

B-67  
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Pre-Yom Kippur Message  
to be delivered over WMAS Sun., Sept. 25, 1955

Beginning at sundown tonight, and for more than 24 hours thereafter, Jews all over the world will flock to their synagogues to ask forgiveness of G-d on this holiest day of the year. Forgiveness implies, of course, that a sin was committed. And, indeed, we shall recite the (עשרת הדיברות) - the list of some 50 sins to which we confess - a total of 8 times. For 424 times, all told, we shall, in full consciousness and awareness, admit that we have erred.

For us moderns that will be, as it is every year, quite a disturbing experience. For we have learned to conform to the tempo of our society in which the words of ~~the~~ Protagoras ~~poet Swinburne~~ hold sway: "Man is the measure of all things". G-d has been replaced by Man as the hub of the universe. Religion has become an extension of psychological therapy. Convenience has been raised to a sacrament. And the only sin recognized is the failure to "adjust".

Yom Kippur thus stands in direct contradiction to this basis of our daily ~~and~~ living. Not only can we sin, but we do sin. We approach our G-d in humility and selflessness, and proclaim that it is we who are faulty - we and not G-d, not Torah, not Religion, not the Synagogue. G-d has not abandoned us; we have abandoned Him.

Yom Kippur thus acts as a check on us; as a brake, lest we run away with ourselves and seriously begin to imagine ourselves as Divinities who can do no wrong. Think about it this way: the one time we Americans are glad to see eager to recognize G-d is when we point to Him as the source of our tragedies. There is an automobile accident. We complain: Why did G-d do it? There is a flood. We ask: Why did G-d do it? There is sickness. We murmur: Why did G-d do it? But when it comes to our successes, we tend to forget Him. Polio was vanquished by American Science. ~~Good~~ Economic prosperity is the achievement of our business wizardry. Jet propulsion is the product of American know-how. The projected man-made satellite will be the creation of our genius.

And this way of thinking reveals itself in our current religious attitudes, *as well*. Since Convenience is a sacrament, Religion must not trouble our consciences. Since Faith is a tool of the psychologist, Religion must never make us feel guilty or inadequate. Since it is a virtue to adjust, Religion must never make demands of us to act contrary to the code of behavior accepted by our peers. Since man is the measure of all things, Religion must be no more than a pious projection of our standards, tastes, wants and desires, no matter how base they are. And G-d, if not eliminated altogether, becomes a rubber-stamp for Man's actions. In the words of the naive and foolish blasphemy of a television commentator, "G-d is the smiling, friendly neighbor who lives in the apartment upstairs and who doesn't really mind our little faults".

It is against this sort of thinking that Yom Kippur agitates with majestic indignation. It bids us be realistic. If family life is in a sorry state, it is not the fault of G-d but of our un-G-dly infidelity and callousness. If children have so little respect for parents, it is not that G-d has forsaken us, but that we have forsaken His Torah. If there is war and bloodshed, it is not ~~that G-d~~ that G-d is unfair, but that we have abandoned the teachings of His Prophets and His Law. *אין גאט אין אים, און אים איז גאט*  
G-d remains just. It is we who should be ashamed.

It is only when we, in maturity and sincerity, will come to that realization, that we will know how to go about making life more meaningful and the earth a better place to live in. It is only then that we will learn to live decently as brothers under One Father. It is only then that we will learn that while we can never become gods, we can always become G-d-like.

May we take to heart this lesson which is the essence of Y.K. May G-d forgive



us our sins, our failings and our shortcomings, and grant us and all the world a year of true Peace, Life and Happiness. Amen