Rosh Hashanah 5779

Let me begin by wishing all of us a healthy and satisfying new year to come. A special welcome to all who have joined our community since last Rosh Hashana and greetings to our guest and friends who share our celebration today.

Many Jewish orators in years gone by would say: *Eyder ikh vel onhabyn redn loz mir zugun a pur verter* –Before I start speaking let me say a few words.

We gather to together every year to awaken ourselves to the process of teshuva-the days between RH and YK are called aseret yemei teshuva- the 10 days of teshuva- elsewhere we find the term yamim noraim –the Days of Awe, I prefer to call them the Awesome days. How awesome is it that our tradition invites us to introspection at this season? Hopefully we will benefit from the introspective teshuva process all year round.

At TBZ we deeply respect our traditional liturgy as well as our contemporary interpretation of these time-honored liturgical poems. By the way, we only present the highlights of literally hundreds of these *piyuttim* that are found in traditional *makhzorim*.

The central theme of RH is the coronation of God as *melech*, king. Our liturgical poems are not prayers in their usual sense, although we do indeed have prayers in our *makhzor*.

On RH we activate our power as both a people and as individuals to start again at the beginning; to announce our allegiance to the ineffable and the unknowable Divine Presence. We proclaim this by using the metaphor of God as *melech*, king. There is no king without a people. As we progress in the recitation of the multitude of poems and prose in our *makhzorim*, our order of service, we transform the metaphor of king into the Source of Reality within which all of us reside every moment of every day; every moment of our lives.

I apologize that the many of the English translations in your *makhzor*, often fail to capture the beauty and artistry of our traditional Hebrew liturgy. Not that it
cannot be done, but not enough has been done that reflect the poetic forms we recite. We offer transliterations so that many of us can pronounce the Hebrew of these poems.

We attempt to make up for this imbalance with melody and song; with melodies, both old and new, that awaken our souls to the awesome days we are about to enter. Our joyous participation and singing at TBZ is extraordinary. Our voices intense, yet sweet.

Often, we do not have time to read the additional commentaries in the makhzor. We move along at a rapid pace. Many of the additional readings for RH articulate in different ways how to understand what king, melech, can mean for us. Our associations with earthly kings are usually found in fairy tales or as political despots of both of the past and the present despots who held, and hold, our lives in their hands.

Often earthly kings act arbitrarily, and we approach them with fear and trembling. On RH we transcend the idea of an earthly king to focus on melech malkhei hamelachim, the heavenly king of kings. As said earlier we coronate the Divine King and we feel confident that this king is not only approachable but encourages us to engage in the process of disarming din - Divine judgement- and reinforcing those fountains of Compassion –rakhamim- we all possess within us. Metaphorically we move God from the Throne of stern and stringent justice to the throne or overflowing love and compassion. We overcome fear, yirah, with love-ahavah. This love connection to the Divine Source permits us to enter Yom Kippur without trepidation, but rather with a sense of confidence that this process of leaving judgementalism behind and opening our hearts to compassion is supported in community. The opportunity to stand in community and look at ourselves, our faults and failings and to commit to avoiding these pitfalls in the future is truly Awesome.

Now I’ll start speaking:

In a few moments we will end this majestic poem, unetaneh tokef with a short beautiful and poignant aphoristic observation:

*Adam yesodo ma-yafar vesofe le-afar-*  
Adam originated from dust and at the end will return to dust.
A few words about Adam.
Not too long ago, our own Rabbi Ebn Leader referred us, in his Hebrew College blog, to an ancient understanding of this day that is slightly removed from the more conventional understanding of what we celebrate on this day.

Rabbi Eliezer taught: the world was created on the twenty-fifth of Elul... This implies that Adam was created on Rosh Hashanah. In the first hour [of that day] the idea arose [in the Divine mind to create humankind]... in the ninth [hour Adam and Eve were] commanded [not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge], in the tenth [hour they] transgressed the commandment, in the eleventh [hour they were] judged, and in the twelfth pardoned by the blessed Holy One. The blessed Holy One said to Adam: “This will be a sign for your descendants. Just as you stood before me in judgment on this day and were pardoned, so too will they stand before me to be judged on this day and be pardoned.” — Pesikta d’Rav Kahana 23:1

As I was surfing the net I came upon a blog by Bill Gates that mentioned the concept of Adam I and Adam II. This rang of familiarity and this led me to his source for these terms in a book by the NYTimes columnist David Brooks, The Road to Character, who in turn returned me to an essay I hadn’t read in years, The Lonely Man of Faith written by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

Rabbi Soloveitchik, a Brookline resident, died in 1993. His wife, Tonya, with the help of her husband founded Maimonides, an Orthodox Day School of renown. The school would be an example of the fusion of Torah and Maddah, religious and secular studies.

Rabbi Soloveitchik, an heir to a distinguished Rabbinical family, was considered one of the true masters of halacha, the Jewish path of traditional practice. His ongoing series of Saturday night lectures at the Maimonides school drew hundreds for decades. A leading Talmudist and commentator of Maimonides, he served on the faculty of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Rabbinical school at Yeshiva University. For over four decades Rabbi Soloveitchik ordained over 2000 modern orthodox rabbis,

ADAM I AND ADAM II
It is difficult to summarize the main argument of "The Lonely Man of Faith" in a few short paragraphs. But here goes:

Rav Soloveitchik proposes that the two accounts of the creation of man (in chapters 1 and 2 of Bereishit) portray two types of earthling, two human ideals. In their approaches to God, the world and the self, these roughly parallel the two personae as representatives of two characteristics "Majesty and Humility" (The first, whom we will term Adam I, is guided by the quest for dignity, which is a surface social quality attained by control over one's environment. Adam in chapter 1 is given dominion over the earth, Adam I is a creative and majestic personality who espouses a practical-utilitarian approach to the world. Adam II, on the other hand, is guided by the quest for redemption, which is a quality of the depth personality attained by control over oneself. In chapter 2 Adam and Eve are asked the existential question “Ayekha?”, “Where are you?” This Adam is humble and submissive and yearns for an intimate relationship with God and with his fellow to overcome a sense of incompleteness and inadequacy. These differences carry over to the type of community each one creates: the "natural work community" (Adam I) and the "covenantal faith community" (Adam II).

God not only desires the existence of each of these personality types and each of these communities but binds each one of us to attempt to embody both seemingly irreconcilable types within ourselves. We must attempt to pursue both dignity and redemption. The demand to be both Adam I and Adam II leads to a built-in tension in the life of each person responsive to this call; and because one lives with a constant dialectic, a continual oscillation between two modes of existence, one can never fully realize the goals of either Adam I or Adam II. Unable to feel totally at home in either community, human beings are burdened by loneliness. Since this type of loneliness is inherent to one's very being as a religious individual, Rabbi Soloveitchik terms it "ontological (existential) loneliness". In a sense, this kind of loneliness is tragic; but since it is willed by God, it helps guide man to realize his/her destiny and is ultimately a positive and constructive experience.

The contemporary human of faith, however, experiences a kind of loneliness due to our historical circumstances, and this "historical loneliness" is a purely negative phenomenon. Modern individuals, pursue great success in the realm of majesty-dignity, recognize only the Adam I side of existence, and refuse to acknowledge the inherent duality of their being. Contemporary society speaks the language of
Adam I, of cultural achievement, and is unable or unwilling to understand the language of Adam II, of the uniqueness and autonomy of faith. Worse, contemporary Adam I has infiltrated and appropriated the realm of Adam II; he presents himself as Adam II, while distorting covenantal man's entire message.

Brooks says it this way in his NYTimes column:

*It occurred to me that there were two sets of virtues, the résumé virtues and the eulogy virtues. The résumé virtues are the skills you bring to the marketplace. The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral — whether you were kind, brave, honest or faithful. Were you capable of deep love?*

So, I've been thinking about the difference between the résumé virtues and the eulogy virtues. The résumé virtues are the ones you put on your résumé, which are the skills you bring to the marketplace. The eulogy virtues are the ones that get mentioned in the eulogy, which are deeper: who are you, in your depth, what is the nature of your relationships, are you bold, loving, dependable, consistency? And most of us, including me, would say that the eulogy virtues are the more important of the virtues. But at least in my case, are they the ones that I think about the most? And the answer is no.

*... Soloveitchik argued that these two sides of our nature are at war with each other. We live in perpetual self-confrontation between the external success and the internal value. And the tricky thing, I'd say, about these two sides of our nature is they work by different logics. The external logic is an economic logic: input leads to output, risk leads to reward. The internal side of our nature is a moral logic and often an inverse logic. You must give to receive. You must surrender to something outside yourself to gain strength within yourself. You must conquer the desire to get what you want. To fulfill yourself, you must forget yourself. To find yourself, you must lose yourself.*

*We happen to live in a society that favors Adam I, and often neglects Adam II. And the problem is that turns you into a shrewd animal who treats life as a game, and you become a cold, calculating creature who slips into a sort of mediocrity where you realize there's a difference between your desired self and your actual self. You're not earning the sort of eulogy you want, you hope someone will give to you. You don't have the depth of conviction. You don't have an emotional*
sonorousness. You don’t have commitment to tasks that would take more than a lifetime to commit.

Adam I is built by building on your strengths. Adam II is built by fighting your weaknesses. You go into yourself, you find the sin which you’ve committed over and again through your life, your signature sin out of which the others emerge, and you fight that sin and you wrestle with that sin, and out of that wrestling, that suffering, then a depth of character is constructed. And we’re often not taught to recognize the sin in ourselves, in that we’re not taught in this culture how to wrestle with it, how to confront it, and how to combat it. We live in a culture with an Adam I mentality where we’re inarticulate about Adam II.

Finally, Brooks quotes the renowned Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr summed up the confrontation, the fully lived Adam I and Adam II life, this way: "Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we must be saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own standpoint. Therefore, we must be saved by that final form of love, which is forgiveness."

Let me reiterate these sentiments in my own way: Majestic Adam I is given dominion over the planet and humble Adam II reaches out for a relationship with the Divine origins of that planet —reaches out for faith —despite its loneliness; despite Majesty and Humility strafing up against each as we struggle to integrate both sides.

We are blessed with so many ways to live as Jewish-Americans, we must not squander the opportunities we have of holding on to our future generations. We should not hesitate to show our love of our traditions and pass forward our values and practices. Even within those families that are comprised of people from different traditions we can still offer models of Jewish living; models of sharing our joy in our identities as Jews in this complex world. It is because of this very complexity that we need to ground ourselves in our particularistic, yet, universal way of seeing the world.
We are blessed with the luxury of time and space for introspection. This luxury must also not be squandered. As Jews in this country we have benefitted greatly from our diversity. We are blessed have so many avenues for expressing our tradition; so many ways to help us on our path to integration and forgiveness. I will be addressing some them at Kol Nidrei next Tuesday evening.

If there is an elevator speech explaining what it is to be a Jew, I would say: through Jewish living we become capable of integrating all our parts. I’d continue and say as we reach the second floor that as Jews we say no to tyranny despite the heavy price we have paid for it. By the third floor where my room is, I would conclude by saying: Jews don’t give up despite the odds rallied against us.

A living Torah and Jewish living is our path.

This is the time to make a commitment to Jewish living.

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We are here today to re-commit ourselves to Jewish living; to making Torah a way of life and not a relic to be revered but rather to see our tradition as a call to life. Last Shabbat we read:

19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.
These values are best articulated, individually and communally, in observing the Shabbat. The end of Creation, the Shabbat serves as the connection between Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis. Shabbat is the weekly booster shot to aid us in this process of integration of Adam I and Adam II. As you know, my definition of observing Shabbat derives from facing the reality we live in and observing our need for Shabbat in our lives. The strength of molding a Shabbat observance from a deep internal desire to integrate the Adam I and Adam II within us is powerful. Creating and living a Shabbat of our own, not because there is a command in a book, but because of our deep need to pave a path of faith for ourselves, our families, our community. The Shabbat is a testimony to faith.

I challenge all of us to use the next 10 days of reflection—these Awesome Days, to value the gift of Shabbat as a day dedicated to nurturing our Adam II as we face the overwhelming challenges of being in the grip of Adam I for the 6 days of the week.

As creatures who have come into this world as Jewish human beings or have joined us on the path towards our destiny, I ask you create a Shabbat for yourself and your family, a Shabbat that reverberates throughout the Cosmos; a Shabbat that is the echo of Eternity; a Shabbat that offers hope in a reckless world; a Shabbat supports hope for a world that that can be redeemed: a Shabbat that nurtures faith.

Faith is hope. Faith refuses to blink when one comes eye to eye with evil.

Faith is holding yourself more dearly- faith in one’s self is a prerequisite of faith in the world and all those who dwell on our planet.

Faith helps us through horrible times.

Faith helps Adam I and Adam II integrate. Rav Soloveitchik tells us –it is a lonely task. This struggle for integration, like birth and death, is the path towards creating a meaningful life- a life that with all of its predictability and unpredictability is found in the dash between the dates of our birth and death on our gravestones.
As birth, death and everything in between, are experiences that we share with all creatures, faith is an individual project. Just as intoxication is not experienced in the same way by all people, faith can only be experience as an individual.

The lonely path of faith allows the fusion Adam I and Adam II.

In the Jewish tradition we also fuse faith and works. We do not accept the notion that faith alone provides access to salvation. Faith without mitzvoth. Mitzvoth are our points of connection to our past, present and future.; and our connection to mitzvoth leads us to understand our obligations to ourselves, our community and to the entire world.

Faith demands that our Adam I and Adam II to reside in harmony, we need them both. Together they provide a lamp unto our feet as we walk on our Jewish path. **We need Adam I to help create, hopefully, so many wonderful things in the world. We need Adam II in our dance with the divine.**

As the lonely man of faith tells us: **Majesty and humility are not opposed to each other but rather balance each other.**

Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Przysucha, a pillar of Polish Hasidism in the early part of the 19th century put it this way: *Everyone must have two pockets. In the right pocket are to be the words: “For my sake was the world created.” (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5) And in the left: “I am but dust and ashes.” (Genesis 18:27)*

**Shana tova tikateyvu vetekhateymu**

May we be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life for a **shanah tova**, which literally means a good change.

May we inscribe and seal ourselves in the Book of Life by living a Jewish life connected deeply to a living Torah, the Torah that teaches us that we are descendants of Adam, that first earthling, created in the image of God. This underlines our commitment to ourselves, commitment to ourselves, our people and to all those who dwell on our planet.