

5776 hhd sermons. Rabbi Robert L. Tobin - B'nai Shalom, West Orange NJ

Rosh Hashanah 1 -Black Lives Matter - Civil Rights - betzelem elohim. Fear versus God?

Our country has finally reached the point where there is a genuine national dialogue about race, power, and civil justice which presumes racial equality. This is a welcome development, imbued with the ideals of Torah and the United States Constitution's Bill of Rights. It has been a long time coming, and it has been a painful road. This morning, I will put our experience of civil rights this year in biblical perspective, for an understanding that reflects our core teachings and values on this topic.

Our core texts are clear: All human beings are created equally *b'tzellem Elohim* in the image of God. Any teaching, whether from a Jewish source or some other voice which denies this fundamental notion denies the foundations of the Torah. Every person, of any shade of melanin in their skin, of any cultural or religious origin, of any gender or orientation, is created equally *b'tzellem Elohim*, in the image of God.

The current cycles of protest and debate finds its spark in the Treyvon Martin/George Zimmerman case, from July 2013. After decades of frustration over racial profiling in everything from drug cases to traffic offenses, America was thrown into a debate of misunderstanding each other - Was this a race case, a gun case, or just a case? The jury found Zimmerman not guilty, and the debate continued. But the reactions to that debate set the foundation for these last two years.

What was good about that disturbing event is that it raised the question of white bias against african americans in a nationally validated conversation. The President spoke of being followed by security guards in a store, and a nation who elected him listened and took up the

conversation. This was a victory for the civil rights movement in America because the most uncomfortable fact of all was on the table: the impetus to profile.

The impetus to profile is a cultural instinct of suspicion or fear - and is in the hearts of all people. It is this defensive reaction against difference which is the human seed that flowers into prejudice and it is this seed that is finally being looked at. Are all human beings created in the image of God? Or, when I look at you, am I first afraid? Are you me, or are you Anti-me?

One response to the impetus to profile has become the **Black Lives Matter** movement, which campaigns against what it calls [police brutality in the United States](#) against African-Americans. The group received fresh impetus from the 2014 deaths of two unarmed African Americans, teenager [Michael Brown](#) in [Ferguson, Missouri](#) and 43 year old [Eric Garner](#) in [New York City](#); in both cases the grand jury did not indict the officers and no charges were brought. In the last year, several unarmed African Americans who died at the hands of law enforcement have had their deaths protested by the movement, including [Tamir Rice](#), [Eric Harris](#), [Walter Scott](#), and [Freddie Gray](#) (whose death sparked this year's [Baltimore protests](#)). The Southern Poverty Law Center, ACLU and others have spoken in support of the ethos of the movement, and joined to raise awareness of the insipid bias which lingers in our culture. Yet from our understanding, from our beliefs, we have to ask the obvious question: Is Black Lives matter saying something different from "humans are created *b'tzelem elohim*?" And I think we are.

Where Zimmerman/Martin provided a forum for conversation, the events in Ferguson MO provided an example of the real issue at stake: Is there an Institutional bias by the police and the courts against people of color? This is the real question in a country where incarceration and arrest of blacks so dramatically outweigh those of whites. This is the question of the civil rights movement which remembers dogs, water canons and night sticks in Selma and Birmingham.

What made Ferguson the great example, again in tragedy, was that the unrest sparked a vigorous debate in the [United States](#) about the relationship between law enforcement officers and [African Americans](#), the [militarization of the police](#), and the [use of force doctrine in Missouri](#) and [nationwide](#). This was not about Florida, guns, stand your ground or anything like that. This was about the relationships between a governed community which was largely black and poor and a police force which was largely white, and the economic and social relationships involved in the criminal justice system of fines and incarceration. This was about power and race in America. As the details of the original shooting event emerged from investigators, police established curfews and deployed riot squads to maintain order. Along with peaceful protests, there was looting and violent unrest in the vicinity of the original shooting. Somehow the Pharmacy and the Liquor Store always seem to get hit at times like this, as honest protestors attract dishonest criminals to the streets. The unrest continued on November 24, 2014, after a [grand jury](#) decided not to [indict](#) Wilson.^[11] Last month, it briefly continued again on the one-year anniversary of Brown's shooting. Why does it linger so?

according to [The Washington Post](#), the Ferguson Police Department "bears little demographic resemblance" to the mostly African-American community, which already harbored "suspicions of the law enforcement agency" preceding Brown's shooting, with 48 of the police force's 53 officers being white,[\[204\]](#) while the population is only one-third white and about two-thirds black.[\[198\]](#)[\[205\]](#) An annual report last year by the office of Missouri's attorney general concluded that Ferguson police were "twice as likely to arrest African Americans during traffic stops as they were whites".[\[198\]](#)

The [Los Angeles Times](#) argued that the situation that exploded in Ferguson "has been building for decades", and that protesters initially came from the town and neighboring towns that have pockets of poverty, the

poorest of St. Louis, and lists "the growing challenge of the suburbanization of poverty" as the catalyst. [\[206\]](#)

Time magazine argued that "[Blacks](#) in this country are more apt to riot because they are one of the populations here who still need to. In the case of the 1992 riots, 30 years of black people trying to talk about their struggles of racial profiling and muted, but still vastly unfair, treatment, came to a boil. Sometimes, enough is simply too much. And after that catalyst event, the landscape of southern California changed, and nationally, police forces took note." [\[207\]](#)

So, on April 12, 2015, when police in Baltimore arrested Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old [African American](#) resident of [Baltimore, Maryland.](#), apparently in good health at the time of his arrest, the pump was primed for the national conversation. Freddie Gray was taken into custody by the Baltimore Police Department for the alleged possession of a [switchblade](#), later found by subsequent investigations to be a legal folding knife. It was basically a swiss army knife. I have several, and sometimes carry them as a scout. Gray sustained injuries to his neck and spine while in transport in a police vehicle, and [died the following](#) week, April 19, 2015. The accusations of bias and bigotry from the Black Lives Matter movement include (1) unjust initial suspicion of an innocent youth, (2) exaggeration of a small accusation (the pen knife) into a criminal offense (a switchblade) for a false arrest, (3) violation of civil rights in custody (his injury in the back of the paddywagon) and (4) a wall of information between the police and the people during the investigation (the protests demand the facts).

Protests turned to riots in Baltimore's poorest neighborhoods, the pharmacy, liquor store, and several abandoned buildings burned, and a shocked city brought in the national guard. But here, things were different. Why? First, the police force did not militarize. Second, the police

force was also representative of the racial demographic that it patrolled. The police looked like the people. Third, the mayor, a woman of color, was immediately and visibly involved - not to conflict with the civil unrest - but to end the looting and demand an investigation. Fourth, the police did not view the protestors as the the enemy. The hoodlums were the enemy, and the protestors needed protection. And fifth, The protestors were being listened to. On day two, houses of worship and civic groups came to the site of the protests and made long lines between the crowds and the police, holding hand and singing songs. All skin tones were present, in a peaceful protest for a peaceful protest. This is where we are today in America. Where police, mayor, and citizens of races forge a common bond to overcome hatred and bigotry.

Black lives matter, or all lives matter? There is truth to the fact that a black man is more likely to be challenged by police, more likely to be reported as suspicious by other citizens, is more likely to be taken into custody, and is more likely to be incarcerated by the courts. And the Black lives matter movement has successfully prevented any such death in police custody this past year to go by unnoticed. And that has to be seen as progress.

The police in this country are not biased nor bigoted. Police are public servants and trained to be such. But the society remains biased, whether liberal or not, northern or southern, urban or rural. Our society remains biased in our basic instincts. And we have a strange fascination with Race, which is impossible to define scientifically. It is a cultural phenomenon, which of course was the heart of the recent NAACP crisis about a regional director in Seattle who was self identified as Black, though she had no African American ancestry. Can you convert to African American? You've come a long way when someone sees passing as your group is a road to advancement.

Of course, when there is progress there is backlash. Hate groups are on the rise, according to the ADL and the Southern Poverty Law Center, and we were all horrified by the slaughter of a peaceful bible study group at a predominantly black church in Charlestown. What is the counter violence about? In a word, it is about losing. And this is what we have to focus on to understand the Jewish take on civil rights in this country.

The truth is that there is still a fundamental difference between how traditionally oppressed groups in the country view the race conversation, and how those of use on the historically preferred side of this melanin skin pigment scale view these things. There are two things which we need to understand in this debate: the turtle effect and the zero sum game.

The Irony of the Turtle Effect - Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*, recently published a study on the effects of diversity. In the 41 sites Putnam studied in the U.S., he found that the more diverse the neighborhood, the less residents trust neighbors. This proved true in communities large and small, from big cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, and Boston to tiny Yakima, Washington, rural South Dakota, and the mountains of West Virginia. In diverse San Francisco and Los Angeles, about 30 percent of people say that they trust neighbors a lot. In ethnically homogeneous communities in the Dakotas, the figure is 70 percent to 80 percent. Combine that with the fact that 40 years ago less than 1 in 5 people in this country were non white, and now that number is double that, and you have a disturbing trajectory.

Diversity does not produce “bad race relations,” Putnam says. Rather, people in diverse communities tend “to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform more, but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to huddle unhappily in front of the television.” Putnam adds a crushing footnote: his findings “may underestimate the real effect of diversity on social withdrawal.” This is the opposite outcome of the goals

implicit in desegregation. Our understanding is championed for the example by WWII GI's who served in mixed units and came home open to diversity and civil rights. Contact leads to understanding is our motto, and school busing to end segregation is the example of the 60's and 70's. But what if it is not having that effect?

We see this here in West Orange, where people talk about the quality of the public school or the neighborhood in thinly veiled racial language. On the West Orange patch recently, I read several comments about the trashy quality of teenagers coming out of the high school in the afternoon. Really? I see peaceful teens in gap clothes, backpacks, sports uniforms, laughing and playing on their way to China Garden or the Quick Shop before their afternoon extracurriculars. What is the blogger talking about? It sure does sound like race.

Homogeneous communities feel stable, safe and protected. Diversity and differences are a challenge to our security, and we withdraw and become afraid - not of the diversity, but in general. Dr. Putnam names this the turtle effect. This is the essence of the societal change we need, and the antidote is understanding and internalizing the image of God. The turtle effect is countered by the message of the prophet and the Torah that we shall pursue justice, and recognize that the differences are in fact not differences if they are about race and culture. They are all *b'tzellem Elohim* - images of God. Religion is the answer to the Turtle effect. Religion brings you back into the world, and provides that safe place where all are welcome.

The other difference between how traditionally pale people and traditionally dark people view race in this country is the idea of The Zero Sum Game. Why is it so wrong to pay someone to take your SAT or final exams for you? Because in cheating, you create an injustice which takes a seat in a good school away from a more deserving candidate. If there was no loser, there might not be a victim and therefore it might be more acceptable. But college admissions are a zero sum game. There is a finite number of seats in each school, and you getting in means someone else was left out.

Affirmative action is an excellent example. Historically oppressed minorities are granted preferentially admission status, or employment, to both balance the society of the college campus to reflect society as a whole and to recognize that minorities have historically been provided poorer educational opportunities in high school and therefore don't have as strong an application by the numbers. But this is a zero sum game. A perfectly qualified paler person is left out, just because of the color of her skin. Most Jews are troubled by Affirmative action, in part because of the quota systems that kept Jews limited in the American Universities, but more because of the loss of opportunity for qualified candidates. It is a double edged sword. I had a roommate at Georgetown who came from a much more privileged background than I did, yet would qualify for Affirmative Action based on skin pigment.

The image of God does not recognize this way of thinking. The injustice of institutional racism must be met with justice, not further injustice.

But most civil rights in this country are not zero sum game situations. The win-loss mentality has been almost entirely eliminated from the debate. The extension of civil rights to new groups does not decrease my rights. That is why the supreme court decision of gay lesbian marriage rights was so important, and why the backlash has centered on the question of religious conscientious objectors. The clerk who refuses to issue a marriage license is viewing the civil rights of the gay couple as impinging on her religious freedom. Their gain is her loss. She sees civil rights as a zero sum game.

Truthfully, it does not harm me economically or physically if a lesbian couple is allowed into my insurance plan, my scout troop, my catering hall. No one is displaced by the extension of civil rights in this case, and the pie of civil justice is simply expanded to include a new group.

Much like the 14th amendment's inclusion of all races in equal protection under law, which did not decrease the rights of white people, or the 19th's amendment's inclusion of women in the vote, which did not decrease the rights of men, a bigger pie is a change in society, but not a diminishing of my own rights.

And so, racial rights are affirmed by the mainstream, and rapidly finding not only sensitivity in the police and courtroom, but direct access to empathetic power in mayors, governors, senators, attorney generals and even the presidency. Gay rights have achieved the great victory of validation in the Supreme Court. If some white supremacist believes in racism, that is his right - to be maintained peacefully and without bias in the public sphere. When it becomes a shooter in Kansas City or Charleston, his is prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law with no sympathy from the nation at large. The days of lynching are forever gone.

Interestingly, it is the case of homosexuality which lingers as a question in some people's minds. And this is because religion is involved, more than bias. Religion, which is the champion of diversity under the Image of God, is also the definer of morality and ethics. There is a long tradition of religious opposition to homosexuality, in our community as well as most others, in those categories. The faith based opposition to homosexuality has to do with broader systems of meaning, definitions of identity and models and perceptions of morality which are in conflict with the contemporary openness which is now the law of the land. And our diversity demands that their rights to believe that will never be diminished.

Yet if opponents of racial equality, gender equality or the equality of sexual orientation act upon the belief that it is a Zero Sum game, then a firm division needs to occur between the public and the private sphere. If you own a lunch counter, it may not be segregated. And if you

take your opposition to work with you in the courthouse, you will lose that job and rightfully so. In the zero sum game, you can only have peace through force of law. What has changed is that the force of law is now based in civil rights, even in the face of uncivil behavior.

What the Black Lives Matters movement is doing, and has already done, is to drive an undeniable focus on the most troublesome part of the American Psyche. In pursuit of civil rights, police training, and empowerment of the voice of the historically oppressed, it has adopted the agenda of the prophet Isaiah - Justice Justice you shall pursue. By asserting the civil rights of any group, the rights of all groups are asserted. No one's gain in civil rights is to my harm. It is not a zero sum game.

So know that if you have that twinge of the turtle in you - you have to train yourself to look at it twice. That person in the neighborhood is probably just a person in the neighborhood. That family, those kids, that ethnic dress, that religion, the lesbian couple in the school, everyone is not anti-you, they are the image of you, because they too are the image of God. Religion asks us - our religion commands us - to get back out of our shell and pursue justice. With all the pain and suffering, all the protests and acrimony, this past year has been a watershed year for civil rights unlike any since the passage of the civil rights act under President Johnson in 1964 - a half a century ago.

Rosh Hashanah 2 - Fact Based Judaism, the Year of the Mishnah

Judaism is not a religion of faith. It is a religion of facts. This makes us unique among all of the world's religions. We are based in facts, not fancy. Now don't get me wrong, we have legends and our myths. Our sacred tales do propose the idea that there is a God, whose presence science can neither prove nor disprove. There are records of revelations and miracles, plaques and promises from God. All these things fall into the column of belief. But today I would like to dwell on the column of facts. To be an educated and observant Jew, these facts must be learned.

Fact number one: We have existed as a people for over 3,000 years.

Fact number two: We came from, and returned to, the Land of Israel as the home of our people repeatedly.

Fact number three: Our religion is parochial.

Is religion about belief, or is religion about facts? We have been around far too long to base our existence on anything other than facts. Let's look at the facts of Judaism.

- 1) The world is a created place
- 2) Human beings have a unique character in the order of creation.
- 3) Civilization, not humanity, originated in the place of our Torah's earliest memories, and our introduction into that story is found in the early memories of our people in the book of Genesis.
- 4) Contrary to the human powers of the day, a small and subject people, Israel, rose to prominence in the land of Israel in the 10th century. Archaeology shows the reality of this people, and other peoples, in that time and place.
- 5) Human history continues to shape our biblical relationship for the next 600 years. WE have their books. We have unearthed their cities, store houses, defensive walls, water conduits, art, coins, and other artifacts. With the rise of Assyria, the North is destroyed. Not hidden from our texts, rather documented.
- 6) With the rise of Babylon, the south is destroyed, not hidden from our texts, but accepted and documented.

Truth means accepting shame and recording sin. Truth is not trying to win an election, and it is not propaganda. Truth is Truth. Facts are facts. Our people, more than any other from the year 1000 to 500 BCE records truth, both inconvenient and inspiring.

Kol Nidrei - (plus President's Speech) Time and Spirit.

Optimism/Pessimism

In May 1913 George Thomas White Patrick, a Professor of Philosophy at the State University of Iowa, published an article titled "The New Optimism" in "Popular Science Monthly" and stated that he had seen the tablet. Patrick was a prominent academic who had been president of the Western Philosophical Association. In an autobiographical text he said that he visited the city of Istanbul in 1911 when it was still referred to as Constantinople. z His itinerary included a stop at the museum: 8

*In the museum at Constantinople the writer saw an inscription upon an old stone. It was by King Naram Sin of Chaldea, 3800 years B.C., and it said,
We have fallen upon evil times
and the world has waxed very old and wicked.
Politics are very corrupt.
Children are no longer respectful to their parents.*

This old and ever-recurring complaint does not depend upon any actual deterioration of the times, for the times are constantly growing better. It comes usually from older people whose outlook may be biased by subjective conditions due to decaying powers and by the tendency to regard all changes as changes for the worse, the only really good times being the bright days of our own youth.

We ask God for what we need, but that is colored by what we sense is wrong: wrong with ourselves, wrong with others, and wrong in the world. So What is Wrong? What are you asking for? Are you asking the right questions of God? So much of our lives are either a mystery or a certainty, that we have a hard time knowing what to ask for. You may be facing illness, so you want to ask for a cure. You may be facing despair, so you want to ask for happiness. You may be facing economic stree, so you want to pray for wealth. You may be without children, and ask for fertility. You may lament injustice, and ask for justice. You may be alone, and ask for companionship. You may be tired, and ask for death. So many things we ask for in our time of need. And to prayer after prayer after prayer so many of us find that we are not given what we sincerely ask, hope, yearn for in life. We know that God hears our prayers, but Does God refuse our prayers? Does God spend our lives saying, "no?" Or is God not all powerful, not all knowing, not able to give us what we want? What good is a God who does not give us what we know we need?

Kol Nidrei. Tonight we began our prayers with the ancient formula: May the great court on high and the human court below permit prayer in a minyan of sinners such as us. May we convene for sacred heavenly purpose without the deeds to justify the chutzpah of our role tonight as God's sacred and chosen people. And may our oaths and promises, made under duress or as fools fooling ourselves about our abilities and intentions - may those oaths and promises not be held against us in the moment of ultimate judgement. Why?

Why do we dare on the one hand to stand before God in doubt and accusation about God's ability or willingness to actually help us, and on the other hand ask God NOT to do precisely what the Torah says he does: judge us according to our oaths, promises and deeds - meeting out punishments for all our shortcomings and providing blessings in response to our mitzvot and sacred actions. We ask only for the reward, and ask God to overlook the punishment.

So which God is it that you came looking for tonight? The one you want to continue to judge as irrelevant? The God you deem unwilling or incapable of truly helping you? The one who stands aloof either in apathy or in mercy, not following through on God's own promises of power, justice and presence in our lives?

The reason we pray for the release of our vows is not merely from the vows of duress forced upon us in times of oppression and subjugation in history. We pray for the release of vows when we tried to bribe God, to bargain with God, to deal with God like a fish monger in the shuk. I will do for you if only you will do for me. I swear it. I take an oath. You give me what I want and I will do what I think you want.

Of course, that is not how it works. What I want, and what I need are almost never the same thing. I want the power ball. I do not need the power ball. I need to love and be loved. I need to impact the lives of the people I meet for good. I must receive and transmit the Jewish tradition, but in my family and in my community. I have a purpose. I want a greater purpose. But I only need the purpose that lies within me.

To love and to be loved, I do not need health. In my sickness and dying I may inspire and feel greater love than ever before. In my illness my family may repair relationships, forgive old wrongs, and heal old wounds. To impact the lives of people I meet, I do not need wealth. Kindness is worth more than money, and the examples of the great saints in history are often those who live in and transcend poverty and physical lacks. To receive and transmit the Jewish tradition I do not need justice. In fact, the prophets of Israel - our greatest teachers of Judaism - lived in times of rife corruption and rampant injustice. The call of Isaiah for Justice does not happen in days of moral perfection. So if we look at all of the things that I think I want, we see

that they are largely irrelevant to all of the things that I actually need to do and to be. What we want is NOT what God wants. What God wants can and must be achieved even when we suffer, even when we feel sorrow, even when we are impoverished. It is the broken world which needs repair, it is the broken heart that requires love.

So what, in deed, do I need from God?

To achieve my purpose in life, to love and be loved, to impact the lives of the people I meet for good, to receive and transmit the Jewish tradition,... to achieve these purposes I need a modicum of time and a well of spirit. Dear God, give me a modicum of time in which to live, and a well of spirit from which to drink.

While we are able to prayer, the gift of time is yet given. Yet once given time, beware lest it be used too little for good purpose.

The secret of being miserable is to have the leisure to bother about whether you are happy or not.

-George Bernard Shaw

But this requires both an optimism and a pessimism. We must start the day assuming that we don't have the time to fix anything - that we stand in judgement today at the end of our days and pray that our deeds to this point justify the fact that we lived at all. Have I done enough, or have I squandered time and life? There is a pessimism about our chances that normally only comes to us through diagnosis, depression or both, when it seems that there is no future for us.

This pessimism can motivate us to grasp the moment, tell the truth, repair relationships, or to fall into the pit of self-justification and condemnation of others.

The politics of the day have been driven to the negative, towards the pessimistic. The relationship between the heads of state of Israel and the US has become acrimonious, untrusting - and even disrespectful. As Israel went to the last elections, fear and attack drove the narrative of election day. In America, as the debate gears up especially among the Republicans for the presidential race, the negative drives the headlines. She is unseemingly. Foreigners are criminals. Real republicans versus fake republicans. The attacks are on, and the search for genuinely positive visions and plans are largely fruitless.

Yom Kippur embraces the pessimism of limited time, and of failed efforts which we call sins, but demands also a basic optimism about each of us and all of us in the year ahead. While some will live and some will die, most will live. While some will wax and some will wane, most will have

enough. While prejudice and injustice will cloud the headlines, equal opportunity under law will continue to define the life of the average joe.

Life is 10% what you make it and 90% how you take it.

- Irving Berlin, 1888-1989,

So stand before the Judge and fear judgement.

You did what you knew how to do, and when you knew better, you did better.

- Maya Angelou

Stand before the court and seek remediation. Stand before each other and reward honesty with forgiveness. Return to the purpose of our best lives and stand ready to act with the time that you may be given. This is an end. This is a beginning. May you who have been written in the book on Rosh Hashanah merit blessing, health and happiness as we seek to be sealed for a new and a sweet life in the year ahead. May we earn the chance that we will be given, and may we become a blessing for all who know us.

L'shanah Tovah Tikateivu.

Yom Kippur Day- Your Jewish Journey (Yizkor, Engagement)

Lekh L'kha, me-artz'kha. Get thee out. Our story is a story of journeys that return home.

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This morning we will explore our Jewish Journeys. The books of the Torah, the Hebrew prophets and the sacred Hebrew writings of ancient times

To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end in life.

-Baruch Spinoza

EARLY STORIES OF PREHISTORY

Adam, Eve, Cain and Seth.

Thrown out of the Garden. Sin, and inheritance.

You shall bring forth Bread from an Earth full of Thistles.

You shall bring forth children in pain.

You shall find enmity with nature.

Exile becomes the context of Human Existence and the model of life.

Result of no plan? Evil and the flood.

Result of our own Plan? Tower of Babel.

Languages and peoples, no unity.

No purpose - idolatry as power and control.

Abraham & Sarah. Acquiring purpose. Lekh Lekha.... and you shall be a blessing.

Hagar and Ishmael. Exile as Existence.

Cast Away from family, cast apart from purpose.

Answer: Justice is, he too shall be a great nation [legacy].

Jacob journeys

Fleeing from Esau into Exile:

Survival becomes the motivation of the Journey

First to RETURN, and to Reconcile.

FAMINE motif - driving us from the Land, NOT in response to sin.

Abraham w/ Avimelekh. Must return.
Isaac, in Gerar. Must return.
Jacob, in Egypt. Must return.
Ruth and Naomi, in Moav. Must return.

Joseph's Journey

Cast out through betrayal

Doesn't matter

Purpose is found in our abilities (dreams) and God

Jacob's journey to REUNITE only ends with

Joseph's oath to RETURN (to bury dad, and for his bones)

Moses' journey is threefold, capturing the themes:

EXILE: into the wilderness - flee authority, build a home, forget the past.

RETURN: Moses back to his people - acquiring a purpose. [the legacy]

EXILE: Moses back into the wilderness - becoming lost among the people.

MYTHIC BACKGROUND SUMMARY:

Exile is the human condition

The Purpose is the Return to the LAND

While in Exile,

Work towards the purpose - miracles and fulfillment are yet possible

Forget the purpose - idolatry, slavery, continued exile.

JOURNEYS OF THE LAND - What to do when you are already there?

The Judges

Each man according to his deeds - Subjugation

Each king according to his deeds - Subjugation

Return to God

Recognition of the apostasy

Rejection of Idolatry

Positive statement of return

Kings of Israel and Judah

Lost the journey.

The Temple is already built by another.

The Land is already won by another.

Civil war, intrigue, occasional return HOSEA
The challenge of Survival.
Physical Just a Plot Device
Religious The ultimate Legacy and source of Blessings
Getting Distracted from the Task at hand is the evil: K.I.S.S.

A man needs only two tools in his workshop: WD-40 and duct tape. If it doesn't move and it should, use the WD-40. If it does move and it shouldn't, use the duct tape.

Jeremiah - the return of EXILE over subjugation

Only a dead fish swims with the current
- Indian Proverb

Ezra - The Return of RETURN

JOURNEYS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE BOOK

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai out in a coffin, to Vespasian, give me Yavneh.
Is this EXILE? Is this RETURN? Is this BROKEN?
Study Houses, Synagogues, Galilee
Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi and the Mishnah

Rav -

The Roman Empire is cracked, invaded from N, W, and E.
Hapless Emperors in rapid succession
Economic woes, political turmoil
219, Rav moves east. DID HE KNOW?

Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.

Lao Tzu

EXILE WITH TORAH become the model for Jewish survival.

What is disposable and what lasts forever? Glass Versus a Potsherd shabbat 16a?

Ibn Ezra, out of Spain, out of France -

Abarvanel, out of Spain, teach the children

THE RETURN OF THE LAND AS A POSSIBILITY

Zionism of the First Aliyah

Zionism after the War

YOU ARRIVE ON THE SCENE.

Your Family's journey.

Your Great Grandparents.

When did they leave?

<1890? [the old wandering]

1880's + ? [Survival]

WWI [Survival, economics]

WWII [Survival, economics, here, not there]

Your Journey -

Away, like.... Jacob, Moses

Out of control, like.... Joseph, Jeremiah

Changing the scene, like... Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai

Facing disaster, like... Famine, Shoah

Recapture the old, like... Ibn Ezra, Abarvanel

Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Building a future, like... Ezra, Rav, or the Zionists of today.

Their Journey in your journey. This is the year that we will share our journey because we're on the same boat here. The good ship B'nai Shalom, and you have booked passage. Where are we all coming from? We have time together before we arrive at our destination. Where are we going to? Only in knowing the story of our journey can we capture its ultimate purpose, our own purpose.

It takes courage to grow up and turn out to be who you really are.

-e.e. cummings

Today in sacred memory we recall, those who were thrown fled from Europe, those who visioned a better life in America, those who held on to survive and thrive so that Judaism could climb out of the coffin and live.

Your Journey is either Exile or Return. Are you exiled from their lives, their dreams, their hopes, or are you journeying to ever return? Today we return to them, and remember them. Today we rededicate ourselves to them - all of them, one by one as we rise for our Yizkor Service.

Minchah Study Session - Mishnah - Sukkot