



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

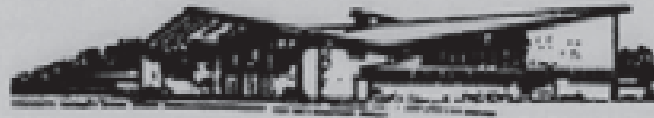
Series II: Subject Files, 1956-1993, undated.

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407

Southwest Association of Reform Rabbis, correspondence and
synagogue services, 1977-1978.



RABBI ROBERT I. KAHN, D.D., C.H.L.

TEMPLE EMANU EL 1500 SUNSET BOULEVARD

HOUSTON, TEXAS 77005 STUDY: 713 529-5771

November 9, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
26000 Shaker Blvd.
Beechwood, Ohio 44122

Dear Daniel:

Mordecai Podet writes with a series of reports to make to you about Kol Nidre, and I am so reporting.

We use the Union Prayer Book, volume 2. The only additional prayer we add is a prayer by Chaim Stern, copy of which I am enclosing.

Cantor Groper is preparing a description of the music, which he will send to you.

The sermon is already in your hands.

The Benediction has no special features, except just an introduction to the recitation of the priestly benediction.

I wear a white robe and an Army ~~atarah~~, which is cut down and looks more like an ~~atarah~~ rather than a tallith, although it's more like the Catholic type of arrangement. The other Rabbis wear only white robes. Laymen on the pulpit wear dark suits, and women wear sober dresses.

Best personal wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi Robert I. Kahn

WE SIN AGAINST YOU

We sin against You when we sin against ourselves; for our failures of truth, O Lord, we ask forgiveness:

for pretending to emotions we do not feel;
for using the sins of others to excuse our own;
for denying our responsibility for our own misfortunes;
for refusing to admit our share in the troubles of others;
for condemning in our children the faults we tolerate in ourselves;
for condemning in our parents the faults we tolerate in ourselves;

for passing judgment without knowledge of the facts;
for remembering the price of things but forgetting their value;
for teaching our children everything but the meaning of life;
for loving our egos better than truth.

We sin against You when we sin against ourselves for our failures of love, O Lord, we ask forgiveness:

for using people as steppingstones to advancement;
for confusing love and lust;
for treating with arrogance people weaker than ourselves;
for condescending toward those whom we regard as inferiors;
for cynicism which eats away our faith in the possibility of love.

We sin against You when we sin against ourselves; for our failures of

justice, O Lord, we ask forgiveness for us and all mankind:

for the sin of racial hatred and prejudice;
for the sin of denying its existence;
for the sin of using violence to maintain our power;
for the sin of using violence to bring about change;
for the sin of separating ends from means;
for the sin of threatening the survival of life on this planet;
for the sin of filling the common air with poisons;
for the sin of making our waters unfit to drink and unsafe for fish;

for the sin of pouring noxious chemicals upon trees and soil;
for the sin of obeying criminal orders;
for the sin of lacking civic courage;
for the sin of silence and indifference;

For all these sins, O forgiving God, teach us to forgive ourselves,

and help us to overcome.



TEMPLE BETH-EL

211 BELKNAP PLACE • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78212 • (512) 733-9135

SAMUEL M. STAHL, D.H.L.
Rabbi
November 17, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple Branch
26000 Shaker Boulevard
Beachwood, Ohio 44122

Dear Dan:

I just received a request sent to members of the Southwest Region of the CCAR by Mordecai Podet. He asks that we submit to you information about our Kol Nidre service.

We used the Union Prayerbook, Volume II.

Enclosed are xerox copies of the five inserts I read this year. The point at which they are introduced is listed on each insert. Sources are identified on each in the margins.

Our Music Director, Jean White, has prepared the attached Order of Musical Service for Yom Kippur.

My sermon, "Our Sins Against Parents and Teachers," is enclosed.

I wear a white robe without atarah - tallit and without headcovering. On our pulpit were the President, First Vice-President, and one member of our Board of Trustees, who was a reader for a portion of the service.

On Yom Kippur Eve, as well as on the Eve of Rosh Hashanah, we hold two services because of the large attendance. One begins at 6:30 P.M., and the other at 9:00 P.M.

I hope this information will suffice for your purposes.

Looking forward to seeing you in Memphis in January, I am

Sincerely,

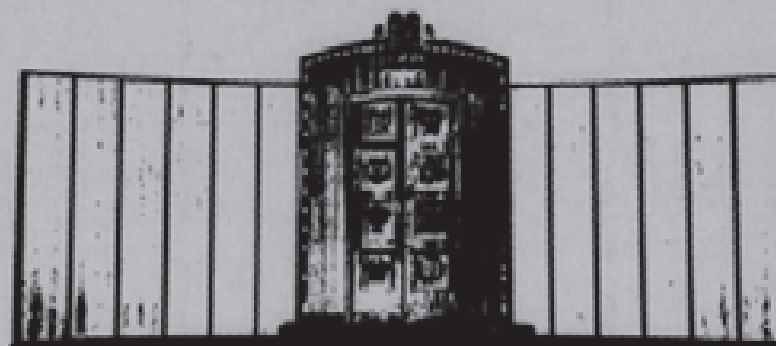
Samuel M. Stahl

SMS:lme
Enclosures

cc: Rabbi Mordecai Podet

TEMPLE SINAI

713 HODGES LAKE CHARLES, LOUISIANA 70601
TELEPHONE 318-439 2866



STANLEY R. MILES, RABBI

December 7, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple Branch
26000 Shaker Boulevard
Beachwood, OH 44122

Dear Rabbi Silver:

Since I heard your presentation on Jewish Survival at the Biennial, I am really anticipating your remarks to the Southwest Association of Reform Rabbis. I will attempt to answer the questions that you have asked for your presentation. The majority of my Kol Nidre service came from the Union Prayerbook, Volume 2. A listing of the music that was performed is enclosed as well. We have a volunteer choir in our temple and for Kol Nidre we employed a flute and a bassoon in addition to the organ. I have also enclosed a typed script of my sermon. Other than the Union Prayerbook material, I used prayers from Meida Judaica's New Prayers for the High Holydays. Xerox copies of these are also enclosed. On the pulpit I wore a robe and a Atora; there was one other member of my congregation on the pulpit, he was dressed in a business suit.

Once again, thank you for your interest in our rabbinical organization. I look forward to hearing you once more.

Sincerely,

Stanley R. Miles,
Rabbi

SRM:pl
Enclosure

EVENING SERVICE FOR DAY OF ATONEMENT SEPTEMBER 21, 1977 Year 5738

Prayer Book II Organ Prelude: Bach Toccata and Fugue D Minor
Louis Brewer

- Pg. 126 Rabbi reads a prayer - Pg. 127 - 128 Pg. 129 Rabbi reads--
Pg. 130- Cue for Kol Nidre is Be acceptable before you,
my Rock and my Redeemer.
PLAYED BY AN INSTRUMENT THEN SUNG BY CHOIR
1st time very softly
2nd time slightly louder
3rd time full, with great meaning.
- Pg. 131 Cue: with this people from Egypt until now Lois
Grauman, Pg. 122 #45 - S'Lach No
Cue: to thy word Lois
Grauman, Pg. 122 #46 - Vayomer Adonoi
Cue: brought us to this day Lois
Grauman, Pg. 123 #47 - Shehecheyonu
- Pg. 132 Cue: forever and ever Choir
Grauman, Pg. 15 # 3 Borchu-Sheet
- Pg. 134 Cue: forever and ever Choir
Ashreynu Shama Sheet # 1
- Pg. 136 Cue: ancient days Choir
Michomocho Songster 295A
separated and picked up again on
Cue: power and exclaimed. Complete
- Pg. 136 Cue: God, Redeemer of Israel Lois
Grauman, Pg. 124 # 48 Ki Vayom Haze
- Pg. 138 Cue: shield of Abraham Choir
Grauman, Pg. 27, #9 & 10 Sheet for Choir
Zochrenu - Melech Ozer
- Pg. 140 Cue: King of holiness Harry & Lois
Grauman, Pg. 28 #11 Kodosh Ato
- Pg. 146 Cue: Solo: Grant Us Peace Lois
- Pg. 148 Cue: we have done perversely Lois
Grauman, Pg. 131 #52 Tovo L'Fonecho
- Pg. 150 Cue: pardon us, forgive us Choir
Songster 158 - Hebrew then English
- Pg. 154 Cue: were not ashamed Lois
Grauman, Pg. 130 #50 in English
Prepare To Meet Thy God
- Pg. 155 Cue: redemption, Lois
Grauman, Pg. 130 #51 in English
Like As A Father

Evening Service
Day of Atonement
Sept. 21, 1977
Year 5738 Cont.

- Pg. 156 Cue: Thou art our friend Sheet "Y" Choir
which is We Are Thy People - after Hebrew reading
which ends with Ato Do Denu
- Pg. 157 Cue: Silent Prayer Songster 298 Choir
May The Words
- Pg. 158 Cue: help us Choir
Grauman Pg. 44 #14 &
Ovinu Malkenu Lois
1,2,4,5,6 Lois - Choir last two lines
- Pg. 160 Cue: praised be He Choir
Songster 303A Va hah nach nu
- Pg. 161 Cue: Lord will reign forever and ever Choir
Ve neh a mar Sheet Music
- Pg. 162 Cue: comfort all the bereaved among us Choir
and wherever such may be
SINGLE - AMEN-
- Pg. 164 CLOSING HYMN Red Hymnal, Pg. 54 Vs. 1,2,5
Choir and congregation

14

Kol Nidre: Vows to God - Truth to People

The connection between Kol Nidre and the Ten Commandments probably appears tenuous at best. Actually, two of God's laws are directly related to the Kol Nidre. When we hear the chanting of Kol Nidre, we listen with our hearts. Now let us heed the English translation with our minds, as well:

"All vows, bonds, devotions, promises, obligations, penalties and oaths: wherewith we have vowed, sworn, devoted, and bound ourselves: from this Day of Atonement unto the next Day of Atonement, may it come unto us for good: lo, all these, we repent us in them. They shall be absolved, released, annulled, made void, and of none effect: they shall not be binding nor shall they have any power. Our vows shall not be vows: our bonds shall not be bonds: and our oaths shall not be oaths.

"And all the congregation of the children of Israel shall be forgiven, and the stranger that sojourneth among them; for in respect of all the people it was done unwittingly."

Kol Nidre is concerned with vows. Likewise, God was concerned with our vows when He gave the Ten Commandments. Two of

the laws directly concern our promises, both between God and people and humans among themselves.

The third commandment warns: "You shall not invoke the name of the Lord your God with malice; for the Lord does not hold guiltless one who invokes His name with malice."

One of my professors at the Hebrew Union College, Rabbi Dr. Herbert Brichto, is a true iconoclast. He begins one of his lectures with a loud blustery curse involving the name of God. I don't need to repeat it from this pulpit, we all know it. Then he asks the class: "Have I broken the third commandment against taking God's name in vain?" Inevitable some unwitting dupe always answers in the affirmative. This gives Dr. Brichto the chance to have a field day with the novice. "No", he thundered. "I didn't take God's name in vain, I simply gave a malediction. You know a benediction is a blessing; well, a malediction is a curse." After this dramatic display the student is sadder, but wiser.

Does this mean we should go around invoking God's name in our curses? Absolutely not. It is disrespectful to God and simply not done in polite society.

What then does this commandment mean? or, indeed does it

have any meaning for us at all? I believe that this commandment is very important, but needs to be explained. In fact, on this night of Kol Nidre, it cries out for an explanation.

Rabbi Robert Kahn of Houston beautifully teaches us the true meaning of invoking God's name with malice. He says:

"For the breaking of all laws, there are penalties. If one man assaults another and is proven guilty, he may be sent to jail. If he steals and the goods are found in his possession, he may be fined or imprisoned. Once he has paid the penalty for his crime, however, his guilt is washed out."

"But for taking God's name in vain, the guilt is not washed out. This is THE unforgivable sin for the reason that it is not punishable by man."

"We need another Biblical verse or two to explain this. Elsewhere in the Bible, the law provides that if one man leaves an animal in another's care and IF that animal is driven away, no man seeing, then the oath of the Lord shall be between them. The caretaker must swear on a sacred oath that he knows nothing of its disappearance; that is to say that he did not secretly slaughter or sell it. Inas-

much as "no man seeing" is a precondition of the situation, it is obvious that all that stands between truth and falsehood is his oath in God's name. No evidence exists to contradict his word. If, therefore, he has taken God's name in vain, society cannot find him guilty, but God will not hold him guiltless."

See the importance of this commandment? Virtually all civilization depends on what it stands for; the speaking of the truth. This commandment forbids perjury, not only the perjury of the false witness in the courtroom, but in other situations, too.

This commandment also will not tolerate lying about our past or making empty promises concerning our future. A Richard Nixon can not plead Executive privilege. This commandment places him before the highest court in the universe. There his oath before God will come to haunt him, if not on this earth

Most of us are sane rational people. We recognize fully our limitations. When we make promises for the future of God, to others, or to ourselves; they must be promises we believe we can keep.

A life burdened with empty promises is a wasting life. It is as if

we attempted to travel through the desert with one huge canteen; knowing full well that the canteen was almost empty. As beings created in God's image; it is our duty to attempt to live purposeful lives in harmony with our potential.

On this night of Kol Nidre, we would do well to re-examine our vows to all, and our seriousness about keeping them. Another type of vow we make, ~~often quite unwittingly~~, is prohibited by the ninth commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Simply stated, God commands us not to lie.

According to our tradition, humans are created in the image of God. Why, then, are we not more like God? The reason stems from the fact that God endowed with free will. We are blessed, or cursed as the case may be with both an inclination to do good and an inclination for evil. When we perform acts of goodness, that part of us that is God controls our being. When we allow ourselves to sink into the mire of destructive behavior with the sad goal of hurting others or inclination for evil flexs its horrid strenght. What about our free will? Due to its presence we are

Forced to choose good or evil, ourselves. That choice is not predetermined; no one can or will make it for us. Unfortunately, one of the easiest of the evil choices to make is to tell a lie. After all, a word seems so harmless.

This ninth commandment embraces all forms of slander, defamation and misrepresentation, whether of an individual, a group, a people, a race, or a religion. None have suffered so much from these injustices as the Jew and Judaism. Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that we take heed to the prayer which begins:

"Oh God, keep my tongue from evil and my lips from deceit."

As both Jews and Americans we know, full well, the destructive power of a lie. Hitler told a big lie to the world. He claimed that Jews were not people at all, but diseased parasites who must be destroyed. Hitler didn't relate this lie to primitive tribespeople in Africa or New Guinea. Oh no, this falsehood was directed toward that cradle of Kultur with a capital "K": Germany. Hitler should have been put away for his preposterous lie. This was not to happen. Like a deadly juggernaut, more and more people throughout Europe were taken in by the lie; intelligent people who should have known better. The result of that lie we all know. We should only pray that the

world grew up as well.

For decades to come, the word "watergate" will symbolize the tragedy of trying to deceive and manipulate the American people. Perhaps, President Nixon and all his men honestly believed they needed to lie, steal, and defame for the greater good of the United States. Yet, in the wake of those soul clensing years, it is difficult to perceive any altruism in any of their Machivellian motives. My friends, the bottom line is, was, and will always be that a lie is a lie and a titally destructive force whenever and wherever it is unleashed.

The admonition of ancient rabbinic Bible commentators should be taken seriously even today. They warn: "Oh, My people Israel, bear not false witness against your companions, for in punishment for this the clouds will scatter, so that there may be no rain and famine will ensue owing to drought." Famines need not only be of a natural variety. We can suffer moral famines and droughts as well: famines which plagued a Nazi Germany; droughts which parched a Nixon White House. You see, God is particularly severe with a liar because falsehood is the one quality God did not create but people

themselves produced.

On this Kol Nidre, this night of vows, may God provide with the fortitude always to bear true witness. May we come to realize that both our promises made to God and people are sacred trust.

Truth and honesty are the most crucial ingredient to the foundation of a strong and just civilization. For in the vacuum caused by the absence of truth and honesty - deceit and treachery take over.

May it be our will, Oh God, to help create a more honest world beginning with our own beings.

Amen

✓ ALL VOWS

All vows, promises, and commitments made in Your Presence
Since last Yom Kippur and in the years before,
May we be given the strength to keep them.

Our marriage vows—may they endure
Through dark days and through dull days,
Through fatigue and through anger.
May our love prove strong enough, and our faith deep
enough, to last.

Our vows to ourselves, commitments to good health,
May we take our own lives seriously enough to heed them,
Keeping our promises in the way we eat and drink,
The way we work and rest,
The way we handle anger and stress.

The promises we made to study and to worship—
We meant them when we made them,
But so many things get in the way.
This time, may we be strong enough to let our better
selves prevail.

Promises made by boys and girls, who stood on this pulpit,
Who glimpsed what life as Jews might hold in store for them,
May their idealism and their vision be with them through all
their days.

Commitments made to parents and to friends,
Pledges to charity, and other good intentions,—
Help us to become as noble, compassionate, and
generous.

As we saw ourselves to be at those moments.

Dear God, we meant the promises we made
To You, to each other, and to ourselves—
Even as we mean the vows we speak tonight.
They were our reaching toward You.

May You reach down to us as we reach up toward You,
And give us strength and self-respect, fidelity and vision,
To grow to be the people we have sworn to be.

All vows, commitments, obligations,
Promises we make
From this Yom Kippur day until the next—
May we be strong enough to keep them.

A MEDITATION BEFORE KOL NIDRE

Ribono shel olam,
I hereby forgive
Whoever has hurt me,
And whoever has done me any wrong;
Whether he did it deliberately
Or by accident,
Whether he did it by word
Or by deed.

May no one be punished on my account.
May it be Your will,
O Lord my God,
God of my fathers,
That I sin no more,
That I do not revert to my old ways,
That I do not anger You any more with my actions,
And that I do not do that which is evil in Your sight.

Wipe away the sins that I have committed
With Your great compassion
But not through sickness or suffering.
May these words of my mouth
And the prayers that are in my heart
Be acceptable before You, O Lord,
My Rock and my Redeemer.



Congregation Emanu El
1500 Sunset Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77005
(713) 529-5771

Cantor Glenn Groper

December 8, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Silver
University Circle and Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Rabbi Silver,

Enclosed is the Kol Nidre service as we do it here at Emanu El. The settings are geared for the Baritone Cantor, so they may or may not be helpful to you.

There are a few selections for which I could not identify the composer.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

G AG:rk

Or Zarua - Piket

Kol Nidre - Stark

Vayomer Adonai -

Barchu -

Ahavat Olam - Janowski

Shema - Boruch Schorr

Michamocho - Stark

Ki Vayom Hazeh - Stark

Av Harachamim -

Kadosh Ata - Lewandowski

Tavo L'Fanecha - Janowski

V'al Kulam - Union Hymal supplement

Ya' aleh - " " "

Prepared to meet thy God -

Like as a father - Piket

Ki Anu Amecha - Fromm

Yih'yu C'ratzon - Bloch

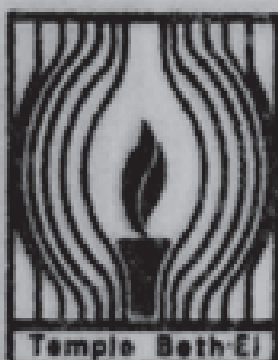
Avinu Malkeynu - Union songster

Va'anachnu - Bloch

On that Day - Idelsoln (Green)

Praised to the Living God - Yigdel Melcdy





TEMPLE BETH-EL

211 BELKNAP PLACE • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78212 • (512) 733-9135

SAMUEL M. STAHL, D.H.L.
Rabbi

YOM KIPPUR EVE

5738 - 1977

MUSIC/TEXT

COMPOSER/SOURCE

KOL NIDRE

Traditional (Arranged) Yamin Noraim
edited S. Adler

VAYOMER ADONAI

Lewandowski/Cantorial Anthology,
Volume 2, edited Ephros

BAR'CHU

Traditional (Arranged) U. H. Pt. I

SH'MA . . . BARUCH SHEM

Sulzer Union Hymnal Part II

MI CHAMOCHA

Traditional (Arranged) U. H. Pt. I

KI VAYOM HAZEH

Sulzer/Cantorial Anthology, Volume 2
Edited Ephros

ZOCHRENU - MELECH OZER

Picket/Service for Rosh Hashana Eve

ELOHENU - TAVO L'FANECHA

Saminsky/Holyday Services

V'AL KULAM

Traditional (Arranged) Union
Hymnal Part II

KI ANU AMECHA

Fromm/Atonement Music

MAY THE WORDS

Max Janowski

AVINU MALKENU

Max Janowski

ANTHEM - UN'TANNEH TOKEF

Max Janowski

VA'NACHNU

Binder/Morning Service For The
New Year

BAYOM HAHU

Traditional (Arranged) Yamin Noraim,
edited S. Adler

HYMN - WE PRAISE THE LIVING GOD

Tune - Traditional Leoni "Yigdal" #5
Text - Gates of Prayer

THREEFOLD AMEN AFTER THE FINAL
BENEDICTION

Traditional (Arranged) Yamin Noraim
edited S. Adler

From: Contemporary Prayers and Readings
(Media Judaica)

Checked paragraphs before Kol Nidre.

X 23/1
ALL VOWS

✓ All vows, promises, and commitments made in Your Presence
Since last Yom Kippur and in the years before,
May we be given the strength to keep them.

✓ Our marriage vows—may they endure
Through dark days and through dull days,
Through fatigue and through anger.
May our love prove strong enough, and our faith deep
enough, to last.

✓ Our vows to ourselves, commitments to good health,
May we take our own lives seriously enough to heed them,
Keeping our promises in the way we eat and drink,
The way we work and rest,
And the things that get us angry.

✓ The promises we made to study and to worship—
We meant them when we made them,
But so many things get in the way.
This time, may we be strong enough to let our better
selves prevail.

✓ Promises made by boys and girls, who stood on this pulpit *Conf.*
Who glimpsed what life as Jews might hold in store for them,
May their idealism and their vision be with them through all
their days.

Commitments made to parents and to friends,
Pledges to charity, and other good intentions,—
Help us to become as noble, compassionate, and
generous,
As we saw ourselves to be at those moments.

Dear God, we meant in all seriousness the promises we made
To You, to each other, and to ourselves,
Even as we mean the vows we speak tonight.
They were our reaching toward You, as plants toward the light.

May You reach down to us as we reach up toward You,
And give us strength and self-respect, fidelity and vision,
To grow to be the people we have sworn to be.

✓ All vows, commitments, obligations,
Promises we make
From this Yom Kippur day until the next—
May we be strong enough to keep them.

✓ To be a Jew is to look.
Is to gaze.
Is to stand at the door to reality with
open arms —
Afraid of what may be,
But more afraid that it may not be.
Is to welcome the real and shun the false.

To be a Jew is to smile.
Is to laugh.
Is to drink in all the happiness of life
until it seems there is no more —
Is to empty the cup of gladness,
But not to get drunk on it.
Is to share our joy with the world.

To be a Jew is to cry.
Is to weep.
Is to shed tears when we or others suffer
from the too real —
Is to express our sorrow,
But not to wallow in self-pity.
Is to dry our tears and go on.

To be a Jew is to reach.
Is to stretch out.
Is to tie the ends of the past and the
future into a stream of history —
Is to live today,
But not to live for today.
Is to be the bridge between Babylonia and
the twenty first century.

To be a Jew is to search.
Is to examine.
Is to know ourselves for what we are and
for what we are not —
Is always to look into the mirror,
But never to stare into it.
Is to change the world by first changing
ourselves.

Reader: In Jewish life there is no confession without repentance.
There must be more than just embarrassment, more than apology.
There must also be a sincere change within which allows us to live
with ourselves in quiet conscience.

*Congregation: People have sometimes thought the price of
repentance too high: We have looked at the things we
would have to give up, at the appetites we would have have
to curb, at the things we would have to set aside. We have
forgotten that no matter what the price of repenting, it is
never so high as the price of not repenting.*

And no later hour is ever better for repenting than this hour is.
Because man is the crown of creation, he can confess and seek
repentance; because he is dust, he must confess and seek repentance.

*In this light, we come before You, O Lord, with a con-
fession for our time, for our everyday lives. In this spirit,
we approach You on this holiest day of the year. (8)*

READER

Guardian of Israel,
Guard the remnant of Israel.
And let not destruction come unto Israel,
Who daily repeat, "Hear, O Israel."
Guardian of our community,
From destruction, grant us immunity.
Nor let them destroy the impunity,
Those who proclaim Thy unity.
Guardian of the human race,
Save mankind from self-disgrace.
May we see in each man's face --
Thou, who fillest all of space.

Cantor: "Shomayr Yisrael"

INTRODUCTION TO KADDISH

READER

Ere we part, we would turn our thoughts to those who shared our lives, who added to our joys, and who have left this earth to enter upon life eternal. At this hour, our memories of them are tinged with sorrow. How often we returned their love with emptiness! How often we recompensed their kindness with neglect! How often we repaid their goodness with evil! Would that we had not been blind and deaf in their presence. Yet we hope that, in their compassion, they forgave us while yet they lived.

Grant us, O God, the strength to release ourselves from our bonds of shame and guilt as we think of our departed. May we, through the warmth of happy memories and through deeds of righteousness in the future, give justification for their lives of service, bring pardon to ourselves, and secure the fulfillment of Thy Torah.

In humility and in awe, we rise to acknowledge Thy creative majesty and Thine eternal forgiving goodness.

KADDISH

CHOIR: "Oh What Is Man?"

Written by Rabbi Eugene J. Lipman for Selichot.
Used to introduce the Kaddish, instead of the prayer
in the UP3, Volume II.

From: Contemporary Prayers and Readings
(Media Judaica)

Checked paragraphs read for "Benediction."

Benediction
ON THIS NIGHT OF ATONEMENT

✓ O God of forgiveness, on this night of atonement, we come before You haunted by memories of duties unperformed, of promptings disobeyed, of beckonings ignored.

✓ We confess that there were opportunities for kindness and service which we allowed to pass by in the year just ended.

We are ashamed, O Lord, of sins committed with evil intent, as well as of follies performed with noble motives.

✓ Make us honest enough to recognize our transgressions, big enough to admit them, strong enough to forsake them.

Humble us by showing us what we are;
exalt us with a vision of what we may yet grow to be.

Keep us ever mindful of how deeply we depend upon You;
and may we understand also Your need of us.

United with You in a holy partnership, may we labor for peace among men and nations, create joy within our homes, and thus find serenity within ourselves.

Kindle within us the fires of faith and set aglow our courage
to live the words we pray.

"Our Sins Against Parents and Teachers"

by Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl

Yom Kippur Eve - 5738

September 21, 1977

Albert Einstein was not formally a religious Jew. Yet two things about Judaism impressed him. One was its message of humanitarianism. The other was its accent on the life of the mind. Einstein enjoyed a couple of advantages that we do not have. The Germany of Einstein's day, before the rise of Hitler, supported every intellectual and cultural pursuit.

American society, by contrast, is generally not oriented toward the life of the mind and spirit. Not too long ago, for example, a small European government spent fifty million dollars during one year for the enhancement of music alone. Yet in the United States, during that same year, only five million dollars were spent throughout all fifty states on all the arts. Yes, only five million in a country which is one of the wealthiest in the world!

What about us, American Jews, in 1977, who live in such an environment? By and large, we are still the intellectual leaders of our communities. We are the highest scholastic achievers. Jewish parents to this very day insist on a superior quality of education in the schools to which they send their children. Often we choose our residence solely on the basis of the school system serving that neighborhood. But how long will this emphasis on intellectual achievement last? Not too long ago, a faculty member of a leading university remarked that in his class he encountered the first generation of not-so-bright Jews. Yes, as we incorporate the values of the non-Jewish world in other areas of our life, we will soon adopt its disregard of education as well. Ludwig Lewissohn once commented that the German Jew tended to assimilate the best of German culture, while the American Jew tends to assimilate the

worst of American culture. Einstein was also nearer in time to the age when Jews were totally absorbed in Torah study. But we are moving further and further from this reservoir of Torah, that which nourished the intellectual hunger of our ancestors for many generations. Our ancestors believed that Torah study was the most important pursuit in which a Jew could engage. We are now living on the reserves of that fund of Torah learning bequeathed to us by our forebears. Soon that fund may run out, as we advance in time from the days of our ancestors.

Indeed the words of our prayerbook are especially poignant at this hour: "For the sin which we have sinned against Thee by disrespect for parents and teachers." We have sinned against our parents and teachers of all generations past. We have disgraced those who left us a legacy of study. We are wasting this legacy and not replenishing it.

How have we specifically sinned against our parents and teachers of past generations, whose lives were devoted to Talmud Torah?

First of all, they insisted on Jewish learning because they believed that it gave us guidance on how to live ethically and morally. Study was stressed because study influenced us to make good decisions and to behave ethically. Through study we learned how to love our neighbor, how to regard life as sacred, how to be compassionate to those in pain, and how to be responsible for the civic life of our community. We, today, believe that learning must have an ulterior non-religious purpose. We, in America, understand learning to mean earning. Our learning is focused on our occupational goal. We Americans stress the accumulation of degrees, because of more academic credentials we acquire, the more money we will make. I remember a conversation while I was pursuing my advanced degree in Jewish studies after my Rabbinical ordination. A prominent corporation executive couldn't figure out why I was spending so much time reading

ancient documents and preparing a dissertation. I told him it was a way of enriching myself and deepening my knowledge of Judaism. He kept on asking, "Will this degree make you a more prominent member of your profession? Will it improve your salary? Will it assure you of a large and prestigious pulpit?" To most of us, learning Torah has no value, because it doesn't lead us anywhere vocationally or materially in the future. How many parents who don't want their children to have too much Jewish education, argue: "Well, he's not going to be a Rabbi anyhow." The only reason that one would study Judaism, in their opinion, is to become a Jewish professional - not to become a more committed Jew.

Furthermore, our ancestors insisted that Torah education must be a life-long effort. They said that one must study Torah every day of his life from childhood to old age. But instead of making Torah a life-long pursuit we American Jews have reduced it to a pediatric endeavor. We have done little to make adult Jewish study a priority. Our exclusive concern is our children. Note the many manifestations of this "Juvenile Judaism." Some people won't join a Temple until children are of a Religious School age. By this practice, they are saying that Jewish study is only for kids and not for adults. We do not insist that adult Jewish community and congregational leaders maintain a program of Jewish studies. One's Jewish learning is not even a criterion when being elected to an office in the Jewish community. When we engage an Education Director for a Temple, the implication is that his sole responsibility will be the Religious School. Happily, our new Education Director, Mr. Hoenig, made it clear that he sees his role as much broader. He has asserted that the total program of education - both Religious School and the continuing education programs - will be within the purview of his

jurisdiction. The sad thing about this "Juvenile Judaism" is that just as young people are ready to understand the very complex and advanced ideas of Judaism, we confirm them. We give them the not so subtle message that their real Jewish education is over. Even post-Confirmation Classes are not enough. Jewish study must go on until one's last days on earth. The main problem with "Juvenile Judaism" is that the sophisticated mature concepts of Judaism are wasted on the young, who can't fully understand them. At the same time, we allow the elders of our community to ignore them and not to glean their healthy insights.

Furthermore, our ancestors insisted that Torah study be demanding and rigorous. In the Ethics of the Fathers, we read: "Such is the way of Torah study: Eat a piece of bread with salt, drink water in rationed measure, sleep on the ground and live a life of hardship, and in the Torah do you toil." They are not requiring us to live a monastic life of hardship. Through this imagery, they are insisting that the Torah cannot be learned in an upholstered chair moving pleasantly along. Anything of value doesn't come easily. But, yet, we today view Jewish learning as a leisure activity that always has to be fun. Those of us who ponder programs of adult Jewish study look at them as we would any other recreational pursuit, like golf, tennis, or Mah Jongg. If we can fit it into our entertainment schedule and the course is enticing, we register for it. But we make it clear from the beginning that we will refuse to do any outside preparation. Religious School is similarly evaluated on the basis of how much fun our kids have, not on the amount they learn. Many of us would prefer our kids coming out of Religious School as happy ignoramuses rather than as tired scholars. We ask that no home work be given because Religious School is supposed to be all fun.

And finally, our ancestors insisted on the maximalist education. One had to study Torah during every free moment of the day. Yet many of us of the American Jewish Community are satisfied with less than two hours per week for our children, and none for ourselves. What is very strange is that Orthodox congregations tend to require the largest number of hours, Conservative somewhat fewer, and Reform the least. The situation should be just the opposite. Reform should demand the largest number of hours of Jewish study. The greatness of Reform Judaism is the freedom for the Reform Jew to select those traditions which are meaningful to him. Reform is also the only movement within Judaism which believes that we have the right to accept only those parts of our Tradition that speak to our hearts and minds. The choice that we make implies a deep knowledge of the options. We have to make an intelligent selection. We need more education than our traditionalist co-religionists to make responsible selections. In Faust, Goethe wrote what would be an appropriate admonition for Reform Jews: "What from your fathers you receive as heir, earn in order to possess it. What of the past you choose to reject, know first before rejecting it."

The Yiddish writer, Peretz, speaks of the transmission of learning in a masterful short story called, "Four Generations, Four Wills." These four wills are dramatic illustrations of the progressive degeneration of values which I have discussed this evening.

The first will is simple. It contains no more than ten lines of text. It is written by a traditional Jew, who spent his whole lifetime immersed in the study of Torah. He bequeathed his books to his children. He asked that they use the funds they will inherit from him to continue to maintain the synagogue and other Jewish institutions. He blesses them in the name of God.

The second will is written by the son of this Patriarch. The son expresses the hope that his children will read the books or at least present the books to a good library. The financial inheritance he hopes will be properly invested and utilized. He also hopes that his children will continue their membership in the Jewish community.

The grandson, the third generation, writes the third testament. He is the "modern man." He is only loosely attached to those things that his grandfather had held dear. This is the typical will of a materialistic man with many a "to wit" and "whereas." He says that the funds he bequeathes are to be held in escrow and in trust. They are to be properly used in the education of any children and for the ultimate establishment of trust funds.

The final will is that of the great-grandson of the old Jew who had written with such love of Jewish books and learning, who had been devoted to the synagogue, who had considered money primarily a means of support of Jewish education. This will was written by a man who pathetically declares: "I have all this money, yet I have no one to give it to, no one to share it with, no meaning in my life, no roots, no past, no present, no future." And after signing the will, he ends his life by his own hand.

Let us take steps, from this Day of Atonement, to avert such a calamity for our future generations. Let us not allow the tradition of learning to wither away during our lifetime. Let us turn once again to Torah to enrich our minds and characters, even if such study will not influence our career advancement or our monetary worth. Let us purchase Jewish books, read Jewish periodicals, frequent Jewish libraries, and participate in Jewish study groups. Let us regard Torah study not as child's play but as a life-long serious pursuit. Let us be mindful that Torah study will make demands and require sacrifices. But, unless

we respond to those demands, we will deprive our descendants in years to come of their glorious heritage.

Amen



Rabbi Mordecai Podet

TEMPLE RODEF SHOLOM
1717 NORTH 41st STREET
WACO, TEXAS 76707

December 20, 1977

Dr. Daniel Silver
The Temple Branch
26000 Shaker Blvd.
Beachwood, Ohio 44122

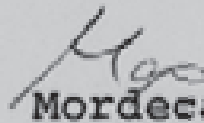
Dear Dan:

Murray's letter has undertones of desperation,
so I hasten to contribute, however scantily.

Our Kol Nidre Service is now a traditional
blend of Saminsky, Freed, Froman and
formalized East European melodies. I read
a version of the KN in English; it is sung
in Hebrew and cello'ed also. The Sifre Torah
are held by elders throughout. I wear robe
and atara. We use the UPB II. Sermons
enclosed.

Of course, I believe that you study such
material as this in order to write your
expositions. But I can't help wondering
about the mental health of anyone immersed
in such sadomasochistic scholarship.
Please - take care of yourself!

Fondly,


Mordecai Podet

MP/eg
Encl.

RABBI MURRAY BLACKMAN, Ph.D., D.D.

TEMPLE SINAI
6227 ST. CHARLES AVENUE
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA
70118

December 20, 1977

Rabbi Daniel J. Silver
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Dan:

I hope my recent mailing to the members of SWARR will elicit the response you need for your presentation.

I know this is "chutzpah" on my part but, I have to make this request. The members of SWARR are located in a wide-flung area. This is the only time that most of us see each other. It appears now that the business confronting us has grown to a point where we need additional time for some presentations and discussions.

I would, therefore, request that you develop your presentation with Peter in three sections rather than four. These can be done on Monday evening, Tuesday morning and Wednesday morning. We need the afternoon of Tuesday following the luncheon for all the various items that have to be brought to the group for their information and discussion.

Please forgive me for asking this of you but I hope you understand our problem in terms of time.

Best personal wishes.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Murray Blackman

MB/ms

cc: Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser
Rabbi Martin I. Hinchin

RABBI MURRAY BLACKMAN, Ph.D., D.D.

TEMPLE SINAI
6227 ST. CHARLES AVENUE
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA
70116

January 10, 1978

Phoenit - continued
but - just = same
re-servicing
marks &
reason
Julia 1-10
heart

Rabbi Daniel Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Danny:

Enclosed are the materials you requested.

The Kol Nidre Service follows the Union Prayerbook with the slight rearrangement at the beginning and with the skipping of several pages as you will note.

We have two Services on that evening and the sermon for the first Service is usually much briefer than at other Services. We have six permanent seats on our Pulpit which are occupied by the Rabbis and filled in by members of the Board who are assigned different Services for seating purposes. The Rabbis wear black Pulpit robes.

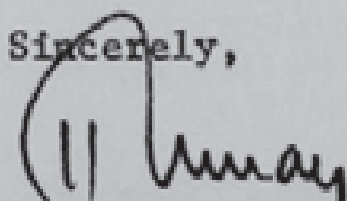
You may be interested in the fact that I finally got our Board to approve changing the color of the Torah Mantles to white for next year.

The sermon which I have enclosed was one of a four-part series which I delivered this year based upon the fact that the King Tutankhamen exhibit opened at our local museum almost coincidentally with Rosh Hashanah.

I hope this supplies you with the information you need.

Best personal wishes.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Murray Blackman

MB/ms

enc.

P.S. The music of the Service is rendered by an 8 voice professional choir led by our organist-director.

Temple B'nai Israel

3700 Rodney Parham Road
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72212

Office of the Rabbi

Elijah E. Palnick, Th.D., M.A.H.L.

(Dictated but not read)

January 11, 1978

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Dan:

I have held off writing to you because I didn't want to. The time is now. I wear a robe and a Atara. No one else on the pulpit wears anything but a suit. We use the Union Prayer Book. We recite no Hebrew. The Choir sings various Hebrew responses. I used various colleagues ideas this year on the sermons for High Holy Days rather than my own, picking sermons that stressed gentleness, forgiveness and the possibility for change. In adapting them to myself I stayed away from negative tones. Somehow the Holy Days ended with controversy anyway. For the first time instead of all my normal readers on Yom Kippur morning (whom I did not change), I added one young attorney who chanted half the morning Haftorah before our old stand by read it. We have had protest meetings, open board meetings and are now initiating a Ritual Committee "lest we stop being Reform". That sums up our Holy Day service. See you in Memphis.

Fondly,

E. Palnick

Dr. Elijah E. Palnick,
Rabbi

EP:lh

*Checked
Lewin
made E. Palnick*

1977 - g...t. rabbi, Lawrence I. Jackofsky, UAHC, Dal-

MUSIC SCHEDULE FOR YOM KIPPUR EVE - Temple Beth Israel - Meridian, Miss.

Organ prelude: Herman Berlinski's prelude for Y.K. This will serve as
Background music to pages 124 and 125

(No music for page 127)

(Allow for candles to be lit on p. 127--special writing--)

Or Zorua - Janowski (Light is sown) - UPB p. 128

~~DEROTHY BERNER plays Max Bruch's Kol Nidre on the viola -- at top of p. 130~~

Rabbi reads, before choir sings KOL NIDRE (cue: sanctified among us - p. 130
Lewandowski-Binder

Vayomer A-doh-nay: H. Weintraub (Idelsohn, arr.) (cue: Egypt until now)

Bo-ruch...sheh-heb-ch'yaw-nu: Traditional (Stark, arr.) - (cue: unto this
day, - p. 131)

Bo-r'chu: (traditional - Stark) - (cue: forever and ever - p. 132)

Sh'ma: Herbert Fromm (Adler, arr.) - (cue: is forever and ever - p. 134)

Mee ehomo-cho: traditional (Stark, arr.) - (cue: working wonders - p. 136
V'n-e-mar: the continuation--sing also

Ki va-gem ha-zeh: Idelsohn - cue: the Lord shall ye be pure - p. 136

Boruch and Zochrenu: Traditional (Stark) - cue: Shield of Abraham - p. 138

Amen: p. 143 - cue: the Day of Atonement.

Amen: p. 146

Taw-vo l'faw-deh-chaw - Stark - cue: we have done
perversely - p. 148 (Be sure to include the Chotomu (Stark) immediately
after the Taw-vo.

V'al kulawm - Herbert Fromm (Adler, ed.) - cue: forgive us! p. 150

Ya-a-leh: Engel (arr. J.K.E.) - cue: Thy great name p. 150 bot.

Prepare to meet: Stark - xpage 154

Like as a father; Fromm - p. 155

We are Thy people: Beigel - p. 156 - cue: Thou art our Friend
This is in place of the Hebrew at bot. of page.

Union
Hymnal

Meditation music and
May the words - Binder (Four Responses) - p. 157

Aw-vee-nu mahl-kay-nu: Janowski - cue: lovingkindness and help us - p. 158
SERMON

Adoration: (Let us adore) - Stark (trad.) - plus Vaanachnu - p. 160

On that Day: Freed (chasidic) - p. 161

Music for Prayer of Consolation p. 161 - 12 Kaddish - Binder (traditional)

Concluding hymn: To Thee We Give- #166 Un. Hymnal

Benediction: Antiphonal with Rabbi - Idelsohn

Postlude: Same as concluding hymn - #166 Union Hymnal

Sermon Preached on Yom Kippur Eve 5738 - September 21, 1977

Palmer

^N
Heire. Since I myself stand in need of God's pity, I have granted an amnesty to all my enemies.

THE NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

How vivid to us are the memories of our childhood. How they stand out with all the firm outlines of a newly stamped coin - clearer often than the recollection of what may have happened only yesterday.

Kol Nidre night -

Scene from my early boyhood - I can remember with perfect clarity -
little synagogue - aged bearded Jews, dressed in pure white "kittels" -
they moved to and fro about the crowded aisles addressing one another -
"What are they doing?"

"They are seeking from each other pardon and forgiveness before Kol Nidre,"
was the reply.

At the time the answer meant nothing to me.

the words - "forgiveness," "pardon" - no significance

What did I know then of the fact that human beings wrong one another - of that
burning need which we all have for exoneration from our fellow.

Neither did I know the beautiful tradition, Jewish law - to seek forgiveness from
all on eve of

In all ages, Judaism has taught pardon, forgiveness.

sacred literature filled with it -

The Bible is explicit.

"Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge...." (Lev. 19:18)

Then, there is the wonderful ending to the story of Joseph and his brothers -
Jacob died - Joseph forgives

"Fear not, for am I in the place of God?" (Gen. 50:15)

Like the Bible so in the Talmud, it is written -

"He who waives his right of retribution is forgiven all his sins"

We are told of a Pabbi, Mar Zutra, every night before going to bed would say

"I forgive all who have vexed me."

Tonight, is the most solemn night of the year and of any number of possible themes,

I have chosen this simple vision as my theme -

There is nothing more relevant - nothing more important

He who forgives, he shall be forgiven.

How beautiful a sentiment, but how difficult an execution.

There is none among us who has not at some time or other been hurt to the inmost recesses of his being by somebody.

You may remember -

malicious slander

humiliated in public

some dear possession, lost, broken or taken

employer - served faithfully in your youth and then cast off, or reprov'd unfairly.

or worst of all, betrayed by a wife or a husband.

We think of these things - bitter with resentment.

It is easy enough to admire the old Jews - Yom Kippur at night.

But does not Judaism ask the impossible when it commands -

Forgive, let go of all your resentments.

The inability to forgive, often the one vice of the virtuous, can be only blot on a noble character.

This is the dividing line between the great and the near great, the truly noble and the imitation.

Greatest poet of the middle ages was Dante. He had imagination and genius.

Was he, a great man? Only near great -

In his "Divine comedy, he, described tortures that will be inflicted on his enemies.

Against these illustrations of weakness the truly great stand out all the more boldly.

1. Uncounted are the wrongs which the Jewish people inflicted on Moses. They refused to believe him - betrayed his God - accused him of dishonesty rebelled against his leadership - insulted him. While he was up on the mountain getting the 10 Commandments they cast the Golden Calf. Yet after the Golden calf - He stands pleading with God for the Jewish people. That's where the phrase after the Kol Nidre originated.

2. Winston Churchill was banished to obscurity by Neville Chamberlain - took him into the war cabinet. "If we do not stop arguing about yesterday, we shall loose tomorrow.

3. Abraham Lincoln - quality of forbearance - Chase insulted him publicly - intrigued against him - expressed contempt - and Lincoln made him a cabinet officer. the South - maligned of Lincoln unmercifully - ugly cartoons,

ugly slander - even Lincoln as a gorrilla.

When the Civil War was over, when the near-great clamored for revenge upon the South,

Lincoln alone could find it in his heart to say, "With malice toward none; with charity for all".

An old saying has it that to err is human to forgive divine.

Do we not all feel something of the Divine in these illustrations of supreme forbearance?

thrill with admiration

All of us reverence this quality of forgiveness

We all accept it in theory and not at all in practice.

But why do we fail in this supreme challenge in character? What is there in our temperaments?

In the first place, there is in man what the Rabbis called

"the evil impulse"

part of the old animal - the beast of the jungle

Have you ever played with a kitten and caressed it, watched it - purr - yet rub the fur the wrong way or hold it a second too long - the purring stops - animal attempts to escape.

If you hold it and persist, it will grow angry; its back will arch; its claws distend, and dig in to you.

That is the universal animal.

All living things grow angry when they are hurt.

All higher beings if they cannot express their anger for the moment, seek revenge.

For revenge is only clotted and coagulated anger, choked up resentment is hatred that has no outlet.

It is the suspended blow that could not be struck.

Now anger is an unpleasant feeling -

the expression of it - a pleasurable release

Think of the man who stubs his toe in the dark....Well you know and I won't say from the Pulpit - which you and I might say when that happens.

That is one reason why we refuse to forgive -

We will not give up the pleasure of striking back.

What a delight it is to get even! I know - I used to be after the collegiate debater - cutting remark - there's animal joy in stabbing back - turning the knife around

How sweet it is to make the gossip eat his words!

How delicious to humiliate and trample upon him who has shamed us!

Sometimes we lie awake nights, seething with suppressed wrath, dreaming of a way to get even.

You do not believe me?

Think of the popularity of Count of Monte Christo through the ages - Successful revenge - that's its theme. This then is one basic cause for refusal to forgive the sheep animal satisfaction of it most of us will not admit that to ourselves - we would feel undignified.

When we are accused, we deny it hotly.

protest - unfair - insist on moral right, absolute justice

We go further - we rationalize and argue -

Forgiveness is not only wrong morally, we say, it is also dangerous.

breaks down morality

example - child who discovers forgiveness and takes advantage of it becomes spoiled.

What becomes of society if we pardon every offense? I can just hear the righteous arguments.

Well then, is personal forgiveness a violation of justice?

There are two kinds of justice

- a. law courts - symbolized by blind woman holding scale -
so much for so much
- b. justice of family - which includes, both punishment and forgiveness.

What is the difference?

In the justice of law court - the deed is identical with the person
criminal - may be an idealist - a dreamer - it doesn't matter, the whole person is punished

For a father - the deed is only a partial expression of a person

There is still good in person and we act to retrieve it

modern criminology to the extent that a state can afford to practice
it works on the same principle

No one asks that we pardon deed - father does not - criminologist does not -
rather that we correct mistakes and save what is good in person

"Let sinners cease out of the earth, And let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Hallelujah." (Ps. 104:35)

"Meir instead of being angry at them Let us see if we can help them change"

There is a marvelous story about Fabbi Meir and his wife Bruria in our tradition - that revolves around the fact that there are no vowels in our sacred Hebrew scrolls.

"The written text (suggests) sins as the meaning and not sinner."

Unless that is done -

Sometimes a person attempts to atone and we will not listen

Sometimes we hate a person so we can see no good in him

and the paradox is everyone else says so-and-so is a decent sort, I insist alone that he is not.

We lose the opportunity to redeem him.

Remember the story of Hillel, Shammai and the pagan

Well, we recognize all this - logical - true - valid.

How can we avoid indulging in pleasure - confusing person with deed?

First recognize the part played by animal pleasure in the person who offended us.

Then use your imagination.

All of us see into ourselves - what we lack is the capacity to see others.

To do hurt is as natural as to live.

We forget, when we resent slander, that we have slandered.

Yes, but we had our reasons - we tell ourselves, just careless or he deserved it -

human nature is of a piece

He also thought that he had good reason.

Our tradition teaches

"Don't judge your associate until you find yourself in his place."

For the offender may seem like arch-villain - from the outside -

Get inside of him or her -

a poor, frail soul

with limitations like our own.

With fears and excuses

and a thirst for life

He is us - only the position is different.

Next, it teaches some understanding

each of us is to some extent a product of circumstance of

heredity and environment

the boisterous hoodlum in subway may feel very unimportant in his slum

the bully may be compensating for a domineering father

the slanderer feels insecure and desperately wants to be important

When you understand you cannot hate.

You don't have to like what they do or have done - but you can not hate.

That is the way of forgiveness, of refusing to regard deed as equal to person.

Now, to renounce the pleasure of revenge takes imagination and understanding
The story that comes to my mind is both cute and true. The tennis courts of an Iowa High School adjoined the grounds of a church rectory. Occasionally, excuberant youngsters whammed a tennis ball over the fence onto the trim church lawns. One day a player chasing a stray ball came face to face with a large sign which read: No Trespassing. The sign came down overnight, however, when the tennis club erected its own sign directly opposite. The one read: Forgive us our Tresspasses"
Well - lets take a Test case and think of modern terrorism. I can understand the Arabs better than the middle class wild men of modern Germany. Arab terrorism it's a hideous wrong. innocent people - careers, lives are destroyed.

There is a Sense of outrage at the idea of a bomb in a grocery store maiming innocent shoppers. People react two ways to a - fight or flight

Some run away, or deny it's occasional happening

others choose the better reaction which is to fight - terrorism and seek Israeli rights but without hating

How can we avoid hating -

1. Pleasure must be renounced.
2. Must not confuse the whole with the part.

Arab hopes for self determination were born the same time as that of the Israelis and the European zionists.

3. Use your imagination and understanding. The British divided the population hoping to keep their foot hold there. The war in 1948 inflamed their hopes of acquiring all that the Jewish pioneers had build. They ended up in the squander of refugee camps.

Would we not seek to keep our cause alive also even Habash - once a University Professor. He has spent years obsessed with injuries, real and imagined one confines a lunatic one does not hate him.

The saints would forgive, but fight terrorism with all they had, the Israelis

How much we personally need forgiveness today.

Heinrich Heine said it best:

"Since I myself stand in need of God's pity, I have granted amnesty to all my enemies".

One more thing and then I'll start drawing it to an end. Anger is the frustration of a positive wish or impulse.....

Each man kills the thing he loves.

Have we not knowingly or unknowingly erred?

Careless of those who love us we have hurt our parents, wives, children - betrayed our friends.

All because we are frail human beings.

Do we not want them to understand that we meant no evil, to understand and to forgive?

Then we too must understand and forgive those who have offended against us.

It has truly been taught "He who will not forgive breaks the bridge over which he himself must cross".

Yes - we need forgiveness from somebody.

And shall we not give it?

Is there not enough pain and unhappiness in the world without our adding to its sum?

Must we not, all of us, suffer disease and hunger, watch those we love die, see life slip from our fingers, dreams fade?

Has not each heart its full share, that we need seek revenge and fill the cup of anguish to overflowing?

That is the lesson of Kol Nidre. Let us no more tear ourselves from each other - hate, resent and seek to hurt.

The world is cold enough.

Let us rather huddle together for warmth, hold hands for comfort.

That in this difficult business of living, we may find some rest and surcease.

That if life must have its sorrow, it may be as slight as we can make it.

That we may spread as much happiness as lies in our poor power - between this day and that dark veil that leads to the world beyond, ~~where~~ all is forgiven because all is understood. He who forgives, he shall be forgiven.

Amen

At some point in our lives, certainly those of us who have reached or passed the mid-way mark, we begin to ask ourselves some searching questions. Such questions as "What have I achieved?", "What remains to be done?", "What must I yet achieve?" I suggest this morning that there is a question more basic than any of these or their like. And that is - "What have I learned?" "What wisdom have I gained?" "What have the years taught me?" For, some day we shall leave our achievements and accomplishments, whatever they might be, to others to enjoy, use or admire or even to squander and neglect. But our wisdom we shall take with us. For wisdom is not a possession; to be wise is something you are, not something you have. And ultimately, we shall be remembered not for what we have or had, but for what we were.

Here I am reminded of what his colleagues said of the Talmudic sage Shmuel Hakaton, at the time of his death. "Kings die and leave their crowns to their sons, rich men die and leave their wealth to their heirs. Shmuel Hakaton has taken the most precious things of this world with him and has gone away."

Here is the paradox. The memory of the Kings and their crowns has long-since vanished, the wealth of the plutocrats has long-since disappeared, but the words of Shmuel Hakaton - his wisdom - have been pondered for almost 2,000 years and will go on being studied and reflected upon as long as man values wisdom.

So, then, the real question many of us should be asking ourselves is "what has my experience of life taught me over the years?" "What have I learned in that hard school, not as one learns, say a foreign language or mathematics - these unused, quickly evaporate - but as one learns a lesson that is never forgotten by virtue of the fact that it becomes bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. In a word, you live by it and with it.

Here, I must talk for myself, though I speak aloud and share with you my conclusions. I give my own answer to the question all of us must face. For each man has his own encounter with life. I can only hope that my own conclusions wake familiar echoes within you and that here and there, mine coincide with yours.

My experience has taught me that for all its variety, there are relatively few things in life that really matter, that really make a fundamental difference in the quality of one's living. I like to put that in terms of a boyhood experience, a boy who summered in what was then a relatively small Quebec town. Every summer the Circus would visit my town. There was, as I recall it, a Mid-way, lined on each side by a series of side-shows, each with lurid posters proclaiming the wonders and marvels to be seen within. In front of each tent, a glib leathered-lung barker sought to lure the passers-by inside. The temptation was often more than a boy, in the days before television, could resist. So I found myself visiting the side shows, one after another. When I got to the main tent, the real purpose of my visit, to my dismay, I no longer had the price of admission.

That experience in the form of a parable, has come back to me, reinforced again and again. All along the road the barkers call out alluringly, "Step this way, step this way." If anything, their number has increased. But again and again, I have tried to tell myself - save your substance, your time, your energy, your thought, your concern, yourself, for the main show, the things that really matter. What a pity if you miss that because you have expended yourself on the trivial, the insignificant, the second- and third-rate.

What are these things that have really mattered, the sources of durable satisfaction? Though they are quickly enumerated, they take a life time, and then some, to ripen and bring anywhere near fruition - work, love and courage, or, if you will, faith - the latter two are hardly distinguishable. I have felt most alive, most purposeful, most filled with a sense of direction, the sense that I was needed in the world by man and God, when I was engaged in work in which I could take pride; when I sought to approach those closest to me, as well as fellowman, in love and understanding; when I had the courage to speak and act for truth and right as I saw them.

Work, love and faith - what do they exclude? - A thousand and one things that I have learned really do not matter, yet seem to pre-occupy so many people.

I would not waste these precious minutes enumerating some of the things - the sideshows - on which so many people waste their lives, grow anxious and deeply concerned about, angry and infuriated over, take in all solemn seriousness - their golf score, whether they are "in" or "out" with one group or another, the kind of car they drive, what kind of address they have, what kind of publicity they get or fail to get; the list runs on and on.

If somehow I could share the lesson I have learned in these years with some young person, I would say, "My child, the things that really matter in life are three-fold - work, love and faith - attend to them and they will be the source of your deepest and most durable satisfaction. They will sustain you for the length of your days."

The years have taught me another lesson, no less precious. It has taught me to accept occasional failure, frustration and mistakes without bitter rankling and endless self-recrimination. All along the path, at every significant step forward in my life, family and friends wished me good-luck and success. Those were the familiar words I heard from my Bar Mitzvah on to my ordination as a Rabbi a chai, eighteen years ago. But no one called me aside and said - Look, success and achievement and good-luck present no problem. But nobody's life is an endless series of successes. No batter ever has or ever will hit a home run every time he gets up to bat. Prepare to handle the times you will strike out, so that the next time you will not be dogged by the crippling feeling that you can't win, that you are a born loser. I wish someone had said something to that effect to me. But like all true wisdom, I had to learn it for myself.

I had to learn that the most gifted, the most talented, the most understanding person occasionally fails. No lawyer wins every case. No doctor always sees a potentially dangerous physical condition in time. No writer unfailingly produces a successful, acclaimed book. No dramatist invariably comes up with a hit. Then why should I expect in my own engagements and commitments, what is given to no man?

Abstractly that was relatively easy to master and that was the easiest part of the lesson. The hard part was learning how not to keep on hating myself because of the failure, frustration and mistakes that came my way now and again. The hard part was sitting myself down and without self-rejection, without nagging, gnawing self-depreciation, try to understand why and where I had failed. And where there was no remedy for it, develop the inner strength to live with the situation just as I live with my other limitations.

Oh how I wish I could somehow communicate and really share this lesson with a multitude of people, dejected, beaten and beating themselves incessantly because of their mistakes or presumed mistakes. There is the heartbreak because now and then children do not turn out as we had hoped, dreamed and expected and parents are ridden with crippling self-rejection and guilt. Oh how I wish I could make them realize that there are forces and powers, inner and outer that swirl around our children and shape their lives - forces and powers over which we have little control. Of course, you may have played your part consciously or unconsciously. But failure and error must be assimilated, digested and integrated and not permitted to ulcerate in our system. And once so integrated, we must go on from there.

There is the businessman who with what he thought was a fool-proof business finds one day that it is turning sour, and that he is in for some serious reverses. What matters most in the long run is the ability to absorb the frustration involved and not be absorbed by it.

So then, whatever its particular context, occasional defeat and failure need not be shattering. It is part of the human condition put there perhaps by God to remind us that we are limited fallible men, not Gods. A wise old Jew in Israel some years ago hearing me complain how frustratingly difficult it was to keep Yiddishkeit alive in America, once said to me: "Men darf ton, nisht auften". Your job is to do, not necessarily to succeed."

There is a final lesson I have learned in the hard school of experience, the years have brought. Again and again, along the road something or someone precious has slipped away from me. I thought in my naivete that somehow they would go on and on, that always things would be the same, that I would go on indefinitely cherishing them, appreciating them just the way they were. But one by one, as the years go on, they slip away. First there are the things and conditions that change as the years roll on. There was youth with its endless energy. Who can really hold on to that? Then there were the children when they were young and you were young and the fun you had together with their brightness and eagerness. But children grow up and strike out on their own path. They will, I expect eventually get married and start their own family. The focus of their lives shifts. Again you realize that you can't and indeed shouldn't try to hold on. Then there are the good and dear friends, the people you cherish and who cherish you because there is a special kind of bond between you. Here and there, one and then another slips away and you feel diminished. Thus, as the years go by, the realization dawns and strikes keep that there is little in life that you can really have and hold and say this is mine forever and ever. In a word, you learn to hold life and its fullness "with open hands", ready to let go when the time comes.

-3- Yom Kippur Morning

Is that a verdict of infinite sadness? Not at all. It is rather an imperative, a daily reminder to cherish, to value, to maximize every hour, every day. How many of us do? If we really did, would we know the hours of boredom, the restlessness that needs constant distraction, the time we deliberately set out to kill with empty mindless, soul-impoverishing pursuits?

There is a scene in Thornton Wilder's unforgettable play "Our Town" that has stayed with me for decades. The scene is this. Emily, the young bride, who has died in childbirth, was permitted by the Stage Manager to return to her home in Grover's Corners to live one day with her family. The day she chooses to relive is her 12th birthday.

She goes back but the experience is not a very satisfactory one. Everyone, her brothers and sisters, even her father and mother, are too preoccupied with busyness about life ever to stop and see the other, or even to stop and enjoy life itself. Emily stops to plead: "Oh Mama, just look at me one minute as though you really saw me..... just for a moment now we're all together. Mama, just for a moment we're happy. Let's look at one another."

But life went on preoccupied and fleeting and at last Emily turns to the Stage Manager and cries out: "I can't, I can't go on. Oh, oh, it goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another. I didn't realize.... So all that was going on and we never noticed."

And so she asks to be taken back. But before she leaves, she turns to say good-bye.

"Good-bye, good-bye world. Good-bye Grover's Corners, Mama, Pappa, good-bye to clocks ticking...and food and coffee...and newly ironed dresses and hot baths.

Oh earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you." She then turns to the Stage Manager and asks:

"Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it? Every, every minute?"

"No, he answers," the Saints and poets maybe they do some."

That is what it means to hold life with open hands - to realize it, value and maximize it, every, every minute.

Here, too, I wish with all my heart that I could share the lesson. My mother used to quote the ironic Yiddish proverb - "Azes kumt tzum leben, iz nish do kein yahren." "When it comes to living, you have no more years." The answer then is here, now and quick.

In a few hours we shall recite the Yizkor Service and read the words of the Psalmist: "Teach us, O God, to count our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom." When you do, then look back over your days and years and ask yourself, what have they taught me? Perhaps, something not too dissimilar from what they have taught me. Work, love and faith.

Amen

Today, I'd like to talk to you about changing. Oh, not changing what we like about ourselves - and that's most of the way we are. I'll talk about changing what we either want to change, or some how sense that we and our families would be happier if we could change.

BOFN AGAIN JEWS

TITCHADESH

In his autobiography, Rabbi Morris Kertzer writes that he once went to visit the Lubavitcher Rebbe, as part of a delegation from the New York Board of Rabbis. They went to discuss matters of mutual concern and ways in which they could share and trade their political influence. In the course of the discussion the Rebbe made a request. He said: "The Housing Authority is putting up a high-rise apartment here in this neighborhood for poor people. Some of my people have applied for admission. They have met all the requirements and they have been accepted. We have just one request. These people are observant Jews, they don't use the elevator on Shabbas, and so would it be possible for them to be given the lower floors." It seemed like a reasonable request, so Rabbi Kertzer said that he would try. Then the Rebbe made a second request. He said: "When you make this request to the Housing Authority, please don't make it in the name of Lubavitcher Jews or Hassidic Jews or Orthodox Jews, - make it simply in the name of Jews."

Rabbi Kertzer said to him: "But Rebbe, don't you know that not all Jews are orthodox, that many Jews do use an elevator on Shabbas?" To which the Rebbe replied: "From what a Jew does this Shabbas you can never predict what he will do next Shabbas."

That story is the key to understanding the remarkable success that the Rebbe has had in persuading people to change. It is why I reluctantly admire him. He really believes that people can change, and so he works on them until they do. If we weren't capable of changing, if we were really creatures of habit or prisoners of the past, as some people claim we are, then Rosh Hashanah would be a waste and Yom Kippur would be a lie. For what is the use of giving sermons urging people to change if they can't? What is the use of saying prayers asking for God's help in changing if we can't, - it is like rubbing salt in the wounds to tell people to change if they can't. The key to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is the belief that "from what a man does this week you can't predict what he will do next week". That also is the basis of psycho-therapy. If our characters were really completely formed and determined by what happened to us in our infancy then therapy would be impossible. The premise of therapy is that, even though the past does mold us to some extent, even though our childhood experiences affect us to some extent, nevertheless we are capable with help and with effort of changing.

The Talmud makes the same point: "Al ta-amen bi'atmicha ad yom motcha, never be sure of yourself until the day you die." As proof, it cites the case of Yochanan Khen Gadol who was a leader of the Pharisees all his life, and then at the age of eighty switched and became a Sadducee. Now if a person can do that, if he can be a leader of one party all his life and then switch at the age of eighty and join the opposition, then no one is safe for as long as he lives. You can be moral this week, and fall into sin the next. Or as the Rebbe puts it: "From what a man does this week you cannot predict what he will do next week."

We in America have seen several sad examples of this truth in recent years. Three Congressmen of outstanding reputation did something very foolish which destroyed their names and ruined their careers. One of them, our own, was recently on the cover of Parade Magazine with his wife for changing again. This is what makes life such a great adventure and such a great danger, - that we are always in the process of becoming. Either becoming better or becoming worse but we are always in the process of becoming.

Old Jewish law teaches us that. Do you know that if you meet someone whom you have ~~not seen for~~ twelve months you are supposed to say a brocho? "Baruch atta Adoshem, Elokeynu melech ha-olam, michayey hameytim. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who revives the dead." I know it sounds strange, but that's the law. Because every person is constantly being reborn and revived, and so if you meet someone whom you have not seen in twelve months he is really not the same person when you see him again. The prayerbook teaches us that. For it declares that God makes the world and everything in it anew each and every day. And it contains a blessing to be said on waking up in the morning: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, who restores life to dead bodies." For to wake up is to be reborn. Christianity has a concept of being twice-born. It believes that a Christian is born twice, once physically at birth and then

and then once again when he sees the light. Jews have a different concept, that a person is born, not just twice, but every day, every time he or she wakes up. Because life is constant change, either for the better or for the worse.

This is why the phrase I hate the most, the one that gets me so mad whenever I hear it is: That's the Way I am. Have you ever had a fight with someone, - you are trying to persuade them to change, - and they say to you: that's the way I am, - as if to say: that's my nature, take it or leave it. I hate that phrase because it isn't true. It is a libel on the self and a libel on God to say it. For the truth is that we aren't today the way we were yesterday, and we don't have to be tomorrow the way we are today.

We all know examples that prove this truth. I don't want to embarrass anyone who is sitting here today and so I am not looking in any particular direction right now, but all of us know examples of people who have changed. I know someone who is sitting here right now who a year ago was overweight, and today is not. I know someone sitting here right now who a year ago was a chain smoker and today doesn't smoke at all. I know someone sitting here right now who a year ago was shy and timid and withdrawn and today is vital and vibrant and alive. And every time you meet such a person you have to be impressed by the incredible flexibility of human beings and by their capacity of almost infinite change. And yet, we fear change, and resist it. We try to hold on to what we have and what we know and what we are. Because change is painful and change is scary. Like it or not we have to change all the time. The only choice we have is not over WHETHER to change but in which direction to change.

I saw a Jules Feiffer cartoon, in which he pictures a person hiding his head under a blanket, and the person says:

When I was 5 they made me go to school and I wasn't ready.

When I was 10 they made me go to camp and I wasn't ready.

When I was 18 they made me go to the army and I wasn't ready.

When I was 21 they made me get married and I wasn't ready.

When I was 25 they made me have children and I wasn't ready.

And now that I'm 50 I am going to stay in here and I'm not coming out until I'm ready.....

That cartoon touches us all. We smile and we wince when we see it because we all have that feeling sometimes. We would all like to stay under the blanket and not come out until we are ready. But the truth is that we can't stay home until we are ready, that ready or not we have to grow up.

The mistake that most of us make is that we change the externals of our lives and call that change. We change careers 3 or 4 times in our lives. We change jobs, our clothing styles and hairdos, our cars, our image; we even go to the plastic surgeon and change our face. And yet we remain restless, dissatisfied and unhappy. If we are ever going to find any peace and contentment in our lives we have to do a more basic thing than that. We have to change our insides, we have to change our inner selves and our souls and our spirits and not just our hairdo and our image. That is much harder to do, yet this is the kind of change that grow-up living requires.

Let me offer you a few simple suggestions of how to do it, how to bring about the changes in our lives that all of us would so much like to achieve.

1. Don't think that you can do it all at once, because you can't; if you try to do that you will fail and be disappointed. Try to do it one step at a time, one day at a time. Jews can be born again a little at a time. You can't move overnight from being tense to being calm, from being shy to being assertive, from being stingy to being generous. It doesn't work that way. The most you can hope for is to go two steps forward and one back. For it is not easy to change the habits of a lifetime and it can't be done overnight.

There is a story about Levi Yitschak of Berdichev that makes this point. It is told of him that every night before he went to sleep he would make out a list of all the sins and errors that he had done that day. And he would say: "God, I am sorry that I did these things. I promise that I won't do them again." And the next night he would do the same thing. He would make out a list of all the sins he had done that day, and many of them were the same ones he had done the day before. And he would say: "God, I am sorry that I did these things. I promise that I won't do them again." And then he would say to himself: "But you said the same thing yesterday?" And he would answer: "Yes, but this time I really mean it."

This is what we have to say to ourselves each night: this time I really mean it. Plastic surgery on the external part of us can be done quickly, painlessly, under an anesthetic, once and for all. But surgery on our inner life, on our souls and spirits, has to be more painful, gradual and delicate than that. It is a slow, gradual process, a forward-backward process until eventually we change, and so we have to be patient with ourselves and not expect immediate results.

2. The second suggestion is that we accept the fact that change is the law of life, and therefore we cannot live in the past, under the weight and the burden of the past. For no one can live that way. Anyone who tries to walk through life carrying all of the past on his back is bound to fall under the burden. There is a story about Napoleon to the effect that when he was a corporal, someone insulted him. And he swore: "If I ever get power I'll get you for this." Years later Napoleon got power. He became the emperor, but he never did anything to that man, he never kept his vow. And someone asked him why. He said: "Because I refuse to let Napoleon the corporal dictate to Napoleon the general."

Do you understand what he was saying? That he had grown, that he had changed, that he was now a different person, and so he wasn't going to carry the corporal that he had once been inside himself forever, weighting him down and warping his life. He was not going to be bound by what he was yesterday. If we ever are going to change we have to let go of yesterday's grudges, stop fighting yesterday's battles, and get over yesterday's "resentments". We have to let the past depart so that we can live in the present without the company of ghosts. We must shake off the chains of the past and say: WHATEVER WE DID - WE DID, AND IT'S DONE. WHATEVER WAS DONE TO US - WAS DONE TO US, AND IT IS NOW BEHIND US. And we will go forward.

3. The third thing we need to have is courage, and the faith in God which is the ultimate source of courage. We need to know that God presides over the present and the future as well as the past, and that He will be with us in the present and the future as He was in the past. It is always so tempting to cling to the past and to avoid entering the unknown and the unknowable future that all of us want to hold back. Do you remember what it was like on the first day when you entered nursery school? And your mother brought you to the door, stayed a while and then left you? Left you in a room full of strangers, called students and a strange creature called a teacher? Left you for a couple of hours for the first time in your life? That was a scary experience, was it not? And so was entering first grade, remember that? And so was graduating from high school and going to college, etc. So was every new experience that we entered, every new stage in our lives. And yet grow we must, we have no choice.

Let me teach you one word today. It's Hebrew, but it's not too much Hebrew. When we were kids and we got a new suit or a new dress, the word that our parents would say? Tischadesh. It means: May YOU become new. That was what they wished for us each time we got a new garment, not just that we would be new on the outside, in our appearance, but that we would become renewed on the inside, in our spirit, where it really counts, in the way we live. This new year that now beings, that never was before, that comes to us fresh and clean from the hands of the Creator, tischadesh, may we become new. For today IS the first day of the rest of your life. You and I have the power to keep what we like and to make the rest make it really new, different, fresh, if only we are willing to become new in it. This is Rosh Hashanah. Today we are all born again Jews. Let's do something with that.

Amen

First, a personal word, though I'm sure I speak for Rabbi Sanders and The Temple Officers as well. How good it is to see you! We are indeed an imposing multitude of worshippers in this beautiful sanctuary.

Some of you represent families which have supported and maintained the survival and growth of liberal and progressive Judaism in Arkansas for one hundred and eleven years.

Others are new to our community and we are strengthened and enlarged by your presence in our midst.

To one and all, to those for whom this is our 15th Rosh Hashanah together, to those who have themselves been sustaining members of the Congregation for over half a century, to those who are brand spanking new in town, we welcome you with the ancient words -

Blessed are you, who have come, in the name of the Lord!

Now, I will share with you some thoughts, on the religious expression "born again".

"HOW TO BE A 'BORN AGAIN' JEW
THROUGH ABRAHAM, JACOB AND MOSES"

Every so often a brand new phrase or expression catches our nation-wide attention and it's on everybody's lips. Psychiatry has provided us with terms like inferiority complex and oedipus complex. Sociologists have given us terms like alienation and group dynamics. The drug culture has given us expressions like uppers, downers and spaced-out. In the last year or so from the world of religion and coincidentally from the world of politics, we've been hearing a lot about the term "born again" Christian. It not only refers to the new President of the United States but also to legions of other Protestant Christians in every conceivable walk of life who proudly and passionately are referring to themselves as "born again" Christians. This term is by no means restricted to hopped up young moonies or Jesus freaks or wild foot-stomping body jerking, hymn-shouting evangelicals who have always been part of the Protestant Bible-belt scene in the United States, but to thousands upon thousands of very sane, straight and very respectable Christians who have in recent times embraced this unique new religious sensation of being "born again" in Christ and those "reborn" have spoken inspiringly of a brand new religious emotion which has not only seized their heart and mind and soul but has given them a whole new way of Christian life, purpose and direction.

What being a "born again" Christian means for Christians is a profound awareness on their part that their life-time identification with Christianity has been up to now a very routine, superficial, taken-for-granted religious attachment wherein the figure of Christ, while paid lip service to on Christmas and Easter and on occasional Sunday morning, has never been taken very seriously. A "born again" Christian, on the other hand, commits himself now to a very deeply-personal, emotionally-charged, spiritually exhilarating, one-to-one intimate relationship with Jesus himself, where Jesus, the man, and Jesus, the God, is felt as entering his very being and suffusing that being with his spirit, his person, (his sense of God-hood and everything else that Jesus is truly supposed to mean to a totally-committed Christian.) No longer does such a "reborn" Christian feel that he is just going through the motions of being a Christian. But now, through Jesus, with Jesus and in Jesus he can begin to live out his Christian destiny as Christ ordains for each truly committed Christian in this world and hopefully in the next. It's all very heady, moving, spiritual stuff for those who have gone this religious route. And it is not to be deprecated or dismissed by non-Christians.

While I personally marvel at this phenomenon, and also quite frankly, while I am naturally suspicious and skeptical of the long range religious fruits and larger religious impact of many of these "born again" Christians, particularly of the "Watergate" Charles Colson type, on the threshold of the New Year what particularly moves me about this phenomenon, no matter what I may personally feel about Christian dogma in general or Christian behavior towards Jews historically, is to wonder what it would take for the average Jew to go through a similar Jewish religious re-awakening and Jewish revival where each of us could unashamedly, unabashedly and inspiringly think of ourselves as being re-committed, re-animated and "reborn" Jews? Like Christians, most of us Jews if we are really honest with ourselves are also merely going through the motions of being Jewish. Most of us if we truly confessed to ourselves basically feel that we are Jews by descent rather than intent. We, too, pay our annual lip service to Judaism by our presence in our Temples on the High Holidays and an occasional Shabbos here and there. But to have our Judaism grab hold of us and rattle our bones to the spiritual quick and elevate our religious pulse to the point where our personal lives can be instantly

transformed and remotivated and re-charged to new heights of pure Jewish emotion, passion and purpose - since obviously, Jesus is not the figure to do this kind of "born again" job for us Jews, no matter what Christian missionaries may say, to whom, then, can you and I turn to in our four thousand year old Jewish religious heritage to re-spark our faith, re-ignite our religious passion, and give to each one of us a personal, thrilling and moving sense of being "re-born" Jews, recommitted to a burning sense of Jewish faith and destiny which can re-shape and re-vitalize our Jewish lives. I can think of at least three great Jewish personalities who can show us the way. Three whose lives and whose examples and whose still challenging teaching can give to each of us a stirring and powerful sense of what it really means uniquely to be a Jew both born and reborn. I invite you to think of them with me.

I think first of Abraham. Abraham is as alive and as meaningful to me today as he was first pictured and described by the writers and commentators of Genesis. The legends surrounding his youth which we all learned in Sunday school told us of the pagan idols that Abraham smashed in his father's house because Abraham early in his life realized the sham, the stupidity and the senselessness of worshipping things in which he did not believe that were unworthy of being worshipped. For Abraham, behind the orderly development of the universe there had to be a supreme cause at once controlling and permeating the process. For Abraham, what we call man and his whole immediate world and the larger universe beyond were all products of one, supreme, directing moral intelligence. For Abraham, this cause, this one supreme, directing, moral intelligence was God. Abraham discovered that God is. And, for Abraham, man is of God, a vital part of this Divine intelligence, mandated to use his mortal intelligence for the moral betterment of the world. For Abraham, man and God were to be co-partners, co-creators, and co-workers in this life. And, thus, to be a "born again" Jew, as Abraham our father envisioned it, and as Judaism our religion declares it, it is incumbent upon each of us to attempt to re-establish this powerful, moving sense of partnership with God and with this Divine intelligence without which each man and woman is frighteningly alone in a universe bereft of meaning, empty of purpose and at a loss for design. Being "born again" in Abraham is to have the sense and the maturity and the guts to smash the cold, stone idols of pagan despair and disbelief which surround and debase our modern day lives and begin to rebuild and renew that simple, comforting, elementary and still revolutionary Jewish God-idea the faith of our fathers in the partnership of man and God. Without such a faith, no Jew can properly benefit from calling himself a Jew.

I think next of Abraham's grandson, Jacob. I recently reread that moving scene in the Bible where young Jacob fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau is crossing a desert stream all alone in the frightening darkness of the Palestinian wilderness. And out of nowhere a stranger suddenly appears and engages Jacob in fierce hand-to-hand combat. The struggle with this mysterious stranger, whom the Bible implies is an angel of the Lord, rages on all night until the dawn with neither party having bested the other. Then, with the coming of the dawn the stranger cries out to Jacob: "Let me go!" But Jacob even though he is physically injured, diminished by the sudden encounter says to him. "I will not let you go until you bless me." And the story ends with the angel blessing Jacob and conferring upon him his new name, Israel, which in Hebrew means "one who battles with the Lord." There are many stories like this one in the Bible where the ancient authors attempted poetically to give the origin of the various names of our great ancestors. What is more significant to me is not the story of the name-change here, and what it implies but the moving, inspired symbolism of Jacob fiercely struggling with God with sudden pain and injury and more particularly, Jacob's ringing challenge which he flung at God in the heat of this struggle: "I will not let you go until you bless me!"

Being "born again" in Jacob, in my mind, is for each of us as we all encounter a whole variety of life's stormy struggles and trials to face up to these great and emotionally searing experiences in our life with the guts and the will and the faith of a Jacob who tenaciously refused to be beaten down and who was determined to wrest some victory from the encounter. With everything that life hurls at us which puts us all to the supreme test of our emotions and our character and our faith, who among us cannot fail to be strengthened and uplifted to face each grave crisis in our life with Jacob's rock-ribbed resolution: "I will not let you go until you bless me!" How we desperately need that kind of a fierce spiritual determination to help us all get through the periodic disappointments, set-backs, heartaches and tragedies which we all encounter as we go through life - whether in the midst of a disintegrating marriage, in the throes of a business failure, in the frustration of an unfulfilling career, on the heels of a broken friendship, in the crushing bereavement of a loved one or on the rack of an overwhelming illness. Being "born again" in Jacob is having the wisdom and the courage and the classic Jewish optimism to tap every conceivable resource in our body, mind and soul needed to fight whatever it is that we have to fight in life, which Judaism demands we face courageously, and wring from that fight a final, glowing victory over cowardness, weakness, inertia, complaining and "poor-me" self-defeating despair. Commit yourself to Jacob's faith and the curses of life, properly faced, Jewishly faced, can be converted gloriously into some surprising blessing.

If Abraham in our tradition represents the first Jew, then Moses has to represent the consummate Jew - the Jew from whose life and from whose teachings and from whose example Jewish history, Jewish law, and Jewish life has been uniquely and supremely influenced as no other single figure in the whole saga and drama of our faith has so influenced us. Whether Moses actually lived or not as an historic person, and, by the same token, whether Jesus actually lived or not as an historic person is really beside the point though I think they both lived when we consider all the laws, and statutes and codes and examples and great institutions which have been built up over the ages in the shining image of such exemplary men by the writers and shapers of religious history. What impresses me most of all about Moses, in terms of motivating us to be "born again" in his image, is to consider well the tough moral lesson surrounding the death of this monumental religious personality.

The writers of his biography and Jews throughout the generations have been sorely puzzled frustrated and depressed over the chilling and frankly not too religiously comforting circumstances surrounding the death of Moses. You recall that at the very end of his fantastic life of unparalleled leadership, service, contributions and devotion to his people God did not permit Moses to have his last and most passionately desired and seemingly deserved wish which was simply to be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Moses dies alone atop an alien mountain peak outside the Holy Land gazing out in heartbroken longing to be privileged to enter this shining Promised Land flowing with milk and honey to which he had dedicated his entire life and being. How unfair, how cruel, and how undeserved for a man of this noble and inspired stature, the true father of our faith, to be denied the just rewards for the living of the kind of life that he lived! The Bible tries to pass off this shocking disappointment by obliquely referring to some minor act of arrogance on Moses' part at some distant point in his career long since forgotten and ignored.

The Rabbis in the Midrash, however, commenting on this glaring, really unexplained inequity refused to "buy" this rationalization. They pointed out to us in the Midrash the larger and deeper and really challenging Jewish religious explanation as to why Moses did not receive his just rewards in life. It's a tough, perhaps even to you personally unsatisfying religious lesson to learn. But learn it we must if we are ever to be "born again" Jews! The Rabbis in the Midrash poetically picture Moses pleading with God to let him enter the Promised Land. But God only answers Moses with two simple Hebrew words: "Rav Leahah! It's enough Moses. Rav Leahah!" What kind of an answer is that? "It's enough! You really shouldn't want anymore!" What our fathers are telling us and what Judaism is basically trying to teach us, and what living the true Jewish religious life is really all about is that for a Jew, it is wrong and immature to expect to receive tangible rewards for one's moral strivings in this life. The reward, Judaism reminds us, is in the ethical striving itself. The reward is to be able to live the worthwhile life of a Moses, as Judaism impels each and every Jew to live such life of morality and decency with no expectation of reward. In our religion, one does good for goodness' sake. In the Jewish religion, one is ethical because it's man's duty to be ethical. In Judaism, one is moral because morality promotes the noblest in man and helps to create and sustain a decent and humane society.

Now, admittedly, that's a tough, demanding, rigorous, if not seemingly impossible code of religion to live by! But our fathers never taught us that Jewish ethics were easy; that to live the true Jewish life was undemanding. Far easier, I confess, to embrace other non-Jewish religious philosophies which preach and teach and herald an attractive and appealing and comforting "pie in the sky" kind of morality - where you'll get yours for being good; or, if you don't get it here, you can expect to receive it in the next world!

In my mind, being "born again" in Moses is a total, flat rejection of that reward or punishment infantile kind of spiritual baby-talk. Being "born again" in Moses is to commit yourself totally at every stage of human existence to an inspired and creative life of moral action and ethical purpose for no other reason than man's higher nature as God truly intended it and as Judaism challengingly defines it demands this of us in order to attain the heights of our true humanity in our God-given mandate to make this world a better and nobler place in which to live. That's the reward! That's the goal. To be "born again" in Moses, to be a "reborn" Jew, is to be a life-time partner in this never-ending ongoing moral work of the world. To be a "reborn" Jew, as the old Union Prayer-book put it so poignantly, is to be among those who are forever willing throughout their lives to sacrifice that others may not hunger. To be a "reborn" Jew is to be a bearer of light in the dark loneliness of stricken lives; to be a "reborn" Jew is to be among those who struggle and even bleed for the triumph of righteousness and morality among men. That's what it means to be a "reborn" Jew! That's what it means to be "born again"

into our faith. And, if you and I are truly serious about being Jewish in the highest and noblest and most challenging and difficult sense of that term, I say to you now on the threshold of the new born year that in the midst of your daily anguished, honest searching for the key to our larger Jewish destiny turn again to Abraham, Jacob and Moses. Be born again into their faith which still beckons to each of us across the ages - a faith creating ample room in all of our hearts and minds and souls for a supreme, single, directing moral intelligence in the universe that we call "God": a faith which fosters the courage to convert the curses in our life into blessings: and a faith whose larger and more satisfying reward in this life is the reward of a moral and spiritual life reborn, renewed, rededicated and re-inspired! May each of us be reborn into that kind of a good year.

Amen

