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YOM KIPPUR TEACHINGS

on

The Six Remembrances

by

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IV Memory and Amalek (KolNidre)

. . . Of course we could try to forget the past. Why not? Is it not natural for a human being to repress what causes him pain, what causes him shame? Like the body, memory protects its wounds. When day breaks after a sleepless night, one's ghosts must withdraw; the dead are ordered back to their graves. But for the first time in history [writes Elie Wiesel], we could not bury our dead. We bear their graves within ourselves.

For us, forgetting was never an option. . . .

And yet it is surely human to forget, even to want to forget. The Ancients saw it as a divine gift. Indeed if memory helps us to survive, forgetting allows us to go on living. How could we go on with our daily lives, if we remained constantly aware of the dangers and ghosts surrounding us? The Talmud tells us that without the ability to forget, man would soon cease to learn. Without the ability to forget, man would live in a permanent, paralyzing fear of death. Only God and God alone can and must remember everything.

How are we to reconcile our supreme duty towards memory with the need to forget that is essential to life? No generation has had to confront this paradox with such urgency . . .¹

Our theme on these High Holy Days is memory, and the relationship between memory and *teshuvah*. I've been speaking about our ability to shape our consciousness, and thereby our actions and our very being, by choosing what and how to remember, and what and how to forget. Specifically, I've been focusing on a practice known as the *Shesh Zekhirot* -- the Six Remembrances. These six things, which the Torah commands us to remember, constitute a core content of Jewish memory. But more importantly, they're paradigms -- patterns that repeat, clusters of associations and meaning -- which, by recalling them every day, prime our consciousness to experience our world in particular ways.

We talked about three of them on Rosh Hashanah: the Exodus from Egypt, standing at Sinai, and the Golden Calf. Now on Yom Kippur we'll turn to the remaining three: Amalek, the incident with Miriam, and Shabbat.

Zekhirat ma'aseh Amalek um'hiyato, remember the incident with Amalek, and "his erasure" -- the blotting out of his memory. What is the story of Amalek? It's told twice in the Torah, and each time, it's specifically associated with memory. The incident occurs in the book of Exodus. About a month after leaving Egypt, when the Israelites have just crossed through the Sea of Reeds into freedom, Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Israelite troops in defense, while Moses goes up to the top of a hill, with his brother Aaron and his nephew Hur on each side of him, holding up his hands. When Moses holds up his hands, Israel prevails; and when he lets down his hands, Amalek prevails. Together, they succeed in weakening, but not defeating, Amalek. The story ends with the following coda:

1. Elie Wiesel, Nobel Lecture, December 11, 1986, *Hope, Despair and Memory*.

Adonai said to Moses, Write this for a memorial (זִכְרוֹן) in a book, and recite it in the ears of Joshua -- כִּי־מַחַה אֶת־זֵכֶר עַמְלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם -- for I will completely erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

At the same time, says the Torah, "Adonai will wage war with Amalek from generation to generation."

That's Amalek -- the first and paradigmatic enemy of the fledgling people Israel, and ultimately, any enemy of humanity, or any people. Radical, even primordial evil, at war with God, seemingly forever. Remember.

And we're again told to remember, and the story is retold, later in the Torah, in Deuteronomy:

זָכוֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק בְּדַרְדָּרְךָ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם: אֲשֶׁר קָרָךְ בְּדַרְדָּרְךָ וַיִּזְנֹב בְּךָ כָּל הַנְּפֻשִׁים אֲחֵרֶיךָ. וְאַתָּה עֵינֶיךָ וַיִּגַע. וְלֹא יָרָא אֱלֹהִים:

Remember what Amalek did to you, on the way, when you were leaving Egypt, that he happened upon you on the way, and he killed among you all the weak ones in your rear, when you were faint and exhausted, and he did not fear God. (Deut. 25:17-19).

We read this passage right before Purim, on a special Shabbat named after this -- Shabbat Zakhor.

Why before Purim? Because Haman (in the Book of Esther, the Purim story) is Amalek. Literally a descendent of Amalek, of the seed of Amalek, but also, paradigmatically Amalek -- at war with God, committing crimes against humanity. Hitler was Amalek. Bin Laden was Amalek. And it seems that Amalek has arisen again in Syria.

Yom Kippur, in a sense, is like Purim. There's a classic midrashic pun on this; the biblical name for Yom Kippur is Yom HaKippurim, which can be read as Yom HaK'Purim, the day that is "like" Purim. It's a day when we confront Amalek, the paradigm of evil, around us and within us. In fact, according to Rav Joseph Soloveitchik, that's why we have two people on each side of the ḥazzan chanting Kol Nidre; they're Aaron and Hur holding up Moses' hands. It's a reenactment of this battle.

What is the value of a paradigm, when it comes to evil, and of remembering it every day? I've spoken on Rosh Hashanah of priming our memories in positive ways; that makes intuitive sense. And priming our memories to recognize patterns of where we ourselves go astray, so we can do better, also makes sense. But why this?

First, remember every day that evil is real, at least in this world. As a religious issue. We can't allow religion to devolve into sentimentality and romanticism. A life of faith is not a life of escapism, but of engagement with the world. Grappling with the problem of theodicy -- developing a theology that enables us to maintain hope, and a sense of meaning, while acknowledging and wrestling with the problem of evil in the world -- is the difficult work of faith, and it's the responsibility of all of us. I've spoken and written of it elsewhere -- it's beyond the scope of what I can and want to do tonight. But it is one of the reasons why it's important to remember Amalek every day. It's a reminder that mature faith invites complexity, unanswerable questions, and discomfiting realities.

Second, on some level, having a paradigm, understanding that our current experience fits into a pattern of mythic time, can be comforting. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi writes of a tendency in Jewish history, especially in the middle ages:

to subsume even major new events to familiar archetypes, for even the most terrible events are somewhat less terrifying when viewed within old patterns rather than in their bewildering specificity. Thus the latest oppressor is Haman, and the court-Jew who tries to avoid disaster is Mordechai.²

I think he's right. It is a little less terrifying to know that we're not facing some new unprecedented threat; this is our old foe Amalek, we know him. It's a little depressing, I guess, to think that these patterns repeat, but also helpful: we've dealt with him before, and we'll deal with him again.

Third, part of the importance of a story like this, a paradigm, is to help us distinguish and remember who and what is -- and who and what is not -- Amalek. Importantly, Judaism locates the definition of evil precisely in the ethical -- how human beings treat each other -- not the ritual or sexual realms. It's not that there aren't other kinds of sins. But the primary Hebrew words for sin mean missing the mark, errors, transgressions. If you don't keep kosher or violate Shabbat, you've transgressed, but you're not Amalek. You're not evil. On the other hand, if you launch a crusade in the name of God and wipe out thousands of people for transgressing, you may be getting there.

Nor is every ethical violation Amalek. Tomorrow we'll look at a different story of how people hurt each other, the story of Miriam maligning her brother Moses. And Miriam is anything but Amalek. Much of Jewish life and practice is designed to teach us to make fine distinctions, to be sensitive to nuance. Not everything hurtful is Amalek.

It's not always an easy line to draw; sometimes it's a delicate distinction. Think of Amalek and Miriam this as two paradigmatic poles, with a full continuum in between. And the difference between them isn't just an issue of scale, the number of people hurt. It has more to do with the roots of the behavior -- hatred, malice -- and the qualitative nature of act and its consequences. Nor need it be black and white -- someone is completely or not at all Amalek. We speak of the seed of Amalek, meaning his descendants, but also bits of Amalek, residue. Amalek resides within us too. As the Baal Shem Tov famously said: "if you are shown evil, know that it is within you too."

So I don't want to be overly simplistic or reductive. Bear in mind that I'm making the line seem sharper than it really is, but I think it's helpful to do so, for a number of reasons.

Who is Amalek? The Torah itself identifies two primary qualities. First, he does not fear God, and is at war with God; he's primordial chaos, *tohu va-vohu*. Second, Amalek preys on vulnerability and weakness. The two are, of course, related. The Jewish tradition understands God as aligned with the most vulnerable in society. Both in scripture and in liturgy, God's "power" is expressed as the ability to uplift the fallen, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, defend the defenseless. Thus, the primary way that a person manifests a lack of awe, or of being "at war" as it were with God, is to do the opposite -- to capitalize on another's weakness, take advantage of another's vulnerability.

2. *Zakhor*, p. 36.

When does Amalek emerge?

There's no question that the Amalek paradigm suggests, at one level, a kind of randomness. "Amalek happened upon you." The roots of radical evil remain to some degree mysterious and beyond our comprehension. We don't delude ourselves into thinking that if only we do the right thing, we can keep evil at bay. Innocent children are gunned down in school. Virulent anti-semitism re-emerges yet again Europe. It's a hard reality to live with, but without it, we might be inclined to blame the victim in inappropriate ways.

But the paradigm also offers another suggestion. Yes, there is a random aspect to evil, but causation is a complicated thing. And although we can't completely prevent innocent children from being hurt, anti-semitism from re-emerging -- we're not entirely helpless either. There are certain conditions, behaviors, attitudes that make us particularly vulnerable -- pre-conditions that set the stage for Amaleks to emerge.

The Torah identifies three.

According to Deuteronomy, Amalek struck "when you were weak and tired" -- that is, when we're physically, emotionally or ethically drained, and have neither the physical nor moral strength to stand by our convictions. Our capacities are limited. As a nation, we do not have the physical resources -- or the stomachs -- to fight every battle in the world. We become fatigued. As individuals, too, there are only so many battles we can fight. That's one reason (among many) why it's so important to become discerning in recognizing Amalek. Don't waste your resources and moral outrage on trivialities.

The second precondition that makes us susceptible to Amalek is when we are religiously/theologically compromised; when we lack faith. In the Exodus account, the people asked, "is God among us or not", and immediately, "then came Amalek." Now, this doesn't mean we have to believe in the anthropomorphized God of children's storybooks, sitting on a heavenly throne directing the world. But when we lose sight of hope and the possibility of transformation, when we lose our values and ideals or our sense of meaning, when we become cynical, when we build any of the Golden Calves we talked about on Rosh Hashanah -- we make ourselves more vulnerable to Amalek.

And third, Amalek arises when we are ethically, morally compromised. As the Torah says, Amalek preyed on the weak ones "who were in your rear." Why were the weakest, most vulnerable members of your society left to fend for themselves in the rear of your camp? Why weren't they embraced and protected in the center? When we forget each other and our responsibilities to each other, when we neglect the vulnerable -- we all, as a society, become susceptible, vulnerable, to those who prey on the vulnerable. Amalek.

And again, these three are related. A society, a community, or a person which "fears God" -- which has its head screwed on straight -- will protect the vulnerable, will understand that in the mythic, paradigmatic battle between God and Amalek, good and evil, "dog eat dog" or "every man for himself" is on the side of Amalek.

So a paradigm like this, albeit a bit oversimplified, helps and reminds us to distinguish among different levels of wrong, and helps alert us to those situations when serious evil is likely to arise.

And that takes us to the most important reason why we need a paradigm of evil, and we need to remember it every day. Because it helps us frame our response. It's a daily reminder to be conscious about our response to evil in our world, and in ourselves

And when we think about our response, we need to focus on two distinct levels. One level is remembering to act: address the evil itself. This seems fairly obvious; "remember what Amalek did" is a call to early intervention and action, a warning not be caught off guard. It's the "never again" emphasis in the aftermath of the Shoah. And in a sense, it's the easier issue. One must step in. How to do it, what to do -- that's never easy, and it's particular to the situation. But that's a question of effectiveness, tactics. The how/what is not a religious question. The whether, the responsibility, *that's* the religious question.

There is no question that the world cannot stand by and allow Assad to annihilate his own people. Sometimes action must be military, sometimes diplomatic. Sometime grand, and sometimes quiet. I have no idea what we should do about Assad in this particular instance, and it's not for me to say. There are people with far greater expertise in this than I. But that we must try, that we cannot simply turn away, that is a religious imperative.

But dealing with the evil itself is only part of our response. Then we have to manage the memory of evil. We have to decide how to handle what we've witnessed, or God forbid, suffered. And this is where the memory of Amalek is an essential part of our *teshuvah*.

זְכוֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק . . . תִּמְחָה אֵת זֵכֶר עַמְלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם. לֹא תִשְׁכַּח:
"Remember what Amalek did to you [says Deuteronomy], on the way, when you were leaving Egypt, . . . So it shall be that . . . you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the sun -- do not forget!" (Deut. 25:17-19).

This may well be the strangest, most convoluted commandment in the entire Torah: remember to erase any memory of Amalek, and don't forget. What can this possibly mean? How can we remember, and at the same time wipe out the memory, and at the same time, not forget? Of all the Six Remembrances, this one calls for the most delicate and sophisticated art of consciously shaping our consciousness -- an intricate dance of remembering and forgetting.

Remember what happened -- so that you recognize it, so that you don't become complacent, naive, or indifferent. So that you act. But remember also to wipe out the memory -- the wounds and scars left in your hearts and souls -- so that you, and not Amalek, shape who you are. Don't forget to be vigilant about the seeds of Amalek -- the crumbs and traces of fear, of anger, of justification of violence. Wipe out the memory. Don't forget.

We do not want a Judaism defined by Hitler, a Jewish soul warped by suffering and persecution. We want a Jewish memory defined by the Exodus from Egypt, and standing at Sinai, defined by the beauty and joy of the Torah and our tradition, our ethics and our rituals.

We do not want, and cannot allow, an Israeli society defined by terrorism and hatred of Jews, an Israeli soul corrupted by anger, and fear, that pulls us away from our values, our core narratives, that justifies anything in the name of safety or worse yet revenge.

We don't want an America defined by Osama bin Laden.

And we as individuals do not want to be defined -- cannot afford or allow ourselves to be shaped -- by the pain or cruelty we've suffered, re-enacting and re-inflicting that pain and cruelty in our relationships with the people we love.

As Elie Wiesel said, "if memory helps us to survive, forgetting allows us to go on living." And this is true not only in the sense of being able to get up in the morning in joy and hope and embrace life; but forgetting is necessarily also to enable us to go on living as ethical, loving, free human beings, consciously choosing who to be.

Remember to wipe out the memory -- the seeds -- of Amalek. Lest they take root and flourish in your own self. Because holding onto the memory of Amalek, will turn us into Amalek.

This is not easy. It's not easy because the seeds of Amalek are insidious -- we're often not even aware we're being influenced by them. And they're not only insidious, they're compelling, because they sound -- and are -- right. "We have a right to defend ourselves." "They are at fault." "You can't reason or bargain with someone like this." All true, and perhaps important to remember in deciding how to *act* in response. But essential to forget, in deciding who to be.

And it's not easy because we're being asked to both remember and forget, at one and the same time; to remember for one purpose, to forget for another. We symbolize this complexity in a playful way on Purim, when we read aloud the name of Haman and simultaneously blot it out by making noise. On Yom Kippur, we do it by means of *teshuvah*, in the sense we've been talking about: consciously, deliberately molding our own memories, shaping our inner life and our very being.

Not by revising history -- in this context, that would be a crime. But by rewriting memory -- "re-membering."

And here, the way the Amalek narrative itself is told in the Torah, serves as our model. The version of the Amalek story in Deuteronomy -- when we're commanded to remember it -- is different than the one in Exodus. In the Exodus version, Amalek arises because of Israel's lack of faith in God. The retelling in Deuteronomy presents a softer and more compassionate view of the Israelites' role: sometimes evil happens randomly, when you're tired and vulnerable, it's not your fault. Don't judge yourself harshly; don't internalize shame.

And at the same time, it's a much more empowering narrative than Exodus version, which speaks of God wiping out the memory of Amalek. The "re-membering" of the story shifts the burden: Amalek didn't come because your faith faltered; after all, whose faith never falters? To the extent you had a share in becoming vulnerable to Amalek, it's because your *ethics* faltered -- your weak ones were in your rear. *That*, you can control. And you don't have to wait around for God to wipe out Amalek's memory. It's up to you.

This structure -- the fact that the story is retold, remembered differently than it was experienced -- conveys the deeper message of the Torah: you have the power (and therefore the responsibility) to manage the impact of Amalek, precisely by managing your memory, by changing how you tell the story. Don't erase the memory (that's impossible and not desirable), but reframe it, in the two ways the Torah does: 1) by introducing compassion on the self (you were tired, weary, in transition), and 2) by introducing human agency (*you* wipe out his memory, don't sit around and wait for God). What an extraordinary model!

This is the path, the work necessary to eradicate the memory -- the traces of shame and pain left in our souls by the Amaleks of the world. Put another way, it enables us to *remember* the experience of shame, humiliation, suffering, without *re-experiencing* the shame. I would even go so far as to say that to the extent we are vulnerable to Amalek when we lose faith, it's when we lose faith in this: that it is possible to remember and learn without reliving, re-experiencing, and re-enacting. It's the central message of the Exodus. The whole ball of wax.

And.... that it is possible to forget without forgiving. This is so important. When it comes to Amalek -- real Amalek -- there can be no forgiving. To say that we have to wipe the memory of Amalek from our hearts and souls is not the same as saying that we have to in any way excuse, justify, forgive, or even understand. We don't abandon or compromise our moral judgement. We simply say, I will not let *that*, shape *me*.

I think we've actually done a remarkably amazing job of this, *vis-a-vis* the Holocaust. Our primary current challenge is radical Islam (not *all* Islam, but the radicalized anti-Semitic anti-Western fringe of Islam).

And of course sometimes (not always, but sometimes), if we're actually successful in wiping out the memory of Amalek -- in "re-remembering" not the facts, but our own narratives; in keeping keep our inner life free of Amalek's influence -- we may in the process discover that we've been using the wrong paradigm all long. We may discover that we're not in fact dealing with Amalek, or that, it's somewhat more complex -- which opens the path for a whole different range of responses.

We'll pick up there tomorrow, when we talk about Miriam.

V Memory and the Incident with Miriam (Yom Kippur Day)

Our theme this year has been memory and its relationship to *teshuvah*. Specifically, we've been focusing on the practice of the reciting the *Shesh Zekhirot*, the Six Remembrances, every morning, as a way of molding our memory and shaping our consciousness.

On Rosh Hashanah we dealt with the three of the six: the Exodus from Egypt, standing at Sinai, and the Golden Calf. Last night, we spoke about Amalek. Now we turn to *zekhirat ma'aseh Miryam* -- Remember the incident with Miriam.

What was the incident with Miriam? The story is told in the twelfth chapter of *Bemidbar*, the Book of Numbers. Miriam and Aaron, Moses' sister and brother, say something negative about him, to each other. God is not happy. God literally calls them out ("you two, outside, now"), defends Moses' honor, and punishes Miriam. (We'll leave aside for another day the question of why Miriam, and not Aaron, is punished.) Aaron then pleads with Moses, and Moses cries out to God with the shortest prayer in the Torah, *El na r'fa na la* -- "please God heal her now." God relents, but not without Miriam paying a price. She's separated from the rest of the camp for seven days, and only then is she gathered back in. The story ends with the Torah telling us that the entire people Israel waited, not continuing on their journey until Miriam rejoined them.

It's not an especially well-known story, but it's one we're told later, in Deuteronomy, to remember. Why? Why is this incident one of the Six Remembrances, to be remembered every day?

Obviously, on one level, we're supposed to remember what Miriam did, to remind us not to do similarly. And here, no doubt, one reason why this story is singled out has to do with the specific nature of the wrongdoing here: *lashon hara* -- negative speech, speaking ill of someone.

Our tradition is very aware of the power of speech. We've been talking about consciously shaping our consciousness, focusing on the role of memory in doing that. For the rabbis, to "remember" is to say out loud; that's how all these verses commanding us to remember became a daily practice of reciting them, orally. And they interpreted "to remember" in that way precisely because they understood that language is the tool we use to shape our memories and thereby our consciousness and our being. The words we say shape our reality. That's why very early, pre-verbal trauma is especially hard to heal; it's because we're dealing with memories that were stored without language to express them.

And it's why the Jewish tradition so frequently emphasizes the importance of words, and not just thoughts. For example, our confessions on Yom Kippur must be said aloud; there's a significance difference between thinking about what we've done wrong, and saying it out loud. And by the way, a significant percentage of the specific sins we confess to in the *al het* have to do with speech. Apologies too, must be verbally expressed, and the specific language used is important. "I'm sorry you were hurt" is not a substitute for "I'm sorry I hurt you."

And because the rabbis understood the power of words, they understood why *lashon hara* is so dangerous. It's bad enough to *think* ill of another; we're obligated to assume the best of each other. But saying it aloud -- shaping those thoughts in words -- takes it to a whole different level. Not only because by saying it we communicate it to another. In this story, Miriam and Aaron speak together to each other; apparently they each already had the same thought, and

there was no actual sharing of information. So what was the harm? The harm is that what we say aloud affects the person speaking, not only the one listening. What we say reinforces and concretizes what we think, giving our thoughts a greater sense of reality and believability, more influence and power over us. And, by the way, telling ourselves that we're "getting it out of our system" doesn't mean it's not *lashon hara*. "Venting" is largely an illusion. Complaining or speaking negatively about another person doesn't get it out of our system. On the contrary, by vocalizing our negative view of another, we reinforce our image of that person, granting it greater rather than less stature and power in our minds.

And sometimes, actually, *lashon hara* in a sense falsifies the memory. One of the richest aspects of the Miriam story is that we're not actually sure what Miriam and Aaron said about Moses, and whether what they said was what really bothered them. The Torah's narrator tells us that it had to do with his marriage (what about his marriage is left for interpretation), but then they're quoting as saying to each other something entirely different: "Has Adonai spoken only through Moses? Has God not spoken through us as well?" Similarly, when we find ourselves speaking ill of someone, we need to be aware that we can't always express -- sometimes we don't even know -- why we're really ticked off. But whatever we say, even if it's not emotionally accurate, even if it's not the real issue, will take on a life of its own and become more real in our minds.

So the fact that the Miriam story involves *lashon hara* is definitely one reason why this particular incident is singled out: it's to emphasize the importance of this particular sin.

But there are other reasons why this story is one of the Six Remembrances, to be remembered every day, to priming and shaping our consciousness. Of the three "negative" remembrances,, reminders of spiritual & moral dangers, we've dealt extensively already with two: the Golden Calf (idolatry, broadly defined), and Amalek (paradigmatic radical evil). Now we have Miriam to complete the picture: hurtful behavior between people that *isn't* radical evil, just the ordinary wounds and hurts we inflict on each other every day.

Don't think for a moment that they aren't important. They matter. Enormously. They matter enough that we're commanded to remember, every day, a story about what happens when we're not careful about how we treat people.

And the fact that we're not Amalek doesn't mean we get a free pass for the Miriam things we do. Remember who was affected by this behavior: Miriam herself, Moses, God, and the whole community, who waited for her. To remember the incident with Miriam is to remember every day that when we're careless in how we treat another person -- whether speaking ill about them or harshly to them, or being distrustful or unkind, withholding, competitive, etc. -- our words, attitudes and actions have far-reaching effect. We are damaged, the person we mistreat is damaged, we've even "hurt" God.

And the whole community -- however imperceptibly -- is held back, stuck a little closer to Egypt, a little delayed in reaching our vision. That may be why these two stories -- the incident with Amalek and the incident with Miriam -- are deliberately juxtaposed by the repetition of the command *Zakhor* ("remember") and by another linguistic parallel. Both are said to have happened, *baderekh b'tzeitkhem miMitzrayim* -- on the way, when you were coming out of Egypt, in exactly the same language. Meaning, on the one hand, that specifically at times of transition we are most vulnerable to committing or falling prey to both kinds of wrongdoing -- the Amalek-like and Miriam-like behaviors. But more generally we're always coming out Egypt; we're always striving to move forward, toward a more expansive, more just, holier vision;

everything we do, every word we say, either takes us closer to redemption, or delays us on the journey

And of course, the story of Miriam is especially evocative and salient because it isn't just a story about the little hurts we inflict on people in general. It's the story of a sister who had saved her brother's life, who loves him and is loved by him, and also hurts him. This is about the everyday hurts we inflict *on the people we love most in the world*. Remember, every day, to consciously work on your most intimate and important relationships; be intentional about them.

If the Golden Calf is what happens when we forget our place in the world, when forget who we are. And Amalek is what happens when we forget that God demands we care for the vulnerable; when we forget to fear God. Miriam is what happens when we forget that we love, forget who we love, and forget how to love.

Hopefully, by remembering the story every day, we'll do better at remembering. Okay. Good.

But there's also another whole aspect of the Miriam story. We remember Miriam not only to be more careful in how we *treat* people, but in responding to how others treat us. When someone thinks or speaks ill of *us*, is nasty, hurtful, mean. When we're disappointed, hurt, even betrayed, by the people we love. Remember the story of Miriam.

I've been talking about Amalek and Miriam as paradigmatic poles, opposites. They're two stories that talk to each other; reflect on each other; they're supposed to be in conversation in our minds. And one of the reasons the Miriam story is singled out here is precisely to remind us that Miriam isn't Amalek. Miriam is righteous. In Sephardic prayerbooks, the Six Remembrances actually read, *uma'aseh Miryam haneviah*, "the incident with Miriam the prophet." Miriam is a prophetess; she's not at war with God, she's connected to God. Good people do bad things. It doesn't mean they're evil. We forget that sometimes. People we love -- who love us -- hurt us. It doesn't mean they don't love us. We forget that sometimes too. We remember Miriam every day, along with Amalek, so that our consciousness is primed to make the distinction.

Now I know I'm oversimplifying; it's not like there's a bright line between Miriam and Amalek. They're polar opposites that are connected by a continuum, a spectrum. And there are a lot of hybrids. After all, Amalek is within all of us, a little -- we call that the *yetzer hara*, the "evil impulse." And a relationship may be intimate, loving -- Miriam/Moses-like -- while a behavior, or its effect, is Amalek-like. Or we may be dealing with a distant or even large-scale relationship, and still be looking at a Miriam-like offense. Anthony Weiner is embarrassing, harmful, ill, sad; he's not Amalek.

I can't give you a firm definition, a list of factors, to know definitively where on the spectrum a particular behavior lies; it's contextual. But even though there is no bright line, it's helpful to keep the two paradigms in mind, and to try to figure out where on the spectrum we are, because that's essential in guiding our response

Don't treat Miriams like Amaleks.

We do it all the time. We turn things into bigger deals than they are. Or we globalize behavior, and it colors our entire view of a person. Or we use the Amalek paradigm to avoid the work of forgiving. And if you think that sounds ridiculous, I'll share with you that I've spoken about forgiveness many times on Yom Kippur. And nearly every time I do, someone will approach me

afterwards and say something like, “You talked about forgiveness. But aren’t there things that are unforgivable? Should we forgive Hitler?” Yes, of course, there are things that are unforgivable, and no, of course we shouldn’t forgive Hitler. But your sister-in-law who didn’t show up to a family wedding, or your neighbor who lets his dogs bark incessantly, is not Hitler, is not Amalek! And we need a different response.

We’ve talked about how we respond to Amalek. How do we respond to Miriam? The Torah speaks of responses from both Moses and God. God inflicts *tzara’at* on Miriam. *Tzara’at* is a kind of supernatural skin ailment, understood to be a physical manifestation of a spiritual illness (understand, we’re talking in metaphor here). And it’s generally dealt with by a period of isolation -- exclusion from the community -- then a purification process, after which the person resumes normal life. That’s what happens here.

And I want to suggest that we’re supposed to remember that every day, not only in terms of our own bad behavior -- when we treat each other badly, we compromise our wholeness and spiritual health, our vitality (*tzara’at* is associated with a kind of death), and we compromise our connections with other people and become more isolated. But also remember it in terms of our response when other people hurt us: they suffer, automatically, from their own behavior. No one “gets away with it.”

And that’s hugely important for our own intention, our own *kavannah*, in how we respond. When it comes to Amalek, we are commanded to remember to act; you have to step in, you have to intervene -- not only for purposes of protecting innocent life and for deterrence, but for the sake of justice. You are God’s redemptive agents on earth in responding to evil. But when it comes to the Miriam-like incidents, when the people we love hurt us, disappoint us -- and not just the people we love, in managing the bruises and insults and slights of everyday life -- we have to remember to leave punishment, retribution, and justice to God (or the universe, or karma, or natural consequences, or however it works best for you to imagine it). Remembering the story of Miriam every day means remembering that it’s not our job to avenge every wrong, to teach everyone a lesson, to keep an accurate balance sheet. Some One else is taking care of that.

Which may be why, in fact, the Torah’s command isn’t, “Remember what Miriam did,” it’s “Remember what God did to Miriam.”

So that... we will remember and emulate Moses’ response: *El na r’fa na la*, “please God, heal her.” When it comes to the small hurts we inflict on each other -- the disappointments and betrayals in families, among friends, neighbors, strangers -- let God deal with justice, you work toward healing and forgiveness.

Now I would be dishonest if I went directly to the process of healing and forgiveness, skipping over a critical part of the story. What prompts Moses prayer for healing? His brother’s plea: *no’alnu*, “we have been foolish.” Please don’t count our sin against us, which we were foolish, and acted wrongly. In other words, an act of *teshuvah*.

Obviously, the process of forgiving and healing doesn’t happen in a vacuum. Ideally, there’s *teshuvah*. When we wrong someone, it is our obligation to do *teshuvah*. And it’s not just saying I’m sorry; it’s obviously deeper than that. What I’m suggesting isn’t just turning the other cheek, ignoring bad behavior, papering over difficulties. Healing has to be honest healing. *Teshuvah* has to be genuine, and deep

And here, we need to note that it's true, we shouldn't turn Miriams into Amaleks; but neither can we dismiss Amaleks -- or Amalek-like behavior or effects -- as mere interpersonal slights. There are behaviors -- even from people we love, who love us, who are good people -- which are toxic, closer to Amalek than to Miriam. Nor is there necessarily a bright line -- at least to the outside observer -- between the behavior necessary to stop Amalek, and the healing behavior in response to Miriam. Sometimes even where there's real *teshuvah*, in working toward healing we may need to distance ourselves, take a firm and tough stance against certain behavior. And of course, not everyone is able or willing to do *teshuvah*, and not everything can be healed. And it may involve some trial and error to figure it out; this is complicated stuff.

But part of remembering the Miriam story is remembering to be someone with whom one can do *teshuvah*. It's about being open to hearing that maybe what we reacted to as Amalek, isn't. That maybe there's another side to the story, something we didn't understand, or maybe the person we thought we had totally pegged, has changed. It's remembering to be someone open to "re-remembering."

And so we come back to the power of words. I spoke earlier about the importance of expressing our apologies in words, and making it real. Admittedly, words cannot change the past -- nothing can; Miriam and Aaron could not take back what they said about Moses. But if they are authentic, words can change how the past is interpreted, and remembered:

Remorse offers us a nonmagical way of undoing the past. Although it is impossible to undo what has been done, since the past cannot be changed, it is possible to change our interpretation of the past. By expressing remorse the offender presents himself in a new light, a light that can be projected into the past. His ability to feel remorse attests that he is not basically evil, even if the act that he performed was abominable. The sinner does not deny the badness of his deed, as then he would not be expressing remorse, but his very assumption of responsibility for the deed is supposed to create a rift between the act and the doer. Thus, an offender can be forgiven if the offense cannot be forgotten.³

When someone does sincere *teshuvah*, it is our obligation to "re-member" -- to allow our memories to be changed and reconstituted. "Rejecting a sincere plea for forgiveness is like rejecting a gift."⁴

I don't mean to suggest that accept the gift is easy. It's hard. And that takes us back to the question of forgiveness. If you ask me, what is the most important aspect of remembering the Miriam story every day? I'd say this: unless you're dealing with Amalek, prime yourself to be forgiving.

Which is different from forgetting, at least to start. This is one of the great misconceptions about forgiveness -- "forgive and forget", we say, as though they're same -- and it sets up a great obstacle. When someone has hurt or angered us in any kind of deep way, we can't just forget. It's not realistic. Avishai Margalit draws an analogy with a jury that has heard inadmissible evidence. The judge never instructs the jury to forget the evidence (this would guarantee they'd remember it!), but rather that they disregard it, and not use it as reason for their verdict. Forgiveness is like that. It's not forgetting. It's making a decision that whatever the person did isn't going to be "admissible evidence."

3. Margalit, Avishai, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 199.

4. Ibid, p. 196.

When we deal with Amalek, we have to forget -- in the way we talked about yesterday -- even if we can't (or shouldn't) forgive. When we're dealing with Miriams, we have to forgive, even if we can't forget.

Nor is it realistic to expect to just stop feeling resentment and hurt, even when someone has done genuine *teshuvah*. Margalit analogizes it to overcoming an addiction. One can indeed stop smoking just like that, but the desire to smoke can only be modified gradually, with effort. Similarly, we make a decision to forgive, to love, not to act on resentment, in a moment. The process of not feeling the resentment, the anger, the hurt, takes time, and effort.

And here, it's important to take a moment to distinguish between the process and the accomplishment, because the words "healing," "forgiveness," and "*teshuvah*" can each refer to either the achievement, the end result, or the process of getting there. The end result is not entirely voluntary; we cannot make ourselves forgive, we cannot will ourselves or another to heal. But we can commit to the process. We can make the decision that we're not going to act on our resentment and anger, that we're not going to nurture those feelings.

Which may, ultimately, lead to forgetting:

There is an indirect way by which forgiveness as a decision can bring about forgetting and thereby complete the process of forgiveness. The decision to forgive makes one stop brooding on the past wrong, stop telling it to other people, with the end result of forgetting it or forgetting that it once mattered to you greatly.⁵

In other words, we may always remember the deed, but we may come to forget why we cared

Remember Miriam the prophetess. Every day. Because forgiveness, healing, *teshuvah*, isn't about forgetting. It's about remembering.

The whole point of remembering the Miriam story every day, is that we're priming our consciousness so that in a moment of hurt or disappointment, we will remember also our shared humanity. We'll remember to see a whole person, not only what that person did to me.

And when we remember that, we'll remember that we can choose how to respond, and we'll remember to stay committed to the choice we've made. We'll remember that we love, who we love, and how to love.

5. Ibid, p. 192.

VI Memory and Shabbat (Neilah)

We began on the eve of Rosh Hashanah with the question of memory, and the relationship between memory and *teshuvah* -- the central challenge being remembering who we are, our truest selves. Since then, we've been on a journey through the *Shesh Zekhirot* -- the Six Remembrances. We've talked about remembering the Exodus from Egypt, and remembering Standing at Sinai. We've looked at remembering three different ways that human beings can go astray: the Golden Calf, Amalek, and the incident with Miriam.

Now we come to the last of the six, which is fundamentally different from the other five. This one is not a story or a narrative. It's an experience. And it's not a paradigm in the same way that we've been talking about -- i.e., a pattern that repeats throughout history. This is an observance, a paradigm and pattern that repeats every week.

Zekhirat Shabbat, "remember Shabbat."

On one level, the meaning of this is obvious: remember to keep, to observe, Shabbat. We've been talking about the Six Remembrances as essential content of Jewish memory -- the formative narratives that keep us together as a people, that shape our hearts and souls. There are a lot of different ways of being Jewish, and a lot of different approaches to *halakhah*, Jewish law and observance. My teacher Dr. Neil Gillman is fond of talking about four different kinds of Jews:

- 1) head Jews, whose primary expression of spirituality is Torah study and learning;
- 2) heart Jews, whose Judaism is expressed primarily through *hesed*, acts of lovingkindness to others;
- 3) hand Jews, whose Jewishness is grounded primarily in the work of social justice, *tikkun olam*;
- 4) and what I might call "soul Jews," for whom prayer and ritual observance is the main basis of their Judaism.

So there are lots of ways of experiencing and expressing our Jewishness. But Shabbat -- Shabbat transcends everything. It's that fundamental.

If you want one Jewish thing to do in this New Year that will make an enormous difference in your life, think about beginning or deepening your Shabbat practice (if you want help, email me, we'll talk about it). It's a gift to yourself, beyond measure.

What is Shabbat really about? It's not about restriction. On the contrary, it's all about experiencing freedom, in all the ways we've been talking about.

- Freedom to choose who to be, uninfluenced by normative culture. On Shabbat we power down our computers and smartphones, and turn off the television. We disconnect from constant bombardment of popular culture telling us that we're not successful enough, young enough, attractive enough, wealthy enough, hip enough, popular enough. Did you know that current research shows that Facebook makes us unhappy? It's no surprise. So on Shabbat we go free from that particular Egypt -- from all the Pharaohs who try to control us, telling us what we need, and what we should want, where we should go and who we should try to be. And we have an opportunity to be present to ourselves, to figure out what we want, who we are, and choose who we want to be.

- Freedom to learn, to be open to standing at Sinai. We stop working, and we take the time to think, to focus, to integrate our experiences. And to read. In my studying the question of memory, I came across a discussion of the way in which our relationship to reading has changed. The change started with the printing press, but has accelerated exponentially with current technology. There was a time when we read in depth, when we re-read and even memorized passages. Now it's all about quantity. So much material crosses our desktops that the best we can do is skim, and something is lost. Shabbat is about quality, not quantity. It's about reading slowly, appreciatively -- savoring a poem, reveling in a beautifully worded sentence, rolling new concepts around in our brains and making new connections.
- Freedom from our Golden Calves. Shabbat gives us a weekly opportunity to reorder our lives and priorities. We don't carry money, and we don't work at our jobs; we're not feeding our ambition, our acquisitiveness, our competitiveness. We can shake off the hold that all those seductions and distractions have on us, and reconnect with our true values.
- Freedom from Amalek. According to the Jewish mystical tradition, the forces of evil -- in Aramaic, the *sitra achra*, "the other side" -- have no power on Shabbat. Shabbat is a weekly taste of the Divine realm, a rest from the six-days-a-week battle against chaos and negativity.
- Freedom, ideally, from the small Miriam-like hurts we inflict on others and which others inflict on us all week. Shabbat allows us to be gentler, kinder and more sensitive with each other. We're not jockeying for position with others; we all have a place. We can release our anger, resentment, and competitiveness. There's a famous hasidic story about a woman who had worked in the house of Rabbi Elimelekh. People were always asking her about the holy practices of the great rabbi, and she would say that the only thing she knew was that all week the servants and staff would quarrel, but on Friday night something happened, and everyone would embrace, put aside their anger, and remember that they loved each other.

We accomplish all this through rest, through refraining; -- but it's not about saying no. We say no, in order to be able to say a higher yes.

Shabbat is the enactment of God's dream. It's an experience of a world redeemed within this life. Some of what we experience as the restrictions of Shabbat derive from this idea -- we don't engage in activities which change the world, because we enter into a consciousness that the world is perfect as it is.

Very often we hear people distinguish Judaism from Christianity by saying that Jews focus on this life, while Christianity focuses on life in the world to come. That's not exactly true. It's not that Judaism doesn't believe in or care about the world to come. It's that we want to experience it here, in this life. Shabbat is that opportunity, every week.

So that's the experience, ideally, of Shabbat. But what does it mean to remember it every day? Here, the rabbis offer a very specific, concrete interpretation: remember all week that Shabbat is coming, by preparing for it. Set aside the best of everything for Shabbat. Orient your week around Shabbat. That's actually how we name the days of the week. There is no Hebrew equivalent of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. Our weekdays are called, "Day One Toward Shabbat," "Day Two Toward Shabbat." etc.

This is not a small concept, and it's very countercultural today. It's a daily reminder of two very important things. First, the purpose of our Shabbat rest isn't to enable us to have more energy to work during the week. We work during the week in order to experience Shabbat, which is an end in itself, the goal. Put another, we don't live to work, we work to live.

And second, it's a daily reminder that spirituality takes preparation, similar to what we talked about vis-a-vis creating the pre-conditions in order to have Sinai moments. This is very important, and speaks to a very common misconception about the way faith -- the life of the spirit -- works. Very often I hear people say something to the effect of, "I'm not spiritual," as though spirituality is something one either has or doesn't. Not at all. Spirituality is a practice, it takes work and preparation. One has to till the soil of the soul, prepare and sensitize one's self. And this is one of the great misconceptions and problems in Jewish life today. We expect our spiritual "providers" -- rabbis, cantors and educators -- to create experiences for us, to "give" us spirituality. It's true of the High Holy Days; people often come to services expecting the rabbi and cantor to inspire or "move" them. And hopefully there is a potential for inspiration and elevation in the service. But the extent to which we are able to have a spiritual experience on Yom Kippur depends upon the preparation we've done, individually, in advance. We can't walk in cold off the street on a Friday night -- or on Kol Nidre eve -- having done no preparation all week (whether study, or personal prayer, or the work of *teshuvah*, or acts of lovingkindness or social action, or other mitzvah) and expect to encounter God. It does occasionally happen, but it's rare. So remembering every day to prepare for Shabbat -- to prepare and sensitize our souls for depth encounters -- is essential.

But beyond the classic rabbinic understanding, I want to suggest that remembering Shabbat every day is about shaping our consciousness -- in the same way the other five remembrances are -- by remembering the *experience* of Shabbat throughout the week.

Remember the importance of rest in life, the importance of attuning ourselves to our own rhythms as well as a rhythm larger than ourselves. Many of us feel like anxious, displaced, and frazzled when we're constantly in transition and on the move; we need down time, reflective time. But as a culture, we're not good at pausing. Remembering Shabbat every day reminds us to be attentive, always, to our needs to pause and rest: physically, mentally, and spiritually.

On the other hand, some of us feel anxious, displaced, frazzled when we're staying still too long. Partly because society has taught us to feel guilty about it. But when you observe Shabbat, you don't feel anxious that you're not working -- not pushing forward and achieving -- one day a week. You're doing precisely what you're supposed to be doing at the moment; it's a *mitzvah*, so there's no anxiety, no guilt. Shabbat is a time when we not only permit, but *honor* and respect stopping. And some of us feel anxious when we're not moving forward because we've forgotten how to keep still, don't know what to do with ourselves, or because when we're not doing, accomplishing, moving forward, we lose our sense of meaning and self-worth. For those people, Shabbat is a reminder -- every day -- that our worth is grounded in *being*, not only in doing.

Remember the wonder of Shabbat. There's a very profound teaching by the Mei HaShiloah, an 18th century hasidic master, on the Biblical commandment to remember Shabbat. He begins by quoting the Zohar, "thus it is when a person first rests after the hard work of servitude, at first one feels a strong feeling of rest. Then when one becomes accustomed to it, one does not feel the taste of the rest as at first." Therefore, the Mei HaShiloah teaches, the Torah says, "remember Shabbat," because we need to remember each week the feeling of our first

experience of rest, and from this new desire and yearning will come to us each time.⁶ In other words, remembering Shabbat is about remembering the sense of wonder and appreciation that comes with experiencing Shabbat rest, and all the freedoms we've been talking about, for the first time.

We take so much for granted, and we become accustomed to our blessings, such that we don't even notice them anymore. In some obvious ways: our physical and mental health (if we're blessed to be in good health), our material blessings, the beauty and diversity and functioning of the natural world, the people we love. And on a much deeper level, we take for granted our humanity: our capacity for wonder and gratitude, our ability to communicate, to feel and express love, our ability to feel pain, our ability to feel. We take for granted our freedom -- our political and religious freedom, but again, on an even deeper level, the very fact of human agency. We take for granted -- we forget -- the miracle of free will, and of human dignity. Our ability to choose who to be, that we spoke about the first night of Rosh Hashanah -- to change, to learn, to grow. So every day, remember Shabbat as a miracle; reconnect with your sense of awe .

Remember the dream and the vision. I've said that Shabbat is an experience of the Divine dream -- a taste of the world to come. One of my favorite ḥasidic tales is of a Rabbi Mendel Futefas, and a lesson he learned from a tightrope walker when the two were imprisoned in a Siberian gulag. The rabbi asked the tightrope walker about the secret to his art:

“What does one need to master? Balance? Stamina? Concentration?”

The tightrope walker's answer surprised him. “The secret is always keeping your destination in focus. You have to keep your eyes on the other end of the rope. But do you know what the hardest part is?”

“When you get to the middle?” the rabbi ventured.

“No,” said the tightrope walker. “It's when you make the turn. Because for a fraction of a second, you lose sight of your destination. When you don't have sight of your destination that is when you are most likely to fall.”⁷

We are always, in a sense, “making the turn;” every moment is a choice point, and every moment is an opportunity to do *teshuvah*. If we lose sight of our destination -- of our vision and our values -- we are likely to make poor choices, to turn in the wrong direction, to fall. How do we keep the destination in view?

To observe Shabbat is to *experience* the destination. To remember Shabbat every day is to keep the destination always in mind, throughout the challenges, annoyances, pains, joys, opportunities, and temptations of everyday life. It's to live every day acutely aware of the gap between reality as it is and as it should be, and to refuse to choose one or the other; it's to be neither escapist (abandoning reality for fantasy), nor resigned (abandoning the dream, the vision, for the practical).

Remember home. There's a famous rabbinic midrash about Cain, after he killed Abel. His father Adam, the first human being, met Cain and asked him, “how did your judgment go?” Cain replied, “I did *teshuvah* and was reconciled.” Adam clapped his hands to face and exclaimed, “Such is the power of *teshuvah*, and I didn't know!” Immediately he stood up and began to chant, “*Mizmor shir l'yom haShabbat*, a song for the Sabbath Day.”⁸

6. Mei HaShiloah on Deut. 25:17.

7. Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*.

8. I.e., Psalm 92.

The Netivot Shalom (an early 20th century ḥasidic master) raises a question about the midrash. It doesn't make sense, he says; from the fact that Adam hadn't realized the great power of *teshuvah*, why then did he sing a song to Shabbat? To understand, he says, read it this way. When Adam asked, how did your judgment go, he was really asking, what could be your remedy after killing your brother, which is such a great and serious sin that no *teshuvah* could be effective? And Cain answered, I did *teshuvah* and was reconciled with my Creator. Because even though all week long it was decreed against him to be a wander (*na va'nad*) on earth, to be displaced and plucked from the root of being -- and maybe also from the root of his own soul -- when Shabbat comes, he goes back and returns to his home.

I've been speaking of remembering our true selves. It's so easy to say, and so hard to do. It's so hard to really connect; to find those deep places. We are all like Cain, wandering here and there, uprooted, lost.

Remembering Shabbat every day is remembering that we do have a home, we do have a root, a true self, even if we can't connect to it right now. It's to remember that life is a continual modulation between feelings of rootedness and displacement, of coming home and feeling lost, of meaning and meaninglessness. Remembering Shabbat isn't an escape from those weekday feelings; it doesn't make them go away, at least it doesn't for me. Sometimes even Shabbat itself doesn't do that. But knowing that Shabbat is coming does make feeling lost more bearable, a little less scary.

Remember your best self, remember the vision of who you want to be. Last night, we chanted the Kol Nidre. Kol Nidre is about recognizing that we're not always true to our word, and that in the coming year we'll make foolish commitments we can't or won't fulfill. So we ask that our vows not be treated as vows, that we not be held strictly accountable for everything we promise. It's a very humbling moment, Kol Nidre.

But there is one vow we can't annul. The Talmud teaches that before our souls come into this world, they are made to take an oath. And what is the oath we're made to take?

תהי צדיק ואל תהי רשע, ואפילו כל העולם כולו אומרים לך צדיק אתה - היה בעיניך כרשע. והוי יודע שהקב"ה טהור ומשרתיו טהורים, ונשמה שנתן בך טהורה היא, אם אתה משמרה בטרהרה - מוטב, ואם לאו - הריני נוטלה ממך.

Be righteous, and don't be wicked. And even if all the world tells you, "You are righteous," consider yourself as though you were wicked. Know always that the Holy Blessed One is pure, and the attending angels are pure, and the soul which God has given you is pure. If you keep it pure, well and good, but if not, it will be taken from you.⁹

We've been talking all this time about remembering, and about how forgetful we human beings are. At root, this is what we need to remember, and what we all too often forget: that our lives are not entirely our own. That our souls took an oath. That we have a commitment, a mission. And, the specifics of the Talmud's language aside, that we have a better self, a best self, a pure self.

Shabbat is a weekly opportunity to remember, in ḥasidic language, that we are royalty. Or as the Sfat Emet says:

9. Babylonian Talmud, Niddah 30b

Each star in heaven has a name and gives its own particular light. Similarly, each Jew is a star in God's spiritual firmament with a name that defines the type of light that person gives to the world. It is most difficult to always remember one's name, to not forget the particular mission one must perform; and it is a great accomplishment when one continues to light the darkness with his particular light.

On Shabbat, we not only remember our name, our best selves, who we want to be -- we have the chance to live that self, to be that person. Remembering Shabbat every day is about remembering who that person is, and striving to be that person not just once a week, but all the time. It's about remembering not only God's dream for the world, but God's dream for *you*.

There aren't so many opportunities in our everyday world to search for that best self, to explore the full contours of our being, to encounter our own purity. Who we would be if we weren't shaped by the world around us, by painful memories in our pasts, by our own inner Amaleks and Golden Calves? Hopefully Yom Kippur offers that opportunity; but one day a year is not enough. To remember Shabbat every day is to remember who we were last Shabbat, and who we want to be this coming Shabbat

"Know always that the Holy Blessed One is pure, and the attending angels are pure, and the soul which God has given you is pure." Remember every day that a part of you is pure, of God, holy. The Torah commands, in the Ten Commandments, *zakhor et yom haShabbat l'kad'sho*, "remember the Sabbath day to make it holy" (Exod. 20:8). But remember Shabbat not *only* to make Shabbat holy; remember to bring the holiness of Shabbat -- of this Shabbat -- into your everyday. Don't relegate your *teshuvah* to once a year, or once a week; do it every day. Don't strive for growth and learning, purity, holiness once a year, or once a week; do it every day

In a little over an hour, Yom Kippur and Shabbat -- *Shabbat shabbaton* -- will come to end, and we'll leave. What will we remember? As we turn to the service of Neilah, think about it. Will you remember the prayers, the music, anything I've said? Maybe, maybe not; that's not actually so important.

But will you remember something you felt, or encountered, even if only for a moment? An insight, even if you can't fully articulate it? Some shift, even an almost imperceptible one? What will you remember about who you were able to be today -- for an hour or a moment -- that felt good, true, right, holy? Don't let the day end, without noting it, marking it.

And then remember it -- let that memory shape your being -- every day. Remember Shabbat, and the opportunity to make yourself, and every moment, holy. As Abraham Joshua Heschel said:

It takes three things to attain a sense of significant being:

God

A Soul

And a Moment.

And the three are always here.

Remember.