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**Washington, DC**  
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Grandpa Goldman

I woke up Wednesday morning thinking of two things. The one I wrote the congregation about in my e-letter-- that legendary sign that hung above the shtibel of the Kotzker Rebbe: "JEWS DON'T DESPAIR." I thought of the rebbe and the sign and Jewish history.

I also thought of my Grandpa Goldman--page 295 in the prayerbook that I grew up with-- the prayerbook published in 1946 by the Rabbinical Assembly of America. Grandpa wrote the reading on page 295, WHY ISRAEL SURVIVED. I thought of Grandpa and that piece which I will read from selectively:

*We survived because we were inveterate optimists. No obstacle stopped us, no crisis dismayed us, no catastrophe crushed us. We swallowed the bitterness of life and pursued the sweet thereof.*

*We survived because of Torah. We loved life and our sages knew that life needs direction, norm, discipline...We had the strength to chain the fury of passion, and the wisdom to escape quietism and negation...*

*We survived...because of the prophetic voices that broke out in Israel from time to time. We were blessed with men that never made peace with the foibles of the people or the whims of the rulers. We were compelled to listen to denunciations that cried aloud like a trumpet...*

*We survived because of Moses who smashed the popular golden calf, because of Nathan who pointed a finger at his king, "Thou art the guilty man;" because of Elijah who thundered at his king, "Hast thou killed and also taken possession?" There was Amos who demanded, "Let justice well up as the waters and righteousness as a mighty stream."*

*We cannot all be Moses, Isaiahs, Elijahs, but we dare not forget that we are in the tradition.*

Wednesday morning I thought of this page and my grandfather.

We are numb this Shabbat. I know that I am numb. I have not read a newspaper this week. I just cannot. Wednesday the sports page. Thursday the sports page. Today the sports page--then this afternoon, the NY Times op-ed.

A friend of mine sent me a note from a rabbi who compared her post-election feeling to the feeling of Tisha b'Av our annual Jewish day of mourning for the temple's destruction.

We are mourning--and this week is shiva. We sit shiva now--but we will not stay in shiva. We will return to life. This we know.

We know because we have been here before--yes, we have.

We have been here before.

I like to say that to be a Jew is to have a long memory. We know history and we know the long term. What have we not endured? What have we not witnessed? What experience has not been ours? We are history's longest witness and we carry the memories. Yes, we have known every possible defeat --yet we rise. We rise.

We have lived through a bruising political season where the results feel to many of us like a repudiation of the values that we believe this country was founded on and long embraced. These have always been for me the noblest ideas of the human spirit: tolerance, an open mind, a spirit of generosity, a belief that we are all created in God's image. For me--there has always been something so confluent about my American beliefs and my Jewish beliefs--they reinforce each other--they strengthen each other. They mirror each other. It is why I feel so at home here--and now that feels somehow in danger.

New York Harbor's Statue of Liberty-- "Give me your tired your poor...." is simply another way of setting the Shabbat table--opening the door to the Passover Seder and proclaiming--"*Kol Deechfeen yaytay v'yaychool*--Let all who are hungry, come and eat."

American symbols-Jewish ritual reinforce each other. We share a bond.

What do we do?

We rise.

We learned this from our newest American prophet, Michelle Obama who taught us all, "when they go low--we go high."

This is an old Jewish text.

Michelle Obama is teaching our own lesson.

It was Isaiah who called out "Holy, Holy, Holy" after the death of the great king Uzziah.

You know how each morning service in the *kedusha* blessing we say "*Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh*"--and some follow the practice of rising on their toes.

There is context for that. This is from Isaiah--

In the year Uzziah died, Isaiah had the vision of God's presence in the temple--

"Holy, Holy, Holy"-- Isaiah cried.

Isaiah's great vision coincided with the death of the great King Uzziah. The reason is so deeply theological and pertinent to us. Judah had known no king like Uzziah since the time of Solomon. Uzziah was the great king who rebuilt Jerusalem and restored the city to its glory. "*Vayeeven Uzziahu migdalim b'Yerushalayim*--Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem and fortified them..." He was the great leader of Judah. Uzziah had been the king the people had hoped and prayed for and now he was gone and the Assyrians were drawing near.

In moments like that, it would be easy to see the futility of any hope. In that very moment of crisis, Isaiah affirms hope. "Holy, Holy, Holy" is God. The inspired prophet starts this prophecy with the words: In the year that King Uzziah died.

Isaiah is a voice of hope.

Remember that on Shabbat morning when we rise for the *kedusha*.

We go on--

In thinking of Tisha b'Av, we can find a way to go forward.

The Book we read on Tisha'b Av is *Lamentations-- Eicha*.

Lamentations is a terrible translation of the Hebrew title.

"*Eicha*" is "*Eich*" meaning "How?"

The rabbis ask "How" did the tragedy of the destroyed temple come about? How did this happen? How is it our city was destroyed--this time by the Romans-- and we were exiled?

And the rabbis teach us to remember on Tisha b'Av that Jerusalem was destroyed for a reason. The Romans were at the gates but the rabbis still ask why.

We too must ask why.

Rabbi Noa Kushner reminded me that the rabbis have suggestion after suggestion about what really caused the city to fall. Were we too cruel to each other? Too insular? Too interested in our own laws and protocol at the expense of justice? The rabbis ask these questions and comment on the virulent hate of Jew for Jew.

We are implicated, then and now, for those same forces. But the rabbis use that destruction, and their interpretation of it, not as the end but as a new beginning. In loss and destruction they find new meaning and insight about what a civilization must be. They know that even if the Temple was destroyed the lessons learned there must live on. The Jewish path of holiness, justice and love in the world depends on those lessons.

We hold those lessons in our hearts and we will not surrender them.

America is built on a covenant. A covenant of "We the People." A covenant of "Government of the people, by the people and for the people." The people are all of us together. As Louise reminded me yesterday on our own sad walk --in Hebrew United States is *Artzot Ha-brit*--the Lands of the Covenant. Hebrew teaches us who we are. We are the Lands of the Covenant. We must return that covenantal language to our American vocabulary. This is something that we can do. A covenant--unlike a contract-- lifts up everyone. A covenant is never a zero sum gain.

A contract looks for the best deal as in being a great deal maker.

A covenant looks for the best world.

A covenant binds together and lifts everyone.

The covenant of America has bypassed too many, overlooked too many--allowed too many to come up short. This is what we experienced in this election. From this we must learn and grow as a people in spirit and in compassion.

We Jews have many gifts. Our country is sorely in need of one. We don't forget. We are Jews with a long memory. We know what it is like to lose most everything. We know that we dare not remain stewing over the lost kingdom. We do not live in the past. History goes forward. The Promised Land is always before us. Loss becomes our starting point.

What then will we do? What will we do? Where do we go from here?-

We will mourn and console one another and then--we will light a candle. I was asked this week by a parent--what do I tell my children. I would say this:

We mourn by lighting a light. When our world is darkened--we light a candle. What could be more Jewish?

If our world became darker--we will light another candle and then another and then by that light we will return to the street. We will repeat our mantra--*od lo avda tikvateinu*--We will never lose hope.

The world needs us. America needs us.

We have memory and from memory will come wisdom. Wisdom brings strength and strength will yield hope. With hope, there will be renewal and ultimately redemption.

This Shabbat is Shabbat *Lech Lecha*--

Like Abraham before us--We will go forward carrying an ancient vision of righteousness and peace.

or in the American vernacular--the vision of

freedom and justice for all.

We will rise.

Amen