

Shanah Tovah.

Tonight begins Rosh Hashanah and we celebrate the creation of the world. How marvelous is this place! This world that we live in is a gift from God. We call today, this first day, Rosh Hashanah, in our tradition Yom Harat Olam—the day the world was conceived. And our birth tale is such that we look to the Garden of Eden as the unique and pastoral and peaceful birthplace of our world. Gan Eden, Paradise, the Garden of Eden we call it.

When God made the world, 5771 years ago according to our calendar... (Ok we lovers of science know that it is longer than that...but it is a creation myth not a creation theory) God saw that it was good! Throughout the narrative of the Creation story... we see that it is good. The world is good, humanity is good.

And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good

And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas; and God saw that it was good

And God made two great lights; the large light to rule the day, and the small light to rule the night; and he made the stars. And God set them in the firmament of the

heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.

Everything in the opening story of creation is created and blessed with goodness. Goodness overflows in the story of creation. And that is part of the promise of tonight, the promise of the New Year, of Rosh Hashanah. We celebrate the Creation of the World and goodness overflows to each one of us.

We too look toward the New Year in the hopes that we can say. This is very Good... Yehi tov m'od. This is why we say Shanah Tovah==And wish each other a good year. We want it all to flow from that same goodness of creation. Today—Hayom.

We dip the sweet apples in honey too as symbol of the goodness of life and the hope for the year. Apples are associated with Love, awakening and birth. We dip the already sweet apples in an extra coating of sweetness and goodness as a symbolic prayer that helps us ask for the same coating of sweetness and goodness over our already sweet lives.

We remember on this Creation Day that we too have a chance to create our world anew. We have a chance to birth a new self, a new world, a new way of doing things. We on Rosh Hashanah can invite a new way of being and acting.

But on this Rosh Hashanah we have to acknowledge the aches and pains of our world. Our earth more than ever is crying out to us to do change, to create our world anew. The tears come from the Heavens as the Angels and God weep for what we have done to our world.

Adam and Eve looked around the Garden and saw abundance and beauty. It was a lush and beautiful eco-system. A utopia where their needs were met and their desires fulfilled. They lived in harmony with nature, with the plants and animals and all was provided for them. Of course this was until they ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Until their own coming of age and awareness of self and awareness of the world. And with that awareness—a different relationship to the earth. One where they had to work and toil; one that had its ups and downs, pains and joys. They were responsible for the earth now.

Adam and Eve after their expulsion from the Garden had a unique responsibility to care for and toil to create their world. No longer was it just provided for them. They were more fragile and so was their world. In fact, that fragility, that unique awakening to the harshness that can come in real life, the cruelties and vagaries of each day made them appreciate all the more so the tender goodness of the Garden of Eden. Once it was provided for them. Now they had to care for their world. So too for each of us.

When we were children – our world was provided for us. Now as adults we have to care for our world. Rosh Hashanah reminds us to look at the way in which we are caring for ourselves and our world.

On this creation Day—Hayom Harat Olam –we can no longer hide our eyes from the trauma that our earth is in. Our globe is hurting. On this Rosh Hashanah the time has come for us to respond-to literally create our world anew.

As Rabbi Daniel Troster writes in *Interpreting Jewish Environmental Texts* on the Coalition for Environment and Jewish Life website:

“Psalm 115:16 says “The heavens belong to Adonai, but the earth God gave over to humanity.” On the surface, this is not a supportive environmental text. And sometimes anti-environmental religious people quote it as a basis for the total human use and abuse of creation. But that is not how we need to understand it. Abraham ibn Ezra, a 12th century Bible commentator wrote, “The ignorant have compared humanity’s rule over the earth with God’s rule over the heavens. This is not right, for God rules over everything. The meaning of *but the earth God gave over to humanity* is that humanity is God’s officer [or steward -- *pakeed*] over the earth and must do everything according to God’s word.” In other words, humanity is not free to do what it wants with God’s creation. We are here to act as the stewards of creation on

God's behalf and that means taking care of it, not wasting or abusing it"

(http://www.coejl.org/learn/je_interpret.php).

According to Jewish tradition we are not over the earth, but we have a responsibility to care for the earth. Like Adam and Eve the first humans. Because yes, our earth, our worlds are fragile. We are fragile.

My friends, we have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. And the time of reckoning has come. We can no longer claim innocence. That we don't understand what is happening to our world as corporations abuse our planet without a sense of responsibility and we recklessly consume and throw our waste away.

The Midrash teaches us: "God led Adam around all the trees of the Garden of Eden. And God said to Adam: 'See My works, how good and praiseworthy they are? And all that I have created, I made for you. [But] be mindful that you do not spoil and destroy My world--for if you spoil it, there is no one after you to repair it.'" (Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13)

Our earth, our planet home is suffering and we must do something more than we are doing now. Increasingly we are negatively impacting the globe, our planet home. There is no one after us to repair it. We have to take responsibility for our

role in the continuing destruction of our environment, our eco-systems, and our food supply. We have to take responsibility for the fragility that is our worlds and walk with greater care. Rosh Hashanah is our reminder. Care of all of our worlds: Our fragile inner world and our fragile outer world.

I don't know about you, but for more than 100 days this spring and summer, as I watched millions of gallons of oil spill into the Gulf of Mexico my heart broke. What are we doing to our world, our planet home? We have eaten of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We have let our corporate interests run amok and run wild. In our oil and fuel thirst driving our big engine SUV's and cars we are not living out our Jewish values to care for God's creation.

This summer was the hottest on record back east and one of the coolest on record here in the west coast. In Russia, choking smoke filled the air around Moscow as the forest fires burned and toxic trees of Chernobyl burned in the summer heat. The contamination was overwhelming.

It is clear that climate change is here to stay. And yet when our government had the opportunity to enact new standards this summer, when it had a chance with to enact sweeping changes in the face of the Gulf Oil disaster—the political polarization of Washington put it asunder. The climate and energy bill that was a part of Obama's agenda died this summer. Despite the fact that a June poll showed

that 76 percent of Americans want our government to limit climate pollution! His own cabinet lacked the will and the way to take advantage of the moment when our nation was looking and seeing what price we pay when we pollute our earth.

According to Wired.com This summer “100-square-mile block of ice 600 feet thick has calved off one of the largest ocean-bordering glaciers in Greenland. The Arctic hasn’t lost a chunk of ice that large since 1962.” “In the early morning hours of Aug. 5, an ice island four times the size of Manhattan was born in northern Greenland,” oceanographer Andreas Muenchow of University of Delaware said in a press release Aug. 6. “The freshwater stored in this ice island could keep the Delaware or Hudson rivers flowing for more than two years. It could also keep all U.S. public tap water flowing for 120 days.” (Read More <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2010/08/ice-breaks-off/#ixzz0wL9O86pM>)

This is further proof that we cannot wait. Further proof that our world is out of balance. And yet we twiddle our thumbs as our earth cries out to us. How fragile our worlds: Our inner worlds and our outer worlds. Rosh Hashanah is our time to begin the repair. This is the Creation Day. Let us begin to create with God in mind the new ways of living and letting goodness flow.

A recent study from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) concluded that an all-out societal investment in energy efficiency could save 46 billion barrels of oil by 2030. That is considerably more than the 4.8 billion barrels produced by domestic offshore drilling over the last nine years. The study recommended strategies such as mass transit, more fuel efficient cars, and improved freight movement.

Rav Zutra, in the Talmud (Shabbat 67b), mandates fuel efficiency, saying that those who burn more fuel than necessary violate the law of not wasting (*bal tashchit*).

And a 13th century German text, Sefer HaChinuch (529), suggests that: "*Tzadikim* (righteous) people of good deeds...do not waste in this world even a mustard seed. They become sorrowful with every wasteful and destructive act that they see, and if they can, they use all their strength to save everything possible from destruction. But the *r'sha'im* (wicked) are not thus; they are like demons. They rejoice in the destruction of the world, just as they destroy themselves."

My friends, this is the season and this is the time. You can choose goodness or not. You can tap into the flow of goodness from the Garden of Eden. On this birthday of the world, the time of celebrating the creation of the world-we cannot go on despoiling creation. And we cannot just think this is someone else's

problem. It is each of ours. We need to find a way in our personal lives to each make a contribution to caring for our planet. Maybe it's the choice of car that you will drive or a commitment to using public transportation. Maybe it is changing every light bulb in your house to a CFL bulb that will be more energy efficient. But we don't have the luxury anymore of doing nothing at all.

When it comes to water usage there is much to be done because water shortages are a looming consequence of climate change. In fact, water shortages are in many parts of the world more pressing and more dangerous than oil shortages and food shortages. Water and lack of access to clean water is of utmost importance. According to scientists at the Sandia National Nuclear Laboratories in a report in the spring of 2008 water shortages by 2025 will be faced by half of the nations in the world and by 2050 as much as 75 percent of the world's population could face freshwater scarcity. They say, "Drinking water supplies, agriculture, energy production and generation, mining and industry all require large quantities of water. In the future, these sectors will be competing for increasingly limited freshwater resources, making water supply availability a major economic driver in the 21st century." <http://www.news-medical.net/news/2008/04/02/36909.aspx>, (September 7, 2010).

Climate change causes less rain to fall and thus freshwater reserves are not replenished.

So what can you do? How can you make changes that matter.

Inside your home or apartment:

Use the plug in your basin or sink - don't leave water running unnecessarily

Always wash a full load in your washing machine or in your dishwasher

Fix dripping taps and make sure that they are turned off fully - in one week a dripping tap can waste a bathful of water. Have a shower instead of a bath - an ordinary shower uses two-fifths of the water in a bath but power showers use 4 times as much water as a normal shower

Outside:

Water plants in the early evening - less water will evaporate. Change your landscaping to more drought resistant plantings.

Perhaps these seem so elementary, so basic but our country uses more of the earth's resources than any other. And our gluttony is killing our world and will eventually kill us too.

As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel writes in "A Passion for Truth" (Jewish Lights Publishing, April 1995), p.24

"Human beings must cherish the world, said the Baal Shem. To deprecate, to deride it was presumption. Creation, all of creation, was pervaded with dignity and purpose and embodied God's meaning"

On this sacred New Year's Day the time to infuse our lives with meaning is now. The time to infuse ourselves with God's meaning is now. And the choices we make in small ways and large ways have an impact on our lives and the life of the world. You are not a being in isolation. Though you may live alone, you are never really alone—for our world is an interdependent place. And each choice that you make reverberates not only in your life but around the globe.

Paper or plastic is not just a preference at Ralph's or Pavilions. But what we use and how we use it impacts everything and everyone around us.

This past year at Kol Ami we did two things that were very important and very symbolic to this end. First, we ended our use of bottled water. We installed a filter in the kitchen to filter out chemicals in the water we do use but even though we recycled the plastic bottles, we eliminated buying all those plastic bottles some of which no doubt ended up in landfills.

And secondly we did something even more symbolic and powerful:

As you know every synagogue has an eternal light. That light reminds us of God's ever present light and love in our lives. The Eternal Light is a reminder of the holy light that filled that ancient temple home of the Shekinah. And so to keep this light ongoing –our Eternal Light in our sanctuary home on La Brea was converted to a solar powered light. As long as the sun shines—our Eternal light will burn brightly at Kol Ami. It should remind you of our partnership and our stewardship of our earth. God shines in our home, the Shekinah shines in our spiritual home because the sun shines upon us. The partnership between our world and the Heavenly world is unique and holy.

Our congregation also does other important environmentally sensitive acts, we recycle. Most of our light bulbs are CFL-energy efficient. Our water usage is minimal and we use recyclable papers. Where we can our Temple strives to live out these social justice ideas about our environment.

In this year our Congregation will introduce some other opportunities to help you make better choices for caring for our fragile planet. You will hear more and have an opportunity participate in our Community Sustained Agriculture Project. You will have a chance to buy shares in a local farm that produces organic fruits and vegetables. Bringing you locally grown produce that cuts down on

transportation costs and environmental impact including pesticide use. As well as nurturing your body with healthy foods.

How else in 5771 will you make significant changes to help our planet—to heal our planet and help recreate the world anew?

The call of the shofar tomorrow will sound the alarm. We must change. We must help create our world again and take this fragile planet back to balance. As our teachers tell us.

“Listen further to our words after the shofar: “Hayom ya’amid bamishpat.”

The phrase ya’amid bamishpat comes from Proverbs: “Melekh b’mishpat ya’amid aretz. A king through justice makes the earth stand.” (29:4) Today, this day, should bring justice, this day teaches us justice. Without justice, the creatures of all the worlds y’tzurei olamim, even the earth itself, cannot stand and endure.

Ecologically, justice means many things, including balance, as in: “Samti mishpat l’kav utz’dakah l’mishkelet. I set justice with a plumb line and righteousness with a balance.” (Isa. 28:17) If we want to be agents of positive change, we can help stand the world upright through acts of justice, fairness and balance. There are so many levels to this mishpat, between us and God, between fellow human beings, within ourselves. And one of those

levels is justice and balance between us and the earth, and between us and our fellow species.

Balance means every person, every species, and every place has enough of what it needs for life to thrive. Balance means that our relationship with the earth is dynamic and sustainable, that we are not consuming future generations to take for ourselves. Each of us helps to establish balance, not just when you see someone in need, but in this moment, hayom, today and every day, in every act and gesture, every choice, in what you eat and wear, how you dwell in your house, in how you travel to work and how you return home.”

Rosh Hashanah reminds us of to rebalance our lives and our world. Let us get to the task. Our inner worlds need rebalancing during these Ten Days of Repentance and let's commit to also rebalancing our fragile planet by the choices we make each day. Ken Yehi Ratzon So may it be God's will.

- Fragile
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If blood will flow when flesh and steel are one
Drying in the colour of the evening sun
Tomorrow's rain will wash the stains away
But something in our minds will always stay
Perhaps this final act was meant

To clinch a lifetime's argument
That nothing comes from violence and nothing ever could
For all those born beneath an angry star
Lest we forget how fragile we are

On and on the rain will fall
Like tears from a star like tears from a star
On and on the rain will say
How fragile we are how fragile we are