

Kol Nidrei  
Har Shalom 2019  
Rabbi Irving Elson

There is always a Starbucks cup left on the table.



Those of you who were here last year for Rosh Hashana services in the social hall service might remember me speaking about a line serious “Star Wars” fans repeat to each other, perhaps to prove the depth of their commitment to the franchise. “Han shot first!” they cry, referring to a scene in the original 1977 Star Wars film that was altered when the film was later digitized and re-released. Nowadays, only Star Wars fans who happen to possess aging VHS tapes of what has since been renamed

“Episode I” are able to see with their own eyes that Han Solo did not kill the character Greedo in self-defense.

All of which brings us to this year, the year that the HBO TV series “Game of Thrones” created a tempest in a coffee cup. (Or a tea cup. Theories vary.)

A few months ago, not long after the fourth episode of the final season of HBO’s show became stream-able, that is, you could watch in on demand, social media exploded.

For those of you who don’t know about Game of Thrones, the show is set in an imagined medieval reality of blood and fantasy.

What happened was that soon as HBO made their show available on demand, and tv viewers were able to watch and rewind and re-watch, some eagle-eyed viewers spotted, something unusual, something out of place something just not right...do you know what it was?

That's right, a Starbucks coffee cup on a table. A modern coffee cup, complete with lid and the Starbucks logo.

The internet has been having fun with the blooper ever since, but that's not really the point of tonight.

The point is that once the error was discovered, HBO changed the scene.

What they did is they remastered the video they already took and digitally were able to remove the cup of coffee from the table!!

And so, if you download or stream that episode and that scene today, the cup is gone!!

One night you'd stream this episode and there sitting on the table in front of the "Mother of Dragons" one of the main characters would be the anachronistic coffee cup. The next night you'd stream the same episode and the cup would be gone.

Forever.

The mistake the production team made has been undone. When the final season is released on DVD (for the six people in the world who still buy DVDs), there surely will be no coffee cup.

Newsweek magazine, who covered that traumatic event wrote:

*“The only evidence that the error ever happened will be the uncertain vessels of human memory, along with a handful of screenshots floating around cyberspace. In 50 years, the remaining images will be crowded out by noise. A future historian, spelunking through our era to understand what made “Game of Thrones” so popular, may even be unaware that the lapse ever occurred.”*

I know that by now, many of you are thinking to yourselves, “Who cares?”

Well, I do...not so much because the hundreds of people who worked on the show made a mistake which was readily fixed, but because of my profound reaction to this entire incident.

At first, I felt it was unbelievable. How can a production that costs over 10 million dollars per episode, with hundreds of people involved make such a mistake, NOBODY NOTICED??.

But the reason I am actually speaking about this tonight, on the holiest night of the year is because after feeling surprised at this error, I then realized I had felt this huge sigh of relief.

You see, because that lonely cup of Starbucks coffee left on a table in the fabled Castle of Winterfell actually turned that castle into a synagogue and helped me become a better Rabbi and a better Jew.

I'll let you into a little bit of life here.

After every High Holy Days, and after every time that Rabbi Raskin is gracious enough to share his pulpit with me and let me give a sermon, there is this interchange of me asking friends, family, or anyone else I trust how they thought my sermon actually went.

If you are like me, you ultimately end up running through what went right...but really focus on what went wrong. And you know, I find that “There is always a Starbucks cup left on the table.”

There are always mistakes

There are always things I could have said differently,

There is always a cup on Starbucks left on the table.

You know what they say: “Stuff happens”..... And it is a heavy emotion.

You can easily get to the point where you think one tiny thing might have the ability to disrupt a sermon, screw up a service or worse, perhaps even something in my day job at the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council!!!

There is always a Starbucks cup left on the table.

No matter what happened to me that was fantastic, that one mistake, that one misspelled word on a memo, a mixup with another part of our office, or a missed email tanks it all.

But then, then I saw a Starbucks cup on Game of Thrones and I breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Just when I think that a mistake I make be it at work, in a relationship or in life can ruin everything, I think of the cup of coffee. And I realize that it really doesn't.

We just think it does.

HBO issued a statement about the mistake in Game of Thrones.

It said as follows: The latte that appeared in the show was clearly a mistake.

That's right:

“Daenerys Stormborn of the House Targaryen, the First of Her Name, the Unburnt, Queen of Meereen, Queen of the Andals and the Rhoynar

and the First Men, Khaleesi of the Great Grass Sea, Breaker of Chains and Mother of Dragons.” They said had ordered a herbal tea, not coffee”

This group of people, who were near the end of one of the most anticipated series finales in television history made a big mistake. And when they got busted on it, they made a joke and realized it wasn’t the end of the world. There is a big lesson we can learn.

So let’s be serious here...or actually the exact opposite. What you think is a huge deal clearly isn’t. If anything, things like this show proves to us that we are all human. And we make a big deal about a tv show that made a mistake...how honest are we being about repenting for other things we have done?

Yes, I am all for perfection, but there is a fine line between doing our best and the being perfect.

In all actuality, we could all stand to chill out a little. Especially when stressed, or when a tiny mistake happens and we instantly think it ruined everything that could have been fantastic.

So take a deep breath when you realize you left a cup on the table. Don't let it spoil the time you now have in front of you.

On this Kol Nidrei evening, you are with a loving caring congregation who care about you and care about your family, with all your imperfections.

So tonight and thru Nehila tomorrow night, take the time for figure out how to improve yourself, how to make your life and the life of those around you better.

(Story of moose hunters)

On this Yom Kippur, strive to get a little farther than you did last year, but remember, it's ok if you don't...because

There is always a cup of starbucks left on the table, and we can always fix that next year.

Shana Tova.