Rosh Hashanah 5780 – September 30, 2019
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I don't know about you, but this is about the time of the morning when I start to realize that breakfast was a few hours ago, lunch is a few hours off, and I'd kill for an espresso to stop from yawning.

It reminds me of an old story about a rabbi who was invited to spend the day on the yacht of one of his wealthier congregants.

The rabbi arrives dressed in perfectly pressed chinos, a blue blazer with gold buttons, and an ascot tied round his neck. They set sail and the rabbi relaxes on the deck and lights a cigar.

Another guest, assuming the rabbi is the owner of the boat, approaches him and says, "This is an incredible vessel you have here. How many does it sleep?"

The rabbi looks calmly at the man and says, "Actually I'm a rabbi and this isn't my boat. But I have a Temple that sleeps two-thousand!"

We laugh because we've all had moments when our High Holy Day thoughts turn to how heavy our eyelids feel. But, while it's bad enough to sleep through the sermon…it's a lot worse to sleep through life.

Maimonides, perhaps the most famous Jewish commentator to have ever lived, taught that these ancient, haunting, and piercing sounds of the *shofar* call to each of us and say, "Awake you sleepers from your sleep! Arouse you slumbers from your slumber…." The *shofar* is an alarm—begging us to wake up.

But what does that really mean? After all, most of us are awake, right?

Well, not so much. If you don't believe me, consider the words of Albert Einstein. "Whoever does not know [mystery] and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed."

I'm afraid that, in our lives of comfort and convenience, too many of us do not know mystery. Too many of us no longer wonder, no longer marvel.

Many of you know that Ashley and I have a three-year little girl. Evelyn has taught me many things already but perhaps the most profound of all, is the way that, from the moment she gets up in the morning, she is truly awake. Like so many children she is constantly amazed. She's filled with a deep and abiding sense of wonder and awe. Sadly, most of us stop seeing the world that way the older we get.

Judaism is about igniting an ongoing sense of awe and wonder within us.

As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder…Our goal should be to live in radical amazement…Get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed."

Consider the first thing a traditional Jew utters when he wakes up in the morning. "*Modeh ani l'fanecha, melech chai v'kayam*—thank you God for the wonder of another breath—the wonder of another blessed day.

How do we want to live in this new year? Will we continue to sleepwalk through life, blind or numb, or deaf, to so much of the wondrous beauty and goodness that fills our lives? Or will we wake up, rekindle our sense of wonder, allow ourselves to be amazed, and wake up to our own blessed lives?

The late poet Mary Oliver put it this way: "When it's over, I want to say: all my life / I was a bride married to amazement. / I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms."

Now I know what you may be thinking, "The world is falling apart and the rabbi is telling us that we're blessed?!" Yes. I am. And, yes. We are.

I'm not naïve. Rabbis know the pain and brokenness in our lives and our world all too well; but we also know that there are so many blessings—so much good. It doesn't usually make the front page of the papers or lead the cable news broadcasts, but it's there, it's there if we but wake up to it.

So as we hear these final blasts of the *shofar*, let's listen to this ancient Jewish alarm. Let's wake up and see, really see the world with wonder. Let's wake up and be amazed. Let's wake up and see the good, because that will truly make it a *Shana Tova*—a good—and amazing new year.