

Erev Rosh Hashana

September 18, 2010

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THE ONE THING THAT WILL GET US THROUGH THE COMING YEAR

Tonight, I wish to focus on one thing that represents the essence of the High Holy Days-not by accident, I think this is also the one thing that will help get us through a year that will most likely be challenging at best. This has been a horrific year for all of us on many levels.

A year of disruption, of unforeseen changes, a year of stress and anxiety. Not to mention cancellations and postponements. I hope that the words I offer to you during these 10 days will bring you some comfort and hope in the year to come. That may not be a lot but at least it is something.

So what is the one thing we need to do? (When you only have 7 minutes you must go straight for the jugular!) In the *haftarah* from the book of Isaiah we are told "Al Titalem mibsarcha"- literally, it means "don't hide from your flesh" but in reality, Isaiah is telling us not to hide from our inner self, from who we really are. This is really the motto for Yom Kippur, but for us this can be a teaching that will also help us in the year to come.

Isaiah knew that we are hiders-he knew we pretend to be someone else or we pretend to be something we are not. And worst of all, we hide from the dark side of whom we are and what we have done to others and to ourselves. Sometimes we think that if we adopt the ostrich mentality and put our head in the ground we can forget what we have done or bury it deep inside of us.

That is especially true when you think about what we have gone through this past year. I know there are some of you who are tired-actually EXHAUSTED from this past year- whether it is covid 19, police killings of young African American men, the fires that have engulfed California, and if that was not bad enough, we

continue to endure a narcissistic, bombastic and sarcastic President who lacks the competency and mental fitness to be our leader.

DAYENU! We say. Maybe this should be our year to hide, to withdraw, to stop caring , to stop being involved. After all, others are doing it— why not us?

Yet we cannot hide from our responsibilities as human beings, Jews and as Americans. Judaism has always brought to the table of life a set of core values that are anchored in the idea that we are a people of compassion, generosity and justice. Our country is clearly in need of these principles and will be in the year to come.

And not just that. If you are a parent or a grandparent we need to know you will not hide from your children and grandchildren. You need to be there for them when they have questions— and they will have even more questions in the year to come— because they are curious and because they are afraid.

You need to be their PRIMARY teacherbecause if you put your head in the sand, others are lined up eager and willing to take your place— the internet, social media, television, politicians and so many others.

In the Yom Kippur morning *Torah* portion, *Nitzavim*, we are told “I have set before you life or death, blessing or curse- choose life that you and your descendants may live.

My friends, this is not a time to hide. The world needs you and your family needs you. Let us choose to build life out of the darkness that surrounds us— in doing so we will be blessed.