

BH. Sermon Day 2 Rosh Hashanah – 5777

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GIVE IT ALL YOUR GOT!

Talk about prayer –

Two kids sleeping over at grandma's, she puts them to bed and reminds them to say their prayers.

Boy begins to pray: Oh G-d please give me a bicycle... describing the exact make and model and which gadgets he wants... but loud oh G-d.... His sister says: why are you screaming, G-d isn't hard of hearing.

Yeah, but grandma is!

Speaking of prayer - Moses, our greatest leader, had one prayer which went unanswered.

He desperately wanted to lead the people into the Promised Land... but G-d said no.

Moses was hugely disappointed and pained... He prayed more than 500 times says the Talmud, he really wanted this...

But G-d didn't budge. Instead he told him to go up onto the mountain top where he'd see the land from afar.

On 3 April 1968, Martin Luther King delivered a sermon in Memphis, Tennessee. He spoke about Moses and said: "I just want to do G-d's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land."

That night was the last of his life. The next day he was assassinated.

(It's interesting that this young preacher, (he was not yet 40) who had led the civil rights movement in the United States, chose to identify not with a Christian leader but with Moses, a Jewish leader.)

So Moses gets his last request refused him.

G-d delivered the disappointing message with two important Hebrew words I want you to remember:

RAV LACH! You have enough!

On the surface of it, G-d was simply saying - It's enough Moses... c'mon Moses, it's enough boobelleh... Shhhhh..., stop it or I'll send you to your room... calm down...! Stop the nagging... let it go!

RAV LACH!

But according to the Talmud, those two words – RAV LACH - were arguably the most important, most empowering and most loving words Moses ever heard from G-d.

They weren't bad news, they were actually good news!!

Really?! Good news?! To be denied his deepest wish, to lead the people to land?

Dear friends, G-d was giving Moses a lesson in being content... in being happy with your lot...

And that's good news, real good news!

If one can accept their limitations, and be content with who they are and what they can and cannot accomplish, they'll live a good life!

Set yourself up with unattainable goals, try to be who you're not, and you've set yourself up for a life of frustration and disappointment.

You see, Moses craves to enter the Holy Land because he feels that this is the culmination of his entire life's mission. Without it, it was all a waste, he was a failure.

Moses, the leader, the liberator, the lawgiver

The man who brought a group of slaves to freedom, turned a fractious collection of individuals into a nation, nurtured that nation for its 40 formative years, so transforming them that they become the people of the Book, the people of eternity, G-d's chosen nation.

At last, he craves to complete his mission by entering into the Holy Land.

I gotta finish the job! Otherwise I've failed!

So G-d tells Moses, "Rav Lach." You have enough.

He is sharing with him good news, deeply inspiring news. “Rav Lach.” You’ve done enough! You’ve accomplished your life’s mission.

Do not denigrate yourself and your life’s work. Do not view your life as a failure, just because you did not make into the Promised Land. That’s not your job, that’s not your destiny. Someone else is meant to do that part.

“Rav Lach.” In life you need to know who you are and who you are not. What is meant for you and what is not meant for you. What is your goal, and what is out of your realm.

“Rav Lach,” it is enough for you to be who you are. This was not rebuke. It was good news, inspiring news, empowering news. You don’t have to be someone else to be good, to be worthy, to fulfill your mission in life and your Divine mandate.

And WOW what an empowering, and freeing, message to us:

You are allowed to be yourself. Celebrate being you. It’s what you do best!

How many people suffer anxiety because they tell themselves they’re supposed to be something else, or someone else. No! “Rav Lach!” Embrace yourself. Give yourself some slack. Relax. Give your soul a hug. Nurture your heart’s journeys. Remain loyal to your path, your destiny, your struggles, and your unique personality. You will find your ultimate perfection in connecting to truth via your reality, not by mimicking another person’s reality.

It’s true, one of the profound causes of human agony stems from people trying to be what they are not, and who they are not...

We look around and see someone more successful, smarter, more handsome whatever, and we think: ah! If only I could be him!

Let me try to be like him...

When we try to be someone else rather than ourselves, we are setting ourselves up for disappointment and frustration at our failure in life...

When I try to be you, instead of being me, there are two problems:

- 1) I won’t succeed because I’m not good at being you!
- 2) If I am trying to be you, who will be me?

By trying to be you, instead of doing what I do best, being me, my own unique contribution to the world, is lost to the world.

The last of the Ten Commandments is Thou Shalt Not Covet, in plain English: DON'T BE JEALOUS!

Why is that so important to be included in the Ten Commandments alongside such things as faith in the one G-d, the prohibition against blasphemy, & murder, honor your parents, big stuff...

But Don't be jealous?!

I mean, it's really good advice... jealousy is guaranteed to rob us of any chance for happiness...

but how does it get to the top ten?!

And it's actually the last of the ten... which in Judaism means - it's the bottom line, the last word!

Because when I'm jealous, when I'm not happy being me and I think I need to be you, I'm losing faith in my own purpose and destiny... I'm failing to recognize that my life is real, that I was created to be me, with my strengths, weaknesses, and set of circumstances, to fulfill my own unique purpose that no one else can accomplish...

Top Ten?! It's NUMBER ONE!

I lost faith in my own intrinsic value, and I've lost my faith in G-d and my respect for mankind.

Many a parent, do this to their kids...

Just to "fit in" with the right crowd or community, send their children to schools which do not benefit the character and caliber of their children.

To be able to say "my children had this type of bar mitzvah."

"My children went to this school, attended this camp, were educated in this university"

But all they accomplish is to ensure that their children don't succeed, and remain lost, confused, and outsiders.

"Rav Lach." Do not try to force your child to be someone else. Do not try to force your spouse to be someone else. Do not try to force yourself to be someone else.

To be what you were born to be and to explore your full potential each day is life's goal, it's why we're here.

In fact, everything about us is G-d's gift to us, to allow us and propel us to be our best self.

How often do we go through a serious challenge in life, and then emerge stronger and better than before... we almost don't recognize ourselves of the person we have become due to the challenge

This is true with who we are as people and the circumstances presented to us by nature and nurture

The very things we think are our vices are actually gifts to tailor make who we are, challenge us to overcome obstacles and achieve our life's destiny

Trying to be someone else is foolish...

Shmerel the fool from Chelm is riding a train. He's sharing a cabin with a Russian army officer. They undress to go to sleep. And Shmerl informs the conductor he needs to be woken up early in the morning to get off at Chelm. He's woken up at 4am, and in the dark he accidentally puts on the clothing of the uniformed army officer rather than his own clothing. Shmerel walks into town and people think he's lost his mind... they're staring at him ... he comes home and wife says "oy vey Shmerl, did you fall on your head? " ... Shmerl takes one look in the mirror and says

"Oy vey, the conductor woke up the wrong guy!"

Dennis Prager has coined a phrase: The Missing Tile Syndrome

Notice when people walk into a room, there's a full ceiling of tiles, but there's one missing tile the focus is on that one missing tile...

Do you understand this? There are 50 or 100 tiles all perfectly situated, ONE is missing, THAT'S the one that gets noticed... No matter how beautiful the ceiling is, you can't fully enjoy its beauty just because of one single missing tile.

All of us have something that we don't have. Those are the missing tiles in our lives. There is no such thing as a PERFECT life.

Notice how human nature focuses on the missing tile...

A bald man told him when he walks into a room all he sees is – HAIR...

A woman once told him – wherever I go I see pregnant women... because she was trying to get pregnant so all she sees if a world where every woman is pregnant

Our lives are full of blessings... but no, we focus on what someone else's got

Look at his kids, if only mine could be like them...

Look at his spouse, smarts, personality, talent, height, weight, whatever... fill in the blanks...

We look at people around us and notice a strength they have they we don't... and we become obsessed with that one missing tile in our lives, instead of celebrating the many wonderful tiles that we do have...

But how foolish and how dangerous to our own happiness to focus on the one missing tile, instead of our many wonderful tiles!

Rob Salzbank – Chabad's official photographer - told me this story:

He was shooting a Bar Mitzvah, the caterer brings the parents into the main ballroom before the guests are brought in, to view the beautiful room set up. And indeed, the room was set up gorgeous, black table cloths, every table has centerpiece on a pedestal, 24 roses in each, every table a different color, napkins match the centerpieces, it's absolutely magnificent, caterer brings parents in to kvell...

Mother comes in: **Where are my dots...**

There's supposed to be a latex color-form dot under each center piece to match the centerpiece... the caterer apparently overlooked that detail, and the mother is devastated. It ruined her night... All night, everyone's complimenting the mother on the gorgeous room... WOW! Mother keeps kvetching: you're should've seen the dots! The dots! Omg you should've seen the dots!

Our lives are full of gorgeous blessings, G-d brings us into the room of life... it's gorgeous, it's exquisite... we've got so much to be grateful for... let's not be that mom:

But the dots!

Alan Roseznweig told me the story about the grandma who was out at the beach with her 3 year old grandson, when a huge wave suddenly came in and schlepped him way out to sea... She panics, no one's around, no life guards, nothing... She prays... G-d bring me back my delicious, my Shaina punim, make a miracle.. you can do it... I promise to be forever grateful... suddenly somehow miraculously a huge wave comes in and brings the little angel right back to shore and deposits him right in front of grandma, just like that!

She takes a look... takes a sigh of relief... but then looks up heavenward and says:

But... he had a hat...

Reb Zusha, one of the great mystics and Chassidic masters of the 18th century, would often say:

“After my lifetime when I come up to heaven, I’m not afraid heaven will ask me why I wasn’t Moses or Abraham. I’m afraid they’ll ask why I wasn’t Zusha!”

Any of you heard of the 8th Day Band?

It’s my new favorite band since I’ve gotten back onto the treadmill. I needed something with a beat to get me going... but I couldn’t stomach the popular music out there where the performers are often stoned and out to lunch... just because they have a good drummer behind them... it’s not for me... Enter – 8th Day, a successful Chasidic pop rock band, where each song is filled with meaningful life lessons.

They have a great song based on what Reb Zusha said. It’s called:

Give it All You Got!

You all have song sheets – please pull ‘em out

I’ve made some minor adjustments to the song & shortened it up a bit

(Ask the crowd to help wherever it’s bolded if they can catch on.

*Practice first with the crowd a couple times: **DID YOU GIVE IT ALL YOU GOT!***

Did You Give it All You Got! (8th Day band)

After one hundred and twenty years
You go up to heaven you climb all those stairs
They won’t ask you were you wise like Solomon
They won’t ask you were you strong like Samson

They’ll ask just one question - And you give just one answer
It’s the end of the game - And only one thing matters
They’ll say:

Did you give it all you got

Did you give it all you got

'Cuz in this life you only have what you got
So give it give it give it all you got
In this world we only have, we only have what we got
So give it give it give it all you got

If you say it's easy I'll say it's not
You gotta give it give it give it give it all you got
If you say it's not for you I'll say it's your lot
You gotta give it give it give it give it all you got
If you say you're tired I'll say tick-tock
You gotta give it give it give it give it all you got
Just count your blessings don't look for the dot
You gotta give it give it give it give it all you got

After working so hard and wiping those tears
You look in the mirror you face all your fears
Don't be a fool trying to be wise like Solomon
Only the weak try to be strong like Samson

I did what I said - I got no one to blame
Only one thing matters - At the end of the game
They'll say:
Did you give it all you got
Did you give it all you got