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Erev Rosh Hashanah – 5775 –September, 2014

Let me tell you something I have learned over the past many years, something that sounds trivial, but is anything but: We were born to create miracles. There are so many distractions that sometimes get in the way of our being able to see this truth, so many obstacles, and so many challenges ... but I know for sure: we were born to create miracles.

Just a month ago, I commemorated the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of an event that rocked my previous community. Before the sun rose, August 27, 2006 a ComAir flight attempted to take off from the Lexington Airport. It went down the wrong runway and by the time the pilot realized the mistake, it was too late and trying to lift off quickly, the plane hit trees just outside the airport. 49 died. The only survivor was the co-pilot who was actually flying the plane, and is now living a diminished life after suffering loss of a limb and brain damage. Through pure random circumstance, I found myself following an entourage of emergency vehicles to the site where they were gathering surviving family, friends, and auxiliary personnel. I was the only non-uniformed clergy on site, when they made the announcement that there were no-survivors. The Fire Department Chaplain, the Police Chaplain and I held a room full of anguished family, helping in every way that we could to find their family clergy, to find emergency medical support and ... and I do not even remember all of the details as the next 6 hours passed. These folks were justifiably angry at the pilot, the airport personnel ... at God, and at us because we had no answers. Where was God?

And then the entire Lexington community ... strangers who did not know the victims ... all poured out in support. The memorials, established financial aid accounts and college funds for widowed spouses and orphaned children, and the love that enveloped these families was nothing short of miraculous. We could not undo the crash, but we could and did bring comfort and healing. God was not in the crash or the recklessness that caused it. God was in the response. We were born to respond to trauma with miracles. (PAUSE)

Summer 2013, it was a beautiful day at the URJ's Goldman Union Camp, not a cloud in the sky, and the kids were having a blast on the sports field. And then, out of nowhere, lightning blasted from the clear sky and struck four campers playing soccer. On the very day that his parents mailed out

his bar Mitzvah invitations, I put a dead boy into an ambulance, as heroic EMT's worked to restart his heart. They did, but now a year plus later, with limited successes thus far. The teenage staff spontaneously took all campers and created impromptu amazing programming to help them regroup and give us time to do all that we could for the children affected by the lightening strike and their families. Adults jumped into action. People from all over the world started to pour in support and encouragement. Ethan Kadish's family has been held and helped by the entire Reform movement, the entire city of Cincinnati, and by people all over the world. Ethan is getting the finest of medical care and occupational therapy / rehabilitation because of this love and support. Where was God? God was not in the lightening. God was in the hearts of everyone who answered and answers the call for help. We were born to respond to trauma with miracles.

God was not in the tsunami, Hurricanes Katrina or Sandy, 9-11, the Shoah, or any of the nightmares we have endured. In each case, when people left their own homes and jobs, put themselves at personal risk, and showed up to assist people they never met restore their lives ... that is where we find God. God is in the miracle of restoration; a miracle that happens because people have enough faith to know that they can make a difference.

(PAUSE) On the Bar Mitzvah of my Bar mitzvah ... to the day ... August 4, 1986, I walked into a hospital skeptical, at best, about there being a God. Early that morning my daughter Corey was born. As I held her, I learned without doubt, we were born to create miracles.

Jews don't talk about miracles much, and certainly our most common use of the term is reserved for special holidays and events. Miracles are not the things that interfere with life; they are the things we faithfully accomplish and do ... that make the world better. They are the acts that elevate our spirit helping us to see the blessings that this world offers with clearer eyes than we might have had before. Maimonides teaches us that miracles are the incredible blessings that affirm the value of living. Miracles do not create special holidays ... they fill every day with blessings. In this light, I have figured out that we do more than meet each other in time and space. When we change lives just because we showed up, we do God's work, and are responsible for the miracle of healing and the miracle of love. We do not always know why or how we came into people's lives, but opportunities for intimate engagement happen all the time. In each moment, we may not have brought the Messiah, but we are a lot closer than if we never showed up, and the world is much better because we did. We are all created to

perform these miracles. They result from us having faith enough to get up each day and do what we are supposed to do, care for whom we are supposed to care, and celebrate each moment that we are cognizant enough to realize is a gift. What makes living and working each day miraculous, roots in having enough faith to believe that what we do really can make a difference. It takes faith to believe in miracles. It takes faith know that we share in making these miracles.

If it were that easy, though, we would not need this sermon. We would not need Yom Kippur. The Messiah would have already come. We know that we can change lives by showing up, but sometimes we get in our own way. Sometimes, we get so caught up in everyone else's business, that we inhibit their opportunity to create miracles, thinking that we know their world better than do they. I am reminded of a story:

Back in the 1930's and '40's, a little Jewish guy named Sid Luckman played for the Chicago Bears of the National Football League. Sid's father was a hard working immigrant tailor who never really had the opportunity to watch his son, Sidney, play. One Sunday, when the Bears played the New York Giants, Sid arranged for his parents to have seats right on the 50 yard line, five rows up from the field. For the first quarter or so, things went smoothly. All Luckman's passes were completed. In the second quarter, his pass protection broke down, totally! Giant defenders poured in; Luckman was in a scramble for his life! The Giants were chasing and Luckman was running. Back and forth across the field, the little quarterback scampered. Those 250 pound behemoths were about to catch up with him when, from the stands, a voice cried out, loud and clear: "Sidney, Sidney, let dem haf da ball, I'll buy you a nudder vun!"

We think that we all know the rules of the game. We watch it play out for others and presume that we know the best solutions for other people's predicaments; people really think that they have everybody else's answers. We seem to know why people are poor, why nations go to war, what God wants from me that God does not want from someone else. It is sheer hubris for anyone of us to presume to know, as did Sid Luckman's dad, what the person on the field knows, when it was Sid Luckman on the field. ... Buying another ball would not have helped a bit, and yet, so often we offer judgements and solutions for other people's problems knowing as

much about the matter as Sid Luckman's dad did about football. The quarterback had coaches and teammates to help out as his supporting cast. Executing the game plan depended on the team having faith in each other.

We are each others' support staff. I can no more play your position than could Sid Luckman block for himself. Ultimately, this thing called faith demands that we not only have faith in ourselves, but that we have faith in each other. If we are to experience the miracle of each other, we have to be able to expect that the people around us are faithful as well.

(PAUSE)

So, what is faith? Faith is the stuff that makes you do what no rational reason could lead you to do. You cannot prove the world will be here tomorrow, faith makes you believe that it will be. You cannot prove that you will be here tomorrow, but faith makes you prepare for it anyway. Faith is not tied to the label of our religion. It is not about which house of worship we attend, who our clergy might be, what our relative income is ... it has nothing to do with our level of ritual observance. Faith has nothing to do with the language we speak ... to God or to each other. Faith is transcendent; it has no label and no dogma. Seven Jews will describe God fifteen different ways. We do agree that Torah is the beginning of all Jewish choices but how we live with those choices is a matter of personal faith. Faith is absolutely about how true we are to the role we believe we are supposed to play in the world ... and how well we help others to play their role, as well. This faith tradition that we celebrate on this holiday demands this respect of "being" ... and of everyone else's being. Faith is the stuff that makes us so secure in who we are and what we believe that we do not feel threatened by what others believe. We can love our faiths, and love the faith of others, as well. In fact, if we are unable to believe that God is equal in other religious traditions, then I submit that we lack faith, thus making what we call religion - nothing more than superstition and bigotry. There are so many who do not get this idea. Listen to the televangelists, the fundamentalist rabbis, and radicals of all religions. They agree on nothing, even while they all preach this abhorrently exclusive message, (WITH EMPHASIS) "You are not faithful unless you were a member of my church / synagogue / mosque / or temple, all other places are filled with false ideas, just ... empty ideas - even demonic ideas."

(PAUSE)

There are many who equally believe they own God exclusively. This is not faith. The teachings of our sages, throughout time have upheld the value of faith, and its measure being rooted in not only what one believes for one's self, but in how one respects the faith of others. The late Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that Torah is the foundation of all world religions; the difference between us is how we live it out. The prophets and the Torah decree this truth. Our Yom Kippur Torah reading will see God reminding us, "This covenant I make is with everyone who is here today ... and everyone who is not here today. It is for all time." It is for everyone. And, as if with one voice, the prophets teach us that there can be no peace for this world until there is peace for all of it. Love and dignity must reign for all people, so that none will sit under their vine or fig tree afraid.

(PAUSE)

We were born to create miracles. In faithfully doing the work of sustaining the world, we accept responsibility for bringing miracles into each other's lives. (PAUSE) Too often we forget that life is a gift and a blessing; that we are here to spend this day with each other is not to be taken for granted. We walk sightless among miracles and too often even less aware of each other, but the miracles are here and we are them. Look to the family and friends who sit near you. Look at the faces that make you smile and that lift your spirit. It is nothing short of miraculous that we are here. I can tell you that more than any religious tradition, we are here to be with each other because we have faith that being here matters.

I am thankful that you share in the miracles of my life. I pray that I might be meaningful in sharing in yours, as well. I pray for our eyes to open wide enough to see beyond the boundaries that limit what we see in the world. Where we can feel that each breathe is a blessing, when each engagement – even when we disagree - is a blessing - when we see each other as a miracle in our midst, then, and only then, can we begin the work of bringing peace to the world. If no other prayer crosses your lips or touches your heart this day; pray to be more aware, more faithful; to be more thankful; to leave the ego – the struggle for power behind and faithfully acknowledge the blessing and the miracle of being. We were born to create miracles; our job this year is to intentionally and faithfully work to fulfill our destiny. The children we raise in our own homes, in our Temple, and in our community schools are the makers of tomorrow's miracles. We have to have faith in their tomorrow. We have to live today in a way that prepares them for the tomorrows that we will share with them. Where we fail to teach them of the power that they possess to change the world; where we turn

our back on tomorrow's potential, protecting our today's wants and desires, we destroy faith and relegate miracles to fairy tales. Where we dive in, the world changes, pain heals, people engage, and we grow. We can define our times or what happens around us can define us. Faith is the stuff that drives us to change this world that is, into the one we want it to be. Bayom hahu, yi-h'yeh Adonai Ekhad u-shemo Ekhad, On that day – the day that we are truly people of faith, God – even in the many ways in which divinity is experienced in this world – God will be one, and we will all come to know that truly there is only one voice in heaven and on earth. It resounds in each one of us ... and through each of us ... with each other. It is a miracle. Amen.