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Series A: Sermons and Prayers, 1940-2016.

Subseries 1: High Holidays, 1941-2016, undated.

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Sermons and notes, 2013-2016.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
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Yizkor Seeman 2013



Is Life Worthwhile?
in terms of pleasure we derive
~~in terms of something other than food?~~
Worthy — to whom?

In pursuit of happiness?

Worthwhileness is something
we create & develop. ~~We can~~
~~add worth to our existence~~

Kahlel's cynicism

→ My world will go on without me

Look for the things in daily life you
enjoy.

Be proud of yourself.
Example of Helen Keller!

Maxine Haberman

1/13/80 13

Re-read
Breusen Diary

Time is your most precious
commodity - illustrate

Breusen (people him!)

would limit visitors - even

the most distinguished ones -

to $\frac{1}{2}$ hour after which he'd
excuse himself w. the

explanation that w. so little

remaining life time he could
not afford to spend more of



TOLERANCE

it now and must **ADL**

Anti-Defamation League®

devote it to what is most

Important to him —

Perhaps Berenson
was mistaken. Are the
things we deem important
really important?

Maimonides considered
nothing in life important
except the One God

Develop question:

What is important?

perhaps nothing human
is important

Maxine Haberman

The unimportance of
most things should
have a calming effect
on our minds

A shortcut to peace of mind.

The pressure is off the
moment you realize that what
upset you are trifles



From Mortality's Muse by D.T. Siebert
2013

Conclusion: Last Words

We are born but to die. Unlike other living things, we know it for a fact. It is our inexorable fate, and it is not easy to accept. We did not choose to be born. We exist, for an unknown length of time, because of the random union of two gametes, among an unimaginable number that have perished without producing human life. We might be grateful for the good fortune, especially if life has been kind to us so far, but we know also that the joy of being alive comes with a dreadful condition attached to the contract: this contract can and will be terminated at an unspecified time and in an unspecified manner. We did not agree to the contract in the first place, but what does that matter? To make this binding non-agreement worse, it is not just our own life that must be terminated, but before that happens, we must live while others die—whether they are those dear to us, people we did not know, or indeed animals, including household pets or just a smashed creature seen on the road. We do not know whether our dying, and that of those we love, will be reasonably merciful—or painful, even cruel. We may wonder how we will be remembered, or for how long. We know that most of us will be forgotten rather soon.

To this litany of woe, religion, philosophy, and art have their responses. These responses cannot take away our mortal anxiety, but they can be of some help in easing that fear. In small part at least, we have considered them all, and we have paid most attention to the consolation provided by secular literary art. How effective, finally, is even art's consolation? Two poems would seem to answer the question quite differently.

The first poem makes a strong case for literature's value in helping us deal with suffering, adversity, and death. It is A. E. Housman's "Terence, This is Stupid Stuff," a work we visited briefly at the end of chapter one. Terence Hearsay is Housman's presumed pen name or speaker in a little volume of verse called *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), containing many of Housman's best lyrics, most of them of a rather melancholy, pessimistic cast. We have read his *carpe diem* poem "Loveliest of Trees" and his elegiac "With Rue My Heart is Laden."

The rather lightweight, rollicking, jocular tone of "Terence" facilitates its argument, developed in four verse-paragraphs. The first paragraph features the united voices of Terence's friends, protesting that while he seems to enjoy life, eating heartily and drinking his beer, he writes dispiriting poems that depress everybody:

Life in the Here and Now
A Yizkor sermon
Yom Kippur, Sept. 14, 2013
by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

Among all the religions in the world, Yom Kippur, as far as I know, is the only holy day entirely devoted to a critical review of your own life: It is a whole day of self-judgment, of reflection on what we did or should have done. However there is one hour, the Yizkor Memorial service, when attention shifts from life to death.

The Bible has a graphic description of the irreversibility of death: "***In death we are as water spilt to the ground which cannot be gathered up again***" II Sam. 14.14 Death is the only

phenomenon which cannot be changed or avoided. It is absolutely unalterable. When a priest made this point and said "everyone in this parish will die", a man smiled and said to the person next to him *asked why are you smiling?* He *answered*: "Because *your* said: "I'm not from ~~this~~ parish."

The angel of death will find us wherever we are.

Death is our destiny. All we can do is consider how to live our remaining years.

Reactions to one's inescapable death differ from person to person and at various ages. Most young people do not imagine dying. Death happens to others, not themselves. I was for the first time made sharply aware of my own mortality when an insurance agent tried to sell me a life insurance policy. He said: ***You want to take care of Maxine and children in the event of your death.***

Then he looked at me and as a final sales pitch, told me my life expectancy according to statistics.

The Viennese novelist, Arthur Schnitzler, wondered if there was anyone who does not deep in his soul think of his death.

Mark Twain, on the other hand, was casual about death:

"I had been dead for billions of years before I was born and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it." This is easily said as long as one is healthy, feeling fine. But when gravely ill and death a close possibility, one is not likely to be so glib about the end of life.

Elie Wiesel just published a book about his feelings when facing Open Heart surgery. While being wheeled into the operating room, he confessed fear and anxiety as he looked at his wife, Marion, and son . Elisha,. Would he ever see them again? The finality of separation from beloved ones is the most painful thought about death.

Could thinking about death have a positive influence upon one's way of life? Could there be benefits that go with the fear of death ? I suggest three possible benefits:

The first is the cooling of ambitions, the lessening of passion in the pursuit of success as you realize that whatever you could gain, you can't take it with you. Thinking about one's death will make success and failure less important. In fact you realize that most things we fret about are not important. You don't have to be #1 in any enterprise to enjoy life. That is a step toward serenity.

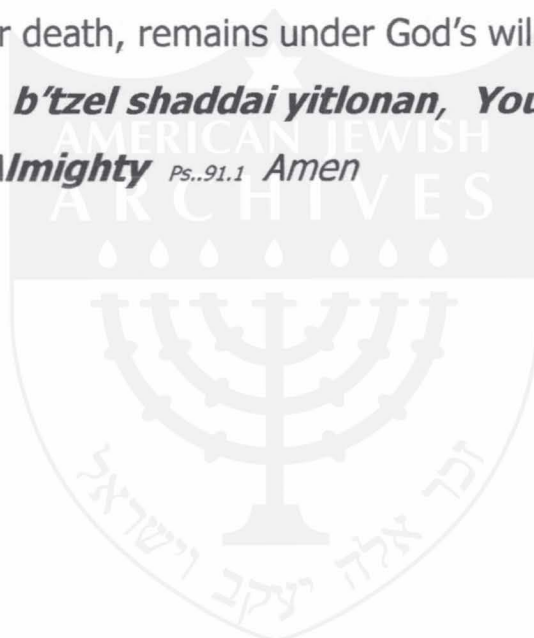
My second suggestion is not to torment yourself with idle speculations about death . Just make the most of the days you are alive. The Biblical book of Kohelet whom our sages called ***he-chacham, the wise man, summed it up in a few words: "eat, drink and enjoy."*** *Koh. 3.13* Attend all happy events of family and friends ; don't postpone your own celebrations; don't put off things you enjoy doing. You live only once.

Carl Sandburg wisely said: "***live not in your yesterdays, not just for tomorrow, but in the here and now.***" Our rabbinic sage, Hillel, made the point 2,000 years ago: ***Im lo ach-shav, ematai? If not now, when***

My third suggestion, in view of the inevitable expectation of death, is to take to heart the 2 -word sentence in the book of Psalms, repeated 3 times in Psalm 37. It is the admonition, ***al titchar, "Fret not;"***--- suppress anger and resentment as quickly as possible; don't keep blaming yourself or others for mistakes; don't brood over failures and disappointments; no one is perfect; forget and forgive injuries; don't try to change people , including your spouse and children; accept what is and limit expectations.

Do I have words of comfort about the hereafter?

I don't think about life after death. In my view life is experienced only in this world. I do not know if there is anything at all after death and what it might be. But whatever it is, we go nowhere but remain in this world forever connected with all there is; whatever remains of us after death, remains under God's will and care, as Psalm 91 puts it: ***b'tzel shaddai yitlonan, You abide in the shadow of the Almighty*** Ps..91.1 *Amen*



Death

The problem is
not understanding
Death - but accepting
it as the inescapable
termination of life
as we know it.

We say
"As we know life
- - do we?"

Y Bk on 2014

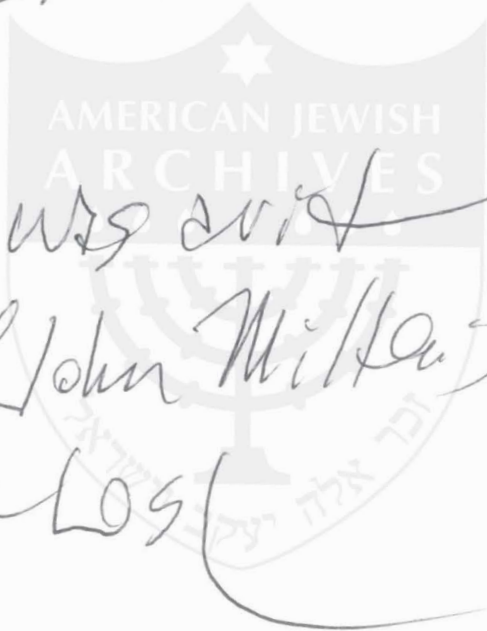
Let go

- ① Isaac Babel, when dragged away by Stalin's Secret Police was heard to shout "But I was not given time to finish" much of our life is unfinished - we can think of relationships which grew intense (but were not finished) but were broken off unfinished
We can think of youthful ambitions never completed
Even life, long or short is an unfinished story, from beginning to end wrapped in mystery
- ② Death itself is painless - in fact it is relief of pain
The pain of death is the sense of loss of the survivor with whom the deceased was in close & loving relationship. —
read poem "Missing you"
- ③ Instead of morbid fantasies about death hereafter, keep active, work as Montaigne wrote (1533-1592)
"I want death to find me planting my cabbages"
- ④ Coping with the fear of death (see Simon Thoughts on Mortality 2004)
p 2-351, p4
- ⑤ Develop point of learning to disting. betw. important & unimportant (p4)
- ⑥ Shen confuting idea of "Comedians" p. 635 - 883,4
- ⑦ See Memorial Simon 1985 - The unifying effect of death

Y K Seminar Topic

The Vision of Hell
& Paradise

Why Freud was a
responder of John Milton's
Paradise Lost



A Small Act of Kindness

A Conversation with Rabbi Edythe Mencher

In times of trouble, a smile, a good word, or a simple act of kindness can restore hope in a friend or stranger—in ways we may never know.

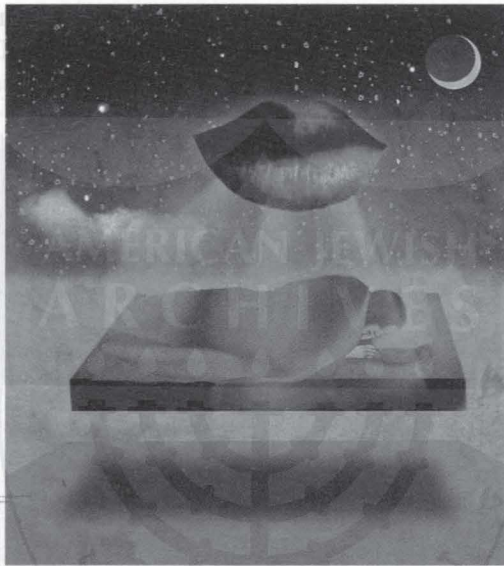
Rabbi Edythe Held Mencher, a licensed clinical social worker, was interviewed by the RJ editors.

What is most important to cultivate in times of adversity?

In order to overcome or even to simply withstand adversity, we need, most of all, to feel hope and to believe that we matter: that we are here for a reason—the world deeply needs us—and our efforts make a difference to us and to others. We need to tap into past memories or have new experiences that cause us to feel worthy, wanted, unique, and precious.

The psychiatrist Viktor Frankl learned from his own experience that the capacity to spiritually survive the worst adversity—the degradation and suffering of incarceration in a concentration camp—was dependent upon the ability to conjure up the image of a single person, near or far, alive or even deceased, who would care deeply about that person's survival. Frankl also observed that engaging in even small acts of morality, generosity, and courage allowed individuals to maintain a sense of spiritual freedom. The hungry person who shared a morsel of bread might have felt greater gnawing in his gut—but also some diminishment of the searing pain within his heart that could make more difference to survival than food.

Our Jewish tradition teaches that each of us is here to bring light and repair to a broken world. We need to tap into the understanding that no one else can fulfill the roles and destiny belonging to us. Even if we perceive ourselves as too old, too impoverished, too depressed,



too constrained by circumstance to contribute much, we can never know how our smile, our words of encouragement, even our own courage and persistence in the face of difficulty may inspire another person who is at his/her own crossroads.

A single act of kindness can reverberate through time. In this way we can begin to fathom ourselves as part of a chain of events that can move the world.

Can you give an example?

A middle-aged woman recently shared with me an incident that happened thirty years ago: "Pregnant and unmarried, I was staying with a friend's parents awaiting the birth of a child I would soon give up for adoption. Thinking I was asleep, my friend's mother straightened my blankets and kissed me softly on the forehead. This kiss came at a time when I felt utterly alone and a disappointment to my own parents. My faith and hope through many difficult times in my life

have been sustained through the memory of that kiss."

A thirty-something man told me this story: "Ten years ago I was teaching poetry to the chronically mentally ill in the lobby of a single-room-occupancy hotel in Manhattan and feeling depressed about the low pay and the low status associated with the job. One evening when my class concluded, it was storming outside. A student, a rather forbidding-looking older woman who had never spoken, asked me to wait for her. When she returned, she handed me an umbrella. Thanking me for the class, she said, 'I noticed you did not have an umbrella and was concerned that you would get soaked.'

Seeing how a woman for whom life had afforded little protection was so concerned about my well-being made me realize that our poetry lessons were as much about human relationships as about study. Ten years have passed and I still have that umbrella as a reminder. My faith—in myself, my work, and even the world—is sustained by my memory of that encounter."

As Rabbi Larry Kushner points out, in Hebrew the word for angel, *malach*, also means messenger. When our actions bring reminders of the light and goodness in the world, then we are messengers and angels all at once.

How does hope help us?

Hope allows us to construct dreams for a better future—it lets us visualize a time when we will view our situation differently than we do today. Both hope and faith open us to think of suffering

continued on page 56

First draft

HOPE AND HAPPINESS

Yom Kippur Seminar 2014

by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

Most everyone awakens each morning thinking about something to worry about or something to hope for. The first subject of our worries and hopes most likely has to do with our physical condition. If you get up without pain, feeling healthy, you should be grateful. It is an old Jewish tradition to recite daily a short thanksgiving prayer upon awakening. Next on our mind are worries and hopes about the day's obligations, our work and enterprises. If single, you wonder if this is the day you'll meet the one you hope for; if in a relationship or marriage, you'll hope to get along well with your partner.

What is the difference between hope and wishful thinking? If you search the pavement, looking for a large amount of money, it is wishful thinking. Past experience does not justify the expectation of finding money on the street.. Hope is an act of faith based on previous experiences. The hope of the ill for recovery is an expectation warranted by many cases of cure and recovery. Knowing about all kinds of people who were healed encourages your own expectation of healing. It is not wishful thinking.

The idealistic hope for human brotherhood and peace is not a dream but an expectation grounded in experience, however limited, of friendship, helpfulness and love.

The hope for success in your profession or business is kindled by your own past achievements. When my parents fled Vienna after having been robbed of their prosperous business and all possessions, they arrived in New York with only \$10 in their pocket. They did not know the language, they had no connections, no bank account.

My father's first job was as an elevator- man at a high-rise; my mother borrowed a shipment of aprons to sell on a stand on the East side downtown.

Still, they did not despair. They were sustained by the hope that as they had lost and recovered their business a number of times in Vienna , so now too in America, they would work and achieve. And they did. Not many years later they owned property in New York and retired comfortably.

An African proverb says: "Any fool can count the apples on a tree, but no one knows how many trees there are in an apple." Nobody knows the potential powers and abilities that are locked up inside a person.

The magic key that opens up your full potential is **perseverance** . Thomas Edison attributed his many inventions not to genius but to persistence in hard work. Once, we are told, he assigned a special problem to one of his assistants. After a number of weeks the young man came back to Edison , very discouraged: "I have made 500 experiments and found nothing."

"You are wrong, young man", said Edison. " You found 500 ways that don't work; now go back to work until you find the way that works. " He did as told and solved the problem.

It has been observed that the gravely ill, when they give up hope, turn to the wall. They have no expectations, and turning away from hope, they say "NO" to all future possibilities.

Never turn to the wall of hopelessness ! Keep hope and expectations alive. Think of yourself as a beachcomber, never knowing what treasures the ocean might wash ashore. But you must be looking for it. Or else you will find nothing and miss opportunities that might come your way. Henry David Thoreau summed it up: *Only that day dawns to which we are awake.*

You see nothing if you shut your eyes in hopelessness.

Attitude is the primary factor of success and failure, as Longfellow affirmed in his 3 lines: *Not in the clamor of a crowded street*

Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng

But in ourselves are triumph and defeat. Longfellow

It was neither a great poet nor a profound thinker, but a man of common sense who wrote this rhyme:

If you think you are beaten, you are.

If you think, you dare not, you don't.

If you like to win but think you can't

It's almost a cinch you won't.

If you think you'll lose, you are lost.

Life's battle don't always go

To the stronger or faster man

But soon or late, the man who wins

Is the one who thinks he can. Walter D. Wintle

Finally, there is a potential power which will bring you either fulfillment or frustration. G.T. Chesterton said: *"It is a sin to assume that nothing is being done unless we are doing it."* The fundamental fact of life is that, for better or worse, we are always subject to the unforeseen and unpredictable actions of others some of which might be the very things you hope for. We are forever exposed to uncertainty. This is realism which should inspire a large dose of humility.

The brilliant Zionist leader Zev Jabotinsky said:

I always hope. I desire much. I expect little.

Don't be too sure about anything. With every expectation and hope, be prepared for its non-fulfillment.

3d draft

WHY HOPE ?

Yom Kippur Seminar 2014

by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

It is hard to be an optimist. Much in the human condition justifies despair. Our lifetime is plagued by illness, pain, fear and worry. We are vulnerable to all kinds of suffering and face the absolute certainty of death. How can you be hopeful? Is there a basis for cheerfulness, for optimism? Is it reasonable to be hopeful? Albert Schweitzer, the saintly physician and religious thinker who built a clinic in the African jungle, said: *"My knowledge is pessimistic, but my will and hoping are optimistic."* It is amazing that despite all the knowledge of evil in this world, we cling to hope. What would justify optimism in view of life's dark realities?

All of us face instability. We can't be sure about anything and are constantly menaced by unforeseen troubles. Overnight, our welfare turns to disaster. Every moment can bring us disappointment, frustration, defeat and loss. Is there a bright side to human existence?

The Roman philosopher Cicero justified hope with his saying: *"As long as there is life, there is hope."* The very uncertainty which threatens our sense of security may also bring relief, help and hope. Things can happen for our good.

When troubles beset you, cling to the hope that tomorrow everything may be different. Even the next hour may change your situation. Any time a new factor may arise that will turn a minus into plus. There is comfort in the truth that nothing is permanent in life. When as a little boy I got hurt, my grandma had comforting words: *"By the time you get married, the hurt will be gone."* No problem, no trouble lasts forever. You may count on change though it may take time. If you have time, you have the minimal basis for hope: *As long as there is life, there is hope.*

There is another potential ground for hope. Our life is shaped not only by what **we** do but by factors over which we have no control. Unforeseen things happen, ---some of which may be to your advantage.

What is the difference between hope and wishful thinking? If you search the pavement for money, it is wishful thinking. Past experience does not justify the expectation of finding money on the street. Hope is an act of faith based on previous experiences. The hope of the ill for recovery is an expectation warranted by many cases of cure and recovery. Knowing people who were healed, encourages your own hope for healing. It is not wishful thinking.

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My father's first job was running an elevator at a high-rise in Manhattan. My mother borrowed a shipment of aprons to sell on a stand downtown on Manhattan's East side. Still, they did not despair. They were sustained by the hope that as they had lost and recovered businesses a number of times in Vienna, so now in America too, there would be ups and downs; but they would work and achieve. And they did. Not many years later they owned property in New York and retired comfortably.

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"You are wrong, young man", said Edison. " You have found 500 ways that don't work; now go back to work until you find the way that works. " He did as told, and solved the problem.

In Judaism, hope is an article of faith. It is the ardent faith of millions of our people in the Messiah. When human efforts can no longer protect us against the evils which threaten our existence, God will empower the Messiah to come to our rescue. Moreover, he will usher in an era of justice, peace and plenty. One of the *Thirteen Principles*, the summary of Jewish beliefs by Maimonides, says *I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah and, though he tarry, I will wait daily for his coming.*

Undergirding belief in the coming of the Messiah is the cardinal faith that God knows and cares for His creatures and especially for His people Israel. God will send the Messiah to save us from destruction and lead us into an era freedom and prosperity. The mass of our people clung to belief in the coming of the Messiah through centuries of turbulence, wars and persecution --- until the Holocaust.

The slaughter of 6 million of our people shattered the hope for the saving power of Messiah. If Messiah did not come to rescue our people from the gas chambers of Auschwitz, when ever would he do his saving work?

Every believing and thinking Jew is still struggling to explain God's non-intervention, or the Messiah's absence when most desperately needed. I have my own answer to the excruciating question, where was God in the Holocaust? I was inspired by a sentence in the book of Psalms:

The heavens are the heavens of the God'

But the earth has He given to the children of men. Ps. 115.16

God rules the cosmos, but we human beings are in charge of life on earth. We were put in control of the earth, to manage it for better or worse.

This sentence from the Psalms reinforces the Bible's view of human destiny as stated in the first chapter of Genesis: After creating man and woman, God charged Adam and Eve, the first human couple:

Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and control it. Gen.1.27-28

With control comes responsibility. God equipped us to manage nature and create the human society. We were given the freedom of will to conduct ourselves as we wish; we are free to develop good or bad human relations. We can create societies of justice and peace or of violence, wars and holocausts.

But you might well ask, did Jews have a part in creating the Holocaust? Why was our people so horribly victimized? What have we done to be singled out for such suffering? I would answer: the most obvious lesson of human history is our interdependence. The wrong-doing of any one nation affects the welfare of all others. We shall be safe, well-off, enjoying freedom and justice, only when all other nations enjoy these conditions. Human destiny is interlocked.

This truth is a summons to improve every society and work with all peoples to make the world safe for universal freedom and justice. This task is also the mission of the Jewish people, the very reason for our existence, -- to be in Isaiah's words: *a light unto the nations. Is. 42.6*

God showed love and care for humanity by enlightening our minds and guiding us in the right way by revealing Torah to Israel, the people chosen by God to spread its wisdom among mankind. As the prophet Micah reminds us: *It has been told you, O man, what is good and what God requires of you: only to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God. Micah 6.8* When Abe Lincoln was asked to which religion he belonged, he replied, that he would belong to whichever religion is based on Micah's summary of faith: *"to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God."*

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Henry David Thoreau summed it up: *Only that day dawns to which we are awake.* You see nothing if you shut your eyes in hopelessness. Attitude is the primary factor of success and failure, as Longfellow affirmed in his 3 lines:

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England's former chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, tells the case of Jill Bolte Taylor: "In 1996, aged 37. She suffered a massive stroke that completely destroyed the functioning of the left hemisphere of her brain. She couldn't walk, talk, read, write or even recall the details of her life. But she was very unusual in one respect. She was a Harvard neuroscientist. As a result, she was able to realize precisely what had happened to her. For eight years she worked every day, together with her mother, to exercise her brain. By the end, she had recovered all her faculties, using her right hemisphere to develop the skills normally exercised by the left brain.... Taylor is only the most dramatic example of what is becoming clearer each year that by an effort of the will, we can change not just our behavior, not just our emotions, not even just our character, but the very structure and architecture of our brain."

What should be your attitude if your hope is obviously in vain and cannot and will not materialize? Suppose you missed an opportunity for something very desirable ? Or, you realize that you cannot advance in your profession? Or, you have suffered an irretrievable loss? Or, you have made a mistake that can no longer be repaired? Or, a close relationship has deteriorated to the breaking point and can no longer be restored? Or, aging, you must cope with the loss of energy and can no longer engage in sports and activities and go on long walks like you used to do.

What if illness leaves you handicapped and your good health is gone? I have myself gone through some of these losses and try to accept the situation. A song from Johann Strauss's operetta, *Die Fledermaus* has helped me bear those losses :*Glücklich ist, wer vergisst, was nicht mehr zu ändern ist, Happy he who forgets what can no longer be changed.* Accept your irreversible losses. Go on with life.

It was neither a great poet nor a profound thinker, but a man of common sense who wrote this rhyme:

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How can a person of hope meet the challenge of the pessimist? What can you say to the pessimist who predicts failure, calamities?

THE CASE FOR HOPE ?

Yom Kippur Seminar 2014

by Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

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The idealistic hope for human brotherhood and peace is not a dream but an expectation grounded in experience, however limited, of friendship, helpfulness and love.

The hope for success in your profession or business is kindled by your own past achievements. When my parents fled Vienna after having been robbed of their prosperous business, they arrived in New York with only \$10 in their pocket. They did not know the language, they had no connections, no bank account.

My father's first job was running an elevator at a high-rise in Manhattan. My mother borrowed a shipment of aprons to sell on a stand downtown on Manhattan's East side. Still, they did not despair. They were sustained by the hope that as they had lost and recovered businesses a number of times in Vienna, so now in America too, there would be ups and downs; but they would work and achieve. And they did. Not many years later they owned property in New York and retired comfortably.

An African proverb says: *"Any fool can count the apples on a tree, but no one knows how many trees there are in an apple."* Nobody knows the potential powers and abilities that are locked up inside a person.

The magic key that opens up your full potential is **perseverance**. Thomas Edison attributed his many inventions not to genius but to persistence in hard work. Once, we are told, he assigned a special problem to one of his assistants.

After a number of weeks the young man came back to Edison , very discouraged: "I have made 500 experiments and found nothing."

"You are wrong, young man", said Edison. " You have found 500 ways that don't work; now go back to work until you find the way that works. " He did as told, and solved the problem.

In Judaism, hope is an article of faith. It is the ardent faith of millions of our people in the Messiah. When human efforts can no longer protect us against the evils which threaten our existence, God will empower the Messiah to come to our rescue. Moreover, he will usher in an era of justice, peace and plenty. One of the *Thirteen Principles*, the summary of Jewish beliefs by Maimonides, says *I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah and, though he tarry, I will wait daily for his coming.*

Undergirding belief in the coming of the Messiah is the cardinal faith that God knows and cares for His creatures and especially for His people Israel. God will send the Messiah to save us from destruction and lead us into an era freedom and prosperity. The mass of our people clung to belief in the coming of the Messiah through centuries of turbulence, wars and persecution --- until the Holocaust.

The slaughter of 6 million of our people shattered the hope for the saving power of Messiah. If Messiah did not come to rescue our people from the gas chambers of Auschwitz, when ever would he do his saving work?

Every believing and thinking Jew is still struggling to explain God's non-intervention, or the Messiah's absence when most desperately needed. I have my own answer to the excruciating question, where was God in the Holocaust? I was inspired by a sentence in the book of Psalms:

The heavens are the heavens of God'

But the earth has He given to the children of men. Ps. 115.16

God rules the cosmos, but we human beings are in charge of life on earth. We were put in control of the earth, to manage it for better or worse.

This sentence from the Psalms reinforces the Bible's view of human destiny as stated in the first chapter of Genesis: After creating man and woman, God charged Adam and Eve, the first human couple:

Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and control it. Gen.1.27-28

With control comes responsibility. God equipped us to manage nature and create the human society. We were given the freedom of will to conduct ourselves as we wish; we are free to develop good or bad human relations. We can create societies of justice and peace or of violence, wars and holocausts.

But you might well ask, did Jews have a part in creating the Holocaust? Why was our people so horribly victimized? What have we done to be singled out for such suffering? I would answer: the most obvious lesson of human history is our interdependence. The wrong-doing of any one nation affects the welfare of all others. We shall be safe, well-off, enjoying freedom and justice, only when all other nations enjoy these conditions. Human destiny is interlocked.

This truth is a summons to improve every society and work with all peoples to make the world safe for universal freedom and justice. This task is also the mission of the Jewish people, the very reason for our existence, -- to be in Isaiah's words: *a light unto the nations. Is. 42.6*

God showed love and care for humanity by enlightening our minds and guiding us in the right way by revealing Torah to Israel, the people chosen by God to spread its wisdom among mankind. As the prophet Micah reminds us: *It has been told you, O man, what is good and what God requires of you: only to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God. Micah 6.8* When Abe Lincoln was asked to which religion he belonged, he replied, that he would belong to any religion which is based on Micah's summary of faith: *"to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God."*

The gravely ill, when giving up hope, turn to the wall. They have no expectations, and turning away from hope, they say "NO" to all future possibilities.

Never turn to the wall of hopelessness . Keep hope and expectations alive. Think of yourself as a beachcomber, never knowing what treasures the ocean might wash ashore. But you must be looking for it. Or else you will find nothing and miss opportunities that might come your way.

Henry David Thoreau summed it up: *Only that day dawns to which we are awake.* You see nothing if you shut your eyes in hopelessness. Attitude is the primary factor of success and failure, as Longfellow affirmed in his 3 lines:

Not in the clamor of a crowded street

Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng

But in ourselves are triumph and defeat. Longfellow

England's former chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, tells the case of Jill Bolte Taylor: "In 1996, aged 37. She suffered a massive stroke that completely destroyed the functioning of the left hemisphere of her brain. She couldn't walk, talk, read, write or even recall the details of her life. But she was very unusual in one respect. She was a Harvard neuroscientist. As a result, she was able to realize precisely what had happened to her. For eight years she worked every day, together with her mother, to exercise her brain. By the end, she had recovered all her faculties, using her right hemisphere to develop the skills normally exercised by the left brain.... Taylor is only the most dramatic example of what is becoming clearer each year that by an effort of the will, we can change not just our behavior, not just our emotions, nor even just our character, but the very structure and architecture of our brain."

What should be your attitude if your hope is obviously in vain and cannot and will not materialize? Suppose you missed an opportunity for something very desirable ? Or, you realize that you cannot advance in your profession? Or, you have suffered an irretrievable loss? Or, you have made a mistake that can no longer be repaired? Or, a close relationship has deteriorated to the breaking point and can no longer be restored? Or, aging, you must cope with the loss of energy and can no longer engage in sports and activities and go on long walks like you used to do.

What if illness leaves you handicapped and your good health is gone? I have myself gone through some of these losses and am trying to accept the situation. A song from Johann Strauss's operetta, *Die Fledermaus* has helped me bear those losses : *Glücklich ist, wer vergisst, was nicht mehr zu ändern ist, Happy he who forgets what can no more be changed.* Accept your irreversible losses. Go on with life.

It was neither a great poet nor a profound thinker, but a man of common sense who wrote this rhyme:

If you think you are beaten, you are.
If you think, you dare not, you don't.
If you like to win but think you can't
It's almost a cinch you won't.
If you think you'll lose, you are lost.
Life's battle don't always go
To the stronger or faster man
But soon or late, the man who wins
Is the one who thinks he can. Walter D. Wintle

Some of our most personal hopes are disguised as dreams. Youth is the age when dreams are most prominent as personal ambitions, flattering self-images of success, of fame and fortune, --until with growing age these dreams clash with reality. You then realize that you will not make the riches or gain the admiration for achievements of which you dreamed. Do not let go of your dreams. If you discard them, replace them with new ambitions. Dream of mastering a new language, playing a musical instrument, do creative writing, painting, sculpting, traveling or exploring new fields of knowledge. Beware of the moment when you have no aspiration,

no ambition, no wish for anything. Dreams are like springs which give your life a push. A life without dreams is an empty life.

There is a potential power which will bring you either fulfillment or frustration. G.T. Chesterton said: "*It is a sin to assume that nothing is being done unless we are doing it.*" The fundamental fact of life is that, for better or worse, we are always subject to the unforeseen and unpredictable actions of others, some of which might deliver the very things you hope for. We are forever exposed to uncertainty.

How can a person of hope meet the challenge of the pessimist?

What can you say to the pessimist who predicts failure and calamities?

My answer is that both the optimism of hope and the dark forebodings of the pessimist are in the realm of possibility. Nobody can be sure about anything in the future. Things can go either way. I choose the way of hope. Hope is to a considerable extent self-fulfilling inasmuch as it inspires perseverance, the will to go on trying for achievement.

I have tried to make the case for hope. In my first point I elaborated on Cicero's saying: *As long as there is life, there is hope.* This is another way of saying that *time is a great healer.* That is, if you give it time, if you will wait, some of your problems will vanish. You may find solutions if only you will wait long enough.

I am thinking of so-called problem children. I know of cases in which parents endured the pain of putting up with a difficult, troublesome child and waited long enough to see the child develop remarkable talents and improve his relationships.

Problems in marriage cannot be treated with generalizations. Each case is different. But every case calls for patience. With time and helpful counseling many a couple may reach a new understanding and make a go of their marriage.

You must not be disheartened by a professional or business setback. Personally, after any setback, I console myself with the truth that you cannot be a winner all the time. In life, you always win some and lose some. You are as strong as your endurance and patience. J. Rowling's sensational novel, *Harry Potter*, was rejected by the first 12 publishers. 21 publishers rejected William Golding's book, *Lord of the Flies*, which later earned him his Nobel prize in literature. An English pop-group of musicians, *The Beatles*, were turned down at their first audition in 1962, with the comment "*The Beatles have no future in show business.*"

Winston Churchill said "*Success is the ability to go from one failure to another without loss of enthusiasm.*"

In this respect, we may draw inspiration from Israel's national anthem, *Ha-tikvah*, meaning "hope." Defeated, exiled from their land, scattered among the nations and oppressed for 2000 years, our people never lost hope for restoration and return to our ancestral land. In 1876, which was one of the darkest years in our history, with millions near starvation in Russia and Poland, Naphtali Herz Imber wrote *Hatikvah*. The key line of *Hatikvah*, later adopted as Israel's national anthem, is *Od lo avdah tikvatenu*, "*Our hope, the hope upheld for 2000 years, to live as a free nation in our own land is not yet lost.*" The message of *Hatikvah* is never to give up hope. To this, Theodor Herzl at the first Zionist Congress in 1897 added an appeal: *Im tirtzu, ein zu agadah*, "If you will it, this is not a fairy tale." You must fortify your hope with the power of your will. Your tenacity, your determination to reach the hoped for goal, makes all the difference.

Another reason for hope, which I stressed, is the fact that things happen not always of your own doing. The action of others, circumstances not of your making, may radically change your situation. What you may not be able to do for yourself, others might do for you. Unforeseen events may bring you fulfillment. The unknown future may realize some of your hopes. Samuel Johnson said: *Hope is itself a species of happiness. So keep hope alive and let it add happiness to your life. Amen*

YOM KIPPUR YIZKOR 2014

DEATH IS NOT THE END

By Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman

The Biblical sage, Kohelet, made a statement which at first sight, sounds absurd. He said: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting: for that is the end of every man and a living person should take it to heart" Ecc. 7.2 Feasting at a party is certainly more enjoyable than sharing the sorrow of mourners, but the company of mourners will be more helpful. It will help you face your own mortality and the death of dear ones.

What is there about death that Kohelet would have us take to heart?

When the Russian-Jewish novelist Isaac Babel was dragged away by Stalin's KGB, he was heard to shout: "But I have not been given time to finish."

One of the great truths about life is that life has no finish. It is without beginning and without end. Much of what we want to do in our own life-time remains unfinished: Many a life tells of passionate relationships which somehow faded; soaring ambitions which vanished; projects that had to be abandoned and hopes discarded.

Jewish wisdom recognizes our incapacities yet adds a challenge:

Rabbi Tarfon in *The Sayings of the fathers* (2.21) said: *Lo alecha ha-melachah ligmor, v'lo ata ben chorin l'hibatel mimmenna.*

"You are not bound to complete the task, but neither must you disengage yourself

from it altogether." In other words, do what you should, as best you can. You may not be able to solve a family problem, meet a financial need or an issue of relationship, but you must help to the extent you can.

The former editor of TIME magazine, Charles C. Wertenbaker, was told that he had terminal cancer and only one more year to live. In a moving chronicle of that final year, his wife records that, from that moment on, the two most often spoken words in their home were "important" and "unimportant." Consider the things you fret and worry about. You'll find that many, if not most of those things don't matter one way or the other.

Death consciousness is the broom that sweeps pettiness out of your life. "Life is too short to be little" said Benjamin D'Israeli.

What you learn in the house of mourning with its sharp awareness of death, is a new scale of priorities, a new perspective on values.

Averell Harriman was an undistinguished rich playboy until his sister, Mary Rumsey, died in a riding accident. She had been a social worker with a strong social conscience. It was reported that her death motivated him to go into public service. He excelled as statesman and diplomat, chief negotiator of the nuclear test ban treaty, serving the cause of peace in memory of his sister. Confrontation with death in the house of mourning brought out the best in him.

What do we fear about death? Is it pain? Having witnessed the dying of many persons, I have observed not agonies but relief from pain. Physicians tell me that death itself is painless.

Do we fear the unknown? Or, the final severance, being cut off from everything, the fear of extinction?

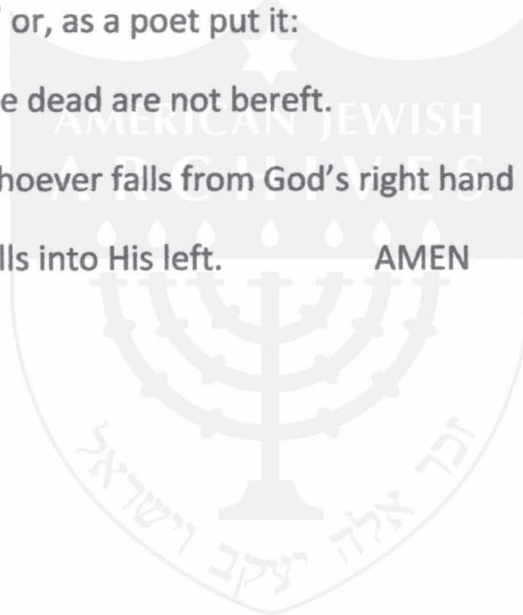
Mitch Albom's hero in his remarkable book, *TUESDAY WITH MORRIE*, denied that death is separation and annihilation. Morrie was helped to face death without fear by a sense of connectedness. Morrie was interviewed only months before his death by Ted Koppel. He disclosed the fact that he had been an agnostic from his teen-age years on until the onset of Lou Gehring's disease. Koppel asked: "What changed your mind to believe in God?" Morrie explained: "A growing sense of inter-connectedness of all things. I am part of some larger Power... Maybe the difference between life and death is not so great." Morrie concluded that there must be something beyond. The world is not sufficient, --only I don't know what is beyond."

Two centuries earlier, our Hassidic master, Nachman of Bratzlav, had some profound thoughts about the connectedness of all things. The universe is multi-dimensional. This life is something transitional, a short phase, moving across a narrow bridge toward another dimension of being.

The point is that in death as in life we remain connected with something greater than ourselves. We , creatures of flesh and blood, do not last long in our physical condition, but whatever connects us with God is eternal.

Why life ? Why death ? These are unanswerable questions. But, I share the trust that speaks out of two words from Psalm 27.10 *Adonai ya-asfeni* "God will pick me up" or, as a poet put it:

The dead are not bereft.
Whoever falls from God's right hand
Falls into His left. AMEN



IDEAS-Top: conf
YK Seminar 2015

① Pathways to Happiness

- (a) Contentment
- (b) ~~Physical health~~ ^{The 3 essentials} self-support
at least one other person who
cares for you, spouse or partner
- (c) A good self-image
- (d) Freedom from worries
- (e) Interesting work & post retirement life
- (f) ~~Keeping~~ ^{making} friends
- (g) Learn to accept loss, setbacks
defects

Add concept. Pathways to Unhappiness
How make yourself miserable

② FROM SETBACK TO COMEBACK

WAYS TO Happiness & Misery



Yizkor 2015



Ideas

for
OBS:

Sermon 2015

Maxine Haberman

(1)

In this hour of remembrance
we should remember the
highlights of our life —
remember ^{but do not} everything.

It is also an hour of
forgetting — ~~forget~~

As you try to remember
your happiest memories
I try to forget painful
events, hurts, insults,
pains — and those who
hurt you. Don't carry
a grudge. That's
reconciliation

Ain at Palmyra ideal
exposed. Who is a hero of
heroes Herodotus an enemy

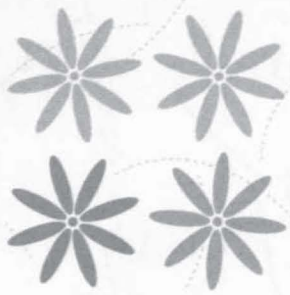
into a friend,



(2)

Is there anyone
with whom, Sometime
ago, you decided not
to talk any more
after an insult or
unpleasant confrontation?

I had that kind of
experience with a very
bright but very arrogant
person. I broke off our
relationship and for
several years avoided all
contact with him - until
I heard that he was stricken.



(3)

Maxine Haberman

With a fatal illness
and might have only
a few minutes to live.

I decided to make a
sick call - visited
him at the hospital
and we shook hands
again.

I felt good about
our reconciliation
It is among my best
Memories

Check quotations about
anecdotes about
Memories, Forgetting

Reconciliation

Particularly painful (4)
is an old grudge against
a parent either for
preferring another sibling
or for making you
feel inferior or
underestimating you

How react?

To hate the parent is
like cutting your own flesh.
Best way is to consign these
memories to the trash heap
of forgetting. Decide not to
think of it as though it
never happened.

Feb 18 07

Human Nature Redux

Sometimes a big idea fades so imperceptibly from public consciousness you don't even notice until it has almost disappeared. Such is the fate of the belief in natural human goodness.

This belief, most often associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, begins with the notion that "everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man." Human beings are virtuous and free in their natural state. It is only corrupt institutions that make them venal. They are happy in their simplicity, but social conventions make them unwell.

This belief had gigantic ramifications over the years. It led, first of all, to the belief that bourgeois social conventions are repressive and soul-destroying. It contributed to romantic revolts against tradition and etiquette. Whether it was 19th-century Parisian bohemians or 20th-century beatniks and hippies, Western culture has seen a string of antiestablishment rebellions led by people who wanted to shuck off convention and reawaken more natural modes of awareness.

It led people to hit the road, do drugs, form communes and explore free love in order to unleash their authentic selves.

In education, it led to progressive reforms, in which children were liberated to follow their natural instincts. Politically, it led to radical social engineering efforts, because if institutions were the source of sin, then all you had to do was reshape institutions in order to create a New Man.

Therapeutically, it led to an emphasis of feelings over reason, self-esteem over self-discipline. In the realm of foreign policy, it led to a sort of global doctrine of the noble savage — the belief that societies in the colonial world were fundamentally innocent, and once the chains of their oppression were lifted something wonderful would flower.

Over the past 30 years or so, however, this belief in natural goodness has been discarded. It began to lose favor

because of the failure of just about every social program that was inspired by it, from the communes to progressive education on up. But the big blow came at the hands of science.

From the content of our genes, the nature of our neurons and the lessons of evolutionary biology, it has become clear that nature is filled with competition and conflicts of interest. Humanity did not come before status contests. Status contests came before humanity, and are embedded deep in human relations. People in hunter-gatherer societies were deadly warriors, not sexually liberated pacifists. As Steven Pinker has put it, Hobbes was more right than Rousseau.

Moreover, human beings are not as pliable as the social engineers imagined. Human beings operate according to preset epigenetic rules, which dispose people to act in certain ways. We strive for dominance and undermine radical egalitarian dreams. We're tribal and divide the world into in-groups and out-groups.

This darker if more realistic view of human nature has led to a rediscovery of different moral codes and different political assumptions. Most people today share what Thomas Sowell calls the Constrained Vision, what Pinker calls the Tragic Vision and what E. O. Wilson calls Existential Conservatism. This is based on the idea that there is a universal human nature; that it has nasty, competitive elements; that we don't understand much about it; and that the conventions and institutions that have evolved to keep us from slitting each other's throats are valuable and are altered at great peril.

Today, parents don't seek to liberate their children; they supervise, coach and instruct every element of their lives. Today, there really is no antinomian counterculture — even the artists and rock stars are bourgeois strivers. Today, communes and utopian schemes are out of favor. People are mostly skeptical of social engineering efforts and jaundiced about revolutionaries who promise to herald a new dawn. Iraq has revealed what human beings do without a strong order-imposing state.

This is a big pivot in intellectual history. The thinkers most associated with the Tragic Vision are Isaiah Berlin, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Friedrich Hayek and Hobbes. Many of them are conservative.

And here's another perversity of human nature. Many conservatives resist the theory of evolution even though it confirms many of conservatism's deepest truths.

deeply rooted
evil in
man

of Freud's
permissivism

"Natural"
man's
dangerous

Belief in
original
goodness
of man



YIZKOR 2015

This Yizkor hour is an hour of sentimental memories. We think of dear ones. If only we could hug and kiss them again, --- parents, grandparents, siblings. We remember some happy times we shared with them. We remember characteristics which made them lovable, qualities we respected, even admired. In what way were our parents role models? We compare ourselves with them. Do we want to be to be like them? Or different ---in which way?

George Lichtenberg made a wise comment about memory: "A good memory is a gift of God: but the ability to forget is often better."

In this hour of remembrance we recall what was good in our relationship with a departed and what was not. This is a time to purge our mind of resentments. If you cannot forget, forgive !

A question to ask ourselves in this hour of remembrance is *If I could live my life over again, what would I change? How would I change my relationship with my spouse, my children, and my work?* It is never too late for changes in your way of life. This hour could be a time for change. Should you give your life a new direction? Should you try to change your relationship with people? Should you seek reconciliation with an alienated family member or former friend ?

We recall admirable role models among our departed. How do you compare with them? Should you change the way you deal with people? Think of someone with whom you have had a falling out. Would you want to repair the relationship? Of course, you can. Just make the first move. Write a few words; or pick up the telephone with a word of greeting. This would be enough to initiate reconciliation.

Yizkor should be more than nostalgia and remembrance. Let this hour be one of forgiveness of healing and of reconciliation in the spirit of Yom Kippur.

Yizkor ends with Kaddish. This is not a memorial prayer but a lavish praise of God. We praise God with gratitude for many gifts ---the gift of life's pleasures, the gift of love from family and friends, the gifts of the mind. Above all, we thank God for being with us in all conditions of life. We are not alone in the universe. We remain connected with our Creator in this life and in the hereafter.



Y. K. Seminan 2016

8 Bits of Wisdom for my children & grandchildren

1) A soft answer (15:1) מַלְאכָה רַבָּה יְרֵיב וְיֵרֵיב תִּפְּנֵי

2) Slow to anger & self-control (16:32) אִיטֵר וְאַל תִּזְעַם וְאַל תִּבְּרַח אֶת הַמַּלְאָךְ

3) Power of words (18:21) וְהָיָה לְךָ כֹּחַ בְּיַד לִשְׁוֹן (18:21)

4) Appropriate timing ^{Patience} (Koh. 3.1) וְאַתָּה עֹשֶׂה כְּלֵי מַלְאָכְךָ בְּעֵת

5) 2 better than 1 (Koh. 4.9) שְׁנַיִם טוֹבִים מִיֵּשֶׁרֶת מִן הַיָּחִיד

6) Don't be half hearted (Koh. 9.10) אַל תִּהְיֶה חֲצֵי הַלֵּב

7) Be sure of your feet (Koh. 11.4) וְהָיָה לְךָ יָסֵד וְיִשְׁטָח לְפָנֶיךָ

8) Be sure of your heart (Koh. 7.21) אַל תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת לִבְךָ וְאַל תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת הַלֵּב
(see #3)