

**YOM KIPPUR YIZKOR**  
**SEPTEMBER 28, 2009**  
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A woman woke up one morning and told her husband, “I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for Valentine’s Day. What do you think it means?” Her husband replied, “You’ll know tonight!” That evening the man came home with a small package and gave it to his wife. Excited and delighted, she opened it and found inside a book entitled, “The Meaning of Dreams.”

We all have dreams! We all spend a good part of our lives dreaming. On average, we dream for an hour and a half to two hours each night, with four or five distinct dreams. If we live 75 years or so, that means we will spend about 6 years virtually dreaming, for a lifetime total of some 100 to 200,000 dreams. But what do they mean?

Here Freud and the Talmud part ways ... Freud said that when we sleep the id – the animal within us takes over. Judaism sees it differently ... in Judaism, when we dream, what comes to the fore is not the id, but the Yid – the real you ... the you that represents your higher state of being, not your lower. Dreams can be very productive. Jacob was a dreamer. Joseph was a dreamer. The central prayer of these High Holydays, the Unetane Tokef, came to its author in a dream.

But we don’t just dream at night when we’re sleeping. Most all of us spend our lives dreaming. What we dream of very much defines us and our aspirations and goals and this year dreams captured our imagination, perhaps none bigger than that of Susan Boyle. Susan Boyle took the world by storm! One day she was what the Los Angeles Times described as “just another 47 year old Scottish virgin,” who says she’s never been kissed. Then she appeared on a TV show “Britain’s Got Talent,” and her world has never been the same. Through YouTube and Twitter, her performance spread to the four corners of the earth. She has a magnificent voice, no question, but a lot of people have magnificent voices. What captured the hearts of hundreds of millions of people was that this voice was coming from what has been described as a “frumpy looking, frizzy-haired, several double-chinned, gawky, woman ... a woman with no makeup, no voice lessons, no wardrobe.” But that didn’t stop her from dreaming of success, fame and fortune! Indeed, the song she sang that captured our hearts was, “I Dreamed a Dream.”

Susan Boyle wasn’t the only one! One of the best selling albums of the year came from the rock icon, Bruce Springsteen. The album is titled, “I’m Working On A Dream.” The death of Sen. Edward Kennedy reminded us of the words of his that entered our hearts, “The work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives and the dream shall never die.” And then there is Barack Obama. Martin Luther King had a dream ... whoever would have imagined that in our time, Barack Obama would make that dream come closer to fruition! And he did it by having a dream. The title of his book says it all: “The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on reclaiming the American Dream.”

But this was the year the American Dream came tumbling down. America is a great country, it alone has a dream. One never speaks of the “French dream” or the “Canadian dream” ... but we have infused within us a belief and commitment to the American Dream. The American Dream, in most peoples minds, meant making it big, or striking it rich, or “you, too, can have it all!” In that insane and provocative movie, “Scarface,” he is described with the words: “He lived the American Dream ... with a vengeance.” We all did! Until recently who amongst us wasn’t better off than when we started out? Who amongst us has not come a long way from the days we dreamt of having a one bedroom apartment, with a television and a used car to now *needing* a home with a three-car garage, enough bathrooms to meet the needs of all the children in the neighborhood and a little place in Florida ... as long as its not too little? We lived the American Dream with a vengeance. Now what?

“Who shall go wandering ... who shall be harassed ... who shall be afflicted ... who shall become poor ... who shall be humbled?” All these are questions that in this age of economic uncertainly and emotional turbulence find all of us asking ourselves. Perhaps part of the answer can be found in our coming to the realization that many of our dreams were unrealistic. It’s one thing to dream; it’s quite another to dream impossible dreams. I think of this every time I look at a questionnaire from one of our Bar Mitzvah boys, and when asked their ambition in life, I get an answer like: professional basketball player. This coming from a 4 ft. 7 in. roly-poly ball of DNA! And oftentimes I say to that kid: “Jewish children don’t dream of *playing* on a professional baseball or basketball team ... Jewish kids are supposed to dream of *owning* a professional baseball or basketball team!”

Yes, maybe we have been dreaming of the wrong things. Just ask Susan Boyle ... just ask Michael Jackson. Susan Boyle dreamed of fame, success, and adulation. And what happened when she got it? It didn’t feel anything like she had imagined it would! The dream was great for a reality show, but the reality was that it turned into a nightmare. Maybe Susan Boyle was singing the wrong song! Instead of singing “I Dreamed a Dream” from *Le Mis*, she would have been better off singing the song, “Don’t Cry For Me, Argentina” from *Evita*. Do you remember what *Evita* sings? “And as for fortune and as for fame, I never invited them in ... though it seemed to the world they were all I desired ... they are illusions ... they are not the solution they promised to be ...”

Michael Jackson learned how true those words are. The way our country – the way the world – reacted to Michael Jackson’s death was truly bizarre, to say the least. You tell me ... what do you call a man who was estranged from his family, who married and divorced Elvis Presley’s daughter (that was some *shidduch!*), who had – or did not have – children with another woman, who dangled his son, nicknamed “Blanket” over a balcony, who slept with children and was accused of being a pedophile, who took Xanax, Zoloft and Paxil and Vicadin and Demerol? What do you call such a person? Well, we ended up calling him an icon ... a legend. How come? Well, if you think about it, there is some of Michael Jackson in all of us. Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, who knew Michael Jackson, pointed out that Michael’s dream to be famous and to be loved was the same dream that so many of us have. Michael’s constant plastic surgeries are emulated in its own way by millions of Americans who spend billions on Botox and surgery and Strivectin and personal trainers and hair stylists ... all in an attempt to cover up the laws of nature, and to confront the great threat of spider veins! Jackson’s abuse of drugs finds it

corollary in our country; a country with the highest standard of living and yet we consume three-quarters of the earth's anti-depressants. Jackson's materialism and his decadence, his spending millions of dollars on useless trinkets is not much different than the rest of us who max out our credit cards buying things we can certainly live without. And we know that we can live without them! After all, everyone who ever lived before us lived without them. And we pay a price for all this. I read a wonderful story:

A man is struggling through a bus station, carrying two huge suitcases, when someone walks up to him, and says: "Excuse me, sir, do you know the time? The man sighs, puts down the two cumbersome suitcases, digs into his pocket, and pulls out a watch. He speaks to the watch and says: "Time, please". A voice comes out of the watch and says "The time is five thirty two and a quarter, sir."

"Wow! That's some watch! says the stranger. The man says: "Oh, that's nothing. Let me show you what else this watch can do."

He speaks to the watch and says: "Give me the time in Japan, please". And in a fraction of a second, the watch gives him the time in Japan and the man then asks for the time in Berlin, in Italy, in the Belgium Congo, and again, in a fraction of a second, the watch gives him the time in those places.

"Now look at these wedding photos," the man said, and within a millisecond, photographs of his wedding appeared in front of them.

"Now play Bach," he said, and music filled the space as the wedding album scrolled down.

"This watch is a super-powerful, voice-activated, state of the art computer, which is in contact with all of the world's satellites. And it is also a two-way radio that reaches halfway around the globe."

"I want to buy it!" said the stranger.

"Oh no, it is not for sale yet. I am still working out the bugs," said the man.

"I've got to have that watch!" said the stranger.

"I'll give you fifty thousand dollars for it!"

"Oh no, I have already spent more than...." Said the man.

The stranger pulled out a big fat wallet. "Here is two hundred thousand dollars in cash. Count it if you want to." The stranger thrust the money at the man. "Here, take it. I have to catch my bus!" he said.

"Alright," said the man, and he took the timepiece and handed it to the stranger.

The stranger smiled and put the watch in his pocket, and started to walk away.

“Hey! Wait a minute!” said the man.

The stranger turned back warily. The man pointed to the two heavy suitcases that he had been struggling to carry through the bus station, and said:

“Don’t forget the batteries.”

Why do I tell you this story? If the recession has taught us anything it should be that living the American Dream with a vengeance comes with a price. We have bought so much and spent so much and splurged so much and worked so much ... thinking that it would enrich our lives, but now we have a chance to reflect and realize that we paid a very high price because it came with heavy batteries that we have to shlep with us wherever we go. I love possessions as much as anyone else, but if we have to give all our time and all our strength to accumulating them, and then we have less time and less strength for our children, our mates or for ourselves ... we have to ask ourselves: couldn’t we live with a little less ... make 5% less to have 5% more time to enjoy life? Think about that man on the bus with his wonderful watch, but who has to carry those heavy bags of batteries with him whatever he does or else the watch doesn’t work. Think about whether we are all not a little bit like that man. And for what?

“Yoo Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg” is a beautiful documentary about Molly Goldberg ... she was the star of a radio show and then a television show – in the early ‘50’s. She was one of the first distinctly Jewish personalities on the TV screen. And in the documentary there is a cut from one of the shows where her husband, Jake, says to her, “Molly, I dreamed that someday we will eat off of gold dishes.” And she turns to him and says, “Why? Do you think the food will taste any better?” Yes, too many of us dream of fame and fortune and forget the price we pay for it.

Warren Buffet, the Oracle of Omaha, knows a thing or two about money and success. And yet, in a recent biography he is quoted as having told a group of business school students, “Basically, when you get to my age you’ll really measure your success in life by how many of the people you *want* to have love you, actually *do* love you. I know people who have a lot of money and they get testimonial dinners and they get hospital wings named after them ... but the truth is that nobody in the world loves them.”

So in these moments before Yizkor let’s look at the ones we love and the ones who love us. Let’s look at the dreams we have for them, and the dreams they have for us. And let’s see how realistic they are, indeed, how successful they are. Are they impossible dreams or unrealistic dreams or dreams worth holding on to?

Most all of us, from early on in life, dream of finding our “*bashert*,” our one person on earth “soulmate” to whom we will be happily married. To which one can only say: Dream on! Happily married? That has become an endangered species in America. According to a recent survey, 50% of marriages end in divorce, 25% remain married but are not happy and only 25% are happy. The situation is so bad that in Europe homosexuals are not advocating for gay

marriage ... they are afraid that marriage will ruin their relationship! This summer two major magazines featured stories regarding the state of marriage in America. One was in Time Magazine which features these words: "There is no single force causing as much measurable hardship and human misery in this country as the collapse of marriage." The other, in Atlantic Magazine, ended with the author writing these words: "In any case, my final piece of advice is straightforward: avoid marriage – or you, too, may suffer the emotional pain, the humiliation, and the logistical difficulties of breaking up a long term union in midlife for something as demonstrably fleeting as love." Do you get it? Don't get married, because it's only going to end in divorce. In fact, one good thing that has come about because of the recession is that the divorce rate has dropped a little ... not because people are happily married, but because they can't afford a divorce! They can't afford the legal expenses and they can't afford the cost of two homes. There are couples who are separated but who are still living under the same roof because they have no choice. It reminds me of the story of a man who complained to his wife, "Honey, 44 years ago we had a cheap apartment, a cheap car, slept on a soft bed and watched a 10-inch black and white TV. But I got to sleep every night with a hot 25 year old gal. Now I have a \$500,000 home, nice big bed, a plasma screen TV ... but I'm sleeping with a 65 year old woman. It seems to me that you're not holding up your side of things!" His wife, a very reasonable woman, replied, "So go out and find a hot 25 year old gal, and I'll make sure that you once again will be living in a cheap apartment, driving a cheap car, sleeping on a soft bed and watching a 10-inch black and white TV!" The fact of the matter is, marrying because of money or staying married because of money, does not make for a happy marriage. Just ask Ruth Madoff! In a statement she released following her husband's sentencing she said, "I feel betrayed and confused. The man who committed this horrible fraud is not the man who I have known for all these years." She's not the only one who feels that way! Many of us, in some sense, do. As the great sage and saint, Mae West, put it: "The most difficult years of marriage are those following the wedding." Yes, those are the years when the dream turns into reality ... when we realize what we've really gotten ourselves into!

In a sermon I delivered this year I asked the congregation to vote. The question was: Did Ruth Madoff know what her husband was up to? Something like 99% of the congregation voted that she knew. Tough crowd! It's nice to know the American concept of innocent until proven guilty is still alive and well! I asked the question because of an article in the New York Times Magazine by Randy Cohen whose column is called "The Ethicist," giving his view on ethical questions. In his blog he claimed that Ruth Madoff had an ethical obligation to know how her husband was making his money and an obligation therefore, to turn him in. In his words, "Here's a guideline: around the time you acquire your third house (the one in Palm Beach) you must inquire: how are we paying for this? When selecting your second yacht (Little Bull, seized by the courts) you must pose the question: where is the money coming from? Having benefited from a husband's activities – for decades, not days – a spouse may not remain willfully ignorant ... marriage is a partnership. If you reap its rewards, you bear some responsibility for the way they accrue." Those are pretty strong words! But I'm not sure that they are fair. On reading them, I immediately thought of a famous scene in The Godfather: (a scene that Randy Cohen in a later blog made reference to) Michael Corleone's wife, Kay, suspects that he killed his brother-in-law. She demands to know the truth and he says to her, "This is the only time I'm going to let you ask about my business." And he tells her, "I didn't kill him." Michael took it like a man! He lied! What was she to do?

In a marriage a wife is supposed to know her husband's business, and these days vise-versa as well! Our dream of marriage was that we would have a partner in life with whom we could share our deepest feelings and secrets. Did Ruth and Bernard Madoff have that kind of marriage? Who knows? And who cares? But we most certainly should care. We gain from it ... our children gain from it.

Staying married for the sake of your children is admittedly not the best reason in the world. But it is also not the worst. The fact is, we did make a commitment to our children when we had them, we committed to allowing them to dream of living in a happy home ... not happy *homes*. Sure, there are times when divorce is absolutely necessary ... absolutely necessary for all concerned. And sure, children of divorce can grow to be emotionally healthy – especially when the parents are wise enough to shield them from their own War of the Roses. But under the best of circumstances, I see the results of divorce: children feeling like yo-yos going from home to home; children feeling like pawns; children struggling with how to deal when another man or another woman comes into their life; children feeling more comfortable confiding in friends than in their own parents; children feeling like they're the monkey in the middle, not wanting to hurt their mother by showing they are closer to their father ... or vise versa. So if you are not in an abusive relationship, you owe it to yourself, you owe it to each other, you owe it to your children, to keep working and working and working and working to try and make it work. No, it may not quite be the marriage you dreamt of but remember the words of the Talmud: "While a part of a dream may be fulfilled, the whole of it is never fulfilled."

Judith Viorst writes: "In a grown-up marriage we recognize that we don't always have to be in love with one another ... but a grown-up marriage enables us – when we fall out of love with each other – to stick around until we fall back in." And I think that explains a remarkable phenomenon. In recent years there have been many public revelations of marital infidelity and heartbreak. We had the Clintons, and the Spitzers and the Edwards, and then the Ensigns, and the Stanfords and the Pitinos. Each revelation was incredibly embarrassing. But they each have one thing in common: all of them are still married. And everyone has an explanation for that ... usually an explanation that makes all of them look bad. "They stay together for political reasons or because of the money, or whatever." But, I think something else is at play here. All these years these couples were living a lie ... there was a secret that had to impact on moods and responses and availability and sensitivities and everything that goes into making a marriage work. You pay for that! Sometimes a spouse's "I don't love you anymore," knowingly or unknowingly, really means, "I don't love ME anymore ... I'm having trouble dealing with my life as I'm living it." Perhaps now that the secret is out, these couples have gone back to whom they originally were. And if *they* can, then so can we. No, it may not be the love we had in our dreams ... but it also need not be a nightmare. And perhaps the one thing that can help make things better is to be honest with each other. No, not everything *has* to be told to a spouse, but, perhaps a good lesson in life is: if you *can't* tell it to your spouse, maybe you shouldn't be doing it! Did Ruth and Bernie Madoff have that kind of marriage? Who knows and who cares? But we most certainly should care about our own marriages. There is not much that Ruth and Bernie Madoff can do about their marriage anymore. This year on Thanksgiving weekend, when they celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, I have a feeling it's going to be a very small affair ... just a few cell-mates! But when you celebrate your wedding anniversary let it be a time not just

to celebrate for what you have, but a time to commit yourselves to making it better ... to being real partners. For only as partners are we able to confront what could very well be the greatest threat to our marriage ... the greatest threat to our lives ... our children!

We all dream of having children, we dream of having healthy, happy children. But we dream of more than that. We have a picture – consciously or unconsciously – what we hope our children will look like and be like. And we do everything humanly possible to make that dream come true. And oftentimes that brings out the best in our children; the schools we send them to, the home environment we raise them in ... these can bring out the best in both us as parents, and in our children. But, like everything else, it can be overdone. Oftentimes the dream that we have for our children is for them to be like us! Or for them to be what we couldn't be! How else to explain that parents will spend \$44 at Nordstrom to dress their toddler in a tank top that declares her to be a “juicy couture princess?” Do you really think that's what your toddler wants to be? And what about stores like Saks that had a Club Libby Lu – a spa for five to thirteen year old girls offering princess makeovers with tube tops and mini-skirts. For what? So that someday they could appear on “Real Housewives?” Is that what we dream for our kids? Is that what *they* dream? Parents have always been involved in the lives of their children, but today between cell phones and GPS and text messaging, we've developed what's called “helicopter parents;” parents constantly hovering over their children with *their* dreams – not those of the child's. How else to explain the image consultants we now have for teenagers? I quote from the Washington Post: “Surely it was inevitable ... moms already bring their teenage daughters for high-end haircuts and mani-pedis. And now image consultants – who act as personal shoppers, closet cullers and makeup advisors – say their business is thriving among clients of high school age and younger.” But whose image are the parents paying these consultants to lay on their children? We as parents tend to forget that our children have dreams of their own! And oftentimes their dream is not to be like us! And oftentimes such dreams are necessary if our children are to be content with themselves. One of the most famous and important dreams of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a dream that the noted psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, tells of in his book. Jung was Freud's greatest disciple; and Freud had great dreams for him. But as time went by, Jung started to have doubts and questions about Freud. And at this point in his life Jung had a dream that really shook him up. He dreamt that he shot and killed Siegfried, who was the greatest hero of German mythology and whose father's name was Sigmund. After that dream, nothing was ever the same for Jung. He understood the dream to mean that his role in life was not to be Sigmund Freud's surrogate son, unquestionably accepting all his teachings. That son had to be slain and Siegfried, who represented the ideal hero, had to be slain so that Carl Jung could be content with being himself.

That's what happens in life. Oftentimes our children have to act out, to assert themselves, to show that they want to *be* themselves! And oftentimes they act out in the most devastating manner: alcoholism, drug abuse, self-starvation, depression, suicide attempts ... and it happens in the best of families; families where they were raised in two parent homes with soccer practices and piano lessons. It can happen to any of us. Critics agree that one of the great novels of our time was Philip Roth's “American Pastoral.” The central part of the story is a Jewish man named Swede Levov, an outstanding man in every respect – brilliant athlete, successful businessman, devoted husband and father – whose only goal is to live a tranquil, pastoral life.

But then, Swede's rebellious 16 year old daughter, Merry, gets caught up in the anti-Vietnam War movement and plants a bomb in the local Post Office, killing one person. It's like the words Susan Boyle sang: "I dreamed a dream in time gone by, when hope was high and life worth living." But then the song goes on, "I had a dream my life would be so different from this hell I'm living." Swede's idyllic life is shattered forever and for the rest of his life, as the novel zigzags its way back and forth in time, Swede tries without success to understand what went wrong. Many of us do that ... many of us go through life wondering what went wrong; what did *we* do wrong. And you know what? Asking those questions gets you nowhere, because your dream is not your child's dream.

It's not easy reconciling ourselves to that. There is the famous Chasidic story of the father who came running to the Rebbe telling of the sinfulness and heartbreaking manner of his child, and he asks the Rebbe what to do. And the Rebbe tells him, "Love him even more." Easy for him to say! Not so easy when you're the parent! But you have to do it! It's not a matter of approving or accepting ... it's a matter of loving!

The Midrash says that on this Day of Judgment, when all of us stand before the Lord to answer for all the things we have done wrong on earth, our defender will be, not Abraham, and not Jacob and not Moses ...but Isaac. Why? Why Isaac? The Midrash says: Because Isaac will be able to say: "God Almighty, I had two children, Jacob and Esau. And neither one turned out to be the kind of child that I wanted them to be. One turned out to be a hunter, instead of a scholar. And the other one turned out to be a deceiver. He deceived me, his brother, and his father-in-law. And yet, you know what? They were my children, and therefore I was able to love them both, despite their faults. And if I could do that, if I could love my children despite their faults, God Almighty, can't you? If I could, can't You forgive your children, even if they are less-than-perfect?"

Rabbi Harold Kushner, a keen student of human nature, points out that this is one of his favorite Midrashim because it teaches such an important spiritual lesson, which is: That we give our children life. And we feed them and nurture them, and we do everything we can to raise them well. But where is it written that, in exchange for what we have done for them, they have to spend their lives making our dreams for them come true? Why can't they have their own dreams? Where is it written that they have to fulfill our dreams or live up to our expectations?

We need to accept the hard truth that they will be what they need to be, and not what we need them to be. We need to accept the painful truth that if they choose to live their way and not our way, it may break our hearts but we should, nevertheless, treat them with love and not with anger. If we want God to forgive us for doing things our way and not His way, how can we not forgive our children, who do things their way, and not our way?

And indeed, it's a good investment in our future for us to forgive our children for not living up to our dreams for them because some day, given the state of the American Dream, we're going to need them and they're going to need us!

One dream most all of us have for many years of our lives is the dream of retirement. We all dream of that time in life when all our worries are gone, when we can sit back and kick up our

feet, when the most difficult decision we have to make is where we are going to eat and where we are going to live. As someone once wrote, “It’s important to choose a development with an impressive name. Italian names are very popular in Florida. They convey ... world traveler, uppity sophistication and wealth. Where would you rather live ... Murray’s condos or The Lakes of Venice? There is no difference; they are both owned by Murray! The Italian names appeal to those name-dropping phony snowbirds who are out to impress their friends up north. If you need any further assistance, you can look me up in Florida. I live in The Leaning Condos of Pisa in Boynton Beach.”

I know a lot of our people who are living in condos like that. But I know lots and lots more of our people who can’t live in condos like that. This year I turn 65. There was a time, not so long ago, when 65 was considered the age of retirement – mandatory retirement! No more! The collapse of the American Dream has had a devastating affect on the dreams for retirement. Many can no longer retire and many more, even if they can retire, no longer find it retiring. With the recession tanking our income, our retirement finds us with new guests ... either our children or our parents have moved in. How terrible it is if the issues that separated us when we or they moved out are still festering when they come back. How important it is to try as soon as we can, whenever we can, however we can, to clean the slate.

Under the best of circumstances, when we think about it, for most all of us our dreams for retirement were unrealistic ones, if not impossible ones. The thought that we could just put up our feet, sit back and relax was a dream, when in fact the reality is that we are reaching an age where it’s hard to put our feet up with arthritis ... it’s hard to sit back with hips needing replacement and there is nothing relaxing about filling our days with making doctor appointments. Our dreams of the “golden years” don’t turn out to be so golden. But you know what? There are good things that we never dreamt of that come our way in our retiring years; things that are worth their weight in gold. I’ve been blessed with five of those good things ... my grandchildren.

Most everyone who has become a grandparent has expressed to me the same feeling that I experienced ... none of us ever imagined, none of us ever dreamt what sheer joy and delight would come into or lives in having grandchildren. They are so much better than having children! Yes, it’s true ... with grandchildren we get all the joy and none of the aggravation. But we get a lot more. We get the opportunity to correct the mistakes we made with our children. We’re at a time in life when we realize how right Warren Buffet is that it’s not money but love that counts. And not only can our grandchildren give us love in abundance – unconditional love - but we can give it to them as well.

And you know what else? No one ever told me how much I could learn from my grandchildren. I now see the world through new eyes. I go to movies I never would have seen. I read books to them that I was too busy to read to my children; books that have stories like this one:

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,  
And all her grandchildren played there, too.  
She laughed at their jokes (when they were funny)

And kept a green jar of bubblegum money.  
She rode with them on the carousel  
And played Monopoly very well.  
She taught them to paint and how to bake bread  
She read them riddles and tucked them in bed.  
She taught them to sing and how to climb trees.  
She patched their jeans and bandaged their knees  
She remembered the way she'd felt as a child,  
The dreams she'd had of lands that were wild.  
Of mountains to climb, of villains to fight,  
Of plays and poems she'd wanted to write.  
She remembered all she'd wanted to do  
Before she grew up and lived in the shoe.  
There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,  
And lived in the dreams she'd had once too.  
She told those she loved, "Children be bold,  
Then you'll grow up but never be old!"

Yes, we all live in the dreams that we had once too. But most all of us go through life never seeing all those dreams come true. Theodor Herzl had a dream. He said "*Im tirzo ein zo agaddah* ... If you will it, it is no dream." But he didn't live to see his dream come true. Martin Luther King had a dream. But he didn't live to see his dream come true. Moses had but one dream: to enter the Promised Land. But it never happened. That's what life is all about, dreams and nightmares ... fantasy and reality ... dreams fulfilled and unfulfilled dreams. And many of those unfulfilled dreams come to the fore in these moments of Yizkor.

Rabbi Kushner tells when he was a pulpit rabbi just starting out, a woman came to see him after the Late Friday Night services. She told him that she had just gotten a call a few hours earlier telling her that her father had died. And this was her question: "I have had nothing to do with my father for many years now. He mistreated my mother and me when I was young. He left the family when I was young, and he never sent us the money for alimony and childcare that he was supposed to. He married another woman, even though my mother had worked for years in order to send him to Law School, and he had very little to do with us from the time he left. What should I do? I can't think of a single reason why I should go to his funeral, or why I should say Kaddish for him. Can you?"

What would you have said if that woman had asked you that question. This is what the rabbi told her: "I can't tell you what to do. You have to make the decision for yourself. But let me try to give you one or two possible reasons why maybe you ought to go to the funeral, and why maybe you ought to say Kaddish. The first one is: you won't be mourning the man who died. You will be saying Kaddish for the father you always wanted and never had. You will be mourning for the relationship you yearned for and never had, and which it is now too late to ever have. And if your mother chooses to say Kaddish, she will be mourning for the marriage she gave her heart to, and never got to enjoy. She will be saying Kaddish for the happy life that she was entitled to but never got. And as for whether you should go to the funeral or not, if you go and then later feel that it was a mistake to go, nu. You will feel bad for two or three days, and

then you'll get over it. But if you don't go, and then later decide that you should have gone, you will feel bad for the rest of your life. You do the math."

I know that some of you are estranged from your parents. It's not for me to judge who is right or wrong. All I can tell you is that for your sake, and for theirs if they are still alive, I hope you reach out to them. So reach out. And if they don't appreciate it ... IT IS THEIR PROBLEM, not yours! At least you will know that you did the right thing. And if they are not alive, now in these moments before Yizkor, you can reach out and speak to them once again.

I had a beautiful experience this year. I officiated at the funeral of an elderly woman and her son got up to eulogize her. His eulogy consisted of reading a letter, and here are excerpts of what he had to say:

About 12 years ago I wrote my mother a letter. She made me promise that I would save it and read it as her eulogy. Mom, I keep my promises.

Mother, First and foremost, I LOVE YOU! I know that you know it, but I also know that I haven't said it enough. Although some things may go without saying, others must be said, so I'll say it again: I LOVE YOU.

Throughout the years you have always been there when I needed you. How you did it, I'll never know. "Thank you" seems so inadequate but what else can I say?

Now before you get too big of a head, you're not perfect. God does not create perfect people. I still disagree with some of your advice and opinions. That is a child's prerogative. But, as the song says, "... with all your faults, I love you still!" I wouldn't trade those faults for anything.

I probably shouldn't be talking about this but I will. Eventually God will call you to come to him for your just and eternal reward. When that day comes, there will be such a void created in my life that I couldn't possibly begin to compare to anything that has happened to me. What makes it worse is that, on that most sorrowful day of my life, I won't have your shoulder. I do know, however, that you will be looking down on us from heaven and that all those prayers you uttered on behalf of me and my family will, from that day through eternity, be delivered by you directly to the Almighty.

My friends, if you are fortunate enough to have a living parent, why don't you write them such a letter? Believe me when I tell you: every parent's dream is to get such a letter ... to be told that they are loved and appreciated. And if your parents are gone, now is the time ... you can speak these words to them. Remember the words: "You're not perfect. God does not create perfect people. Yes, I still disagree with some of your advice and opinions, that is a child's prerogative. But as the song says: with all your faults, I love you still. I wouldn't trade those faults for anything."

Write those words, say those words, live those words ... and hopefully someday your dream will come true and those words will be said of you.

And if you are fortunate enough to be living in a home where you are not living alone, tonight – and every night – say to your loved ones the words my mother said to all of us before we went to sleep. Remember?

Good Night  
Sleep well  
I love you  
And add: pleasant dreams!

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