

Gut Yontuv and Shabbat Shalom. Once again, I come before you to open our service with a *Kavana* or a brief welcome and reflection.

The words of the prayer, *Hin'ni*, that I, along with our Temple Choir lead by our beloved Mr. Dick Woodruff, just chanted indeed challenge me each year and I humbly pray that my service to you, the members of this K'hila K'dosha (this sacred community), is filled with acts of which you are always proud. When I falter, I pray for your forgiveness. But, for 27 years, I have known nothing but a sacred and forgiving partnership with the generations of Temple B'nai Torah. For that, I cannot express enough gratitude. My blessings are enormous. I give thanks to God for the good people of this congregation.

And, I want to thank the many of you that wrote me beautiful notes or phoned me after my comments last week. The reaction to my first time addressing the congregation during the High Holy Days reminded me of that great scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Romeo is lovingly gazing upon Juliet from afar as she peers out from the balcony with that dreamy look and finally, as she is about to utter her first words, Romeo, on the other side of the stage, simply declares, "...She speaks..." I guess many of you sweetly noted, "Our cantor speaks." The support has been overwhelming. I thank Rabbi Mirel for offering me this moment to respectfully blur some of the classic lines between Rabbi and Cantor.

On behalf of your clergy team and the entire Temple B'nai Torah leadership, lay and professional, I wish each of you a G'mar Hatima Tova – may you be inscribed for "good" in the *Sefer Hayim* - the big *Book of Life*.

Last week I spoke of my personal challenge to be able to forgive. And I have sat with that thought all week. Maybe it has stirred

some thinking on your part. A good friend of mine once said, “..It’s hard to forgive while it still hurts...” and how it hurts sometimes!! So, since life does hurt sometimes, do we remain stuck?

Over the past decade, Rabbi Arik Ascherman, Executive Director for *Rabbis for Human Rights*, based in Jerusalem has become a friend and personal hero. This week he reminded me of an important concept when referencing all this “sin” talk that is a major part of this day’s liturgy. He writes,

“...The idea that people have the potential to be good, that our word for sin, khet, is an archery term indicating that we were trying to do the right thing but missed the mark, and our teaching that human beings can change and return to their highest and true selves, all say a great deal about how we must approach our work...”

He was talking in the context of dealing with the situation within Israel and with her neighbors. But, his words spoke loudly to me about how I must approach this issue within my own life and especially on this Yom Kippur.

It is consummately optimistic to say that when a wrong has been committed, people, who I believe do start from a place of goodness, somehow got “off-track” or “missed the mark.” So, what is the antidote? All of sudden, while thinking about it, it became rather simple; **I must not give up**. That is, if I miss the mark (and I do miss the mark frequently), to keep the archery metaphor, I need to keep practicing and eventually, if I work at it, my aim should improve.

Indulge me for one more minute with yet another archery reference. There is a rather special moment in the book of First Samuel, chapter 20, where David and Jonathan, then teenagers, make a secret rendezvous using a bow and arrow as the tools to signal the safety of the place to meet. That is, by

shooting the arrow at a certain place, they would know if was alright to meet even though King Saul had already declared his displeasure with the young upstart, David. So, the arrow hitting a certain mark had become a sign of a safe encounter.

As we deal with our individual and collective “missing of the mark” – khet, it is my prayer for this year that the compassion about which I spoke last week for those who have hurt us, helps each of us to turn those arrows (that may have missed their marks), possibly by negligence or simply due to the fact that most of us need to practice harder – I pray that this year’s arrows transform into neither stray missiles nor weapons that hurt, but rather arrows that point the way, as they did for Jonathan and David, to new places of meeting where the *k’dushah*, the holiness of a human encounter becomes our reality.

Ken Y’hi Ratzon – so may it be God’s will