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Let's start with a little lesson in Greek Philosophy. The ancient Greeks instilled into western culture a NEED TO KNOW. Understanding was a most important goal, and Socrates taught that an unexplored life was hardly worth living. To that end, philosophers sought wisdom with the hope of understanding how and why ... life is. One topic that occupied a great deal of energy was the phenomenon of change. Heraclitus, was one of these ancient Greek philosophers. He taught us, "You can't stand in the same river twice." His theory was that by the time the second foot hits the water, the river that the first foot stepped into had moved on downstream. Heraclitus's student Cratylus took the matter one step further, "You can't stand in the same river ... ONCE." In the time that it takes to put the toes in after the heel (or visa versa) the water has already changed. Even if the pool is stagnant, the bacteria, temperature, and density from the toes have changed the ph, chemical structure, volume measurement and thermodynamics of the water, before the heel ever breaks the surface. The world is in constant motion ... every place ... but ... in most houses of worship. Which leads me to a bad joke.

So, how many Jews does it take to change a light bulb? CHANGE? MY GRANDMOTHER GAVE THAT LIGHTBULB AND WE HAVE BEEN USING IT IN THE SAME FIXTURE FOR FORTY YEARS!!!

Today, I want to talk about change. I know that this is almost a no brainer. I get it. I come to you as your new Rabbi. I know, some of you are saying, "Again, a new Rabbi?" I think I even heard one person say, "Now, that's not the same guy we saw last year, right?" (PAUSE) I have some news to share: we are a people of change... we are always changing. Now, I hope to be here a while, but over the course of that "while," I expect that we are going to experience a great deal of change together. This change is not going to happen because one of us wants it, but because it is going to happen. As the world evolves, so must our tradition. Here is a sobering fact: 13000 houses of worship closed in this country in 2013. They closed because while the world continued to evolve, they insisted on ... not changing the light bulb. That we can be here today is not to be taken for granted, and is absolutely a result of our tradition's commitment to change.

Rabbis Leopold Zunz, Abraham Geiger and Samuel Holdheim were the Talmud scholars during early 19th century Germany. In conquering Europe, Napoleon liberated all minorities from the ghettos to which they had been gathered. After his 1815 defeat, there were calls for Jews to return to the ghetto in order to preserve traditions and protect “us” from the real world. These “radical rabbis” instituted fundamental changes in Jewish life and observance. Men and women sat together. They prayed in German – the language that they spoke in the grocery stores, in their homes, and in school. Holidays were limited to single day observances to match the provisions of Torah. They created the role of the choir and ... even the cantor. Judaism needed to respond to the modern world, and allow Jews to live in the real world ... and still be active in their Jewish practice.

Welcome to Reform Judaism. From the perspective of its founders, the change they aspired was not new to Judaism: they were not innovators: they simply insisted that Judaism was supposed to be a religious tradition that addressed today’s real world and prepared us for tomorrow.

Perhaps this may shock some, but the word “orthodox” never applied to any walk of Jewish life until Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch argued that the Reformers were all wrong, and that there was an orthodox – correct way to keep a narrow Jewish practice. The difficulty rooted in that statement ... and why I could never be an Orthodox Jew ... is that from the very beginning, there never was “A” way of doing Judaism.

Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan was also a change agent. He taught us that change was inevitable. We had to know from where we came, but could not allow our faith to stay stagnant in the past. “The past,” he wrote, “Has a vote, but never a veto” as we grow spiritually. He was a well respected Conservative Rabbi in America, albeit with a few strange ideas, until he made a wholesale break with tradition. It was March 18, 1922, and accompanied by her family (including disapproving grandmothers), the Rabbi’s 12 year old daughter Judith, went to the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, a progressive congregation founded by her father ... the flagship congregation of the separatist Reconstructionist movement (also founded by her father). She read Torah at what we now know to be the very first Bat Mitzvah. Granted, she did not read from the scroll, but from her own Chumash ... standing far enough away from the scroll to not cause any more of a stir than was necessary to make the point.

She did, however, say the blessing over the reading, becoming perhaps the first woman in modernity to do so publicly. As she would write many years later, “No thunder sounded, and no lightning struck. The institution of bat mitzvah had been born without incident, and the rest of the day was all rejoicing.” Kaplan was an agent of change I guess one of the changes that we best recognize that came from his notion of spiritual evolution brought us Rabbi Sally Priesand.

These sages are not innovators. Our tradition has always demanded relevance and evolution. Change is part of who we are: we cannot be held back, if we are to stay meaningful and relevant in the spiritual life of this modern world. At the same time, we cannot throw out our traditions and simply declare them outdated. The first Chief Rabbi of Israel, Avram Kook taught us that we had an obligation to make the old things new, and the new things holy. There are no outdated teachings in our tradition, only outdated ways of living them. We have to bring who we have been into modernity, and at the same time, we must take the blessings and challenges that present in this new world and create in them, a sense of the sacred. This idea is not new age, it is as old as we are. Over the last few Shabbatot, the Torah readings have included conversations on tithing and on bringing first fruits to the place God established God’s presence. In the story of the Torah, that was the Tabernacle in the wilderness. In the north, it was the high places throughout the country. While the Temple stood in Jerusalem, the tradition declared that it was the place for the pilgrimages to be made, instead. Today, we are not agrarian and there is no altar at which to bring sacrificial offerings. Today we bring Tzedakah and support the congregation which does the work that the ancient Temple staff did ... administrating and coordinating religious ritual, education, and service to those in need.

Change is inevitable. Goethe wrote, “Life belongs to the living, and he who lives must be prepared for changes.” Where we choose to want to live, even where we hate change, we have no option but to look forward to change.

Yet, we have to remember that we are a people in whom the past endures. Tomorrow cannot be but for yesterday and today. Our goal has to be to make sure that even as we evolve, we still live the dedicated mission that brought this congregation and this tradition into the hearts of so many people.

We are moving our MRT family into growing more relevant relationships and making our tradition more than something that lives in a

book. As Peter Noon of the band Herman's Hermits, said, "Something tells me I'm into something good." This sense of something good ... that cannot change, but it will ... if we stagnate in "what was."

But change takes time and engagement. It cannot happen without interested people, without energy and resources, and without time. Time is a most precious commodity, and while change takes patience, time does not stop. Abraham Joshua Heschel taught us that the most sacred experience is time. "There are no two hours alike. Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious. Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time; to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year." Per Cratylus, the world is ever changing and per Heschel, there is no time to waste. And, lest we think that seconds are meaningless, note that the difference between Olympic gold and silver medals is often milliseconds. Tell the boy picking up a girl for a first date that five seconds less interrogation is immaterial. Go to S'derot in southern Israel and learn that from the time that the rocket launches in Gaza, you have roughly 18 seconds to find shelter or risk being blown up. Dwelling on this moment means that even as time moves forward, if we stand still, we are living in the past. SO we cannot wait for something to change. Torah tells us that we have to pursue blessings and pursue righteousness. Waiting for something to change, cost us those 13000 houses of worship last year.

Here is the ultimate message: We are stewards of an amazing tradition. Beyond that, we are stewards of an incredible world. Stewardship is not a word we use a lot in Judaism, but it speaks to the way in which we affirm the holiness of being ... and being with each other. Face it, there is so much happening around us that we have to be less concerned with the earth we inherit from our ancestors, than the one we currently borrow from our children. What we pass to our children has to be reworked and made relevant for their children. We need to embrace who we have been, and still mold ourselves into what our children will need in order to keep our faith relevant tomorrow. This is not just about making things new. As important as it is to make our place beautiful, a new coat of paint is not the solution for a vibrant future. As Rav Kook said, we must make the new ... new relationships, new programs, new everything ... we must make it holy. When looking into each other's eyes, each experience must be new, and we need to be open for new opportunities with each other. The same is true for every experience we have. Holiness is what we bring not what is given us. This sanctuary is not holy, we make it holy. The kitchen, classrooms, meeting rooms, storage space is not holy until we make it holy,

until we change what happens there into what we want heart and soul to happen there. (PAUSE) The Torah is not holy until we do something with it, beyond pulling it from the ark, parading it, kissing it, and putting it back. It is the source of holy conversation no differently than the tree is the source from which the leaves draw nourishment. The leaves absorb the food that the tree needs, ensuring a healthy ongoing symbiosis. We return to Torah the teachings of the relevant world, so that it can pass them on and continue the cycle. We are the extension linking both. We sustain and are sustained in our relationships with nature and tradition ... and by extension, each other.

You are here today because, whatever your theology, you have a relationship with this tradition and this temple, and have chosen to experience this special day with us. You walked in the door, and because you are here -- you own a piece of this experience ... and are partly responsible for shaping its impact on everything that we do from this point forward. How we as a community change and evolve moving forward will be determined by your input. What will be holy will be in part dependant on what was, but more so on how we will engage from this moment forward. Each of us are stewards of the potentiality of blessings that waits to be shared.

SO we have a lot of people who do a lot of things. This congregation sustains and grows because of an immense amount of love and energy. Please note that I have not yet mentioned money. ... Here is my theory on this, if we offer a relevant mission and meaningful services and programming, people will want to support what we do. Yes, we have a High Holy Day appeal, and yes, I hope you will invest in our future by giving meaningfully to its goal. We all have different circumstances... do what you can. More importantly this is not a sermon about guilt, or even money, but about engagement. This is about change: timely change. We opened our doors to the whole community this year. CHABAD did not even do that. WE greeted 30,000 people at the Red Bank Street Fair. We opened religious school this year bent on teaching our children that each one has the capacity for heroism. Our social hall is beautiful; plans are in the works for taking each piece of our home and rethinking, repurposing, and redecorating/renovating it. Our worship and studies are evolving. Sunday afternoon informal text based conversations will be advertised from coffee shops in the area. Come to our sunrise Sukkot service in the Sukkah. School and work keep people from taking too many days off for holiday celebration. So, on the first morning of the holiday, we will meet in the Sukkah at 6:30 and shake the lulav, read the Torah portion, offer thoughts

and prayers and get everyone to work and school on time. Oh yeah, we will have bagels, coffee, and hot chocolate, too. We are making the old things new.

We want to take intentional time to make the new things holy. We need you. This is not about guilt. I do not believe that guilt brings people to temple any more ... it never should have. This is about stewardship. We want this to be your home away from home, your go to place to foster relationships and your safe haven from life's storms.

It is time for us to step up. It is time for a spiritual revolution ... a conversion from passive to active, from observer to celebrant, and from watching to engagement. It is time for us to make some decisions. Rabbi Noah Weinberg taught, "People often avoid making decisions out of fear of making a mistake. Actually, the failure to make decisions is one of life's biggest mistakes."

Our tradition has molded and shaped civilization for thousands of years. Our tradition offers amazing opportunities for renewal. You are here and not out there somewhere ... because you want to have a moment to say "WOW!"

On this day, as we perform the khesbon hanefesh – take the inventory of what our souls hold as sacred, we need to take stock of who we are and who we want to be. A steward invests himself not just in walking through the motions, but in engagement and interaction. I get calls from telemarketers wanting me to invest in this fund or that commodity. I ask them how much of their own funds are invested. As they say "none," I ask how I can accept how special and uniquely wonderful this opportunity is, if they have steered clear of the investment themselves.

Our tradition teaches us that the world stands upon three things: Al Sh'losa Devarim Ha-olam omed: Al hatorah, v'al ha-avodah, v'al gemiloot khasadim – On Torah, on service, and on love and kindness. The Torah is the tradition – not just the scrolls, but everything who we are. Avodah are the obligations that we inherit that keep this Torah alive. The methodology with which we perform these tasks is not rooted in ego or power, rather with a commitment to g'miloot khasadim, lovingly care for the community and nurture the growth of our tradition. You are the only one who can pass this on to your next generation, and the greatest help available to you in making this happen ... is you. "Remember, if you ever need a helping hand, it's at the end of your arm. As you get older, remember you have another hand: The first is to help yourself, the second is to help others," Audrey Hepburn.

Born into a faith or converted, each of us chooses to be who we are ... and live the faith that we choose. Living in and supporting a Jewish

household? You are a vibrant member of our family and need to be loved, honored, and respected for being here ... and fostering support for your family who is here. This is not a religion just for your children or grandchildren, and it needs you ... you personally, so that there is still this blessing to pass on to our children and our children's children. We need each other. Find a place that moves you here. Find people with whom you want to share your lives ... even in a transient world, we need people to hold close. It is time to change ... and not change ... it is absolutely a time for to celebrate the holiness and blessings that exist in each of us. Amen and Amen.