God, I am not referring to an angry biblical deity who wrathfully punishes his recalcitrant flock. I am not referring to a simplistic literalist projection of a “Heavenly Father” seated on a lofty throne. When I pray, I do not believe that my prayers are being “accepted” or “rejected” or “judged” in any mechanistic way by a Divine Being who expects a certain quota of prayers and good deeds to effect Divine favor. Frankly, I have come to understand how the English word “God” has become so baggage-laden and conceptualized and cheapened by fundamentalist, popular, and critical discourse that I don't much enjoy using the English term myself. And yet, here we are. This is our language, and despite everything, I find myself in a relationship with Ultimacy that is joyful and transformative beyond words, and that leads me to bring others to *Torah*, to *mitzvot*, and yes—to God.

## דובר אמת Dover Emet Speaking the Truth Rabbi Gil Steinlauf

If you hear references to God in a sermon or a conversation, or when you're looking into the *Torah* text or reading a prayer, and something feels wrong about that for you—know that you're in good company. Know that you're doing it right. Follow that discomfort and see where it leads you. You may be amazed at what insights open up for you about all of life when you open up to that uneasiness.

This fall I am teaching a class, called “Walking With God,” October, 25–December 6, where we can explore these exact issues together. My experience has shown me that many of us go through life as very sophisticated adults with notions of God that never evolved—through no fault of our own—past an adolescent stage of development. I believe it is our birthright to grow in our ideas of what a God may be for us. Whether that journey leads us to an abiding faith in a Divine Presence, or to a rejection of all God-concepts, the point is the journey itself. The Kotzker *Rebbe* once said, “Where is God? Wherever you let God in.” I would like to let God into the discourse of our modern Jewish life in new and mature ways. I don't know where it will lead us, but I have a strong hunch that it will lead us to goodness, to transformation, and to joy. ○

## Adas Israel in Your Neighborhood Continues 'Havdalah in Your Neighborhood' Expanded Program to Kick Off Nov. 7

Adas Israel in Your Neighborhood coffees continue and expand with Rabbi Feinberg, Cantor Weber, and *Hazzan* Greenberg joining Rabbi Steinlauf in small, informal gatherings in members' homes. Michelle Leavy, Debra Benator, and Gail Levine chair the program, which is coordinated through our Rabbinic Transition Committee, headed by Margaret Siegel.

The expanded program will kick off with “*Havdalah* in Your Neighborhood” on November 7 when congregants and synagogue staff gather in members' homes for a special evening. If you would like to be invited to a scheduled coffee, or you would like to host one beginning in November, please contact Beth Ann Spector, *bethann.spector@adasisrael.org*. When you receive your personal invitation, be sure to RSVP to the host.





ADAS ISRAEL CONGREGATION

# Chronicle

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TISHRI-CHESHVAN 5770

## דובר אמת Dover Emet Speaking the Truth

Rabbi Gil Steinlauf

### THE 'G' WORD

One of the first and most important lessons I learned early on in my rabbinate was to be very careful with the "G" word. What is the "G" word? God! Fresh out of my seminary education, I talked about God casually, as if I could really know and understand what God wanted, as if I could understand the nature of the unknowable and eternal. I spoke as if the concept of God were not challenging. A lay leader offered advice: "Rabbi, can you try to lessen all the God talk? It's making some people uncomfortable." "What do you mean, lessen the God talk?!" I fired back, "I'm a rabbi! This is Judaism! It's all about God!" Like all good and important pieces of advice, I didn't like it when I heard it. But, as it was good and important advice, it sank in. I began noticing how often, indeed, I talked about God. I started to pay attention to the people who were

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Adas Israel Reads: Strengthening Learning and Community Thomas Friedman and Laura Blumenfeld Discuss *Revenge*, Nov. 15

*Revenge: A Story of Hope* by synagogue member Laura Blumenfeld is this year's Adas Israel Reads selection. On Sunday, November 15, at 10:30 am, three-time Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Thomas L. Friedman of the *New York Times* will interview Blumenfeld about her best-selling book. Friedman, a world-renowned author and speaker, will also discuss the influence of revenge on international affairs.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



Thomas Friedman



Laura Blumenfeld



David Lynn



Lucy Hassell

## Simchat Torah Honorees

*Simchat Torah* is one of the most joyous days of the Hebrew calendar. On this day, the annual cycle of the reading of the *Torah* is begun again. Each year, congregants who have served with unusual dedication are selected to receive special honors on *Simchat Torah*. For each of them, Adas Israel is deeply entwined with their lives and those of their families.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah, 5770

*Sukkot* begins on the 15th day of the month of *Tishrei* (Saturday, October 3) and continues for seven days. It is known by several names, none more descriptive than *Z'man Simchataynu*, Day of Our Rejoicing. *Hag HaSukkot*, the Feast of Tabernacles, reminds us of the huts (*sukkot*) in which our ancestors lived in the desert for 40 years on their way to the Promised Land. Another name for *Sukkot*, *Hag He'asif*, the Feast of the Ingathering, stresses that this is a harvest holiday, falling at a time when crops were gathered. It is one of the three harvest festivals in the Jewish year known as the *Shalosh Regalim*, the three pilgrimage festivals (the other two are *Pesach* and *Shavuot*).

The *lulav*, a palm branch composed of three myrtle twigs and two willow branches,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

CELEBRATING OUR 140TH YEAR  
THE CHRONICLE IS SUPPORTED IN  
PART BY THE ETHEL AND NAT POPICK  
ENDOWMENT FUND

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Good looking without  
&

rotten within

Expect to lapse  
many times



RENAISSANCE  
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## Procrastination

He lived a life of ~~to-do~~ - to-do

And died with nothing done

James Albery

# IMMORTALITY

Hs glitt: "No young man  
thinks he will ever  
die."

Fascinat - obsession with death  
Popularity of "The Grateful Dead"

## WHAT IS DEATH?

Wm Blake, on his deathbed, told his wife Catherine that  
dying was no more than moving from one room  
to another

"I have never... seriously doubted that our existence here  
is related in some mysterious way to a more comprehensive  
and lasting existence elsewhere; that somehow or other  
we belong to a larger scene than our earthly life provides

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, when taken to his execution, said  
to the 2 Nazi guards "For you it is an end,  
for me a beginning" ibid.

for intro. on of that larger scene

See Chom Becher's experience

by the river in a state park near the Chesapeake



# Reflections on Death



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- ① Our life is a brief moment between  
2 eternities; the endless past and  
the unending future
- ② What you may learn from  
simple pleasures - they reduce  
lives to their very few essentials.  
The Point : Only very few things really  
matter in our life — we should  
not be distracted & absorbed by  
the rubbish of trivial concerns

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# Confronting Death

Respond to death w. the excessive enjoyment while alone  
15 23.13      מן מן מן מן מן מן מן מן

Our k'layam: Strange, is it not? that of the myriads, who  
Before us passed the Door of Darkness through,  
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,  
Whither to discover we must travel too

Read Robert Silverberg

## DYING INSIDE

"a superb novel about a common human sorrow,  
that great shock of middle age -  
"the recognition - that we are all dying  
inside and that all of us must face  
the eventual disappearance of the person  
we have been"

(Michael Dirds)



# Re: IMMORTALITY

## God - Body a Spirit

We wonder: where is God why doesn't God help me when I'm struck by illness, or a stone falls off the roof and breaks my skull? Why does not God protect me from bodily harm?

The fact is that the laws of nature, physics, chemistry & biology operate both to keep me alive but ~~also when~~ may also ~~cause~~ cause my destruction. So, what does God do about it?

If God is not a physical object, a super man or power, but more like a spiritual being, then my connect. with God must be primarily on the spiritual level - which argues strongly for the 2 dimensional view of the human condition, physical & spiritual.

It's like a poem printed on paper - fire may consume the paper, but not that spiritual configuration which is the poem. It is unaffected by whatever physical damage is done to the paper on which it is printed.

So the soul remains as the spiritual configuration it is regardless of what happens to the body to which it is attached - as the Bible says: The dust returns to the earth as it was the spirit unto God who gave it

The flaw in this analogy is that there would be no poem without the human poet. The paper on which poem is printed, is not the author of the poem

This afternoon I must <sup>god &</sup> talk about Deeth ~~and~~ ~~not~~ in the spirit of morbidity but ~~relishing~~ ~~that~~ ~~it~~ is the religion ~~practically expressed~~ in one of the classic ~~the~~ ~~prophecy~~ <sup>in the new</sup> ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~daily~~ ~~meeting~~ ~~and~~ ~~service~~ Sovereign of all the worlds!

1700/1800 B / 1000  
What are we? What is our life... what our strength? What our might? What can we say before you O my God. Are not all the mighty ones as nothing before you? The wise as if without knowledge and the intelligent ones as if without discernment? Most of their work is void and their life time a mere breath.

We do not know and never shall <sup>know</sup> why we are here on earth. It seems ~~as absurd~~ ~~to have been put into~~ ~~this world naked only to~~ No one defined the seeming

absurdity of human existence more bluntly than the Bible in the words of Ecclesiastes 5:14  
As man came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he depart as he came and shall take nothing with him

If this is the <sup>real</sup> condition of man - what comfort what consolation is there?

There is comfort in  
1. Our ignorance. It leaves open the possibility of meaning & purpose even if we ~~do not know~~ <sup>do not</sup> it remains a mystery. There is a particle of bliss in our ignorance. ~~Not knowing~~ ~~of~~ ~~what~~ ~~is~~ ~~bliss~~ there is life & death, ~~is a~~ ~~core~~ ~~of~~ ~~bliss~~



Jizka

Scheduled to fight & doomed to die  
placards filed past the imperial box and shouted  
Hail Emperor, those who are about to die salute you

In this hour of memory we remember <sup>not only</sup> our departed but our relationship  
with them <sup>5 snapshots of memory</sup> ~~which~~ <sup>our own</sup> ~~we~~ <sup>we recall</sup> experiences we shared with them, words  
we exchanged, their feelings toward us & our fellows toward them  
We call them departed, <sup>in reality, they are our</sup> ~~we should call them~~ <sup>advance patrol into the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>unholy</sup>  
wherever they are, we shall follow, ~~that~~ <sup>for</sup> sooner or later.

<sup>Many years ago</sup> I <sup>heard</sup> ~~remember~~ a national radio address by the American poet  
Archibald Mac Leish. I <sup>was</sup> ~~have~~ <sup>never forgotten his message</sup> ~~can't remember~~ <sup>what he said</sup> but  
I shall never forget <sup>his</sup> 3 <sup>open</sup> <sup>words</sup> <sup>with which he</sup> <sup>addressed</sup> the listening audience  
"Dear fellow warriors" <sup>(of Ps 22:7)</sup> <sup>וְיָרֵם יְהוָה יָדְךָ</sup>  
I would salute you in less demerol my way <sup>he said</sup> <sup>(But I am like a warm and nozzan)</sup>  
If I wanted to salute you <sup>say</sup> ~~I would put it less use less~~  
~~demerol~~ <sup>my</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>that</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>you</sup> ~~say~~ <sup>dear fellow warriors!</sup>

The undercurrent of all our memories and prayers in his  
hour is our <sup>In this hour we pray to God</sup> <sup>(Martyr's)</sup> <sup>doomed to die in the fight</sup> <sup>like the gladiators of</sup>  
ancient Rome, <sup>who</sup> <sup>filed</sup> <sup>past</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>imperial</sup> <sup>box</sup>  
~~and~~ <sup>AVG CAESAR IMPRITURI SE SALUTANT</sup> <sup>shouting</sup> <sup>Hail Emperor</sup>  
<sup>They destined to die</sup> <sup>we salute God in our prayers</sup>  
those who are about to die, salute you  
~~Wm Buckley~~ <sup>These are</sup> <sup>central</sup> <sup>topics</sup> <sup>people</sup> <sup>people</sup> <sup>try</sup> <sup>not</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>talk</sup>  
about are Molynaux, Perverted Sex and Death,

Wm Buckley ~~essent~~ added another word to this  
list of shunned topics. He said: <sup>if you want</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>talk</sup> <sup>about</sup> <sup>it</sup>  
in Manhattan's high society <sup>if you</sup> <sup>want</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>re-invited</sup>  
~~if you want~~ <sup>to</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>re-invited</sup>



# YBker 09

Ostensibly - This is kind of minimal -  
but in reality it is an hour  
in which we reassess our own life.

~~become~~ <sup>As soon as</sup> when we remember a departed, we ~~strongly~~  
focus on our relationship with that person  
- mother - father - sister brother grandparent  
or uncle - aunt - we judge their <sup>treatment of us</sup> ~~conduct~~ <sup>and our</sup> ~~relationship with~~  
~~relationship with~~ <sup>treatment of</sup> ~~relationship with~~ them  
How ~~do~~ we compare with them & would we <sup>want</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>be</sup> like them - or the opposite?

A question often asked if you could live your  
life over again - <sup>what</sup> would you do  
differently?

~~Fact is~~ <sup>memories, ~~review~~</sup> you are living your life  
over again <sup>and as you review</sup> ~~It is still~~ your life & you  
can change it.

What should <sup>you be</sup> ~~stop~~ doing and what should new  
catch up & do in future - Traveling  
or staying put - get to know your grand <sup>child</sup> ~~family~~  
Death of Ilya - discovered his life has  
been empty  
You can still pre-empt content

IF Stone in 70's took up Greek  
to read classics - how about taking  
up Hebrew & read Bible



M. Buber's most profound insight:

All life is in relationships  
— since all must die, you might ask  
what sort of pers. or can one  
make for it?

As to freedom & disposal of assets — "Estate  
Planning" can you prepare yourself for  
that final severance from life and  
all <sup>with whom</sup> you have a relationship?  
And what might you expect ~~desire~~ after  
you — assuming that there remains a  
conscious self?

I could answer if I knew what death is  
— or for that matter what life is all about  
— and why & what for we're here?

All your Ph.D.'s in Science, Philosophy & even  
Religion can't answer — The sum total  
of our knowledge is less than 1 billionth  
or even trillionth of that immeasurable  
cosmos into which we were tossed to flicker  
in life for a split-moment.

All you can do is to accept & submit  
to your human lot — to live & muddle thru  
to what seems like the end — But

Indispensable ?

---

Charles de Gaul

---

The graveyards are  
full of indispensable  
men.





\*\*\*  
amazing awaits

Y Bkon 09 title  
Re Expectation

Living in Anticipation of Death

LIVING WITH

DEATH ON YOUR

MIND

There is no end to being. Even in death  
you're not getting out of this world  
you're transformed to another  
~~state of being~~ state of being.

The upshot is Week 6.4  
all you can do is to do justly, love  
mercy & <sup>above all</sup> walk humbly —

If you've got peace of mind — accept  
& Submit

We were not put into this life to  
understand it — but to live, preserve  
& transmit it to our children — become  
a context and to all people with whom  
we relate

As Bible tells about Job & other men  
God did not say "Understand the why  
& wherefore of existence but  
Be fruitful & multiply & .

Cultivate this earth !

Refer to case of Ed Kalm — Lost control fell  
into depression — knowing that he was paying down till  
with 6 Mo. to live — My advice ① Accept — Submit  
② Embrace it

The only certainty is that nothing is  
certain - Pliny the Elder

An infant crying in night  
Bartlett - p. 6506





! P'137 JIN '2AK

June 18 <sup>27</sup> **BREWER**  
**Dr. NATHAN RONALD BREWER**  
 Dr. Nathan Ronald Brewer, age 104, well-known veterinarian and physiology professor at University of Chicago; beloved husband for 73 years of Esther Jean (nee Lees); ~~loving father of Maureen (Donald) Pasik, Sandra (Benjamin) Ginsberg and Jacquelyn (John) Fechter, adored grandfather of Ronald (Sandie) and Laura (Paul Norris) Pasik, Cynthia and Alexander Ginsberg; proud great grandfather of Joanna, Rebecca and Alicia; cherished brother of the late Kay Fuller; dear brother-in-law of Blanche (late Dr. Bernard) Halpern and the late Irene Lees, William (late Evelyn) Lees and Ann (late Ben) Kaplan; treasured uncle of Beverly (Paul) Jarrett and many other loving nieces and nephews.~~ Service Friday 2 p.m. at Goldman Funeral Group, 195 N. Buffalo Grove Rd., Buffalo Grove, IL. Interment Shalom Memorial Park. In lieu of flowers, contributions to the College of Veterinary Medicine, Office of Development, Michigan State University, F-130 Veterinary Medical Center, East Lansing, MI 48824. For info, call Goldman Funeral Group, Irwin Goldman Director (847) 478-1600.

Now that I am reading obituary notices with greater attention, I have noticed how nearly every departed is idealized in the obit.

For example, one gentleman (not from this area) who died at age 104 is described in the obit with lavish adjectives:

- Beloved husband
- Loving Father
- Adored grand father
- Proud great grand father
- Cherished Brother
- Dear Brother-in-law
- Treasured Uncle

Dear death  
 Gaffer upon  
 us a bit of  
 sanctity

Are these praises the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? 2

"It is easy to love people in memory;  
the hardest thing is to love them  
when they are there in front of you"

John Updike, My Father's Tears, p.202



Kohélet - ch. 4-7 re

fully of a circuml. wealth

of with Ps 49

Re  
Tyler Thomas  
p. 182 to Ps 102  
§ 1 - 100% / m

Assumpt. The 8 Life Bases You'll Want To

Y.K. Seminars 06 Money

Without limitation - See Kohélet ch 4-7

Israeli soldier told me

to be at, ~~and~~ go on with you. If

cope with unpleasant fundamental



~~Rollin~~

~~I Goldstein~~

~~3019860224~~

The image of a Tree of life - פ"ח עץ - represents  
growth - fertility (bearing fruit), also roots (the sustaining  
life force), the stem (the mature person) —  
but also the withering, withering leaves (decline, decay,  
death)

We have no clue of the purpose of human life,



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Yizkor 109

The Viddui Confession

Not only destined - but daily confession  
not to a rabbi (Priest) but directly to God

Value of Confession:

(a) re-assessment of one's (daily) life

(b) a humbling experience - to admit fault,  
& wrong doing, short comings



Dr. A. Alan Steinbach

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## IMMORTALITY

This racing blood, these lungs, this tom-tom heart  
Transmuting oxygen to living breath  
Will turn to dust, ungentle and apart,  
Grafted upon the marble skin of death.  
No vestige will remain of flesh or brain,  
No residue of marrow or of mind,  
Only an afterglow of love and pain  
Brooding in hearts of those I leave behind.

Yet, when this earth kneeling beneath my feet  
Becomes my bed, is there not more than this?  
More than a tortuous journey, sadly fleet,  
Winding its way to some unknown abyss?  
The Now and Here, these bodied parts of me,  
Are shells that hold the pearl - Infinity.

He asked that I read this Sonnet at his  
funeral

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Y3 has <sup>is not meant to</sup> be a death watch  
Planning

Making the Most of  
the Rest of your Life

---

Remember - What?

① How short life is  
Uncertainty is the  
only certainty in life  
anything can happen  
<sup>and</sup> which surely limits planning  
Nevertheless I recommend  
Long term plans - on  
condition that I'll survive  
~~it~~ till tomorrow



# Set your House in Order

Priorities - Be selective  
of the ~~concerns~~ or tasks  
you'll undertake in the  
last chapters of your  
life - Simplify  
Live

One day at a time - because

Death as a release  
- not a pain but the  
end of pain

Simplify -

George Bern. Shaw <sup>wrote</sup>

Old Age at 94 one day  
before the ~~the~~ accident that led to his death

The Will to live is wholly inexplorable.  
Rationally, I ought to blow my brains  
out, but I don't and won't. Most people  
hold on to the last moment and die  
→ "Natural death" as I mean it,  
though at 94 I ought to clear out,  
my bolt being shot and over shot.

YIZKOR theme

# TREASURES OF WISDOM

## FROM THE PSALMS

Ps 90.12      יָדָע לָנוּ יְיָ יוֹמֵי מִיָּוֶם

So teach us to count our days  
that we may apply our hearts  
to wisdom.

- ① Set up your priorities in view of the few years of life
- (a) Why spoil it with feuds?  
with angry bitterness
- (b) Don't put off what's important
- (c) good time management!



E-mail - Jules Raley

re David - 2 friends offered to  
donate 2 part of their lives  
one flew from New York

~~Before asking Why death, ask Why Life?~~  
Y K Semson or Yizkor

The fact that you are  
alone means

You are wanted  
by the creator - There is  
a benevolent power  
that not only creates life  
but sustains it.

Yizkor

Facing one's mortality

Arthur Schitzler's panic at age 13

when one night his mortality sank in!





Death Life is not a gift —  
it is a loan

The challenge is not to explain but to accept death, the termination of life as we know it —

This <sup>fact</sup> should not depress us but it certainly ought to humble us. The point is:

You are not the boss of your own existence  
How do you learn to accept this with less pain and anxiety?

One Family Fund: Overcoming Terror Together



Death itself is not painful

- On the contrary, death  
ends all pain

Y12 KOR

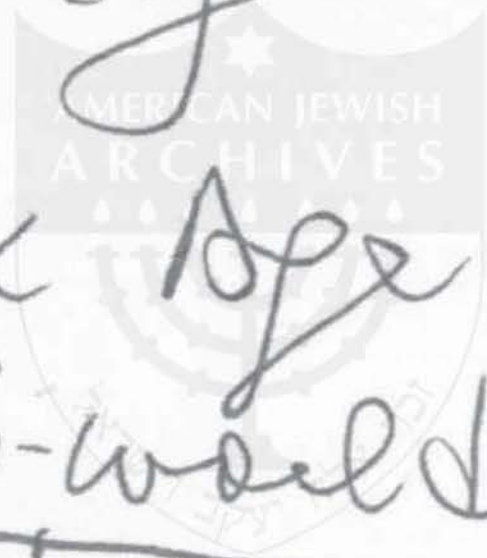
Arthur Mitter on the Notion  
of "immortality" is like trying to  
Carve your initials in a block  
of ice in the middle of July.  
For human beings talk of  
Immortality is absurd

1 Post-Biblical Jewish beliefs

~~Death~~ is the  
next stage of life

Messianic Age is not  
the final-world to come

ד.י.ד & ד.י.ד  
↓ ↓





Conclusion

Ingersoll's Questions unanswerable

Every Cradle asks... p. 15

The final hour of the

We call it a last farewell. But, ~~it is~~ all ~~human~~ ~~of~~ ~~our~~ ~~experiences~~ in speech to the beginning and the end of life in ~~reality~~. Who knows to ~~know~~ Who knows the true end of existence? It is a mystery as impenetrable as is the ~~truth~~ ~~of~~ ~~our~~ ~~original~~ ~~beginning~~ of ~~life~~ our existence. ~~We must trace~~ ~~back~~ ~~our~~ ~~origin~~ in being must be traced ~~back~~ ~~to~~ ~~all~~ ~~concepts~~ ~~of~~ ~~being~~ ~~and~~ ~~all~~ ~~things~~ ~~back~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~point~~ ~~of~~ ~~creation~~. And the end of ~~our~~ ~~life~~ ~~is~~ ~~being~~ ~~is~~ ~~equally~~ ~~unknown~~ ~~and~~ ~~unknowable~~. Could there be <sup>after our bodily death</sup> an ongoing consciousness & evolution of our spirit? There is no way to disprove it. It is a point of faith.

Er Walter Scott

Greenley Antology

Don Quixote - " " p. 52

We die a little daily - p. 59

Robert Green Ingersoll, upon death of child said:  
Every Cradle asks us Whence?  
and Henry Affin "Whither"? We are fancy?  
Ultimate mysteries: The Origin of life and  
that which we call "death"

As for the hereafter, cons: don't know I was <sup>remorse</sup> ~~inclined~~ ~~to~~ ~~expect~~ ~~one~~. "not reason but instinct affirms it"  
"I am ~~strongly~~ ~~inclined~~ ~~to~~ ~~expect~~ ~~one~~" not reason but instinct affirms it

<sup>yizkor on</sup>  
Y K Seminar for 2010

---

DOES YOUR LIFE HAVE A  
PURPOSE?

Rationally - No!  
Jews have inherited the purpose "revealed"  
or "commanded" to Abraham  
to be a blessing!

---

Do you need to know?

---

Zeit. Drink & be Merry!

---

DEATH

03-23/10

2

Recyclable Paper

Death drives home our immense ignorance.

~~Death~~ <sup>Death</sup> raises all the unanswerable questions:

Why life? For what purpose do we exist?

If death is an exit — is it also an entrance into another form of existence?

We can explain countless details of life on earth but have no answers for the big questions:

Death is ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> ultimate humiliation.

All the wealth, all knowledge, all brilliance, all beauty, all power vanishes in death.

We know nothing of the hereafter. All that remains is ~~faith & hope~~ and is a "perhaps" on our lips.

If death is the end of our earthly journey — could it <sup>also</sup> be a return, a home-coming to the source whence we came?

We know of sustaining forces in this life ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~strong~~ powers of growth & healing. Could there be other powers — unknown to us, that make for our continuity?



Memorial Service  
2008  
KADDISH

### Scorned by Naipaul, Embraced by Others

To the Editor:

If you ask a Trinidadian about Sir Vidia Naipaul, it's true, you'll get the standard response that he is a *neemakharam* (Hindi for someone who's thoroughly ungrateful). And, yes, as David Shaftel points out in "Letter From Trinidad: An Island Scorned" (May 18), he has shunned us time and again. Yet *tabanca*, that wretched state of lovelorn anguish any Trini could tell you about in detail, doesn't begin to describe our condition when the only mention he made of us when he won the Nobel in 2001 was a paltry "born in Trinidad" in his bio sketch. It was "The Middle Passage" all over again.

Nevertheless we have not stood still, pining for this dusky Englishman. Since Naipaul, and before him, we have had Earl Lovelace, the Commonwealth Writers Prize best-book winner; Lawrence Scott, winner of a Commonwealth Writers Prize for best book in Canada and the Caribbean; Sam Selvon, writer of the most liquidly gorgeous sentences in the Trinidadian canon. Lesser known is Harold Sonny Ladoo, whose book "No Pain Like This Body" is a masterpiece of hurt writ with some knowledge that one is afraid to interrogate.

The list of accomplished, even genius Trinidadian writers can go on to include Elizabeth Nunez, Robert Antoni, Dionne Brand. Whether or not they have defined their works and careers in opposition to or in spite of Naipaul doesn't lessen the vigor of their work. For sheer volume, few — anywhere — can beat Naipaul's prodigious output. But on style, the writers in the Trinidadian canon can meet him eye to eye. Some of these writers are featured in an anthology I edited with Jeanne Mason, "Trinidad Noir," to be published in August by Akashic Books. I'd like to think it is testimony to our moving on from the Naipaul *tabanca*. At the very least, it proves that Trinidad is no one-trick pony, literarily speaking.

LISA ALLEN-AGOSTINI  
Diego Martin,  
Trinidad and Tobago

To the Editor:

Shaftel's essay on Naipaul is an extremely important examination of a writer whose work ought to be scrutinized for what it refutes and how it does generate scorn in those historic islanders whose artistic and socio-political contributions' worth he refuses to fully acknowledge. Naipaul has always confounded me (a non-Trinidadian with British heritage) with his repeated assertions that nothing ever truly emerged, culturally, from the lives and experiences of the early 19th-century Trinidadians who were enslaved by the Europeans.

I closely studied the 1820s-'50s Trinidad Carnival for my master's thesis. With that research in mind I can say it is vital that people remember what the slaves produced from pain and from necessity. Amazing, exuberant, vociferous, message-loaded, life-affirming music and dance that drew from African-based traditional rites and developed into entire social institutions, political war-groups and comedic theater that fed the famous iterations of today's Carnivals.

Today it seems that the real message of Carnival gets trounced by the annual event's extraordinary pageantry (gorgeous, loved and labor-intensive, that it is!), so we definitely do not need Naipaul, a writer with such wide reach and who really ought to know better, to deny the history-changing suffering that occurred before emancipation.

FIONA D.J. BAYLY  
New York

### Judged by the Cover

To the Editor:

As a subscriber and reader for over 20 years, I would like to convey my profound disgust at your cover illustration for the May 25 Book Review. One of my greatest weekly pleasures is perusing The New York Times on Sunday morning with breakfast. The nausea engendered by your choice of graphics not only ruined my meal but also made me sad that you have come to this!

Egregious violence has come to dominate every facet of our daily lives including movies, television and interaction among people. That you somehow think it appropriate to splash blood

and gore over for what I considered one of the last bastions of civility and rational discourse, the Book Review section, is both revolting and frightening.

I have no idea what sort of editorial decision-making went into this ghastly choice, but I sincerely hope it will not be repeated. I'm sure whoever made the decision has no interest in the effect on readers of this abomination. In my house, however, the Book Review section ended up buried in the recycling pile, unread.

SUSAN LEHMANN  
Santa Cruz, Calif.

### Kaddish

To the Editor:

In his review of "Peace" (May 11), Ben Macintyre describes a Jewish soldier who is reciting "the Mourner's Prayer for the dead." It is a common misconception among non-Jews that the mourner's prayer, called Kaddish, prays for the deceased person. However, there is no Jewish prayer for the dead. The theme of Kaddish is the greatness of God, and there is no reference, not one word, about death. Its purpose is to reaffirm the belief of the mourner.

A. KALLEY  
Troy, Mich.

### Learning the Language

To the Editor:

For Mike Meyer to pay so much attention to "Mocky," the naughty monkey, in his essay "Learning to Speak Olympics" (May 25) was rather fitting because of his unduly mocking critique of the way English is being taught in Beijing. Meyer was relentless in presenting examples of sentences that some Americans might consider bizarre or superficial as well as too focused on the coming Olympics.

He spares not a word of praise for the fact that every Chinese child in Beijing is being taught English at a time when Chinese is rarely taught in the United States.

How dare we in this country take such a condescending attitude, with a president who can't speak English too good and with most Americans speaking what can only be called Americanese?

ARTHUR E. ROWSE  
Chevy Chase, Md.

How it responds to the fact of death from mortality to eternity from human importance to God's omnipotence.  
From this life to the totality of existence to do sh' bradim our perspective on life  
Kaddish lifts you above yourself

# THE PUZZLE of KADDISH - A PUZZLING PRAYER & MIRIAM'S LULLABY

No mention of death - no word about grief  
What is its consoling message - if any?

It points to the larger context of  
existence - The Universe & God  
with Whom we connect  
in Prayer

Can you see yourself <sup>at large</sup> in context?

A link generations after generations  
you were in all of them (Miriam's  
Lullaby)  
The consolation of connectedness



# VIZKOR 2010

May 19<sup>th</sup> 10

It is impossible to understand death as long as we do not understand life - Not understanding but accepting is our task.

But once you accept the indescribable end of your life - ~~What is a sensible, wise reaction?~~ the only concern you should have is - So what? What should you do in the face of that death sentence that hangs over all of us.

Kohélet says: Here is much for us possible - make the best of every

① day - of each day.

② keep in contact with all your dear ones & friends before you or they die





JUNE 8 10 WALLST. JOURNAL

# There Is Just No Replacement for a Lost Loved One

I have read the Journal for years, and I have often found its articles and editorials to be informative, interesting and provocative. I have never, however, had to shut my office door while reading an article for fear of crying. That is, until I read the "Moving On" column "Families With a Missing Piece" (Personal Journal, June 2).

I lost my baby brother when I was five years old and my dad when I was 14. Since their deaths, I've experienced many of the same thoughts and feelings noted in your article: the guilt of saying something mean to my dad before he died; fantasizing about the barter of a year of my life for just 15 minutes with my dad and brother; the loss of hope when the realization of life without dad finally hit home.

I found no consolation in

religion. The notion that The Father took my father to be in heaven was cold comfort to the 14-year-old boy who wanted to play catch and learn how to change the oil in the family car. However, I did get strength from my mom who, by her word and her deed, made it clear to my siblings and me that life would go on and we would go on with it. I also found comfort from classmates and teachers who asked enough questions to keep me out of my shell but who also treated me no differently than anyone else.

In the end, though, the best therapy was simple but not easy: Keep moving forward. I now have a family of my own, and I can see Grandpa Joe in each of his grandchildren's eyes. The hypothetical barter no longer seems like a good deal.

BROCK A. SWARTZLE  
Okemos, Mich.

My mother died when I was 14 years old, my brother 12 and my sister 22 months old. For more than four decades I've been trying to figure out when I will "get over" it. Recently, it dawned on me: Never.

SUSANNA HOFMANN MCSHEA  
Greenville, S.C.

The article portrays a parent's death as a predictor for a downward path of drugs and hopelessness. However, I have witnessed otherwise. Many of us who lost a parent become more determined to lead a life filled with purposeful achievements that honor the deceased parent. We also become more devoted to our faith and have the ability to provide comfort to others experiencing similar losses, roles that many don't assume at a much older age, if ever.

MEGAN HENRY SHUGARMAN  
Annapolis, Md.

1-811 428-22  
STW 22  
yette  
of Mind Hall

**ANNUAL UNION REFORM  
CONGREGATIONAL SELICHOT SERVICE  
With Guest Speaker: Dr. Sherwin Nuland**



**Saturday, September 24  
7:30 p.m. Havdallah  
8:00 p.m. Services**

We are honored to have Dr. Sherwin Nuland as our guest speaker. Dr. Nuland's topic for the evening will be "A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Doctor's View of Maimonides—Physician, Philosopher, Rabbi."

Dr. Nuland has recently completed a book on Moses Maimonides — "a Renaissance man before there was a Renaissance: a great physician who served a sultan, a dazzling Torah scholar, a community leader, a daring philosopher whose greatest work—*The Guide for the Perplexed*—attempted to reconcile scientific knowledge with faith in God. He was a Jew living in a Muslim world, a rationalist living in a time of superstition. Eight hundred years after his death, his notions about God, faith, the afterlife, and the Messiah still stir debate; his life as a physician still inspires; and the enigmas of his character still fascinate."

Sherwin B. Nuland—best-selling author of *How We Die*—focuses his surgeon's eye and writer's pen on this greatest of rabbis, most intriguing of Jewish philosophers, and most honored of Jewish doctors. He gives us a portrait of Maimonides that makes his life, his times, and his thought accessible to the general reader as they have never been before.

Sherwin B. Nuland, M.D., is the author of such books as *Doctors: The Biography of Medicine*, *The Wisdom of the Body*, *The Mysteries Within*, *Lost in America: A Journey with My Father*, and *The Doctors' Plague*. His book *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter* won the National Book Award and spent thirty-four weeks on the New York Times best-seller list. His writing has appeared in The New Yorker, The New Republic, The New York Times, Time, and The New York Review of Books. Nuland is a clinical professor of surgery at Yale University, where he also teaches bioethics and medical history. He lives with his family in Connecticut.



~~Here especially these messages~~ Oct 2 / 10

Ronald & Susan King Y K Semms '10

Living w. Uncertainty -

Major lesson for uncertainty is our limited control  
We carry illusion of control we say I'm conducting  
or leading <sup>or managing</sup> my life; in reality we conduct or  
control only a small, tiny portion of our existence

Things happen to us far more than what  
we make happen.

Life deals us a set of cards - but we decide  
how to play our hand - . . . . .

Poem - The winds blow East or West  
but how we set our sails  
determines where we go

Descartes was sure of only one thing - that he  
was thinking about it - Cogito Ergo Sum  
from which he concluded that he actually existed

We all talk about weather but nobody can do  
anything about it - except try to be prepared  
ie have your umbrella ready!



but many things can happen for which  
preparation is impossible - eg earthquake  
collapse of bed - fire & explosions

Haley's illusion of self-mastery -

We are subject to a set of forces - to people's  
impact upon us - to <sup>diseases</sup> infections - to  
world events - terrorism, war, airplane  
accidents.

CONCLUSIONS:

What can we do? Adjust! Yield.

Don't try to control others <sup>when</sup> you can't  
be sure of your self-control

Realistically - be more humble!

Observed Jews make no statement about  
a ~~their~~ future plan w. text p. 1137, pro  
yiddish "Im yertze-Shem"

Much of our life we are scavengers - picking  
up what the sea sweeps up for us

There's a feed side to it: Unexpected gifts from the sea "  
surprising Blessings

## MAKING THE MOST OF THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

A Yizkor Address – 2010

Joshua O. Haberman

~~On May 3<sup>rd</sup>~~ , Our son-in-law, Rabbi David Forman, died at the age of 65. He was a ~~vibrant personality,~~ bold leader, mesmerizing speaker, witty and challenging in his idealism. ~~Five years earlier,~~ because of an incurable liver disease, he knew that he would not live long. The diagnosis prompted him to write his book *OVER MY DEAD BODY*, in which he wrestled with his beliefs. Does God care about us? Is God good?

David held on to belief in God but questioned His goodness and fairness: "God is not a good role-model," he wrote. This should not shock you because we, Jews, have always felt free to question God's management of the world, and challenge His way with man. In this spirit, I want to ask some questions of mine own:

God, You commanded us to love you. Your Torah tells us: "You shall love Adonoy, your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might" But, do You love us, too? Is it love when you give us life only to decay and die? What kind of cruel joke is this life You have created?



**I imagine God answering: Do I owe you anything? Who are you to hold me to account? You don't know the first thing about being and non-being. You have no idea why there is something, anything, instead of nothing. If I told you, would you understand? You speck of dust , you, infinitesimal, little worm dare to question the way I run the world I made?**

**So far, God has not chosen to tell me why there must be death.**

**I have no choice but accept the fact of the inescapable end.**

**A minister preached a sermon on death : "Everyone in this parish will die," he declared -- at which one man broke into a smile. "Why are you smiling?," asked the person next to him. " Because I am not from this parish,"**

**Unhappily, human destiny is nothing to smile at. We must face inescapable decline and death.**

**The motion picture mogul, Louis B. Mayer was asked to make a large charitable donation. "You can't take it with you," said the solicitor. "If I can't take it with me," answered Mayer, "I WON'T GO.**

**Protest as you wish, the clock keeps ticking, ~~decline~~ -- and go you must.**



**What consolation is there in the hope for immortality? If only we knew what is immortal? Is it the spirit? The soul? What kind of continuity? Do we retain our identity?**

**Many suspect that the whole notion of immortality is wishful thinking, yet, even skeptics cling to this belief. Mark Twain confessed: "I have never seen an atom of proof that there is a future life --- and yet I am strongly inclined to expect one."**

**Does instinct overrule our reason ?**

**We speak of the gift of life. A gift it is not. It comes closest to being a task whose purpose we cannot fathom.**

**As the Russian-Jewish novelist, Isaac Babel, was being dragged away by Stalin's secret police, he was heard to shout: " But I was not given time to finish!" You can say the same about life: Long or short, it is an unfinished story which from beginning to end is wrapped in mystery.**

**Death drives home our colossal ignorance. We can explain countless details about life on earth but have no answers for the big question: Why is there life? For what purpose do we exist? If death is an exit, could it be an entry into some other form of existence? That is the great perhaps.**

**You and I must live with uncertainty.**

They tell about a village doctor in Galicia. A man took his ailing son to <sup>the</sup> doctor who examined the boy and proceeded to administer castor-oil. "But, doctor" -- asked the father -- "why do you prescribe castor oil for every illness?" The doctor explained: "Life is full of mysteries. We can't be sure about anything ---but one thing we know . We know what castor-oil will do. So, start with a sure thing!"

Uncertainty is the human lot: Rich today, poor tomorrow; jubilant today, downcast tomorrow; the life of the party today, on the deathbed tomorrow.

The most admired Jew of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Sir Moses Montefiore. Related by marriage to the Rothschild family, Montefiore made 7 strenuous journeys to Palestine and traveled throughout the world in defense of oppressed Jewish communities.

When residing on his estate at Ramsgate, he had his butler solemnly announce every hour: "Sir Moses Montefiore, another hour of your life has passed." Montefiore wished to be reminded that time was running out and he better make the most of the rest of his life.

That goes for each of us. What could you, what should you do to make the most of your remaining years?



**Kohelet in the Bible, tells us, in view of the brevity of life,: "Go eat your bread and drink your wine with joy; ... wear good clothes; take care of your body and enjoy life with the spouse you love and ...whatever you can do, do it by all means." (Koh.9.7-10)**

**Yes, pleasure is a good thing. Our sages tell us that on the Day of Judgment, you will be rebuked for denying yourself any ~~one~~ legitimate pleasure you might have enjoyed --- because we must not reject the good things God created.**

**I would add to Kohelet's , "eat, drink and be merry," 3 suggestions of mine own:**

**(1) REVIEW YOUR PRIORITIES.**

**Focus on what is really important to you. The poet of ancient Rome, Horace, had it right: "Why aim at so many things in our short life" Cut your agenda. Simplify your life. Be selective. In work or retirement, concentrate on what means the most to you.**

**Realize that YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE IS A BAROMETER OF HAPPINESS. Be attentive to family, renew contact with those with whom you have been out of touch. Let friends know you are alive. To keep a friend, be a friend .**



*My 2nd suggestion to make the most of the rest of your life, is*

**(2) REVISIT YOUR UNFINISHED BUSINESS.** The older we get, the more of our plans and projects fall into the category of unfinished business --- hopes and dreams which we are unwilling to surrender; schemes which are close to our hearts but cannot be quickly realized; all kinds of good ideas and ambitions that had to be set aside for the time being.

It is never too late. Grandma Moses commenced her long deferred career as an artist at the age of 75 and painted 1,600 paintings before her death at age 101.

Then, there is the unfinished business of our home-life. People living under the same roof often drift apart. Almost imperceptibly, distances grow between husband and wife or between parents and children.

Two persons may walk hand in hand, yet feel alone,-- living together, but not sharing thoughts and feelings. To find again the way to the other person's heart is one of life's most important tasks.

*My third suggestion is to*

**(3) LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME – MAKE TODAY THE MOST IMPORTANT DAY OF YOUR LIFE.** In youth, we are future oriented. We build castles in the sky. We spin hopes and plans for the future. At later stages of life, we should stress today and not worry about tomorrow. The best way

to make the most of the rest of your life, is to make today count .

### CONCLUSION

90.12 שְׁמַרְנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Psalm 90 begs God: " So teach us to count our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom." With limited life-time at our disposal it is wise to

**SORT OUT WHAT REALLY MATTERS,** ignore trivia, unclutter your life.

**FOCUS ON YOUR RELATIONSHIPS,**

**LIVE IN THE HERE AND NOW;** TODAY is the day that counts.

Don't put off; don't procrastinate. Do what you can, now! Be grateful for whatever good you can find in each hour, for a good friend, an interesting conversation, a beautiful song and a lovely day. We Jews recite a thanksgiving blessing over a mere crust of bread. Be grateful for every little thing, even for a good night's sleep, and thank God for today. The poet said it well:

**Don't worry about tomorrow  
For tomorrow may never come.  
Don't worry about yesterday  
For yesterday is done.**

**The path we are to trod  
Is the pathway of today,  
For today is the tomorrow  
We dreamed of yesterday** **AMEN**





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They tell about a village doctor in Galicia. A man took his ailing son to the only doctor in town who examined the boy and proceeded to administer castor-oil. "But, doctor" -- asked the father -- "why do you prescribe castor oil for every illness?" The doctor explained: Life is full of mysteries. We can't be sure about anything ---but one thing we know . We know what castor-oil will do. So, start with a sure thing!"

Uncertainty is the human lot: Rich today, poor tomorrow; jubilant today, downcast tomorrow; the life of the party today, on the deathbed tomorrow.

The most admired Jew of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Sir Moses Montefiore. Related by marriage to the Rothchild family, Montefiore made 7 strenuous journeys to Palestine and traveled throughout the world in defense of oppressed Jewish communities.

When residing on his estate at Ramsgate, he had his butler solemnly announce every hour: "Sir Moses Montefiore, another hour of your life has passed." Montefiore wished to be reminded that time was running out and he better make the most of the rest of his life.

That goes for each of us. What could you, what should you do to make the most of your remaining years?

Kohelet in the Bible, tells us, in view of the brevity of life,: "Go eat your bread and drink your wine with joy; ... wear good clothes; take care of your body and enjoy life with the spouse you love and ...whatever you can do, do it by all means." (Koh.9.7-10)

Yes, pleasure is a good thing. Our sages tell us that on the Day of Judgment, you will be rebuked for denying yourself any one legitimate pleasure



you might have enjoyed --- because we must not reject the good things God created.

I would add to Kohelet's , "eat, drink and be merry,"

3 suggestions of mine own:

(1) REVIEW YOUR PRIORITIES.

Focus on what is really important to you. The poet of ancient Rome, Horace, had it right: "Why aim at so many things in our short life" Cut your agenda. Simplify your life. Be selective. In work or retirement, concentrate on what means the most to you.

Realize that YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE IS A BAROMETER OF HAPPINESS. Be attentive to family, renew contact with those with whom you have been out of touch. Let friends know you are alive. To keep a friend, be a friend .

(2) REVISIT YOUR UNFINISHED BUSINESS. The older we get, the more of our plans and projects fall into the category of unfinished business --- hopes and dreams which we are unwilling to surrender; schemes which are close to our hearts but cannot be quickly realized; all kinds of good ideas and ambitions that had to be set aside for the time being.

It is never too late. Grandma Moses commenced her long deferred career as an artist at the age of 75 and painted 1,600 paintings before her death at age 101.

Then, there is the unfinished business of our home-life. People living under the same roof often drift apart. Almost imperceptibly, distances grow between husband and wife or between parents and children.

Two persons may walk hand in hand, yet feel alone,-- living together, but not sharing thoughts and feelings. To find again the way to the other person's heart is one of life's most important tasks.

(3) LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME – MAKE TODAY THE MOST IMPORTANT DAY OF YOUR LIFE. In youth, we are future oriented. We build castles in the sky. We spin hopes and plans for the future. At later stages of life, we should stress today and not worry about tomorrow. The best way to make the most of the rest of your life, is to make today count . ~~Amen~~



Psalm 90 begs God: " So teach us to count our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom." With limited life-time at our disposal it is wise to

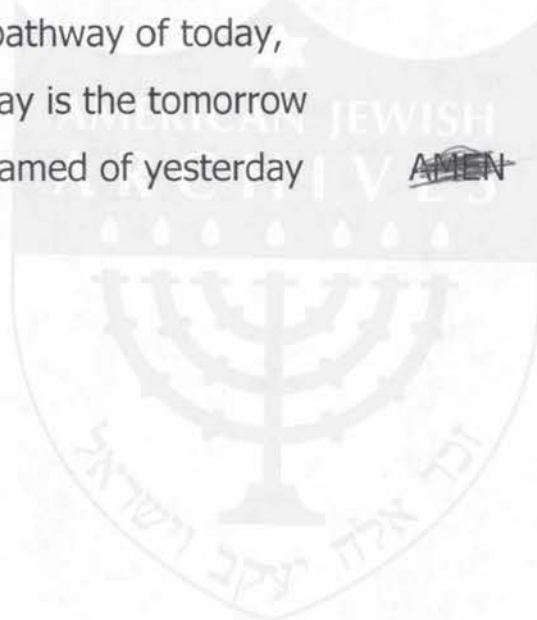
SORT OUT WHAT REALLY MATTERS, ignore trivia, unclutter your life.  
 FOCUS ON YOUR RELATIONSHIPS,  
 LIVE IN THE HERE AND NOW; TODAY is the day that counts.

Don't put off; don't procrastinate. Do what you can, now! Be grateful for whatever good you can find in each hour, for a good friend, an interesting conversation, a beautiful song and a lovely day. We Jews recite a thanksgiving

blessing over a mere crust of bread. Be grateful for every little thing, even for a good night's sleep, and thank God for today. The poet said it well:

Don't worry about tomorrow  
For tomorrow may never come.  
Don't worry about yesterday  
For yesterday is done.

The path we are to trod  
Is the pathway of today,  
For today is the tomorrow  
We dreamed of yesterday ~~AMEN~~





## ASKING GOD SOME PAINFUL QUESTIONS

A Yizkor Address – 2010

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, our son-in-law, Rabbi David Forman, after an agonizing month of hovering between life and death, died at the age of 65. He was a vibrant personality, a bold leader, mesmerizing speaker, witty and challenging in his idealism. Five years earlier he already knew that because of an incurable liver disease, he would not live long. The diagnosis prompted him to write his book *OVER MY DEAD BODY*, in which he wrestled with his beliefs. Does God care about us? Is God good?

David held on to belief in God but questioned His goodness and fairness: "God is not a good role-model," he wrote.

Throughout the ages, Jews have addressed God directly, raised questions about His management of the world, and challenged His way with man. ~~In this spirit, I have some painful~~ questions of mine own: God, You commanded us to love you. ~~Your~~ Torah tells us: "You shall love Adonoy, your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might" But, do **You** love us, too? Is it love when you give us life only to decay and die? What kind of cruel joke is this life You have created?

I imagine God answering: Do I owe you anything? Who are you to hold me to account? You don't know the first thing about being and non-being. You have no idea why there is something, anything, instead of nothing. If I told you, would you understand? I gave you brains just to manage your life on earth, on this planet, ~~which is a speck of dust in the immeasurable universe, And you, infinitesimal, little worm dare to question the way I run the world I made?~~

So far, God has not ~~chosen to explain to me why there must be death.~~ I have no choice but accept the fact of the inescapable end. ~~As the Biblical book of Kohelet says: "The same destiny awaits man and beast alike." (Koh. 3.19)~~

~~We are told of a minister who in a sermon on death said: "Everyone in this parish will die"~~ ~~at which one man broke into a smile. The fellow next to him, said: "Why are you smiling?" He answered: "I am not from this parish."~~

~~Unhappily, human destiny is nothing to smile at. We must face inevitable decline and death though our heart cries out, why? There is no comfort in the scientific explanation of biological changes which put an end to life. The clock keeps ticking as decline accelerates.~~

Are we destined for total extinction? What consolation is there in the hope of immortality? If only we knew what is immortal? Is it the spirit? The soul?

Mark Twain said "I have never seen an atom of proof that there is a future life — and yet I am strongly inclined to expect one" — Our reason may be skeptical but instinct wants to affirm ~~the~~ immortality.

See WORD "Painful Questions"

# Word - "Painful Questions"

Are you easy enough to be by your family?

Are you attentive to friends? <sup>Focus on</sup>

When you work or retire <sup>Be selective</sup> what means the most to you

That's what you need to concentrate on that!

and let go of ~~the~~ functions & respons. bilities

that have ~~become~~ <sup>lost meaning for</sup> you

2) Your relationship with people is <sup>a</sup> barometer of happiness. Put family first and keep friendships in good repair.

3) In youth we are <sup>future oriented</sup> ~~business~~ <sup>We build castles in the sky</sup> ~~with future plans~~  
In the later stages of life <sup>it is wisest</sup> ~~we should~~ <sup>and not worry about tomorrow.</sup> ~~live entirely~~ stress today - <sup>live one day at a time</sup> ~~Make the most of now!~~

Make each day count.

Poem Don't Worry about Tomorrow



*any kind of*  
 If there is ~~some spiritual~~ continuity, what kind of existence is it? Do we retain our sense of identity?

All these questions are unanswerable. Many suspect that the whole notion of immortality is just wishful thinking. Arthur Miller said "the notion of immortality is like trying to carve your initials on a block of ice in the middle of July." "I have no choice but accept the fact that a will other than my own brought me into this life and will cause my life to end."

I have no knowledge, no certainty of continuity in any form. However, I cling to belief in creation because a world emerging from nothing by itself is for me unthinkable. I believe in creation, in a creative Power, in a Creator or God, and I say to myself: The fact that I was created proves to me that I was wanted. Why? ---I do not know but I am in the hands of my Maker. If so, there must be some on-going relationship between God and me.

We speak of the gift of life. A gift it is not. It comes closest to being a task whose purpose we cannot fathom.

Death is our ultimate humiliation. All brilliance, all knowledge, all wealth, all power vanish in death. The Russian <sup>novelist</sup> Isaac Babel, was heard to shout as he was being dragged away by Stalin's secret police: "But I was not given time to finish!" You can say the same about life: Long or short, it is a tiny fragment of an unfinished story which from beginning to end is wrapped in mystery.

Death drives home our colossal ignorance. We can explain countless details of life on earth but have no answers for the big question: Why is there life? For what purpose do we exist? If death is an exit, could it also be an entrance into some other form of existence? That is the great perhaps!

Maybe I'll know more about it tomorrow or next year.

Meanwhile, you and I must live with uncertainty.

They tell the story about a small Jewish town in Galicia. A man took his ailing son to the only doctor in town who had treated his family for many years. The doctor examined the boy and proceeded to administer a dose of castor-oil. "But, doctor" -- said the man -- "I have always wanted to ask you, why do you always prescribe castor oil for every illness?" The doctor explained: Life is full of mysteries. We can't be sure about anything ---but one thing we know ~~for~~ ~~certain~~. We know what castor-oil will do. So, start with a sure thing!"

Uncertainty is the human lot. Kohelet in the Bible draws a sensible conclusion. Since you do not know what will happen tomorrow, make

*rich today, poor tomorrow  
 joyful today, downcast tomorrow  
 well today - on your deathbed tomorrow*



the most of today: "Go, eat your bread and drink your wine with joy; God will approve; wear good clothes; take care of your body and enjoy life with the spouse you love...whatever you can afford to do, do it." (Koh.9.7-10)

Sir Moses Montefiore ~~was a~~ ~~beloved~~ friend of Queen Victoria ~~was~~

The obvious lesson is: Make the best of life. Don't put off; don't procrastinate. Do what you can, now!

Be grateful for whatever good you can find in each hour, for a good friend, an interesting conversation, a beautiful song and a lovely day. We Jews recite a thanksgiving blessing over a mere crust of bread. To put in the simplest possible words: Be grateful for every little thing, even for a good night's sleep. How much more grateful should we be for the more refined pleasures of life!

If our dear departed were able to speak, they would say: Listen to Rabbi Hillel's advice: *Im lo ach-shav, eymatai?* If not now, when?

staggered  
of the heart  
of the  
be  
10  
she  
made  
7 journey  
to Palestine  
and travelled  
throughout  
the world  
in defense of  
oppressed Jewish  
Communities.

Upon his ~~last~~ ~~instructions~~ ~~his~~ ~~butler~~ ~~of~~ ~~announce~~ ~~him~~ ~~every~~ ~~hour~~ would solemnly

Sir ~~Montefiore~~ Montefiore, another hour of your life has passed

~~It was~~ ~~his~~ ~~butler~~ ~~to~~ ~~prompt~~ ~~him~~ ~~to~~ ~~make~~ ~~the~~ ~~most~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~rest~~ ~~of~~ ~~his~~ ~~life~~. This was

Imagine that butler ~~is~~ ~~announcing~~ ~~to~~ ~~you~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~time~~ ~~is~~ ~~running~~ ~~out~~. ~~What~~ ~~can~~ ~~you~~ ~~do~~? ~~What~~ ~~can~~ ~~you~~ ~~do~~?  
Time is running out. ~~What~~ ~~can~~ ~~you~~ ~~do~~?  
Make the ~~best~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~rest~~ ~~of~~ ~~your~~ ~~life~~!  
What would ~~you~~ ~~do~~?  
The quest. on is ~~now~~?  
What would you, what should you do?

I have 3 suggestions:

- 1) ~~Set~~ ~~your~~ ~~priorities~~. Simplify, reduce funct. ea.  
Listen by ~~concentrate~~ ~~to~~ ~~what~~ ~~is~~ ~~really~~ ~~important~~ ~~to~~ ~~you~~  
The ~~use~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~ancient~~ ~~proverb~~ ~~of~~ ~~Socrates~~:  
Why am I at so many things in one short life?

and wisdom. But this can only happen to those who throughout their earlier years set aside time to learn, think, reflect and cultivate a spiritual life.

Life is wrapped up in two mysteries: its origin and what seems to be its ending. Death may be clinically defined as the cessation of physical functions and disintegration. But is death a total ending? an ultimate extinction? We cannot answer with certainty. Fears inspired by death are best relieved by a sense of connection with all there is. The belief that we are part of a greater whole is the heart of religious faith. People of faith find comfort and reassurance in the assertion of life's larger context.

Friedrich Nietzsche voiced a profound truth when he said: "We take unto ourselves the strength of that which we overcome." Each life crisis is a struggle from which we may emerge wiser, better and spiritually stronger.