

# Rosh Hashanah in the Round 5777

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הוֹדִיעֵנִי ה' קִצִּי, וּמֵדַת יְמֵי מַה־הִיא, אֵדְעָה מַה־חֲדָל אֲנִי:

Tell me, Adonai, my end; the measure of my days, what it is;  
that I would know how fleeting my life is.

Psalm 39:5

## 1. King David asks to know the day of his death (Talmud Tractate Shabbat 30a)

אמר דוד לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא "רבוננו של עולם, הודיעני ה' קצִי."  
אמר לו: גזרה היא מלפני שאין מודיעין קצו של בשר ודם.  
"ומדת ימי מה היא"  
גזרה היא מלפני שאין מודיעין מדת ימיו של אדם.  
"ואדעה מה חדל אני"  
אמר לו: בשבת תמות ...

David spoke before the Holy One, blessed be God, "Master of the universe, 'Tell me, Adonai, my end.'" (quoting from Psalm above)

God replied, "It is My decree that no human beings will be told when their end is to be."

[David said,] "And the measure of my days, what it is."

[God answered,] "It is My decree that no humans should be told the measure of their days."

[David said,] "Let me know how fleeting my life is."

The Holy One answered, "You will die on the Sabbath." ...

## How would you live differently if you knew the day of the week on which you would die?

## 2. The Possibility of Living Forever

Predictions from Ray Kurzweil - computer scientist, inventor, futurist, author  
(excerpts from personal correspondence)

Our intuition about the future is linear, whereas the reality of information technology is exponential. At step 30, a linear progression (1, 2, 3,...) gets to 30. At step 30, an exponential progression (1, 2, 4,...) gets to a billion. This is not an idealistic speculation about the future. Your smart phone is billions of times more powerful per dollar than the computer I used as a student at MIT.

Health, medicine and biology are now an information technology. The basis of biology, the software of life, is our DNA, and we now have the means of changing this age-old software. The enabling factor for this was the genome project. That was a perfect exponential in that the amount of DNA we sequenced doubled every year, and the cost came down by half every year. That first genome cost a billion dollars. We are now down to a few thousand dollars per genome. And it is not just our ability to sequence DNA that is progressing exponentially. Our ability to understand, model, simulate, and most importantly to reprogram this outdated software that runs in our bodies is also doubling in power every year. ...

We are now seeing clinical applications of biotechnology. We can, for example, reprogram adult stem cells to rejuvenate a damaged heart from a heart attack. Scientists are reprogramming stem cells to grow organs (kidneys, hearts, and lungs) with the patient's own DNA. These have been successfully installed in primates and will be coming to a human near you in the next 5 to 8 years....

Finally, medical nanorobots will radically extend our immune system. These microscopic robots will go into our bloodstream, communicate wirelessly, and download software when new pathogens arrive. They will attack cancer cells, bacteria, viruses, and all the disease agents. They will also maintain healthy levels of everything you need in the blood, and basically repair and eventually replace damaged organs.

I think we are only about a dozen years from a key tipping point, sometimes referred to as *longevity escape velocity*, where we are adding more time to our remaining life expectancy (from these scientific advances) than is going by.... Immortality is no longer a pipe dream.

**How would you live differently if you thought you would live forever?  
or if you thought you had another 100 years to live?**

## Malchuyot, Zichronot, and Shofarot - Songs for Contemplation

Malchuyot - Sovereignty

אֵין עוֹד מִלְבָּדוֹ, ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹקִים  
*Ain od mil'vado, Hashem hu haElokim.*

There is nothing but God. Adonai is God. (Deut. 4:35)

Zichronot - Remembrances

זְכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֶסֶד נְעוּרַיִךְ, אֲהַבַת כְּלוּלַתַּיִךְ, לְכַתֵּךְ אַחֲרַי בְּמִדְבָּר, בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא זְרוּעָה  
*Zacharti lach chesed ne'urayich, ahavat kelulotayich  
lechtech acharai bamidbar b'erez lo z'ruah.*

I remember the affection of your youth, your love when we were betrothed  
when you followed Me in the wilderness, a barren land. (Jeremiah 2:2)

Shofarot

כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְהוָה הַלְלוּיָהּ  
*Kol haneshamah tehallel Yah, Halleluyah.*

Let every breath of life praise Adonai, Halleluyah. (Psalm 150)