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It would seem, on the surface, that modern man should be the happiest of his kind in history. He has, per capita, more money than his ancestors ever had. He has a degree of freedom unknown to ages gone by, and his opportunities are almost unequalled. He has conquered the elements, and electricity has become his handmaid. He abounds in luxuries of all kinds. Medicine and science are here to protect him, and there is no end to his entertainment. Yet despite all of this, one disturbing aspect of modern man becomes painfully evident. He is lonely. Modern man is terribly alone. Here we are in shul to become the godparents, so to speak, of the New Year about to be born. In hushed reverence we shall soon hear the sound of the shofar. We are among fellow-Jews, among friends, and yet so many of us feel so lonely, so terribly alone. We look about and observe the friendly faces of our neighbors - people whom we like and who probably like us. Then we look into our own souls, and we again feel that loneliness. We are each walled off by iron curtains through which, it is true, we can see; but through which we cannot feel. We are thousands of little islands of humanity floating about in the cold ocean, ~~on~~ occasionally bumping into each other, but never establishing any real and comforting contact. We are alone.

If we were to look for the best symbol of the loneliness of man, we should choose that person whose birthday, according to tradition, falls on Rosh Hashana - today. That man is Adam, the first human being. Think of how prosperous this man Adam was. He lived in the Garden of Eden and had it all to himself. The landscape was breath-taking, for it was done by G-d. The Garden of Eden abounded in wonderful trees, beautiful to look at and good to eat. A four-pronged river covered this fertile area and added to its richness. Adam had plenty of gold and there was also much quartz and crystal. Bubbling brooks shaded by majestic oaks gave him comfort, and the rolling soft meadows offered an infinite variety of the most luscious fruits. Adam did not have to work for a living. All he had to do was lift his hand to pluck a ripe fruit; and if he was thirsty, he had merely to cup his hands to drink refreshing and cool water. He did not fear Death, for there was the Tree of Life right next to him. Adam, in addition, did not need to long for an education, for on the other side of him grew the stately Tree of Knowledge. And to occupy his time in this luxurious and palatial garden, G-d even provided Adam with a chance for intellectual exercise. Adam was given the pleasant and challenging task of naming and classifying all the animals, his personal pets, which inhabited his Garden, to save him from boredom. So that Adam, really, had everything a man could ask for - Beauty, Wealth, Comfort, Life, Knowledge and Entertainment. It was truly a Paradise. And yet G-d recognized that this man He had created was terribly unhappy. The Divine Judgement recorded for all posterity, was וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה אָדָם הָיָה לְבָד, "It is not good that man should be alone".

T T T

We, my friends, are re-living the experience of our first ancestor. We also have Beauty. Coming from New York through the Adirondacks, the scenery was awe-inspiring; it was just waiting to be appreciated. We have Wealth. This continent is richer than any continent was ever before. In fact, Canadians can boast of a dollar worth more than the American dollar. Our comforts and luxuries exceed those bestowed upon Adam. For he had no autos and refrigerators, no typewriters and no airplanes like we do. We too have a Tree of Life - medicine and hygiene have provided our generation with a longer life span than was ever hoped for. And we have, too, a Tree of Knowledge. Science, we are told, has accomplished more in the past fifty or one hundred years than in 5 centuries past. We know more about more things than we are capable of absorbing. Education is universal and compulsory. And we have entire industries dedicated to our entertainment in order to keep us from boredom. And yet, the Divine Judgement, first pronounced over Adam, clearly and solemnly re-echoes over our heads today: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה אָדָם הָיָה לְבָד it is not good that man should be alone - and how terribly alone he is. Despite huge, populace cities; despite packed trains and busses; despite overcrowded theatres; despite all these, we are lonely people.

Now you have the right to ask me: granted, then, that people are lonely today; we recognize this sense of solitude. But that is one of the main reasons we have come to shul on Rosh Hashana. We look to the Rabbi for ~~interpretation~~ a hint to the solution of our problem. What does Religion have to say about loneliness?

Well, Religion has plenty to say about it. First of all, let us again look back to our first ancestor. G-d gave Adam the solution to that oppressing problem. For G-d said (אֶלֶּם לְךָ אֶתְּכָנִי, "I shall make for him a help-mate suited unto him". So that the first solution that Religion suggests is - Family. Family, love, call it what you will, is the first real antidote to the poison of loneliness. Where family and love enter, loneliness and solitude depart. Not just people who are relatives, but a family bound by the cement of love and devotion. A family founded on the feeling of אֶלֶּם לְךָ אֶתְּכָנִי, "this time it is a bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh". That means a unified, loyal and faithful family. And what it did for Adam it can do for us. For the Adam who but a short while ago was wandering about in his magnificent Paradise, forlorn despite his prosperity; terrified, as our Rabbis tell us, by the setting sun for fear that it meant the end of the world; this same Adam who was now transformed into the courageous and confident man he was intended to be. For he was now part of a family. True, he would now have to work for a living. True, he would now have to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. But he learned that a Paradise without Love can be a wilderness; and a wilderness with love ~~and~~ can be a Paradise.

Family, and decent family life, is therefore the first antidote to loneliness. And this cure is suggested to us, too, on this Rosh Hashana Day by one of the major parts of our prayers. The Mussaf service, as you know, is composed of three parts. And one of them is called אֶלֶּם לְךָ אֶתְּכָנִי, or "Rememberances". And in it we conjure up the memories of the families of the past and we recall the covenant G-d made with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob: grandfather, father and son - a happy family, of which we are members and therefore one which discourages loneliness.

But Religion does not stop here. There is yet a higher and nobler method to which man must resort in order to abolish loneliness. And that is - Tradition, or a sense of continuity. For man is of necessity connected with the past. He is the sum total of generations. In his veins courses the blood of countless ancestors. He is not alone the ~~product~~ product of biology but of history too. His personality, is, in a sense, a suspension bridge, one end of which lies in ages gone by and the other end of which extends into the infinite future. Over this bridge, which is man, march legions of singers and saints, philosophers and prophets; there is Moses and David; there goes Rabbi Akiba and Abaye and Rava; here marches the Rambam, Maimonides; and then follow the Gaon of Vilna and the Baal Shem Tov. How can man be lonely when such company is his to enjoy.

The Sages of the Talmud offer a profound illustration of this truth. Recall the story of Jacob, fleeing from Laban, his treacherous relative, and preparing to meet Esau, a brother who bore him an old grudge. At night, he crossed אֶלֶּם לְךָ אֶתְּכָנִי and the Bible tells us (וַיִּשָּׁב אֶלֶּם לְךָ אֶתְּכָנִי, "And Jacob was left alone". Never was a man lonelier than he in the darkness of that night. There was no family to comfort him and no friends to console him. Danger was behind him; uncertainty ahead of him, and an unknown adversary about to assail him. A solitary, forlorn, desperate figure upon the bleak planes of Mesopotamia. The Sages of the Talmud sensed the plight of this lonely patriarch. To the verse "and Jacob was left alone", they add: אֶלֶּם לְךָ אֶתְּכָנִי, "alone in a cave with his ancestors". What a commentary on the nature of loneliness. No, they tried to say, Jacob was not alone. He may have been in mortal danger. He may not have had his dear ones close to him, but he had his ancestors as company. There, in the darkness of that cave, hovered the ~~face~~ prophetic face of his grandfather Abraham, who acknowledged G-d when he was only three years old. And there he again met his kindly, blind father, ^{Isaac} who, as a young man, had offered his life to G-d upon the altar at Mt. Moriah. Now man is alone

when he has ancestors to spur him on; when he has a past of which he is a continuing strand;
a chain of tradition of which he is the contemporary link.

Tradition as the second answer to loneliness is also suggested to us by our Rosh Hashana prayers. For another section of our tri-fold Mussaf Service is known as SHOFROTH. In it is the Shofar, and the Biblical verses mentioning Shofar are recounted. The essence of this section of the prayer is that the Teruah is more than a musical note - it has meaning. More than the sound of expiration, it is the symbol of inspiration. For the origin of the Shofar is the horn of the ram which appeared just in time to save Isaac from being sacrificed on the Akedah; a ram, furthermore, which Jewish Tradition maintains was created during the First Six Days of Creation. The Shofar too it was that sounded so ominously on Mt. Sinai when G-d revealed Himself to Israel and gave them the Torah. And not only the Past, but the tradition of the Future too has its roots in the Shofar-symbol. For the coming of the Messiah and the redemption of Israel, will, according to Isaiah be heralded by the victorious blast of the Shofar. And Resurrection too, shall be proclaimed by the sound of the Shofar. What a wealth of tradition is symbolized by this instrument. Creation, Akedah, Revelation, Redemption, and Resurrection. The Shofar, therefore, should warm our hearts, for it reassures us and dispels our loneliness by the weight of the tradition it carries. And when there is such a tradition there is no loneliness.

Religion has yet a third weapon with which to ward off solitude. And that third weapon is clearly symbolized by the third, remaining section of the Mussaf, the part called מלכות, Kingship. When man declares the Kingship of G-d, that is, when he senses the presence of G-d, he cannot be lonely. A sense of the presence of G-d abolishes the misery of solitude; for G-d is with him.

That seems so vague - and yet it is so real. It was real to Moses, who in the stillness of the desert heard the Lord. It was real to David, who in the silence of the night looked up upon the starry skies and proclaimed מלכותך ה' אלהינו, "The Heavens declare the glory of G-d". It was real to the Psalmist, who, though walking in the valley of the shadow of death, feared no evil. For G-d was with him. It was real to the philosopher who assured us that when we have closed our doors and darkened our room we must remember never to say that we are alone. For G-d is within. It is real to any sensitive person who has that sacred slogan inscribed in his heart אני ה' לפני תמיד, "I have set the Lord before me always".

As part of the מלכות, we shall soon recite: ה' אלהינו, ה' אחד, "The Lord their G-d is with them, and they shout in honor of their King". Certainly, when one proclaims from the depths of his soul that G-d is King; when all one's senses tingle with the knowledge of G-d's nearness, then ה' אלהינו, ה' אחד, then the Lord his G-d is with him - he is not alone*.

There is a beautiful and simple allegory written by Franz Kafka, the German-Jewish author, which illustrates this point very profoundly. He writes of a pet that he owns. And a very strange pet it is, for there is none other like it in the entire world. It is half cat and half lamb. As a result of its dual nature, it is afraid of cats and also cannot be at home with lambs. It is therefore terribly alone. In its loneliness, it gazes dumbly into its master's eyes, as if it were trying to communicate its misery to him. There is, however, one time that its solitude is relieved - and that is when it can jump up and curl up in its master's lap and entrust itself in his hands.

What a remarkably true symbolic account of the modern Jew. His nature is half cat, half lamb; half - חצי חיה, and half חצי אדם; half devil and half angel. As a result, he is repudiated by the angels and scoffed at by the demons of life. The Jew who comes to shul on Rosh Hashana does so with a broken heart for he knows that his actions during the year have not been exemplary. He feels guilty. Perhaps he has been lax in his morals, perhaps in his Sabbath observance, perhaps in his kashruth, perhaps in his obligations to the community at large. He lacks confidence in himself; he knows that he cannot be at home in the company of angels. He is no innocent lamb.... And yet

the Jew is possessed of a soul, he is the heir to a tradition of fine moral sensitivities. And so he cannot remain with the cats, with the demons of life. He looks about him and sees the immorality and lust, the *ure fish*, and the desecration of all that is sacred in Jewish life. And then he hears of persecution and slave labor camps and bigotry. He rebels against this unholiness because it outrages that part of him which is pure, which is lamb and angel. And so, rejected by both societies, his loneliness grows and his misery increases. He comes to shul on Rosh Hashana and he raises his gaze toward G-d. He can only look and cannot speak, for he feels so small that his mouth will not open. But one thing he does know; that if he will lovingly entrust his ~~soul~~ to G-d the King: if he will, like the pet in the story, nestle in his master's hands; if he will, in pure faith, feel the majestic and yet gentle presence of G-d, then his loneliness will vanish.

Aye, Family and Tradition can and will abolish solitude. But even more than that, the sense of the presence of G-d can abolish it forever; the complete and total faith in and devotion to G-d. Like the pet in the story, exiled from the society of angels and despising the company of devils, we look to G-d to keep us company. *ה' אלהינו* In the hands of G-d do we commend our spirits. *אנחנו בידיו*. Then is G-d with us, and we shall have no fear. For we shall no longer be lonely.