



HIGH HOLY DAY SERMONS

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"I Am Tevye"
Erev Rosh Hashanah - 5776
Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

I am Tevye.
Elkins Park is my Anatevka.

The old Tevye thought he had problems;
I have problems, too.

Difference is, Tevye read the good book the wrong way.
He thought every sentence ended with an exclamation mark!
Apparently, he was wrong.
Many of those sentences, end with a question mark!

The old Tevye thought he didn't understand his kids!
I don't understand my kids!
 I don't really mean my kids, or at least Liz's kids.
 I mean all kids today.
I don't understand Millennials or Gen X or Gen Y or Gen Z.
Does anyone, really, if you are not one of them.

The old Tevye couldn't believe his oldest daughter wanted to be "in love" in order
to marry
 and that his son-in-law wanted a sewing machine
 and not a Talmud.
The Poppa, tradition says, picks the boy, not the heart.

The old Tevye couldn't believe his middle daughter fell in love with a
Communist,
 ok a Jew, but still a Communist.

The old Tevye couldn't believe his youngest fell in love with a Ukrainian
peasant boy,
 ok, a good looking Ukrainian peasant boy , but, still not a Jew.

Those were problems?
Yes, Cossacks were a problem!
Yes, the Czar was a problem!
Yes, the Communists were a problem, too.

But listen, Tevye, I have problems.

I have *tsuris*.

You know, *tsuris*, Jewish problems;
lack of *nachas*, you know,
the family reward system God promised Moses
and is payable every Pesach, Bar Mitzvah and family simcha.

Tevye, old boy, you might have had problems.

But I have my problems, too.

Tevye, one of our kids,

that means “you, me and everybody else here” ,
the whole kid generation,
say they don’t need partners at all.

Who needs marriage when you have friends,
With benefits?

One of our kids, that means all of us,

is a Buddhist and says,
don’t worry, its nothing.
She doesn’t say the Shema,
But twists herself up like a pretzel
And then breathes.

Ok, breathing is good, but it is Jewish?

Another one of our kids, yours-mine -and-everyone’s kid ,

is ok with being a Jew
And even has to a Hebrew tattoo to prove it.
For this they had a Bar Mitzvah?
Doesn’t the Torah sat inscribe on your doorposts,
Not on your left forearm,
If you are lucky
And the tattoo is onnever mind!

Tevye, you know what else?
almost all my kids are atheists.
But they say they like being Jewish.
Jewish without Judaism,
Jewish without synagogue.
Some of them even say there are deeply spiritual
Humanly spiritual.
Some with God, some without God, but spiritual.

Tevye, you think you had problems,
one of my sons-in-law is a Ukrainian,
but he comes to shul and likes it.

Tevye, I can't figure anything out anymore.

And, you know what , Tevye,
one of my girls told me that she **too** wanted to marry
the person she loves
but that person is another girl and she's Chinese!

Tevye, guess, what, I like my atheist, Chinese, daughter-in-law
She comes to Shabbas at my house.
Knows the prayers
Smiles a lot
Likes to hug.
I'll never learn to use chopsticks properly.
But I'll keep her anyway

Tevye, remember when you packed it all up
and got on the road
And thought you knew where you were going?
I've got some news for you.
You were going to America where everything grows like an
onion,
With the head in the ground and the feet in the air.

But Tevye, I need to tell you something.
You know how you used to put our hands up in the air
and cry out:

“Where will it stop? Where will it stop?”

Tevye, in America, its not going to stop.

Its going to morph and change and morph again

And, at first, when you see it,

you won't even recognize it.

But Tevye

You are going to love your descendants

And guess what, they still love you, old man,

Our ancestor who had a big heart

And knew he couldn't win a single generational controversy.

Tevye, your Messiah still hasn't come.

We could have used him a thousand times in the last 150 years.

So, we have to keep hoping that when he finally gets here,

We -- you, me, the kids, the Ukrainian son-in-law, the Chinese daughter-in-law,

We, the Jewish people, will still be here.

We will look different and talk different and dress different.

But we are not going to disappear, just change, on the outside.

Guess what? This is not the first generation that decided to beat its own path.

Tevye, your kids didn't listen to you

And my generation, the end of the Baby boomers, we didn't listen either.

When I was a teenager in the late 60s, my parents generation

Thought everything we did was wrong.

Our hair was wrong.

Let me repeat, our hair was wrong,

Very, very wrong.

Our clothing was wrong, too loose and dirty.

Our English was wrong.

Everything was cool

Far out

And “heavy.”

Our music was wrong and too loud, and not really music!

Our art was wrong, it wasn't really art either,

It was random and

The colors looked like plastic candy wrappers.

Our politics were.....not really wrong, just a little excessive.

Tevye, ,my Confirmation service in 1970 was a semi-disaster.

We couldn't rehearse properly because we had to make
statements

About Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

One of the kids won't wear shoes in the synagogue
and the senior rabbi went crazy on us.

Half my class loved Khahil Gibran a lot better than Moses
And the other half didn't know who Gibran was or gave a hoot
about Moses.

We preferred Peter, Paul and Mary to the old Hebrew tunes.

The great Mandela was more important than the great Mitzvah.

TM meant transcendental meditation, not trademark!

No one was against any kind of smoking

And acid should have been understood as a dangerous chemical,

In whatever form it took

In 1970, we were a total mess, were upside down like an onion in the ground, With
our feet in the air

And we were totally confident, we were going to do everything differently,
everything correctly, change the world,
and grow old singing the "age of Aquarius"
to our hair was down to

I'm told that the generation after World War I, acted almost the same way we did
and went nuts during the 1920s.

The first generation of Reform Jews must have been rebels, too

For that matter, even the Hasidim were rebels

They refused to go along with their old rabbis back in your neighborhood, Tevye
and demanded their own rebbes!

And so , it goes, all the way back to Adam and Eve, and guess what, they didn't
listen either. Their father threw them out of the house for rebellion.

Generational discontinuity is nothing new, its actually a norm of sorts, at least for
awhile, and then we get older and older things become more important.

Every generation wants to do it their way, are told by their elders that “it won’t work.”

By nature, every generation is intent on make some changes, then unmaking some changes, then telling their kids that they are not listening!

When I was 16, I really wanted long hair, hair I could chew on and that’s saying something when you have hair like my hair.

I fought with my father about my hair.

Now, I regret that.

But, meanwhile, when my kids came to me 30 years later and said they wanted short hair, I said no,

I fought too hard for too long for long hair for them to go short

And, then I said, what am I doing? Didn’t I learn anything from my own growing up?

Somehow, now that I am 61 and the world is what it is today,

It does seem like the new generational discontinuities are bigger and wider and more profound than ever before..

Millennials, Gen Xers? What are they?

Maybe I am not dealing with these discontinuities in an accepting manner and just privately absorbing my losses.

But maybe, things really are profoundly different now?

Tevye, are you listening? Where does it stop? Where does it stop?

With respect to Judaism, maybe we are finally cooked and America and its material, liberal culture is just too much for Jews and Judaism outside the ghetto walls of Orthodoxy? Maybe, we are at the end of the road?

Maybe, maybe not.

Let’s take a look at ourselves here at KI:

Like most synagogues today, we have four different co-existing generations.

First, there is the greatest generation. They survived the depression and fought or at least lived through World War II. They spend less than they earn, are charitable, generally worry about Israel and carry cell phones mostly for emergency purposes.

Second, there are the Baby Boomers. They are the children of the Greatest generation but did not have to prove themselves in a global way.

Baby Boomers thought 9volt am transistor radios were technological achievements and having one station that played their kind of music was proof that they were the center of the universe.

Their parents made them go to synagogue and many of them still are.

Then again, some of us became the first synagogue drop outs. Synagogues are for kids. The kids are gone so are the holiday tickets.

Tevye, I think I understand the Greatest Generation and the Boomers. They make sense to me.

But then, we have Generation X. Generation X did not have transistor radios, they also had more than three primary tv stations.

They had MTV. OK, I'm going to sound like my parents now but MTV is not music and it is not TV.

Gen X knows there is an Israel but doesn't really worry about it.

Gen X had Bar and Bat Mitzvahs but were psychologically gone by the time the President of Sisterhood gave them their life long personal set of Shabbat candle sticks, never to be coated with actual melted wax.

And now the Millenials. There are 80 million of them. Their grandparents are Boomers. Few of them have heard a person speak with an authentic Yiddish accent. They have never seen a 9volt transistor radio but have the capacity to download 4000 of their favorite songs and never listen to a live broadcast. Israelis are their Hebrew school teachers and Israel is a kind of Jewish Disneyland one can go to one day, along with bird watching in Panama and an African safari. Half their friends are half Jewish. LGBT is a right and a fact and correctly so. They believe that college dorms should have amenities and if something isn't online, it isn't. They have their own music of which I know nothing and, one last thing Tevye, they are proud that they are Jewish.

Fact is, there isn't a single Jewish leader or educator who really knows what to do with the Millenials and Gen X.

Some of the rules are

- don't teach frontally
- experience is the greatest teacher
- everything should be like camp

- peer learning works
- use technology but not cell phones in the class room
- Israel is good for two week trips, but not as a unifying topic
- Social justice is essential to Judaism, up to 2 hours at a time
- Two Holocaust museums are about right before age 15
- Have heard about “Fiddler on the Roof” but haven’t seen it yet
- Jewish food is largely sub-par in their culinary cosmos.
- Expect to take a rain check on Jewish life between Bar and Bat Mitzvah and their wedding
- Remember more about their preschools than their Hebrew schools
- Denominational labels mean very little to them
- Know their Hebrew name.

One major study after another points to the same basic conclusions. The longer Tevye’s descendants are in America, the less intense their Jewishness becomes. The corollary is the less intense Jewishness becomes, the more fragmented it becomes along innumerable, mostly local lines. On the other hand, the same polls report that Jewishness itself remains and strongly so.

So what are we to do? First and foremost, we need to have faith in our kids. They are not going to give up Judaism. Maybe not every single one of them will keep it, but as a cohort, the millenials will keep the faith.

How do I know that? Because they report they are Jews and Jewish people will always find ways to doing Jewish things with other Jewish people.

Maybe not my way. Certainly not Tevye’s way. But their way.

How do we help them? How do we keep it, Judaism, going until the great generational handoff is complete? Simply, we need to do our job and to do our Judaism our way, as fully and as completely and as generously as possible.

If we think that handing off a broken, broke synagogue will be our stairway to heaven, we are wrong.

But if we embrace the kind of Judaism we say we believe in, and enrich it with our presence and our capacities, if we demonstrate faith and not ambivalence, if we set a good example with our feet and do what we say, they, the Millenials will get the message and do the same for themselves, their way.

The synagogue of the future may be small or online or home-based or on the beach or in the mountains or on a monitor or in a year round Jewish retreat center or in a Jewish center in a major city or in a synagogue or in a tattoo club, but it will be there.

Tevye, where will it stop? It won't stop. It will keep emerging, bending, preserving, reviving, and going on forever because it has too.

Fifty years from now, Generation Xers and Millennials, will be wondering what their grandchildren will be doing to keep their Judaism alive. They won't have any idea except to go on their I-29 phones and connect with their local cosmic Jewish virtual center and trade old ideas with their friends and fellow travelers.

Judaism is just too good, too deep, too enriching, too transcendently human to be tossed away by an entire generation.

As we get older and become more refined in our tastes and more discerning of our sources for inspiration, we seem to always turn back to the wells of wisdom first dug by Abraham and Sarah. They still provide us with Mayim Chaim, the waters of life. Our grandparents understood that. We know it too. And so will our grandchildren and their grandchildren .

Am I sure?

Yes

Do I have proof?

No

Then, how do I know?

Because I believe it to be so, that's why.

Because our heritage is compelling to child and adult alike.

Because Judaism has a message for the world and the world needs to hear it.

We are the originators and the standard bearers of the belief that ultimately there is one human family

And that every child in that family is a gift to be nurtured with love and kindness

and taught that they should dedicate their time on earth to the good of everyone as fairly, as justly and as joyfully as possible.

Tevye,
what did you say our message is:
L'chaim, To life!
It's the message of the ages, it's the message of Judaism
and it's the message for all the millenials to come.
That's why I love you Tevye,
You see,
I'm a Tevye, too.

Amen. Shana Tova!

♪[music]

"One Day More: Israel, Iran and American Jews"

Rosh Hashanah Morning - 5776

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

My favorite musical is *Les Mis* and my favorite song in *Les Mis* is *One Day More*.

It is the final and 27th song at the end of the First Act.

It brings together all the characters, all the plots, all the subplots, all the musical motifs, into one giant, magnificent chorus of complexity, passion and hope.

It is the Quintet *Tonight* from *West Side Story*.

It is the Sextet from *Lucia*.

It is the grand mix of Jean Val Jean and Javert, the love triangle of Marius-Cosette-and-Eponine, the black toothed innkeeper and his portly wife, young Gavroche and the student revolutionaries, and a chorus of hundreds.

It promises perseverance, conflict and tragedy

Here are a few key phrases,

You know the words:

“One day more

Another day, another destiny

One day more before the storm....

Will you take your place with me...

The time is now, the day is here

Tomorrow is the judgment day

One more dawn

One more day

One day more!”

To me, this past summer played out like a global, non-stop rendition of “One Day More” as the White House and its opponents, Netanyahu and the President, AIPAC and J Street, presidential candidates of every stripe, op writers across the political spectrum and a long string of Senatorial solos, all crescendo together in a prolonged, multi-voiced dramatic song of conflict and destiny over the Iran Deal,

One day more, the opponents sang out, Iran will have the bomb

One day more, the proponents replied, Iran will not have the bomb

One day more, 2 dozen nuclear scientists, said the deal was ok
One day more, 3 dozen nuclear scientists, said the deal was bad

One day more, 300 American generals said the deal worked
One day more, 500 different us generals said the deal didn't work.

One day more, the Israeli government says the deal hands Iran the bomb
One day more, top leaders from the Israeli security establishment, says the deal blocks Iran from the bomb

One day more, AIPAC says the deal is a disaster
One day more, JPAC, says the deal averts disaster.

One day more, the White House says the deal is based on verification
One day more, the GOP said Iran needs to release its hostages before we can begin to talk about verification.

One day more, China, Russia, Germany, France and the UK ramp up business with Iran
One day more, the Saudis are against deal
One day more, the Saudis are for the deal

One day more, 340 rabbis are for the deal
One day more, 900 rabbis sign against the deal

One day more, Senate republicans seek to disapprove of the deal
One day more, Senate democrats block the path to disapproval

One day more, Senate GOP members say filibuster is undemocratic
One day more, Senate Democrats said filibuster is as old as the Senate itself

One day more, House opponents say the "Deal Clock" isn't running so the deal can't be voted on.
One day more, House supporters say the Deal process timed out.

One day more, the Reform movement in Judaism punts and doesn't take a stand on the Deal.
Instead urges everyone to starting focusing on the "day after the deal" or let's just move on – one more day.

**Ok then! now it is “one day more”
and it’s the “day after the deal.”**

Now what do we do?

In the musical, *Les Mis*, after the casts sings “One Day More,” a totally pumped up audience applauds, stands up and runs to the bathroom and enjoys an intermission.

In real life, on the “day after the deal,” there is no intermission.

So now it’s the “day after” “*one more day*” and its time to go back to the barricades.

The never ending work of helping Israel help defend itself!

So, what needs to be done now?

I have six items on my Israel-Iran “to do” list.

One. Verification. Verification needs to begin, not tomorrow, not one day more, but today.

Susan Massie, a writer on Russia, met with President Reagan numerous times between 1984 and 1987. She taught him that the Russian people love proverbs. In this case, negotiations on the INF or Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces was in play.

Massie taught President Reagan how to say, “*do-ver-yai no pro-ver-yai*,” or “trust, but verify.” The slogan then became the motto of the DTRA, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, in 1998.

As with former American –Soviet nuclear negotiations, “*do-ver-yai no pro-ver-yai*,” “trust, but verify” is the working assumption of the Iran Deal. If verification works, then the deal works. If you believe Iran will never comply and the whole world will be duped, then the deal collapses and the Middle East and maybe the world dives even deeper into chaos.

Now, what does “the Deal” actually say about verification. Well, I read the Deal or the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action” signed by P5+1 or E3/EU+3, as most

the world calls it. The Deal was adopted on July 14, 2015 in Vienna, Austria. I urge you to look at it, too. It is online and easily accessed.

The Deal is 159 pages long. Its basic terms are spelled out in a 20 page Preamble followed by 5 Annexes including extended discussions of nuclear regulation and sanctions in Annexes 1 & 2.

Much of it is technical; some of it is procedural. Much of it beyond my scientific knowledge. It is highly detailed and involves the tracking of Iran's entire nuclear program, at every site in Iran and by every nuclear company in Iran. It specifies caps to nuclear materials and requires comprehensive reporting and tracking.

The independent "International Atomic Energy Agency", founded in 1957 and based in Vienna, which is now headed by a Japanese diplomat, legal scholar and international arms specialist, is the lead parallel outside agency in implementing the Deal.

164 countries belong to the Agency including Israel, although Israel is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a known fact which was not raised during the Iran negotiations and was a huge, but silent, victory for Israel .

From start to adoption, the Iran deal was an exercise in multilateral diplomacy with sweeping global participation in stark contrast to years of American unilateralism.

According to the deal, verification will be multilateral as well. Including the IAEA which has been the global operational standard in nuclear monitoring for decades. Do-ver-yai no pro-ver-yai, Don't Trust, Verify

What is the second thing to be done now, on "the day after the deal?"

Israel's military edge needs not only to be maintained but broadened. This will require new weapons systems on the land, air and sea. It will require greater cooperation between the American military and Israeli military than ever before and despite the poor political climate right between the US and Israel, purely military cooperation has never been better. Agreement on the "David's Sling" system, now on the table, will be a good first step. In my opinion, America is clear in their commitment to Israel. Israel, however, also needs to come to the table and reduce its political lobbying. It is probable that elements in Congress will continue to try and derail the Agreement in the near future in the near future. Congressional

success, under the terms of the Deal, could trigger an Iranian withdrawal from the process as their own Parliament debates the Deal.

In my opinion, Israel, too, needs to think in terms of the “day after the deal” and move on and seize the opportunity for greater military capacity. Just last week, Prime Minister Netanyahu was in London and struck just the right cord with the British government. It seems he has also accepted an invitation to meet the President of the United States in November. All this suggests a quick mend and quicker still return to the critical business of allied military cooperation.

AIPAC, too, would be well advised, in my view, to get back to rebuilding bipartisan support for Israel in Congress and expanding the military pipeline. Those members who voted to support the Deal, did not vote against Israel, and all of them called for increased, unprecedented military cooperation with Israel. AIPAC will not serve Israel’s interests if it permanently damages its political ties across the aisle. Act I is over. Time for the pro-Israel world to move on to Act II, just like in the play and if nothing else, start making “lemonade” from the lemon of the Deal they opposed, understandably as a matter of principle.

Third. Hezbollah. Hezbollah is Iran’s proxy in West Asia. Hezbollah has tremendous fire power, 50,000 missiles which can hit any target in Israel. In my opinion, Hezbollah is the greatest immediate existential threat to the Jewish state. To some extent, Hezbollah is entangled in Syria’s bloody civil war and is part of a Moscow-Teheran-Damascus axis. It has endured losses in Syria but it has not been fundamentally weakened. The prolongation of the standoff between Israel and Hezbollah is in Israel’s best interests. Hezbollah is closely tied to Iran’s Mullahs. If the Mullahs want to sabotage the Deal, Hezbollah is their proxy. It’s a game of chicken and who blinks first. Israel needs to maintain an iron fist toward it lethal, northern enemies.

Closely tied to Teheran and Damascus in this regard are the Russians. Putin wants to expand his influence, keep his own Muslims quiet and make badly needed money by selling technology to the Iranian Mullahs. They too are dancing on a wire and the more they are convinced that keeping Hezbollah quiet and maintain Russian naval access in Syria. The quieter the Golan and the Galilee will be for the time being.

Fourth. Hamas. Unlike Hezbollah, the radical Sunni group called Hamas is on relatively hard times. Egypt has clamped down on their sponsors, the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt itself. Israel, despite great world condemnation, badly

damaged Hamas in the Operation Protective Edge. There are even talks of negotiations between the Netanyahu government and Hamas leadership at present.

Gaza, Hamas' main base, is in bad shape. Per usual, no one, especially in the Arab world, has done much of anything to help the people of Gaza and the people of Gaza seem to have little interest and less capacity to overthrow Hamas.

Hamas' current goal is probably to maintain relative quiet in Gaza while it bores politically into West Bank Society with the goal of displacing the Abbas-PLA government. A Hamas victory in the West Bank would be horrible and greatly complicate Israel's already complicated security situation. It would almost certainly lead to the introduction of ISIS into the West Bank, civil war in Jerusalem and the destabilization of Jordan and possibly an opportunistic end run by Hezbollah to press its advantage in the chaos with the hope of winning the Muslim war against Israel.

What should Israel do in the West Bank? Since we only have one day of Rosh HaShanah at KI and not two, I will have to pass on that right now. The issue at hand is Iran and the deal. Suffice it to say, Israel cannot afford a PLA collapse, as all the alternatives are worse.

And, we still have "one day more" amount of material to cover our topic.

Which brings us to issue Number Five: Iran's American Hostages. The Iran Deal did not involve the prior release of four individuals currently being held the Iranians. Nor did it promise to. Whether or not that should have been a pre-condition is still debatable, but only as history.

Who are the hostages? There are four of them.

Amir Hekmati is being held for no reason whatsoever. He went to Iran to visit extended family including his grandmother in 2011 to celebrate Ramadan with them. He is a US Marine but that does not mean he is also a spy. He has been sentenced to death for no reason. He needs to be released.

Jason Reza-ian is a dual American-Iranian citizen. He is a journalist. He is facing 20 years in prison for doing his job.

Saeed A-be-dini is a pastor who travelled to Iran frequently to build an orphanage there. His crime is being a Christian. He has been beaten repeatedly in jail. He needs to be released.

The most complicated case is that of Robert Levinson, who was working for a CIA operation on an island off the coast of Iran when he was kidnapped in 2007. The Iranians claim they do not where he is. Not good enough in a post-Deal environment. He, too, needs to be set free, immediately.

The Cubans set their American hostages free after they got their deal, including Alan Gross, who like Levinson, was involved in gray activities.

Now its Iran's turn to set their captives free and its time for us to turn the heat up!

Finally, American Jews, you and me, need to heal the wounds in our own community.

The Iran Deal, in my opinion, did not create fissures in American Jewish unity, it widened them. The tension, even hatred, was already there. I literally feel it every day in my work.

We are a community essentially at war with itself. The poison of the political polarization so prevalent in general American political culture, is equally at work in the American Jewish community.

Jews are viewed by other Jews as enemies, traitors, anti-Semites and willful or destroyers of Judaism and the Jewish people. It is shameful, painful and counterproductive.

The political fragmentation of the American Jewish community is not new. It is at least a 100 years old but with social media, it spreads and deepens more rapidly. As I noted last night, generational tensions are intensifying, basic human respect is not being honored and our capacity to function as a community grounded in democratic principles is eroding. Polarization is not only killing our capacity to deal with one another, it is also marginalizing entire cohorts of our community who are sick of the nasty, internecine fighting which makes Jewish life an anathema to them.

What will heal the breach? In my opinion, less proxy fighting for parties in Israel and greater direct involvement in Israeli life. We need a Birthright for all American Jews, every Jewish family with their kids before or during their Bnai Mitzvah years.

We need direct financial investment, not just charity dollars in Israel. Reform Jews, especially, need to double down and learn about and support their counterparts, peers and partners in Israel itself.

This summer Liz and I and the Mayer family from KI, visited YOZMA, the Reform community in Modiin, a community between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. YOZMA was incredible. It was the synagogue and school of choice in this middle class community inside the green line. Their preschool was amazing. They share our values about political democracy, religious pluralism and Israeli national security. We share every aspect of life with them, every Jewish value with them, every Israeli concern with them.

Most of all, American Jews need to remember that first principle of Zionism is Jewish self-reliance. Israel will take care of Israel. Israel is not dependent on anybody. Israel is not afraid anyone. Nor is Israel a ship of fools. Fools don't respect danger, they charge into danger without concern. But a courageous person understands danger, respects fear as a human radar system and then moves on to take care of itself in a smart, courageous fashion.

Israel can and will take care of itself but it also wants us, their cousins, to be part of the process and not just on Capitol Hill but in schools, universities, preschools, hospitals, business investments and more in Israel itself.

Israel needs all the friends it can get and we should be first in line to be that friend. Go there! Make it part of your life. Support institutions and values there. Learn a little Hebrew. Read Israeli English newspapers online every day. Make a connection with an Israeli family. Buy Israeli products. Go to the beach in Tel Aviv and not just on the Jersey shore. Make Israel real in your lives.

So, how does the song, *One Day More*, end?

“Tomorrow we'll discover what our God in Heaven has in store!
One more dawn, *one more day*, *one day more!*”

Well, we, too, don't know what tomorrow will bring.
But it is in our capacity to face tomorrow together with Israel
and not just continually fight against one another.

One more day – our communal fighting has to stop
One day more until our collective sanity is restored and

we reaffirm that we are all on the same side:

The pro-Israel side
The Pro-Jewish people side,
The Pro-American side.

One day more,
May we be restored.

Amen. Shana Tova

♪[music]

"A Sacred Event: Social Justice, Hesed and Reform Judaism"

Erev Yom Kippur - 5776

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

March 4, 1865 was a miserable, rainy day in Washington, DC
Still, thousands gathered on the eastern face of the Capital building.
As Abraham Lincoln rose to speak, the sun burst through for the first time that day.

What followed was a short, 703 word talk, "Lincoln's Second Inaugural".
Surprisingly, It was totally devoid of any reference to the North's impending military victory after four years of bloody civil war.

Instead, Lincoln offered a deeply religious talk, filled with Biblical quotes and framed by
a theology based heavily on the Hebrew prophets God's justice is more a function of kindness and charity, than the work of great armies, the President Said..

"With malice toward none," Lincoln concluded, "with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nations wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan -- to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves and with all nations."

The press yawned!
John Wilkes Booth, who was present in the crowd that day and would soon murder the President at nearby Ford's theater, sneered;
And Frederick Douglas, the great African American abolitionist called the Second Inauguration Oration, "A sacred event."

Every time I read Lincoln's words from March, 1865, whether in a book, or online, or as they

carved inside the Lincoln Memorial, I, too, experience a sacred event.
For me, they perfectly encapsulate the merger of the spiritual and the ethical so passionately envisioned by the ancient prophets of Israel, for the first time in all history.

From Abraham, the first Prophet,
To Moses, the greatest of our Prophets,
To Malachi, the final Prophet in our tradition,

Come the same basic set of ideas:

There is a transcendent source of all existence
Who has given us the capacity to shape the kind of people and nation we want to be
And consistently challenges us to follow the paths of justice, mercy and peace.

In Judaism, above riches, power and fame, there is *chesed*,
Our love for one another combined with our love for our God, the source of Hesed.

Chesed, the prophets taught us, is anchored in a cosmic source
Who summons us, not to be great for greatness' sake, but to be good,
For in seeking justice, there is life.

On Yom Kippur day , we read from the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 58,
that it is not our physical fasting and day long prayers that truly matter to God,
They are fine and acceptable, if offered with the right spirit, and, more importantly, accompanied
by the right actions.
What really counts, the Prophet proclaims, is the fast from injustice, the fast from hypocrisy, and
the active pursuit of a good life.
a life filled with justice, love and Chesed.

In the Torah, we find Judaism's moral blueprint for humanity.
Literally to care for the widow and the orphan,
To leave the corners of the field un-harvested so the poor can come and claim the
The wheat and other fresh products for themselves!
We are commanded to pay the day laborer at sunset,
Not to take a poor person's blanket to secure a loan,
To treat prisoners of war with dignity
To build safe homes for people to live in
To return lost property to friend and enemy alike
Not to abuse animals
To give all things a Sabbath of rest from their work
To honor our parents
To be hospitable and kind to the stranger
To tell the truth in court
Not to slander or libel anyone

Not to mock the deaf or trip the blind
Not to engage in wars with wanton disregard for life
To compensate those we injure
To educate our children
Not to stand idly by the blood of our neighbors
And to love all of God's children as we would have them love us.

Judaism has always stood for justice and mercy, righteous and kindness,
Peace and peacefulness. Judaism has always stood for Chesed.

In the ancient world, following the destruction of Jerusalem,
The Jewish people were dispersed across the globe.
Wherever we landed, we created new communities
And immediately established funds for poor brides, funds for the hungry,
And for the elderly with insufficient means to care for themselves.

The *pushke*, the little box with the big heart, was to be found in every Jewish
community and every Jewish house.

Ashkenazic and Sephardic

German and Russian

Italian and Iraqi,

Wherever there was Jewish life, there was concern for the other,

A command to take up the cause of the widow and the orphans.

With pennies from children, placed into the little blue JNF box, the Jewish people

Literally redeemed the Land of Israel, one coin at a time.

When Jews first settled in North America in the 17th century,
They created communal funds for the next wave of immigrants and the next to the
next.

When Rebecca Gratz started the Hebrew Sunday School in Philadelphia, the
country and the city was in the depths of an economic depression.

She raised the funds necessary for the poorest students to attend her classes
without

paying tuition, so they could learn along side their more fortunate coreligionists.

She also made sure her indigent students had both winter coats and firewood in
the winter. "A mind can't learn if a child is hungry or cold or both."

Here is the opening prayer, the first Sunday school students recited here in Philadelphia on March 4, 1838: “O God, give unto us the help we need: give us bread to eat and raiment to put on and instruction to understand Thy mercies .”

And what Rebecca Gratz did for the poor Jewish immigrant children, she also did for the Irish and the German kids through her work in local civic associations
And when as an older woman, the Civil War broke out, she worked tirelessly to care for the wounded of all faiths,
To care for the soldier, the widow and the orphan.

When Rabbi David Einhorn came to KI in 1862, his anti-slavery message was loud, clear and undiminished as it had been in Baltimore.

Slavery, he taught, is the ultimate perversion of ethics and economy.
It is all greed and no heart.

If we are commanded to help an over-worked ox, in the Torah, what about a slave who is whipped, bound and hanged for sport?

This not the Jewish way, he taught,
This is not the prophetic path.

Slavery is wrong and must be stopped, even if it splits the community,
Justice, fairness and kindness, Einhorn taught, are our principles:
No false peace, no submission to evil in the name of communal unity.

How bad was slavery in the American South? I have a friend who is a legal historian of slavery. He has collected tens of thousands of cases documenting the brutality and utter depravity of America’s Peculiar Institution. Here is one report from St. Louis in 1844;

“On Friday last, the coroner held an inquest at the house of Judge Dunica, a few miles south of the city, over the body of a negro girl, about 8 years of age, belonging to Mr. Cordell. The body exhibited evidence of the most cruel whipping and beating we have ever heard of. The flesh on the back and limbs was beaten to a jelly -- one shoulder-bone was laid bare -- there were several cuts, apparently from a club, on the head -- and around the neck was the indentation of a cord, by which it is supposed she had been confined to a tree. She had been hired by a man by the name of Tanner, residing in the neighborhood, and was sent home in this condition. After coming home, her constant request, until her death, was for bread, by which it would seem that she had been starved, as well as unmercifully whipped. The jury returned a verdict that she came to her death by the blows

inflicted by some persons unknown whilst she was in the employ of Mr. Tanner. Mrs. Tanner has been tried and acquitted.”

To this and tens of thousands other documented cases, the rabbi of KI said NO More!

In 1866, Rabbi Einhorn went to NY and was followed here by Rabbi Samuel Hirsch.

Hirsch had been the Grand Rabbi of Luxembourg and was a widely respected Jewish philosopher.

Hirsch, too, was passionate in his concern for the poor, for poor children and most of all, for the impoverished orphan.

He created the KI Orphans Guardian Society.

It became the signature activity of our congregation for generations.

Hirsch opposed large, faceless institutional orphanages.

Kids don't need institutions, they need homes, he taught.

They don't need large wards, they need real families.

The congregation responded and an army of home visitors was raised from people who went into the slums with food, blankets, coal and love

To care for the widow and the orphan in the Philadelphia of the 1860s, 70s and 80s.

In 1881, Philadelphia finally dedicated a new, proper Jewish orphanage. At the dedication ceremony in Germantown, the following words were shared by Edward I Weil, having been introduced by I. Binswanger, a member of KI:

“We [now] dedicate this Temple to the God of love and mercy.

This Home, where the outcast little one will find shelter.

This asylum where the fatherless child can be reared and protected.

For this religion of that race teaches that the deed which is upmost acceptable to God is to break the yoke of the oppressed, to deal out the bread to the hungry, to bring the poor that are out cast to our home and to satisfy the afflicted soul.”

In 1887, Rabbi Hirsch retired and joined his family in Chicago.

He was followed by KI's longest serving rabbi, Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf.

Like Einhorn, Krauskopf spoke out against exploited labor

Like Hirsch, Krauskopf called on the congregation to care for orphans in their homes.

But he did something else,

Rabbi Krauskopf understood that city slums are not places for children to thrive, to be educated, to be healthy.

So, he started a farm school in Doylestown, to take the kids out of the city, put them on the land and in fresh air.

At first, he spent his own money to buy land, he then lobbied with Presidents and great Philanthropists to support his school. They responded in kind.

A few weeks ago, Krauskopf's Farm School officially became the Del Valley University,

Nearly every older building on that campus bears the name of a KI family to this very day.

For decades, and maybe again in the future, it was one of this synagogue's many ways to care for the orphans of Philadelphia and beyond.

IN 1920, a young man by the name of Lessing Rosenwald settled in Jenkintown to help expand his family's world famous business, Sears and Robuck. He came to Philadelphia from Chicago.

He immediately joined KI.

His father, Julius Rosenwald, was one of the great philanthopists in all of American history.

A congregant in the Chicago synagogue, headed by Samuel Hirsch's son, Rabbi Emil Hirsch.

Julius Rosenwald was a Jewish Andrew Carnegie .

In his lifetime, 1862-1932, Rosenwald gave away \$70 million dollars, to promote education and fight racism in Chicago and across the deep south. He took up the cause of the widow and the orphan with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his might. He embodied the spirit of the prophets of ancient Israel and the spirit of KI where his rabbi had been reared as a child.

In many ways, prophetic social justice was the central message and principal method of the early Reform movement in the United States. Reform was not just an easy path to Jewish ritual observance, it was a gallant attempt to restore the prophetic passion to Jews and Judaism late in the 19th century. Slavery, unfair labor practices, poverty, inferior education, racial and religious discrimination and unjust war were among its chief concerns.

On the one hand, classical Reform rejected anarchism and the call to destroy government and authority.

On the other hand, it equally resisted the centralization of national economies by the left and the right, as well as government curtailment of human rights.

Reform sought a middle course, the prophetic way. It was closely aligned with American progressivism. Rabbi Krauskopf, for example, was a personal friend of Teddy Roosevelt. To this day, our lobby has a stained glass window in memory of TR.

Rabbi Emil Hirsch in Chicago championed economic justice and had it added as the final plank of our movement's first great Platform, the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, which addressed the great economic disparities of its day.

Perhaps the greatest Reform voice for justice was Rabbi Steven Wise. He was a founder of the NAACP long before the rest of the Jewish community took up the cause of Civil Rights. He battled the anti-Semitic priest, Charles Coughlin on the Radio, along with Louis Brandeis championed the cause of Zionism for decades prior to World War II.

IN 1959, the Reform movement voted to establish a real presence in Washington, DC, to bring its prophetic message to the nation's capital on a permanent basis.

The Religious Action Center quickly emerged as a central meeting place of the American Civil Rights movement. Federal legislation was prepared at the RAC despite tremendous resistance both from within and beyond our movement.

The RAC Director, Rabbi David Saperstein, became one of the nation's best known voices for justice.

In 1970, our own Congregation, Keneseth Israel, decided to immortalize the prophetic message of social justice by commissioning artist Jacob Landau to create our stained glass windows. Our windows are not just ornaments. They are massive statements about justice, forgiveness and peace. They are not art for art's sake, they are visual midrashim urging us to reach further in our own pursuit of justice.

So, what are we doing today as a congregation? As individuals, hopefully, most, if not all of us are doing something for the common good.

If anyone in this sanctuary tonight is personally involved in the work of social justice, as you yourself define it, whether through education, art, philanthropy, political activism, cultural programs, after school programs, teaching, mentoring, sponsorships, health care, social work, employment, anti-hunger programs or any other means of helping those less fortunate than ourselves, please stand for just a moment!

[Thank you, wow]

But how about us as a congregation, as a totality? Thanks to our third term President, Dr. Arnold Meshkov and the work of Rabbi Kevin Kleinman, social justice is fully reinvigorated at KI.

We have many, many congregational projects. Among them are two major initiatives.

First, we have expanded our relationship with **Lowell Elementary School** in Philadelphia. In addition to school supplies and winter clothes, we are now organizing an extensive volunteer tutoring program to be held at the school. Education is a foundational value in Judaism. The Torah speaks of the priority of education. The kids at Lowell need our help, our extra concern, our capacity to help them secure the basics in math and reading so that they can excel later in life.

“Give a person a fish, they eat a meal. Teach a person to fish, they can feed themselves and their family in perpetuity.”

Literacy and math competency is something we can help them achieve. But we need volunteer tutors, congregants who are committed to social justice one child at a time.

If we can create a team of 40 tutors to help a hundred kids and if hundreds of other synagogues across the country do the same, we can begin to make a dent in the endless and devastating cycle of poverty in this country.

Second, we have our **HaMotzi Campaign** addressing food insecurity in Philadelphia and Montgomery County. We have our holiday food drive and mitzvah garden. This year, starting this November, we will be providing a cooked dinner on the third Sunday of each month at KI to anyone who is food insecure in our area. We will buy the food, cook the food and serve the food in our auditorium.

We will listen to the ancient words of our Passover Hagadaah. “All who are hungry, come let them eat” at our table, in this house. We have already received funds to pay for the November and December dinners from a devoted family of this congregation. We hope to make this program, another signature activity at KI for years to come.

Every Hanukkah for the last few years, we have created a huge Menorah in our lobby. Each class in JQuest is responsible for an arm of the Menorah, an arm built with large clear plastic boxes, boxes to be filled with care products for the widow and the orphan.

Our Menorah literally becomes a giant Mitzvah machine.

KI should be a giant Mitzvah machine and we are well on our way to becoming one, again, as we were in the past.

But there needs to be more, much more at KI. We need to do research on contemporary social justice issues, we need to test the feasibility of addressing those needs here at KI and we need to marshal our resources, human and material.

Even more than that, we need and the Reform movement needs a clear policy statement and philosophy on social justice, on caring for the widow and the orphan.

We also need to identify our blockers that keep us from pushing forward?

What are these blockers?

Indifference? Apathy?

The false confidence that somebody else will do the work for us?

Racism? We really don't want to help “them,” some might say.

Classism? The poor bring it upon themselves, they are lazy, wasteful and cheaters!

Inefficiency? Too many will cheat and steal from us.

Defeatism? The problem is too big and we are too little

Contempt? “Do-gooders” are fools.

Perhaps it's the government's problem and they have already messed things up so badly, that

We as a community have no chance of making a real contribution.

Perhaps the real blocker is Me-ism? I need to take care of me and mine, not yours and theirs.

The gauntlet of excuses, protests and counter arguments are endless.

Perhaps the upcoming visit of Pope Francis to our area will help wake us up in this regard. A friend of interfaith cooperation, the new Pope is rooted in the work of a devoted priest in a hopelessly poor parish. It is not grandeur which makes the Catholic Church great, he teaches his flock, it is the use of its resources to do good for all people.

We know we have many areas of official difference with the Catholic Church, but we also have areas of possible cooperation at the local level, at the level of social justice. Let us listen to Francis' message, reach across the aisle to our neighbors of every religious stripe and get to work in pursuit of the prophetic quest.

KI has done it in the past! Jews have done it throughout the ages! The Jewish community of Philadelphia has a heritage of helping.

Tomorrow, we will listen to Isaiah, chapter 58 for our Haftarah reading for Yom Kippur. It will tell us, yet again, that our faith demands of us, both to fast from inequity and to engage in the active pursuit of justice, kindness and love of neighbor.

Social Justice is in the DNA of our congregation!

We can keep our congregation strong by making it a great Mitzvah machine. Not by might and not by power, the prophet Zecharia taught, "but by MY spirit", can we dedicate ourselves to greatness through goodness.

May we be filled with the spirit of prophetic justice, mercy and kindness from this Yom Kippur to the next.

May we become living examples of "good neighbors and decent human beings" and take up the cause of the widow and the orphan, and together bind up the wounds of our nation and the world.

Amen.

An easy fast!



"The Spirituality of Daily Living"

Yom Kippur Morning - 5776

Rabbi Kevin M. Kleinman

The theme for our High Holy Day sermons this year is, "What Kind of Jew are You?" Here's my take:

I am a Jew.

I am a third-generation American Jew.

I am a Reform Jew. My parents belong to a Reform Synagogue in Virginia. Their commitment to synagogue life and my Jewish formal and informal education shaped the direction of my personal and professional life.

I am a modern Jew. I dress for the 21st century. I am on Facebook. I drive on Shabbat. I look to our tradition and extrapolate messages and values that can add meaning to my life.

I am a cultural Jew. I listen to Jewish music. I read Jewish books. I eat Jewish foods. I am fluent in talking Jewish with other Jews.

I am a Jewish activist. I speak up about injustices at home and abroad from an informed Jewish perspective on justice.

I am a questioning Jew. While we did have a *bris* for each of my three children, we did not do so blindly, without questioning if we, as Modern Jews, should still gather our family and friends to watch our children become circumcised in public.

I am a Jewish parent. We raise our children with Judaism as a guiding pillar of time and ethics. We have Shabbat dinner at home. We go to synagogue together every week, if not every day.

I am a Jew who cares deeply about Israel and Israelis. I yearn to be back in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, to be in a nation whose history – both ancient and modern – I am connected to not only through my DNA, but through a feeling of kinship with its citizens.

I am a progressive Jew. I believe in true equality and inclusivity in Jewish life – particularly for people of all genders, races, sexual orientations, and mental and physical abilities.

I am a religious Jew. I put my Judaism at the forefront of my daily thoughts and actions. I pray to God. I study Jewish text. I live a Jewish life.

And I am a spiritual Jew. Though I do not always understand it, I believe that my life has a unique purpose, that my body is a vessel for my soul, and my soul often needs recharging through prayer and meditation.

Each of these parts of my identity, when put together as a whole, make me who I am as a Jew, as a rabbi, as a father, as a friend, and as a human being.

Some parts of my identity come naturally to me. Other parts have taken years of intentional practice to cultivate. I have spent my entire life in Jewish community. It is my comfort zone. I feel at ease in Reform synagogues because I was brought up in them, and I work in them. I married into the Jewish arts scene and naturally gravitate to Jewish music and literature. I have been to Israel half a dozen times, so when I hear about events in Israel in the news, my ears naturally perk up.

My spiritual life, on the other hand, is constantly a work in progress. Like any practice – Yoga, meditation, music, art, sports – spirituality, things concerning our inner lives, our souls, our spirits, needs to be developed in order to be part of our daily life and consciousness.

Like you, I have experienced moments of spiritual bliss and spiritual depletion.

My earliest feelings of connecting to something greater than me, something outside of me that stirred something inside of me, took place in nature. When I was fourteen I climbed Mount Katadin in Maine. When I was fifteen I went to Arches National Park in Utah. When I was sixteen I hiked through the Negev Desert in Israel. Each of these trips opened my soul up to the grandeur of creation and made me feel more alive, freer, more aware of how incredible this planet is. I felt connected and at peace. Though I didn't have the language for it at the time – I was in awe.

I experienced these same feelings at Jewish summer camp and in synagogues. This time, it was not the power of the place, but the power of the people. Singing the Shema with other people, who prayed the same way I did, I again felt connected and at peace.

I am sure you can relate to being in a beautiful spot or being surrounded by people with common interests and passions lifting your spirit.

There are of course, many moments in life that dampen our spirituality. Having children is often one of the most powerful moments of a person's life. However, it takes less than those first 24 hours at home with a newborn to adjust to the new reality that raising children is also deeply challenging to one's spiritual life. You begin to realize that you are not in control. You lose patience. You lose your temper. You lose sleep. You fight with your partner because you are sleep-deprived and impatient. Crying raises your blood pressure.

On the other hand, when they finally fall asleep it is one of the most peaceful moments. Nothing like a sleeping baby in your arms to lower your blood pressure back to normal.

Illness, job loss, and personal tragedies: anything, unexpected that threatens our sense of self can have devastating emotional and spiritual implications. Why me? What am I supposed to do now? How will I go on living? Why did God let me down?

When I first arrived at KI six years ago it was in the middle of the financial crises. We had signs posted in the bathrooms that read, "Are you in a spiritual recession?" I can't remember exactly what the solution we offered was, but I imagine it was along these lines: "Make an appointment to talk with your clergy. Join our community for Shabbat. Come to KI to lift your spirits."

How do we do that here at KI? We listen...we pray....we connect with other people. We help you find a path to get you out of the spiritual red and back into the spiritual black.

Spiritual practices and programs – whatever they may be – yoga, art, music, writing, Zumba, sports – can connect us to a higher power inside and outside of ourselves and to others who really "get" what is going on with us. Spiritual practices and programs give our lives purpose and meaning.

Most importantly, becoming more spiritually aware in our daily lives helps us to live in the present moment and alleviate anxiety and guilt.

In Buddhism, the definition of torture is regretting the past and worrying about the future.

This is really hard for us as Jews, who constantly dwell on the pain of our past and yearn for a better future.

However, Judaism is also rich with tools that focus our spiritual energy on living life in the present, especially on Yom Kippur. Today, we have set aside hours to reflect on the past year, to apologize to our loved ones for the hurt we have caused them, to be thankful for the many blessings that await us in the year ahead. We have turned off our phones. We are sitting next to our family and friends. We are spiritually present during this Day of Atonement, or at-one-ment.

We can bring these practices into our daily lives as well.

Everyday we can be grateful for the blessing in our lives, if we intentionally build in a few moments for personal reflection. We don't have to wait until the next Yom Kippur to do teshuva, to recognize where we've missed the mark and to release the karmic baggage of our own misdeeds and the misdeeds of others. It can become part of our nightly ritual before going to bed.

The daily evening and morning liturgy reflect the major themes of Yom Kippur. Just as on Yom Kippur we ask God and people in our lives for forgiveness and thank God for the many blessings that are in our lives, so too, our tradition gives us tools to heal relationships and express gratitude every day. The two go hand in hand.

I think the vidui of Yom Kippur -- and for that matter the vidui before death -- would take on a different tone if we were accustomed to praying it, or something very like it more frequently.

Judaism provides a pathway to do a mini-Yom Kippur every day. It's part of the Shema Ha-Mitah – the Bedtime Shema.

This is the bedtime prayer of forgiveness as translated by Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi. It's the Jewish version of, "Don't go to bed angry."

Bedtime Prayer of Forgiveness

*You, My Eternal Friend, Witness that I forgive anyone
who hurt or upset me or offended me -
damaging my body, my property, my reputation or people that I love;
whether by accident or willfully, carelessly or purposely,
with words, deeds, thought, or attitudes;
in this lifetime or another incarnation -
I forgive every person,
May no one be punished because of me.
Help me, Eternal Friend,
to keep from offending You and others.
Help me to be thoughtful
and not commit outrage,
by doing what is evil in Your eyes.
Whatever sins I have committed,
blot out please, in Your abundant kindness
and spare me suffering or harmful illnesses.
Hear the words of my mouth and
may the meditations of my heart
find acceptance before You, Eternal Friend
Who protects and frees me. Amen*

Can you imagine asking for forgiveness and forgiving others as a daily practice, not just once a year? Would you wake up feeling lighter, freer, not having to carry around excess emotional baggage?

The corollary morning prayer *Modeh Ani*, is one of my favorite pieces of liturgy:

“Modeh ani le’fanecha – I offer thanks to you, ever-living God, that you have restored my soul to me.” This first prayer in the daily and Shabbat morning service is a blessing of gratitude. Thank you God that I am alive. We can be truly free to experience being present in the morning if we have removed the heaviness of the night before. Of course a cup of coffee helps too!

From waking-up to going to sleep and everything that happens in between, we have a Jewish, spiritual framework for connecting to our inner life, to others, and to God.

Judaism is rich with meditations and prayers in addition to moral and ethical instruction. One need not only turn to Eastern religions to find mindfulness practices. Judaism can offer spiritual seekers comfort and consolation and daily exercises of the mind and spirit. Judaism can also offer those of us who stress too much, moments of respite and tranquility as we go about our all too hectic lives.

“So,” You might be thinking, “Rabbi, this sounds great, but how does it really work?” Well, it takes practice, and there is a sliding scale from extremely overtly Jewish – like saying prayers throughout the day - to less overtly but still Jewish - like going to a Torah Yoga class taught by Cantor Levy here at KI – to the not necessarily Jewish but could be if you think about it Jewishly – like breaking.

Here are my top 5 suggestions for developing a spiritual awareness in our daily lives through a Jewish lens:

1. Developing daily rituals for giving thanks and resolving conflict. In addition to the prayers I already mentioned – simply asking another person what their favorite part of the day was at dinner or bedtime followed by saying Shehechianu or simply a moment of silent gratitude. We, as a people are quick to complain, but slow to show appreciation for the daily miracles, both big and small in our lives.
2. Saying blessings before or after meals. Whether it’s a brief pause before you eat, or saying Ha’motzi as a family, making a connection to where our food comes from and all the people who make it possible for us to eat, can bring a deeper consciousness to meal time.
3. Turning off our phones when we are with other people. I know, this one is much easier said than done, but we desperately need to create a division between our digital lives and our actual lives. Again, the goal of living spiritually is to create emotional connections with the people we care the most about. Why not start with Shabbat, or at least Shabbat dinner.
4. Give to others. Martin Buber famously developed a philosophical system called “I-Thou.” Essentially, when we enter into an intentional relationship with another person, we can experience them beyond just the physical reality, we can connect spiritually. When we really take the time to focus on another person’s needs – be it volunteering or actively listening, we create a space for divine love and energy to flow between us. This is just as true for Buber with people we know and people we don’t yet know.

5. When all else fails, Breathe. Before I go to bed at night, I take a few deep, focused breaths. When I feel my stress level beginning to rise, I try to remember to breathe.

My other favorite morning prayer is Elohai Neshama, which says, “My God, the soul you have given me is pure.” The Hebrew word for soul, Neshama, shares the same root with the word for breath, Neshima. Our breath is what fuels our spirit. Calm breathing can create calm energy inside of us.

It’s amazing what two or three deep breaths do to calm anger. I recently listened to a guided meditation that centered on recognizing the difference between reacting and responding. When we are angry or hurt, usually our first reaction is to push anger and hurt back onto another person. Rather than spitting out the first nasty thing we can think of and escalating the situation, there is another possibility. We can take a few breaths and think about the appropriate response. We can still express our anger or hurt, but in a way that de-escalates the situation.

I’ve been trying this, not always successfully, but it is pretty amazing what pausing for a few seconds and focusing on breathing can do in tense situations.

I am not perfect in following the spiritual program I just laid out. However, having a Jewish spiritual practice tempers the challenges that I face in my daily life. Whether it is a brief stressful moment with my children, or a larger life issue, spiritual grounding helps me put into perspective the short-term feelings of anxiety and regret within the larger story of the blessing that is my life.

Life is challenging. It is hard. The things that we “go to” to manage our daily stress or anger will be our “go to’s” for the bigger challenges we face as well. Bringing our spiritual practice of teshuva, of retuning to spiritual place of love and acceptance, beyond the confines of Yom Kippur can bring us greater peace of mind year round.

We don’t always get life right. And that’s okay. We are not supposed to be perfect, Yom Kippur is our yearly reminder that we can always strive to be better. But when we spend time each day to be truly present and reflect upon how our actions affect others and how others affect us, we are more prepared to walk the path of life together. As the Yiddish Proverb goes, “Even the smoothest path is strewn with stones.”

We don’t know what the future will bring us. We never really do. We can plan and hope and pray that things will work out, but with a firm spiritual foundation, we can have deeper faith and strength when life throws us curveballs.

Putting time and energy into cultivating a practice to deal with anxiety or an unexpected changes in your life circumstance can better prepare us for dealing with crises as well savoring the really good moments. It's like putting money into the bank of your soul.

My Jewish identity guides by spiritual path. Though religion and spirituality don't exclusively go hand in hand, for me, and I know for many of you, one can enhance the other.

Here at KI we know that many of our members identify as "spiritual" Jews. Last year Rabbi Sussman took a poll asking, "What kind of Jew are you?" and "spiritual" was the number one answer. We are working hard to develop our congregation's spiritual life and I invite you to join us at a Sabbath for the Soul Shabbat service or Cantor Levy's upcoming Sukkot Harvest Yoga class to join us on our journey.

These are not replacing what we already do, but creating additional opportunities in our building for spiritual experiences that past generations have sought outside the synagogue walls. And we are doing it with the goal of creating a community that knows how to be present for one another, in good times, in bad, on holy days and throughout the year.

We often think of Yom Kippur as a day when we "give something up." But what if we flip it around and concentrate on what we receive. Today, we receive the gift of really being present with family and community. Today we receive the gift of lifting the burdens we carry deep inside our heart. Today we receive the blessing of a purified heart and soul.

On this Yom Kippur, and in each and every day of 5776, I hope and pray we continue to receive the gifts of reflecting meaningfully, turning genuinely toward fellow human beings, and noting well how precious each moment is.

May this day create for you in the year ahead a new beginning, a sense of renewal in what is familiar, a sense of joy in the risk of discovering what is new, and a sense of satisfaction in achieving for yourself and others a greater sense of meaning and purpose.

G'mar Chatimah Tovah – May this year, truly be a year of discovering the blessings in your book of life.

"Yizkor"

Yom Kippur - Yizkor - 5776

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

There's a powerful scene at the end of the movie Titanic.

Deep in the sea, covered with coral, broken and grave like
The ballroom of the great ship and its cascading stairway comes back to life.

Its passengers come back to life.
Ballroom music is heard again.
The scene is then bleached in white and we are carried up into a great glass dome
And perhaps to heaven.

In my life, there is no great ocean liner or ballroom or elegant glass dome
But there are memories of family holidays and a dining table, covered with savory
food and enveloped in the music of family love.

Those no longer with us in life are back at their places at our family tables:
grandparents, uncles, aunts, spouses, children, grandchildren:
All those who once defined life for us.
They are still there in our minds, in our hearts, in that place in universe where
death
cannot go and memory lives on,
In light and laughter and enduring love.

Today, when I look across my family's holiday table
There is a new generation and new laughter and innocent children
Who can't see their ancestors like I see them
But who will grow up to love them, as I did and always will.

Today, now, the afternoon of Yom Kippur
Is the most sacred time in the Jewish year.
It is our moment to remember our loved ones together.

It is our moment when the ballroom of life is refilled with our grandparents and
parents and friends and children who no longer sit by our side,
At Seder or at Thanksgiving or here in this sanctuary
Where they will always live and laugh and even cry in our hearts.

A day, a week, a month, a year, a life time ago
It doesn't matter.
They abide with us still.
They will not leave us even if we can't see them or touch them
Or tell them something we yearn to share.

At this sacred moment of Yizkor, their spirit fills our hearts.
We are deeply sad
We are deeply empty
We are deeply bereaved.

We yearn and somehow, across the unknown space between life and death
We can sense that they are there
Somehow still with us
Somehow gone, but somehow here.

Our minds tell us, there is no report from the other side
but
Our hearts tells us we are not alone,
That somewhere in the deep recesses of existence
They are there, with us, with us forever
Undiminished
Filling us again with their spirit and love and presence.

At this moment of Yizkor, let us give thanks for all the blessings
In our lives
From long ago until today.
Let us remember the good and the beautiful and admirable in their lives.
Let us be filled with that goodness.

Let us breath deeply and allow ourselves to feel the "life spirit" in ourselves
And draw deeply from our own places of strength.
To move forward, courageously, wisely,
Into life
As our beloved dead would want us to do.

Zichronam livracha.

For sure, their memories are blessings in our lives!

Amen.



HIGH HOLY DAY SERMONS

Lance J. Sussman Ph.D., Senior Rabbi
Kevin M. Kleinman, Associate Rabbi

2015 - 5776

8339 Old York Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027

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"I Am Tevye"
Erev Rosh Hashanah - 5776
Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

I am Tevye.
Elkins Park is my Anatevka.

The old Tevye thought he had problems;
I have problems, too.

Difference is, Tevye read the good book the wrong way.
He thought every sentence ended with an exclamation mark!
Apparently, he was wrong.
Many of those sentences, end with a question mark!

The old Tevye thought he didn't understand his kids!
I don't understand my kids!
 I don't really mean my kids, or at least Liz's kids.
 I mean all kids today.
I don't understand Millennials or Gen X or Gen Y or Gen Z.
Does anyone, really, if you are not one of them.

The old Tevye couldn't believe his oldest daughter wanted to be "in love" in order
to marry
 and that his son-in-law wanted a sewing machine
 and not a Talmud.
The Poppa, tradition says, picks the boy, not the heart.

The old Tevye couldn't believe his middle daughter fell in love with a
Communist,
 ok a Jew, but still a Communist.

The old Tevye couldn't believe his youngest fell in love with a Ukrainian
peasant boy,
 ok, a good looking Ukrainian peasant boy , but, still not a Jew.

Those were problems?
Yes, Cossacks were a problem!
Yes, the Czar was a problem!
Yes, the Communists were a problem, too.

But listen, Tevye, I have problems.

I have *tsuris*.

You know, *tsuris*, Jewish problems;
lack of *nachas*, you know,
the family reward system God promised Moses
and is payable every Pesach, Bar Mitzvah and family simcha.

Tevye, old boy, you might have had problems.

But I have my problems, too.

Tevye, one of our kids,

that means “you, me and everybody else here” ,
the whole kid generation,
say they don’t need partners at all.

Who needs marriage when you have friends,
With benefits?

One of our kids, that means all of us,

is a Buddhist and says,
don’t worry, its nothing.
She doesn’t say the Shema,
But twists herself up like a pretzel
And then breathes.

Ok, breathing is good, but it is Jewish?

Another one of our kids, yours-mine -and-everyone’s kid ,

is ok with being a Jew
And even has to a Hebrew tattoo to prove it.
For this they had a Bar Mitzvah?
Doesn’t the Torah sat inscribe on your doorposts,
Not on your left forearm,
If you are lucky
And the tattoo is onnever mind!

Tevye, you know what else?
almost all my kids are atheists.
But they say they like being Jewish.
Jewish without Judaism,
Jewish without synagogue.
Some of them even say there are deeply spiritual
Humanly spiritual.
Some with God, some without God, but spiritual.

Tevye, you think you had problems,
one of my sons-in-law is a Ukrainian,
but he comes to shul and likes it.

Tevye, I can't figure anything out anymore.

And, you know what , Tevye,
one of my girls told me that she **too** wanted to marry
the person she loves
but that person is another girl and she's Chinese!

Tevye, guess, what, I like my atheist, Chinese, daughter-in-law
She comes to Shabbas at my house.
Knows the prayers
Smiles a lot
Likes to hug.
I'll never learn to use chopsticks properly.
But I'll keep her anyway

Tevye, remember when you packed it all up
and got on the road
And thought you knew where you were going?
I've got some news for you.
You were going to America where everything grows like an
onion,
With the head in the ground and the feet in the air.

But Tevye, I need to tell you something.
You know how you used to put our hands up in the air
and cry out:

“Where will it stop? Where will it stop?”

Tevye, in America, its not going to stop.

Its going to morph and change and morph again

And, at first, when you see it,

you won't even recognize it.

But Tevye

You are going to love your descendants

And guess what, they still love you, old man,

Our ancestor who had a big heart

And knew he couldn't win a single generational controversy.

Tevye, your Messiah still hasn't come.

We could have used him a thousand times in the last 150 years.

So, we have to keep hoping that when he finally gets here,

We -- you, me, the kids, the Ukrainian son-in-law, the Chinese daughter-in-law,

We, the Jewish people, will still be here.

We will look different and talk different and dress different.

But we are not going to disappear, just change, on the outside.

Guess what? This is not the first generation that decided to beat its own path.

Tevye, your kids didn't listen to you

And my generation, the end of the Baby boomers, we didn't listen either.

When I was a teenager in the late 60s, my parents generation

Thought everything we did was wrong.

Our hair was wrong.

Let me repeat, our hair was wrong,

Very, very wrong.

Our clothing was wrong, too loose and dirty.

Our English was wrong.

Everything was cool

Far out

And “heavy.”

Our music was wrong and too loud, and not really music!

Our art was wrong, it wasn't really art either,

It was random and

The colors looked like plastic candy wrappers.

Our politics were.....not really wrong, just a little excessive.

Tevye, my Confirmation service in 1970 was a semi-disaster.

We couldn't rehearse properly because we had to make
statements

About Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

One of the kids won't wear shoes in the synagogue
and the senior rabbi went crazy on us.

Half my class loved Khahil Gibran a lot better than Moses
And the other half didn't know who Gibran was or gave a hoot
about Moses.

We preferred Peter, Paul and Mary to the old Hebrew tunes.

The great Mandela was more important than the great Mitzvah.

TM meant transcendental meditation, not trademark!

No one was against any kind of smoking

And acid should have been understood as a dangerous chemical,
In whatever form it took

In 1970, we were a total mess, were upside down like an onion in the ground, With
our feet in the air

And we were totally confident, we were going to do everything differently,
everything correctly, change the world,
and grow old singing the "age of Aquarius"
to our hair was down to

I'm told that the generation after World War I, acted almost the same way we did
and went nuts during the 1920s.

The first generation of Reform Jews must have been rebels, too

For that matter, even the Hasidim were rebels

They refused to go along with their old rabbis back in your neighborhood, Tevye
and demanded their own rebbes!

And so , it goes, all the way back to Adam and Eve, and guess what, they didn't
listen either. Their father threw them out of the house for rebellion.

Generational discontinuity is nothing new, its actually a norm of sorts, at least for
awhile, and then we get older and older things become more important.

Every generation wants to do it their way, are told by their elders that “it won’t work.”

By nature, every generation is intent on make some changes, then unmaking some changes, then telling their kids that they are not listening!

When I was 16, I really wanted long hair, hair I could chew on and that’s saying something when you have hair like my hair.

I fought with my father about my hair.

Now, I regret that.

But, meanwhile, when my kids came to me 30 years later and said they wanted short hair, I said no,

I fought too hard for too long for long hair for them to go short

And, then I said, what am I doing? Didn’t I learn anything from my own growing up?

Somehow, now that I am 61 and the world is what it is today,

It does seem like the new generational discontinuities are bigger and wider and more profound than ever before..

Millennials, Gen Xers? What are they?

Maybe I am not dealing with these discontinuities in an accepting manner and just privately absorbing my losses.

But maybe, things really are profoundly different now?

Tevye, are you listening? Where does it stop? Where does it stop?

With respect to Judaism, maybe we are finally cooked and America and its material, liberal culture is just too much for Jews and Judaism outside the ghetto walls of Orthodoxy? Maybe, we are at the end of the road?

Maybe, maybe not.

Let’s take a look at ourselves here at KI:

Like most synagogues today, we have four different co-existing generations.

First, there is the greatest generation. They survived the depression and fought or at least lived through World War II. They spend less than they earn, are charitable, generally worry about Israel and carry cell phones mostly for emergency purposes.

Second, there are the Baby Boomers. They are the children of the Greatest generation but did not have to prove themselves in a global way. Baby Boomers thought 9volt am transistor radios were technological achievements and having one station that played their kind of music was proof that they were the center of the universe. Their parents made them go to synagogue and many of them still are.

Then again, some of us became the first synagogue drop outs. Synagogues are for kids. The kids are gone so are the holiday tickets. Tevye, I think I understand the Greatest Generation and the Boomers. They make sense to me.

But then, we have Generation X. Generation X did not have transistor radios, they also had more than three primary tv stations. They had MTV. OK, I'm going to sound like my parents now but MTV is not music and it is not TV. Gen X knows there is an Israel but doesn't really worry about it. Gen X had Bar and Bat Mitzvahs but were psychologically gone by the time the President of Sisterhood gave them their life long personal set of Shabbat candle sticks, never to be coated with actual melted wax.

And now the Millenials. There are 80 million of them. Their grandparents are Boomers. Few of them have heard a person speak with an authentic Yiddish accent. They have never seen a 9volt transistor radio but have the capacity to download 4000 of their favorite songs and never listen to a live broadcast. Israelis are their Hebrew school teachers and Israel is a kind of Jewish Disneyland one can go to one day, along with bird watching in Panama and an African safari. Half their friends are half Jewish. LGBT is a right and a fact and correctly so. They believe that college dorms should have amenities and if something isn't online, it isn't. They have their own music of which I know nothing and, one last thing Tevye, they are proud that they are Jewish.

Fact is, there isn't a single Jewish leader or educator who really knows what to do with the Millenials and Gen X.

Some of the rules are

- don't teach frontally
- experience is the greatest teacher
- everything should be like camp

- peer learning works
- use technology but not cell phones in the class room
- Israel is good for two week trips, but not as a unifying topic
- Social justice is essential to Judaism, up to 2 hours at a time
- Two Holocaust museums are about right before age 15
- Have heard about “Fiddler on the Roof” but haven’t seen it yet
- Jewish food is largely sub-par in their culinary cosmos.
- Expect to take a rain check on Jewish life between Bar and Bat Mitzvah and their wedding
- Remember more about their preschools than their Hebrew schools
- Denominational labels mean very little to them
- Know their Hebrew name.

One major study after another points to the same basic conclusions. The longer Tevye’s descendants are in America, the less intense their Jewishness becomes. The corollary is the less intense Jewishness becomes, the more fragmented it becomes along innumerable, mostly local lines. On the other hand, the same polls report that Jewishness itself remains and strongly so.

So what are we to do? First and foremost, we need to have faith in our kids. They are not going to give up Judaism. Maybe not every single one of them will keep it, but as a cohort, the millenials will keep the faith.

How do I know that? Because they report they are Jews and Jewish people will always find ways to doing Jewish things with other Jewish people.

Maybe not my way. Certainly not Tevye’s way. But their way.

How do we help them? How do we keep it, Judaism, going until the great generational handoff is complete? Simply, we need to do our job and to do our Judaism our way, as fully and as completely and as generously as possible.

If we think that handing off a broken, broke synagogue will be our stairway to heaven, we are wrong.

But if we embrace the kind of Judaism we say we believe in, and enrich it with our presence and our capacities, if we demonstrate faith and not ambivalence, if we set a good example with our feet and do what we say, they, the Millenials will get the message and do the same for themselves, their way.

The synagogue of the future may be small or online or home-based or on the beach or in the mountains or on a monitor or in a year round Jewish retreat center or in a Jewish center in a major city or in a synagogue or in a tattoo club, but it will be there.

Tevye, where will it stop? It won't stop. It will keep emerging, bending, preserving, reviving, and going on forever because it has too.

Fifty years from now, Generation Xers and Millennials, will be wondering what their grandchildren will be doing to keep their Judaism alive. They won't have any idea except to go on their I-29 phones and connect with their local cosmic Jewish virtual center and trade old ideas with their friends and fellow travelers.

Judaism is just too good, too deep, too enriching, too transcendently human to be tossed away by an entire generation.

As we get older and become more refined in our tastes and more discerning of our sources for inspiration, we seem to always turn back to the wells of wisdom first dug by Abraham and Sarah. They still provide us with Mayim Chaim, the waters of life. Our grandparents understood that. We know it too. And so will our grandchildren and their grandchildren .

Am I sure?

Yes

Do I have proof?

No

Then, how do I know?

Because I believe it to be so, that's why.

Because our heritage is compelling to child and adult alike.

Because Judaism has a message for the world and the world needs to hear it.

We are the originators and the standard bearers of the belief that ultimately there is one human family

And that every child in that family is a gift to be nurtured with love and kindness

and taught that they should dedicate their time on earth to the good of everyone as fairly, as justly and as joyfully as possible.

Tevye,
what did you say our message is:
L'chaim, To life!
It's the message of the ages, it's the message of Judaism
and it's the message for all the millenials to come.
That's why I love you Tevye,
You see,
I'm a Tevye, too.

Amen. Shana Tova!

♪[music]

"One Day More: Israel, Iran and American Jews"

Rosh Hashanah Morning - 5776

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

My favorite musical is *Les Mis* and my favorite song in *Les Mis* is *One Day More*.

It is the final and 27th song at the end of the First Act.

It brings together all the characters, all the plots, all the subplots, all the musical motifs, into one giant, magnificent chorus of complexity, passion and hope.

It is the Quintet *Tonight* from *West Side Story*.

It is the Sextet from *Lucia*.

It is the grand mix of Jean Val Jean and Javert, the love triangle of Marius-Cosette-and-Eponine, the black toothed innkeeper and his portly wife, young Gavroche and the student revolutionaries, and a chorus of hundreds.

It promises perseverance, conflict and tragedy

Here are a few key phrases,

You know the words:

“One day more

Another day, another destiny

One day more before the storm....

Will you take your place with me...

The time is now, the day is here

Tomorrow is the judgment day

One more dawn

One more day

One day more!”

To me, this past summer played out like a global, non-stop rendition of “One Day More” as the White House and its opponents, Netanyahu and the President, AIPAC and J Street, presidential candidates of every stripe, op writers across the political spectrum and a long string of Senatorial solos, all crescendo together in a prolonged, multi-voiced dramatic song of conflict and destiny over the Iran Deal,

One day more, the opponents sang out, Iran will have the bomb

One day more, the proponents replied, Iran will not have the bomb

One day more, 2 dozen nuclear scientists, said the deal was ok
One day more, 3 dozen nuclear scientists, said the deal was bad

One day more, 300 American generals said the deal worked
One day more, 500 different us generals said the deal didn't work.

One day more, the Israeli government says the deal hands Iran the bomb
One day more, top leaders from the Israeli security establishment, says the deal blocks Iran from the bomb

One day more, AIPAC says the deal is a disaster
One day more, JPAC, says the deal averts disaster.

One day more, the White House says the deal is based on verification
One day more, the GOP said Iran needs to release its hostages before we can begin to talk about verification.

One day more, China, Russia, Germany, France and the UK ramp up business with Iran
One day more, the Saudis are against deal
One day more, the Saudis are for the deal

One day more, 340 rabbis are for the deal
One day more, 900 rabbis sign against the deal

One day more, Senate republicans seek to disapprove of the deal
One day more, Senate democrats block the path to disapproval

One day more, Senate GOP members say filibuster is undemocratic
One day more, Senate Democrats said filibuster is as old as the Senate itself

One day more, House opponents say the "Deal Clock" isn't running so the deal can't be voted on.
One day more, House supporters say the Deal process timed out.

One day more, the Reform movement in Judaism punts and doesn't take a stand on the Deal.
Instead urges everyone to starting focusing on the "day after the deal" or let's just move on – one more day.

**Ok then! now it is “one day more”
and it’s the “day after the deal.”**

Now what do we do?

In the musical, *Les Mis*, after the casts sings “One Day More,” a totally pumped up audience applauds, stands up and runs to the bathroom and enjoys an intermission.

In real life, on the “day after the deal,” there is no intermission.

So now it’s the “day after” “*one more day*” and its time to go back to the barricades.

The never ending work of helping Israel help defend itself!

So, what needs to be done now?

I have six items on my Israel-Iran “to do” list.

One. Verification. Verification needs to begin, not tomorrow, not one day more, but today.

Susan Massie, a writer on Russia, met with President Reagan numerous times between 1984 and 1987. She taught him that the Russian people love proverbs. In this case, negotiations on the INF or Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces was in play.

Massie taught President Reagan how to say, “*do-ver-yai no pro-ver-yai*,” or “trust, but verify.” The slogan then became the motto of the DTRA, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, in 1998.

As with former American –Soviet nuclear negotiations, “*do-ver-yai no pro-ver-yai*,” “trust, but verify” is the working assumption of the Iran Deal. If verification works, then the deal works. If you believe Iran will never comply and the whole world will be duped, then the deal collapses and the Middle East and maybe the world dives even deeper into chaos.

Now, what does “the Deal” actually say about verification. Well, I read the Deal or the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action” signed by P5+1 or E3/EU+3, as most

the world calls it. The Deal was adopted on July 14, 2015 in Vienna, Austria. I urge you to look at it, too. It is online and easily accessed.

The Deal is 159 pages long. Its basic terms are spelled out in a 20 page Preamble followed by 5 Annexes including extended discussions of nuclear regulation and sanctions in Annexes 1 & 2.

Much of it is technical; some of it is procedural. Much of it beyond my scientific knowledge. It is highly detailed and involves the tracking of Iran's entire nuclear program, at every site in Iran and by every nuclear company in Iran. It specifies caps to nuclear materials and requires comprehensive reporting and tracking.

The independent "International Atomic Energy Agency", founded in 1957 and based in Vienna, which is now headed by a Japanese diplomat, legal scholar and international arms specialist, is the lead parallel outside agency in implementing the Deal.

164 countries belong to the Agency including Israel, although Israel is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a known fact which was not raised during the Iran negotiations and was a huge, but silent, victory for Israel .

From start to adoption, the Iran deal was an exercise in multilateral diplomacy with sweeping global participation in stark contrast to years of American unilateralism.

According to the deal, verification will be multilateral as well. Including the IAEA which has been the global operational standard in nuclear monitoring for decades. Do-ver-yai no pro-ver-yai, Don't Trust, Verify

What is the second thing to be done now, on "the day after the deal?"

Israel's military edge needs not only to be maintained but broadened. This will require new weapons systems on the land, air and sea. It will require greater cooperation between the American military and Israeli military than ever before and despite the poor political climate right between the US and Israel, purely military cooperation has never been better. Agreement on the "David's Sling" system, now on the table, will be a good first step. In my opinion, America is clear in their commitment to Israel. Israel, however, also needs to come to the table and reduce its political lobbying. It is probable that elements in Congress will continue to try and derail the Agreement in the near future in the near future. Congressional

success, under the terms of the Deal, could trigger an Iranian withdrawal from the process as their own Parliament debates the Deal.

In my opinion, Israel, too, needs to think in terms of the “day after the deal” and move on and seize the opportunity for greater military capacity. Just last week, Prime Minister Netanyahu was in London and struck just the right cord with the British government. It seems he has also accepted an invitation to meet the President of the United States in November. All this suggests a quick mend and quicker still return to the critical business of allied military cooperation.

AIPAC, too, would be well advised, in my view, to get back to rebuilding bipartisan support for Israel in Congress and expanding the military pipeline. Those members who voted to support the Deal, did not vote against Israel, and all of them called for increased, unprecedented military cooperation with Israel. AIPAC will not serve Israel’s interests if it permanently damages its political ties across the aisle. Act I is over. Time for the pro-Israel world to move on to Act II, just like in the play and if nothing else, start making “lemonade” from the lemon of the Deal they opposed, understandably as a matter of principle.

Third. Hezbollah. Hezbollah is Iran’s proxy in West Asia. Hezbollah has tremendous fire power, 50,000 missiles which can hit any target in Israel. In my opinion, Hezbollah is the greatest immediate existential threat to the Jewish state. To some extent, Hezbollah is entangled in Syria’s bloody civil war and is part of a Moscow-Teheran-Damascus axis. It has endured losses in Syria but it has not been fundamentally weakened. The prolongation of the standoff between Israel and Hezbollah is in Israel’s best interests. Hezbollah is closely tied to Iran’s Mullahs. If the Mullahs want to sabotage the Deal, Hezbollah is their proxy. It’s a game of chicken and who blinks first. Israel needs to maintain an iron fist toward it lethal, northern enemies.

Closely tied to Teheran and Damascus in this regard are the Russians. Putin wants to expand his influence, keep his own Muslims quiet and make badly needed money by selling technology to the Iranian Mullahs. They too are dancing on a wire and the more they are convinced that keeping Hezbollah quiet and maintain Russian naval access in Syria. The quieter the Golan and the Galilee will be for the time being.

Fourth. Hamas. Unlike Hezbollah, the radical Sunni group called Hamas is on relatively hard times. Egypt has clamped down on their sponsors, the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt itself. Israel, despite great world condemnation, badly

damaged Hamas in the Operation Protective Edge. There are even talks of negotiations between the Netanyahu government and Hamas leadership at present.

Gaza, Hamas' main base, is in bad shape. Per usual, no one, especially in the Arab world, has done much of anything to help the people of Gaza and the people of Gaza seem to have little interest and less capacity to overthrow Hamas.

Hamas' current goal is probably to maintain relative quiet in Gaza while it bores politically into West Bank Society with the goal of displacing the Abbas-PLA government. A Hamas victory in the West Bank would be horrible and greatly complicate Israel's already complicated security situation. It would almost certainly lead to the introduction of ISIS into the West Bank, civil war in Jerusalem and the destabilization of Jordan and possibly an opportunistic end run by Hezbollah to press its advantage in the chaos with the hope of winning the Muslim war against Israel.

What should Israel do in the West Bank? Since we only have one day of Rosh HaShanah at KI and not two, I will have to pass on that right now. The issue at hand is Iran and the deal. Suffice it to say, Israel cannot afford a PLA collapse, as all the alternatives are worse.

And, we still have "one day more" amount of material to cover our topic.

Which brings us to issue Number Five: Iran's American Hostages. The Iran Deal did not involve the prior release of four individuals currently being held the Iranians. Nor did it promise to. Whether or not that should have been a pre-condition is still debatable, but only as history.

Who are the hostages? There are four of them.

Amir Hekmati is being held for no reason whatsoever. He went to Iran to visit extended family including his grandmother in 2011 to celebrate Ramadan with them. He is a US Marine but that does not mean he is also a spy. He has been sentenced to death for no reason. He needs to be released.

Jason Reza-ian is a dual American-Iranian citizen. He is a journalist. He is facing 20 years in prison for doing his job.

Saeed A-be-dini is a pastor who travelled to Iran frequently to build an orphanage there. His crime is being a Christian. He has been beaten repeatedly in jail. He needs to be released.

The most complicated case is that of Robert Levinson, who was working for a CIA operation on an island off the coast of Iran when he was kidnapped in 2007. The Iranians claim they do not where he is. Not good enough in a post-Deal environment. He, too, needs to be set free, immediately.

The Cubans set their American hostages free after they got their deal, including Alan Gross, who like Levinson, was involved in gray activities.

Now its Iran's turn to set their captives free and its time for us to turn the heat up!

Finally, American Jews, you and me, need to heal the wounds in our own community.

The Iran Deal, in my opinion, did not create fissures in American Jewish unity, it widened them. The tension, even hatred, was already there. I literally feel it every day in my work.

We are a community essentially at war with itself. The poison of the political polarization so prevalent in general American political culture, is equally at work in the American Jewish community.

Jews are viewed by other Jews as enemies, traitors, anti-Semites and willful or destroyers of Judaism and the Jewish people. It is shameful, painful and counterproductive.

The political fragmentation of the American Jewish community is not new. It is at least a 100 years old but with social media, it spreads and deepens more rapidly. As I noted last night, generational tensions are intensifying, basic human respect is not being honored and our capacity to function as a community grounded in democratic principles is eroding. Polarization is not only killing our capacity to deal with one another, it is also marginalizing entire cohorts of our community who are sick of the nasty, internecine fighting which makes Jewish life an anathema to them.

What will heal the breach? In my opinion, less proxy fighting for parties in Israel and greater direct involvement in Israeli life. We need a Birthright for all American Jews, every Jewish family with their kids before or during their Bnai Mitzvah years.

We need direct financial investment, not just charity dollars in Israel. Reform Jews, especially, need to double down and learn about and support their counterparts, peers and partners in Israel itself.

This summer Liz and I and the Mayer family from KI, visited YOZMA, the Reform community in Modiin, a community between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. YOZMA was incredible. It was the synagogue and school of choice in this middle class community inside the green line. Their preschool was amazing. They share our values about political democracy, religious pluralism and Israeli national security. We share every aspect of life with them, every Jewish value with them, every Israeli concern with them.

Most of all, American Jews need to remember that first principle of Zionism is Jewish self-reliance. Israel will take care of Israel. Israel is not dependent on anybody. Israel is not afraid anyone. Nor is Israel a ship of fools. Fools don't respect danger, they charge into danger without concern. But a courageous person understands danger, respects fear as a human radar system and then moves on to take care of itself in a smart, courageous fashion.

Israel can and will take care of itself but it also wants us, their cousins, to be part of the process and not just on Capitol Hill but in schools, universities, preschools, hospitals, business investments and more in Israel itself.

Israel needs all the friends it can get and we should be first in line to be that friend. Go there! Make it part of your life. Support institutions and values there. Learn a little Hebrew. Read Israeli English newspapers online every day. Make a connection with an Israeli family. Buy Israeli products. Go to the beach in Tel Aviv and not just on the Jersey shore. Make Israel real in your lives.

So, how does the song, *One Day More*, end?

“Tomorrow we'll discover what our God in Heaven has in store!
One more dawn, *one more day*, *one day more!*”

Well, we, too, don't know what tomorrow will bring.
But it is in our capacity to face tomorrow together with Israel
and not just continually fight against one another.

One more day – our communal fighting has to stop
One day more until our collective sanity is restored and

we reaffirm that we are all on the same side:

The pro-Israel side
The Pro-Jewish people side,
The Pro-American side.

One day more,
May we be restored.

Amen. Shana Tova

♪[music]

"A Sacred Event: Social Justice, Hesed and Reform Judaism"

Erev Yom Kippur - 5776

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

March 4, 1865 was a miserable, rainy day in Washington, DC
Still, thousands gathered on the eastern face of the Capital building.
As Abraham Lincoln rose to speak, the sun burst through for the first time that day.

What followed was a short, 703 word talk, "Lincoln's Second Inaugural".
Surprisingly, It was totally devoid of any reference to the North's impending military victory after four years of bloody civil war.

Instead, Lincoln offered a deeply religious talk, filled with Biblical quotes and framed by
a theology based heavily on the Hebrew prophets God's justice is more a function of kindness and charity, than the work of great armies, the President Said..

"With malice toward none," Lincoln concluded, "with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nations wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan -- to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves and with all nations."

The press yawned!
John Wilkes Booth, who was present in the crowd that day and would soon murder the President at nearby Ford's theater, sneered;
And Frederick Douglas, the great African American abolitionist called the Second Inauguration Oration, "A sacred event."

Every time I read Lincoln's words from March, 1865, whether in a book, or online, or as they
carved inside the Lincoln Memorial, I, too, experience a sacred event.
For me, they perfectly encapsulate the merger of the spiritual and the ethical so passionately envisioned by the ancient prophets of Israel, for the first time in all history.

From Abraham, the first Prophet,
To Moses, the greatest of our Prophets,
To Malachi, the final Prophet in our tradition,

Come the same basic set of ideas:

There is a transcendent source of all existence
Who has given us the capacity to shape the kind of people and nation we want to be
And consistently challenges us to follow the paths of justice, mercy and peace.

In Judaism, above riches, power and fame, there is *chesed*,
Our love for one another combined with our love for our God, the source of Hesed.

Chesed, the prophets taught us, is anchored in a cosmic source
Who summons us, not to be great for greatness' sake, but to be good,
For in seeking justice, there is life.

On Yom Kippur day , we read from the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 58,
that it is not our physical fasting and day long prayers that truly matter to God,
They are fine and acceptable, if offered with the right spirit, and, more importantly, accompanied
by the right actions.
What really counts, the Prophet proclaims, is the fast from injustice, the fast from hypocrisy, and
the active pursuit of a good life.
a life filled with justice, love and Chesed.

In the Torah, we find Judaism's moral blueprint for humanity.
Literally to care for the widow and the orphan,
To leave the corners of the field un-harvested so the poor can come and claim the
The wheat and other fresh products for themselves!
We are commanded to pay the day laborer at sunset,
Not to take a poor person's blanket to secure a loan,
To treat prisoners of war with dignity
To build safe homes for people to live in
To return lost property to friend and enemy alike
Not to abuse animals
To give all things a Sabbath of rest from their work
To honor our parents
To be hospitable and kind to the stranger
To tell the truth in court
Not to slander or libel anyone

Not to mock the deaf or trip the blind
Not to engage in wars with wanton disregard for life
To compensate those we injure
To educate our children
Not to stand idly by the blood of our neighbors
And to love all of God's children as we would have them love us.

Judaism has always stood for justice and mercy, righteous and kindness,
Peace and peacefulness. Judaism has always stood for Chesed.

In the ancient world, following the destruction of Jerusalem,
The Jewish people were dispersed across the globe.
Wherever we landed, we created new communities
And immediately established funds for poor brides, funds for the hungry,
And for the elderly with insufficient means to care for themselves.

The *pushke*, the little box with the big heart, was to be found in every Jewish
community and every Jewish house.

Ashkenazic and Sephardic

German and Russian

Italian and Iraqi,

Wherever there was Jewish life, there was concern for the other,

A command to take up the cause of the widow and the orphans.

With pennies from children, placed into the little blue JNF box, the Jewish people

Literally redeemed the Land of Israel, one coin at a time.

When Jews first settled in North America in the 17th century,
They created communal funds for the next wave of immigrants and the next to the
next.

When Rebecca Gratz started the Hebrew Sunday School in Philadelphia, the
country and the city was in the depths of an economic depression.

She raised the funds necessary for the poorest students to attend her classes
without

paying tuition, so they could learn along side their more fortunate coreligionists.

She also made sure her indigent students had both winter coats and firewood in
the winter. "A mind can't learn if a child is hungry or cold or both."

Here is the opening prayer, the first Sunday school students recited here in Philadelphia on March 4, 1838: “O God, give unto us the help we need: give us bread to eat and raiment to put on and instruction to understand Thy mercies .”

And what Rebecca Gratz did for the poor Jewish immigrant children, she also did for the Irish and the German kids through her work in local civic associations
And when as an older woman, the Civil War broke out, she worked tirelessly to care for the wounded of all faiths,
To care for the soldier, the widow and the orphan.

When Rabbi David Einhorn came to KI in 1862, his anti-slavery message was loud, clear and undiminished as it had been in Baltimore.

Slavery, he taught, is the ultimate perversion of ethics and economy.
It is all greed and no heart.

If we are commanded to help an over-worked ox, in the Torah, what about a slave who is whipped, bound and hanged for sport?

This not the Jewish way, he taught,
This is not the prophetic path.

Slavery is wrong and must be stopped, even if it splits the community,
Justice, fairness and kindness, Einhorn taught, are our principles:
No false peace, no submission to evil in the name of communal unity.

How bad was slavery in the American South? I have a friend who is a legal historian of slavery. He has collected tens of thousands of cases documenting the brutality and utter depravity of America’s Peculiar Institution. Here is one report from St. Louis in 1844;

“On Friday last, the coroner held an inquest at the house of Judge Dunica, a few miles south of the city, over the body of a negro girl, about 8 years of age, belonging to Mr. Cordell. The body exhibited evidence of the most cruel whipping and beating we have ever heard of. The flesh on the back and limbs was beaten to a jelly -- one shoulder-bone was laid bare -- there were several cuts, apparently from a club, on the head -- and around the neck was the indentation of a cord, by which it is supposed she had been confined to a tree. She had been hired by a man by the name of Tanner, residing in the neighborhood, and was sent home in this condition. After coming home, her constant request, until her death, was for bread, by which it would seem that she had been starved, as well as unmercifully whipped. The jury returned a verdict that she came to her death by the blows

inflicted by some persons unknown whilst she was in the employ of Mr. Tanner. Mrs. Tanner has been tried and acquitted.”

To this and tens of thousands other documented cases, the rabbi of KI said NO More!

In 1866, Rabbi Einhorn went to NY and was followed here by Rabbi Samuel Hirsch.

Hirsch had been the Grand Rabbi of Luxembourg and was a widely respected Jewish philosopher.

Hirsch, too, was passionate in his concern for the poor, for poor children and most of all, for the impoverished orphan.

He created the KI Orphans Guardian Society.

It became the signature activity of our congregation for generations.

Hirsch opposed large, faceless institutional orphanages.

Kids don't need institutions, they need homes, he taught.

They don't need large wards, they need real families.

The congregation responded and an army of home visitors was raised from people who went into the slums with food, blankets, coal and love

To care for the widow and the orphan in the Philadelphia of the 1860s, 70s and 80s.

In 1881, Philadelphia finally dedicated a new, proper Jewish orphanage. At the dedication ceremony in Germantown, the following words were shared by Edward I Weil, having been introduced by I. Binswanger, a member of KI:

“We [now] dedicate this Temple to the God of love and mercy.

This Home, where the outcast little one will find shelter.

This asylum where the fatherless child can be reared and protected.

For this religion of that race teaches that the deed which is upmost acceptable to God is to break the yoke of the oppressed, to deal out the bread to the hungry, to bring the poor that are out cast to our home and to satisfy the afflicted soul.”

In 1887, Rabbi Hirsch retired and joined his family in Chicago.

He was followed by KI's longest serving rabbi, Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf.

Like Einhorn, Krauskopf spoke out against exploited labor

Like Hirsch, Krauskopf called on the congregation to care for orphans in their homes.

But he did something else,

Rabbi Krauskopf understood that city slums are not places for children to thrive, to be educated, to be healthy.

So, he started a farm school in Doylestown, to take the kids out of the city, put them on the land and in fresh air.

At first, he spent his own money to buy land, he then lobbied with Presidents and great Philanthropists to support his school. They responded in kind.

A few weeks ago, Krauskopf's Farm School officially became the Del Valley University,

Nearly every older building on that campus bears the name of a KI family to this very day.

For decades, and maybe again in the future, it was one of this synagogue's many ways to care for the orphans of Philadelphia and beyond.

IN 1920, a young man by the name of Lessing Rosenwald settled in Jenkintown to help expand his family's world famous business, Sears and Robuck. He came to Philadelphia from Chicago.

He immediately joined KI.

His father, Julius Rosenwald, was one of the great philanthopists in all of American history.

A congregant in the Chicago synagogue, headed by Samuel Hirsch's son, Rabbi Emil Hirsch.

Julius Rosenwald was a Jewish Andrew Carnegie .

In his lifetime, 1862-1932, Rosenwald gave away \$70 million dollars, to promote education and fight racism in Chicago and across the deep south. He took up the cause of the widow and the orphan with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his might. He embodied the spirit of the prophets of ancient Israel and the spirit of KI where his rabbi had been reared as a child.

In many ways, prophetic social justice was the central message and principal method of the early Reform movement in the United States. Reform was not just an easy path to Jewish ritual observance, it was a gallant attempt to restore the prophetic passion to Jews and Judaism late in the 19th century. Slavery, unfair labor practices, poverty, inferior education, racial and religious discrimination and unjust war were among its chief concerns.

On the one hand, classical Reform rejected anarchism and the call to destroy government and authority.

On the other hand, it equally resisted the centralization of national economies by the left and the right, as well as government curtailment of human rights.

Reform sought a middle course, the prophetic way. It was closely aligned with American progressivism. Rabbi Krauskopf, for example, was a personal friend of Teddy Roosevelt. To this day, our lobby has a stained glass window in memory of TR.

Rabbi Emil Hirsch in Chicago championed economic justice and had it added as the final plank of our movement's first great Platform, the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, which addressed the great economic disparities of its day.

Perhaps the greatest Reform voice for justice was Rabbi Steven Wise. He was a founder of the NAACP long before the rest of the Jewish community took up the cause of Civil Rights. He battled the anti-Semitic priest, Charles Coughlin on the Radio, along with Louis Brandeis championed the cause of Zionism for decades prior to World War II.

IN 1959, the Reform movement voted to establish a real presence in Washington, DC, to bring its prophetic message to the nation's capital on a permanent basis.

The Religious Action Center quickly emerged as a central meeting place of the American Civil Rights movement. Federal legislation was prepared at the RAC despite tremendous resistance both from within and beyond our movement.

The RAC Director, Rabbi David Saperstein, became one of the nation's best known voices for justice.

In 1970, our own Congregation, Keneseth Israel, decided to immortalize the prophetic message of social justice by commissioning artist Jacob Landau to create our stained glass windows. Our windows are not just ornaments. They are massive statements about justice, forgiveness and peace. They are not art for art's sake, they are visual midrashim urging us to reach further in our own pursuit of justice.

So, what are we doing today as a congregation? As individuals, hopefully, most, if not all of us are doing something for the common good.

If anyone in this sanctuary tonight is personally involved in the work of social justice, as you yourself define it, whether through education, art, philanthropy, political activism, cultural programs, after school programs, teaching, mentoring, sponsorships, health care, social work, employment, anti-hunger programs or any other means of helping those less fortunate than ourselves, please stand for just a moment!

[Thank you, wow]

But how about us as a congregation, as a totality? Thanks to our third term President, Dr. Arnold Meshkov and the work of Rabbi Kevin Kleinman, social justice is fully reinvigorated at KI.

We have many, many congregational projects. Among them are two major initiatives.

First, we have expanded our relationship with **Lowell Elementary School** in Philadelphia. In addition to school supplies and winter clothes, we are now organizing an extensive volunteer tutoring program to be held at the school. Education is a foundational value in Judaism. The Torah speaks of the priority of education. The kids at Lowell need our help, our extra concern, our capacity to help them secure the basics in math and reading so that they can excel later in life.

“Give a person a fish, they eat a meal. Teach a person to fish, they can feed themselves and their family in perpetuity.”

Literacy and math competency is something we can help them achieve. But we need volunteer tutors, congregants who are committed to social justice one child at a time.

If we can create a team of 40 tutors to help a hundred kids and if hundreds of other synagogues across the country do the same, we can begin to make a dent in the endless and devastating cycle of poverty in this country.

Second, we have our **HaMotzi Campaign** addressing food insecurity in Philadelphia and Montgomery County. We have our holiday food drive and mitzvah garden. This year, starting this November, we will be providing a cooked dinner on the third Sunday of each month at KI to anyone who is food insecure in our area. We will buy the food, cook the food and serve the food in our auditorium.

We will listen to the ancient words of our Passover Hagadaah. “All who are hungry, come let them eat” at our table, in this house. We have already received funds to pay for the November and December dinners from a devoted family of this congregation. We hope to make this program, another signature activity at KI for years to come.

Every Hanukkah for the last few years, we have created a huge Menorah in our lobby. Each class in JQuest is responsible for an arm of the Menorah, an arm built with large clear plastic boxes, boxes to be filled with care products for the widow and the orphan.

Our Menorah literally becomes a giant Mitzvah machine.

KI should be a giant Mitzvah machine and we are well on our way to becoming one, again, as we were in the past.

But there needs to be more, much more at KI. We need to do research on contemporary social justice issues, we need to test the feasibility of addressing those needs here at KI and we need to marshal our resources, human and material.

Even more than that, we need and the Reform movement needs a clear policy statement and philosophy on social justice, on caring for the widow and the orphan.

We also need to identify our blockers that keep us from pushing forward?

What are these blockers?

Indifference? Apathy?

The false confidence that somebody else will do the work for us?

Racism? We really don't want to help “them,” some might say.

Classism? The poor bring it upon themselves, they are lazy, wasteful and cheaters!

Inefficiency? Too many will cheat and steal from us.

Defeatism? The problem is too big and we are too little

Contempt? “Do-gooders” are fools.

Perhaps it's the government's problem and they have already messed things up so badly, that

We as a community have no chance of making a real contribution.

Perhaps the real blocker is Me-ism? I need to take care of me and mine, not yours and theirs.

The gauntlet of excuses, protests and counter arguments are endless.

Perhaps the upcoming visit of Pope Francis to our area will help wake us up in this regard. A friend of interfaith cooperation, the new Pope is rooted in the work of a devoted priest in a hopelessly poor parish. It is not grandeur which makes the Catholic Church great, he teaches his flock, it is the use of its resources to do good for all people.

We know we have many areas of official difference with the Catholic Church, but we also have areas of possible cooperation at the local level, at the level of social justice. Let us listen to Francis' message, reach across the aisle to our neighbors of every religious stripe and get to work in pursuit of the prophetic quest.

KI has done it in the past! Jews have done it throughout the ages! The Jewish community of Philadelphia has a heritage of helping.

Tomorrow, we will listen to Isaiah, chapter 58 for our Haftarah reading for Yom Kippur. It will tell us, yet again, that our faith demands of us, both to fast from inequity and to engage in the active pursuit of justice, kindness and love of neighbor.

Social Justice is in the DNA of our congregation!

We can keep our congregation strong by making it a great Mitzvah machine. Not by might and not by power, the prophet Zecharia taught, "but by MY spirit", can we dedicate ourselves to greatness through goodness.

May we be filled with the spirit of prophetic justice, mercy and kindness from this Yom Kippur to the next.

May we become living examples of "good neighbors and decent human beings" and take up the cause of the widow and the orphan, and together bind up the wounds of our nation and the world.

Amen.

An easy fast!



"The Spirituality of Daily Living"

Yom Kippur Morning - 5776

Rabbi Kevin M. Kleinman

The theme for our High Holy Day sermons this year is, "What Kind of Jew are You?" Here's my take:

I am a Jew.

I am a third-generation American Jew.

I am a Reform Jew. My parents belong to a Reform Synagogue in Virginia. Their commitment to synagogue life and my Jewish formal and informal education shaped the direction of my personal and professional life.

I am a modern Jew. I dress for the 21st century. I am on Facebook. I drive on Shabbat. I look to our tradition and extrapolate messages and values that can add meaning to my life.

I am a cultural Jew. I listen to Jewish music. I read Jewish books. I eat Jewish foods. I am fluent in talking Jewish with other Jews.

I am a Jewish activist. I speak up about injustices at home and abroad from an informed Jewish perspective on justice.

I am a questioning Jew. While we did have a *bris* for each of my three children, we did not do so blindly, without questioning if we, as Modern Jews, should still gather our family and friends to watch our children become circumcised in public.

I am a Jewish parent. We raise our children with Judaism as a guiding pillar of time and ethics. We have Shabbat dinner at home. We go to synagogue together every week, if not every day.

I am a Jew who cares deeply about Israel and Israelis. I yearn to be back in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, to be in a nation whose history – both ancient and modern – I am connected to not only through my DNA, but through a feeling of kinship with its citizens.

I am a progressive Jew. I believe in true equality and inclusivity in Jewish life – particularly for people of all genders, races, sexual orientations, and mental and physical abilities.

I am a religious Jew. I put my Judaism at the forefront of my daily thoughts and actions. I pray to God. I study Jewish text. I live a Jewish life.

And I am a spiritual Jew. Though I do not always understand it, I believe that my life has a unique purpose, that my body is a vessel for my soul, and my soul often needs recharging through prayer and meditation.

Each of these parts of my identity, when put together as a whole, make me who I am as a Jew, as a rabbi, as a father, as a friend, and as a human being.

Some parts of my identity come naturally to me. Other parts have taken years of intentional practice to cultivate. I have spent my entire life in Jewish community. It is my comfort zone. I feel at ease in Reform synagogues because I was brought up in them, and I work in them. I married into the Jewish arts scene and naturally gravitate to Jewish music and literature. I have been to Israel half a dozen times, so when I hear about events in Israel in the news, my ears naturally perk up.

My spiritual life, on the other hand, is constantly a work in progress. Like any practice – Yoga, meditation, music, art, sports – spirituality, things concerning our inner lives, our souls, our spirits, needs to be developed in order to be part of our daily life and consciousness.

Like you, I have experienced moments of spiritual bliss and spiritual depletion.

My earliest feelings of connecting to something greater than me, something outside of me that stirred something inside of me, took place in nature. When I was fourteen I climbed Mount Katadin in Maine. When I was fifteen I went to Arches National Park in Utah. When I was sixteen I hiked through the Negev Desert in Israel. Each of these trips opened my soul up to the grandeur of creation and made me feel more alive, freer, more aware of how incredible this planet is. I felt connected and at peace. Though I didn't have the language for it at the time – I was in awe.

I experienced these same feelings at Jewish summer camp and in synagogues. This time, it was not the power of the place, but the power of the people. Singing the Shema with other people, who prayed the same way I did, I again felt connected and at peace.

I am sure you can relate to being in a beautiful spot or being surrounded by people with common interests and passions lifting your spirit.

There are of course, many moments in life that dampen our spirituality. Having children is often one of the most powerful moments of a person's life. However, it takes less than those first 24 hours at home with a newborn to adjust to the new reality that raising children is also deeply challenging to one's spiritual life. You begin to realize that you are not in control. You lose patience. You lose your temper. You lose sleep. You fight with your partner because you are sleep-deprived and impatient. Crying raises your blood pressure.

On the other hand, when they finally fall asleep it is one of the most peaceful moments. Nothing like a sleeping baby in your arms to lower your blood pressure back to normal.

Illness, job loss, and personal tragedies: anything, unexpected that threatens our sense of self can have devastating emotional and spiritual implications. Why me? What am I supposed to do now? How will I go on living? Why did God let me down?

When I first arrived at KI six years ago it was in the middle of the financial crises. We had signs posted in the bathrooms that read, "Are you in a spiritual recession?" I can't remember exactly what the solution we offered was, but I imagine it was along these lines: "Make an appointment to talk with your clergy. Join our community for Shabbat. Come to KI to lift your spirits."

How do we do that here at KI? We listen...we pray....we connect with other people. We help you find a path to get you out of the spiritual red and back into the spiritual black.

Spiritual practices and programs – whatever they may be – yoga, art, music, writing, Zumba, sports – can connect us to a higher power inside and outside of ourselves and to others who really "get" what is going on with us. Spiritual practices and programs give our lives purpose and meaning.

Most importantly, becoming more spiritually aware in our daily lives helps us to live in the present moment and alleviate anxiety and guilt.

In Buddhism, the definition of torture is regretting the past and worrying about the future.

This is really hard for us as Jews, who constantly dwell on the pain of our past and yearn for a better future.

However, Judaism is also rich with tools that focus our spiritual energy on living life in the present, especially on Yom Kippur. Today, we have set aside hours to reflect on the past year, to apologize to our loved ones for the hurt we have caused them, to be thankful for the many blessings that await us in the year ahead. We have turned off our phones. We are sitting next to our family and friends. We are spiritually present during this Day of Atonement, or at-one-ment.

We can bring these practices into our daily lives as well.

Everyday we can be grateful for the blessing in our lives, if we intentionally build in a few moments for personal reflection. We don't have to wait until the next Yom Kippur to do teshuva, to recognize where we've missed the mark and to release the karmic baggage of our own misdeeds and the misdeeds of others. It can become part of our nightly ritual before going to bed.

The daily evening and morning liturgy reflect the major themes of Yom Kippur. Just as on Yom Kippur we ask God and people in our lives for forgiveness and thank God for the many blessings that are in our lives, so too, our tradition gives us tools to heal relationships and express gratitude every day. The two go hand in hand.

I think the vidui of Yom Kippur -- and for that matter the vidui before death -- would take on a different tone if we were accustomed to praying it, or something very like it more frequently.

Judaism provides a pathway to do a mini-Yom Kippur every day. It's part of the Shema Ha-Mitah – the Bedtime Shema.

This is the bedtime prayer of forgiveness as translated by Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi. It's the Jewish version of, "Don't go to bed angry."

Bedtime Prayer of Forgiveness

*You, My Eternal Friend, Witness that I forgive anyone
who hurt or upset me or offended me -
damaging my body, my property, my reputation or people that I love;
whether by accident or willfully, carelessly or purposely,
with words, deeds, thought, or attitudes;
in this lifetime or another incarnation -
I forgive every person,
May no one be punished because of me.
Help me, Eternal Friend,
to keep from offending You and others.
Help me to be thoughtful
and not commit outrage,
by doing what is evil in Your eyes.
Whatever sins I have committed,
blot out please, in Your abundant kindness
and spare me suffering or harmful illnesses.
Hear the words of my mouth and
may the meditations of my heart
find acceptance before You, Eternal Friend
Who protects and frees me. Amen*

Can you imagine asking for forgiveness and forgiving others as a daily practice, not just once a year? Would you wake up feeling lighter, freer, not having to carry around excess emotional baggage?

The corollary morning prayer *Modeh Ani*, is one of my favorite pieces of liturgy:

“Modeh ani le’fanecha – I offer thanks to you, ever-living God, that you have restored my soul to me.” This first prayer in the daily and Shabbat morning service is a blessing of gratitude. Thank you God that I am alive. We can be truly free to experience being present in the morning if we have removed the heaviness of the night before. Of course a cup of coffee helps too!

From waking-up to going to sleep and everything that happens in between, we have a Jewish, spiritual framework for connecting to our inner life, to others, and to God.

Judaism is rich with meditations and prayers in addition to moral and ethical instruction. One need not only turn to Eastern religions to find mindfulness practices. Judaism can offer spiritual seekers comfort and consolation and daily exercises of the mind and spirit. Judaism can also offer those of us who stress too much, moments of respite and tranquility as we go about our all too hectic lives.

“So,” You might be thinking, “Rabbi, this sounds great, but how does it really work?” Well, it takes practice, and there is a sliding scale from extremely overtly Jewish – like saying prayers throughout the day - to less overtly but still Jewish - like going to a Torah Yoga class taught by Cantor Levy here at KI – to the not necessarily Jewish but could be if you think about it Jewishly – like breaking.

Here are my top 5 suggestions for developing a spiritual awareness in our daily lives through a Jewish lens:

1. Developing daily rituals for giving thanks and resolving conflict. In addition to the prayers I already mentioned – simply asking another person what their favorite part of the day was at dinner or bedtime followed by saying Shehechianu or simply a moment of silent gratitude. We, as a people are quick to complain, but slow to show appreciation for the daily miracles, both big and small in our lives.
2. Saying blessings before or after meals. Whether it’s a brief pause before you eat, or saying Ha’motzi as a family, making a connection to where our food comes from and all the people who make it possible for us to eat, can bring a deeper consciousness to meal time.
3. Turning off our phones when we are with other people. I know, this one is much easier said than done, but we desperately need to create a division between our digital lives and our actual lives. Again, the goal of living spiritually is to create emotional connections with the people we care the most about. Why not start with Shabbat, or at least Shabbat dinner.
4. Give to others. Martin Buber famously developed a philosophical system called “I-Thou.” Essentially, when we enter into an intentional relationship with another person, we can experience them beyond just the physical reality, we can connect spiritually. When we really take the time to focus on another person’s needs – be it volunteering or actively listening, we create a space for divine love and energy to flow between us. This is just as true for Buber with people we know and people we don’t yet know.

5. When all else fails, Breathe. Before I go to bed at night, I take a few deep, focused breaths. When I feel my stress level beginning to rise, I try to remember to breathe.

My other favorite morning prayer is Elohai Neshama, which says, “My God, the soul you have given me is pure.” The Hebrew word for soul, Neshama, shares the same root with the word for breath, Neshima. Our breath is what fuels our spirit. Calm breathing can create calm energy inside of us.

It’s amazing what two or three deep breaths do to calm anger. I recently listened to a guided meditation that centered on recognizing the difference between reacting and responding. When we are angry or hurt, usually our first reaction is to push anger and hurt back onto another person. Rather than spitting out the first nasty thing we can think of and escalating the situation, there is another possibility. We can take a few breaths and think about the appropriate response. We can still express our anger or hurt, but in a way that de-escalates the situation.

I’ve been trying this, not always successfully, but it is pretty amazing what pausing for a few seconds and focusing on breathing can do in tense situations.

I am not perfect in following the spiritual program I just laid out. However, having a Jewish spiritual practice tempers the challenges that I face in my daily life. Whether it is a brief stressful moment with my children, or a larger life issue, spiritual grounding helps me put into perspective the short-term feelings of anxiety and regret within the larger story of the blessing that is my life.

Life is challenging. It is hard. The things that we “go to” to manage our daily stress or anger will be our “go to’s” for the bigger challenges we face as well. Bringing our spiritual practice of teshuva, of retuning to spiritual place of love and acceptance, beyond the confines of Yom Kippur can bring us greater peace of mind year round.

We don’t always get life right. And that’s okay. We are not supposed to be perfect, Yom Kippur is our yearly reminder that we can always strive to be better. But when we spend time each day to be truly present and reflect upon how our actions affect others and how others affect us, we are more prepared to walk the path of life together. As the Yiddish Proverb goes, “Even the smoothest path is strewn with stones.”

We don’t know what the future will bring us. We never really do. We can plan and hope and pray that things will work out, but with a firm spiritual foundation, we can have deeper faith and strength when life throws us curveballs.

Putting time and energy into cultivating a practice to deal with anxiety or an unexpected changes in your life circumstance can better prepare us for dealing with crises as well savoring the really good moments. It's like putting money into the bank of your soul.

My Jewish identity guides by spiritual path. Though religion and spirituality don't exclusively go hand in hand, for me, and I know for many of you, one can enhance the other.

Here at KI we know that many of our members identify as "spiritual" Jews. Last year Rabbi Sussman took a poll asking, "What kind of Jew are you?" and "spiritual" was the number one answer. We are working hard to develop our congregation's spiritual life and I invite you to join us at a Sabbath for the Soul Shabbat service or Cantor Levy's upcoming Sukkot Harvest Yoga class to join us on our journey.

These are not replacing what we already do, but creating additional opportunities in our building for spiritual experiences that past generations have sought outside the synagogue walls. And we are doing it with the goal of creating a community that knows how to be present for one another, in good times, in bad, on holy days and throughout the year.

We often think of Yom Kippur as a day when we "give something up." But what if we flip it around and concentrate on what we receive. Today, we receive the gift of really being present with family and community. Today we receive the gift of lifting the burdens we carry deep inside our heart. Today we receive the blessing of a purified heart and soul.

On this Yom Kippur, and in each and every day of 5776, I hope and pray we continue to receive the gifts of reflecting meaningfully, turning genuinely toward fellow human beings, and noting well how precious each moment is.

May this day create for you in the year ahead a new beginning, a sense of renewal in what is familiar, a sense of joy in the risk of discovering what is new, and a sense of satisfaction in achieving for yourself and others a greater sense of meaning and purpose.

G'mar Chatimah Tovah – May this year, truly be a year of discovering the blessings in your book of life.

"Yizkor"

Yom Kippur - Yizkor - 5776

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

There's a powerful scene at the end of the movie Titanic.

Deep in the sea, covered with coral, broken and grave like
The ballroom of the great ship and its cascading stairway comes back to life.

Its passengers come back to life.
Ballroom music is heard again.
The scene is then bleached in white and we are carried up into a great glass dome
And perhaps to heaven.

In my life, there is no great ocean liner or ballroom or elegant glass dome
But there are memories of family holidays and a dining table, covered with savory
food and enveloped in the music of family love.

Those no longer with us in life are back at their places at our family tables:
grandparents, uncles, aunts, spouses, children, grandchildren:
All those who once defined life for us.
They are still there in our minds, in our hearts, in that place in universe where
death
cannot go and memory lives on,
In light and laughter and enduring love.

Today, when I look across my family's holiday table
There is a new generation and new laughter and innocent children
Who can't see their ancestors like I see them
But who will grow up to love them, as I did and always will.

Today, now, the afternoon of Yom Kippur
Is the most sacred time in the Jewish year.
It is our moment to remember our loved ones together.

It is our moment when the ballroom of life is refilled with our grandparents and
parents and friends and children who no longer sit by our side,
At Seder or at Thanksgiving or here in this sanctuary
Where they will always live and laugh and even cry in our hearts.

A day, a week, a month, a year, a life time ago
It doesn't matter.
They abide with us still.
They will not leave us even if we can't see them or touch them
Or tell them something we yearn to share.

At this sacred moment of Yizkor, their spirit fills our hearts.
We are deeply sad
We are deeply empty
We are deeply bereaved.

We yearn and somehow, across the unknown space between life and death
We can sense that they are there
Somehow still with us
Somehow gone, but somehow here.

Our minds tell us, there is no report from the other side
but
Our hearts tells us we are not alone,
That somewhere in the deep recesses of existence
They are there, with us, with us forever
Undiminished
Filling us again with their spirit and love and presence.

At this moment of Yizkor, let us give thanks for all the blessings
In our lives
From long ago until today.
Let us remember the good and the beautiful and admirable in their lives.
Let us be filled with that goodness.

Let us breath deeply and allow ourselves to feel the "life spirit" in ourselves
And draw deeply from our own places of strength.
To move forward, courageously, wisely,
Into life
As our beloved dead would want us to do.

Zichronam livracha.

For sure, their memories are blessings in our lives!

Amen.



HIGH HOLY DAY SERMONS

Lance J. Sussman Ph.D., Senior Rabbi
Kevin M. Kleinman, Associate Rabbi

2015 - 5776

8339 Old York Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027

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"I Am Tevye"
Erev Rosh Hashanah - 5776
Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

I am Tevye.
Elkins Park is my Anatevka.

The old Tevye thought he had problems;
I have problems, too.

Difference is, Tevye read the good book the wrong way.
He thought every sentence ended with an exclamation mark!
Apparently, he was wrong.
Many of those sentences, end with a question mark!

The old Tevye thought he didn't understand his kids!
I don't understand my kids!
 I don't really mean my kids, or at least Liz's kids.
 I mean all kids today.
I don't understand Millennials or Gen X or Gen Y or Gen Z.
Does anyone, really, if you are not one of them.

The old Tevye couldn't believe his oldest daughter wanted to be "in love" in order
to marry
 and that his son-in-law wanted a sewing machine
 and not a Talmud.
The Poppa, tradition says, picks the boy, not the heart.

The old Tevye couldn't believe his middle daughter fell in love with a
Communist,
 ok a Jew, but still a Communist.

The old Tevye couldn't believe his youngest fell in love with a Ukrainian
peasant boy,
 ok, a good looking Ukrainian peasant boy , but, still not a Jew.

Those were problems?
Yes, Cossacks were a problem!
Yes, the Czar was a problem!
Yes, the Communists were a problem, too.

But listen, Tevye, I have problems.

I have *tsuris*.

You know, *tsuris*, Jewish problems;
lack of *nachas*, you know,
the family reward system God promised Moses
and is payable every Pesach, Bar Mitzvah and family simcha.

Tevye, old boy, you might have had problems.

But I have my problems, too.

Tevye, one of our kids,

that means “you, me and everybody else here” ,
the whole kid generation,
say they don’t need partners at all.

Who needs marriage when you have friends,
With benefits?

One of our kids, that means all of us,

is a Buddhist and says,
don’t worry, its nothing.
She doesn’t say the Shema,
But twists herself up like a pretzel
And then breathes.

Ok, breathing is good, but it is Jewish?

Another one of our kids, yours-mine -and-everyone’s kid ,

is ok with being a Jew
And even has to a Hebrew tattoo to prove it.
For this they had a Bar Mitzvah?
Doesn’t the Torah sat inscribe on your doorposts,
Not on your left forearm,
If you are lucky
And the tattoo is onnever mind!

Tevye, you know what else?
almost all my kids are atheists.
But they say they like being Jewish.
Jewish without Judaism,
Jewish without synagogue.
Some of them even say there are deeply spiritual
Humanly spiritual.
Some with God, some without God, but spiritual.

Tevye, you think you had problems,
one of my sons-in-law is a Ukrainian,
but he comes to shul and likes it.

Tevye, I can't figure anything out anymore.

And, you know what, Tevye,
one of my girls told me that she **too** wanted to marry
the person she loves
but that person is another girl and she's Chinese!

Tevye, guess, what, I like my atheist, Chinese, daughter-in-law
She comes to Shabbas at my house.
Knows the prayers
Smiles a lot
Likes to hug.
I'll never learn to use chopsticks properly.
But I'll keep her anyway

Tevye, remember when you packed it all up
and got on the road
And thought you knew where you were going?
I've got some news for you.
You were going to America where everything grows like an
onion,
With the head in the ground and the feet in the air.

But Tevye, I need to tell you something.
You know how you used to put our hands up in the air
and cry out:

“Where will it stop? Where will it stop?”

Tevye, in America, its not going to stop.

Its going to morph and change and morph again

And, at first, when you see it,

you won't even recognize it.

But Tevye

You are going to love your descendants

And guess what, they still love you, old man,

Our ancestor who had a big heart

And knew he couldn't win a single generational controversy.

Tevye, your Messiah still hasn't come.

We could have used him a thousand times in the last 150 years.

So, we have to keep hoping that when he finally gets here,

We -- you, me, the kids, the Ukrainian son-in-law, the Chinese daughter-in-law,

We, the Jewish people, will still be here.

We will look different and talk different and dress different.

But we are not going to disappear, just change, on the outside.

Guess what? This is not the first generation that decided to beat its own path.

Tevye, your kids didn't listen to you

And my generation, the end of the Baby boomers, we didn't listen either.

When I was a teenager in the late 60s, my parents generation

Thought everything we did was wrong.

Our hair was wrong.

Let me repeat, our hair was wrong,

Very, very wrong.

Our clothing was wrong, too loose and dirty.

Our English was wrong.

Everything was cool

Far out

And “heavy.”

Our music was wrong and too loud, and not really music!

Our art was wrong, it wasn't really art either,

It was random and

The colors looked like plastic candy wrappers.

Our politics were.....not really wrong, just a little excessive.

Tevye, my Confirmation service in 1970 was a semi-disaster.

We couldn't rehearse properly because we had to make
statements

About Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

One of the kids won't wear shoes in the synagogue
and the senior rabbi went crazy on us.

Half my class loved Khahil Gibran a lot better than Moses
And the other half didn't know who Gibran was or gave a hoot
about Moses.

We preferred Peter, Paul and Mary to the old Hebrew tunes.

The great Mandela was more important than the great Mitzvah.

TM meant transcendental meditation, not trademark!

No one was against any kind of smoking

And acid should have been understood as a dangerous chemical,

In whatever form it took

In 1970, we were a total mess, were upside down like an onion in the ground, With
our feet in the air

And we were totally confident, we were going to do everything differently,
everything correctly, change the world,
and grow old singing the "age of Aquarius"
to our hair was down to

I'm told that the generation after World War I, acted almost the same way we did
and went nuts during the 1920s.

The first generation of Reform Jews must have been rebels, too

For that matter, even the Hasidim were rebels

They refused to go along with their old rabbis back in your neighborhood, Tevye
and demanded their own rebbes!

And so , it goes, all the way back to Adam and Eve, and guess what, they didn't
listen either. Their father threw them out of the house for rebellion.

Generational discontinuity is nothing new, its actually a norm of sorts, at least for
awhile, and then we get older and older things become more important.

Every generation wants to do it their way, are told by their elders that “it won’t work.”

By nature, every generation is intent on make some changes, then unmaking some changes, then telling their kids that they are not listening!

When I was 16, I really wanted long hair, hair I could chew on and that’s saying something when you have hair like my hair.

I fought with my father about my hair.

Now, I regret that.

But, meanwhile, when my kids came to me 30 years later and said they wanted short hair, I said no,

I fought too hard for too long for long hair for them to go short

And, then I said, what am I doing? Didn’t I learn anything from my own growing up?

Somehow, now that I am 61 and the world is what it is today,

It does seem like the new generational discontinuities are bigger and wider and more profound than ever before..

Millennials, Gen Xers? What are they?

Maybe I am not dealing with these discontinuities in an accepting manner and just privately absorbing my losses.

But maybe, things really are profoundly different now?

Tevye, are you listening? Where does it stop? Where does it stop?

With respect to Judaism, maybe we are finally cooked and America and its material, liberal culture is just too much for Jews and Judaism outside the ghetto walls of Orthodoxy? Maybe, we are at the end of the road?

Maybe, maybe not.

Let’s take a look at ourselves here at KI:

Like most synagogues today, we have four different co-existing generations.

First, there is the greatest generation. They survived the depression and fought or at least lived through World War II. They spend less than they earn, are charitable, generally worry about Israel and carry cell phones mostly for emergency purposes.

Second, there are the Baby Boomers. They are the children of the Greatest generation but did not have to prove themselves in a global way. Baby Boomers thought 9volt am transistor radios were technological achievements and having one station that played their kind of music was proof that they were the center of the universe. Their parents made them go to synagogue and many of them still are.

Then again, some of us became the first synagogue drop outs. Synagogues are for kids. The kids are gone so are the holiday tickets. Tevye, I think I understand the Greatest Generation and the Boomers. They make sense to me.

But then, we have Generation X. Generation X did not have transistor radios, they also had more than three primary tv stations. They had MTV. OK, I'm going to sound like my parents now but MTV is not music and it is not TV. Gen X knows there is an Israel but doesn't really worry about it. Gen X had Bar and Bat Mitzvahs but were psychologically gone by the time the President of Sisterhood gave them their life long personal set of Shabbat candle sticks, never to be coated with actual melted wax.

And now the Millenials. There are 80 million of them. Their grandparents are Boomers. Few of them have heard a person speak with an authentic Yiddish accent. They have never seen a 9volt transistor radio but have the capacity to download 4000 of their favorite songs and never listen to a live broadcast. Israelis are their Hebrew school teachers and Israel is a kind of Jewish Disneyland one can go to one day, along with bird watching in Panama and an African safari. Half their friends are half Jewish. LGBT is a right and a fact and correctly so. They believe that college dorms should have amenities and if something isn't online, it isn't. They have their own music of which I know nothing and, one last thing Tevye, they are proud that they are Jewish.

Fact is, there isn't a single Jewish leader or educator who really knows what to do with the Millenials and Gen X.

Some of the rules are

- don't teach frontally
- experience is the greatest teacher
- everything should be like camp

- peer learning works
- use technology but not cell phones in the class room
- Israel is good for two week trips, but not as a unifying topic
- Social justice is essential to Judaism, up to 2 hours at a time
- Two Holocaust museums are about right before age 15
- Have heard about “Fiddler on the Roof” but haven’t seen it yet
- Jewish food is largely sub-par in their culinary cosmos.
- Expect to take a rain check on Jewish life between Bar and Bat Mitzvah and their wedding
- Remember more about their preschools than their Hebrew schools
- Denominational labels mean very little to them
- Know their Hebrew name.

One major study after another points to the same basic conclusions. The longer Tevye’s descendants are in America, the less intense their Jewishness becomes. The corollary is the less intense Jewishness becomes, the more fragmented it becomes along innumerable, mostly local lines. On the other hand, the same polls report that Jewishness itself remains and strongly so.

So what are we to do? First and foremost, we need to have faith in our kids. They are not going to give up Judaism. Maybe not every single one of them will keep it, but as a cohort, the millenials will keep the faith.

How do I know that? Because they report they are Jews and Jewish people will always find ways to doing Jewish things with other Jewish people.

Maybe not my way. Certainly not Tevye’s way. But their way.

How do we help them? How do we keep it, Judaism, going until the great generational handoff is complete? Simply, we need to do our job and to do our Judaism our way, as fully and as completely and as generously as possible.

If we think that handing off a broken, broke synagogue will be our stairway to heaven, we are wrong.

But if we embrace the kind of Judaism we say we believe in, and enrich it with our presence and our capacities, if we demonstrate faith and not ambivalence, if we set a good example with our feet and do what we say, they, the Millenials will get the message and do the same for themselves, their way.

The synagogue of the future may be small or online or home-based or on the beach or in the mountains or on a monitor or in a year round Jewish retreat center or in a Jewish center in a major city or in a synagogue or in a tattoo club, but it will be there.

Tevye, where will it stop? It won't stop. It will keep emerging, bending, preserving, reviving, and going on forever because it has too.

Fifty years from now, Generation Xers and Millennials, will be wondering what their grandchildren will be doing to keep their Judaism alive. They won't have any idea except to go on their I-29 phones and connect with their local cosmic Jewish virtual center and trade old ideas with their friends and fellow travelers.

Judaism is just too good, too deep, too enriching, too transcendently human to be tossed away by an entire generation.

As we get older and become more refined in our tastes and more discerning of our sources for inspiration, we seem to always turn back to the wells of wisdom first dug by Abraham and Sarah. They still provide us with Mayim Chaim, the waters of life. Our grandparents understood that. We know it too. And so will our grandchildren and their grandchildren .

Am I sure?

Yes

Do I have proof?

No

Then, how do I know?

Because I believe it to be so, that's why.

Because our heritage is compelling to child and adult alike.

Because Judaism has a message for the world and the world needs to hear it.

We are the originators and the standard bearers of the belief that ultimately there is one human family

And that every child in that family is a gift to be nurtured with love and kindness

and taught that they should dedicate their time on earth to the good of everyone as fairly, as justly and as joyfully as possible.

Tevye,
what did you say our message is:
L'chaim, To life!
It's the message of the ages, it's the message of Judaism
and it's the message for all the millenials to come.
That's why I love you Tevye,
You see,
I'm a Tevye, too.

Amen. Shana Tova!

♪[music]

"One Day More: Israel, Iran and American Jews"

Rosh Hashanah Morning - 5776

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

My favorite musical is *Les Mis* and my favorite song in *Les Mis* is *One Day More*.

It is the final and 27th song at the end of the First Act.

It brings together all the characters, all the plots, all the subplots, all the musical motifs, into one giant, magnificent chorus of complexity, passion and hope.

It is the Quintet *Tonight* from *West Side Story*.

It is the Sextet from *Lucia*.

It is the grand mix of Jean Val Jean and Javert, the love triangle of Marius-Cosette-and-Eponine, the black toothed innkeeper and his portly wife, young Gavroche and the student revolutionaries, and a chorus of hundreds.

It promises perseverance, conflict and tragedy

Here are a few key phrases,

You know the words:

“One day more
Another day, another destiny
One day more before the storm....
Will you take your place with me...
The time is now, the day is here
Tomorrow is the judgment day
One more dawn
One more day
One day more!”

To me, this past summer played out like a global, non-stop rendition of “One Day More” as the White House and its opponents, Netanyahu and the President, AIPAC and J Street, presidential candidates of every stripe, op writers across the political spectrum and a long string of Senatorial solos, all crescendo together in a prolonged, multi-voiced dramatic song of conflict and destiny over the Iran Deal,

One day more, the opponents sang out, Iran will have the bomb

One day more, the proponents replied, Iran will not have the bomb

One day more, 2 dozen nuclear scientists, said the deal was ok
One day more, 3 dozen nuclear scientists, said the deal was bad

One day more, 300 American generals said the deal worked
One day more, 500 different us generals said the deal didn't work.

One day more, the Israeli government says the deal hands Iran the bomb
One day more, top leaders from the Israeli security establishment, says the deal blocks Iran from the bomb

One day more, AIPAC says the deal is a disaster
One day more, JPAC, says the deal averts disaster.

One day more, the White House says the deal is based on verification
One day more, the GOP said Iran needs to release its hostages before we can begin to talk about verification.

One day more, China, Russia, Germany, France and the UK ramp up business with Iran
One day more, the Saudis are against deal
One day more, the Saudis are for the deal

One day more, 340 rabbis are for the deal
One day more, 900 rabbis sign against the deal

One day more, Senate republicans seek to disapprove of the deal
One day more, Senate democrats block the path to disapproval

One day more, Senate GOP members say filibuster is undemocratic
One day more, Senate Democrats said filibuster is as old as the Senate itself

One day more, House opponents say the "Deal Clock" isn't running so the deal can't be voted on.
One day more, House supporters say the Deal process timed out.

One day more, the Reform movement in Judaism punts and doesn't take a stand on the Deal.
Instead urges everyone to starting focusing on the "day after the deal" or let's just move on – one more day.

**Ok then! now it is “one day more”
and it’s the “day after the deal.”**

Now what do we do?

In the musical, *Les Mis*, after the casts sings “One Day More,” a totally pumped up audience applauds, stands up and runs to the bathroom and enjoys an intermission.

In real life, on the “day after the deal,” there is no intermission.

So now it’s the “day after” “*one more day*” and its time to go back to the barricades.

The never ending work of helping Israel help defend itself!

So, what needs to be done now?

I have six items on my Israel-Iran “to do” list.

One. Verification. Verification needs to begin, not tomorrow, not one day more, but today.

Susan Massie, a writer on Russia, met with President Reagan numerous times between 1984 and 1987. She taught him that the Russian people love proverbs. In this case, negotiations on the INF or Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces was in play.

Massie taught President Reagan how to say, “*do-ver-yai no pro-ver-yai*,” or “trust, but verify.” The slogan then became the motto of the DTRA, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, in 1998.

As with former American –Soviet nuclear negotiations, “*do-ver-yai no pro-ver-yai*,” “trust, but verify” is the working assumption of the Iran Deal. If verification works, then the deal works. If you believe Iran will never comply and the whole world will be duped, then the deal collapses and the Middle East and maybe the world dives even deeper into chaos.

Now, what does “the Deal” actually say about verification. Well, I read the Deal or the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action” signed by P5+1 or E3/EU+3, as most

the world calls it. The Deal was adopted on July 14, 2015 in Vienna, Austria. I urge you to look at it, too. It is online and easily accessed.

The Deal is 159 pages long. Its basic terms are spelled out in a 20 page Preamble followed by 5 Annexes including extended discussions of nuclear regulation and sanctions in Annexes 1 & 2.

Much of it is technical; some of it is procedural. Much of it beyond my scientific knowledge. It is highly detailed and involves the tracking of Iran's entire nuclear program, at every site in Iran and by every nuclear company in Iran. It specifies caps to nuclear materials and requires comprehensive reporting and tracking.

The independent "International Atomic Energy Agency", founded in 1957 and based in Vienna, which is now headed by a Japanese diplomat, legal scholar and international arms specialist, is the lead parallel outside agency in implementing the Deal.

164 countries belong to the Agency including Israel, although Israel is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a known fact which was not raised during the Iran negotiations and was a huge, but silent, victory for Israel .

From start to adoption, the Iran deal was an exercise in multilateral diplomacy with sweeping global participation in stark contrast to years of American unilateralism.

According to the deal, verification will be multilateral as well. Including the IAEA which has been the global operational standard in nuclear monitoring for decades. Do-ver-yai no pro-ver-yai, Don't Trust, Verify

What is the second thing to be done now, on "the day after the deal?"

Israel's military edge needs not only to be maintained but broadened. This will require new weapons systems on the land, air and sea. It will require greater cooperation between the American military and Israeli military than ever before and despite the poor political climate right between the US and Israel, purely military cooperation has never been better. Agreement on the "David's Sling" system, now on the table, will be a good first step. In my opinion, America is clear in their commitment to Israel. Israel, however, also needs to come to the table and reduce its political lobbying. It is probable that elements in Congress will continue to try and derail the Agreement in the near future in the near future. Congressional

success, under the terms of the Deal, could trigger an Iranian withdrawal from the process as their own Parliament debates the Deal.

In my opinion, Israel, too, needs to think in terms of the “day after the deal” and move on and seize the opportunity for greater military capacity. Just last week, Prime Minister Netanyahu was in London and struck just the right cord with the British government. It seems he has also accepted an invitation to meet the President of the United States in November. All this suggests a quick mend and quicker still return to the critical business of allied military cooperation.

AIPAC, too, would be well advised, in my view, to get back to rebuilding bipartisan support for Israel in Congress and expanding the military pipeline. Those members who voted to support the Deal, did not vote against Israel, and all of them called for increased, unprecedented military cooperation with Israel. AIPAC will not serve Israel’s interests if it permanently damages its political ties across the aisle. Act I is over. Time for the pro-Israel world to move on to Act II, just like in the play and if nothing else, start making “lemonade” from the lemon of the Deal they opposed, understandably as a matter of principle.

Third. Hezbollah. Hezbollah is Iran’s proxy in West Asia. Hezbollah has tremendous fire power, 50,000 missiles which can hit any target in Israel. In my opinion, Hezbollah is the greatest immediate existential threat to the Jewish state. To some extent, Hezbollah is entangled in Syria’s bloody civil war and is part of a Moscow-Teheran-Damascus axis. It has endured losses in Syria but it has not been fundamentally weakened. The prolongation of the standoff between Israel and Hezbollah is in Israel’s best interests. Hezbollah is closely tied to Iran’s Mullahs. If the Mullahs want to sabotage the Deal, Hezbollah is their proxy. It’s a game of chicken and who blinks first. Israel needs to maintain an iron fist toward it lethal, northern enemies.

Closely tied to Teheran and Damascus in this regard are the Russians. Putin wants to expand his influence, keep his own Muslims quiet and make badly needed money by selling technology to the Iranian Mullahs. They too are dancing on a wire and the more they are convinced that keeping Hezbollah quiet and maintain Russian naval access in Syria. The quieter the Golan and the Galilee will be for the time being.

Fourth. Hamas. Unlike Hezbollah, the radical Sunni group called Hamas is on relatively hard times. Egypt has clamped down on their sponsors, the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt itself. Israel, despite great world condemnation, badly

damaged Hamas in the Operation Protective Edge. There are even talks of negotiations between the Netanyahu government and Hamas leadership at present.

Gaza, Hamas' main base, is in bad shape. Per usual, no one, especially in the Arab world, has done much of anything to help the people of Gaza and the people of Gaza seem to have little interest and less capacity to overthrow Hamas.

Hamas' current goal is probably to maintain relative quiet in Gaza while it bores politically into West Bank Society with the goal of displacing the Abbas-PLA government. A Hamas victory in the West Bank would be horrible and greatly complicate Israel's already complicated security situation. It would almost certainly lead to the introduction of ISIS into the West Bank, civil war in Jerusalem and the destabilization of Jordan and possibly an opportunistic end run by Hezbollah to press its advantage in the chaos with the hope of winning the Muslim war against Israel.

What should Israel do in the West Bank? Since we only have one day of Rosh HaShanah at KI and not two, I will have to pass on that right now. The issue at hand is Iran and the deal. Suffice it to say, Israel cannot afford a PLA collapse, as all the alternatives are worse.

And, we still have "one day more" amount of material to cover our topic.

Which brings us to issue Number Five: Iran's American Hostages. The Iran Deal did not involve the prior release of four individuals currently being held the Iranians. Nor did it promise to. Whether or not that should have been a pre-condition is still debatable, but only as history.

Who are the hostages? There are four of them.

Amir Hekmati is being held for no reason whatsoever. He went to Iran to visit extended family including his grandmother in 2011 to celebrate Ramadan with them. He is a US Marine but that does not mean he is also a spy. He has been sentenced to death for no reason. He needs to be released.

Jason Reza-ian is a dual American-Iranian citizen. He is a journalist. He is facing 20 years in prison for doing his job.

Saeed A-be-dini is a pastor who travelled to Iran frequently to build an orphanage there. His crime is being a Christian. He has been beaten repeatedly in jail. He needs to be released.

The most complicated case is that of Robert Levinson, who was working for a CIA operation on an island off the coast of Iran when he was kidnapped in 2007. The Iranians claim they do not where he is. Not good enough in a post-Deal environment. He, too, needs to be set free, immediately.

The Cubans set their American hostages free after they got their deal, including Alan Gross, who like Levinson, was involved in gray activities.

Now its Iran's turn to set their captives free and its time for us to turn the heat up!

Finally, American Jews, you and me, need to heal the wounds in our own community.

The Iran Deal, in my opinion, did not create fissures in American Jewish unity, it widened them. The tension, even hatred, was already there. I literally feel it every day in my work.

We are a community essentially at war with itself. The poison of the political polarization so prevalent in general American political culture, is equally at work in the American Jewish community.

Jews are viewed by other Jews as enemies, traitors, anti-Semites and willful or destroyers of Judaism and the Jewish people. It is shameful, painful and counterproductive.

The political fragmentation of the American Jewish community is not new. It is at least a 100 years old but with social media, it spreads and deepens more rapidly. As I noted last night, generational tensions are intensifying, basic human respect is not being honored and our capacity to function as a community grounded in democratic principles is eroding. Polarization is not only killing our capacity to deal with one another, it is also marginalizing entire cohorts of our community who are sick of the nasty, internecine fighting which makes Jewish life an anathema to them.

What will heal the breach? In my opinion, less proxy fighting for parties in Israel and greater direct involvement in Israeli life. We need a Birthright for all American Jews, every Jewish family with their kids before or during their Bnai Mitzvah years.

We need direct financial investment, not just charity dollars in Israel. Reform Jews, especially, need to double down and learn about and support their counterparts, peers and partners in Israel itself.

This summer Liz and I and the Mayer family from KI, visited YOZMA, the Reform community in Modiin, a community between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. YOZMA was incredible. It was the synagogue and school of choice in this middle class community inside the green line. Their preschool was amazing. They share our values about political democracy, religious pluralism and Israeli national security. We share every aspect of life with them, every Jewish value with them, every Israeli concern with them.

Most of all, American Jews need to remember that first principle of Zionism is Jewish self-reliance. Israel will take care of Israel. Israel is not dependent on anybody. Israel is not afraid anyone. Nor is Israel a ship of fools. Fools don't respect danger, they charge into danger without concern. But a courageous person understands danger, respects fear as a human radar system and then moves on to take care of itself in a smart, courageous fashion.

Israel can and will take care of itself but it also wants us, their cousins, to be part of the process and not just on Capitol Hill but in schools, universities, preschools, hospitals, business investments and more in Israel itself.

Israel needs all the friends it can get and we should be first in line to be that friend. Go there! Make it part of your life. Support institutions and values there. Learn a little Hebrew. Read Israeli English newspapers online every day. Make a connection with an Israeli family. Buy Israeli products. Go to the beach in Tel Aviv and not just on the Jersey shore. Make Israel real in your lives.

So, how does the song, *One Day More*, end?

“Tomorrow we'll discover what our God in Heaven has in store!
One more dawn, *one more day*, *one day more!*”

Well, we, too, don't know what tomorrow will bring.
But it is in our capacity to face tomorrow together with Israel
and not just continually fight against one another.

One more day – our communal fighting has to stop
One day more until our collective sanity is restored and

we reaffirm that we are all on the same side:

The pro-Israel side
The Pro-Jewish people side,
The Pro-American side.

One day more,
May we be restored.

Amen. Shana Tova

♪[music]

"A Sacred Event: Social Justice, Hesed and Reform Judaism"

Erev Yom Kippur - 5776

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

March 4, 1865 was a miserable, rainy day in Washington, DC
Still, thousands gathered on the eastern face of the Capital building.
As Abraham Lincoln rose to speak, the sun burst through for the first time that day.

What followed was a short, 703 word talk, "Lincoln's Second Inaugural".
Surprisingly, It was totally devoid of any reference to the North's impending military victory after four years of bloody civil war.

Instead, Lincoln offered a deeply religious talk, filled with Biblical quotes and framed by
a theology based heavily on the Hebrew prophets God's justice is more a function of kindness and charity, than the work of great armies, the President Said..

"With malice toward none," Lincoln concluded, "with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nations wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan -- to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves and with all nations."

The press yawned!
John Wilkes Booth, who was present in the crowd that day and would soon murder the President at nearby Ford's theater, sneered;
And Frederick Douglas, the great African American abolitionist called the Second Inauguration Oration, "A sacred event."

Every time I read Lincoln's words from March, 1865, whether in a book, or online, or as they
carved inside the Lincoln Memorial, I, too, experience a sacred event.
For me, they perfectly encapsulate the merger of the spiritual and the ethical so passionately envisioned by the ancient prophets of Israel, for the first time in all history.

From Abraham, the first Prophet,
To Moses, the greatest of our Prophets,
To Malachi, the final Prophet in our tradition,

Come the same basic set of ideas:

There is a transcendent source of all existence
Who has given us the capacity to shape the kind of people and nation we want to be
And consistently challenges us to follow the paths of justice, mercy and peace.

In Judaism, above riches, power and fame, there is *chesed*,
Our love for one another combined with our love for our God, the source of Hesed.

Chesed, the prophets taught us, is anchored in a cosmic source
Who summons us, not to be great for greatness' sake, but to be good,
For in seeking justice, there is life.

On Yom Kippur day , we read from the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 58,
that it is not our physical fasting and day long prayers that truly matter to God,
They are fine and acceptable, if offered with the right spirit, and, more importantly, accompanied
by the right actions.
What really counts, the Prophet proclaims, is the fast from injustice, the fast from hypocrisy, and
the active pursuit of a good life.
a life filled with justice, love and Chesed.

In the Torah, we find Judaism's moral blueprint for humanity.
Literally to care for the widow and the orphan,
To leave the corners of the field un-harvested so the poor can come and claim the
The wheat and other fresh products for themselves!
We are commanded to pay the day laborer at sunset,
Not to take a poor person's blanket to secure a loan,
To treat prisoners of war with dignity
To build safe homes for people to live in
To return lost property to friend and enemy alike
Not to abuse animals
To give all things a Sabbath of rest from their work
To honor our parents
To be hospitable and kind to the stranger
To tell the truth in court
Not to slander or libel anyone

Not to mock the deaf or trip the blind
Not to engage in wars with wanton disregard for life
To compensate those we injure
To educate our children
Not to stand idly by the blood of our neighbors
And to love all of God's children as we would have them love us.

Judaism has always stood for justice and mercy, righteous and kindness,
Peace and peacefulness. Judaism has always stood for Chesed.

In the ancient world, following the destruction of Jerusalem,
The Jewish people were dispersed across the globe.
Wherever we landed, we created new communities
And immediately established funds for poor brides, funds for the hungry,
And for the elderly with insufficient means to care for themselves.

The *pushke*, the little box with the big heart, was to be found in every Jewish
community and every Jewish house.

Ashkenazic and Sephardic

German and Russian

Italian and Iraqi,

Wherever there was Jewish life, there was concern for the other,

A command to take up the cause of the widow and the orphans.

With pennies from children, placed into the little blue JNF box, the Jewish people

Literally redeemed the Land of Israel, one coin at a time.

When Jews first settled in North America in the 17th century,
They created communal funds for the next wave of immigrants and the next to the
next.

When Rebecca Gratz started the Hebrew Sunday School in Philadelphia, the
country and the city was in the depths of an economic depression.

She raised the funds necessary for the poorest students to attend her classes
without

paying tuition, so they could learn along side their more fortunate coreligionists.

She also made sure her indigent students had both winter coats and firewood in
the winter. "A mind can't learn if a child is hungry or cold or both."

Here is the opening prayer, the first Sunday school students recited here in Philadelphia on March 4, 1838: “O God, give unto us the help we need: give us bread to eat and raiment to put on and instruction to understand Thy mercies .”

And what Rebecca Gratz did for the poor Jewish immigrant children, she also did for the Irish and the German kids through her work in local civic associations
And when as an older woman, the Civil War broke out, she worked tirelessly to care for the wounded of all faiths,
To care for the soldier, the widow and the orphan.

When Rabbi David Einhorn came to KI in 1862, his anti-slavery message was loud, clear and undiminished as it had been in Baltimore.

Slavery, he taught, is the ultimate perversion of ethics and economy.
It is all greed and no heart.

If we are commanded to help an over-worked ox, in the Torah, what about a slave who is whipped, bound and hanged for sport?

This not the Jewish way, he taught,
This is not the prophetic path.

Slavery is wrong and must be stopped, even if it splits the community,
Justice, fairness and kindness, Einhorn taught, are our principles:
No false peace, no submission to evil in the name of communal unity.

How bad was slavery in the American South? I have a friend who is a legal historian of slavery. He has collected tens of thousands of cases documenting the brutality and utter depravity of America’s Peculiar Institution. Here is one report from St. Louis in 1844;

“On Friday last, the coroner held an inquest at the house of Judge Dunica, a few miles south of the city, over the body of a negro girl, about 8 years of age, belonging to Mr. Cordell. The body exhibited evidence of the most cruel whipping and beating we have ever heard of. The flesh on the back and limbs was beaten to a jelly -- one shoulder-bone was laid bare -- there were several cuts, apparently from a club, on the head -- and around the neck was the indentation of a cord, by which it is supposed she had been confined to a tree. She had been hired by a man by the name of Tanner, residing in the neighborhood, and was sent home in this condition. After coming home, her constant request, until her death, was for bread, by which it would seem that she had been starved, as well as unmercifully whipped. The jury returned a verdict that she came to her death by the blows

inflicted by some persons unknown whilst she was in the employ of Mr. Tanner. Mrs. Tanner has been tried and acquitted.”

To this and tens of thousands other documented cases, the rabbi of KI said NO More!

In 1866, Rabbi Einhorn went to NY and was followed here by Rabbi Samuel Hirsch.

Hirsch had been the Grand Rabbi of Luxembourg and was a widely respected Jewish philosopher.

Hirsch, too, was passionate in his concern for the poor, for poor children and most of all, for the impoverished orphan.

He created the KI Orphans Guardian Society.

It became the signature activity of our congregation for generations.

Hirsch opposed large, faceless institutional orphanages.

Kids don't need institutions, they need homes, he taught.

They don't need large wards, they need real families.

The congregation responded and an army of home visitors was raised from people who went into the slums with food, blankets, coal and love

To care for the widow and the orphan in the Philadelphia of the 1860s, 70s and 80s.

In 1881, Philadelphia finally dedicated a new, proper Jewish orphanage. At the dedication ceremony in Germantown, the following words were shared by Edward I Weil, having been introduced by I. Binswanger, a member of KI:

“We [now] dedicate this Temple to the God of love and mercy.

This Home, where the outcast little one will find shelter.

This asylum where the fatherless child can be reared and protected.

For this religion of that race teaches that the deed which is upmost acceptable to God is to break the yoke of the oppressed, to deal out the bread to the hungry, to bring the poor that are out cast to our home and to satisfy the afflicted soul.”

In 1887, Rabbi Hirsch retired and joined his family in Chicago.

He was followed by KI's longest serving rabbi, Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf.

Like Einhorn, Krauskopf spoke out against exploited labor

Like Hirsch, Krauskopf called on the congregation to care for orphans in their homes.

But he did something else,

Rabbi Krauskopf understood that city slums are not places for children to thrive, to be educated, to be healthy.

So, he started a farm school in Doylestown, to take the kids out of the city, put them on the land and in fresh air.

At first, he spent his own money to buy land, he then lobbied with Presidents and great Philanthropists to support his school. They responded in kind.

A few weeks ago, Krauskopf's Farm School officially became the Del Valley University,

Nearly every older building on that campus bears the name of a KI family to this very day.

For decades, and maybe again in the future, it was one of this synagogue's many ways to care for the orphans of Philadelphia and beyond.

IN 1920, a young man by the name of Lessing Rosenwald settled in Jenkintown to help expand his family's world famous business, Sears and Robuck. He came to Philadelphia from Chicago.

He immediately joined KI.

His father, Julius Rosenwald, was one of the great philanthopists in all of American history.

A congregant in the Chicago synagogue, headed by Samuel Hirsch's son, Rabbi Emil Hirsch.

Julius Rosenwald was a Jewish Andrew Carnegie .

In his lifetime, 1862-1932, Rosenwald gave away \$70 million dollars, to promote education and fight racism in Chicago and across the deep south. He took up the cause of the widow and the orphan with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his might. He embodied the spirit of the prophets of ancient Israel and the spirit of KI where his rabbi had been reared as a child.

In many ways, prophetic social justice was the central message and principal method of the early Reform movement in the United States. Reform was not just an easy path to Jewish ritual observance, it was a gallant attempt to restore the prophetic passion to Jews and Judaism late in the 19th century. Slavery, unfair labor practices, poverty, inferior education, racial and religious discrimination and unjust war were among its chief concerns.

On the one hand, classical Reform rejected anarchism and the call to destroy government and authority.

On the other hand, it equally resisted the centralization of national economies by the left and the right, as well as government curtailment of human rights.

Reform sought a middle course, the prophetic way. It was closely aligned with American progressivism. Rabbi Krauskopf, for example, was a personal friend of Teddy Roosevelt. To this day, our lobby has a stained glass window in memory of TR.

Rabbi Emil Hirsch in Chicago championed economic justice and had it added as the final plank of our movement's first great Platform, the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, which addressed the great economic disparities of its day.

Perhaps the greatest Reform voice for justice was Rabbi Steven Wise. He was a founder of the NAACP long before the rest of the Jewish community took up the cause of Civil Rights. He battled the anti-Semitic priest, Charles Coughlin on the Radio, along with Louis Brandeis championed the cause of Zionism for decades prior to World War II.

IN 1959, the Reform movement voted to establish a real presence in Washington, DC, to bring its prophetic message to the nation's capital on a permanent basis.

The Religious Action Center quickly emerged as a central meeting place of the American Civil Rights movement. Federal legislation was prepared at the RAC despite tremendous resistance both from within and beyond our movement.

The RAC Director, Rabbi David Saperstein, became one of the nation's best known voices for justice.

In 1970, our own Congregation, Keneseth Israel, decided to immortalize the prophetic message of social justice by commissioning artist Jacob Landau to create our stained glass windows. Our windows are not just ornaments. They are massive statements about justice, forgiveness and peace. They are not art for art's sake, they are visual midrashim urging us to reach further in our own pursuit of justice.

So, what are we doing today as a congregation? As individuals, hopefully, most, if not all of us are doing something for the common good.

If anyone in this sanctuary tonight is personally involved in the work of social justice, as you yourself define it, whether through education, art, philanthropy, political activism, cultural programs, after school programs, teaching, mentoring, sponsorships, health care, social work, employment, anti-hunger programs or any other means of helping those less fortunate than ourselves, please stand for just a moment!

[Thank you, wow]

But how about us as a congregation, as a totality? Thanks to our third term President, Dr. Arnold Meshkov and the work of Rabbi Kevin Kleinman, social justice is fully reinvigorated at KI.

We have many, many congregational projects. Among them are two major initiatives.

First, we have expanded our relationship with **Lowell Elementary School** in Philadelphia. In addition to school supplies and winter clothes, we are now organizing an extensive volunteer tutoring program to be held at the school. Education is a foundational value in Judaism. The Torah speaks of the priority of education. The kids at Lowell need our help, our extra concern, our capacity to help them secure the basics in math and reading so that they can excel later in life.

“Give a person a fish, they eat a meal. Teach a person to fish, they can feed themselves and their family in perpetuity.”

Literacy and math competency is something we can help them achieve. But we need volunteer tutors, congregants who are committed to social justice one child at a time.

If we can create a team of 40 tutors to help a hundred kids and if hundreds of other synagogues across the country do the same, we can begin to make a dent in the endless and devastating cycle of poverty in this country.

Second, we have our **HaMotzi Campaign** addressing food insecurity in Philadelphia and Montgomery County. We have our holiday food drive and mitzvah garden. This year, starting this November, we will be providing a cooked dinner on the third Sunday of each month at KI to anyone who is food insecure in our area. We will buy the food, cook the food and serve the food in our auditorium.

We will listen to the ancient words of our Passover Hagadaah. “All who are hungry, come let them eat” at our table, in this house. We have already received funds to pay for the November and December dinners from a devoted family of this congregation. We hope to make this program, another signature activity at KI for years to come.

Every Hanukkah for the last few years, we have created a huge Menorah in our lobby. Each class in JQuest is responsible for an arm of the Menorah, an arm built with large clear plastic boxes, boxes to be filled with care products for the widow and the orphan.

Our Menorah literally becomes a giant Mitzvah machine.

KI should be a giant Mitzvah machine and we are well on our way to becoming one, again, as we were in the past.

But there needs to be more, much more at KI. We need to do research on contemporary social justice issues, we need to test the feasibility of addressing those needs here at KI and we need to marshal our resources, human and material.

Even more than that, we need and the Reform movement needs a clear policy statement and philosophy on social justice, on caring for the widow and the orphan.

We also need to identify our blockers that keep us from pushing forward?

What are these blockers?

Indifference? Apathy?

The false confidence that somebody else will do the work for us?

Racism? We really don't want to help “them,” some might say.

Classism? The poor bring it upon themselves, they are lazy, wasteful and cheaters!

Inefficiency? Too many will cheat and steal from us.

Defeatism? The problem is too big and we are too little

Contempt? “Do-gooders” are fools.

Perhaps it's the government's problem and they have already messed things up so badly, that

We as a community have no chance of making a real contribution.

Perhaps the real blocker is Me-ism? I need to take care of me and mine, not yours and theirs.

The gauntlet of excuses, protests and counter arguments are endless.

Perhaps the upcoming visit of Pope Francis to our area will help wake us up in this regard. A friend of interfaith cooperation, the new Pope is rooted in the work of a devoted priest in a hopelessly poor parish. It is not grandeur which makes the Catholic Church great, he teaches his flock, it is the use of its resources to do good for all people.

We know we have many areas of official difference with the Catholic Church, but we also have areas of possible cooperation at the local level, at the level of social justice. Let us listen to Francis' message, reach across the aisle to our neighbors of every religious stripe and get to work in pursuit of the prophetic quest.

KI has done it in the past! Jews have done it throughout the ages! The Jewish community of Philadelphia has a heritage of helping.

Tomorrow, we will listen to Isaiah, chapter 58 for our Haftarah reading for Yom Kippur. It will tell us, yet again, that our faith demands of us, both to fast from inequity and to engage in the active pursuit of justice, kindness and love of neighbor.

Social Justice is in the DNA of our congregation!

We can keep our congregation strong by making it a great Mitzvah machine. Not by might and not by power, the prophet Zecharia taught, "but by MY spirit", can we dedicate ourselves to greatness through goodness.

May we be filled with the spirit of prophetic justice, mercy and kindness from this Yom Kippur to the next.

May we become living examples of "good neighbors and decent human beings" and take up the cause of the widow and the orphan, and together bind up the wounds of our nation and the world.

Amen.

An easy fast!



"The Spirituality of Daily Living"

Yom Kippur Morning - 5776

Rabbi Kevin M. Kleinman

The theme for our High Holy Day sermons this year is, "What Kind of Jew are You?" Here's my take:

I am a Jew.

I am a third-generation American Jew.

I am a Reform Jew. My parents belong to a Reform Synagogue in Virginia. Their commitment to synagogue life and my Jewish formal and informal education shaped the direction of my personal and professional life.

I am a modern Jew. I dress for the 21st century. I am on Facebook. I drive on Shabbat. I look to our tradition and extrapolate messages and values that can add meaning to my life.

I am a cultural Jew. I listen to Jewish music. I read Jewish books. I eat Jewish foods. I am fluent in talking Jewish with other Jews.

I am a Jewish activist. I speak up about injustices at home and abroad from an informed Jewish perspective on justice.

I am a questioning Jew. While we did have a *bris* for each of my three children, we did not do so blindly, without questioning if we, as Modern Jews, should still gather our family and friends to watch our children become circumcised in public.

I am a Jewish parent. We raise our children with Judaism as a guiding pillar of time and ethics. We have Shabbat dinner at home. We go to synagogue together every week, if not every day.

I am a Jew who cares deeply about Israel and Israelis. I yearn to be back in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, to be in a nation whose history – both ancient and modern – I am connected to not only through my DNA, but through a feeling of kinship with its citizens.

I am a progressive Jew. I believe in true equality and inclusivity in Jewish life – particularly for people of all genders, races, sexual orientations, and mental and physical abilities.

I am a religious Jew. I put my Judaism at the forefront of my daily thoughts and actions. I pray to God. I study Jewish text. I live a Jewish life.

And I am a spiritual Jew. Though I do not always understand it, I believe that my life has a unique purpose, that my body is a vessel for my soul, and my soul often needs recharging through prayer and meditation.

Each of these parts of my identity, when put together as a whole, make me who I am as a Jew, as a rabbi, as a father, as a friend, and as a human being.

Some parts of my identity come naturally to me. Other parts have taken years of intentional practice to cultivate. I have spent my entire life in Jewish community. It is my comfort zone. I feel at ease in Reform synagogues because I was brought up in them, and I work in them. I married into the Jewish arts scene and naturally gravitate to Jewish music and literature. I have been to Israel half a dozen times, so when I hear about events in Israel in the news, my ears naturally perk up.

My spiritual life, on the other hand, is constantly a work in progress. Like any practice – Yoga, meditation, music, art, sports – spirituality, things concerning our inner lives, our souls, our spirits, needs to be developed in order to be part of our daily life and consciousness.

Like you, I have experienced moments of spiritual bliss and spiritual depletion.

My earliest feelings of connecting to something greater than me, something outside of me that stirred something inside of me, took place in nature. When I was fourteen I climbed Mount Katahdin in Maine. When I was fifteen I went to Arches National Park in Utah. When I was sixteen I hiked through the Negev Desert in Israel. Each of these trips opened my soul up to the grandeur of creation and made me feel more alive, freer, more aware of how incredible this planet is. I felt connected and at peace. Though I didn't have the language for it at the time – I was in awe.

I experienced these same feelings at Jewish summer camp and in synagogues. This time, it was not the power of the place, but the power of the people. Singing the Shema with other people, who prayed the same way I did, I again felt connected and at peace.

I am sure you can relate to being in a beautiful spot or being surrounded by people with common interests and passions lifting your spirit.

There are of course, many moments in life that dampen our spirituality. Having children is often one of the most powerful moments of a person's life. However, it takes less than those first 24 hours at home with a newborn to adjust to the new reality that raising children is also deeply challenging to one's spiritual life. You begin to realize that you are not in control. You lose patience. You lose your temper. You lose sleep. You fight with your partner because you are sleep-deprived and impatient. Crying raises your blood pressure.

On the other hand, when they finally fall asleep it is one of the most peaceful moments. Nothing like a sleeping baby in your arms to lower your blood pressure back to normal.

Illness, job loss, and personal tragedies: anything, unexpected that threatens our sense of self can have devastating emotional and spiritual implications. Why me? What am I supposed to do now? How will I go on living? Why did God let me down?

When I first arrived at KI six years ago it was in the middle of the financial crises. We had signs posted in the bathrooms that read, "Are you in a spiritual recession?" I can't remember exactly what the solution we offered was, but I imagine it was along these lines: "Make an appointment to talk with your clergy. Join our community for Shabbat. Come to KI to lift your spirits."

How do we do that here at KI? We listen...we pray....we connect with other people. We help you find a path to get you out of the spiritual red and back into the spiritual black.

Spiritual practices and programs – whatever they may be – yoga, art, music, writing, Zumba, sports – can connect us to a higher power inside and outside of ourselves and to others who really "get" what is going on with us. Spiritual practices and programs give our lives purpose and meaning.

Most importantly, becoming more spiritually aware in our daily lives helps us to live in the present moment and alleviate anxiety and guilt.

In Buddhism, the definition of torture is regretting the past and worrying about the future.

This is really hard for us as Jews, who constantly dwell on the pain of our past and yearn for a better future.

However, Judaism is also rich with tools that focus our spiritual energy on living life in the present, especially on Yom Kippur. Today, we have set aside hours to reflect on the past year, to apologize to our loved ones for the hurt we have caused them, to be thankful for the many blessings that await us in the year ahead. We have turned off our phones. We are sitting next to our family and friends. We are spiritually present during this Day of Atonement, or at-one-ment.

We can bring these practices into our daily lives as well.

Everyday we can be grateful for the blessing in our lives, if we intentionally build in a few moments for personal reflection. We don't have to wait until the next Yom Kippur to do teshuva, to recognize where we've missed the mark and to release the karmic baggage of our own misdeeds and the misdeeds of others. It can become part of our nightly ritual before going to bed.

The daily evening and morning liturgy reflect the major themes of Yom Kippur. Just as on Yom Kippur we ask God and people in our lives for forgiveness and thank God for the many blessings that are in our lives, so too, our tradition gives us tools to heal relationships and express gratitude every day. The two go hand in hand.

I think the vidui of Yom Kippur -- and for that matter the vidui before death -- would take on a different tone if we were accustomed to praying it, or something very like it more frequently.

Judaism provides a pathway to do a mini-Yom Kippur every day. It's part of the Shema Ha-Mitah – the Bedtime Shema.

This is the bedtime prayer of forgiveness as translated by Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi. It's the Jewish version of, "Don't go to bed angry."

Bedtime Prayer of Forgiveness

*You, My Eternal Friend, Witness that I forgive anyone
who hurt or upset me or offended me -
damaging my body, my property, my reputation or people that I love;
whether by accident or willfully, carelessly or purposely,
with words, deeds, thought, or attitudes;
in this lifetime or another incarnation -
I forgive every person,
May no one be punished because of me.
Help me, Eternal Friend,
to keep from offending You and others.
Help me to be thoughtful
and not commit outrage,
by doing what is evil in Your eyes.
Whatever sins I have committed,
blot out please, in Your abundant kindness
and spare me suffering or harmful illnesses.
Hear the words of my mouth and
may the meditations of my heart
find acceptance before You, Eternal Friend
Who protects and frees me. Amen*

Can you imagine asking for forgiveness and forgiving others as a daily practice, not just once a year? Would you wake up feeling lighter, freer, not having to carry around excess emotional baggage?

The corollary morning prayer *Modeh Ani*, is one of my favorite pieces of liturgy:

“*Modeh ani le'fanecha* – I offer thanks to you, ever-living God, that you have restored my soul to me.” This first prayer in the daily and Shabbat morning service is a blessing of gratitude. Thank you God that I am alive. We can be truly free to experience being present in the morning if we have removed the heaviness of the night before. Of course a cup of coffee helps too!

From waking-up to going to sleep and everything that happens in between, we have a Jewish, spiritual framework for connecting to our inner life, to others, and to God.

Judaism is rich with meditations and prayers in addition to moral and ethical instruction. One need not only turn to Eastern religions to find mindfulness practices. Judaism can offer spiritual seekers comfort and consolation and daily exercises of the mind and spirit. Judaism can also offer those of us who stress too much, moments of respite and tranquility as we go about our all too hectic lives.

“So,” You might be thinking, “Rabbi, this sounds great, but how does it really work?” Well, it takes practice, and there is a sliding scale from extremely overtly Jewish – like saying prayers throughout the day - to less overtly but still Jewish - like going to a Torah Yoga class taught by Cantor Levy here at KI – to the not necessarily Jewish but could be if you think about it Jewishly – like breaking.

Here are my top 5 suggestions for developing a spiritual awareness in our daily lives through a Jewish lens:

1. Developing daily rituals for giving thanks and resolving conflict. In addition to the prayers I already mentioned – simply asking another person what their favorite part of the day was at dinner or bedtime followed by saying Shehechianu or simply a moment of silent gratitude. We, as a people are quick to complain, but slow to show appreciation for the daily miracles, both big and small in our lives.
2. Saying blessings before or after meals. Whether it’s a brief pause before you eat, or saying Ha’motzi as a family, making a connection to where our food comes from and all the people who make it possible for us to eat, can bring a deeper consciousness to meal time.
3. Turning off our phones when we are with other people. I know, this one is much easier said than done, but we desperately need to create a division between our digital lives and our actual lives. Again, the goal of living spiritually is to create emotional connections with the people we care the most about. Why not start with Shabbat, or at least Shabbat dinner.
4. Give to others. Martin Buber famously developed a philosophical system called “I-Thou.” Essentially, when we enter into an intentional relationship with another person, we can experience them beyond just the physical reality, we can connect spiritually. When we really take the time to focus on another person’s needs – be it volunteering or actively listening, we create a space for divine love and energy to flow between us. This is just as true for Buber with people we know and people we don’t yet know.

5. When all else fails, Breathe. Before I go to bed at night, I take a few deep, focused breaths. When I feel my stress level beginning to rise, I try to remember to breathe.

My other favorite morning prayer is Elohai Neshama, which says, “My God, the soul you have given me is pure.” The Hebrew word for soul, Neshama, shares the same root with the word for breath, Neshima. Our breath is what fuels our spirit. Calm breathing can create calm energy inside of us.

It’s amazing what two or three deep breaths do to calm anger. I recently listened to a guided meditation that centered on recognizing the difference between reacting and responding. When we are angry or hurt, usually our first reaction is to push anger and hurt back onto another person. Rather than spitting out the first nasty thing we can think of and escalating the situation, there is another possibility. We can take a few breaths and think about the appropriate response. We can still express our anger or hurt, but in a way that de-escalates the situation.

I’ve been trying this, not always successfully, but it is pretty amazing what pausing for a few seconds and focusing on breathing can do in tense situations.

I am not perfect in following the spiritual program I just laid out. However, having a Jewish spiritual practice tempers the challenges that I face in my daily life. Whether it is a brief stressful moment with my children, or a larger life issue, spiritual grounding helps me put into perspective the short-term feelings of anxiety and regret within the larger story of the blessing that is my life.

Life is challenging. It is hard. The things that we “go to” to manage our daily stress or anger will be our “go to’s” for the bigger challenges we face as well. Bringing our spiritual practice of teshuva, of retuning to spiritual place of love and acceptance, beyond the confines of Yom Kippur can bring us greater peace of mind year round.

We don’t always get life right. And that’s okay. We are not supposed to be perfect, Yom Kippur is our yearly reminder that we can always strive to be better. But when we spend time each day to be truly present and reflect upon how our actions affect others and how others affect us, we are more prepared to walk the path of life together. As the Yiddish Proverb goes, “Even the smoothest path is strewn with stones.”

We don’t know what the future will bring us. We never really do. We can plan and hope and pray that things will work out, but with a firm spiritual foundation, we can have deeper faith and strength when life throws us curveballs.

Putting time and energy into cultivating a practice to deal with anxiety or an unexpected changes in your life circumstance can better prepare us for dealing with crises as well savoring the really good moments. It's like putting money into the bank of your soul.

My Jewish identity guides by spiritual path. Though religion and spirituality don't exclusively go hand in hand, for me, and I know for many of you, one can enhance the other.

Here at KI we know that many of our members identify as "spiritual" Jews. Last year Rabbi Sussman took a poll asking, "What kind of Jew are you?" and "spiritual" was the number one answer. We are working hard to develop our congregation's spiritual life and I invite you to join us at a Sabbath for the Soul Shabbat service or Cantor Levy's upcoming Sukkot Harvest Yoga class to join us on our journey.

These are not replacing what we already do, but creating additional opportunities in our building for spiritual experiences that past generations have sought outside the synagogue walls. And we are doing it with the goal of creating a community that knows how to be present for one another, in good times, in bad, on holy days and throughout the year.

We often think of Yom Kippur as a day when we "give something up." But what if we flip it around and concentrate on what we receive. Today, we receive the gift of really being present with family and community. Today we receive the gift of lifting the burdens we carry deep inside our heart. Today we receive the blessing of a purified heart and soul.

On this Yom Kippur, and in each and every day of 5776, I hope and pray we continue to receive the gifts of reflecting meaningfully, turning genuinely toward fellow human beings, and noting well how precious each moment is.

May this day create for you in the year ahead a new beginning, a sense of renewal in what is familiar, a sense of joy in the risk of discovering what is new, and a sense of satisfaction in achieving for yourself and others a greater sense of meaning and purpose.

G'mar Chatimah Tovah – May this year, truly be a year of discovering the blessings in your book of life.

"Yizkor"

Yom Kippur - Yizkor - 5776

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman Ph.D.

There's a powerful scene at the end of the movie Titanic.

Deep in the sea, covered with coral, broken and grave like
The ballroom of the great ship and its cascading stairway comes back to life.

Its passengers come back to life.
Ballroom music is heard again.
The scene is then bleached in white and we are carried up into a great glass dome
And perhaps to heaven.

In my life, there is no great ocean liner or ballroom or elegant glass dome
But there are memories of family holidays and a dining table, covered with savory
food and enveloped in the music of family love.

Those no longer with us in life are back at their places at our family tables:
grandparents, uncles, aunts, spouses, children, grandchildren:
All those who once defined life for us.
They are still there in our minds, in our hearts, in that place in universe where
death
 cannot go and memory lives on,
 In light and laughter and enduring love.

Today, when I look across my family's holiday table
There is a new generation and new laughter and innocent children
Who can't see their ancestors like I see them
But who will grow up to love them, as I did and always will.

Today, now, the afternoon of Yom Kippur
Is the most sacred time in the Jewish year.
It is our moment to remember our loved ones together.

It is our moment when the ballroom of life is refilled with our grandparents and
parents and friends and children who no longer sit by our side,
At Seder or at Thanksgiving or here in this sanctuary
Where they will always live and laugh and even cry in our hearts.

A day, a week, a month, a year, a life time ago
It doesn't matter.
They abide with us still.
They will not leave us even if we can't see them or touch them
Or tell them something we yearn to share.

At this sacred moment of Yizkor, their spirit fills our hearts.
We are deeply sad
We are deeply empty
We are deeply bereaved.

We yearn and somehow, across the unknown space between life and death
We can sense that they are there
Somehow still with us
Somehow gone, but somehow here.

Our minds tell us, there is no report from the other side
but
Our hearts tells us we are not alone,
That somewhere in the deep recesses of existence
They are there, with us, with us forever
Undiminished
Filling us again with their spirit and love and presence.

At this moment of Yizkor, let us give thanks for all the blessings
In our lives
From long ago until today.
Let us remember the good and the beautiful and admirable in their lives.
Let us be filled with that goodness.

Let us breath deeply and allow ourselves to feel the "life spirit" in ourselves
And draw deeply from our own places of strength.
To move forward, courageously, wisely,
Into life
As our beloved dead would want us to do.

Zichronam livracha.

For sure, their memories are blessings in our lives!

Amen.